Space Rulers

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/13792083.

Rating: Explicit
Archive Warning: Graphic Depictions Of Violence, Rape/Non-Con, Major Character Death
Category: F/F, F/M, Multi
Fandom: Game of Thrones (TV), Chrono Trigger, Warhammer 40.000, Warhammer Fantasy, Dune Series - Frank Herbert, Rick and Morty, League of Legends, Spore (Video Game), Bionicle - All Media Types, Super Mario & Related Fandoms, Bravely Default (Video Game) & Related Fandoms, Donkey Kong Country, Pocket Monsters | Pokemon - All Media Types, Madrid Series, Predator Series, Samurai Jack (Cartoon), Doom (Video Games), Jumanji (1995), Rockman Zero | Mega Man Zero, ARK: Survival Evolved, Pikmin (Video Game), Toriko (Anime & Manga), Subnautica (Video Game), Street Fighter, Simon the Sorcerer - Fandom, Disney - All Media Types, Beauty and the Beast (1991), Hyper Light Drifter, Calvin & Hobbes, Metroid Series, A Song of Ice and Fire & Related Fandoms, Godzilla - All Media Types, Starbound (Video Game), Dark Souls (Video Games), Bloodborne (Video Game), Splatoon, Monster Tale (Video Game), Forbidden Planet (1956), Monster Hunter (Video Games), Jurassic Park - All Media Types, Star Wars - All Media Types, 藤村正 | Muramasa: the Demon Blade, Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim, Teen Titans (Animated Series), Cats Don't Dance (1997), God of War (Video Games)

Relationship: Jon Snow/Daenerys Targaryen, Ashi/Samurai Jack, Catelyn Stark/Ned Stark, Sylvanas Windrunner/Harem, Kairi/Sora (Kingdom Hearts), Link/Mipha/Zelda (Legend of Zelda), Flora/Spyro the Dragon, Ciel/Zero (Rockman), Rayman/Ly, Ragna the Bloodedge/Noel Vermillion, Arya Stark/San, Sansa Stark/Morty

Character: Ned Stark, Arya Stark, Jon Snow, Sara | Schala, Jaki | Janus, Catelyn Tully Stark, Bran Stark, Sansa Stark, Rick Sanchez (Rick and Morty), Morty Smith, Rickon Stark, King K. Rool, Daenerys Targaryen, Razorbeast, Tamatoa (Disney), Gregor Clegane, Sandor Clegane, Xenomorph, Yautja (Predator), Queen Zeal, Koopa | Bowser, Bowser Jr, Mata Nui (Bionicle), Hana "D.Va" Song, Robb Stark, Samurai Jack, Ashi (Samurai Jack), Sylvanas Windrunner, Braev Lee, Edea Lee, Tiny Tina (Borderlands), Eilonwy (Prydain), Grox, Tyranids (WH40K), Gelu (Bionicle), Volibear (League of Legends), Agent 47 (Hitman), Sombra (Overwatch), Reaper | Gabriel Reyes, Widowmaker | Amélie Lacroix, Doomfist: The Successor | Akande Ogundimu, Moira O'Deorain, Zero
Space Rulers

by Krocken

Summary

(A collab with Master of the Boot)

Welcome to the Galaxy, a feudal empire filled with various threats and dangers, and political
schemes. Here are the tales of those who live in the darkness

Notes

A bit of an ongoing work between me and a pal. We hope you enjoy it.
All cast belong to their respective owners.
The Cold

This world was cold. Not as cold as the icy void of space, but this cold offered special suffering. Winds could blow the heat out of the most well insulated travelers; that was if blizzards or native predators didn't do the job first.

It was mid day during the summer equinox on Planet ST4K-8b when the traveller came trudging down the old trapper's trail. What the traveler wanted was a matter of mystery, but what they were chasing the vast beam of light shooting up to the heavens; the Transport Beam to Space Station Winterfell-1.

The traveller looked through snow goggles and marveled at the Space Station blinking like a star on a bright day.

Some would question why he would do something like this...traveling across this frozen wasteland. Some would find it mad.

But in truth, it was all for practice. Need to get stronger in such a harsh universe, full of the worse kinds of aliens...aliens that made the wildlife on this planet look cuddly by comparison...and the creatures of this planet could rip apart an entire platoon of soldiers in a matter of moments.

There were a lot of threats here on this rock. Savage monsters of all types; naturally evolved and designed leftovers from bio-wars that just never died. There were people here too. Spice prospectors who combed the glacial valleys for the fabled blue space, the so-called Raven spice.

Following the spice prospectors there were various bandits and mercenaries looking to take a share of the most precious form of spice; the one that made interstellar travel possible.

The traveler felt up the fine laser pistols at their belt and the assortment of knives. Bandits and brigands weren't always well armed, but they'd had some luck.

And sometime the bandits and pirates were species that didn't need weapons to kill you. He remembered a story about a reckless platoon who came across a group of unarmed Skakdi bandits and engaged them, thinking it would be easily victory.

The Skakdi won.

But no time to dwell on such horrific memories. Time to report to Lord Stark.

The traveler's boots struck self-heating roadway. They were already in the small town that served as a service hub for the station in the sky. A man took down the polar goggles and lifted up the heated balaclava on his face.

Reuben "Rooster" Cogburn took a sip from a self-heating whiskey flask on his belt, his one less than lethal weapon for his travels. Reuben winced at the bad liquor and savored the burn. The former lawman turned and eyed the huge, frozen knight standing vigil over the small town. Polar Knight paid no attention to Rooster; he knew better than to keep Lord Eddard "Ned" Stark Waiting.

The two Stark men, while not actually family members themselves, were nevertheless loyal solders for Ned and the rest of the group. Rooster sighed as he made his way to the main teleporter.

The bald man watched Rooster and his companion. Somewhat insanely, he'd chosen not to wear any kind of head covering in this frigid weather. He looked more like a mid level stock trader compared
to the towering man in power armor.

Gregor Clegane loomed over both Rooster and his companion. Rooster knew him well and had fought the Mountain that Rides many times. What he didn't know was the bald man with a bar code on the back of his head. "It's alright boys," he took another pull of Whiskey, "We're here. We'll take you to Lord Stark."

Gregor said nothing as usual, simply nodded. Rooster, of course, remained on guard. Gregor was known for being psychotically violent, and would kill without any sort of warning.

Rooster reached a console and began typing some buttons...and all were developed in light, and then beamed right upward towards the stars.

The three arrived in a large, white room, one of Winterfell's VIP teleportation rooms. Every man was now dressed for a warm, temperate climate. Rooster welcomed his familiar Western Duster while Polar Knight remained much the same.

The bald man adjusted his red tie, "I look forward to Lord Stark's assessment. There's been unusual activity around the Grox Border and the merchant class whom King K. Rool depends on is getting nervous."

Rooster grimaced. King K. Rool, a Kremling and the leader of the whole galaxy. To public, he appeared as a hopeless oaf...and yet, some spoke of what happens when no one of the other house was looking.

But there was no time to ruminate over that: A door slid open, and in came two people. Eddard 'Ned' Stark himself, looking tall and grim, yet honorable as usual. With him was his wife, Catelyn Stark, a woman that possessed a strong spirit.

The first thing Ned noticed was when the bald man glared, Gregor bowed. The bald man himself bowed shortly afterwards. But he was under no illusion what kind of man it would take to get a psychopath like Clegane to bow.

"Welcome to Winterfell, Agent 47," Ned said with arms crossed, now acknowledging the bow. "What brings the King's chief killer to my home?"

"Grox business," Was the curt reply.

Ned sighed, knowing that this was bad new. Grox were a race of cybernetic life forms who had weak physical abilities, but keen intelligence and xenophobic hatred for anyone not them.

"What about them?" Ned asked.

"Well, they seem to be get a little edgy at times, and this the main merchant vessels to nervous to do their jobs properly." 47 went on.

"We understand the Grox political structure is undergoing a unification," said Lady Catelyn. "That their fleet and ground armies are remarming and reorganizing."

"The intelligence was correct about you," was Agent 47's even reply.

"And our vassals, House Lee are front row to a potential Grox invasion, followed shortly by Winterfell itself," the Lady finished.

"Would you believe, my lady, that Winterfell might not be the first target of the Grox?" enquired the
Catelyn raised an eyebrow. "Whatever do you mean by that?"

47 sat back in his chair. "We are not quite sure, but we believe they are actually mobilizing for defense, not assault," He grimaced. "Likely another hostile race is coming."

"Have there been any mysterious disappearances among asteroid miners?" the Hitman asked, evading the question further. "Surely you had spies at the spice refinery over Tatooine?"

"I thought the King's official stance was that the refinery disaster was an unfortunate accident?" Ned Inquired, unwilling to let his guard down around the King's personal killer.

"Expensive, but the King did manage to recoup his losses," Agent 47 explained, "However it was a controlled self destruct that destroyed the refinery, and a Xenomorph infestation that threatened to spill through the refinery's teleport system."

"Meaning what, exactly?" Rooster interjected as he pulled out a fresh rolled cigar from his jacket. "Since you seem to know so much about it??"

Ned did not silence his man, as Rooster had served both him and his father faithfully for years.

Agent 47 didn't seem to mind Rooster's directness either and repaid it in turn. "As of now there is a Tyranid splinter fleet rampaging through the Magellan cluster's at the edge of the galaxy; it ultimate destination either Grox Space or Stark space."

Polar Knight grunted, the stoic being alarmed by the news.

Ned felt himself tense. Tyranids were among the most dangerous aliens out there. Some would actually compare them more to a virus than anything else. Invading, absorbing everything, and moving on to the next world. They could be beaten back...but it seemed it would be an eternal threat.

But before he could ruminant further, Anivia, the cyrophoenix, came flying in. "My Lord and Lady," she began. "Windrunner is approaching our station."

"Give the Lady Windrunner landing permission," Catelyn commanded the frost elemental. "See to it that the lady is given hospitality before anything else."

"The Lady is one of our staunchest allies," Ned supplied as Agent 47 glared. "If as you say there is a Tyranid Splinter fleet threatening the galaxy, she and her man Duke Nukem fought nearly for thirty years against the beasts."

"As you distinguished yourself in the destruction of Hive Fleet Gorgon," 47 casually supplied.

Ned simply nodded, to humble to boast. He then let his thoughts drift to Slyvanas. A undead elf, Slyvanas was an extremely powerful leader and warrior, and most of the worlds under her command were Death Worlds, to breed the finest of the undead to help counter threats the galaxy as a whole.

She was also rather blunt and cold at times, but that was just her. One could ignore it in favor of her incredible skills, especially in marksmanship.

"Lady Windrunner did most of the ground work," Ned explained humbly. "In a fight with Tyranids, her special forces from half a dozen Death Worlds can be trusted to take a Hive Tyrant or Norn Queen."
"But your standing armies have the numbers, the equipment and the discipline to be the bulwark upon which the swarm is held," said 47. "The size of your army has more than doubled since the time of your father Rickon. To say nothing of the sway the Starks have in Segmentum Aurora."

"I love a good bug hunt," Rooster crowed with bravado, trying to get under the bald man’s skin. 47 just ignored him. It would soon be time to discuss important matters about the future of the Empire.

He did allow himself to think a bit, though, while they waited. Death Worlds...K. Rool owned quite a few himself, his favorite being Planet 4546B, an oceanic world with only a few scattered islands as true land. It was a beautiful world...and very deadly, used to train troops in aquatic situations. High General Pridak often oversaw the training himself, and he was a harsh being, with only the toughest serving under him.

But soon, he had to stop thinking too much, as Windrunner soon arrived.

The Death Worlds were what they had in common. Before she was undead, Sylvannas hailed from the deadly jungles of Quel'Thalas. Duke Nukem was now the Knight administrator of the radioactive Death World New Vegas. 47 himself was raised on half a dozen death worlds from Catachan to Char. He was more comfortable in a setting where everyone wanted to kill him.

"Winter has come, and so has this bad boy!" crowed a boorish, muscular man.

"It is good to see you again, Eddard," said Sylvanas, ignoring her loud servant. "It gladdens my heart to see you and Catelyn once more."

Catelyn nodded alongside Ned, never quite sure if Windrunner was being sincere or simply facetious as times. But now was not the moment to think about that. It was time to chat.

As they all sat down together, Sylvanas spoke up. "I have heard of the encroaching threats myself. Currently I am looking into the Death World Ark for potential recruits to combat anything that gets in our way."

Ark...a varied world full of dangerous prehistoric based creatures. Perfect training grounds.

Ned nodded. "Hopefully it will be enough."

"And I do believe that Ark produces warriors with technological prowess as well as raw ferocity," added 47.

Sylvanas nodded as hot cider and wine was brought out by servants. She abstained, her servant Duke showed no such thing. "Yes, people who go into Ark are given a specimen implant. Those who truly thrive are those who can craft, tame beasts, research technology and work in teams to defeat native monsters and other teams."

"To beat the Tyranids, you need to be smart and fearless," Ned supplied. "You can't match their mindlessness or numbers; so men have to try other methods."

Sylvanas nodded. "Indeed, though I have heard rumors the Tyranids are not quite as mindless as they seem. Rumors is that...something guides them. Something intangible that connects them all..."

A moment of silence passed from this uncomfortable idea...before 47 spoke up. "While on the subject of hostile aliens, have any of you also had trouble with the Yautja on your Death Worlds?"
Ned glowered at the mention of that species, Catelyn held his hand and caressed the cross shaped scar on his hand. "The cursed beasts infest anywhere with conflict and heat. They've even established a small Colony on Arrakis, one of our major spice producers."

"Kindly enough they don't attack the spice miners," Sylvannas purred, "They just attack military installations and hostile tribes. They seek the strongest prey and most dangerous monsters. I've been trying to broker a truce with them and establish a formalized system of combat and warfare in places like Ark and New Vegas."

"And how has that been going?" Catelyn asked.

"Quite slowly, but we're making progress." Windrunner admitted. "Better than we did with those Salmonids."

Duke scoffed at the mention of the toxic beasts. While not THE most dangerous alien species, they were still a high-level threat, with their aggressive behavior and toxicity...and tendency to swarm.

"Give the word and I'll make barbecue out of those Salmonid bastards," Duke ground out, remembering what they'd done to his hair.

Sylvannas chuckled, "That's what I love about you Duke, your total honesty and killing intent."

"While King K. Rool has utter faith in your ground armies, he is most concerned with the Stark Space Navy," 47 interrupted. "From what I see, the Death worlds give you the strongest special forces in the galaxy, but how will you fare in ship to ship combat with Tyranid Bio-ships or Yatuja reaver ships?"

Ned was silent for a moment. He had a point there. Those ships were extremely deadly to fight, not helped by the fact the Tyranid ships were actually modified Tyranids themselves.

He had to think on this one for a moment. Perhaps it was time to look more into spaceship-based combat, to take the enemy head on before they landed and put others at risk.

"The Starks have a substantial fleet," Ned supplied to the King's main assassin. "Most of the fleet protects the merchant navy that keeps the flow of trade goods and spice running to the core worlds."

"A number of mercenary outfits and paramilitary corporations have been nationalized or had their controlling stakes bought by House Stark," Catelyn interjected. "We have some of the finest fighter pilots in the galaxy pledging themselves to our banners."

"Good, good," 47 nodded, pleased. "Now there is something else I wish to discuss: Rumors sightings of the renegade scientist Rick Sanchez."

Windrunner scoffed. "Rick. You speak of the fool who aided in the creation of the 'Space Station Silicon Valley'?"

47 nodded grimly, still knowing said station was still active...and populated by dangerous and intelligent robotic animals.

"Sure, I know Rick," scoffed Duke as he chomped on a cigar. "He's anywhere right now where you can find liquor and bikini babes. I hear Hyrule, the Mushroom Kingdom and Illium are full of babes this time of year."

"We don't keep contact with Rick Sanchez," Ned said firmly, "The man is treacherous and unpredictable." Perhaps, but he had shown the Starks how to cultivate spice in the wild without
damaging future stockpiles. More dangerously, he'd shown Ned the true origins of the spice; some critical information that could not fall into the King's hands.

He was a highly intelligent man, but also selfish, jerkish, and drunk for the most part. The only one he seemed to trust was his grandson, Morty. Rumor had it Morty was with Rick now as well.

"The King hopes that you will assist him in taking in this wanted criminal to justice," 47 coolly admitted. "His achilles heel is his grandson, Rick. I hope to meet them soon enough."

"House Stark always stands loyally with the crown," Catelyn "Where King K. Rool leads, Houst Stark follows and so do the Houses of the Northern Segmentum."

“Good to know,” 47 nodded as Gregor still remained silent. “Thankfully, not all news is bad for today. The Dreemurr’s are still greatly in the aid in the spread of food, thanks to their control over the Death World ‘Gourmet World’.”

Ned and Catelyn nodded with smiled. The Dreemur’s were good people, always are sure everyone was fed...and it was much appreciated as well, considering the huge risk one took when going to the Gourmet World. It was full of dangerous animals, with many growing to impossible sizes, and the environment itself was varied and deadly.

Catelyn's tone became less guarded and friendlier. "The Dreemurr have been critical in the development of agriculture across the segmentum. They’ve shown us how to grow food on worlds we didn't think we could, and shown asteroid and comet miners how to build proper hydroponic farms."

"The Dreemurr are almost family to us at this point," Ned explained, "their leader Asgore is a personal friend and shield brother to me." The Lord of Winterfell eyed the bald assassin, "Though I'm sure you're worried about the production of Red Spice on the death world Fenris."

This did cause a reaction from Gregor, a subtle shift in the giant man's posture. Quietly, he punched a button on his power armor, feeling an injection of red spice directly into his veins. His eyes temporarily glowed red before returning to their normal steel blue. Red spice helped. It gave him focus, made him strong; it took away the chronic pain and more. It was what the King's Space Marines needed to elevate them above even the best-disciplined humans.

And those marines were NOT to be causally messed with, hand picked from the toughest of individuals, trained on the most hellish of Death Worlds, and genetically and physically altered by Relius Clover, the leading scientist under K. Rool.

The Space Marines were the Crown's true trump card over the other noble houses. Immensely expensive to train and maintain, King K. Rool had turned many heads when he began to streamline the command structure and trim the General ranks of the Space Marines.

The first Space marines were formed thousands of years ago during the event known as the Long Night, a winter that lasted a generation and of which only a few written records survived. Warriors were given radical gene therapy and organ transplants to make them gods of war; and red spice was what allowed the warriors to survive their transformation and live for decades, or sometimes centuries.

Space Marines would be critical against Tyranids, and equally critical against the Noble Houses if King K. Rool so decided.

As for what came in the Long Night...few were fully certain, but the term ‘Others’ came up often.
But for now, it was known the Marines were successful in ensuring victory in those years, and now were used to maintain order.

Still, some people were a bit nervous about the Royal Court, as many of people serving K. Rool were said to be...dangerous.

Relius himself, for example, was a genius, with extensive knowledge of both magic and science. However, this was paired with a severe lack of empathy.

The Society of the far future was feudal in nature. The King called on his lords, his lords called on their bannermen, and the bannermen called upon peasant armies and mercenaries to make up the numbers. It wasn't just like whistling for a dog to come.

And for all his public image as a buffoon, K. Rool was a power hungry man. He was a man interested in the galaxy pre-Long night, before the "Others" had decimated nearly 90 percent of the galaxy's population before being driven into the darkness of space. What he wanted was a return to a state run army, a galaxy with one leader, one party and no feudal houses to divide loyalties.

With psychopaths and assassins serving him, not to mention the dreaded Space Marines, K. Rool had the resources to bring back the days of a powerful, centralized Nation State.

The Starks were the other, relying on public good will, honor and martial valour; they were the only other power in the galaxy with the resources to build a more decentralized, more just nation state, as were others, like House Dreemur and Nui.

But now was not the time to ruminate on how the system worked: Right now they had focus on the immediate threats.

Ned looked back up. “We shall do whatever we can to combat the threats.” He assured.

47 cocked his head, like a vampire who needed to be invited into a home. "And that was what we needed to hear, Lord Stark. the Imperial house is facing troubling internal strife on top of alien threats; King K. Rool personally needs your help and extends to you the position of Hand of the King."

"What?" Catelyn demanded.

"What!" said Rooster with even less tact. "Join that fucking nest of vipers?"

Ned blinked, ignoring the outburst. “That...I...I am not worthy.”

47 waved his hands. “Eh, he thinks you are. Besides, you can use this to help the people of the various world, make them feel more secure with a Stark in charge.”

Sylvanas leaned in, smiling but emitting no warmth. "That is a great honour, however I question the Wisdom of one of the galaxy's most capable military leaders moving away from the front lines at a time of potential war."

"And a bigger percentage of the overall spice market," 47 added. "Your House would profit greatly. All you would have to do is say yes and greenlight the construction of shipyards in the Hoth System and the Ark world. It would kill many birds with one stone."

Ned was silent for a long time. True, this would greatly benefit his family and people...but it would also mean LEAVING his family, which would be distressing. Plus this was his home...
"Allow me time to think on this great honour," said Ned to the King's main hitman. "this is a great deal to take in and I must confer with my advisors." It wasn't a coincidence that this golden opportunity came out of the mouth of one of the galaxy's deadliest assassins.

47 nodded, "Take a month, if you prefer. I have much business in the sector and that should give you enough time to make preparations."

It was then that the red warning lights and klaxxons started going off in the Station's corridors.

"UNKNOWN LIFEFORM IN LOADING BAY 13-B!" blared the mechanical computer voice.

All were alert in an instant, concern and/or anger on their faces. Something was in the station, and could be a huge threat if left unchecked.

The Lord of Winterfell stood up in his chair, turning to his men. "Reuben, take Polar Knight and Gelu to the loading bay. Whatever it is, keep it contained there."

Ned grabbed the power sword at his belt, "Get the station sensors back on line," he ordered to Anivia, the frost elemental.

Sylvanas looked to her grinning champion, Duke, "Duke, be a lamb and assist Lord Stark in killing anything that needs to be killed."

"Looks like to kick ass and chew bubblegum...and I’m all outta bubblegum!" Duke grinned.

"Whatever." Came the dry reply.

Catelyn herself mad her way to the personal quarters, always ready to make sure her children were safe from harm. Truly a mother to be admired.

Soon, all were rushing to their duties.

Ned turned to 47, “Please stay safe. My people will handle this.” He turned and left before the assassin could get another word in.

As the Lord of Winterfell stormed towards his private command center, he tapped into a private communicator. “Rick, I need to know exactly what’s been happening.”

The drunken reply came over the encrypted line “Uh, Ned, it’s kinda, it’s kinda fucked, Ned,” Rick Sanchez belched over the line

As it so turned out, the Starks have actually been giving shelter to Rick and Morty. True, the two remained neutral, but were happy for the help...even if Rick didn’t show it.

Morty’s panicked voice could be heard next. “Oh, jeez! Kill it! KILL IT KILL IT!!!”

Ned signed, “Rick, at some point I’m going to lose my patience and my mind.”

“Ned, urp, it isn’t my fault!” Rick protested, “one minute I was fixing the toilet in Robs room when my teleporter goes off and there’s a predalien in the room!”

“A predalien?” Ned ground his teeth. A hybrid of Yatuja and Xenomorph. Very tough. With some specimens surviving falls from orbit or diving in Lava

“Look, uh, it hasn’t killed anyone yet. We are holding it off,” Rick explained. “J-Just make sure your guys get down here and help us out.”
“RRRRIIIICCKKK!!!” Morty’s scream echoed into the communicator.

“Talk to you later, bastard’s trying to maul him.” Rick explained causally before hanging up.

Ned could only sigh.

Rick hung up on his liege lord in order to throw an exploding barrel at the Predalien. The explosion was more flash than thunder, but it had the effect of knocking Morty out of the beast’s claws.

Thing about Xenomorphs, their genetic code was very dense. It meant that even the Tyranids couldn’t assimilate their silicone DNA. It meant even a lowly drone could only be brought down by an armour piercing bullet to the head. And it meant this Predalien could take missiles to the face and ask for seconds.

Rick cried out in shock as the burning, acid bleeding thing started to run at him as he was reloading his rocket launcher.

The acid blood was no weak agent, no sir. It was highly corrosive, able to eat through flesh and even steel in a matter of moments. Clearly nothing that anyone would wish to make contact with.

Rick gritted his teeth. "C-Come on, fucknuts! Show me what you got!" He aimed once more.

The majority of Xenomorph blood was made of a compound called fluoro-antimonic acid. One of its properties other than dissolving just about everything was that it exploded in contact with water.

Rick lunged out of the way as the bleeding Predalien slammed into a tank of purified water. The explosion rattled Ricks teeth but he couldn’t help but laugh.

He ran to get Morty and leave this fucker to Lord Starks men.

"Morty, Morty! Are you alrightt?" he belched out to his grandson.

"O-Oh, Rick! I-I think I'm scarred for life," Morty whined, prone on the ground.

"Don't be r-ridiculous, Morty!" Rick replied. "This sort of crap happens to you all the time! It's just part of the adventures! Danger and death everywhere! And whatever doesn't kill you makes you stronger! And this didn't kill ya, so you're stronger now! That means we can deal with even more crazy stuff and go on more adventures, Morty!"

"Rick, I honestly just wanted to hang with the Starks because Ned promised me a free college education and--oh shit, Arya!" Morty cried out, as Lord Stark's waifish daughter fell out of overturned container, covered in flour.

Arya coughed, "Hey, Morty, Rick," she coughed once more. "How are you?"

"The fuck are-urp-you doing here!" Rick demanded, "If you dad knows you're in danger, he'll cut my liquor allowance in half!"

"That's not my problem." The Stark girl responded. "Maybe you need to look into more odd jobs to make that money."

"Ah, come on! This is annoying enough as it is, hiding from most of the other houses who want to kill me!" Rick complained. "So what if those robotic animals proved homicidal. At least I deactivated the Shrink Ray that was on the Station. It was supposed to be a great zoo, Arya, a greeaat Zoo! But noooooooo! They did not let me test in time! Not my fault, theirs!"
Rick continued his tirade as the Predalien began to pick itself up. "And the Predators love my zoo of deadly cyber animals; but they do they pay me money for it? No! They just give me raw beef as thanks, like I'm a fucking-urp-dog or something!"

Rick was cut off as gunfire struck the Predalien in the knees. Rooster drank rick's last beer and flipped open his revolver. Standing shoulder to shoulder with him was Duke Nukem and Polar Knight. "You are the dumbest genius I've ever met," said Rooster as the Predalien roared. "Yeah, well, I least I got a brain." Rick countered as he pulled out laser from his coat. "Though it's been no help with most of my life." The Predalien roared again...and Rick fired the laser into the mouth, the beam going in and through the back of the beast’s head.

The Predalien twitched on the ground, excess nervous energy coming from its spine and ganglion. Morty watched mortified as the thing bled on the ground, burning holes in the space station hull.

Rick scoffed as he drew out a whiskey flask, "It's dead, Morty. It's brains are ashes. Just another dead critter."

As though to prove him wrong, the Predalien threw a large bag of flour at Rick, the scientist flying backwards and slamming into Rooster.

Duke looked down at Arya as the monstrosity stumbled to its feed; the loss of half its brain crippling it but not killing it. "You're a snot nosed kid with no combat experience," and he immediately handed her a gold plated handgun. "Take a minute to get familiar with that and follow my lead, short stuff."

Arya watched impressed as Rooster took careful aim with his gun. Despite her status as a 'lady', she herself was determined to be a great fighter one day, like Rooster.

For now, she simply watched...and learned.

Rooster went for the Monsters rapidly regenerating knees, hobbling it further. It swayed like a tree in the breeze but didn’t fall.

Duke power slid under the Predalien, firing a salvo of diamond tipped explosive bullets into its back; distracting the beast.

Bringing up the rear, Polar Knight raised his enchanted Valyrian steel axe. The Predalien sensed him somehow, flinging its long tail at the polar knight.

Arya didn’t think, she just fired the gun in her hand

Tough as the beast was, it was not immortal and even it could only take so much abuse and damage. Snarling in rage to the very last, the Predalien finally collapsed onto the floor, dead and decaying.

Rooster spat. "And that is how it's done there."

Polar Knight simply nodded as he looked down at the hideous corpse.

Arya shuddered as she held the smoking gun in her hand. She’d tagged along for shooting leasing with Robb and Jon, but this was her first target that could fight back.

“Don’t thank me for softening it up for you!” Came Rick’s sarcastic voice as he gave Morty first aid.

It was then that Ned Stark stormed into the loading bay, sword drawn and eyes dark.
He took in the scene, from a stunned Morty with a deadpan Rick injecting him with advanced medicine, the dead Preadalian on the floor...and Arya, gun in hand.

Before he did anything he’d regret, Ned took a long, deep breath, sighed, and sheathed his sword. "Is everyone at least all right?" He asked.

"Yeah, we managed to off it before it killed anyone," Rick replied simply. "No harm done in the long run."

Ned turned to Arya, “Go to your mother.” He spoke to Rick, “unless you want to start paying for your own liquor, I need access to the teleport logs over the last 24 hours.”

Arya attempted to return the gun to Duke, who refused it. “Keep it, kid. I got a whole drawer at home of those.”

Arya nodded, leaving the room to return to the personal quarters of the Stark family. Ned watched her go with a grim expression, nevertheless happy she was still alive after that messy incident.

Rooster began the process of getting the flour off his clothes as Rick began locating the teleport logs.

“Hey alright,” He crowed drunkenly, “we got a low bandwidth piggyback signal from a contact on the outer edge of this solar system.”

"Oh, jeez. I didn't even think those things were smart enough to use teleporter..” Morty said.

"Well, the universe is full of surprises, Morty...and they all wanna kill ya!"

“An individual Xenomorph isn’t smart,” Ned spoke from dark experience. “As a hive they can perform complex puzzle solving and long term strategy.”

Polar Knight spoke for the first time, “On an airless moon around Death World Lustria, they took out our oxygen supply and suffocated half the troops on the campaign.”

Ned nodded, remembering that incident, and on some survivors had to travel to Lustria itself to get away from the beasts. It was...not pleasant experience for them.

“I remember Lustria,” said Morty, “Lord Mazdamundi was really nice. He stopped Kroq-gar from tearing my head off.”

“Tech! Can’t stand those fat fucking toad men,” Rick belched, “they think just because they’re the most powerful psychics in the galaxy that they’re better than me!”

"Nevertheless, they are among the finest soldiers in the galaxy, and we need their allegiance." Ned replied. "Now, I want you all to clean up and get things ready. I sense dark times are ahead."

Agent 47 watched Lord Stark and his men on a cheap disposable tablet. He shut off the tablet and removed the memory chip, throwing away the device into a garbage chute.

Rick Sanchez was a master at countering spies and hacking, but his arrogance led him to forget about more amateur attempts at hacking. 47 had all he needed by hacking the video terminal of a junior programmer with a weak work password.

He knew the Stark’s would prioritize Xenomorph extermination, and seek to unify the Death worlds. For now he would watch closely as they tried to clear out the derelict ship in the comet cloud

Now was not the time...if he did it now...everything would fall apart. First they all had to pull the
strings to make the situation prime.

“It’ll have to happen all at once, not just the Stark’s but the Dreemur and anyone who can threaten
the primacy of the crown,” He uttered in a soft voice.

He looked up as he saw Gregor stalking towards him. 47 stared directly at Gregor without fear or
hesitation. “As a show of good faith, you can help purge The Xenomorphs. By my estimates it’s
been nearly 7 hours since you killed something “

Gregor simply nodded. "It will be done."

47 nodded back, wondering still how he should approach the subject with K. Rool. He smirked
slightly. He had to hand it to the Kremling, he could have skill when he used it. Already the Great
Houses Zeal and Koopa had become close associates of his.

Zeal and Koopa stood to gain much from the planned fascist state of the future, being granted heavy
weapons manufacturing rights and favored positions among long range spice hauling.

Recruitment of the currently wild Salmonids was proving difficult but progressing. With the promise
of new breeding grounds and their intelligent members being addicted to spice, they could provide
reliable, cheap cannon fodder for the crown

Zeal's house had extreme mastery over the art of magic, with countless spells in their possession. In
addition they owned a good number of Death Worlds themselves, chiefly the multi-biomed Mira and
Wyveria, both full of dangerous megafauna, meant to train hunters and to live off the beasts that
dwelled there.

House Koopa was a military powerhouse, with mining from Zebes and Pandora, two very deadly
Death Worlds, adding to their armaments.

House Windrunner commanded a vast army of undead who could fight in outer space , in high
radiation environments and places too hazardous for ordinary beings.

Remove Sylvanas and her lapdog Nukem, and Facilier and LeChuck would both be happy to bend
the knee.

Easier said than done though. Sylvanas was no fool. Not just a cable fighter, but highly intelligent
and crafty herself, knowing all too well how the system worked...and willing to do anything keep
herself from being plundered.

She’d be difficult to kill but not impossible. People thought Handsome Jack was untouchable before
47 added something to his evening martini, made his face turn purple as he choked to death.

The key to everything lay in making the great houses focus on external threats. Make them spend
blood and treasure fighting the Tyranids, the Orks and the Grox.

Orks...now there was race they just confused the heck out of everyone. They were fighters to the
core, and reproduced via spores, but those were not the most troubling things.

The most troubling thing was their technology... which, by all laws and appearances, should never
work at all...but they did, but only in Ork hands. Relius theorized that the Orks had some sort of
subconscious psychic power that made things work if they believed it so.

The way Relius has described it was magic, if magic were very, very stupid.

Orks loved to fight, they were drawn to it like sharks to blood. They were the only species who
celebrated when Yatjua hunting parties or Tyranid invasions came into the neighborhood.

Getting the Orks to pick a fight with the kings enemies would be like taking candy from a baby.

Not that he would ever actually TAKE candy from a baby. He had some standards.

Ah, but what what he doing thinking about this now? For now, he should go about and look into the spice production on several of the colonies.

47 shook his head and adjusted his tie. He was getting too ambitious in his advancing years. Thinking like a revolutionary and not a killer.

For now he could count on the Stark’s to liberate the stockpile of spice on board the derelict ship. There were some corporate executives fixing the price of green and yellow spice who needed to talk to his favorite strangulation wire. A talk with that object usually help to straighten things out considerably.

He looked out the nearby window, taking in the multitude of stars. A dangerous galaxy they lived in.

Meanwhile, on the surface of the planet, two young men were fighting a gigantic armored bear.

Volibear roared and swiped his paws at Robb Stark and Jon Snow. “You Cubs has better give me a real fight!” He snarled

Both young men were armed with iron bars, ready to practice their skill against the might Stark warrior.

Robb and Jon were both sons of Ned, though only Robb was a trueborn. Jon Snow, as he was called, was a bastard child of an unknown mother.

As a bastard Jon could never inherit any of Ned Stark’s holdings or titles. Yet despite this, Ned saw what the boy was capable of and gave him the same education and opportunity as his trueborn son.

For his part, Volibear was a brutal but fair teacher. In this galaxy the sons of Ned would have to be ready to fight tired and out of ammo against stronger, better motivated and better equipped foes. It was him who’d even swayed Catelyn to give Arya firearms training

Reluctant at first, yes, but Cat knew it would likely be for the best, so Arya was happy for the bear.

As for Jon, he saw himself of proving himself in the future. It would just take time.

Jon swung the iron bar in his hands, trying to hit a gap in the armoured bears metal plates. Volibear parried with a giant paw, but left himself open to a swing from Robb.

The bear shifted, knocking Jon over and pivoting to deal with Robb. Robb’s iron bar glanced off the metal plate and threw off sparks

It was intense, but had to be. Many things in the various Death Worlds would be trying to kill them for real. Heck, even the Civilized Worlds could be dangerous.

So this training was all needed.

Volibear slammed his paw into Robb’s chest and buckled his practice armor. The bear suddenly spun around as Jon Snow thrust the tip of his iron bar into the back of the bears knee.
In response the ursine warrior stepped on Jon, cutting off his breathing.

Then the great bear stepped back. “You have injured my knee and I’ve taken both your lives. Let your bruises be a reminder of this lesson.”

Both men coughed. Catching their breath

“And remember,” Volibear went on. “Lord Stark made have spoken of honor in all things, but out there, you will encounter both enemies who spit on honor, and those who have no concept of it.”

“Worse yet,” Volibear cautioned, “You’ll meet those who wear the mantle of honor with none of the substance.

“But at least with Xenomorphs, you’ll always know what to expect.” said the voice of Ned Stark and his entourage. "And on the topic of the creatures, I have a volunteer job for you boys, if you’re up to it."

Both young men turned to see their father.

"Always happy to help.” Robb replied with a nod.

"Same here." Jon nodded as well. "What is there to do?"

Ned gave the boys a hard look, “I’m giving you lads your first real job. Not just fighting bandits or chasing pirates in a star fighter. We’re going on a bug hunt, Xenomorphs.”

Jon’s jaw dropped while Robb grinned with excitement. “Here? On the planet?” Jon asked

"Apparently so,” Ned confirmed. "I believe someone is weaponizing them here somewhere on this planet, and you need to track them down and shut down whatever operation is going on."

Jon took a moment to look out in the vast expanse, no doubt littered with countless dangers.

"Overwhelming, I know." Ned seemed to read his mind. "But I would not be giving you this task if I did not have absolute faith in your both."

“Leave your pride behind for this, Master Robb,” Volibear scowled. “With the Xenomorph, expect only the unexpected.”

Ned did not contradict his ursine servant. “A Predalien teleported onto Winterfell this morning. It came from a teleport signal from a derelict ship hauling spice, which was then bounced from a transmitter on the planet”

"So this transmitter could be a key to finding who was behind this?” Jon asked.

"Exactly,” Ned confirmed.

"Leave it to us, father," Robb stated. "We'll get to the bottom of this matter."

“You leave within the hour,” Ned instructed. “I need to personally oversee the sterilization of the derelict and retrieval of any cargo, but you’ll get pick of men and weapons.”

“Will we be bringing atomics, father?” Jon found himself asking.

Ned nodded, “We can’t risk an outbreak. The signal emerged near a village called Barrow. Neighboring hunting and prospecting communities are being evacuated. If the hive is too deeply
entrenched, wipe it out.”

Ned’s dark tone dampened even Robb’s adventurous spirit. “Wipe out?”

Ned glared, “With extreme prejudice. We have an entire world to protect.”

"It's harsh, yes, but sometimes you need to be in these times." The Stark tracker, Gelu, came striding up. The Glatarion was somewhat cold and aloof individual, but very loyal to the Stark family, and was good at what he did.

"Gelu..." Jon began.

"I'll be one of your men," Gelu confirmed.

Robb stood in awe of the old guerilla warrior, veteran of nearly a dozen wars. "We're honored, Gelu. The Glatorian Hero nodded, "I'm not trying to honor you, I'm trying to keep you both alive. Not to mention that if someone is weaponizing the Xenomorphs, trying to bend them to his or her will, you'll need all the help you can get."

Blunt as always, but that was a welcome trait at times, especially on worlds like this.

Made the two wonder for a a moment if Sansa actually set foor upon the planet at all.

"I have about a dozen men I trust," Gelu elaborated. "Mercenaries, former war heroes with a lack of diplomacy, I think you'll like them, Jon Snow."

"Take this," said Ned, passing the passive sword at his side to Robb's hands. "Valyrian void weapons cauterize wounds; stops the creatures from bleeding acid on you."

Robb was at a loss for words

Jon smiled. "You should accept it, Robb."

Robb regained himself and nodded. "I shall use this weapon with the worth it was bestowed upon me." He said.

"Keep your men's lives in mind," Ned cautioned, "Regard them as your own beloved sons and they will follow you into the jaws of hell."

Gelu bowed to Ned, "My men are ready when your sons are ready. If need be we can pick up additional help on outposts along the way."

All seemed to be ready, and the two sons listened deeply to their father. He was noble man, despite the occasional chill he presented...but that was just the leader doing the needed talk. Deep down was a loving family man and someone of great honor.

Ned embraced both of his sons, "I'll be transporting up to the station to deal with the derelict. An atmospheric craft will take you both as far as The Wall, after that you'll have to make your way to barrow on foot to avoid the electromagnetic storms."

Jon nodded, "We'll make you proud, father."

Robb nodded likewise, "We'll return victorious, father."

Nothing more was needed to be said after, as all began to prepare for their dangerous missions.
Even for a noble, life could be harsh in this galaxy.

In this harsh world, Arya watched her brothers leave to fight while she was stuck aboard a space station. She looked at the view screen with longing eyes and cradled the gun Duke Nukem gave her. "I should be there, fighting with them." she said to her sister, Sansa.

Sansa looked up briefly from her knitting, shaking her head at her sister's adventure lust. "Arya, Robb and Jon are going to kill monsters that reproduce entirely through rape. This is one fight you should sit out."

"Do those things actually RAPE people, or it is just metaphorical?" Arya asked with a frown.

"Doesn't matter, those things are highly dangerous. Read all about them." Sansa gestured to tablet that contained a wide variety of files regarding Houses, aliens, wildlife, and planets.

Arya looked at the information on Xenomorphs, and wished she hadn’t. “Sansa” she asked, “why do I want to feel it again? The danger and adrenaline?”

Sansa shrugged, “probably because you’re weird.”

That didn’t help.

"Thank you very much." Was the heavily sarcastic reply.

The two sisters were...not very close, due to heavily conflicting personalities. Sansa was the 'traditional lady' type of girl, while Arya had a tomboy streak to her.

“I could join a mercenary outfit.” Arya said more to herself than anyone else. “I could start out with Duke Nukem on Death World New Vegas.”

Sansa didn’t look up from her book. “While I’m sure he’s irresponsible enough to let you, Sylvanas would send you right back here and mother would lock you in a tower.”

"You really think they would do that?" Arya asked as Nymeria, her direwolf, came up to her, allowing herself to be petted.

"Well, maybe the lockup is out, but you'd be pushing it." Sansa replied.

“You’re smart,” Sansa said, “you don’t have to lead a life of gowns, makeup and costume balls. You could be a planetary governor or a minister and father would support you.”

Arya shook her head, “That’s almost as bad. Wearing a suit and wearing a dress would be just as bad.”

Sansa sighed, “If you want to be a great warrior you’re going to have to do more than shoot, you’re going to really have to broaden your skill set.”

As Lady, another direwolf, came to Sansa, Arya stared at her sister. "Meaning?"

"You need to use a wide variety of weapons, as well as increase your sense and make sure your body can quickly adapt to any environment." Sansa went on. She put down her book, “look at Robb. He learned how to use every weapon and pilot every vehicle on ground and in space, and that was just the start. He knows how to lead men, how to spot an ambush and retreat when the odds are against him.”
Arya was surprised, “How do you know so much about this?”

Sansa gave a sardonic smile, “Well I’m more than just a pretty face”

Arya just glared at that, before turning back out into the abyss. It was so...inviting. It sounded quite thrilling to travel the many worlds, seeing exotic life and realms.

She could run off to New Vegas, she’d get her wish on that world full of mutants, radioactive zombies and deadly ork like super mutants. But if she could work directly under Sylvanas...

Sylvanas was someone who’d fought in every environment, against every enemy and with every weapon. Arya’s heart raced as she thought of becoming a galaxy famous battle queen.

Oh, that would win her some well-deserved respect all right. Maybe even the King himself would be impressed with her! That would so awesome!

But for now, she was stuck here on this giant space station, like many others would be.

In Winterfell’s military open dock, Morty was being left behind. “I can help, Rick!”

Rick brushed off his grandson, “Morty, I need you to make sure the janitor doesn’t pilfer my moonshine still. Lord Stark needs me to run scans on the derelict in real-time. Enjoy the rest.”

Rooster Cogburn clapped Morty on the back, “Son, you don’t want to be stuck in a bug hunt. And you don’t want a man like Clegane watching your back.”

Gregor scowled from across the small loading bay, calibrating his giant vibro Sword

Morty paled, having heard PLENTY of stories about the atrocities committed by the Mountain. None were pleasant.

Oh well. Maybe it was a good time to rest after being nearly killed...again. That was just Morty's luck. He lost count on all the ways he brushed by death.

Guilt still ate at Morty. He really liked Lord Ned. He was kind of like that cool neighbor who gave out full sized candy at Halloween and gave candy to adult trick or treaters.

He’d hate to think of something happening to Ned on the derelict. He’d also hate to think about something happening to Jon and Robb in the surface

Oh, why did the Galaxy demand so much from people? What is a comic joke? Or just what it was for no reason? That could be scary.

He looked out into the stars as well. The Great Houses owned many of the planets out there...and the Guild was a connector.

The galaxy was vast and full of riches as it was full of terrors. There were too many shipping companies to name, but the Guild occupied a special place. They didn't pay their captains, they just gave them a ship and a niche. This let them avoid regulation like the other shipping companies without being labeled true smugglers.

Morty dreamed of one day being a Guild captain. He was being trained in star navigation under Lord Stark's tutors. On a guild ship there would be lots of risks. But even a junior-junior navigator could earn twenty year's worth of a regular merchant sailor's wages if they were hauling an expensive cargo.
Rumors swirled around of the Guild hauling stolen spice, though nobody had been able to prove it. On a spice haul, the percentage paid even to a ship's dishwasher could set up a man for five lifetimes.

Morty felt lost in the future. He didn't want to live in his grandfather's shadow forever.

All so overwhelming...Rick was a super scientist, seemingly able to do anything. A lot to move out of. It would take miracle to do something like that, and make his own name among the records.

One thing at a time, though. For now...he had to keep on surviving.

Morty knew there was nothing he could do on a Xenomorph hunt. You only wanted elite soldiers to fight those creatures, especially if there was a Predalien or other exotic variants involved.

If he hit it big on a spice haul with the guild he could be rich enough to buy his own planet. He could have enough money to buy titles and claim a noble woman for marriage. A woman like Sansa Stark maybe.

... 

...Fat chance of THAT. He was getting way too caught up in the moment. He was too dorky for someone like her.

Morty bumped into someone. Looking down, he saw Sansa's tomboy sister, Arya. "Uh-uh, Lady Arya, I'm-uh, really sorry!"

Arya shrugged at the dorky boy, "It's okay, Morty. Are you staying behind?"

Morty sighed, "Yeah, Rick wants me to guard his moonshine,"

Course he does," Arya muttered.

"Yeah, he does like his drinks." Morty confirmed. "Seem to keep him going in this vast galaxy..."

"Well my father payed for his last two liver transplants," Arya put her hands in her belt.

Awkward silence fell between the two seens.

Morty scratched the back of his head, "So, uh, can I do anything for you?"

"Well, I was hoping you could, Morty,"

"Eh?" Morty looked up to see a dark smile across her face...one that spoke of no good.

Arya grinned and handed a note, sealed to Morty. "I was hoping you'd get this to Sylvanas Windrunner. She's still on the station and I trusted you to get this to her."

Morty just stammered, "Uh-uh, I-ah, oh sure!"

Sylvanas Windrunner, right. The hot undead lady that Morty had fantasized about for a while. Just go right up and talk to her

And hopefully not completely blow it, like a big dumb idiot. Great, no pressure.

Still...it was worth a shot. And he hated to turn down a friend
Morty nearly pissed himself and dropped the letter when Volibear stomped near him. "Careful, boy," said the bear in his most gentle voice. Which could still terrify hardened killers.

Volibear hauled a giant flame thrower in his paws; so big it normally was mounted on tanks and aircraft. Fire was good for cleaning out Xenomorph nests, a hot enough fire could crack their exoskeletons and prevent them from climbing on their melted hive walls.

Fire had its uses, especially in this icy wasteland of a world,

"Um, a-anything I c-can help you with?" Morty stammered, sweating quite large amount.

"Where are you taking that letter?" the ursine deadpanned.

"N-nn-nowhere," Morty stammered before the bear's icy gaze.

Volibear regarded the boy with alien emotions, inhuman aloofness; but no malice.

"...I see..." was all that was said. "I trust you, Morty. But don't be pushing it."

"Yes, sir," Morty sighed, relieved it did not explode into something nasty.

The bear snorted, "Sylvanas is by the armoury, restocking. If you need to talk to her, do it now," He stormed off, leaving Morty to breath a sigh of relief.

Volibear did trust Rick and Morty...that did not mean he LIKED them, finding them a little...problematic to say the least.

Nevertheless, Morty did as he was told and made his way to where Windrunner was.

Morty stood before her, she made his heart race even faster than Volibear had, but for different reasons.

Secretly he always had a thing for elves, his first fictional crush was for that lady from Lord of the Rings, which Rick mercilessly taunted him about and led to a nasty adventure in Naggarond; the Dark Elf homeland.

Sylvanas however regarded Morty with no malice, "Your mouth is wide open," she quipped.

Morty gulped as Windrunner gave an odd smirk, always enjoying messing with people, to test them out...how they thought in the terms of the galaxy and so on.

"Um, A-Arya w-wanted me to g-give you this!" Morty forced out, holding out the letter.

The undead elf smiled, "Yes, I was expecting something like this sooner or later, ever since Arya chose the knight doll over the princess doll when she was younger."

Morty continued to stammer, "Y-y-your wel-welcome!" Talk about a woman even more insanely unattainable than Sansa Stark.

She smiled at him, "Go get yourself a drink, Morty. And try to keep the station safe in case the worst should happen."

Morty found himself saluting stupidly, before scurrying off, leaving Windrunner alone in her thoughts.

She scanned over the note quickly. This would be a formidable task. She knew that Ned wanted
Arya trained in self defense. He'd sooner have Rickon and Jon go to train with her as an apprentice than Arya. Arya was Ned's baby, and good luck getting through to a protective parent.

She frowned as she selected a high powered compound bow with explosive and fire and freezing arrows. Perhaps she could talk Ned into letting Arya learn politics on her world, then maybe give her the training the girl so desired.

Arya had potential, Sylvanas knew that. She just needed to be trained properly. It would be lethal to just waltz right into a death world.

For example, Sylvanas recalled a time she was given permission by the Dreemurrs to travel to the Gourmet World for supplies. Extremely tough as she was, it was still a harrowing experience: A planet with the circumference of 220,000 kilometers, with varied weather, biomes, and gravity, and populated with powerful animals, some as big as islands...and some even bigger.

Dreemur would be a good place to train her. They were allies of Ned, and more than that the many monsters on the surface were tough but fair. Getting killed was usually due to personal mistake, since so many of them favored personal duels.

Ark world might be good when she got older, but she didn't think Ned and Catelyn would be comfortable having their little girl tame dinosaurs or get an implant.

And getting her trained on New Vegas with Duke Nukem was out of the question.

Asgore and Toriel were good and reasonable people, if a bit too kind for their own good. Of course, even they would have to test Arya before the girl could THINK of setting foot on a Death World.

There was also the case of Frisk, Toriel's adopted daughter of sorts. She might be a good female companion for Arya, lord knows she'd survived for years on her own in a monster infested mountain so she'd be a good squad mate if nothing else.

Arya had a certain personality type. She'd be wasted in some administrative post or as a pretty thing at a ballroom.

Yes...this all required some thought. And she had time to do it, assuming no hostiles came en masse all of the sudden.

She now found herself wondering...what insidious plans was the King up to?

K. Rool was easy to understand. He desired unlimited power, more than what the brute force of his space marines could grant him. They were too few in number to be an effective police force. They could oust outside invaders, but they could never be an occupying army with their limited numbers.

Even if he took down House Stark and Dreemur, he was looking at two possible alien invasions from Tyranid and Grox sources. To say nothing of a potential ork invasion that could be triggered.

And there was also House Nui. Armed with advanced technology resources of their own, they were a formidable force. But they were good people, ready for justice.

They were mostly politically neutral, but their desire for peace, order and good government meant that they would naturally avoid any course that triggered a civil war or weakened the empire to outside threats.

Unity would be the saving grace of the galaxy, unity and brotherhood between the houses. It would be preferable to top down tyranny by shows of force.
The only way that K. Rool could make his hostile takeover work would be if he could monopolize the spice trade.

And that would be quite difficult, considering how shrewd the business could be a times, everyone wanting their own portion of spice.

Spice trade was handled by over a hundred shipping, refining and processing companies. Even taking control of the guild would have little effect, since they had so little centralized control over individual captains.

He’d need something, some way to nationalize the major shipping companies and also neutralize the most affluent guild captains

Windrunner paused. He would find a way. Somehow...it actually unnerved her to think about...

She gathered her supplies and headed out.
Infestation

The shuttle was getting ready to take off, the engines were fuelled and Rick Sanchez had all of his scanners and gear on board. With that, they could track each individual man and Xenomorph on board the derelict and also liberate the spice store inside.

Lord Stark marched forward in full power armor, minigun mounted on his back. Rooster followed in light armor while Volibear made up the rear. It was time to take on the Xenomorphs, and keep them from spreading to other places.

From a viewing area, Bran Stark, the second youngest of the Starks, watched this all happen, staring at the platoon. He was a young man, energetic; but he lacked Rob's overwhelming dedication to lordship or Arya's obsession with combat. For the most part he was just content to climb and do well enough in school and combat lessons.

Though his eyes drifted to the canisters of Blue "Raven" Spice that Rick was using to power his equipment. Users of the Blue spice were said to be able to see the future, guide starships on instantaneous fold space journeys over billions of lightyears. His thoughts often drifted to such things.

Spice...a powerful substance, which certain colors more valuable...like the Purple 'Royal' Spice, only available to a select few, the King among them. What exactly the royal spice did was a matter of rumour and myth, the current king hoarded it to a degree which few kings had been able to.

Young as he was, Bran had strange feelings about his own destiny. He'd always had odd dreams and loved strange stories, but something about the recent events... they just gave him a chill he couldn't explain.

And the ravens...he always saw ravens, notably one with three eyes...

What did it mean?

The sound of the ship taking off caught his attention again, and he watched in awe as it took of into the black, starry abyss.

For the first time since he was a child, Bran began to pray for his father to return home.

While Ned and his valiant crew zoomed off to a Xenomorph infested ship.

It was all...intimidating to think about. The hostile aliens were all extremely dangerous for a variety of reasons, from love of battle, hope for good hunting, or just sheer animalistic rage.

It felt like there was danger around every corner, and that things like the Xenomorphs, Orks, Tyranids and Yatjua would never lose their focus; while sentient peoples would only get lost in their little squabbles.

Spice and all its variants allowed the development of space travel on an interstellar scale, before the Long Night. Maybe it would be civilization's downfall.

Hard to say nowadays. For now, things seemed to be mostly quiet in the stars...

...But for how long?
Space was quiet, but it was not peaceful. Lord Ned always hated Space travel. It was one thing to climb on a cruiser with his family, it was another to jump into a rust bucket like this with just one wall between him and the cold of space.

His family were what drove him, and gave him the courage to overcome his fears. And to hide his fears for the sake of his men.

Clegane sat alone in a corner of the shuttle's loading bay, not worse but not any better than a Xenomorph.

Ruthless, violent, and terrible...no wonder K. Rool valued him.

Much of Gregor's history was cloudy. Born to the minor house Clegane, he grew fast and large, and with it his infamous temper. Rumor had it he even burned his younger brother's face over a minor incident. The temper issues were not helped by the constant headaches Gregor possessed.

In short, The Mountain was a dangerous man, who even went training in one of K.Rool's Death Worlds, Jumanji. Out of the 100-warrior unit he was part of, only he survived.

Even more worrying however was K. Rool's personal blade, Agent 47. His history was even murkier, with only a few scraps of information given to him by Rick Sanchez.

Supposedly he was custom made in a laboratory to be the perfect assassin. He first made his mark for a shadowy agency when he took out a veteran Yatjua hunter on Death World Subnautica.

At one point he ended up destroying the agency he worked for, but not before killing Van Pelt on Jumanji; then King K. Rool's favoured assassin. But K. Rool was not upset by that: If Van Pelt was killed by another assassin, then that assassin was simply better, and more worth having around. 47 was then allowed into K. Rool's inner circle as well...a place where only the best of the best were allowed.

Him and Relius were a lethal team, with the mad scientist helping the Hitman build new and creative ways to kill himself, or build more effective and innovative disguises. It had been 47 afterall who freed Relius from Death World Salusus Secundus, home of the ruthless Sardaukar. Imprisoned for various crimes, the mad, yet oddly clam and polite, scientist was busted out and given pardon...providing he gave service to the king.

But as bad as 47 could be, Pridak could be worse. The Military General of the entire royal army, the biomechinal being was a Barraki (an ancient term meaning 'warlord'), and was once considered to be someone 'handsome'...and with that came a lot of pride. Then a great accident happened, mutating him into the hideous, amphibious shark-like form people knew of today. Not to mention under his calm and practical demeanor was a vicious, bloodthirsty psychopath...

But enough ruminating now. The ship was coming into sight of their destination.

Over the loudspeakers, Rooster merrily announced their arrival. "Humans and aliens, this is your pilot speaking. Air Rooster is on rout to the derelict ship. Our ETA is thirty seconds, so prepare for pressurization and boarding. Please keep your arms and feet away from any Xenomorphs."

Rick cut in on Rooster's broadcast, "She looks-urp-like a Cornerian vessel; very good quality. I'm pulling up her ID and name now!"

Rick began to work on identifying. He may be a mercenary, true, but he did admire Lord Stark, in his own way. Guy stuck to his convictions, for better or worse.
True Ned wasn’t the highest paying employer Rick ever had. K. Rool, the fat bastard, could offer ten times as much.

However, Ned was the first guy that Rick felt was safe to leave Morty with. After the thing with King Jellybean on Gourmet World, that was more important than ever.

Rick smiled as the scanners came up, “it’s a guild ship we’re looking at!”

Ned sighed. "So even they have fallen victim to the scourge...prepare to board and exterminate."

Rick nodded as he moved the ship into position.

Time to kill some Xenos.

Ned turned to his men as the shuttle docked with the ship and the machinery clicked and clanked.

“This is a guild ship, the captain will have ripped it apart and rebuilt it a hundred times to customize it for each job. We set up a perimeter and heavy weapons in the cargo bay and we don’t sweep ahead until Rick gets schematics.”

Sylvanas joined Ned’s side and looked to Clegane. “Lord Stark was interested if you’d volunteer to take point, Ser Mountain.”

Cleagne stared at her, then strode forward. "I will scout ahead."

No use agreeing with him, Ned knew. Might as well let him do as he wishes. Besides, he would kill any Xenomorph he saw, which was the entire point.

The lights were completely destroyed in the loading bay. Laser security turrets had their power sources and targeting systems ripped apart.

Worst of all was that damp, mold smell in the air. All the hallmarks of Xenomorph activity. As a species they didn’t need technology. Any new problem was solved by impregnating new hosts and using their DNA to create new variants.

And they were quite lot of variants...but they all shared several things in common.

Dangerous, vicious, crafty, hard to kill...and nightmarish to the core.

And these were just one of the MANY savage species out there in the void of space.

Gregor stomped over the blood stained floor, holding his massive sword and equally massive handheld shotgun.

Everyone in the room had seen the variety of Xenomorphs. The Predalien only being one of the most famous.

In fighting on Lustria’s moon, Ned had seen Xeno-orks; psychotic bullet sponges with teeeh. On Ark, Sylvanas had purged the southern deserts of Dino-xenos. On New Vegas Rooster battled ghoulish Xenomorphs who could grow stronger and regenerate from radiation. Zeal’s fighters even had reports of Xeno-wyverns, which were practically the stuff of nightmares, to put it VERY lightly.

And on and on the list went.

Volibear began setting down automatic turrets normally used to take down medium tanks. Sylvanas fires an arrow into a wall which released a burst of green light. “Clear!” She shouted as the scanner
arrow sent data into her eyepiece.

There could be more than Xenomorphs on this ship. Xenomorph infestations often attracted Yatjua hunting parties, Tyranid gene stealers looking to one up them, Ork kommandos and more. It was like an infection that invited more infections. A disease that had to be cured before it escalated...and destroyed everything, even themselves...

Ned, his face grim with duty, marched forwards, ready to take on the monsters that would threaten his home, his people...his family.

Floating drones built by Rick flew in and started to weld shut the various air vents in the room. The handful of elite men he’s brought along were dug in.

The beach head was established. “Rick,” Ned demanded over the com link, “do you have the ships layout?”

"Let's see here..." Rick muttered as he uploaded the map to everyone about the area. "Yeah, a doozy here, but keep track of the map and you'll be fine...at least, in terms of knowing where you are, cant promise anything else."

“Your map is an incomprehensible pile of shit!” Shouted Rooster as he exited the shuttle, “Did you draw this in MS Paint?”

“Shut it, broke back!” Rick snapped, “if Sylvanas can read it so can you!”

“What about crew numbers?” Ned asked

"Hmmm, hard to say..." Rick admitted. "Don't see anyone else on here right now...though I AM picking up hostiles," Rick read over the ship manifests. “Captain never kept track of crew numbers. But you’re looking at a hundred guaranteed hostiles. None of them moving. Closer to the ships engines, hive resin blocks the scans. They're building better hives."

Rooster scoffed. "Well, I for one will NOT be an incubator," He cocked his gun. "Let's kill some fuckers."

“They’re using heat and light from the engines to drive chenosynthesis; feed their queen and give her energy to make eggs, if they’ve gotten that far,” Ned observed. “Rooster, Volibear, I don’t want to fight them in the hive just yet. Make some noise once you find a good narrow corridor to funnel them in.”

Both of the banner men nodded, knowing it would the best course of action. When fighting swans of any enemy, a good strategy was to funnel them into a narrow path, to make them easier targets, and to prevent getting surrounded.

That was where Ricks drones came in. Xenomorphs were highly flexible; their exoskeleton resembling chain mail in many places. The result was they could fit anywhere they could get their head through.

The two men moved forward, with Clegane naturally moving to where fighting would be fiercest

The Clegane's family sigil was that of hounds...fitting due his fearsome, battle-ready nature. Like the hound of his family crest, Clegane was ready to kill all the time. Those three dogs had been killed bringing down a deadly predator on Death World Norsca. Gregor would suffer no such fate.

Already, he could hear the scurrying about of the aliens...
In fact...

He thrust his sword through a sealed door and was rewarded with a screech. This was a cramped corridor with no back entrance, so Lord Stark would have his noise.

He pulled his blade back and opened the door, stepping back with satisfaction as the course of Xenomorph feel through, the acidic blood hissing against the floor.

One down, many more to go...and the commotion he heard told him they were coming.

While Clegane exalted in the kill, Volibear and Rooster prepared for the onslaught. “I'll take the heavy units,” the ursine growled, firing up his flamethrower.

Rooster held up his pistols, “I'll keep the face huggers off you.”

It went to hell when an ork Xenomorph crashed through a wall and knocked over Gregor like a bowling pin. The hideous creatures screeched in fury, moments before it was consumed by fire to prevent it from sporing. More traditional 'human' xenomorphs came following, but Gregor and Rooster wasted no times.

Rooster focused on shooting the face huggers, little things with a long tail and body like grasping hands. Alien queens produced thousands of these things per hour. More if the colony tapped into a silicon ore vein to farm.

They were the ones to impregnate living beings with a chest burster. They were fast and the slime on their bodies hid them from all but the most accurate scanners. Just another example of Xenomorph evolution.

And once on, they were impossible to remove, until they fell off...which they did once the egg was inside, which would soon hatch and burst painfully from the chest of the victim, and rapidly grow to adult size.

So they had to be taken out fast.

In the case of regenerating creatures like Space Marines or Orks, a host could survive chest bursting and serve as a multi use incubator. A fate Rooster would wish on very few. Speaking of which...

Clegane shoved his shotgun into the mouth of a xenomorph. He scowled under his helmet as he pulled the trigger. Behind him, he hardly felt the heat of Volibear's flamethrower through his armor. Under his feet, burned Xenomorph bodies crackled like kindling. The fire consumed all...all except him, with his specialized amour, covering him head to toe. It would take tremendous force to even pierce it.

Another Xenomorph charged in. This one had six legs, it was smaller than the ones born from humans. A hormigaunt-xeno, born from a face hugger impregnating a Tyranid.

The Tyranid-morph used its superior agility to run along the walls and land on Gregor's back. There it opened its mouth and fired the proboscis characteristic of all Xenomorphs.

Gregor's eyes widened as he realized the thing had just hit the latch connecting his helmet to the rest of his suit. He was enraged. He reached back and seized the alien, yanking it off before it could try any real damage. He then, will all his might, smashed the creatures against a wall, splattering it. His armor deflected the acid.
Gregor cursed as he holstered his shotgun, using his armoured gauntlet to get the latch back into place. The thing was supposed to be idiot proof, battle proof. For the xenomorph to open it like that, it would have to hit the mechanism with a specific amount of force; down to the thousandths of kilograms per area.

His helmet was on, but his suit's HUD told him the vacuum seal was broken. Just great.

He took out his anger with his sword, slicing one Xenomorph from crotch to head.

He would have a 'word' with the last foolish mechanic who worked on his suit...yes.

Rooster reloaded is revolver, shoving speed loaders as fast as he could. Next to him, Volibear turned over his flame thrower and ejected the empty fuel tank. As the fires stopped, so did the Xenomorph tides.

Through the smoke and smell of charred flesh and burning acid, Rooster winced; grateful for the energy air filter Rick had installed into his and Volibear's suits. Even the fumes from Xenomorph blood could cause painful death.

Then a pair of black, clawed hands thrust through the floor and dragged Gregor through it. A single word came to Rooster's mouth, "Praetorian."

Functioning as guards to the Queen and the hive, these Xenomorphs were exceptionally powerful and skilled, rearing someone of great power to take one on.

Fortunately, Ned and all those with him were such people.

Rooster reached for the specialty ammo on his belt, a nice set of explosive, armour piercing, incendiary rounds. He'd have to shoot through the joints of the Praetorian; he'd seen the frontal armour on their head crests resist missile strikes.

"There is a queen here," Volibear and Rooster spun around to see Ned Stark in power armour, holding a Valaryan void axe. "Take down the Praetorian and let us charge into the hive."

The couldn't say a word before Lord Stark jumped down after Gregor and the Praetorian.

Lord Stark...a man who led by example. Hard not to follow a man like that.

As such, he was soon followed by his men, into the dark...where dangers awaited.

One thing Ned truly believed was that the galaxy would not be inherited by the cruel. They might win short term gains, but those who watched their brothers and sisters backs would be the ones to take the day.

On the comms, Rick updated them. "Okay guys, you got a long service tunnel full of possible ambush spots; it's the shortest and shittiest way to the Queen's chamber," His voice faltered, filling for once with concern, "Uh, Ned, don't die. Catelyn will kick my ass if you do."

Ned could not help but crack a small smile at that. "Do my best."

Head down the cramped tunnels, Stark and the others were prepared for anything, as those monsters could pop out without a moment's notice.

Always be aware in the galaxy, or one would be dead.

Rooster stepped forward and grabbed something off the ground, Clegane's helmet. "He's alive," he
inferred. "They're going to want him as a host."

"It's no less than he deserves," uttered Volibear darkly.

Ned looked at his two men, "And deal with a Space Marine Xenomorph hybrid?"

Volibear nodded. "True...best leave his death to something that won't leave anything behind."

A crashing sound caught their attention.

"And he ain't going down without a fight." Rooster noted.

Ned pressed a button on his armour's gauntlet, three glowing orbs floated out of a hidden pannel; providing lighting in the darkened, cramped corridor littered with broken machinery and holes chewed in the floor.

"They've been moving spice containers, "Volibear pointed out.

Indeed canisters of spice covered in slime and resin littered the floor, from the look of it they'd been dropped when Ned and his crew attacked the ship.

Rooster frowned. "The hell would they want spice for? They got no use for it? They only want to spread and evolve, not get high!"

Ned paused, thinking. Why WOULD they want the spice?

Xenomorphs were a silicon based lifeform. They harvested silicon from planet's crusts to build their hives and fuel to make eggs; but they reproduced through and fed on carbon based life. Their DNA was highly rigid and durable, they needed carbon-based life to copy, to change and evolve.

Were they now using the spice to change themselves? To guide their own evolution? The thought filled Ned with dread. "Rick, get some drones to pick up these containers of spice; analyze it as best you can."

"Drones on the way, boss!" Rick replied as the group moved forward.

As the drone moved out for their task, Ned and his team followed the sounds of battle. It was always easy to find Gregor like this.

And sure enough, upon reaching their destination...

The Praetorian had torn off one of Gregors arms, it’s teeth were stained red from it. Gregor fought back like a rabid dog, slashing at it with his massive sword and cutting off part of its tail.

Suddenly the Praetorian lunged and pinned Clegane to the ground. A face hugger was crawling closer to the mad Space Marine.

Gregor snarled with animistic fury, never willing to give up until the bitter end. The face hugger readied to jump and latch...

...and was promptly shot dead by Rooster.

The loss of his arm was a minor thing. The wound to his pride would take longer to heal. Under 47’s orders he couldn’t kill them now, but his day would come.

Lord Stark swung his axe and hamstring the monster, right behind the Sylvanas readied an arrow and
fired it right down the Praetorians throat.

The creature, wounded, staggered back, as Volibear tore through the ranks with his own weapons. The nest began to fall apart around them quickly.

Sylvanas notched a special arrow, a nuke arrow. Let loose, it slammed into a wall and burned a man sized hole right through it. Right into the queens chambers. Another nuke arrow from Sylvanas tore a hole in the Praetorians head.

As the corpse fell to the ground, a dark hiss could be heard.

The Queen was alert...and angry.

An Xenomorph Queen was a extremely dangerous and deadly creatures. Possessing extreme brute power and immense size, it was not to be trifled with casually.

The Queen was big, uglier than the Praetorian; able to live thousands of years if they didn’t meet a violent end.

Filling the room was her egg sac, a vast translucent wet thing. Connected to the egg sac were thin tentacles that were burrowed into piles of spice

A nasty sight for all that looked upon it.

"Hey there, Ugly." Rooster causally spoke up.

The Queen simply snarled, ready for battle.

The Queen swung her tail around, crumpling Gregor ‘s breastplate like tin. The man roared in pain and hacked at the tail.

Volibear unleashed his flamethrower, scorching the egg sac, making the queen scream in pain

The Queen, seeing the eggs may be lost, decided to make these fools pay...directly. With that in mind, she detached herself from the sac and engaged them directly.

Her speed was impressive, sprinting she could outrun a cheetah and keep pace with most military ground vehicles.

So Ned did the obvious thing and jumped in front of her. He turned his power armor into overdrive and swung his axe

It all happened so fast it was hard to really grasp it. Ned swung hard and true, inflicting a damaging wound upon the Queen, and moving out of the way of the blood flow.

His axe struck behind her massive head crest, between the plates on her neck. His suits schematics all came up red.

Nothing was more dangerous than a wounded animal, so he swung his axe again and cut off her proboscus

Indeed, the Queen, despite the damage, was not quite done just yet. Blind with pain and rage, she swatted Ned aside. The armor kept him alive and mostly intact, but the blow still HURT.

Sylvanas took her chance, though, to use her arrows on the wounded beast.
This arrow was special, made just for the queen. It was acid proof, adamantine tipped and designed to deliver compressed water into her bloodstream.

The alien blood reacted explosively with the water, exploding the queen’s head like a melon at a shooting range.

The body of the beast staggered a bit, before collapsing into an ugly heap, allowing everyone to catch their breaths.

The voice of Rich Sanchez broke the peace over the coms. “Ned what the fuck? Your armor is fucked! Power supply is fried, circuits are burned out. Don’t get me started about the nanomachine population!”

Ned laughed, “I only took on an alien queen by myself, thanks for asking.”

"...Oh I see. Er, well, good job." Rick barely managed to hide his relief and impressed feeling with his usual taciturn nature. Typical of him.

Rooster signed as he reloaded his guns, "Nice kill, boss. We got her before she could start laying eggs."

"With any luck, the ship can be rebuilt and retrofitted for use in your navy, Lord Stark, " Sylvanas congratulated.

Ned simply nodded, tired from just all that. Right now, he’d need to clean up a bit before heading home to his wife and children...and to make sure Gregor got his arm regenerated.

A medical robot could see to Gregors needs. All he needed was to get that arm stapled on and he’d be in fighting form in a day. Besides, Ned didn’t trust The Mountain that Rides with the lives of his medical staff.

“Get on the line,” Ned ordered, “have the ship towed into orbit and get repair crews on the ready “

The orders were soon carried out, along with requests of the corpses to be moved out. No one wanted those around for long.

The ship's crew were dead to the last, the Captain nowhere to be found. The engines and the external weapons were functional, though large portions of the vessel had lost atmosphere due to xenomorph burning through the hull.

The space born threat was dealt with, which meant that it was now up to Robb and Jon to purge them on the planet.

...How were they doing, some had to wonder.

--

How they were doing was cold. Even with internally heated power armour, the whipping winds of the arctic regions were brutal. Robb cradled his father's sword in his hands, for the entirety of the trip he'd been reciting old lessons; everything from Old Nan's fairytales to advanced modern tactics and strategic ground warfare.

"We've coming up on the wall!" the Pilot announced over the intercom.

Gelu paid no need, merely paying attention to his arrows. He trusted them, yes, but when it came to real battle, he could always rely on his trusty icy blade, to hack down those in his way.
He remembered the days when he regularly fought the Skavens...

Funny thing about the Skaven, they weren't particularly frightening individually. But they were ruthless and adaptable. They were also highly technologically advanced; using their mad science to make up for poor troop morale and weak individual units. It was the insane technology combined with dark magic which kept them competitive in a galaxy of horrors.

But enough about that. They were approaching their destination...and they had to be prepared of anything that might be there.

Gelu could see the Wall on the view screen. It still managed to stir even his cold heart. Built thousands of years ago, stretching for over forty-five thousand kilometers; it stretched five kilometers high and was as solid as the day it was built.

Mostly people took it for granted, only believing it good to block the electromagnetic storms from the planet's frozen north.

And yet, he knew better, it was blocking...something else...something unknown.

And soon, they would be landing at their destination of it, to find out who was behind the current mess.

The Wall would keep the Xenomorphs in for now; such was the technological wizardry behind it, ancient technology from before the long night.

the shuttle's engines fought against the strong winds as it settled on the landing pad. Ready for action, Rob, Jon, Gelu and the men exited to storm the village of Barrow; the epicenter of the transmission.

Quickly, they noticed how...quiet it was, more so than usual of the sleepy, cold town. Everyone was quickly alert, for anything that might happen in the cold.

"This was a village of about a hundred people," Gelu supplied, readying his advanced war bow, "The only place with a transmitter strong enough to reach Winterfell station is the meteorological outpost at the center of town."

"Does it have an extensive basement structure?" Robb asked.

Gelu nodded grimly, "Definitely."

"Underground..." Robb muttered.

"Skavens?" Jon asked.

Gelu grimaced. "Quite possibly, but we won't know until we descend..." They entered a nearby tavern, only to find it empty. Usually there was someone here, at least a worker, but now...nothing.

"This area is built on relatively soft limestone under the permafrost," Jon read off the data on his overhead display. "If they're here, they'll have an easy time tunnelling."

"Not to mention they're one of the few races reckless enough to experiment with Xenomorphs," Gelu uttered.

Brushing back some loose boards he saw, Robb noticed a tunnel leading downwards into the depths of the earth.

"Their work, all right," He muttered to himself.
"You boys still have that atomic bomb with you?" Gelu asked, peeking down the seemingly bottomless hole. "If the Skaven have established a base and possess captive Xenomorphs, the logical course of action is to detonate it at the heart of the warren."

"Sounds like a suicide mission," Jon observed.

"Only if you're not quick," Gelu retorted.

Jon let out a deep sigh. It was risky, but as it turns out, no longer any worry for civilian casualties...as they were already dead.

Bits of skin covered the walls of the tunnel, human skin. Skaven viewed other species as livestock, so eating the locals was cheaper than importing food from off world in their beady eyes.

Robb and Jon nearly gagged from the smell, which only grew stronger as they descended, eventually finding themselves in a large cavern littered with human and animal bones.

And up ahead, they heard the chittering of the rat people. Already there were armed, ready to engage the filthy vermin.

They had to be on guard though. Who knew what else they would encounter?

These were Clan rats, it would be a mistake to engage them. They were poorly armed and trained, carrying nothing but rusty pistols and knives if they were lucky. They weren't the main threat, not like Storm Vermin, the terrifying Robots of Clan Skryer or monsters of Clan Moulder.

The Clan rats could be evaded as they fought over scraps of lord knows what.

Down another tunnel could be heard the sound of machinery, heavy stuff by the noise; that was where the team would go.

The plan was simple. Infiltrate the middle of the settlement they had, plant and arm the bomb, and run. Hopefully they did not have the ability to properly disarm it.

A Storm Vermin in heavy power armor and with a powerful plasma rifle guarded the entrance to the machine shop. An arrow to the eye took it out without a problem. The Vermin standing next to it spun around but had its head cut off by Robb's sword before it could raise alarm.

They entered further, as Jon worked at a crude Skaven terminal; plugging in his wrist computer he began to loop camera footage so the Skaven overseers wouldn't see them coming.

But they would catch on that SOMETHING was up eventually, so haste was needed. The team kept moving, on guard for anything Skaven that might be around the corner..

Power cables led them; Skaven machinery was notoriously power intensive, requiring large amounts of radioactive metal infused with dark magic to run. Cutting the power at the edge of the facility would shift guards while Jon and Robb planted the bomb.

Reluctantly, Gelu left the boys as he did not trust any of his men to do this evasive job.

Rob and Jon didn't have to wait long before the sound of Skaven Tek priests chittering turned furious.

And they heard voices as well.

"Intruders, I smell!"
"BAH! No one foolish to come down here! This town unimportant anyways! Makes good hiding place!"

That was always the main weakness of the Skaven, their blind overconfidence. They could already hear one of the higher ups berating his subordinate, "Send-Send Stormvermin! Yes-yes! Stupid Clan rats chew-chew wires again!"

Blame the Skaven for insulating their wires in something their species found tasty.

The sound of armored boots told Jon and Robb that Gelu had cut the power and that they could proceed.

They two half-brothers moved forward, taking out the occasional sentry here and there. No time to hide the bodies though. Just kill them to avoid them alerting others.

Soon, they found a good place and place the charge under a rock to keep it hidden from plain sight.

The cave was a sight to behold, and by sight that meant a horror. In a vast Cauldron, human heads, organs and limbs floated in a red, viscous substance. A Xenomorph Queen in chains shrieked before a sadistic Skaven researcher electrocuted her. Wires and probes stuck to her egg sac as an inhibition field held her egg laying in check, for now.

By a control panel, a captive Yautja in a stasis capsule was starting to stir. And over by what looked like Dr. Frankenstein's lab, Skaven slaves were trying to handle face huggers safely. Those who didn't were shot down by their Stormvermin overseers.

About the area, Hell-Pit Abominations lurched about the area, their hideous forms seeking out enemies. Various test tubes held Salmonid poison to study as biological weapons.

All these depraved acts, with all unaware they were about to meet an explosive end.

The Hellpit Abominations were tough, able to handle as much firepower as a tank of comparable size; but they weren't very smart. Skaven were afraid that Artificial Intelligence would turn against them so they mostly relied on bio-organic brains to meet their needs; which more often than not ended up eating their masters.

Robb saw his chance as a floating truck full of pink paste and food byproduct began to float over the lab to a dispenser. Mother's milk to Skaven. He aimed his rocket launcher and showered the testing area in pink gore.

The Hellpit Abominations roared with hunger, suddenly not able to tell their masters from food.

Chaos spread as the Skaven tried to reign control over the beasts, screeching with panic and rage. Jon took the time to arm the bomb, and used the distraction to flee with Robb.

Stormvermin unloaded their plasma rifles on the hellish monster, which was actually twenty or thirty different abominations stitched together in one awful package.

Fortunately their weapons fire provided cover for Jon, who ran behind one of the main portable reactors and began to prime the bomb.

Unfortunately the weapons fire unleashed the wakening Yautja and the Alien Queen. Robb swore.

The two seriously angry creatures, though, were more focused on their tormenters than the fleeing brothers, and immediately attacked the Skaven. The Queen took priority over the ones torturing her,
ripping them limb from limb.

The Yautja first made its business with the head Skaven researcher, a rat man that was more machine than Vermin. The creature squeaked hisses and insults in its harsh language at the Dreadlock wearing alien.

Yautja used Skaven to train their children, sending their young against hordes of Clan rats armed with just bladed weapons. This Tek Priest wasn't even worth the hunter's time.

The Yautja grabbed one of the Skaven's mechanical arms and ripped it out of the socket with a spray of blood and oil. Then, contemptuously, it caved the rat man's head in with his own arm.

A warrior came running at the hunter next, but it too, was seen as nothing to the mighty Predator, who simply reached out, grabbed the head, and tore it clean off.

Meanwhile, the Xenomorph Queen attacked the Hellpit Abomination. The two creatures writhed like angry snakes when the Queen emerged on top. Her claws and extra pair of arms held the struggling monster still as her proboscus punched a hole into the beast's brain.

Actually one of several brains; the Queen destroyed its major brain, paralyzing but not killing it. This way it could serve as a host for a face hugger later from one of its dozen mouths and produce a Xenomorph abomination.

Little did anyone know she would not get the chance...the countdown kept going and going, tiny beeps signifying the approaching blast.

Robb, Jon, Gelu, and all the others rushed back up the tunnel, knowing time was short. Bursting from the tavern, they rushed to their vehicle.

The Yautja in his dark mask scanned Rob, Jon and Gelu fleeing the scene. It took snapshots of each man as best it could with its tech-mask. Realizing the chaos around it, the Predator saw Skaven flood the chamber in numbers even it could not hope to defeat, the alien queen was fighting like a cornered animal and it knew enough about humans to know what the nuke's timer meant.

On a work table was its wrist device, still intact. Placing it on, the Yautja was cloaked in light bending technology. It would thank the Stark boys in its own way, in the future. For now it had to follow their example.

Unseen now, it quickly fled, and it was not long before it was out of blast range.

"Let's go!" Robb ordered, and without further ado the vehicle took off, and soon was out of range...

The bomb's timer began to dip down...5...4...3...2...1...

The explosion could be seen from the Wall. The town was evaporated and earthquakes were triggered for miles as underground tunnel systems collapsed from the concussive force. Gelu got a little bit off since his unique DNA divided at less than half the rate the humans did; making him less vulnerable to radiation. Robb and Jon however would have to take a freezing shower at the wall to get rid of any radioactive fallout on them.

The watershed was poisoned with radioactivity as well and would require much environmental cleanup. Of xenomorphs and Skaven, however, there was not a trace.

Gelu sighed, his biomechanical body tired out from this harrowing ordeal. "Well, that's that."
The two brothers nodded as Jon spoke up. "Take us to base."

And so the vehicle flew off, as the smoldering remains of the settlement emitted smoke high into the air. Such was the reminder that life in the galaxy, no matter your rank, was dangerous and perilous.

Such was life.
Royal Schemes

All the Noble Houses of the Galaxy possessed massive space stations that served as their homes and main base of operations.

But none were as grand as the Royal Space Station, the Imperial City. A truly massive station, it was designed with different architectural styles, and contained numerous sections, from libraries to barracks to labs to dining halls to pleasure rooms to even massive arenas for bloodsport.

Imperial City, once upon a time, had been a simple refueling station built in the aftermath of the Long Night. Then it had been a safe port for the first few traders and explorers trying to move into the newly empty space lanes.

Then a few thousand years ago the Valaryans invested in it as a military outpost and sector governor's residence. That ended with the Great Doom.

That wasn't the end of Imperial City, strategically placed by all the richest trading lanes and orbiting a cluster of planets with high spice resources; several dynasties spent blood and treasure turning it into the grand city it is today.

And now, it was the head of the Galaxy, and the personal lair of the High King himself, King K. Rool. Also occupying it were his inner circle, his legions of Kremlings, Zingers, Neckys, Gnawtys, and the dreaded Space Marines, as well as various servants.

As for the crocodile himself...

"Is there any reason in particular that the East Pool hall has been painted yellow?" asked the obese crocodile with barely concealed anger. "Is there any good reason my favorite pool room is now blinding yellow from walls to ceiling?"

Reilius Clover had an answer, "An unfortunate side effect of an experiment with nonotechnology, my lord. Painters will restore the room by day's end."

"Well, hot dawg," chuckled a dice headed humanoid, "Looks like someone isn't as smart as they think they are."

Relius ignored him as he spoke to the King. "As I said, sometimes scientific progress has its...complications. You have my most sincerest apologies."

K. Rool nodded. "Hmm, well, never mind. Right now we have more important matters to attend to. Zeal and Koopa should be arriving any moment soon."

Relius bowed, "Lord, you'll be happy to know that Dr. Strange has arrived to oversee security for Queen Zeal, and that she will be arriving in the hour on her cruiser."

King Dice cut in, eager for his king's favour, "Meanwhile, Sombra is likewise overseeing security for Koopa while Bowser Junior enjoys the gambling facilities in the gold level."

K. Rool nodded, a smile returning to him. "Good, good. Have them all meet me in my throne room once all are here, and make sure the others of our circle are gathered as well. Please bring refreshments and canape. My followers have invested in me, trusted in me and it is only fair that they see the fruits of their investment," K. Rool rewarded his followers, though he never truly trusted them.
King Dice smirked, "I'll see to it that everyone is comfortable and off their guard."

K. Rool chuckled. "Now, now, we're not killing them. They are highly valuable allies. Especially with the coming events."

"Indeed."

Another member of K. Rool's circle, Krux, came striding from a corridor. The Beastmaster, the masked, cloaked figure was responsible for the use of the various mighty beasts under royal command...and he took his job seriously and coldly. "When they arrive, I would like to personally thank Queen Zeal for the live capture of a Xenomorph Wyvern. To say nothing of her extraction of Salmonid research and splicing from the Skaven Clan Molder," the robed beast master uttered evenly.

"Quite the fine piece to your collection," the King chuckled. "Had any luck in controlling the monster yet?"

"Slowly, but yes," Krux confirmed. "Still mauls some of the Gnawty's servants, but the beast seems to respond to me in some sense."

"Good," K. Rool smirked. "Take the time you need...we have it."

The gathering was interrupted by a man in a cape, with a fancy mustache teleporting into the room. Dr. Stephen Strange took a knee and knelt before the king. "Your majesty, your security lives up to its reputation. As of now, Queen Zeal is docking at a minor shipping port on the station."

K. Rool nodded as he turned to Dice. "See to it that the Koopas are informed, and have them escorted to our meeting location."

"At once, sire," Dice saluted, before leaving to do his job. "I'll tell Koopa Junior that the poker girls are going on break," he grinned, "That should pull him away from gambling for a hot minute."

"Hola Hermanas!" shouted the distinct woman in lavender, "Don't start the party without Sombra and her sexy lord Koopa! He's docking now!" Eccentric as always, Sombra always knew how to draw attention...which belied her almost godlike skin as a hacker. Clearly Bowser knew how to pick them. Sombra was a far cry from the taciturn Hitman or the nearly animalistic Celgane, but she got the job done. And she could be stealthy when she wanted to be.

"Bow, you shits!" Cried a blue haired woman in robes, "Queen Zeal is here!"

Obviously Queen Zeal had been having a shitty day, so K. Rool was willing to cut her some slack to keep her exemplary magic skills on his side. "Ah, the matriarch of House Zeal, Matriarch of Antiquity and my favorite spell caster."

The Queen smirked, "At least someone knows how to treat a lady, my lord."

Queen Zeal, an expert sorceress, was known by many to be an arrogant and haughty woman, and one few wished to cross. She controlled much of the magical guild in the galaxy, and would not share secrets easily.

Behind her, her two children followed, Schala and Janus.

Schala, in stark contrast to her mother, was gentle, kind, and demure young woman, always hoping to help those in need. Beautiful and lovely, she was beloved by many.

Her younger brother Janus, though, was an odd one. Intelligent for his age, he was also quite cold and aloof for a young kid.
It was K. Rool's sincere hope to use the power of magic as a trump card against the Tyranid hordes and the heavily armored but unintelligent Orks. If push came to shove, he hoped that the Queen's children could be loyal and steadfast allies to him, turning their magical talents against the enemies of the crown and being rewarded for it as part of the new fascist order.

More than that, Simon and Dr. Strange were deathly loyal to the Zeal heirs. Well, Simon always hid it thanks to the fact for the most part he was a HUGE jerk, but still, he had some scruples, and loyalty to the children was one of them.

House Zeal had the talent with magic, House Koopa had the ruthlessness and the industrial output to make K. Rool's dreams a reality. And speaking of which, here they were now.

"What did I tell you about gambling? It's all rigged!" Bowser shouted at his son, Bowser Junior.

"I was winning, I was hot, I could feel it!" his son protested.

"Enough of that!" Bowser snapped, "Bow to your king!"

All the family members bowed to the Supreme King, who simply smiled. "Now, now, let's not be all formal. We're all friends here."

K. Rool, when needed, could turn up a polite facade to easier communicate with people...and mess with them.

--

Serving robots came in bearing drinks and food, tailored specifically in the kitchens to the personal tastes of each guest, right down to Sombra's choice of tomales in banana leaves. There were also Space Marines standing guard by the doors outside in case anything went wrong. Those Marines were less insane and bloodthirsty than Gregor Clegane; which wasn't saying much.

All were now in the throne room, feating at a table, ready to discuss events...and upcoming plans.

"So, I take it you all are doing well?" K. Rool asked smoothly, letting his meat dish savor on his tongue.

"The Damn Yautja keep raiding my ammo depots, but the weapons factories are online," Bowser reported, "More than that, we're turning out shipboard plasma cannons with gyroscopic subspace sights and targeting systems."

"And we're building more defense stations and space mine fields than old Valarya!" Bowser Jr. proudly announced.

"Not to mention," Bowser went on. "That Pandora is proving to be a prime place for recruitment. Sure, a lot of those convicts are insane, but damn, do they know how to use weapons!"

"And how is Zebes going for you?" Relius asked.

Bowser shrugged, "It's a shit-hole. It's full of death, radiation, hungry Metroids and worse. It's the perfect place to raise an army. More than that, the underground Brinstar, are the perfect place to build fortresses. As it stands those forts we've build underground could last a ten year siege and an orbit bombardment for twice as long."

"And we've got a new shipment of captured Metroids for you, Mr. Mad Scientist," Bowser Jr. said to Relius.

"Interesting..." Relius gave a slight smile. The Metroids...ancient bioweapons from a civilization...
lost...this is always useful.

"And you, Zeal?" K. Rool turned to the blue-haired woman. "Things going well."

Zeal smirked. "Wyveria has been proving profitable. Not just a good place for minerals and plants, the wildlife there makes it superb training grounds for hunters. It helps that the large amount of human sacrifice and satanic cults in the prison system are generating massive amounts of magic energy," The Queen seemed giddy about the revelation. "The planet is a den of violence, the darkness and anger of the environment taints the living things there, which makes them act out and perpetuate the death and violence."

"I've been able to raise armies of zombies capable of complex tactics and marksmanship," her son supplied in an aloof tone.

Schala fought the urge to be sick, and spoke up. "In addition, the various monsters there are resources onto themselves, their body parts successful for crafting weapons and armor."

"Ah, yes." Zeal smiled. "And the best comes from the Elder Dragons."

'Elder Dragon' was a taxonomy on Wyveria, given to creatures of overwhelming power, to the extent they were called living natural disasters. Only the best could face them, and could be even be seen as a qualifying test to join the Queen's elite fighters...assuming they survived.

"More than that," the queen announced gleefully. "the purple spice is helping us incubate elder dragon eggs without the presence of the mother. It’s a new age in breeding war beasts!"

Zeal’s daughter winced, the majestic greater dragons reduced to steeds in the future. Even more worrisome was the fact they they could be used as war beasts: A single Elder Dragon had enough power to take down a well armed legion of soldiers, and could even kill a Space Marine.

That was why K. Rool was courting Zeal and her House. Besides her appetite for cruelty and violence, her dragons, once fully mature, could give his armies the kind of numbers he needed to hold territory, not just conquer it. A sky full of dragons was a potent symbol of dominance.

"And what of the Yautja on Wyvernia?" the King inquired.

Queen Zeal's expression turned dark.

"Like moths to a flame," She stated bluntly. "They see it as the ultimate ‘game reserve’, hunting both soldiers and beast alike. At least they don’t harass the convoys as they go from settlement to settlement."

"Well, there’s that." K. Rool nodded. "And what of Mira?"

"Well," Schala began. "We managed to develop a large settlement there, and the resources regenerate rapidly...but the wildlife still proves to be highly dangerous."

Indeed, Mira was a planet noted for five large and diverse continents, each full of different beasts and hazards. From pack hunters to mammoth rampagers to high cliffs to volcanoes.

"The alien coalition, the Ganglion. were a problem at first, but now they give us a chance to test out our penal legions," Queen Zeal elaborated. "Convicts are given grenades and knives and ordered to charge Ganglion front lines. Those who survive are given a gun and a less suicidal mission. Those who survive enough missions have the chance to join my house's elite armies. Those who refuse to fight are executed."
"New Los Angeles is the main capital," Dr. Strange elaborated after his queen. "Thus far the City's industrial output is on the rise, as is the production of farmland in the fertile regions."

“Good, Good.” K. Rool nodded. “Glad to hear you are all doing so well.” He pressed a button nearby, allowing a holographic map of the galaxy to appear. Using a remote, he began to zoom in on his sector, then zoomed in on an arid planet.

“This is not a Death World, as it is rather standard. Ah, but it was a prime location to develop the Black Mesa Research Facility.” He looked as his comrades. “You all remember was it is?”

Bowser nodded, knowing more than he let on. "A physics research facility, at least to the public. There was supposed to be heavy weapons and biological weapons research there,"

"A real Area 51 type place," Bowser Jr. quipped.

“Yes, the researchers actually live there as well.” K. Rool went on. “Always researching, but they have places of leisure as well.”

“Gotta get our gambling in!” King Dice sang like he was doing a paid advertisement. “Scientists need a bit of blackjack and roulette to unwind; especially when they’re fusing actual demons with war machines “

“Gambling?” Schala questioned.

“Ah, yes, the entertainment of the ages!” Dice grinned. “Why, we even have a planet that is one giant casino! Just like New Vegas!” King Dice became nostalgic. “Nothing but wasteland, then we sunk a fortune into a new casino; bigger and swankier than anywhere else,” He growled, “Could have fortune without any rules or laws governing what people could bet on. Then Duke Nukem and his barbarian friends blew it all up. They didn’t like the gladiator rings, too rich for their blood.”

“Our loss,” Bowser stated, smirking. “Always enjoy pit fights...especially when Riptor decided to fight in them.” He was, of course, referring to the only female member of K. Rool’s circle.

Riptor, proof that often the female of the species is the more lethal. A mix of human and saurian DNA, she combined human intellect with raptor ferocity. K Rool bought her at great expense from a shady corporation who raked in big bucks on an illegal fighting tournament they sponsored every year. Serving as a brutal enforcer and fighter, she followed K. Rool without question. She earned her place.

K. Rool smiled as he zoomed in on another planet. “Death world Stygia,” he proudly announced, “Former vacation world, amazingly. That changed when a slave revolt shut down the planetary radiation shields.” The screen depicted a tropical world with ruined hotels and beaches. “Now it’s run amok with cannibal prison gangs, drug runners and regeneration mutants. And don’t forget the man eating plants and deadly lightning storms “

"Always amazing how fast things fall apart," Sombra quipped, eyes rolling in amusement.

K. Rool laughed, “When the resort corporation declared bankruptcy, I bought the planet for a pittance. And the best part is the man eating plants can be processed to make dozens of narcotic drugs. To say nothing of the spice reserves found in the expansive cave network.”

Bowser could not help but laugh. "Reminds me of a time some yahoos tried to use Pandora plants to make herbal cigars. Died from massive internal bleeding, dumb bastards!"

"Oh, my," Zeal crooned. "Some people would do anything for a fix, even if it defies all common
"The addictive impulse is a powerful impulse in most thinking animals," Relius interjected clinically. "Most pleasure is irrational, but in the past, drugs, alcohol and entertainment helped secure empires as much as force of arms."

"Bread and circuses," laughed King Dice. "Vallaryan style!"

"Amen to that!" Bowser Jr. laughed, his grin wide as he spoke. "Even if it kills them all in the end."

K. Rool simply smiled and zoomed in on another Death World. This was a huge jungle. "Death World Jumanji," K. Rool said fondly, "Home of the Space Marines. And your generous contributions have greatly allowed the expansion of their ranks."

"Thank our increase of red spice," Sombra chuckled, "Jumanji is also a good place to send the craziest of the crazy."

"Oh, yes." K. Rool confirmed. "Dangers all about. Huge mosquitoes and spiders, vicious monkeys, savage lions, stampeding beasts, carnivorous flora...and those you can't even see..." He grinned like a wolf. "In the days before the Long Night, space was lawless." K. Rool exposted fondly, "back then deep space traders had something called jungle justice. If you committed a crime, you were thrown into the surface of Jumanji. If you died, it was the will of the gods."

"Then the gods must have been harsh back then." Janus snarked, a dark smile on his face.

"Exactly, my boy," K. Rool confirmed. "Few survived the infinite horrors of the jungle... and then there are some who thrive in the jungle," K. Rool went on. "The darkness feeds their rage, their rage feeds the darkness in an endless cycle. My own assassin Agent 47 survived for 9 months in the jungle with nothing but a handgun and one clip of ammunition. Killed my then current hit man, Van Pelt, but hey, that's progress for you," K. Rool shrugged.

"Indeed." Zeal noted. "And one must keep up with it at all times, or perish in the unforgiving galaxy."

"47 sabotaged Van Pelt’s ammunition," Relius clarifies. "He was a better sniper, but 47 exploited his preferred killing style."


"Cheating is the most efficient way to win," Relius conceded.

K Rool pulled up a new screen, "More than that, the rings around Jumanji are proving an ideal construction ground for a new shipyard."

"More ships?" Schala questioned.

"Why, yes, my dear," K. Rool confirmed. "We must always be ready for battle against the hostile, as well as more ships for trade. Speaking of ships..." He brought up another planet. "This Death World, Xen, has proven to be useful in ship resources. Tyranid bio-ships have the potential to outnumber our navy nearly thirty to one in an ideal situation. Yatjua blockade runners and stealth ships run circles around our fighter patrols," K. Rool elaborated. "The Guild is too decentralized to regulate or rely on. What Xen offers is a low gravity environment ideal for safe and cheap ship construction as well as an environment to train for zero g and ship to ship combat."

"Not to mention it is not so much of a planet than it is a colony of distinct asteroids," Relius added.
“True, true,” K. Rool nodded. “Allows is to specialize in certain part,” He brought up another planet. “LV 426, Home of history’s first recorded Xenomorph attack,” silence fell across the room.

The king went on, “An airless hellhole, full of thousands of kilometers of tunnel. What this world offers us more than anything is ancient technology. Every year prospectors lose their lives looking for Valaryian tech or pre long night machinery. Xenomorphs stalk the tunnels, and those who let their guard down lose their lives.” He smirked. “In comparison, my favorite Death World is paradise...or not.” He brought up Subnautica. “A water world, Home to an artificially created aquatic ecosystem.” The King demonstrates. “Aside from deadly plagues and gigantic carnivorous sea life, the world is rich with alien ruins. Known as the Precursors they developed biological weapons ages ago in their war against the Valaryans.”

“And now they’re gone,” Zeal stated.

“Indeed.” K. Rool confirmed. “Ah, but they left us a World of bounties and resources. We even managed to build research bases in select locations. But, of course, the dangers of dangerous fauna remains...as do the depths themselves.”

“The Sea Emperor in particular is a hindrance to fishing and mining operations.” Relius stated, “Thousands of years old, it has resisted every effort to kill it by nearly every off world visitor. Currently we are researching the possibility of transplanting the species to other water worlds.”

K. Rool nodded as he zoomed out back to the galaxy. “Indeed, all our worlds, Death, Service, Civilized, and more, all serve their purposes to our people...and now, things are about to change. As things stand, the Galaxy is poised for change of the catastrophic sort.” The King orated, “it’s tempting to only focus on one problem at a time or problems in our own back yard but that won’t be enough. As of now I am inviting you to all be part of the Inperium Galactica. A true, United Space nation with one language, one government and one law. Against us are the border Houses, like the Stark’s; clinging to their rat infested stations and ancient honor.”

“I’m in.” Bowser confirmed.

“As am I.” Zeal added. “But do tell me what is your plan with Lord Stark.”


Schala felt ill as she raised hands with her mother. The King was ruthless and his servants more than. But what choice did they have?

The feudal nature of the galaxy meant that pirates, plagues and invasions could go unchecked for years. The galaxy only united against Hive Fleet Gorgon when the old king threatened his space marines upon the noble houses.

Without unity the Hive Fleet had consumed more worlds and armies than it could have.

The kings’ plan was the only way forward, to a secure, safe galaxy for decent people

Then Bowser spoke up. “You wanna make Stark your hand? Why?” He looked very confused at this. K. Rool did not like the Starks, so why offer this?

“What does that have to do with anything?” asked K. Rool in a most sadistic voice

"Well, all types of known wolves do tend to hunt in packs, never alone," Bowser Jr. stated. "But what does that have to do with anything?"
"Everything." K. Rool chuckled. "Together the pack thrives...alone, they are easy pickings."

"Desert wolves on New Vegas can bring down death claws," Relius explained. "On Jumanji, wolves fear old lion prides. The preferred method is Ariel hunting. In a more literal sense, this position would isolate Ned Stark from his best advisors and bodyguards. Not to mention throw his family into turmoil before his son Robb can finish his training."

"Robb Stark." Zeal smirked. "Met him once. Stupid boy. Always trying to live up the ideal of honors. But the Galaxy as a whole does not allow for such simpering. You have to do whatever it takes to survive."

"Don’t underestimate the boy," said King Dice with uncharacteristic hate in his voice. "He’s as straight as an arrow and strong as the bow that fired it. If you want to beat him or his dad, you can’t do it in a straight fight."

"Indeed." K. Rool said. "We must be patient, unstained how they all tick before we can strike. Recklessly charging in will get us nowhere." The Kings expression grew angry, "The worst possible outcome would be if Winterfell and their bannermen declares independence. As much as I desire a unified nation state, so does Ned Stark and his father before him. We could be looking at a kingdom with two capitals. Two Kings. King in the North and the Imperium King."

"A nation divided." Zeal noted, sipping some wine. "That'll cause issues."

"Indeed," K. Rool noted. "But I have been taking some steps to ensure unity under my rule. I have been communicating with the Guild...and as matter of fact..."

It was that moment Mr. Dark, the cloaked wizard of the court, came teleporting in. "Your Grace, a Guild Trade ship, carrying representatives, in approaching, as you had hoped."

"I love Treasure Knight," said Sombra, hacking into the docking records. "The Iron Whale is the best stealth ship in the galaxy. And he’s been rejected for years to join the Guilds ruling council."

"Because he likes to hoard a bit too much for himself." Bowser said in a deadpan tone.

K. Rool ignored them as he spoke to Dark. "Make sure they come here once ready."

On cue, a large figure in deep space diving armour stomped into the throne room, trailed by a couple of robotic bodyguards.

The large figure began to speak in Morse code or something until he adjusted the knobs on his suit.

"You summoned us?" Treasure Knight asked.

"I did, yes," K. Rool confirmed. "Is it only you for now?"

“It’s an honor, your majesty,” said Treasure Knight, “I’m here answering your call when I could be mining precious stones, shipping radioactive fuel or stripping wrecked ships."

“After today, you’ll have a brighter future than being the Guilds underpaid enforcement agent,” said K. Rool. “I know you were attacked by Skaven stealth fighters on your way here. I’ll happily pay for repairs."

"Good to hear. More than that fool Tamatoa will pay." Treasure Knight replied as he took a seat of his own, his armored frame hiding his true body.
“We can imagine your surprise when you found out Tamatoa had been looting your safe houses and blaming it on pirates.” King Dice said coyly.

“Revenge was my true price,” Treasure Knight admitted, shaking with rage in his armor. “Besides, you’ll need my help nationalizing the Guild. I know the captains and I helped set up the Guild Credit Union and Bank.”

"Not to mention many of those in the Guild wish to increase their power base as well." K. Rool added.

"True,” Treasure Knight thought of Roodaka, a Vortex and one of the highest ranking members of the Guild. Her species was a female dominated race, coming form the Industry World Xia, a world dedicated to weapon manufacture. It was Roodaka who vouched for Treasure Knight to become a captain. Before that he broke his back with deep space salvage and mercenary work that paid pennies.

Roodaka was good and one of the few that Treasure Knight would call friend. She never took easy jobs, wasn’t afraid to take risks and knew how to gamble wisely. Not to mention her connections on Xia guaranteed access to weapons from interplanetary siege guns to personal hunting weapons.

And very few could actually call Roodaka a 'friend': Underneath that usually pleasant attitude was a vicious and sadistic manipulator who only respected those who had what it took to survive in a harsh, unforgiving galaxy. And those who did not earn her respect...well, she liked to use her spinner to mutate people for fun.

It was one of her trade secrets. She’d long ago figured out how to use radiation to mutate humans into ghouls, like those found on New Vegas. And she’d even synthesized the Forced Evolutionary virus to create giant insects, super mutants and worse.

Rumors abounded that she’d even learned or stolen dark magic from the Skaven,

Indeed, her dark and backstabbing nature is what allowed her to climb the ranks of the Guild, often a dog-eat-dog organization.

And maybe that was part of the larger problem. For years the Guild had made money hand over fist by passing all risk and responsibilities to their captains; letting them enjoy business from noble houses, commoners and criminals alike.

But the rise of Tamatoa was proof of the rot. He got rich not by being a good captain but by killing anyone who stood in his way and take over guild leadership.

Now more and more captains were trying to join the inner circle instead of ship, work and earn.

But that was not of K. Rool's concern right now.

"As you are all aware, I seek to build unifying rule," He spoke to Treasure Knight. "But the Starks have the possibility of doing the same, leaving the galaxy divided with two kings. And the the Starks are quite popular with several houses, I might add."

“While the Stark’s don’t have any sizeable military fleet, they do have a large merchant navy which has allowed them the money and resources to field an army larger than normal for a house their size,” Relius elaborated. “It started when the late Lord Rickon established merchant jobs for retired soldiers and pilots after the Rage wars of his youth. His son Ned only expanded the program after the Hive Fleet Gorgon war.”
"Not to mention all the Death Worlds they posses, training amplitude of powerful soldiers, like those Lizardmen of Lustria. Dangerous creatures right there," He chuckled. "Tear your limb from limb with their bare claws if they can."

"We are aware of Ned Stark's progress," Treasure Knight said dryly. "But I did not simply come to speak of Ned."

"The Starks have the fleet and the army," said King R. Rool. "But House Dreemur has pioneered new methods of interhouse cooperation. They've taken over food production in the sector and showed small communities and nomadic space based cultures better ways to farm. It's only because of their influence that the Stark Merchant navy can reach as far and wide as it can."

"And as dangerous the Gourmet World is," Treasure Knight added. "The flora and fauna there are the best sources of food in the galaxy. We cannot risk losing it. The same with House Nui, with their skill in technological advancements and renewable energy sources."

"Both these houses have resources that House Stark could utilize in an independent move. House Nui is notoriously politically neutral, but their desire for peace may mean they side with the Starks," K. Rool explained. "Killing Ned Stark in isolation would only galvanize them into action against us. The real end goal is to take out Ned Stark and all of the pawns who support him; it's the felling of a mighty tree, not the snapping of a twig."

"Roodaka is our best bet to allying ourselves with House Nui," Relius elaborated. "She is one of the claimants to the throne in case the current leadership is disposed of."

"Aye, but first you must show her you are worthy of her time," Treasure Knight replied. "But if you do, she will be happy to aid you...unlike that bumbling bear, Moneybags." Treasure knight seethed. "The bear who thought it would be a good idea to bring on Euron Grayjoy as security because he charged less. The trail of destruction he left behind was too big and bloody for even the guild to hide from. In the end, I had to kill Euron without any extra compensation."

At least, Euron was THOUGHT to be dead, but the truth was his body was never found after the fire fight. But assuming no one could survive such a fearsome attack, well, they decided to write him off as dead.

Treasure Knight had used a lot of explosives, but no body was ever recovered from the wreckage of Euron's ship. "To move Moneybags, you'll need cash; he'll work for the highest bidder without any regard to long term gain or loyalty."

"Oh he'll give us a discount when I send Ser Clegane to have a talk with him," K. Rool chuckled. "And if that doesn't work, Agent 47 can be very persuasive."

"I'm sure they will be." Treasure Knight chuckled. "Any other business you wish to discuss?"

"I just wanted to let you know that once everything goes forward, the Guild will have a monopoly on all civilian space travel. My Space Marines will maintain their own navy, but everyone else will go through your organization," K. Rool promised. "Does this suit you?"

Treasure Knight nodded as he stood up. "That sounds quite fair. Thank you for your time," He turned to go and took a few steps before he stopped. "Oh, I believe I should mention some...rumors some trade ships have been muttering about."

"Rumors?" K. Rool questioned.

"Something about a great golden dragon, with three heads and hideous cackle," Treasure Knight
replied.

Relius elaborated, “Another so called Kaiju. The search for safer shipping lanes increasingly takes ships through their territory. It will be dealt with.”

The look of anger on K Rool’s face said a different story.

Those types of creatures...no one really were sure what they were. Apparently some theories portrayed them as some god-like beings, of even savage nature given form.

Relius had a theory that Kaiju were in fact living fossils, creatures who’d gone from being living beings to living nuclear reactors. That some animal somewhere had gone to a naturally occurring nuclear reactor and had its DNA wiped clean by high radiation, only to be brought back as heavy metals and other substances replaced the fragile carbon based DNA and other structures.

Spice, in his mind, was the key, that allowed an organism to go from simple chemical reactions to advanced nuclear or even anti-matter annihilation based reactions; like so called King Ghidorah.

It was a theory of course, but it helped to explain why so many Kaiju had vast stockpiles at the heart of their territory.

But for now, they keep an eye for things...and make sure they didn't get too involved with the conflict.

"I'll take my leave then." Treasure Knight turned, and he was soon gone from the room.

"As you can see, we have everything to gain and even more to lose," K. Rool explained in a solemn tone. "As it stands now, our nation is a house divided. Every day, monsters from space who once prowled the edges of the star maps are now eating their way to the center. Corporate powerhouses shirk their taxes and responsibilities to national defense. What we do will be remembered even after the Long night and the Valaryans are long forgotten. This is the birth of a nation!"

All gathered raised this cups in toast to this claim.

The King turned to Relius, "My guests deserve some entertainment. Bring out Riptor and a few fresh victims."

Bowser grinned at the prospect.

As if one cue, the group got out of their seats and walked out the throne room.

The arena awaited.

Riptor roared and shredded a practice dummy with her fore claws. Actually the "dummy" was a starving hunting dog that came up to most human's shoulders.

The dog with jaws the size of an alligator's whimpered as Riptor tore its guts out. the human dinosaur hybrid finished by tearing the dog's head off with her teeth.

Riptor spat it away and looked to the arena gates. She liked the gladiator arena because it gave her room to show her stuff. Clegane was brutal, but he lacked the creativity and sadism that Riptor brought to the table.

And the arena...oh, yes, it brought many to it, all willing to see both exotic dangerous animals and the bloodsports that resulted. K. Rool had game hosted today, and not only were some foolish prisoners 'participating', but very strong beasts were in for today.
The Arena was another crucial part of K. Rool’s future fascist state. It would entertain the nobles and commoners alike, and show people what happens to slaves, the underclasses and prisoners of war.

Riptor was used to this, to Ultratech’s old tournament. This promised to be entertaining. Supposedly there would be rat ogres here, captured Lizardmen and even a Yautja Bad Blood. And maybe even disgraced individuals who had joined in one last grab for glory.

Only time would tell, and the crowd began to gather,

Each gladiator event was huge. Tickets cost a fortune and live streaming wasn’t cheap either. To say nothing of how much the betting brought in.

For the gladiator wearing a kraken like mask. this was exactly where he wanted to be.

He observed the surrounding audience, all cheering and ready to see the blood spill, and how creatively people would die today.

The arena featured gravity catapults which could either propel a gladiator to one of the arenas higher floors or splatter them if they got the angle wrong.

Trap doors in the sand could unleash dangerous beasts or robotic killing machines.

Armed with his axe, the kraken warrior was eager to face the famous Riptor.

Up in the deluxe balcony, K. Rool, his circle, and all his guests were sitting, having the best seat in the house.

Then, a Kremling announcer began to speak, his voice broadcasted throughout the area.

“Ladies and lords, this is the Arena! Provided by none other than your generous King K. Rool! Tonight we have an excellent selection of death row inmates and ferocious monsters!”

The kraken smiled under his mask.

"And here we have a special guest, known as the 'Kraken!'" The Kremling went on as he began to highlight the event. "He will be just one of the many fighters today, taking on both dangerous races and savage beasties!"

Kraken smiled. Unlike many others, he was here voluntarily. When enough people were dead, he would claim his true prize.

The announcer went in, “Also in is the notorious Yautja Bad Blood, Scar!”

Wrapped in chains, the tall Yautja with worn out equipment and brutal scars was unreadable, and yet, hatred was in its posture. Once loose, it would murder the closest thing to it. Only time was needed...

"And in the next corner, a full-grown Kroxigor!" All eyes turned at the hulking Lizardman.

The Kroxigor glanced around with dull golden eyes. Its crocodile like jaws gaping to regulate its cold blooded body temperature. Towering above even the Yautja bad blood, the Lizardmen used muscular beasts like this as both construction equipment and line breaking military units.

Dragging behind the Kroxigor was a massive bronzium hammer, chained to its waist. in a moment, it would remember that hammer and use it. Until then, it simply glared at its surroundings...the roar of the crowd pounded in its head.
The Kroxigor would be relatively docile until attacked, unlike the Rat ogres.

Three of the beasts captured or left over from Skaven invasions, each one was meaner, uglier and smellier than the last. The three mutated Skaven snarled and pulled at their chains, their cybernetic weapons temporarily offline. One wielded a flame thrower, the other chainsaws for hands and the last with a warp lightning cannon build into its right arm.

"And now that we see our fighters, let's meet the beasties!" Cages were revealed, each contained large animals.

"First off is the Galala Gator!" A huge reptilian beast, 18 meters long and 13 tons, with eight legs, red skin, and an enormous mouth a razor-sharp teeth.

"Hailing from the world of Ark, the Gigantopithicus!" the large, ape like creature howled with rage as the shock collar it wore went into overdrive, getting it ready for the fight.

"This bad boy can be your fibre gathering, helmet wearing, human tossing buddy for life it if survives the fight!" the announcer laughed.

Haughty laughter could be heard from the stands as well as the announcer went on. "In addition, hailing from the icy regions in Wyveria, a Barioth!"

A large, white create, resembling a cross between a wyvern and a sabretooth, these were feared creatures when one with the tundra regions of Wyveria, and were only hunted by experts.

"And last but not least, a Dragon Ogre Shaggoth! Over one hundred thousand years old, the number of lives it ended in this century alone is incalculable!"

The huge monster, part dragon and with a humanoid upper body roared, lightning crackling down its throat and in its eyes. The enormous monster cradled a heavy hammer style weapon, hinting that it was more intelligent than its bestial appearance let on.

"And now that our contestants our ready, who's ready for some bloodshed?!"

The roar of approval was deafening...especially to Schala, who found the whole thing depraved. More than that, Schala was ashamed of her mother, looking upon the ensuing carnage with positive glee in her eyes. One day there'd be no need for these games, the crown would have other sources of revenue.

But for now, all the chains dropped in the arena and the madness began. The Kraken masked man roared with rage and pleasure as he took his axe and charged at the nearest Rat ogre; Euron Greyjoy was in his element.

Yes, he had survived, of course, thanks to quick thinking and a swift escape pod. He found himself facing K. Rool, but the two actually got along quite well and came to an...agreement of sorts.

K. Rool's proposition was simple. Euron had cost the crown a great deal of money and generally messed with people who were politically connected. He had to survive in the gladiator pits for one year to earn his freedom and a place in the Royal Navy.

To Euron it was more than a fair deal. It was another golden chance. People back home talked about the old days when the Ironborn raided up and down the galaxy. That was well and fine, but Euron actually lived the old ways.

And for now, he had a Rat Ogre to kill.
The one with the chainsaw looked at him hatefully, revving up the weapon, ready to gruesomely dismember him. But Euron was not ready to die just today. No...he was going to kill this fucker.

He dodged out of the of one swing, sneering under his helm, and he lunged forward, slicing the leg of the ogre.

Euron's axe struck the thing in the knee, hobbling the Rat ogre but not downing it. The Rat ogre swung its chainsaw arms wide, slashing at one of its brethren.

Euron screamed and swung his axe again, chopping off the rat ogre's head. Except it kept going, powered by an onboard computer and a secondary brain. The thing began blindly swinging its chainsaws, heading right for the Wyvern.

The Barioth, though, was no easy target. With amazing agility, it dodged the attack and swung back around, using its long teeth and claws to rend its foe into bloody bits, all while coughing up ice projectiles about the area.

The Bad Blood, Scar, surveyed the battlefield with infrared vision. The Barioth in particular was the greatest prey, the greatest threat and also the source of his greatest weakness. His kind were jungle creatures, Yautja could survive poison, high gravity, low oxygen or gunshots but cold was their main weakness.

Sprinting to evade the ice crystals, Scar looked at the weapon the arean had given him; a knife barely fit to cut bread. It would have to be enough.

The Barioth had brought down the Ogre and noticed Scar approaching fast. Growling with dark intent in its eyes, it got into position, clawing at the ground.

Scar braced for the charge as he saw the Kroxigor wrestle tooth and claw with the gigantopithicus and Euron hack away at the legs of the Dragon Ogre Shaggoth.

The Barioth sprinted and Scar waited until the last possible second, finally using his powerful legs to leap right onto the monster's head and hold on for dear life.

Naturally the the beast was none to pleased with this at all, and began to thrash wildly about as Scar began to stab over and over again the thick hide of the best, pricing the scales...

...and then both were abruptly sent sprawling by the top half of an rat ogre, said beast being gruesomely bisected and tossed about by the jaws of the Galala Gator.

Janus watched this all with a very deadpan expression. Truth be told, the young boy did not care much for these bloodsports either...

Janus's first real friend had been a cat, due to him being an introverted boy. No doubt the gladiators were scum, the Bad Blood Yautja having killed women and unarmed civilians. Euron's crimes were uncountable. But he felt for the creatures who had no choice in being brought to die.

Down below in the sand the Barioth slammed into the Dragon Ogre, which was swiping its weapon at the Rat Ogre spraying it with warp lightning.

The whole of them collapsed into a heap, with Scar picking himself up first, ready to rip and tear and fool who got in his way.

The Dragon Ogre Shaggoth had thrown down its hammer and was grappling the Galala Gator with bare hands. It gouged our the gator's eyes before crushing the skull with brute strength.
Against such foes, Scar needed a better weapon. He ran to the chainsaw rat, somehow still alive and knocked it over. Smashing bones with his fists, he took hold of one of the chainsaw hands and ripped it right off.
Revving up the weapon from the dying body, it charged into the fray once more, this time rushing the Gigantopithicus, slicing into its legs.

Bellowing with rage and pain, the creature staggered, crippled by such a fearsome blow.

Scar was merciless, swinging his new chainsaw down into the gigantopithicus’s mouth. The saw ran through bone and sliced the top of the apes head off.

“Now that’s impressive!” Gushed Queen Zeal.

Meanwhile, Euron faced the wounded and enraged Kroxigore. He danced out away from its hammer like a ballerina and swung his axe like a bastard maniac

It wouldn’t be easy. The Lizardman had a thick hide, and even if disarmed, he would have enough strength to tear Euron easily into pieces.

Not helped by the Barioth prowling the area.

Euron’s axe made sparks on the Kroxigor’s thick scales. Suddenly it lunged forward and clamped it’s haws around his axe handle, snapping it in two.

He glanced around. The Barioth was getting ready for a second charge and there was one last rat ogre with a flame thrower. Then he saw a dead one, one with a warp lightning cannon and he got an idea

Waiting until the very last, he dove out of the way, leaving the Barioth charging into the Kroxigor. As the two brawled, Euron kept moving, heading towards the cannon.

Dragon Ogre Shaggoth’s were the oldest members of their race. Even a junior Dragon Ogre was thousands of years old and could wipe out entire armies or tear apart a bunker with its fists. But Euron had a way with Skaven tech.

He ran to the Rat ogre and started ripping apart and putting back together the wires in the thing’s exposed skull. He was always good with mechanical engineering, it had saved his life as often as his axe.

Raising the monster's gun, he took as aim best he could at the enraged Dragon Ogre.

The ogre noticed him, and charged at him...

...just as Euron fired, right though the midsection of the beast, blowing it into bloody pieces.

Euron fell back as the warp lightning cannon fired a thousand shots worth of energy in just one.

The cannon vented radiation and plasma, Euron scrambled away to avoid glowing in the dark from radiation poisoning.

The crowd screamed with delight at the pyrotechnics; a huge hole blown in the Arena floor.

And now...things were about get intense.

"And now, ladies and gentlemen, entering the fray now, our finest fighting machine, bred to be the perfect killer...RIPTOR!!"
The roar of approval was enormous.

Euron knew the tricks of the Arena. Send in the valuable fighter last when everyone else was exhausted.

Fine by him, he lived for a challenge. He feared radiation from the destroyed warp lightning cannon more than he feared Riptors claws.

There was only a moment before Riptor charges at the Barioth.

The large Wyvern turned to her and spat ice...but she leapt deftly over it and latched onto its back, clawing fiercely at it. It thrashed in pain, rearing upwards...allowing Riptor to jump down and drag her foot claw along the belly, spilling blood and guts.

The Barioth went down, dying but still dangerous as it spat out ice and frost.

Riptor leaped at Scar, who lunged out of the way. His chainsaw passed over her head, just scratching her crest feathers.

The two born killers faced each other, snarling in fury as the Barioth finally collapsed into a heap, as Euron stood nearby, ready for anything.,

Euron knew that his unpowered armor would only last so long with either fighter. The dead Rat Ogre still had one chainsaw arm left.

Then he looked at the gravity catapults and got an idea.

Crazy, yes, but very workable...all he needed was the right moment.

The air was fill of electricity from the body of the Dragon Ogre Shaggoth. Even dead it still held as much power as a nuclear reactor.

Riptor jumped onto a gravity catapult and Scar gave chase. Euron jumped into the gravity catapult, but began to strip his metal armor as he did.

K. Rool watched from his balcony with intrigue...Euron was up to something...and like always, hard to say what it was.

Euron presented himself as a brute, as unthinking as Clegane. K. Rool however knew that Euron his an unpredictable streak beneath a savage exterior.

Riptor slashes at Scar. Fatal on a human, but the Yautja would be able to fight for hours through it. When Riptor’s claws broke the chain on his chainsaw, Scar gave her a slash with his own sharp claws.,

Euron had reached the height of the gravity catapults and was preparing to bounce downwards at the dead Dragon Ogre. This was going to be hairy, and he knew deep down he would only get Scar...but maybe that was the whole idea. K. Rool wanted both him and Riptor to survive this.

Euron flew downwards on the reverse catapult, thrusting his chainsaw forward, he hurled it at the dead Dragon Ogre and used air currents to shift out of the path of the beam.

The Ironborn man slammed into the sand of the arena as the chainsaw struck the dead monster near where its primary heart would be.

The reaction was instantaneous. The electricity travelled up the chainsaw and detonated the nuclear
reactor inside. The electromagnetic energy formed a powerful burst that exploded each and every one of the gravity catapults like a land mine. Concussive force and electric power spread through the arena and terrified the crowd.

Riptor was thrown unconscious, but Scar who'd been covered in bits of metal armor was fried like a bug.

And as such, only two remained in the blood stained arena, with body parts sprayed all about in the pit. A brutal fight to the end...and now K. Rool raised his hand.

"Citizens, people of the arena, I give you, your champion!" the King crowed, "Euron Greyjoy, Kraken of the bloody sands, is your new champion! come and claim your freedom!"

Euron stood up, feeling less than satisfied. He might never get another chance to kill Riptor, so in the future he'd just had to make another chance. For now, he was a free man and he'd fulfilled his end of the agreement with K. Rool.

And for all his faults, K. Rool fully intended to honor his agreement: It would be bad to backstab EVERYONE, and he admired those with extreme ruthlessness, like Euron here.

Euron, of course, knew this, and looked up at the king with a wild grin.

"I live to serve my king!" Euron announced dramatically, kneeling on the sands of the arena. Armed Space Aarines moved in to apprehend him as well as transport Riptor to the infirmary.

K. Rool turned to Relius, "Give Euron a meal and some comfort women in King Dice's brothel. After that, put him to work with the Navy. We need to start reorganizing the admiralty as soon as possible. I can trust Euron to cut away the dead weight and admirals who don't pull their weight."

Relius nodded as the Marines helped Euron and took him to get ready for his new job as people filed out the arena stands. Another game of satisfaction.

K. Rool regarded Schala. "Is everything alright, dear?" he asked with mock sweetness.

Schala, who was pale as a ghost, turned to him and mustered up a smile. "Oh, it's nothing, just feeling a stomachache..." She lied in a way.

The King smiled, maybe even sincerely. "Child, you don't have to lie. I watched my father be beaten to death by his brother when I was younger than you. Just remember that all of this is justified."

This did nothing to mollify Schala, she merely gulped and nodded at the man who had so completely embraced and internalized cruelty and evil. "Yes, your highness, thank you." Taking Janus by the hand, she swiftly left, wanting to be away from...all of it.

Janus squeezed his sister's hand, his logical, scientific worldview reeling from the raw cruelty of the King's rule. He wondered if indeed a nation build by the likes of Euron, Riptor and Relius could be one that survived. Or if it should be one that survived...
Death World Subnautica...Seabase X...

A rather large sea base in the bottom of the sea, drawing power from nearby geothermal vents. Usually a research station, it was also the staring point of military recruits, commanded by Pridak...

Pridak, his experience as an aquatic organism made him perfect for building both underwater habitats and space stations. While he had a great deal of experience in siege warfare and building fortifications in planets and in space, Pridak's cruelty and his hunger for conquest were his strongest defining traits.

Worse yet, he was a deeply emotional creature; able to hold a grudge for eternity and wildly swinging between lavishing rich rewards and brutal, painful violence.

He had been known for executing a 100 man squad simply because three of them were trying to go AWOL. Make an example of the squad to show he would NOT tolerate any dissent. Brutal, ruthless, but intelligent, he was the military commander for a reason.

And for now, he was looking out the window into the abyss, lost in his thoughts.

The arena, showed on a nearby screen, remained loud as repair robots and lobotomized slaves moved to fix the destroyed fighting pit while the dozens of broadcasters in every language gave a blow by blow replay of the day's fights; hyping up the match and the matches to follow.

What the King needed now was to reassure his kingdom and its subjects in the face of the coming alien threats.

All the while, Pridak would be helping with that by training an army to help combat the threat of encroaching hostile aliens...and at the same time, eventually overtake any rebel houses.

And that was the crux of the problem. As well armed and motivated as the Galactic North was, they lacked the manpower or resources to rule the entirety of the galaxy. Their population was united by a shared culture and the worship of the old gods, but their territory was so vast they couldn't really afford to play conqueror in the long term.

By the same token, the North was so full of environmental and navigational hazards that it would be a nightmare for an occupying space force and ground army to take. Singularities, quasars, dense nebulae and more. To say nothing of the millions of space mines that Ned Stark had been building up near possible extra-galactic invasion routes.

As such, not only did Pridak need to build up a varied army, he needed to wait until things were more destabilized over there. K. Rool was taking care of that part as they waited...but for now, things had to proceed slowly...

As it stood now, Pridak was working on the most ambitious defense plan in galactic history. His goal was to build up hundreds of space mine fields, gravity traps and magnetic anti-matter charges around the core worlds; K. Root's main holdings and those of his closest allies.

Huge space borne fortresses could be towed and moved to watch over key choke points in the space lanes or guard strategic planets.

Above all, Pridak would be collaborating with Treasure Knight to identify and guard key stockpiles
of spice; which were crucial for everything from space folding of starships to the making of space
marines, advanced medical healing and the boosted growth of crops depending on the type.
Now, he was overseeing some specialized recruits designed for amphibious training. Often their job
was to try and survive this world, by gathering the resources they could and dealing both with great
depths and savage beasts-The kind that were either huge and powerful, or the kind great at
ambushing.

Water planets like Subnautica were often overlooked by the public for their strategic importance.
Those deep waters which held the deadliest sea monsters were often super saturated with heavy and
light metals. The sea water itself was broken down for oxygen and fuel for Star Fighters.

Without Subnautica and a hundred other ocean worlds providing fuel, the Star Fighter corps of the
galaxy would grind to a halt and leave the big dreadnoughts and super heavy cruisers vulnerable.

And now Pridak was getting a little...edgy. He needed to go and kill something today.

Turning away from the window, he made his way through the halls of the base, brushing past the
researchers stationed there as well.

Pridak observed the containment pen, where the juvenile Sea Emperor was growing. Tamed with
Purple spice, the monster was already large enough to devour humans like popcorn. It was too
valuable to attack, though Pridak relished the chance to kill something that large and deadly when
full grown.

The ancient aquatic biomechanoid glanced at a Mosasaurus imported from Ark; a useful mount but
inexpensive to grow, raise and tame. That would satisfy his bloodlust for now.

The Sea Emperors, yes, useful for...medical purposes, mostly. And now they were breeding this
once rare species quite well.

These younger specimens were a viable and abundant source of Enzyme 42. A substance capable of
not only curing the lethal Carar Bacterium, but also reversing the damage caused by Tyranid virus
strains and Skaven biological weapons.

Once almost extinct, the species were now put to good use serving the empire. Purple spice allowed
them to be controlled and prevented them from using their considerable telepathy against Pridak and
his crews.

And made them little more vicious than usual, more than mere plankton eaters...

But enough of that now. He dove into the pool with the Mosasaurus. He knew this one. It was wild
and unruly, and seemingly unable to be tamed.

Good for killing practice.

This Mosasaurus was a problem animal. The male in the tank had proven exceptionally predatory
and violent. It wasn't rare or valuable enough to justify purple spice and it had only grown more
violent with captivity.

For a time it paid for itself by being allowed to breed with females, but now it had begun attacking
and eating the juvenile Mosasaurus. This was killing two birds with one stone as Pridak swam with
his limbs extended, the monster before him opening its jaws wide.

Pridak was natural born killer. His teeth were exceedingly sharp, and his blade was made out of
countless shark teeth, perfect for ripping through flesh like a hot knife through butter.
His agility and strength in the water were what he gained following his mutation. Once he had been handsome for a biomechanical being, some almost considering him 'bishōnen'. Then, during an expedition, he was exposed to a mutagenic substance by accident, mutating him into his current hideous form. A huge blow to his pride.

He powered through the water, evading the Mosasaurus’ jaws. Slashing out with razor sharp claws, he tore open deep gashes and turned the water red. The rabid monster however ignored the wounds. Which was fine by Pridak.

The loss of his pride had been the start of a downward spiral. As it stood, he was arguably K. Rool's least loyal lieutenant, which was saying something. However, he couldn't turn down what the mad King was offering; his only chance to take the throne of House Nui.

His rage was focused as he thought on House Nui. A diverse house, they were responsible for much of technological and biological advancement in the galaxy. They even set up Biological Space Laborites in orbit around various Death Worlds they owned for controlled studies.

Pridak dodged out of the way of the Mosasaurus’ attack, avoiding the beast's powerful hind limbs as it swam past him; the monster's strength able to snap him in two if it landed.

House Nui was positively ancient, they were old long before the Long Night. When the galaxy had stagnated culturally or technologically, Nui had paved the way to the future before retreating back into isolationism. They'd been at the technological revolution, which transitioned from sub light ships with cyro-stasis crews to faster than light vessels and eventually the space folding spice powered ships that dominated space travel today.

He made more cuts along the body of the beast, the water tuning red as he did.

As it stood now, the House's lead scientist was Ciel, a human female who'd despite her youth, was an exceptionally brilliant individual in numerous fields of science...to the point some would call her even smarter than Relius.

The Mosasaurus grew more aggressive, more frenzied, its attacking becoming more and more erratic. A lesser fighter wouldn't have known how to fight an opponent with no self preservation, but Pridak had much experience with that.

Ciel was good. The leader of the House Mata Nui had chosen her for her brilliance and her kind heart. And that really rankled Pridak. The universe was cruel, the beings who lived in it were cruel. He embraced that, and he knew the rejection of that would be the downfall of House Nui.

And with that in mind, he dove down the throat of the replied, tearing right through the insides, including the heart. A bloody, nasty finish.

Once he took over, he would not kill Ciel. Oh, no. He did like that pretty face...it would make raping her over and over again all he more pleasurable.

The dead Mosasaurus sank to the bottom of the tank. It hadn't even hit the bottom when carnivorous fish, Megapiranha, started devouring the carcass. It was cheaper than having underwater robots do the cleaning and they made excellent guards in the extended water system.

Deadly in groups, Pridak had gone out of his way to tame the carnivorous fish; using a mix of rewards and merciless beatings and even death.

His model of reward and brutal death would also work well as a political style.
Always making sure the peons beneath him were always doing what they were told, in order to evade mutilation...or worse. Indeed, despite his calm facade, everyone knew better than to enrage Pridak.

And now, he found himself thinking on forcing himself on Ciel.

Agent 47 blindsided his enemies, killing them with often nothing but a fibre cable. Euron Grayjoy spaced his enemies and Gregor Clegane tore them limb from limb. With competition like that, Pridak needed to do something to stay noticed, stay ahead of the pack.

But Ciel, it wasn't about the sex. He wasn't like the lecher, King Dice. Sexual assault was one of the most assured ways of holding power over someone; particularly as innocent and kind as Ciel. He'd give anything to rob her of the ability to smile or love, before violently crushing her skull.

Well, as he thought, not the first time, or event he 50th time...only when she was scarred beyond belief would he put her out of her misery...brutally.

But for now, more immediate matters. He walked into the main control room of the lab, where several Kremlings were working. He approached one of them. "Two weeks ago, 500 potential recruits were dropped into the extremely dangerous zones of this planet as part of their training. Status update?"

The Kremling accessed the computer readouts, nervous about the blood and chunks of flesh stuck to Pridak's frame. "So far, my lord, the group's numbers have been whittled down to exactly 247. A number of recruits have banded together and are building aquatic habitats near the hunting grounds of the alpha predators in the oceans. They number at forty percent while the rest have gone alone to set up habitats in safer waters."

Pridak nodded calmly, taking in this information. He would reward the more daring ones soon...and have a little 'chat' with the others later. Hardly any room for such weaklings in the army. Not prime Marine resources.

"You did well. Continue to monitor. One more week before we gather them up," That ought to give them all time to weed out the weaker ones and leave only the best of the best.

Risk and reward, safety and caution were for merchants. A soldier needed an all or nothing attitude. They had to be able to risk everything and understand that a single slip could undo months or years of gains.

He regarded the view screens as a band of former criminals were working together to bring down a Ghost Leviathan; second largest aggressive creature on the planet. Pridak approved, according to notes, this group were a mix of professional criminals, hardened murderers and disgraced war veterans. They were looking promising. Sure, a few got eaten or killed in some other ways, but to Pridak, that was just showing how the system worked.

Pridak turned to the Kremling. "Have a new shipment of prisoners sent in next month. Select from the triple super-max prisons and select for violence and intelligence in prisoners."

The Kremling bowed. "Yes my lord."

Pridark sneered at his underling, "And make sure that the Sarcosuchus from Ark are ready for then. The candidates need to learn to adapt to fight aquatic creatures that can travel on land."

Another nod, and Pridak walked out of the control room. Thing were going well, it seemed. But still, best not to drop their guard yet.
His thoughts turned to another military House, the Lee's, led by the Grand Marshal Braev Lee.

...Braev Lee. Bravely. How very droll.

He was a man of commitment and forwardness, always leading from the front. His elite soldiers came from Skyrim. Not a 'Death World' per say, but still quite tough to live on.

Skyrim was a tough place, but its warrior population came as a result of culture rather than simple environment. Cold and harsh, the native Nords valued strength and martial honor. They chose freely to become warriors and fighters; with every random farmer and tradesman on the planet at least devoting part of their lives learning how to fight and defend their homeland.

Braev Lee was chosen on Skyrim by the Kingsmoot upon the death of the last High King. A civil war on the planet and a Xenomorph invasion gave him a chance to prove his strength and leadership, cementing his rule.

Then there was his adopted daughter Tiny Tina. Pridak felt the bomb scars around his arm and rage consumed his heart.

Tina...a loudmouthed, crazed brat of a human who was orphaned in a terrorist attack and managed to escape experimentation that took her parents lives. She survived by going....'cuckoo' and would have stayed that way if not for Braev, who took in her in, and alongside his wife, Mahzer, and his daughter, Edea, raised her lovingly.

That little bitch had come closer to ending Pridak than anyone else had in centuries. All because of an exploding rubber ducky of all things.

As it stood Mahzer was giving Tiny a proper, classical education and rumor had it that Braev was grooming Tina to be a general or a military leader when she grew old enough.

Then there was her sister Eilonwy.

A young girl of noble house who had cut ties with them and trained to be a warrior mage in her own right. A skilled archer capable of enhancing arrows with magic, she was already a force to be reckoned with...and paired with her snarky, feisty attitude, Eilonwy was no frail flower.

And speaking of toughness, Alternis Dim, the Dark Knight, came to mind. A orphan found in the sewers of some fancy city, he too was taken in by the Lee's, and with proper training, became one of THE deadliest fighters in the galaxy, tempered by his code of honor.

Alternis Dim was officially Braev's Housecarl; his right hand man, his bodyguard and the man who the High King of Skyrim trusted more than any other. He has a hard man who'd helped to pioneer the taming of the native trolls and broker a peace accord with the dragons who'd once terrorized the planet for so long. he was a solid man.

Less solid but no less deadly was Gaston, a loud mouth braggart whose official position within the House Lee seemed to be Braev's drinking buddy. With the looks of a storybook hero, an exemplary sniper record and the ability to drink a space marine under the table, Gaston had helped House Lee build a lethal and effective sniper school.

But though he LOOKED like a storybook hero, his personality left much to be desired. A boastful, arrogant, boorish, sexist, ignorant pig, Gaston may had admiration from much of the common folk, but several of the higher and smarter individuals looked down on him.

Pridak included.
Yes, Gaston could shoot, he could blow off a man's head at a thousand yards with his eyes shut. That didn't change the fact that he was still a clown playing at being a soldier. Spent more time bragging about his trophies than getting out, grinding and getting kills.

Secretly, Pridak suspected K. Rool's plan to flip Gaston would backfire on him for the same reason Gaston would eventually turn disloyal to Braev Lee.

Honestly, how did Braev even becomes friends with the man? It defied all logic and reason. Pridak growled to himself. So many houses causing issues...

There were too many Houses in the galaxy. Many of them only in power because their many years dead great ancestors having won their right to rule. Most of them traced ancestry so far back that nobody could prove them a liar.

They weren't like Pridak. Everything he had, he fought for himself. He had no heirs, he aimed to keep what he killed for. And he would continue to prove himself and his worth constantly with the blood of his foes. And much blood would he spill in the coming days.

Speaking of which...perhaps he should contact K. Rool. He could use the teleport to leave and go straight to the Station. But for now, he preferred to stay here and radio communicate. He found the oceans to his liking...

Pridak had no interest in the luxury that K. Rool surrounded himself with or used to buy others. The gladiator fights in particular were wasteful; simply watching killing without participating made his blood boil with frustration.

The oceans with their deadly creatures were his home. The sea creatures never lost their will to slay, to assert their bloodlust and hunger. More than that, he needed to tend his growing collection of domesticated beasts. Too often, armies with little machinery had tamed and ridden deadly monsters into battle; turning the tide against technologically superior enemies.

And to see such bloodthirsty animals charging towards you would causes anyone's heart to freeze up.

Pridak reached the communications room, approaching a monitor and pressing some buttons.

Pridak pulled up footage of a tribe of Orks who'd settled here a few centuries ago. The brutish beasts had adapted well to this water world, crafting crude war canoes to do battle with and eventually primitive submarines.

Like the rest of their species, their main advantage was in personal physical power and adaptation over intelligence or strategy.

Time to take care of them soon enough...but now...

He pressed some buttons, and waited for a few seconds...

The effect was twofold, the first effect was that a nuclear weapon detonated in the middle of the Ork encampment. That alone would not be enough to wipe them out, even the spores of the Orks would survive.

Following the mini nuke, a small army of radio controlled ghouls attacked; reanimated human bodies powered by radiation. Ghouls came in either feral variety, which were little more than mindless animals, or civilized ghouls, who were indistinguishable mentally from humans.
With these ghouls, Pridak had hit a sweet spot, making them able to use weapons without developing empathy or questioning orders.

No mercy as given, just as Pridak liked it. Better make that report. Pressing some buttons, the screen once again went to static...before K. Rool himself appeared.

"Ah, Pridak." K. Rool grinned as his military general. "I take it you are calling to give me some updates?"

Pridak gave the slightest nod to the smiling monarch. "The Ghoul Soldier Program is performing to acceptable parameters. Tests against native Ork tribes have been a resounding success. More than that, turning dead and failed soldier candidates into Ghouls is proving to be a useful way to recycle wasted potential. Among other things, the Leviathan Program is performing well."

"Good, good, and the potential recruits?"

"A little under half remain...and of those, a select few have continued their training in dangerous waters," Pridak remarked. "I'll see to the situation later."

"I'm sure you will," K. Rool nodded.

"More than that, King K. Rool," Pridak elaborated, "Final plans for a defensive sphere around the core worlds and an invasion plan for the Galactic North are finalized. They only need your approval to move forward."

"Ah, before we do any of that, first we must throw them into confusion," K. Rool replied. "And my first part of that is recruiting Ned Stark as my hand."

Pridak frowned. "Beg pardon?" He ran through what he knew about such matters. "Under galactic law, control of his house will pass to his son Robb while he is your Hand. Ned will only be allowed to bring one Bodyguard with him; as is customary with your highest officers."

"Yes, and the wolves will be separated..."

"Making them easy picking," Pridak concluded with a smirk.

"Exactly," K. Rool crooned. "He just needs to accept the offer, and all will go smoothly from there."

"By this time, Lord Stark will have dealt with a Xenomorph infested derelict and a potential Skaven landing party on his private world," the King said. "He knows that his worlds are under risk and that only I can give him the means to defend all that is his."

"Never knowing his doom will be sealed," Pridak sneered. "Honor is what goes through his mind, but that's not what runs this galaxy. It's fear and blood! Just be wary my king," he cautioned, "That in defeating the wolves we don't neglect the invaders at our door; the Grox, the Tyranid, the Xenomorph and more. to say nothing of the spreading Skaven plague. Then it will not matter whose skeleton sits on the throne."

"Agreed," K. Rool nodded grimly. "So that is why I am counting on you to build our army to repel such threats."

"I'll give you your army," said Pridak, dropping formalities for a moment. "Give me a fleet and I'll move them to where they need to go. Give me the resources and I'll fortify all your strategic worlds and rebuild the North in your image."
"Don't worry. I will," K. Rool nodded with a dark expression. "And you'll have House Nui AND Ciel as part as your eventual reward, I promise you that," And K. Rool meant it.

The power of house Nui would be good, amazing even. When Pridak finally got it, it'd be like taking a drug. But Ciel would be his ultimate prize, his ultimate trophy of power. She'd be a message and a warning; a warning to those who were weak and a message to those who were strong what they could win in battle.

But he was patient. Like a predator he would wait, until the perfect moment to strike and rend.

House Nui was enduring, it was lasting and adaptive. But their isolationist attitude would end them.

Pridak looked down at his own claws, he was feeling the urge. It never went away, and that was good.

It kept his wits sharp and his claws sharper. It kept him alive all the years, in galaxy full of dangerous predators, insane pirates, and hostile aliens.

He himself kept his own trophies in his private questers in this base. Of the most dangerous hunts he had made.

Sentimentality made him bring up his trophy collection. It filled him with pride... and disappointment.

He had so many trophies, but never enough.

The head of the Ork warboss was the newest one. Built like a tank and shockingly smart.

Always one among a tribe of idiots, it seemed. One day, though, he would get something of great value...to show the world just what he was. The ultimate predator.

As fun as Orks were to kill, Pridak wanted enemies who could think.

Maybe one of the kings enemy houses could be worthy trophies. Or their hired guns. Rooster Cogburn had some very nice revolvers that would look good at Pridak’s hip.

All in due time...all in due time.

He looked back at K. Rool, who was staring at him. "It's all understood, my lord."

Pridak forced himself back to work as he bid farewell to his monarch.

The promised day was coming.

And he would be ready for it, showing them all the life truly was red in tooth and claw.

For now there was still much polishing and refining to do with the special forces of Subnautica. The recruits were tough but the goal would be to get the right mix of brutality and mental toughness.

Wasn't good if they went UTTERLY mad from the horrors they witnessed in the galaxy.

Madness was good in meat shields, what Pridak needed we’re hungry predators.

And with the rise of aquatic Skaven monsters on various ocean worlds, they were needed more than ever.

With that in mind, he went back to the main control room to oversee the operations.
Getting a working base on this water world was a constant administrative challenge. Besides monitoring recruits, corrosion of salt water needed to be fought, food stocks had to be defended from pests and scavengers and oxygen levels needed to be kept constant.

Reminded him of a time some wealthy man...Andrew Ryan, he believed, built an entire CITY called Rapture the sea to escape the noble houses and their controlling ways, making their own 'free market' government.

Naturally, due a variety of factors, like a vast social gap, lack of charity, and some kind of slug, the city collapsed into anarchy.

Ryan had been a good business man, visionary even. But he didn’t give credit to the armies. Warriors and kings who let men like him keep their wealth.

In the end, Rapture was dominated by a rapacious drug dealer named Frank Fontaine. Pridak had a plan to kill Frank, but someone else beat him to it.

It was all a blur, to be honest, and the city was now a crap hole, full of addicts, mutants, and giant living marine suits.

Ah well. Their fault.

A raiding party was heading to Rapture to finish off that place once and for all. For that, Mr. Dark, a new member of the kings court, would be in charge overall.

Dark...he was a being of mystery, even Pridak had to admit. No one knew his origins or even where he came from. All that was known was he was sinister and powerful mage who showed up one day and simply offered his services to the King.

This was a perfect mission for a mage, given that they were going to a city full of people who were addicted to what boiled down to magic powers in a bottle.

Dark had shown good survival skills on this planet. And Pridak looked forward to seeing how deadly Mr. Dark could be.

Yes, everything was going well, and it would be only a matter of time before stye could truly begin.

Stark would soon come to an end, and new, massive unified rule would begin.

As it should be.
The Station called Home

The ship folded through the abyss of space at great speed, yet the passengers remained comfortable throughout.

Grand Marshal Braev Lee kept seated, his imposing form silent as the trip continued. He was on a trip to House Dreemurr, to discuss recent developments. When deciding who to take, he was quick to, of course, choose Mahzer, Edea, and Tina, most of his family, to come with him. Alternis was here as well, in full armor as usual.

His daughter, Tiny Tina, was getting a scolding from her adopted mother. “That’s enough of that, young lady.”

“But ma!” Tina protested, “Chest pains are a legit medical problem.”

Mahzer frowned, “You fell asleep with a lit cigarette and set yourself on fire. Smoking won’t take away any future chest pains, which are most assuredly caused by fires.”

Braev wondered if he should get involved...but he knew Mahzer would insist on doing this herself, having the mother’s touch, so he stayed silent and looked out the window. It was House Dreemurr who’d saved the Galactic North from a famine five years ago. They’d saved countless small colonies and nomadic bands of comet hunters.

Good people, yet monsters usually were.

‘Monsters’ were a unique breed in the galaxy. They were creatures of all shapes and sizes, a commonality being they were composed of magic. As another rule, monsters were more attuned to kindness than any other race in the galaxy.

The Dreemurr’s, dating back in history, were largely known for farming. Most of their society was agrarian and even as their technology grew, they never developed many large cities.

Monsters they might have been, but in shape mostly. Without an external threat, they preferred to stay in pubs and eat varieties of spaghetti.

The reason Braev had for visiting them was to finalize an alliance between their houses started by their grandfathers

As of known, the current rulers of the house were Asgore and Toriel, both very kind people. With them were their three children: Blood son Asriel, and two adopted human children, a son named Chara and a daughter named Frisk.

The adoption of Frisk and Chara marked a change in both human and monster society. The children were powerful in the ways of magic, but had used their power to save their world.

Monster and human populations across the sector were more friendly. Old Rickon Stark naming Asgore his official bannermen only sped the integration. It was a momentous occasion, and Braev wanted it make sure this went smoothly as well.

Braev nearly jumped when a meaty hand clamped on his shoulder.

“My lord,” Gaston laughed, “we’ve got an hour and a half before we dock. What do you say us and a few close men get some beers in the ships tavern?”
Braev turned to him. “I’m afraid I must sit this one out. This meeting will be important, and I do not wish to show up intoxicated.”

“Quite true,” Wes, the beastkeeper of House Lee, spoke up from nearby. “Bad for business.”

Wes, alongside his lover Rui, were in charge of the various domesticated animals of the House. Quite good at it as well, to the point they got along more with the animals than other people.

"Indeed," said Rui, "Not to mention you can wait. Dreemurr is known for making the finest wine and spirits in the galaxy. Better than any ship's menu."

Gaston laughed, "I like you, beautiful and smart. Well, this at least gives me time to clean my weapons one last time."

Wes tried not to grind his teeth as the shameless flirting.

Meanwhile, Tina had calmed down and apologized, and Mahzer was pacified, and went back to her usual warm, mother self.

“The Dreemurr station is smaller than most, but Lord Lee will be taking a tour of the surface,” said Wes, turning his mind to work.

“Particularly Mt. Ebbot,” said Rui, “It’s the home of their holiest shrine, where most of their magic is harvested and where human and monster first learned to coexist.”

Mt. Ebbot. A vast mountain range with an underground system, with several different environments within.

It was also the plan to examine the Gourmet World in great detail...in a safe distance of course. Native monster crews were putting in seismic detectors with the help of House Lee technicians.

The worlds supply of magic energy made them a potential target for Skaven invasions. If it came to it, the war would be fought underground as much as in space.

And the Gourmet World was also a target for Skavens for the massive amounts of ingredients that could be found there...

...though practically every time, the rats got completely slaughtered by the harsh environments and lifeforms.

More worrying about Skaven was their habit of leaving radioactive waste wherever they went. They threatened local harvests this way and needed to be repelled.

More than that, it was House Dreemur’s diplomatic clout that made them such a powerful ally to House Lee.

So it was good to stay on fair terms with such influential allies.

For now, he just thought, and noticed a Space Bar in the distance. That got him thinking more: Those small space stations, typically containing a western/steampunk design, were watering holes for traders, travelers...

...and most notably, mercenaries.

Mercenaries were the gray area between the lawful and the outlaws. They came from a variety of backgrounds, but across the vast distances of space, they were often the difference between victory
and defeat.

Ages ago, House Lee drove out the drug dealers and slavers from the space stations, but they kept the loyalty of the mercenaries.

They charged a considerable amount, but it was often worth it, as they were usually very skilled fighters. Knowing this, mercenaries only deployed their considerable services to the highest bidder.

And that was the thing about House Lee, their prominence in the exotic animal market gave them considerable funds for mercenary armies.

Often times, House Lee officers would oversee a larger mercenary force and command them well enough to multiply their effectiveness and morale many times.

It could be a tough job, but it was worth it, and he could see both his daughters doing the same, even better than he had.

As for bars...well, he preferred the more rustic and quieter inns at Skyrim if need be.

Dreemurr owned a nice planet, but they didn’t have Nord mead or even Alto wine.

Braev considered the planet he was coming to. He’d gone on many hunting expeditions as a boy there with his father and the old king of Dreemurr. So if need be, he knew the surface well.

The first stop, though, was the Dreemurr station, Home.

...

Asgore was a man of many talents, notably gardening. Naming things...was not one of them. Heck, Asriel’s name was a combination of his parent’s names.

Indeed, the very slogan of House Dreemurr was “Growing strong”

While technically a nobleman, he’d distinguished himself with the garden trowel rather than the sword. He’d bred sunflowers that sucked up pollution and turned poisoned industrial worlds into gardens. He’d created vegetables that would grow in zero gravity with very little light.

While he wasn’t much of a warrior, he was excited to have Braev Lee on his humble station

And woe betide any fool who dared hurt his family, as Asgore still knew how to use a trident, and was armed with potent fire magic.

There were many in the corporate sector and the old aristocracy who still harbored anti-monster sentiments. They’d tried to rise against his house both with overt and covert action.

He’d shown pirates hired by House Zeal just how deadly his magic could be. Not to mention that of his adopted children.

Monsters...odd folk, but good unless provoked.

And soon, Home came into view. Small for a station, it was still very large, in order to hold both people and facilities. It was built into a small moon, little more than a captured asteroid in the planets gravity. It had the advantage of always facing the sun, so the station had perpetual solar power.

Driven by steampunk solar and backup fusion reactors, it was a highly effective and efficient little station
Quite a cozy homestead as well, suited for hosting guests. The Lee ship soon docked within, ready to disembark from their long trip.

The first thing the embarking Lee party noticed was the amount of plant life. Dreemurr station was lousy with flowers, bushes and trees. It looked more like a magic fairytale cavern than the home of a noble house.

Braev Lee breathed deeply of air full of fragrance and food smells.

Captain of the guard, Undyne, soon came with others to escort them. A fish-based monster, Undyne was incredibly passionate in regards to everything, and she approached everything with fiery energy. “Lord and Lady Braev,” the fish woman smiled, “on behalf of House Dreemurr, let me welcome you to Home Station. You are expected at Royal Headquarters.”

“Sounds good,” Edea nodded with a smile. “Been cooped up for some time.”

“No part of our station is off limits to you.” Undyne explained. “Your security is free to inspect our defenses and you are all invited to the Garden Core, where the stations food and oxygen is produced.”

“And the bomb range?” Asked Tiny Tina.

Undyne answered evenly, ”Only with your parents consent and supervision.”

“...Let’s get settled first.” Mahzer suggested.

“I agree” Braev rumbled. “Good to get situated first.”

Tina nodded, pacified by the answer. She was grateful for her parents. While she was still an insane little helion, she was grateful for the stability and normality in her life.

The family headed down the central boulevard, filled with shops and merchant stalls. “Perhaps we can get a look at the famous lab,” Rui suggested.

The lab, run by Elco, Alphys, Zelda, and Gaster, was the large place where species and food from the Gourmet World were studied. Seeing what had the most flavor and how they worked.

The lab was a true marvel of science. A place where knowledge was used only for good. It was this place which allowed the planet below to become one of the most fertile places in the galaxy despite still being a Death World.

This place was also the main supplier of food for the Imperial Capital.

As for the visit…

“Oh, yeah. Lord Asgore DID say for you to stop by there, both for recent developments and how the Gourmet World works,” Undyne admitted.

Up ahead the party was coming to a series of flower and vegetable gardens. At the Center of this garden district was the Lords Residence.

Far from looking like a galactic nobleman’s home, it looked like a luxurious vacation home. Inviting and friendly.

Once the families met, they would proceed from here to the lab, to discuss recent events. But first, greetings must be made.
The wooden doors parted and there waiting for Braev Lee and his family were the rulers of House Dreemurr.

“Hello, old friend,” said Toriel.

The goat like monster, Toriel, was a warm and motherly individual, like Mazher, who always wanted the best for family, people, and friends.

Mazher embraced the goat woman like they were sisters. "It's been much too long, Toriel."

Braev himself hugged Asgore like a brother, "It's like I never left home."

At that moment, Gaston chose to ruin the feeling. "I'm going to set up a sniper's nest on the roof. If you hear shots fired, assume the worst." The man then turned and left to head to the roof. At least now he could stay away from any happy family matters.

Toriel sighed, but gestured for the rest of the Lee's to come in.

Inside, Asriel, Frisk, and Chara were waiting as well.

Asriel was a sweet and sensitive soul, kind like his parents. Frisk was a quiet girl, yet possessed deep kindness. Chara was a bit more brash and had a morbid sense of humor, but he love his family deeply.

Toriel led the procession to the supper table. It was hardly worth visiting the famous Gourmet World without sampling the food. Dinner was a simple affair, just a roast with some herb encrusted veggies.

Chara winked at Tiny Tina, whom he sat next to. "When we're older, you'll be my Salt Wife in the Ironborn style."

Tina frowned, "As opposed to what, your pepper wife?"

It was well known, though, that Chara had something of a crush on Tina, something that Edea like to mention in her 'gadfly' moments.

For a boy with a morbid sense of humor and a dark way of viewing the world, a child weapons expert like Tina Tiny was more desirable than any princess and more interesting.

Frisk just rolled her eyes at her brother's crush. He had a long way to go before Tina would give him the time of day. Per family tradition, it fell to her to say a word of thanks before supper.

"I like to give thanks to all those who have braved the Gourmet World to obtain the best food not only for us, but for our friends and all the people in the galaxy," She stated. “And bless Hylia.”


Braev felt a warmth in his chest that was better than any beer or even the rush from a good hunting trip. he wasn't used to this level of humility from anyone. He never felt safer than when he did around his long time friends.

As Asgore began to plate for his guests, Toriel asked of him. "Did you have a safe journey, Braev?"

"Thankfully, yes." Braev replied. "Neither pirates nor others hostiles bothered us on our journey. We were fortunate."

"Ah, good to hear," Asgore replied. "Sometimes it just feels as hostile activity has increased in some
parts of the galaxy."

"Success breeds jealousy," Mazher lamented, "And sadly success also attracts the greedy and the ruthless."

"And we owe our thanks to you and your mercenary forces for policing the space lanes," Toriel comended.

Braev shook his head, "Without your mages to pinpoint the pirates strongholds and refueling stations, our star fighters would be chasing our own tails."

Asgore nodded, but then turned grim. "And yet, we still cannot track down the dreaded pirate, Terumi."

Yūki Terumi was the one he was referring to. Terumi was one of the most feared space pirates out there. The two words to best describe the pirate would be these: Evil incarnate. The man was a vile, sadistic, cruel, and twisted individual, even by pirate standards, and thrived on the suffering, misery, and despair of others.

Braev frowned, the food on his plate losing some of its allure. "It feels like every day, the monsters of the galaxy find a new member of their fraternity; always willing to do something to stand out from the rest of the pack."

"Even among the pirates, Terumi is highly elusive," said Mahzer, "Some of our Raven Navigators think he's a Null; a person without a soul, who pushes away magic and the ether away from him just by existing."

Toriel pursed her lips. "Yes, he has been on the move as always, which makes it difficult to track him down..."

"We're not sure yet who's supplying him with weapons, or purchasing his stolen goods," said Braev, "But thus far our spies have pointed to a certain Tarantulas as a possible accomplice."

"Without this creature," Mazher reasoned, "Terumi would quickly run short of spice for navigation and healing, plasma cores for his space folding engines and special torpedoes. Tarantulas is one of the few with the means and the will to sell to a creature like Terumi."

Asgore grimaced again. Tarantulas was a Predacon scientist who went rouge several years back, becoming his own agent. A nasty piece of work, his experiments were unlawful and unethical, and he took sick pleasure in performing such deeds.

Toriel shook her head, "It makes me long for the days when the worst of our worries was that reprobate, Snake Jailbird. At least he limited himself to mere theft."

Snake. Persistent but small time crook. Affably even. Those were better days.

But soon the meal was finished and Asgore stood. "Well, enough grim talk for now. Let's head to the lab. Mata Nui is here as well, in fact."

"The robot?" Tiny Tina asked.

Braev forgot to chastise his daughter for her lack of manners, he himself was too surprised. "Mata Nui? Toriel, Asgore, you are full of surprises. what did you to get him of all people out of his isolation?"
"He seemed to be intrigued by the recent events going on, and he wished to help as well in the turbulent times," Asgore replied as he stood, walking out with the entire group. "I admit he's more than a bit inscrutable," he went on "He is over one hundred thousand years old. He more or less precedes modern space travel of any kind."

Toriel began to gather the dinner plates from her guests. "Please, come with us to meet him. If you like after that, we may all sit down for some after dinner drinks."

"That does all sound so good." Edea admitted with a nod. "Alrighty, lead the way."

And so, it was not long before they reached the large lab.

Unlike the rest of the House, the Lab was state of the art, one of the best anywhere in the galaxy. And an orange, female reptile was trying to talk down a large, green creature with a gun and a broomstick.

"Strong, friend," begged Alphys, "Please, I want to thank you for taking care of the rat problem. But in the future just leave out some traps."

The creature looked a little like an Ork, but it lacked the massive underbite and fangs. In fact it was one of the fabled Super mutants from New Vegas. The creature, Strong, rumbled in reply. "Strong kill and eat rats. Traps no fun!"

Another scientist, a skelton-like monster named Gaster managed to talk the super mutant down. "Strong, go into the ammo dump and detonate some expired bombs for us. We have business with the Lord and Lady of our house."

"Strong go!" The mutant bounded off happily.

Alphys sighed. "Ah, t-hank goodness that's taken care of," The usually nervous and flustered monster sighed with relief as she put the broom down.

Gaster nodded as he turned to the group. "Ah, Lord Dreemurr and Lord Lee. Good to see you today."

"A pleasure as always, Gaster," Brave nodded to the scientist. "What you you and the others have for us today?"

Gaster gestured to the path where the Super Mutant had gone. "Well we have fairly definitive proof with Strong and a dozen others of his kind that Super Mutants can coexist peacefully with monsters and humans; that is when they're not using guns to open soup cans and soft drinks," He flashed a knowing grin, "But I think you'll be more interested in the anti-piracy measures we've been working on."

Alphys jumped up, filled with nervous excitement. "Yes! We've been working on ways that pirates avoid conventional scanners and space mines. This in turn can be used to get the jump on Tyranid Bio-fleets or the spores that Xenomorphs launch into space from planet to planet!"

Alternis nodded. "That is good to hear. The virus must be cleaned before they can take root!"

"First one must study the virus," Another voice caught their attention. A blond Hylian female with a blue shirt and black pants. Zelda, an scholar, researcher...and tsundere.

"Most people believe that the egg or the face hugger is the basic Xenomorph unit," Zelda explained, "In fact, most Xenomorph infestations start with something called black goo; a highly virulent
mutagen that infects groundwater and transforms native life into zombies. When these zombies die, they birth large worms which impregnate new hosts and produce a Deacon; which then evolves into a queen."

The Hylian looked somber at her announcement, "With medical research from House Nui, we've made the first steps to developing a vaccine and even a cure for the Black Goo, and for the facehuggers."

"It is our pleasure," said a wise voice, "For long I spent ignoring other beings, taking for granted they would always be there," said Mata Nui himself.

All turned to see the Lord of House Nui. A tall biomechanical being, Mata Nui was a golden figure, wearing the Mask of Life, Kanohi Ignika, upon his face. An artifact of great power, it was not to be used rashly.

Yet for all his power, Mata Nui was a humble figure, evidenced by his pet Scarabax Beetle, Click, who rode on his shoulder.

"Lord Dreemurr," he bowed. "Thank you for having me. And Lord and Lady Lee, thank you for answering our summons in the name of friendship and peace."

"Friendship runs strong between my house and Dreemurr," said Braev, "But I'm afraid myself and my forefathers only knew you by reputation lord. What brings you out from your homeworld?"

Mata Nui smiled. "I wish to aid the galaxy at large as hostiles begin to grow in numbers. It is my home as well."

"True..." Edea noted. "Well, it's good to have you around for the future."

"Indeed," Zelda nodded. "Now, let us show you around."

Alphys took over for the Hylian Princess, "Oh there's so much to show! Where can we even begin?! Why just over there, we have engineered a new flower that can nullify Yautja cloaking devices. X-rays, infrared, subspace, their invisibility can resist them all, but our flower can flush them out and force them out of hiding!"

"For that we have House Dreemurr's long history with farming and horticulture," Zelda elaborated.

"And speaking of which," Zelda went over to a console and summoned a holographic map of a planet.

The Gourmet World

"220,000 kilometers in circumference, this planets has countless species of flora and fauna," Zelda explained. "We actually divided the world into two sections. 30 percent is what we call the 'habitual zone', where, while still quite dangerous is certain areas, it is stable enough where we built large settlements and cities there. The remaining 70 percent, though, is what we call the 'True' Gourmet World. Consisting of eight massive continents, the environments and animals here are powerful beyond belief, and only experts can safely travel there."

Alternis knew that well. A few months ago, in a reckless moment, he traveled to that part of the Gourmet World to seek ingredients for his family.

Had it not been for Urbosa, he would have been killed.
Toriel regarded Zelda with respect, "Indeed, the so called Gourmet Zone is where House Dreemur trains our Citizen Militias. Not to mention the fact that there are still thousands of isolated farmsteads in the Gourmet Zone; protected only by basic ring forts and the willingness of their owners."

Mata Nui nodded, "And I take it this Habitable Zone is where most of your House's manufacturing and commerce takes place."

"Indeed," Zelda nodded. "Though even that Zone has dangerous environments. Ice Hell is one such example."

"Ah, yes. Ice Hell," Asgore smiled weakly. A continent composed entirely of ice and snow, it was below freezing there, and one must have both good equipment and preparation before going there...lest one ends up as frozen statue.

The highlight there was the 'Century Soup', a soup formed every hundred years by the mixture of frozen ingredients.

"But even more Important though it Hotland, my old home!" squawked Alphys.

Zelda brought up a map of an arid, dry desert. "Indeed, It's the source of most of Dreemurr’s mineral extraction. It's the home of the planet's industrial revolution and also the main source of lasers."

"And conveyor belts!" reminded Alphys.

"Yes, and it's actually one of the more safer areas, compared to other deserts, like," Zelda zoomed in on another section. "The Sand Garden, located the Habitable Zone, is a desert region of 39,000,000 Sq. kilometers. Dangerous, yes, but also prime source of desserts."

"And nothing beats those!" Edea grinned happily.

"Agreed," said Zelda, "It's the sale of desserts on the intergalactic market that funds nearly two thirds of the research here as well as making up over twenty percent of the planet's exports. Though a region which could use some more lockdown and security is The Core."

"It's gotten bad recently," said Gaster, "The Core the source of much of the planet's magical electricity and a major producer of ozone. However, there's a logic plague among the robots of the region which is rendering it more hazardous than the electrical storms, deadly insects and other hazards make it."

"Hmmm," Braev rubbed his chin in thought. "That is distressing to hear."

"And to compound matters," Elco, another scientist, stepped forward. "The powerful lifeforms on the Gourmet World attracts Yautja, who see the animals as supreme trophies."

"We have a delicate balance with the Yautja," said Toriel, "They've always had a gentleman's agreement with us; they don't hunt the monsters and we don't stop them from hunting the wildlife. However, that agreement doesn't extend to any of our allies or any humans on the planet."

Mahzer sighed. "Well, no pact is perfect, sadly."

Braev nodded silently, knowing all too well of the deadliness the Yautja presented. Many of brave Nord had fallen victim to the hunters, converted to trophies for the ships of the predators.

The Yautja were violent, no member of their society no matter age or gender were except from the hunts. Despite their violent nature, they were not like the Orks or the Xenomorph. They were
They sought out the strongest prey, to weed out the week and benefit their society as a whole; individual trophy taking was a means to an end for their nomadic, tribal culture. But as shown with the Monsters of Dreemurr, they could be reasoned with on some level.

"Anyways," Mata Nui went on. "All is otherwise well so far?" He tilted his head. "What is the status of Hyrule?"

Zelda's expression grew dark. "Ganon has uploaded his mind into a super computer called Calamity Ganon, many years ago; He's taken control of several biomechanical constructs our greatest scientists built. Food from House Dreemurr is keeping us in the war."

She took a deep breath, "Our Champion Link is taking the war to Ganon. He’s lost most of his factories and his allies are deserting him. But my main worry is that King K. Rool is thinking of sending the Space Marines to intervene."

Mata Nui and Braev nodded grimly, thinking of not only Link, but the other Champions as well: Mipha of the Zora, Revali of the Rito, Urbosa of the Gerudo, and Daruk of the Goron. Together with Link and Zelda, these were Hyrule's best, and were personally recruited by Asgore to serve as his elite guard (and in Zelda's case, scientist). They thrived on to this day, due to various reasons.

Mahzer spoke. "Has Ganon tried to use the constructs to invade the Gourmet Zone?"

Gaster smirked. "Tried, but the Eight Kings take care of them. Ganon is smart," He explained. "But he doesn't understand magic, he's never respected it. You can't study magic or use it effectively if you don't play by its rules. It'd be like building electronics without using insulated wires."

"But he still keeps trying," Alphys lamented, "Evil as he is, the guy is as persistent as Link, his arch enemy."

As for the Eight Kings, they were the most powerful known animals in the Gourmet Zone. Each one ruled over one of the eight continents, and to cross one was a bad idea.

"The Eight Kings fundamentally preserve the balance of the ecosystem," Gaster went on. "They're fundamentally neutral to what goes on about them as long as the integrity of ingredients are preserved. Only Bambina has the slightest interest of anything going on outside this planet."

"However, it was the Guardian Heracles who crippled Gannon's fleet in orbit with her air powers when his activities threatened her foal," Zelda interjected.

"Not to mention Moon's ability simply absorbs anything that gets too close," Elco added. "All in all, these creatures are dangerous, but simply wish to protect their homeland."

"As with many things," Toriel explained, "That which is dangerous is not always evil. That which helps you is not always good. The livelihood of everyone, monster and human, depends on the ingredients of the Gourmet world. To tame the world would be to kill it. Even the violent Yautja don't harm the sacred air trees or the children of the eight Kings."

"If it came down to it," said Mata Nui, "Do you think your world could withstand a siege by the Tyranids... or the space Marines?"

Asgore had to pause and think on that for a moment. Then he spoke. "It is difficult. There is much even we do not know about the Gourmet World... what mysteries lie within."
"But that's why we've been working on some Robos to remote control, so we can explore the World without risk!" Alphys piped up.

"Given how Tyranids exterminate all life anywhere they go, even more systematically than Xenomorphs, it'll be unlikely that the Eight Kings take it lying down," Gaster pointed out, "The Moon that absorbs everything will help us funnel in their bio-ships in for a specific angle; allowing our anti-space guns to concentrate our firepower."

"And barring that," said Alphys, "there's a number of ingredient rich caves and rock formations which we could use to build garrisons and entrenchments that would allow us to stand year long sieges."

"And," Zelda went on. "The Snake King has been know to extend its body into space to eat, so it will likely attack anything hostile that gets to close."

Braev nodded. "Good, good."

"I believe the galaxy is due for a time of chaos," said Mata Nui, looking directly at Braev. "A sit stands, all of our houses face deep, ongoing problems with no real solutions in sight. But there is more on the horizon.When times are good, the Noble Houses can do no wrong, when times are hard, the Noble Houses can do no right. What we need is to act before the start of the dark times."

"Don't you think you're being a bit dramatic?" said Braev, "If we're under threat from Tyranids and who knows what else, the King will act. He may be a buffoon but he can be counted on to defend his throne."

"And yet..." Mata Nui paused. "What if it's JUST the throne, and nothing else?"

Braev had no answer for that. Deep down he wondered about the state of things in the Royal House. It...got under his skin sometimes, worrying about his family as well.

"King K. Rool will do anything to keep his throne," said Mata Nui, "But do not mistake that for patriotism. I've watched many tyrants fight back the Tyranids and other monsters from the void; only to bleed their kingdoms of treasure and people in the process. They rule over a pile of ashes, but they still rule."

"Remember the history of the Barrow Kings," said Zelda, "Who ruled the North thousands of years before the Starks. the Last of them stopped a Grox invasion by using atomic weapons on Grox occupied worlds; burning out their armies but also turning thousands of planets into glassy wastelands. After the Grox were gone, the Barrow kings turned to banditry and theft to pay for the tremendous cost of the war."

Braev nodded grimly once more. Indeed, he knew corruption well. Several decades back in his youth, a religious sect, known as the Sparrows, had power over a portion of the Galaxy. Acting as benevolent caregivers, they were in fact a fearsome and intolerant militant force, eager to convert all those to their faith-and root out those 'unclean' such as homosexuals and the like.

The Sparrows had tried to push their faith onto the native peoples of Skyrim, hoping to use the chaos of the Civil war as a cover for their brand of fundamentalist violence. Braev himself was a worshipper of Talos; a god of strength and war, but not a god who policed his followers in the bedroom.

The Sparrows would keep their Seven, or their version of the Seven. Talos would be more offended by their treachery, using kindness to mask cruelty than he would be of a man and a man or a woman
and a woman together.

Braev himself did not care really about what a 'proper' relationship was. If a man loved a man or a woman loved a woman, then so be it. Eventually, he tracked down their leader, a man known only as the 'High Sparrow'.

Digging up records, Braev discovered the man, whose name was never known to him, was once nothing more than a shoemaker. Before he became the so called "High Sparrow," the Shoemaker had been a man of some wealth and status. His luxury shoes were in high demand from the nobility and a pair could fetch a year's salary. Back then he'd been known for his drunken debauchery rather than fundamentalist preaching.

It scared Braev, to think of how the man could go so wrong. One day the High Sparrow had turned from drunken lecher to healer, teacher and helper of the poor. Yet the man's heart had turned very dark, it wasn't long before he was wanted in connections with lynchings, attacks on minorities and queer people.

And most alarming of all, K. Rool's spies and policemen had done nothing to stop him; even as his fundamentalism and cruelty grew too great to ignore.

The worse part? The High Sparrow was not doing this out of money and and material gain, as he believed such things were worthless. No, the High Sparrow truly believed what he was doing and preaching was right, the will of the gods.

Eventually, Braev knew he had to take matters in his own hands, to protect his lands and his loved ones. Gathering not only the best Nords he knew, but other great warriors he allied with, he led an assault on the Sparrows.

By the time it came to end it, the Sparrows had gathered a powerful and fanatical army; many of them former mercenaries and poor kids who'd only known hardship. They had a well trained and armed space force and the High Sparrow was not too proud to take advice from people who knew more about warfare than he did.

With his best mercenaries and finest captains at his side, Braev had broken the Sparrow's citadel and fought his way past the gates to the great Sept of Baelor.

it was there in what should have been a holy place of a major galactic religion that he’d faced the little old man who'd been so kind and caused so much death and misery.

He did not seem to fear Braev, seeming accepting his end, but also asked if Braev was willing to spill blood in such a holy place.

Braev paused, knowing the High Sparrow had some points...but he had come to safeguard those he cared for, not an ideology.

When Braev answered yes, the old man confided that he was in fact afraid of death; but that there were more important things. That any man alone was poor and powerless, but together his Sparrows could bring an empire to its knees.

It was then that old man revealed he had a hostage, Mahzer; the woman who would in the future become his wife. Frail and sick, she'd been getting treatment in the White Magic Hospital in Eternia when the High Sparrow's agents had kidnapped her.

It was Mahzer, who despite having a gun to her head, suggested the Notorious "Trail of the Seven."
Braev, deep down furious at this cowardly tactic, had to agree, unwilling to let her die.

The fighting called a ceasefire as the preparations were made.

The Rules of the trail were simple but not easy. Each side would field seven champions and whoever won had the will of the Seven Gods on their side. To Braev, it seemed a barbaric and arbitrary thing; but he could not deny that the Sparrows would not back down from such a challenge.

Alternis, Reinhardt, Rui, Wes, Tsubaki Yayoi and even a newly hired, fresh faced Gaston had agreed to join Braev in combat against the High Sparrow's hand picked killers.

Among those was a young man named Lancel, who had joined the Sparrow after some personal crisis.

The fight was short but bloody. Although Tsubaki lost her life, she died boldly, never one crying or begging for her life. Defiant to the very end.

Young Lancel had fought with a poisoned weapon; the smallest scratch being what ended Tsubaki, who killed two more men even while succumbing to the deadly venom. In a bit of vengeance, Gaston put an arrow through Lancel's eye.

Braev and his men prevailed, but the High Sparrow refused to relinquish his hostage. And Mahzer surprised everyone by stabbing the High Sparrow with his own dagger.

Mahzer ran to the group afterwards with the teenage Alternis guarding her as Braev approached the wounded Sparrow and finished him off with his great sword.

He took no joy in his task, not even satisfaction. He simply did what he had to do.

Even in his final moments, the High Sparrow had been sure that his had been the moral path. The scary part was that Braev could see himself in the man. He'd once flirted with crystal orthodoxy as a jaded young man, nearly falling to fundamentalist faith.

Had his life taken a different turn, he could have ended up being a Sparrow instead of a follower of Talos.

In killing that old man, he buried a part of himself; a part that was better off dead.

What happened next was simply cleaning up the mess. The Sparrows were disbanded, Tsubaki was giving a honorable funeral, and those had suffered were taken care of...

... But enough on dwelling on the past. Braev had to focus on the now.

"Myself, my house and my family will give our last treasure and our last drop of blood defending our allies and our Kingdom," he told his friends, "We will defend it from threats internal and external; I'll even defend all of you from our King, if I have to."

Mata Nui put his hands together and smiled, "That, Lord Braev Lee, is exactly the answer I was hoping for. Now then, I believe I will share some of my advancements. It is time for me to help defend this galaxy from anyone who would threaten it."

It was then Ciel chose to come in.

"Thank you for having me and giving me such fine hospitality," the genius girl said to her hosts,
Toriel and Asgore. "And as per your permission, I've managed to set up the CIEL-SYSTEM aboard this station. Now if the solar power is cut off, you won't have to rely on expensive, imported anti-matter to provide power. You can just use energy crystals which are abundant on the planet’s surface."

Toriel bowed, "We are only too humble to have your aid, my dear."

Ciel smiled kindly, "More than that, I've figured out a way to punch through the communications blackout caused by Tyranid Hive Fleets; known as the Shadow in the Warp."

The Shadow...no one knew exactly how it worked, but apparently the Hive Mind guiding the beasts and the ability to completely screw up communications and travel. It was quite distressing, and Ciel's research to counter it would be much appreciated.

What it meant was that when a hive fleet attacked a solar system, the Shadow would cut off all communications and block fold space travel. The world in question would be cut off and left vulnerable.

“I came upon the seed of my research from watching recorded footage of Skaven Horde Fleets use focused warp lightning to punch through the interference and Yautja ships wage guerilla attacks despite the shadow in the warp; using faster than light travel freely.”

“Hopefully,” Mata Nui added. “We can counter the threats before they begin, and help stabilize Worlds around the sectors.”

"Yes!" said Ciel excitedly, "that's the entire point of my research! Distribute the CIEL system ahead of anti-matter shortages. Detect Hive Fleets before they get within attack range. Sniff out Skaven activity in Dark space before they attack. Our Galactic Kingdom is too vast and the King's power too diffuse to be reactive. We, the people, the Houses must be proactive in the time to come."

Braev nodded once more, happy to hear such advancements have come far...

But sometimes science could be both beneficial AND dangerous...Wes and Rui were good examples. While they had served Braev for some times, they both only looked like very young adults.

The reason: Experimentation.

The two were orphans captured by a scientist named Fuyuhiko Date, who performed nasty experiments on them, to build new types of soldiers. The effects gave them better connection to animal life, better health, and dramatically slowed the aging process, as well as extending their lifespans dramatically. But the operations were painful.

The goal of the scientist Date was to create a mass produce-able super soldier program to rival that of the King's Space Marines. Rui and Wes were intended to become proto-super soldiers; their enhancements supposed to make them eligible for further augmentation at a lesser cost than the feared Space Marines.

It ended when Agent 47, to prove himself to his king, assassinated Date and destroyed all of his data or stole it to improve the King’s own Space Marine program.

47's orders did not cover the fate of the boy and girl, at the time, Braev had used his favor with the King to spare the then children's lives. He treated them well and helped them, and they in turned served him loyaly.
Rui also gained a sort of 'second sight' that let her see the 'aura' of certain beings. These psychic powers served him well as a lord, spotting out those with aggressive auras, tracking down spies and seeing through the ways of various shape shifters. More than once, the two had saved Braev from gene Stealer cults, Skaven Gutter runners and worse.

Yes, he was happy to have them as his side.

Meanwhile, Ciel went on. "In other news, we've been testing something new...but it's kinda risky and still in the early stages..."

Mata Nui, though, gave a nod of consent, and Braev spoke "Proceed. The knowledge will be safe with us."

Ciel took a deep breath. "DNA transfusion...or using samples of animal DNA to enhance other beings."

Braev couldn't help but blurt out, "I hope you're not talking about what I think you're talking about," His expression grew angry, "The last time someone tried something like that, the Beastmen of the Drakwald sector were created."

Ciel raised her arms, "No my lord, nothing like that."

"Not hybrids or anything." Mata Nui added. "Simply enhancements."

"But like I said, it's a tricky process." Ciel admitted. "DNA is a rather...complex thing to work with. A baseline human has about thirty genes that control the formation of the eyes," she explained, "A Space marine has only two; but that's because red spice keeps their bare bones DNA stable and solid.

The girl scientist became excited as she waved her arms, "But imagine, a human with gills who could survive on an aquatic world. Or a human with heat vision like a Yautja. It's a matter of finding the right blend of genes. We don't want to rip away the excess DNA, we want to keep people modular; keep the changes reversible."

Mahzer looked interested, but then a look of worry came over her. "I remember a similar thing was done in the fallen city of Rapture, they...used some kind of slug to alter the genes."

Braev nodded. "Yes, and the reports say they needed the substance regularly, or deformity of both body AND mind would occur."

"Well in Rapture, the maker of these "plasmids," Dr. Tannenbaum ran into the opposite problem," Ciel elaborated, "The Plasmids of rapture are made of two components; ADAM and EVE. ADAM being a substance of pure stem cells which modifies the DNA and EVE with actually powers new mutations. Excessive use of ADAM or EVE brought on addiction which both increased the number of genes and genetic mutations and also required more and more EVE to keep the mutation in check."

"I remember seeing autopsies of the so-called Splicers," said Braev, "Poor souls; on the inside and out they were torn apart."

"Yeah..." Ciel nodded. "What I am working on is an attempt to be more stable, as to not cause a complete breakdown in the coding systems. We're working on something reversible, stable but also adaptable. I'm not trying to make my procedure addictive in order to sell magic powers in a bottle."

"We've had much promise using white spice during gene splicing," explained Mata Nui, "Normally it's used to freeze cells for live cryo-stasis; but we've found it can keep DNA solid without tearing it
apart or causing it to become excessively rigid."

White Spice...one of the rarer spices, but quite useful nonetheless, and it was all in the good hands of Mata Nui. The Lord Of House Nui controlled the majority of the Galaxy's White Spice supply. he made a good profit from its niche uses; but it seemed like he was using it to unlock hidden potential in the genes of sentient life.

As an extremely advanced House, it would make great advancements in the field. The Station of his House, Metru Nui, was a vast area divided up into various sections. The Coliseum was the center of it, used to hosting friendly games and making speeches, as well as powering the station.

The station was a powerhouse of art, culture and science. Housing not only some of the finest scientists in the Galaxy but among the most cutting edge cinema, literature, theater and even video gaming. The Station was home not only to a powerful military force but served yearly for the site of a dozen conventions and meeting celebrating one form of art or sports or another.

Mata Nui himself was famous for his laws regarding free speech and expression and his endorsement of the arts in all shape and sizes. It wasn't always like this, but it coincided with Mata Nui's desire to make the galaxy a better place and be an active steward of it.

And speaking of gaming...

"So, you all showing our pals the sweet new tech were planning?" All turned to see a high ranking Nui member, Hana 'D.Va' Song, waltz in, a grin on her face.

"Indeed," Said Mata Nui playfully, "Sentient beings cannot live on bread alone. As our resident Starcraft champion will attest."

"And Total War champion," the Asian woman corrected playfully.

At first glance, one would wonder why D.va would be part of the upper circle. She was a pro gamer, sure, known for being a champion in many rings of video games. Some, though, did not understand why that would earn her a high seat.

The answer: Her gaming skills gave her the reflexes to pilot a special type of mech into battle, and her skill with it inspired troops when facing enriching hordes of enemies. She lost count on how many alien bastards she would gun down in a single battle.

D.VA had been at the top of her class in school, top of her class for physical education. Combined with the reflexes honed in skill based shooters and real time strategy games, she'd made a name for herself when Orks had invaded her homeworld and she'd gone toe to toe against suicidally insane Ork fighter pilots; particular Da Krimson Baron.

But that alone wouldn't guarantee her a spot in Mata Nui's court. At the end of the day, it was her commitment to justice and fairness which put her over the top and into the court of the ancient machine. That and she was never afraid to speak her mind.

Sure, maybe a bit of glory hound and little too caught up in treating fights like a game, but her true kindness and spirit shone through it all, and she earned the respect of many.

D.VA pointed to her eyes, "See anything different?"

Braev cocked his head.

She smiled, "I got eagle DNA in me. I went from 20/20 vision to 20/60. Oh and wait until you see
what my new mech can do.”

Eagle DNA? Well, at least she did not mutate horribly like those Beastmen did...

Beastmen... unlike other animal bases races, who had just as much civilization as anyone else, these brutes were feral, smelly, rage-filled, and primitive... but very dangerous.

The Beastmen ruled over a section of galaxy known as the Drakwald Sector; a twisted mess of asteroid fields, nebulae, black holes and a hundred other navigational hazards.

When they weren't killing, slaying and maiming on planetsides, they were riding around on rusted, beat up, scavenged starships and raiding and pillaging at will.

Monstrosities of human and animal, the Beastmen desired nothing but to destroy civilization as it existed everywhere, aided by powerful magic and a high reproductive rate.

Just another alien race to do battle with.

Ciel spoke up again. "D.Va here received only a minor sample, just as a test. Everything, thankfully, turned out ok."

"But I would have forgiven you if I turned into a giant eagle woman," D.VA giggled.

Ciel gulped, "True, but I'm not sure I would have forgiven myself."

Mata Nui stepped in, "D.VA has been helping Ciel design better navigation computers for mech infantry as well as starfighters. At some point however, improvements to the pilots themselves are needed."

That was true... in space, you always needed to be alert every second of battle in order to NOT get shot down into the unforgiving abyss.

Space craft could dogfight thousands of kilometers apart, and then in the blink of an eye two pilots would find themselves within only a few hundred feet of each other with a simple engine boost. It was a game of less than milometers. The tiniest advantage would be enough to give one pilot victory over another.

"Not to mention," said Mata Nui, "Our ongoing research into Raven spice is producing a more accurate and safer way to train fold space navigators."

Edea looked up. "The Raven Spice, eh?"

Asriel spoke up this time. "I've read about it. Supposedly named after the Three-Eyed Raven, a being said to see into the past, present, and future all over the galaxy."

"I'm old enough to remember the time before Fold Space, before Warp travel," said Mata Nui. "In the earliest days of space travel, living beings would freeze themselves and travel thousands of years between stars. Warp travel allowed faster travel, but it would still have taken centuries to cross the galaxy. Fold Space as we know it allows instant space travel anywhere in the galaxy. The only limit is the sight of the Navigator."

"Indeed," said Ciel, "Many promising young navigators suffer overdose or stroke due to the sheer volume of spice they ingest. My work was focused on weeding out those with genetic affinity for Blue Spice and stopping overdoses."
Asgore looked up. "A tricky process at times. Even today the nature of Spice eludes us in some aspects..."

"Yes," Toriel agreed. "Some have even begun to question where it came from...and why."

"Even I don't know where the spice comes from," said Mata Nui, "But the problem is that it is so profitable, most don't care where it comes from. They just want to mine as much as they can."

Ciel stepped forth, "And that is the biggest question of my research, the origins of spice and how to cultivate it in a renewable fashion."

"The Worms of Arrakis..." Alternis began. "They are major spice producers themselves, but to harvest directly from them is quite dangerous."

"They're the largest producers of Blue Spice," Braev reflected, "The average worm about eight hundred meters long and nearly unkillable without atomic weapons. They eat the spice, hoard it but they also seem to produce it."

"As of late," said Ciel, "Excess water brought in from off world is harming the worms and their delicate fusion based biology."

"Hmmm, yes." Asgore rubbed his chin. "Nature is a delicate balance. To disrupt it could have devastating effects to the planet and they ways of life we live."

"As our house was descended from farmers rather than warriors," said Toriel, "We know better than most just how much we depend upon nature, even in this age of faster than light travel. The richest, most prosperous farmer can be ruined by an early frost or a crop blight."

"All it takes is one bad season..." Frisk noted.

"And we're all dead," Chara concluded with an impish grin.

...Seriously, the kid was creepy. D.Va thought that to herself as she stared at the boy.

"I like you boy," said Tiny Tina, giving Chara a look, "Maybe you and me can talk bombs when this is done. Swap stories of killing dangerous beasts."

"You're not handling any bombs outside of weapons training, Tina," said Braev, "You're not on Pandora anymore."

Braev knew Tina had potential as a great military leader. She just needed the focus to do so. It would take time, yes, but it would happen. A experience military commander under the next Marshall, his blood daughter Edea.

If there was one thing that gave Braev confidence in Tina, it was her willingness to bond with her allies. She’d lost too many people in her life. It made her reckless but it also laid the foundation for a military commander who would not spend the lives of her troops needlessly.

And who knew, maybe in this lifetime the Galaxy would not need Tina’s particular skills.

One could only hope, due to the countless dangers that spread throughout it. From monsters, to aliens, to even malevolent gods...worse of which were the so called 'Chaos Gods'.

Magic was a powerful force in the galaxy. It was a force of nature, similar to gravity or magnetism; but unlike those it followed its own set of rules and restrictions very different from anything else.
The winds of Magic by themselves were fundamentally neutral, it was all up to the intent of the spell caster. But Chaos was what happened when the worst emotions of mortals combined in the Warp to become sentient. Khorne; god of war and Murder. Nurgle: God of disease and despair. Tzeentch: God of Treachery and sorcery. Slaanesh: God of debauchery and pleasure.

Needless to say, they were a threat to all, and demons were countered with extreme prejudice.

Asgore once again spoke up. "Ah, I just remembered! I wish for some of your to test our new remote controlled droids if you wish to explore the Gourmet World from a distance."

"Why not," said Braev, "If we're going to defend your world, we may as well get to know the planet's surface."

Zelda grinned. "We call the drones 'Gourmet Telexistence Robots' or GT Robo for short." She showed one nearby: A humanoid robot with bird-like head and covered with a fur-like coating. "These are based of the Nitro species, the legendary gourmet masters of the ancient past. You put on special equipment, and it will copy your exact movement, with a delay time of less than a millisecond. So…shall we begin?"
"Amazing!" said Edea, as GT Robo took off and began to fly over the dense jungle canopy. "It's beautiful," She gasped as the Robo took a dive and dropped through the canopy, diving into the dense undergrowth of Area 7, King Bambina's realm. Area 7 was a massive continent, and filled to the brim with primates of all kinds, as well as others sorts of giant animals.

Edea, using the direct control over the Robo, looked about at the massive landscape, the camera providing visual feedback.

King Bambina had established a kingdom among the largest trees in the known universe. Establishing a ruthless martial arts based caste system. He was a proud and rambunctious ruler who nonetheless still took his duties seriously. He'd even gone so far as to welcome Yautja hunters to his realm in order to keep his people on their toes and never complacent.

Down below, various strange creatures fought, hunted and died in the jungle's dense, dark undergrowth. The gourmet ingredients found within could nearly match the rarer strains of spice for their value and use.

As well as the mystical ingredient known as PAIR...

...which happened to be Bambina’s balls, and could only be obtained via a complex dance session that required superhuman speed to do.

Not here for that.

That ingredient wasn't one you harvested with the kids watching.

At any rate, the party aboard Home Station were more interested in the strategic choke points in the landscape. The dense wood of the trees and metallic composition of the leaves would make it hard for a foreign fleet to have any kind of accurate scans of the surface.

The party, all piloting GT Robos from the space station, began to examine their surroundings once more, keeping watch for any aggressive life forms.

The Stray islands, floating islands that wandered all over the planet at random were geological marvels. They were also home to anti-aircraft defenses, training grounds for Asgore's monster militia forces and also the hideous and powerful Goron Beasts.

Speaking of Gorons, Gorons themselves were a tough, hardy race, found of volcanic environments. But, as a rule, they were big-hearted people. Daruk was among the people, and one of the best fighters.

Daruk was an exemplar of his people. Aggressive but not unethical, brusque but not unkind and deadly loyal to friends and family. he'd been thought dead by Gannon's hands nearly a century ago. But in truth his personality had been copied and uploaded into the CPU of the Divine Guardian Vah Rudania.

Now he was a voice of his people as well as a veteran of the war against Hive Fleet Gorgon

The same thing happened to Mipha, Revali, and Urbosa as well. Thought dead but also restored by the CPU units, with Zelda and Alphys all making backup bodies for them. Tricky, but WAY worth
The end result of which was that Dreemur, Lee and their allies could count on experienced warriors who during their lives had decades or even centuries of combat experience.

More than that, each of these warriors had for over a century resisting demons of Chaos. Year ago, Ganon had perfected the ability to transfer demons of the Chaos gods into advanced enough computers; this was how he corrupted the guardians.

But the champions of Hyrule had not only survived war, but the moral temptation of greater demons of Khorne, Tezeentch, Nurgle and Slannesh.

In short, things have been going well for the Dreemurr family. Good food (if dangerous to get), loyal and skilled warriors, and loving friends and family.

That what was going through Asgore's mind as he piloted his Robo across Area 7. He looked about, then quietly made sure the others took over as they hid from a Sapphire Ant, a native species of insect. It was, as the name said, a crystalline ant with a body of sapphire. And it was big.

VERY big. Even that was an understatement, and with a Capture Level of 702, it was not to be taken lightly.

A Capture Level was a value given to the animals of the Gourmet World. To put in comparison, a beast with a Capture Level of 5 could overturn a large tank easily with its bare claws/wings/paws. To say nothing of the Gourmet Zone animals, with CL levels reaching to the hundreds, and even thousands.

There were definitely some lethal creatures on the world, with the Eight Kings approaching God like levels of power and ferocity. Though one of the things keeping creatures like the Sapphire Ant in check was the Sandoriko plant, which Asgore picked up on the drone's scanners.

An animated, venus fly trap like plant; the deadly pollen of the flower could completely desiccate a living being, even something as deadly as the mighty Ant now fleeing the flower. Many powers in past history had attempted to weaponize the flowers with varying levels of success. But the 'domesticated ones' were still more manageable than wild ones. Thankfully, the GT Robos would keep the group safe while they did the recon from the station.

Toriel brought up a video monitor from a remote drone, "This is Area 3, arguably the harshest area of the Gourmet World. The Clouds are thick enough to block any known scanners, especially around the Cloud Tree. Due to its geographical isolation and harsh climate and volcanism; this is our last resort fallback position in the event of a catastrophic invasion."

Undyne, in her own Robo next to her, spoke up. "Possibly, if only the dumb Raven King would let us stick around more."

The Raven King, one the Eight Kings, was an extremely powerful Emperor Crow with powers over poison. Anything caught in its shadow would perish.

"Indeed," commented Toriel, "Even by the Standards of the Eight Kings, the Raven King is deeply independent, paranoid and territorial. However, the creature is also highly practical; it is nearly omniscient and it is this trait which has enabled his kind to survive multiple mass extinctions."

"So in order for him to let us onto his land," said Undyne, "It would have to be something big, like a galactic level extinction event or benefit him in some way."

Ravens...odd birds, no matter what type they were. Seen as harbingers of doom or change, they were
both feared and revered by the people of the galaxy.

Zelda pointed to a global map, "While the Raven is treacherous in his own way, one of our main concerns is holding the Three Way Road," The screen zoomed in as the drone flew overhead, "This road is one of the only major ways in and out of the habitable, so called "human world."

Gaster grinned, "For years it's been guarded by an all out maniac named Guemon. But lately we're trying to persuade him to let us place landmines, gun emplacements and checkpoints on the road."

Geumon was a easy-going yet very powerful man who spent a lot of his time guarding the Road...so much he often was seen spacing out, seemingly not paying any attention to things around him...but he was good at his task.

He was a fearless fighter, a skilled swordsman and a highly adept cook. His Fly Shark fin soup was regarded by many as a national treasure. More than that, he was famous for his near inhuman intuition; something that saved him against many dangerous beasts and more human foes.

He always turned down the help he was offered, politely though. He liked to keep his skills sharp and intact. Gaster found he could not blame the man for that. Besides, Gourmet Zone beasts were tough enough that conventional weapons would do no good against them.

Most creatures were resistant to typical forms of gunfire and hand held weapons. Even the weaker wildlife could only be hurt by either monomolecular edge weapons or otherwise magically or psychically empowered weapons. Such as Space Marine Adamantium chainswords, Link’s Master sword or Geumon’s own unique Katana weapon.

It was a tough world, but it was worth it to come here. So...delicious to come here.

And the Gourmet Zone had all the best food.

Hell, this was one of the only Death Worlds with a large tourism industry in the planet's safe zone. The only other was Stygia, and that was before the planetary shields shut down and stellar radiation, lethal gangs and everything turned into shit.

Gourmet World lived up to its name a dozen times over.

Indeed, the food here could reach extremely high prices, not surprising due to both the taste and how risky it could be to get some of this food.

Indeed, the point of this recon was to use the Robos to gather up some prime ingredients.

One such drone had spotted the highly tasty but poison ridden soft drink ATOM, used to make either delicious beverages once it came down from space or serve as an affordable starship fuel.

There was AIR, in Hercules’s lands; a fruit that was both a nutritious salad ingredient and a source of oxygen which could make a void moon habitable with just a few gourds.

These, like PAIR, were actually very tricky ingredients to use, and were rumored to be part of the course used by a famous hunter.

The stuff was famous for being used to enable contact with the dead. As such it was prized by people looking to cheat death, people looking to talk to dead loved ones and Chaos Sorcerers with much darker intentions.

The soup like substance needed to be eaten after AIR, in order to take full effect.
Yes...the legendary Full Course of the hunter...not to be taken lightly.

As such, today was more standard (relatively speaking) ingredients being sought out. It would involve using the Robos for hunting, so some fisticuffs would ensured.

And Speak of the devil, amidst the shadows of Area Seven, a Sapphire Ant staggered into camera view; spikes of glowing green stone sticking out from its joints. The creature was moving erratically and snapping its mandibles on something only it could see.

"Warp stone," said Toriel with a heavy voice, "Sometimes it is released into the atmosphere from volcanic eruptions in Area 3."

Warp stone...dangerous substance, mainly used by Skavens in their dark magic and odd technology. The element was rare, but when it appeared in an ecosystem it could cause massive mutation, highly aggressive behavior and even mass extinction. When it did appear, it was one of the few things that could unite the Eight Kings in exterminating warp spawn

Thankfully, the Eight Kings were too tough to be affected by the fell energies. They made short work of any infection they saw. Dangerous as they could be, they were needed for the safety of the Gourmet World.

The Eight were probably the best defense this world had. As it stood, the Sapphire ant would have to be destroyed. Just as it was staring to grow a new head and several new scorpion style stingers, one of Bambina's trusted monkey warriors struck the best with a blow to its multiple hearts.

It was using Enbu, a sort of martial arts practiced by the primates of Area 7. They could often perform it with no issues, though it took time to actually become masters at it. Humans and other sentient species could do it, but it took focus...lots of focus.

Discipline was a common trait among human and monster warriors of Gourmet World. Whether it was Sans Skeleton bending time and space to his will or Geumon going beyond human limits, the Eight Kings had much to teach mortal beings if they were willing to put in the effort.

Sans...a odd case, even for monsters. At first glance, he was a causal, lazy (to the extreme), but friendly and well-meaning guy, always looking out for his younger oddball brother, Papyrus.

...and yet, some would say there was more to him than met eye, his ability to teleport when no one was looking a good example.

Nobody was exactly sure how old Sans was, or why he basically had free run of the most dangerous zones with his teleport abilities.

His brother was an aggressive go-getter, a fine warrior and a terrible cook despite his best efforts.

But it was Sans himself who'd guided Chara and Frisk away from a path of darkness and some believed, from falling into Chaos.

A good man in the end.

Asgore and his team continued their trek, gathering up their ingredients, their Robos making good progress. "You're all doing well today." He noted.

Edea laughed lightly. "Ah, you're too kind."

Asgore smiled, even if the Robo did not show it. "Well, we'll be wrapping up soon, so-" He stopped
suddenly when the sensors picked up something...as did the others, and they began to look around. Something...foreign was here.

"What was that?" Edea asked.

Then, they heard distant, but approaching chittering sound.

"Salmonids..." Alternis growled, the fingers of his Robo curling up.

There they came again. Just in time for their 70 year Salmon Run. They always turned up at the same time but never in the same place. They were first spotted nearly a thousand years ago in the radioactive waters around Inkopolis. They were first discovered during the middle of a massive Ork invasion and a Yautja Civil war.

At the time nobody suspected they were intelligent, being nothing more than gangly, goofy looking fish who just so happened to walk on land.

But over the course of a thousand years they learned. They learned how to forge technology through brute trial and error. And aided by an astonishing reproductive rate and ferocious warrior culture, they'd thrived in a hostile, deadly universe. And they'd finally come to Gourmet World.

All too many times had small bands of fighters underestimated the fish, due to their weak looking bodies, ramshackle tech, and the fact their main melee weapons were frying pans.

Those overconfident bands almost always wound up dead, poisoned and beaten to melted pulps.

Salmonids had three main ranking. The 'Grunts' were first, individually weak, but came in large numbers and operated as main warriors and engineers.

Next was the 'Boss' rank. Fewer in number, but very powerful, able to use toxic attacks with supreme effect.

The top rank were the 'Golden' Salmonids, which functioned as leaders and had odd powers.

There was a reason many Yautja carried frying pans with them as trophies. Unlike Skaven, the weakest, smallest of the Salmonids would charge gladly into the jaws of death in order to buy their brethren a killing shot.

The so called Goldie Salmonids were a rare bunch, fearless; they grew faster and more ferocious the more damage they took in a fight. At their most adrenaline buzzed, jacked up they could go toe to toe with a Xenomorph Praetorian.

And now a whole swarms of them was hearing their way. Great.

"Thankfully, these metal bodies are tough," Asgore began explaining. "Though even they can succumb to the poison. Use the head mounted blasters to pick them off at a distance when they come.

The Robos took off, powerful wings churning the air. The onboard weapons powered up and all systems were green. The obvious target for a newbie would have been the wave of Chum, the lowest on the Salmonids Hierarchy. The smelly creatures were roaring with fanatical glee and waving their frying pans.

Instead the Robos targeted the Steelhead protecting the Goldie and opened fire.
Soon, the rest of the Robos opened fire as well, grateful that Zelda and Elco had installed wings on these models. The heads had opened sideways, showing laser guns that would mow down the Grunts.

But then came the Bosses, a Stinger among them. This Boss rode atop of pile of kettles, and was armed with a nozzle that could fire a accurate stream of acid at its foes.

The Robos banked hard to avoid the high stream, showering the jungle in deadly acid that burned through wood as dense as metal and stone formations.

A laser blast detonated the Steelhead's bomb just as it was launching, blasting dozens of chum but only stunning the boss Salmonids.

Flyfish hovered about, launching missiles about wildly...

...and one stuck Alternis' Robo, sending it crashing to the ground. The wing unit was damaged, but the main body was finding. Alternis picked himself up, facing down the swarm, and flexed the claws of the Robo. Time to take them head on.

"Right, let's see what you got."

The blade Master of House Lee took his unit in low, vacuuming up golden eggs from the downed Salmonids. If they weren't taken care of, they'd hatch and birth a new generation of Salmonids on the planet in a never ending cycle.

Going for the direct attack, he raised the legs of his metal bird and gouged out the eyes of the Goldie. The creature howled in rage and pain, swinging wildly with a crude sword. It actually picked up the now dead Steelhead and threw the body like a basketball after Alternis's unit.

Alternis managed to parry it, the strong alloy of the body managing to deflect the massive body. Alternis found himself wishing he could be here in person, so he could unleash his full might upon them.

One of the Salmonids, a Drizzler, used an umbrella of all things. The creature hissed and came out from under its seemingly flimsy tool, which had deflected laser fire. From the handle of the Umbrella fired a missile.

"Incoming!" shouted Alternis as the flock of mecha birds soared under a tree canopy. Toxic ink exploded from the missile, showering the area in a deadly poison which the Salmonids would shake off, but could be lethal to even to mid level creatures on Gourmet World.

The fur coating of the Robos began to melt away, protecting the main bodies from the initial assault. But still more were coming.

A hidden missile from a half damaged unit blew the Drizzler to bits and sent its umbrella scattered in pieces.

But that wasn't he main threat, directing the flying Salmonids was a Flyfish; a biomechanical unit that used an inkjet like contraption to fly around. It was releasing missile pods from its device, its fishy eyes full of hate.

"Oh, I can handle this," said Toriel with a grim smile, maneuvering her Robo so the missiles followed her unit.

The Salmonids fell the score soon enough...but they had plenty of bodies. Things even got more
intense when a Goldie unleashed a warm of Glowflies onto Edea's unit, which unleashed a chemical scent that stirred the Chum into a frenzy, causing them to rush her at high speeds.

Toriel's unit dive bombed and banked hard, causing the barrage of missiles to strike the Salmonid ground forces; blasting the entire area with fish guts.

The Chum leaped at Edea's unit, jumping on tree branches and grabbing onto synthetic fur and metal hand holds. Edea ground her teeth as she struggled to throw off her unwanted passengers.

So glad pain wasn't part of the feedback, otherwise she'd been feeling this for months. She used the Robo's arms to bash aside the Chums as they came.

The systems on her unit were going critical, but Edea had to make the most of it. Taking a gamble, she flew straight at the Stinger Salmonid. the creature fired a stream of acid, but Edea took it just below that; burning off several chums hanging on.

More than that, due to the angle of flight, the Stinger ended up firing acid at the Goldie; causing the creature to go more berserk than it already was.

The signals it sent out in blind pain and rage caused confusion among the ranks. This made them easy picking for the Robos. And soon, they had the Salmonids on the run.

Salmonids were frenzied, but do enough damage to the boss classes and their discipline would waver. A few of them still tried to attack the Robos, but they lacked the cohesion to land real hits and the flying ones were being torn to pieces.

Their reliance on boss units was their greatest strength and greatest weakness.

And so, all was quiet again. Toxic liquid was across the ground, but the monkeys would tend to that. Time to return the Robos to base with the food they gathered.

And so...

Edea sighed, removing the helmet and remotes used to control the Robo after she had returned it for repairs.

"Well we got the ingredients we were looking for," said Toriel cheerfully, "And we also got some golden Salmonid eggs as a bonus. Not to mention the Eight Kings will be on high alert."

"Still," lamented Braev, "i would rather have no Eight Kings and no Salmonids, or other threats."

"Don't we all," Asgore sighed. "We live in a harsh galaxy, and threats will keep coming no matter what."

"But there's still hope," said Edea, "None of us are standing idle in the face of all this. My old teacher Reinhardt used to say that we shouldn't ask for easier times, but try to be stronger people."

"And the horrors out there have yet to meet an enemy like me," chuckled Chara, still unsettling Ciel a bit.

Creepy, creepy boy.

"Now, now," Toriel said. "Let's not dwell over this. Why don't we all sit down and enjoy some food?"

"We have dessert ready," said Frisk in her usual dry tone. "Ice cream and pie. Please don't drip on
the hardwood floor or the carpet."

Butterscotch cinnamon pie, in fact, a Dreemurr specialty. Toriel was the creator of it, and it was loved by all of the House. Edea, armed with a sweet tooth, was partially excited.

Everyone's nerves were running high from the Salmonid incursion on the surface. They all had faith in the Eight Kings, but were unnerved by how little control they had over such beings. At least everyone but Toriel and Asgore were; they'd learned long ago to trust those whose sole interest was the defense of their planet and balance of the ecosystem.

Thankfully, good food and idle chatter managed to ease everyone down from the day.

It felt good that in a galaxy of terror and danger, there was still time and room to have a family dinner. It was nice that there was something worth fighting for, even dying for.

Family, friends, the people...might the fights all worthwhile in the end.
Tribes of Ark

Ned Stark looked at Rooster Cogburn with real anger. "Send Arya to Ark; a dangerous death world full of monsters, dinosaurs and criminals. Is that what you're suggesting?"

Rooster shrugged, "Well, when you put it that way . . ."

"It will be good for her," Volibear interjected, much more confident than Rooster.

Ned Stark glowered at them, trying to muster up some words to shoot them down...but he was too angry to even speak or yell right now. Sending his little girl to such a extreme Death World, where 'Survival of the Fittest' was in full effect here...he did not like that.

"You sent your heir, Robb to Death World Arrakis for a year," said Volibear, "You sent your other son Jon to New Vegas where he returned with nothing but a curable STD from Duke Nukem's whore house."

Rooster laughed at the memory.

The large bear went on, "You have plans to train Rickon on Gourmet World when he's old enough. Sansa might be content as a stateswoman, but Arya will never be content with a political education and nothing more."

Rooster nodded. "Like it or not, kid has a different future, one as a fighter. Training her now would likely be best choice so she can learn fast and grow into a capable fighter."

"Now Rickon likes guns," said Rooster, "What boy doesn't? But first time Arya saw me shooting, she grilled me for firearm discipline, how to maintain a gun and the right way to shoot because holo dramas always lie. Kid has a knack for the nuts and bolts of shooting."

"I want her to defend herself," said Ned, "But sending her to Ark would be a bridge too far. To say nothing of her mother."

Volibear huffed, "Ark is a planet that teaches the value of cooperation; not to mention it's the fief of one of your most trusted allies."

Ned knew that, yes, but still, Windrunner was not one for hand holding. Her task was to see them the World, then let them fend for themselves.

Now that he thought about, wasn't his wife talking to Windrunner now?

"Assuming that I consent to this madness," said Ned, "What makes you think that Catelyn will go along with it?"

Volibear met his lord's eyes, "Sylvanas might have not been a mother, but she has known loss; she once had a family and she knows exactly what concerns and fears haunt your wife and indeed yourself, lord."

Ned flinched, and went silent for a moment. That was indeed correct. The High Elf Windrunner family had been torn apart by madness, death, and war. Hard to say if things could ever be the same again...

Rick Sanchez chose to stroll by, pushing a large cart of spice for sorting, purifying and eventually
"Sale. "I say let her go, Neddy," the man took a long pull on his flask, "If you go as the King's hand, she'll be stuck here with nobody to defend her but Morty; and as much as I love him, the kid is as useless as an asshole with taste buds."

Ned gave Rick a sideways look, "You're too drunk to be giving anyone advice."

"Yeah, but, would ya know it, people listen to me anyways," Rick countered with a smirk.

"For better or worse...or shall I remind you of Silicon Valley?" Volibear deadpanned.

"Aw, geez, is EVERYONE gonna hold that over my head!?" Rick growled. "They didn't listen to me ENOUGH!"

Rooster laughed as he started rolling himself a cigarette on the billiards table. "Sure Rick, just keep telling yourself that. Go do some science, it's what you're good at."

Rick grumbled, but moved on, both to fulfill his duty to Lord Stark and to make sure that Morty had done a good job guarding his moonshine.

"And don't forget, Lord Stark," Said Rooster as he lit his smoke, "Arya is a better shot than Robb was at her age."

All these arguments...it made Ned's head sway. They had some points, yes, but still...for Arya to go out there...

"There's a chance she might not come back," said Ned.

"True," said Volibear, "But would you ever forgive me if I went easy on Robb or Jon during training? Even as a teacher I have my limits. Believe me, my lord; this is universal for all parents."

"And at least she'll have training," Rooster added as he took a sip of stolen moonshine from Rick's distillery. "My old man kicked me out of the house with nothing. You'll give her education and one of them ARK chips what lets a man craft anything."

Ned once again went silent. Deep down, he knew he could not watch over her forever, not the mention that galaxy was a dangerous place...

At the moment, the doors slid open, and Catelyn came in, Windrunner next to her.

The lady of Winterfell was a somber as always. Next to her, Sylvanas had the ease of a predatory snake. "I take it you've heard the same arguments I have," she said to her husband.

Ned nodded, "Mostly likely, Cat, though I wouldn't dare reach a decision without you."

Cat sighed, rubbing her head. "I know it's not easy...but they all made good points. Arya is growing up, and even I can see that the quiet life is...not her."

Ned nodded in grim understanding. "Yes..." He looked up at Windrunner. "Very...well. On the condition Nymeria accompanies her, you have my permission to take Arya to Ark."

Sylvanas bowed, "That is most fair of your, lords. The talent for beast taming will serve Arya well on ARK. There she will learn the most valuable lessons about honor and morality."

"Just see that she has the tools she needs to survive," said Catelyn, not taking her decision lightly.

Sylvanas smiled. "I believe Arya already has that, she just needs to sharpen what she has."
And so...a few minutes, in Arya's quarters...

Arya, resting on her bed with Nymeria, was suddenly brought to attention by a knock on her door.

"Come in," She said as she sat up.

The door slid open, and Rooster walked in. "Pack your bags. You're going places, as is Nymeria."

Arya's first instinct was to panic, "Oh no! Is mother sending me to that all girls's school? Am I being locked away in a nunnery? Did Sylvanas reject me?"

Rooster laughed, "Damn girl, you're as jittery as a jackrabbit. And no on all accounts. You're going to Ark; kill some dinosaurs, blow up someone's base camp, maybe make soup out of a giant turtle."

Arya couldn't believe what she was hearing. "Really?"

"Yeah, took some time, but we managed to convince your parents that this would be for the best in the long run. Pack what you need, then meet us at the docks with Nymeria." Rooster took his leave.

"Hey there, trouble," said Robb with a smirk, entering the room. "We finally convinced mother and father to get rid of you and they're just waiting for payment to come through."

"Oh shut up," said Arya playfully,

"And on that topic," said Jon Snow, coming in after his brother, "I've got something for you."

Robb stepped aside for his half-brother, who produced a bundle for Arya. Unwrapping it, Arya saw to her joy it was a sword, a thin, but sharp looking one.

"Keep it with you," Jon said. "And stick them with the pointy end."

"That's an energy rapier," Robb explained. "It's not as heavy as other swords. but the point will get through the chinks in most armor. It's good for duels or sneaky underhanded tactics,"

"Now Ark is beautiful," said Jon. "But it's still a death world. And Sylvanas is going to throw everything but the kitchen sink at you."

Arya petted her faithful dire wolf. "I understand."

And indeed she did. In fact, she did not even WANT any special treatment just because she was a noble. Thankfully Windrunner knew and understood this, which, of course, made everything go smoother.

"Am I getting a specimen implant?" Arya asked.

"When you arrive," explained Robb. "Implanting will be tough and painful, your first test; not like joe Jon here was just given a Pip boy on New Vegas."

Jon just glared silently.

"Well, perhaps I should start getting ready." Arya noted, already looking over what resources she should bring. Nothing elaborate, just enough to survive.

Arya knew better than to overpack. Ark had a variety of biomes and there was no telling where she’d be thrown.
Besides her sword, a water purifier would be highly valuable in any environment. She paused to consider a tiny hatchet she could use as a weapon or for crafting.

Better take it. And soon, she and Nymeria were on their way to the docking station.

Windrunner was there, as was the rest of her family, wanting to see her off.

Catelyn was the least sentimental but most sincere, “Come back alive, Arya.” She pleaded.

“Remember to uphold your honor,” said her father as he hugged her.

Bran nodded. "Take care of yourself."

Rickon simply waved with a smile.

That just left Sansa. Both sisters looked at each other for a bit.

“I’m going to miss you,” said Sansa. “I wish you weren’t going.”

Arya struggles to keep her composure, “it won’t be forever. I’ll come back just so I can make fun of you and be sisters,"

Sansa could not help but smile at that, with both sisters glad they could part with good and playful words instead of harsh words they would regret if Arya never came back. That would be the worst feeling.

After the hug, Arya and Nymeria boarded the vessel to take them to their destination.

Time to rock.

The ship took off and Arya could look forward to a few years of mayhem and adventure.

Aboard Sylvanas’ personal ship, Duke Nukem came to congratulate Arya. “Well kid, you’re younger than I was the first time I killed somebody. Just aim for the vital organs on a target and wear protection during sex and you’ll be fine. Also you can craft stim berries into steroids when you level up enough.”

"Riiiight..." Arya gave him dry look as she sat down on a chair, looking out into the stars as they flew past.

It was then Karthus, an undead warlock and scholar, came in, holding a diamond shaped implant. Windrunner was nearby.

Arya looked at them. "So...that goes into my arm, right?"

"Indeed it does," Karthus replied. "And I must warn you that it will not be...comfortable. The device will merge with your nervous system," the undead scholar explained as medical drones started setting up the sick bay around him. "Please sit in this chair."

Arya complied as he went on.

"The Implant, as mentioned, will be inserted into your nervous system. It has a subspace pocket inside which can be used to store a variety of objects. More than that, there is a micro molecular assembler which will allow you to craft weapons and armor depending on practice and your own knowledge of chemistry and physics."
Arya nodded. "Sounds very useful," She noted.

"A necessity in fact," Karthus explained as Arya laid her arm on a rest. "Now, do you wish to be put under...or endure it? Personally, we see those who choose to endure it awake have what it takes to survive, showing their willpower.

Arya thought for a moment, as much as she put on a brave face, she really was scared shitless. "No drugs, no anesthetic. I'll take it as is."

"As a warning, child," said the undead mage, "It will activate every pain receptor in your body at full capacity. But because of it, there is a chance you'll understand the implant better and be able to use it more fluidly."

Arya was about to speak when the old man thrust a metal prong into her arm.

Arya grit her teeth as the process began. Nymeria, though alarmed, did not interfere. As a direwolf, she was intelligent, and knew that Arya was doing this own her own violation.

Windrunner watched as the process began. She could feel Arya's fear. That was good. Fear was vital in this galaxy, as it cautioned one. But it was also vital to proceed despite one's fear. To be a great warrior, and not just a brawler or a hired thug, was to be balanced. And balance was the hardest thing in the universe to achieve.

Arya screamed, tears streaming from her eyes. Sylvanas watched dispassionately, but not uncaring. This would be one of many ordeals in the child's life. She observed the wolf Nymeria lick her master's hand as she thrashed in the medical chair.

All lifesigns were green.

And soon, the implant would be ready. One would wonder if Arya would feel specifically that, or just huge amount of general pain.

Coming too, Arya felt like she was on her period, had been beaten up by twenty guys, and had thousands of knives driven into her skin. It as the shittiest she'd felt in her life, but there was a joy. The mental congratulation of knowing she'd passed her trial by fire.

"How do I look?" she joked as Sylvanas approached her.

"Like you've already been there," Sylvanas had a wolfish grin on her face.

Arya took a look at her arm. The diamond was now part of her body, and would serve her well in the trials to come...and many would.

A Skink suddenly came into the room for an update on their destination.

Arya cringed at the sight of the slinking, reptilian creature. Though it held no malice, Arya always had a phobia of lizards. Biting back her fear, she listened to the Skink Priest.

The bow legged reptile, bowed until its snout nearly touched the floor. "Lady Windrunner," it hissed, its forged tongue flicking out. "We are approaching Ark. Lord Mazdamundi has foreseen your request and will grant you five legions of Saurus Warriors in the next solar rotation."

Windrunner nodded. "Extend my thanks to him." She said as Arya stood up wearily, though she quickly composed herself.
"This is where we get off, eh?" She asked as Nymeria took her place at her side.

"Indeed," The Undead elf nodded as she gestured. "You will take a pod to the drop off point. Once there, you two will be on your own...unless you find a tribe willing to take you in," She gave a mysterious little smirk. "Remember that Ark is about more than killing. You're going to have to learn who to trust and who not to. Because that's life," Sylvanas explained, "If everyone were untrustworthy it would be too easy."

Arya nodded, still not fully comfortable with the idea of teaming up with strangers and putting her life in their hands.

And yet...if she must, she would. She stepped into a pod with Nymeria, letting the doors close in on them as Karthus began the launch procedure.

"Arya...good luck," Windrunner said with a salute, which Arya returned.

The next she knew, the pod left the ship and was heading downwards.

Officially the point of no return.

Her wolf Nymeria whined as the drop pod shook, battered by powerful electrical storms and strong winds in the atmosphere. Arya wasn't feeling much better herself, but she held her direwolf for comfort. Then there was a crash as the pod landed.

The sturdy design, of course, kept them all safe, if a bit shaken...then the pod opened up...

...To show the Island, a section of the Ark. It WAS beautiful to look at. They had landed on a shoreline, and a thick jungle lay ahead of them. Behind them a vast, pristine ocean lay.

Arya had never seen anything like it. It looked like a paradise. Her wolf ran out to stretch her legs. She allowed it, just taking in the ambiance.

That was when Nymeria started growling. Arya looked to her companion, "What is it, girl?"

That was when the starving velociraptor came charging out of the underbrush. No, wait...too large for that kind. It was more of a Utahraptor...and it looked hungry.

The huge avian predator made a straight line for Arya, ignoring the wolf. It probably reasoned in its lizard brain that she was the easier meal.

Not that easy, the point of her rapier, needle thrust out. By some luck, the point thrust into the thing's eye and tore it right out. The monster screeched in pain, but Arya knew better than to allow it to use its large claws. Quickly, she used her sword to stab right into its chest, slicing thorough the vitals, just as Nymeria leapt up and tore at the throat of the raptor, blood flowing rapidly.

She had no room to breathe as a giant Megalodon splashed out of the nearby ocean and snapped the Utahraptor in half. Pulling back to the sea, the giant shark vanished as quickly as it arrived; like an orca snapping up seals on the beach.

Arya's heart pounded as Nymeria started to gnaw on the half raptor carcass left over.

"Turn around," said a gruff voice as a person cocked a gun behind Arya.

Nymeria growled as Arya's eyes narrowed. She just landed here, and if she was NOT going to die
just now. Slowly, she turned around to see who was here.

A man stood there in metal armour. It wasn't very advanced, but it was lightweight and could stop anything smaller than a T-rex. He aimed a single action revolver with the longest barrel Arya had ever seen. But his most striking feature was behind a curtain of ginger hair, half of his face was covered in horrific burn scars.

"Drop your sword, cunt; I need your gear more than you do," he barked at her.

Arya glared but moved slowly to drop her sword in the sand. "Get him," she said softly, and her wolf attacked like a coiled viper.

The man had dropped his revolver, but it was within reach. One of his armored gauntlets was wrapped around Nymeria’s throat. If he so desired, he could strangle her lifelong friend to death.

He didn't flinch at the sword tip inches away from his face. If anything ,he looked like he was daring Arya to kill him.

"You have to apologize," she growled. "That’s my friend you've got there and if you don't want to die, you'll apologize to me and her."

The man on the ground exploded into laughter, unable to believe what was being asked of him.

Arya glared harder as the man caught his breath. "Really now, you dumb cunt! You think you are in any position to-"

"Hey, hey, both of you play nice," A young man with blond hair emerged from the trees, wearing a tank top and shorts.

The man looked friendly enough. Following him was a dark haired man with a huge warhammer over one shoulder. "Listen, girl, you're obviously a decent person; why you're here, I don't know. But we kind of need him."

"He's part of our tribe," said the man with the hammer. "He's an asshole and his cooking sucks, but he's good in a fight."

"Yeah, yeah," The scarred man grunted. "Its all I need here in this bloody island." Arya scowled as she backed off, and the scarred man released Nymeria, who growled and shook her body. He stood tall once more, and Arya got a good look on just HOW tall he stood.

For a fleeting second, Arya could have sworn he was familiar. Something about the shape and color of his eyes. But he couldn't remember exactly how the man was familiar. They never took eyes off one another as the man bent down to retrieve his revolver.

The man with the hammer called to them, "You can fight, so you can join us for dinner if you share that raptor."

"I prefer chicken, Gendry," snarled the scarred man. "Not fucking thunder lizard."

Arya looked at what was left of the raptor. She then looked back at the group. She weighed her options. Should she just trust them like that?

... "Lead the way," She said as last, grabbing the mangled remains.
"Glad to," The blond grinned. "Name's TK Takaishi. This is Gendry, and this charmer is the Hound. Or what we call him."

Hound just grumbled. "Don't give me a reason to shoot you," he warned Arya.

"Well, you didn't shoot me," said Arya. "You could have."

"Shut up and help me skin the carcass," Hound snarled as he began to gut the half raptor with a hunting knife.

Arya glared, but decided to help in order to build good rep with this tribe. She could use some help, she knew that much.

Butchering the carcass made her skin crawl, but she hid her feelings from the crew. It also gave her the chance to keep some raptor skin; it could be crafted later into leather, which could then be crafted into useful items.

As tempting as it was to go solo, these guys knew the land, knew the local players; she could benefit from their help. Close to her, Nymeria watched with hard eyes, ready to rip throats out at the slightest provocation.

And so, the group headed back into the thick forest, where they settlement was...small as it was, it was still a place to call home in this dangerous land.

To Arya's surprise, the base camp looked remarkably civilized. A log cabin, large enough for four or more men, a small garden and a tamed dimetrodon standing guard over it all. The mammal like reptile scratched at itself, its sail waving as it did.

"Don't step in the fucking garden," Hound growled as he walked up to the tamed reptile and threw it some kibble.

Arya just took it in, it was all so...homely.

"Hey, find someone new?" A voice from the higher areas spoke up. A green Jungle Agori leapt down and examined Arya with curious eyes.

"Oh, yeah, Tarduk," TK explained. "We found her just arrived on the shoreline."

"Did the Hound try to rob you?" asked the Agori. "He does that, but he really wasn't born mean; even if he acts like it."

"Actually he did, and try to kill my wolf," said Arya. "So does your tribe have a name, or are you just going at it?"

"Just going at it now." A blunt female voice caught Arya attention, and tall, large breast female human stepped out from a small building. She had dark skin and white hair, and she wore revealing clothing and a gauntlet on one of her hands.

"So far, our goals on this planet are to survive," said the woman, "We hunt, we garden, we raid, we avoid being raided and our last base was demolished by someone riding a gigantosaurus with a fortress on its back; so we're planning revenge for that one day."

"I'm sorry," said Arya, "I didn't catch your names. I'm Arry Underfoot to my friends," Arya was not keen on receiving any special treatment right now, so she decided to use an alias for the moment. One day...but not today.
The woman stared at Arya for a moment. "Name's Bullet. I take charge around here. We have a few basic rules around here," said Bullet, crossing her arms. "You pitch in with the chores; that means the boring stuff like chop wood, wash the bed sheets, and scrub the toilet. Two, you get the most dangerous jobs in ambushes at raids at first. Three, you be straight with us and pitch in, and you'll get full membership."

Arya nodded, seeing the crew already get to the daily tasks of life on Ark.

The Green Agori bounced over to her, getting too close for comfort, "We'll be raiding later, but for now, I'm Tarduk, nice to meet you Arry!"

"Nice to meet you as well," Arya said with a small smile.

"Ah, a newcomer!" A blue Water Agori emerged from the house, followed by a brunette woman about TK's age. Revealing clothes adorned the brunette's form, though not as bad as Bullet's.

Arya looked uncomfortable, "I just have to ask, is it mandatory to wear revealing clothes for the women?"

Bullet burst out laughing while the new girl patted Arya on the shoulder, "That's our personal choice. Plenty of the women and men on Ark go nearly nude with big weapons; like Celtic berserkers. Nobody is going to make you go around like Bullet."

"But I'm going to fucking smack you if you don't start chopping firewood," Hound growled, looking up from his crafting of iron ore.

"And to be honest," The brunette continued, ignoring the Hound. "It's just more comfortable due to the warm climate here. Unless we need to go North, where we have to were thick fur clothes."

Arya was relieved that she wouldn't have to dress in beach wear. That was always Sansa's thing. But for now she could test out her implant by borrowing some of Hound's ore and some wood she'd recovered to craft her own axe. Nymeria was growling at the dimetrodon.

"Oh, don't be angry with Potato," said TK. "With luck your wolf and our synapsid will be fast friends."

"Perhaps so," Arya said as she managed to make her own tool. "But it could take some time."

"Ah, I just realized a forgot to give you my name." The brunette suddenly spoke up. "I am Kari Kamiya. TK and I take care of the animals we tame. The Water Agori is Berix. He helps with upkeep and repairs."

Arya turned as Berix waved. "So, it's just you all."

Gendry nodded. "Yeah. We had more...but they all met their ends here. You and Hound are our most recent additions," he went on, "I'm the local blacksmith. That's my main strength."

Hound gave a sardonic grin as he worked to forge new bullets for his gun. "That’s sad, but in my time on Ark, I’ve seen people killing people. in the year before that I saw people killing people. And the year before that and before that as far as I care to remember. As far as I’m concerned, Ark is just like anywhere else."

"True..." Bullet muttered. "But don't forget, the wildlife here, unless properly approached, hates us just as much," She sighed. "A lot of us had lost our lives to wild animals. Sometimes we find their remains, other times...nothing at all. Especially if they go the caves to the sea."
"Big-time danger zones, those places," Berix remarked. "But rich in resources, so sometimes the risk must be taken."

Arya started chopping firewood as soon as her implant finished forging an axe. It wasn't that sharp, but it was sturdy and serviceable and she felt proud. She swung as she observed the group.

"It's all about picking your fights," said Hound. "No matter how big or mean the beast is, if you pick your moment and know when to run, you can take out the throat, the heart or the liver."

"Or we can tame the creatures," said Berix. "We're running low on a few crucial elements and perhaps a raid on a sea cave could be a good initiation for our new recruit. We might not even have to go for the heart, throat or liver."

"I agree with Berix," Bullet noted. "We could use more beasts for use. Taming animals is often the difference between life and death on this world."

"We should look into flyers," Kari said. "It would great us great advantage."

"We've been looking to tame an Argentavis," said Bullet, "Big carrion bird good for cargo hauling. Think you could tame one, short stack?" she asked of Arya.

Arya stared at her for another long time. Bullet found herself impressed by the girl, deep down. Not a meek little thing at all.

"Where do we even find one?" Arya asked.

Bullet, smirking, gestured Arya to follower into the main hut. “Lemme show you the map of the Island.” She gestured to the map. "We're here on The Southern Jungle. The bird we're looking for mostly live in the mountains. They're scavengers and very good at finding dead meat. But unlike most scavengers they've got powerful beaks and claws to fight other predators and protect their nests."

"The good thing about them is that unlike most flying dinosaurs," said TK, "Is that they don't usually fly off when they see you. They'll typically try to attack you first."

"And the closest nesting ground for the birds is Red Peak," said Berix, "A dangerous area full of predators."

"So, good chance at death, especially for a newcomer," The Hound said as he strode up. His sneer made his face uglier. "Think you and and your pet are up to the job?"

Arya glared at him. "Just give me what I need, and I'll get you your bird."

"You've got your little play sword, you've got your dog," Hound sneered, "We'll get you a crossbow, some kibble, and TK can show you how to craft tranquilizer bolts so you don't accidentally kill the oversized chicken."

TK nodded, "You can shoot and dodge it, or you can take advantage of its natural aggression to lead it into a trapping pen."

"Good," Arya said. "So, Red Peak then?"

"Indeed." Bullet said. "Try not to die right now. Taken a liking towards you."

"Hound and I will accompany you," said Berix, "We have some hunting of our own we need to do
in that region." He said as he produced his longneck rifle.

"So hurry, girl," said Hound, "You're going to be at the front line, and your worthless life will depend on what you do."

"Then let's get started," said Arya, "I've got the bolts and I can craft the crossbow on the way."

With that in mind, the four headed off towards their destination.

Tarduk, after they were gone, turned towards Bullet. "Something tells me the girl is more that she appears to be."

Bullet considered, sweltering under the tropical sun. "It wouldn't surprise me, there's a lot of criminals, outcasts and social rejects who get dumped on Ark. I got kicked out of my mercenary gig for civilian casualties and it landed me here."

"Yeah," said Tarduk, "But how many criminals have a dire wolf with them?"

"As they only come from the galactic north," said Bullet, "Not many, and even less have a sword of that quality."

"Then...highborn?" Kari asked.

"Could be, but thankfully it was clear she was not looking for any special treatment. She knows as much. This planet doesn't care what rank you are. They want to kill you all the same."

TK sighed as he looked over the hanging Coelacanth meat, preserved for cooking later. "Yeah...Death World for a reason."

"I don't know many highborn who wind up on this world that aren't part of Sylvanas' crew," said Bullet, "Think she could be a knight, or part of a knightly family like Clegane?"

"She just might be," said Tarduk, "But I hope she survives no matter who she is, she's friendly."

"and I have a weakness to fluffy animals like wolves," said Kari.

Bullet just stared out into the horizon. Something told her...things were about to change...

--

Arya screamed as she thrust her sword through the open mouth of the crocodilian creature. The monster gagged on its own blood, but blindly clawed at her. Nymeria answered by singing her teeth into the monster's scaly throat and ripping it out.

"You scare easy, girl," said Hound, hefting a huge two-handed sword. "That's just a Kaprosuchus, he's just small fry compared to the big sarcos; those will bring down a t-rex."

Arya trembled, "I'm not afraid, I just hate lizards."

"Not actually a lizard..." Berix muttered. "But if you are scared of reptiles, better get used to them fast. Place is a haven for them...and this Island is actually one of the SAFER zones of Ark. And don't forget to scan over a carcass for anything useful," said the Agori, "You never know what you can use now or later as you level up."

At that moment, Hound used his giant sword to chop a Dilophosaur in half, He laughed as the bottom half stood for a few seconds before falling. "Kill those ones quickly, they have a poison spit that blinds you."
"Blinding poison?" Arya asked.

"And then they swarm and gut you," The Hound went on. "That's life here of Ark."

"And once we reach the mountains areas, things are gonna get worse," Berix admitted. "I suggest you have your crossbow ready. Attacking most animals at range is preferable to close combat without a proper sword and armor."

Arya nodded, "I'll do that," she felt foolish. Her father had always taught Robb and Jon that a sword was a backup weapon, unless you had either a shield or good armor. And she had neither. As the group moved on, she saw materials for simple stone bolts; not the most advanced, but they're fly true and hit hard.

Quickly mining some up, she utilized her system to craft some projectiles. "Right, this isn't so hard after all."

"Say, question," Berix began. "Did you put yourself under for the transplant, or did you remain awake?"


"Same with myself and Bullet," said the Agori, "In the long run it gave us an initial leveling boost. When you have a bit of time try crafting more advanced items; and I don't mean just weapons."

The group walked, the jungle was starting to give way to hilly terrain covered in redwood trees. Dominating the skyline was the great mountain itself, Red Peak.

Arya looked about. She could hear the sounds of various wild animals scattered about. This would be a risky endeavor.

Time to see if she had what it took.

The real test came when a gunshot struck a redwood next to Arya's head. Hound brought up his revolver and Berix brought up his long rifle.

From out of the ferns popped a group of camouflaged men with guns, bows and crossbows. The leader, a bald man looked at the group and laughed. "You're the Hound! What brings you up north?"

"Chickens," Hound said dismissively. Around her, Arya noticed that Nymeria was nowhere to be seen, just like a predator should be.

She and her group immediately went the defensive, ducking behind trees, ready to take them on.

Tribal warfare...another danger of the Island.

Arya put a hand to her ear and took it away red. Her ears were ringing where the gunshot had nicked her earlobe. A bloody but superficial wound. It ignited something in her. She raised her crossbow and like swatting a fly, put a stone bolt between a man's eyes. Elsewhere, a man screamed as Nymeria hamstrung a man.

The Hound brutally gunned down anyone he could, firing off round after round, as did Berix. These punks picked a bad time to mess with them...

...and the smell of blood would soon attract predators.

The bandit leader, Polliver, reloaded his rifle and peeked over cover. "I'm going to kill you both and
I'll fuck the little boy you're keeping with you."

Polliver heard a twig snap next to him and turned to shoot, but his long rifle worked against him. Arya thrust a recently crafted dagger in the gaps of his armor. She hissed through her teeth and twisted the knife. She wasn't thinking about her mission, predators or other trivialities. She was high on bloodlust.

Polliver gargled in pain, coughing up blood. Arya gazed was fearsome and predatory. She BELONGED here on this World. A apex predator...or one in the making.

One of Polliver's men saw this, and tried to rush Arya...

...and as such, never saw the Thylacoleo in trees until it had leapt down on him, brutally mauling him.

The sight of a carnivorous marsupial devouring a man while still alive shook Arya out of her bloodlust. Polliver was down, and a sadistic part of her was keen to leave him to the Terror Bird barreling down at them.

While the ten foot tall predator bird ate Polliver's tasty liver, Arya ran as fast as her short legs could take her, following Hound, Nymeria and Berix through the Redwoods and to the mountains. At least she'd managed to steal a simple flintlock pistol from Polliver. This was moving up in the world of Ark.

Arya, once out of range of the bloodshed, took a moment to catch her breath.

"Not bad, I must admit," The Hound said with a odd smirk. "Perhaps you do have what it takes out here," Nymeria soon caught up with them, snout coated in blood. She shook herself.

"You can dispatch predators of the two legged kind," said Berix, "But take care of that wound on your ear. Even a small wound can lead to either infection or a predator coming after you."

Arya glanced around, looking to craft some sort of bandage or balm while the group carried on. Both Hound and Berix seemed to have unlimited stamina and were in no mood to wait for her, so she had to craft and keep up.

Thankfully, some nearby herbs and plants seemed to do the job nicely enough, and she quickly patched herself up. Nymeria was close behind.

Soon, a call of large bird of prey could be heard. They were close.

There on a crag in the lower slopes of the mountain was the carcass of a gigantosaurus, a truly massive sauropod dinosaur. Maybe the creature had passed from sickness or old age, but already the scavengers were on it. Half a dozen Argentavis were feasting on the carcass.

"Get to it, girl," said hound, "It won't be long before the body attracts creatures we don't have the weapons to fight."

Arya nodded numbly, then began to descent towards the birds. She began to take a deep breath...and then something came to her. An old phrase about fear. How did it go again? Oh, yes.

"I must not fear." She murmured to herself. "Fear is the mind-killer. Fear is the little-death that brings total obliteration." She got closer.

The first bolt in her crossbow was a stone one and it struck one of the giant vulture birds in the head. The creature squawked and opened its wings wide. The ones next to it kept ripping into the carcass,
Arya stood up and waved her crossbow at the Argentavis, "Hey!" she shouted as the bird made eye contact with her.

The bird flew in close, aggressively, before landing in front of her. The wings were spread and talons sharp, and it screeched in her face.

Arya simply stood her ground, prompting the Argentavis to do the same.

The two killers simply stared at each other...

The bird snapped at her with its long neck, Arya dodged and thrust a tranquilizer bolt into its neck like a dagger. The bird shrieked and flew back a dozen paces.

The crashing of the underbrush signaled the charging of a Direbear.

Arya's eyes glanced towards it, but Nyemria was on top of the bear already, biting savagely at the beast. Arya turned back to the bird, staring it down once again. The two killers just...stared.

Nymeria was ferocious, but she was at a huge size and strength disadvantage to the large bear. She had to break contact, throwing fresh, harvested deer meat at the vulture like bird as she charged the bear.

She screamed as she drew her rapier and made for the heart.

The bear bellowed, before it stumbled back and collapsed in a heap. Arya whirled back around...only to see the bird had not left.

There would be more predators and scavengers looking to get their cut. But with the bird's keen eyes bearing down on her, she had the idea to slice off a slab of bear meat with her dagger and throw it to the bird. Though if she needed, her flintlock pistol was within easy reach.

The Argentavis now was more wary, instead of aggressive. Testing if Arya was worth of its time.

The bird snapped up the slice of bear meat. Arya knew that this was her best chance, and that the raptor skin saddle she crafted earlier would be coming in handy just now.

She approached the birds and this time, it did not react aggressively. She managed to put the saddle on, and mount it.

The Argentavis turned to look at her, and she stared back...and a sense of 'understanding' could be reached.

Stepping onto the back of the beast and taking the reins wasn't like Robb teaching her to drive a speeder or Jon showing her how to ride a cybernetic horse. She was riding a giant carnivorous bird and she had to make it trust her more than it trusted its own instincts.

"Hop on!" she shouted to her companions, "before the new and old carcasses attracted more trouble."

The stupified Hound and Berix did as they were told, while Nymeria remained on the ground, able to follow perfectly. And soon, they were off.

The bird's giant wings took a beat, then another and then they were off in the blue skies of Ark.

Arya's fear of heights kicked in, only to be replaced by a sense of accomplishment and exhilaration. Even hound's curse filled warnings could hardly shake her from the sense of joy as they climbed
higher and higher.

Letting instinct take over, she stir the bird with a grace and precision, while making their way back to base.

Arya grinned ear to ear as the Hound slammed a fist on her shoulder, "Head due south forty five degrees!" he ordered. "That's where our fucking home is!"

"Yes sir!" she said.

A gunshot from the redwood canopy shook her out of her glee and she banked the bird hard right.

"Beware of ground threats!" shouted Berix over the wind.

Arya gritted her teeth. Just how many of these fucking hostile tribes where there? No matter, better keep moving.

Nymeria kept pace easily, her sense of smell keeping her on track.

At home base, Bullet was tending the garden while Tarduk collected fruit growing from the trees. TK reacted with a bow and arrow when he heard the sound of wings beating, an explosive tipped arrow in his notch. His face split into a grin when he saw the missing group members riding the giant bird.

"Well, would you look at that," He mused as they soon landed by the village. Bullet turned, and stared with a smirk at the sight.

The bird landed and the party disembarked, Hound growled, "The short one gibbed some cunts out there."

Bullet laughed, "That's the nicest I've ever heard you talk about someone, Hound."

"So, you mean Polliver?" Tarduk asked.

"Yeah, he's dead," Berix replied. "Torn apart by the Terror Bird that came into our fighting area."

Hound shrugged, "It spared me the effort of snuffing him out with my own hands." From the tone of his voice you'd think he was talking about pulling weeds.

"That was a good raid," said Arya, "When's the next one?"

Bullet grinned. "Eager to get things done. That's good. But for now, take a moment to breathe, look at the maps, not to the mention the dossiers we have, and learn a bit."

The dossiers were a series of documents pertaining to the various life forms of the world. A bit old, but still useful at times.

"Take some time to plant seeds, weed the garden and water it," said Bullet. "Before sundown, read over the documents. Long term, knowledge will keep you alive just as well as guns and bombs."

"For years, biologists and planetolgists have been cataloging the wildlife of this world," said Berix, "Those dossiers hold the various animals habitats, habits, food, mating and migration patterns. Read it like your life depends on it."

"And it will." Kari assured. "Trust us, it will."
Arya nodded as Nymeria took her place at her side. Looks like there were things to be done.

It wasn't long before the sun began to set on Ark and Arya's hands were blistered from labor, her clothes were bloody and her mind was eager for new knowledge. She could hardly believe how much had happened in just a single day.

Outside, Hound stood with a large rifle on his back, scanning the woods for danger with the tribe's new pet.

Nighttime, the time when Bullet made sure no one went on into the lands, unless a dire emergency had occurred. The night was dark and full of terrors...

"Lord, cast your light upon us," is how the chant would go. Hound had no time for gods or goddesses. He hated fire, and the only light he needed was the muzzle flare from his gun.

Like the animal of his namesake, he sniffed and scanned the darkness.

All around was there was the sound of wildlife, chipping, hissing, roaring, calling, and more.

Amongst the most dreaded nocturnal predators was the Megalosaurus. Sluggish by day, at night they became swift and dangerous creatures.

The theropod moved silently, scanning the campground with its keen vision; better than an owl. Its sense of smell gave it perfect stock of the surrounding area, prey and predator. Its powerful jaws would have no problem chewing through even metal armor.

The Hound expected such a monster, but he did not expect Arya to sneak up behind him.

"So, night brings a lot of things out, eh?"

The Hound jumped a little, then turned. "Aye, that it does. After a while, you just come to expect it," he said, reaching into his implant. "You figure out when and where certain predators come; and they always come." he drew an enormous compound bow, notching it with an arrow tipped with a brutal, barbed point.

"We're being hunted," said Arya, cradling her crossbow.

"You catch on quick," said Hound

Arya soon saw it to: A large theropod stalking the outskirts, looking for a easy opening to get in and devour all those within.

"Thinks we're an easy meal." She growled.

Hound drew back his bow, the arrowhead gleaming in the moonlight. "That’s his weakness, he thinks we're weak. I never take an enemy for granted,"

Arya brought up her own crossbow, scanning the woods for more predators; here on Ark, there was rarely just one of anything, whether it was edible plants, deadly predators or environmental hazards.

The sounds of the night echoed in her head. It be quote overwhelming at times, listening to it all. Nymeria soon took her place at Ayra's side, fur on end in battle ready.

Hound looked straight ahead at the Megalosaurus. His arrow was a special design that was designed to spread out once it had penetrated armor and hide of a target; slashing wider and cutting through the organs of a large animal. Perfect dinosaur killer.
Arya didn't see it, but when Nymeria turned her head, she followed and brought up her crossbow to compensate. There she saw a Troodon about to bite through the lock on the meat-smoking hut.

"I'll handle this," she told the Hound, who nodded as he kept his eye on the Megalosaurus.

Arya and Nymeria approached the Troodon, who turned and hissed at her. Its glowing eyes showed signs of intelligence.

Troodon, one of the most intelligent dinosaurs on record. In another timeline, it could have formed the basis for intelligent life on Earth that was. As it stood now, they were among the most intelligent creatures on Ark, surpassing most mammals.

Lowering her crossbow, Arya raised her hand, keeping eye contact with the bulbous-eyed dinosaur. A bit of kibble could go far. If this thing didn't have a pack of its own, then maybe her group could fill that role.

...Would that work on such an intelligent creature, though? Or was something more needed?

"Crafty, isn't it?" Kari up next to Arya suddenly. "Would make a good tame. I've been looking for one for a while. A lot of people tame them by letting them kill a previous tame, but also one of their preferred foods is Direbear. I think you ran into one earlier."

"Um, I did cut some of the meat out..." Arya admitted, wondering if it would be enough.

"Find out," said Kari, "If its pack was killed or it was driven off, it'll be much easier to tame."

Behind them, Hound let loose his arrow with the satisfying sound of a Megalosaurus howling in pain. He expected it to attack in fury... but it turned out he must have made a bigger mark than he thought, because he then heard it stomp away from the area, until he could no longer hear it.

He could follow the blood trail in the morning, no point in rushing into the woods after a wounded animal and getting killed. The group wasn't that desperate for food. Though as it stood, Hound was prepared to fire another arrow at the damn Troodon that Arya was making eyes with.

He never liked those things, though its hunting and tracking skills could make it useful.

The two killers were looking at each other, trying to see some sort of advantage over the others. Hound had noticed, it was impossible not to. Arya seemed to stare down things she wished to tame, as if trying to assert herself over them by battles of will.

It was simple animal rules. The Troodon was a pack hunter, it would punish submission but also reward a pack leader who could locate food and keep the group safe. Unblinkingly, she met its giant, nearly glowing eyes. Next to her, Nameria stepped away, as though reading her master's intentions.

A moment of dead silence... just silence...

Then, the Troodon bowed to Arya, sensing her superior sense and killing intent. She would make a good pack leader.

Hound was disappointed that he would have to wait to kill something, but he couldn't deny the usefulness of the beast. He turned away back to the forest, full of terrors... and he was one of them.

Over the skies of Ark, more drop pods fell like meteors to the ground. The world was dangerous, dark, full of terrors, but also inexorably alive and thriving.
It would be interesting to watch where this would go....
Darkland Station, the base of House Koopa. Designed with a dark castle motif in mind, it resembled a stony fortress, with fire and lava about the area, ruling the power of the base. This is where Bowser did his deeds.

And now, a Zeal ship was heading towards it.

A man in a skull mask watched the main view screen from Darkland Station's security room. Reaper crossed his arms over his chest. "Inform Lord Bowser that Queen Zeal has arrived." he turned and spoke to Sombra. "See to it that the Queen is free of recording devices when she and Lord Bowser are talking."

"Just no trusting people," Sombra chuckled, "But trust me, nothing they say will leave this station."

Reaper nodded grimly, turning back to the monitors. Everyone wanted to be on top, so it was good to be careful.

On board the shuttle, Zeal and her two children were near the front in disembarking, with several others with them.

Plague Knight led the way for Queen Zeal and her children. The robed, bird masked man swung side to side a censer that burned sweet incense into the air. As an expert in virology, chemistry, poison making, Plague Knight also had a surprising background in making perfumes and sweet smells. At a moment's notice, the censer could release deadly poison gas which the Zeal family had been immunized against.

The Queen herself brought up the rear, looking bored and haughty.

Mona, a fellow alchemist, had remained behind at Zeal's station. Shame. Plague Knight really enjoyed her presence...

Sadly Plague Knight never was good at human interaction. As a former combat surgeon, he'd dealt with life and death on a regular basis. As a maker of explosives and poisons, he was no stranger to peril and risk. But at parties, social situations, or a girl he liked he was utterly useless.

And it wasn't just her looks, she was smart and knew more about chemistry and alchemy than he did. To be able to converse with her alone would be incredible. Not that Queen Zeal gave him much time for mingling.

No, Queen Zeal was always plotting and planning...and spicing. A user, she used spice to extend her lifespan and preserve her youthful appearance, perfect for a narcissistic person like her.

The sad thing was, she used to be much kinder person, but the loss of her husband, the harshness of the galaxy, and other factors transformed her into woman people knew of today.

Spice could extend life, but not indefinitely. Queen Zeal truly meant to become immortal, and extend the honor to her children. As it stood, a certain artifact on Aegis Seven, a far away mining world on the edge of Zeal and Koopa space, could be of use.

A huge creature, a wolf-like monster, approached the party in the dim halls of the space station. Warwick bowed in animalistic fashion before the Queen. "Welcome to the ancestral home of Lord Bowser," He said, "You are expected in the map room."
Zeal nodded without a word, and she, her children, and Plague Knight made their way down the halls with Warwick. It was not long before they reached the large map room, equipped with holographic protector. Bowser and his son were there, as were the Koopalings, seven elite Koopas who served as military commanders/scientists/sorcerers.

In addition, Doomfist was nearby, a powerful man with cybernetic arm. A military commander, his calm and polite demeanor hid a brutal fighter. Akande Ogundimu had been his name once. Then he'd gone to war during the Omnic Crisis, earning distinction time and time again on the field of battle. Then the loss of his arm came and with it, Bowser's cyberneticians. Giving him a powerful cybernetic enhancement and the chance to slake his lust for blood.

Doomfist bowed to Zeal and her party. "My lady, Lord Bowser bids you welcome. As it stands, please take to the map for all the local space threats."

Zeal looked upwards at the map, with several markings map on the galaxy area.

Bowser took a breath as he spoke. "Thank you for coming. Things to discuss today. First things are the threats we are facing soon," Bowser pointed at an unassuming world in a section of the galaxy known for mineral extraction. "Mining operations have shut down around Aegis 7 and all local worlds. Crews have been turning up dead or insane, and that's before they turn into murderous undead slaughter machines."

"Yes," said Zeal, "the so called Necromorphs; you know what they say; shoot the limbs."

Bowser scowled, "This is bigger than that."

Zeal raised an eyebrow. "Oh?"

"I think...something is guiding these things." Bowser went on. "Not sure what, but we've been investigating the area...nothing yet, though."

"Though we HAVE been looking into what makes a Necromorph tick," Iggy piped up. "Maybe we can use it to our advantage."

Doomfist spoke up, "I've been overseeing live capture. As many have seen, they have no need for vital organs and can even sense a target with their eyes, ears and noses removed. From what we can tell, they simply collapse and shut down a certain distance from a red marker."

"Don't tell me someone was stupid enough to build one after all the legends say?" said Zeal contemptuously, masking her curiosity.

"Some people are curious like that..." A new voice caused all to turn. Moira, the top scientists of Koopa, stepped into the room. A brilliant individual with a talent for genetic manipulation and alteration, Moira's work was seen as unethical and dangerous by most...but Bowser gave her work, without restraint.

The biotic user bowed to the arrived royalty. "From what we've seen before our research mages went totally mad and needed to be put down, the Red Markers channel immense amounts of Dhar, one of the least understood and malevolent winds of Magic. It does so in such a way that most magic users can't understand it."

"So you have something worth my while, Bowser," said Zeal. "And I think if you scratch my back I can scratch yours."

"Perhaps we can..." Bowser mused,
"Wait," Schala began. "What was that about the mage being-?"

"In other news," Bowser cut in, suddenly holding up a tube holding a baby Metroid. "We've been looking into these guys more...and we've come to the conclusion that they are not bioweapons, but predators." He explained.

"Necromorphs don't need to eat," Moira explained, going back to the undead. "But only because they are the part of a larger whole. When Mazdamundi destroyed the Necromorphs of Tau Voltanis, he actually destroyed something larger than any army of Necromorphs."

"The records say it was huge," said Bowser, "Like a moon."

Zeal huffed, "I know the myths, so why would you be interested in a planet eating moon?"

Bowser, deciding to discuss the Metroids later, put down the tube and spoke. "Maybe we could utilize it, as some sort of weapon."

"You don't have to tell me about the power of necromancy," said Zeal, "I personally own three of the nine books of Nagash." She looked up at the Koopa King, "However, controlling one of the Brethren moons would be a game changer; a magic planet killer of incalculable power. I respect your greed in trying to control one."

"So...?" Bowser began.

"Yes, I believe I can help you with this little affair...but first, do go on about those Metroids," Zeal smirked.

Bowser nodded. "Follow me everyone." He began to lead all gathered towards the laboratory of Moira.

"You actually managed to capture Metroids?" Zeal asked, "Normally they kill everyone who goes after them or they expire in transit. They're almost impossible to sedate and their feeding habits are largely unknown."

"Thank this guy," said Bowser, pointing to a huge, power-armored man holding a shotgun. "I found Doomguy out in lawless space; he needed money and I gave him a job. he also comes in handy when chaos cultists summon demons."

Behind him, Doomguy pressed a button, which shone a light on a large cage.

An Omega Metroid was there...and it reacted angrily at the sudden light. It slammed its bulk against the cage with a hellish screech, causing Schala to jump. Bowser chuckled. "Yeah, it'll do that."

Ludwig came up to the front. "We've been do some research on them, as well as analyzing ancient Chozo texts, and we've found the Chozo designed them to hunt something called 'X'." He shrugged. "No idea what those are."

Zeal's son, Janus, examined the monster. "That Omega, it doesn't happen to have the gene to become a Queen does it?"

Bowser laughed, "You bet it does; I'd go broke if I had Doomguy go out and get a new one each time they died in testing. But yeah, your highness, these things were designed to be predators; they're not a disease, they're a cure."

"And you think this 'X' could be a disease?" Zeal asked with a raised eyebrow.
"Like we said," Lemmy piped up. "Still working on that." He looked at Zeal. "Say, since we're here, we've wanted to ask. Think we could use some of the Visorak to mutate our Metroids?"

Visorak were a species of large, biomechanical spiders, with seven breeds, serving as part of Zeal's army. The species name translated to 'Stealers of Life', an apt description.

Their venom was known as 'Hordika Venom'. Not a fatal toxin, it was mutative substance that worked both body and mind, transforming victims of it into feral beasts. It was mainly used in the war mounts of Zeal to create even more savage war beasts.

Zeal smirked, "Why Bowser, I'd love to lend you some of my deadly spiders. However in return I want some of your Eridium from the mines on Pandora; not much, just enough to enhance our magic rituals."

Eridium, a strange element from the world Pandora; created by a long dead race and valued as a fuel source. It also had the effect of vastly boosting the powers of the native psychic Sirens. Evidently it would also do the same for House Zeal's battle mages.

"Well as I'd hate to leave you using warp stone, take a share of it," said Bowser, "My people will kick you a percentage."

"Excellent," Zeal crooned as Schala went pale behind her. "Show the world who is strong...that is how I recruited the Tomb Kings."

"Oh?" An amused Bowser crossed his arms.

Zeal smirked. "I traveled to the world Nehekhara to recruit the fabled Tomb Kings into my army. Their leader, Settra, initially proved to be...stubborn. But we agreed on a one-on-one duel with each other. I did not want to get my clothes dirty, so I stripped everything all off to fight."

"You did what now?" Roy deadpanned.

Zeal shrugged, "I was young, I was hot-headed, and I have as little shame as I did now. But I think Settra was angry because in life, pussy was his one weakness and as an undead skeleton warrior, that is the one thing he could never have. So he went in angry, unfocused and I tore him apart."

Schala blushed deeply at her mother's lewd display.

Zeal laughed, "A few of the mortuary priests tried to press their advantage when I overwhelmed Settra, but he came to my aid. And I don't mind being dominated in the bedroom, but in politics and at war, I rule with an iron fist. Everyone else can get behind me or die in the process. Now Settra serves me. Though I was kind enough to let him and his brood keep their gods and practices, as long as they still serve me. Settra kills, maims and terrorizes," Zeal purred, "Why change what works?"

"Well, we might need your undead boyfriend if we are to continue with Live Necromorph capture," said Ludwig. "Mindless skeletons pretty well counters the mass psychosis caused by the markers."

Zeal glared at him, but let the comment slide. "Hmmm, yes. Perhaps he can tame these abominations."

Schala suddenly spoke up. "We have more news to share as well."

"You'll be happy to know, Lord Bowser," said Janus, "That we've managed to acquire a working, living sample of Samus Aran's DNA."
Bowser's eyes widened, "But how?"

Schala answered evenly, "Our Mother has known of your interest in the Metroid's for some time, and it has come to our attention that Samus herself might serve as a bridge to understanding the monsters, given her long history of fighting them."

Bowser rubbed his chin. Samus Aran...one of the greatest bounty hunters in the Galaxy, and that was saying something there.

Raised by the Chozo after being orphaned in a pirate attack, she grew under their care, becoming a skilled fighter and traveler. Few dared to cross her. Thankfully, for the most part, she was a kind person.

He'd tried to get Samus over to his side. Get her to see the reason of controlling and harnessing the metroids. Her beloved Chozo had created the damn things, why not use them? She didn't see reason, so blinded by her hate for these things. She'd tried to destroy all Bowser was working towards.

So, yeah, not working out.

"We try to make something with this?" Bowser asked.

"In time, yes." Zeal nodded. "First we need more materials."

"In other news," Schala spoke up again. "We have recently colonies planet called 'Altair IV', a world once inhabited by a race known as the 'Krell'. These aliens were highly advanced, having built a vast machine that goes into the very planet."

"Thank my lovely daughter for finding the works of Dr. Edward Morbius and deciphering them," said Zeal. "The man was a loon, but he took risks and it paid off to a degree. He learned the science of the Krell and how they were able to alter reality on a whim and harness magic to a degree unseen in even the Lizardmen."

"If I remember correctly," said Moira, "I thought that Dr. Morbius had died on that planet."

"True," said Janus, "But his notes survived him, even if he and his associates tried to destroy the research. We had to be good detectives about it."

"Not to mentioned...The Krell died too, in single night over 200,000 years ago," Schala added somberly. The notes of Morbius seemed to leave something out...but she did decipher something along the lines of 'Beware the id'.

"Oh the Id," said Zeal, with an unhealthy amount of enthusiasm in her voice. "From what I've been able to understand, it is a reference to the unconscious mind; the thing most of us are never aware of but always depend upon."

"Some scholars theorize," said Janus, "That the Id is both the source of all creativity as well as all depravity and evil. Some theorize it is the source of Chaos magic as well."

"So, you having those weird tech priests look at the machine?" Bowser asked dryly.

Zeal shrugged. "At times when it is needed."

"...Those guys freak me out," Bowser Jr. muttered.

Bowser hit his son across the back of the head. "Don't be afraid of anything! Least of all a bunch of
weirdoes in red robes with metal cyber arms."

Bowser Junior winced and nodded at his father's advice.

"Don't be afraid of the Tech Priests," said Schala, "The Brotherhood of Mars might be amoral, but they're predictable and their love of ancient technology is a huge asset to anyone they call an ally."

"If it wasn't for their pompous nature" Janus muttered dryly, knowing too well what those priests could be like...and what they did to themselves.

"And they command giant robots called Titans," said Zeal, "Even one of those can swing a battle on ground or act as the perfect anti-air defense. They don't know how to rebuild them, but they can maintain their Titan war machines just fine."

"Hmm, noted," Bowser stated dryly. "Just like we can't more get Sirens until one dies: Only six can exist at any given time."

"We can have Stephen Strange scour the galaxy for Lilith," said Zeal, "She's been a thorn in my side since she left Pandora. I'll kill her for free as a favor to you, if I find her."

Schala lowered her head, remembering how the woman Lilith had stopped a fire cult from forming on her own homeworld, saving possibly thousands of lives.

"Yeah, she has not been very cooperative...and don't get me started on Steele." Bowser muttered. "She tried to screw me over, trying to take the Vault contents for herself." She snickered. "Too bad for her the contents was some eldritch being, which simply ate her."

The Vaults...once thought to be places of great treasure, now known to be prisons for dangerous beasts.

The Destroyer, that was the thing that lived in the Pandora vault. Something so terrifying and dangerous that the Eridians sacrificed their entire civilization to imprison it. Ancient runes revealed that there were other vaults like it across the galaxy.

The Destroyer was indestructible in its own realm, but needed a host in this universe. This led some scholars to believe that it was some kind of Daedric entity or a Chaos Demon of unspeakable power.

House Zeal and House Koopa stood with the king, but their support was not unconditional. If things went south they needed to look after their own interests.

Metroids could make a fine cure for some of the worst races in the galaxy, like the Tyranids or the Grox. Better yet, analysis of Samus's DNA could lead to the making of better super soldiers, better war beasts for Zeal and better tech for Bowser and his kin.

Which led to the current discussion.

"I'm assuming there are still things left unsaid at the moment," Zeal noted.

"Perhaps, and the same could be said of you. Can I trust you not to blab some things to the King? Including Beaky there?" He pointed to Plague Knight.

Plague Knight shrugged, "I am a trustworthy man."

"Shut up," said Zeal, "But Bowser, you are right. I'm as trustworthy as you are. If we both put our might behind the King, we can all be rich and powerful beyond measure. Why would I screw up a
Bowser glared at her, satisfied with her answer, at least she wasn't trying to pretend to be something she was not.

"Yeah, well, some things are better left not known to the King. He keeps his secrets from us, so we some secrets to ourselves as well. I may be willing to share some with you," Bowser noted. "I can share a copy of Red Marker Dark Magic frequency. I know that'll help with your study of necromancy."

"And I'll give you whatever Krell tech I can find." Zeal replied.

"Just watch yourself on the Forbidden Planet," said Bowser, "It's not technically a death world, but you don't want to wake up something from the past."

"Hmmm, true," Zeal nodded, turning to walk and examine some Metroid baby specimens. "What an ugly little thing," she mused. The creature inside began to float around before lunging at the glass.

"At that age they don't have good coordination or killer instinct," said Moira, "But en mass they can overwhelm a human target. It's not until they reach the larva stage that Metroids start to become deadly on their own."

"Say, why don't I show you something we've been working on, drawing off old blueprints we found in ships wreckage," Bowser said. "I'm sure you will be able to make the most of it."

"What do you mean?" Schala asked, turning towards the Koopa.

Ludwig grinned. "It's a little something called the 'Sigma Technology.' The main use is to use the DNA of two different animals to create a powerful hybrid beast."

Zeal's eyes lit up, she bit her lip with barely concealed excitement. "Show me what you can do with this? Back up your words."

Bowser laughed, "Step into the dungeon, we've got a show prepared for you. I know you like a good show."

All gathered began to make their way out of the labs and into the lower depths of the station, also passing by cells full of prisoners, there for various reasons.

"Please, your omnipotence," Kink Van Houten pleaded from one cage as Bowser passed, "Have mercy."

"You'll have mercy when you scrub all the floors in the dungeon!" shouted Bowser Junior.

"The dungeon full of deadly monsters and death traps?" Kirk blanched.

"That's the one," said Bowser Junior. "What about the rest of you mugs?" he addressed the other prisoners.

"Dude, go eat a dick," said Snake Jailbird from his cage.

Schala turned to him. "I WAS wondering where you went." She said.

"Yeah...got a little too carried away." Snake admitted with a sigh. "But I'll be outta here before you all know it."
"Yeah, well, you and others better pipe down." Roy said to them all. "You're all here because your hate our benevolent rule."

"In a couple of seconds, you're going to go up against some of the Sigma Technology's finest creations. And for that we can thank the good Doctor Chanikov," said Bowser Junior. On cue he motioned to Doomfist, who punched a button on his gauntlet.

On the far wall, a large curtain began to lift, showing the fruit of the technology.

In a holding pen was some kind of...thing. Its base form resembled a Crocomire from Zebes, but the head and back legs were that of a Thundertusk, and its red scales were patched with wool.

In another cage with a swimming pool in it, something with a huge turtle shell crawled out. Stick out front the head of an enormous megalodon shark snapped its teeth. At the rear of the creature, a large bombardier beetle abdomen wriggled, holding a cargo of high explosives.

"I want to see it kill something," hissed Zeal.

"Oh shit," said Snake.

Bowser turned to the line of prisoners nearby. Then he turned to a rather fat man in red. "You, Coachman right? Time for you to pay for trying to turn my son into a donkey."

Some said the Coachman was a servant of Chaos; he was evil enough for it. He simply shrugged and gave that dimple smile. "Well Bowser, I have no regrets. But we can still work at the old human trafficking business. Skaven pay well for donkey meat."

The two abominations roared, they were hungry.


Into each of the cages dropped a Wunderwaffe weapon; a radioactive powered energy gun of devastation power. Kurt and Snake eagerly went for their weapons, while Coachman just crossed his arms, a defiant smirk on his face.

"Now if you survive my Sigma monsters, you'll go free," said Bowser, "Actually I'm lying, you're all going to die."

Kirk scowled. "So, that's it, a weapon and a 'good luck'?"

"I don't recall saying good luck," Bowser smirked.

The Crocomire fusion gave a gargling, watery ululation as its cage door opened. The Shark turtle tank beast climbed out of its pool.

The Prisoner's cages began to open, Snake Jailbird pointing his gun at Bowser, "Let me out or the big turtle gets it!" he demanded.

Snake cried out in pain as a blast from the turtle tank shot his weapon out of his hands. He turned with fear as the two monsters began to advance. Meanwhile, the Coachman held his hands out and started to summon magic from the Warp; the stuff of Chaos.

It formed into a deadly whip, ready to lash the beasts. But the beasts eyes showed no fear at all. ...
Come to think of it, when Janus looked closer at the eyes of the hybrids, he didn't see any details: No pupil, no iris...just blanks white eyes.

Schala gasped as she realized before her brother the implications of the eyes. The whip of chaos energy struck the turtle beast and passed through the shell, cooking its guts, yet the monster didn't even slow down or register any pain. It charged full tilt at the condemned men.

The eyes. A mark of Metroid DNA. Bowser just hadn't fused animals together; the Sigma technology had used Metroid genetic codes as a glue to hold the diverse animal parts together and make them exponentially more powerful than it should be.

The Crocomire creature waddled forward, slowly converging on its prey. Kurt, panicking, fired several laser blasts right in the monster's eyes, but it didn't even flinch. It didn't even look like its eyes took damage.

"Behold!" Moira announced for all to hear, royals, guards, and prisoners. "This is the power of the Sigma Technology! Unstoppable weapons that feel no fear, feel no pain! A products of the greatest minds! They are creatures who will fear neither enemies of flesh, bone, metal, magic or demon might!" she continued, as the turtle tank swung put on a brief speed burst and biting through the Coachman's right leg. "With Sigma, we can make monsters to shame the Tyranids!"

Kurt screamed as the Crocomire monster took hold of him and ripped him in two like a doll.

Snake cursed, going for Kurt's dropped weapon.

Snake had no intention of dying today. Even if he failed to kill the things, he would find a way out. He looked over to the Coachman, who was cursing over his lost leg as the turtle beast loomed over him.

Actual worry formed on the Coachman's face. For a man who'd just lost a leg he wasn't looking so bad. Holding his hands out, warp energy began to gather and a portal started to open. The fat, red coated man started to drag himself through as the turtle tank ignored further shadow whips that ravaged its flesh. Even with half its internal organs melted, it wasn't even slowed down.

Snake cried out in pain as the Crocomire thing fired a strand of spiky hair at him like an arrow. Poison numbed the wound, but it only increased Snake's resolve. He sprinted as fast as he could and threw himself at Coachman's portal.

He knew where it could lead...something dangerous...but he took any chance he could to get of of this mess...and as he made his way to the portal, he used the Coachman as a springboard, knocking him flat on his face, and leaping through the portal...just in time, as it closed shortly afterwards due to lost concentration.

Several of the arrow hairs of the Crocomire monster pierced his rotund body, maggots started climbing out of the Coachman's wounds. His leg was now thrashing around, having sprouted teeth and insect legs. It was soon eaten by the turtle monster.

"Disgusting," said Queen Zeal with fascination, "I always wondered if he was really human. I remember stories of him from when my grandmother was a child."

Yes, the Coachmen, as he was so called. A man who came out of nowhere, building an amusement park to take little boys there to act rowdy...

...and then they would turn into donkeys for him to sell to various species, notably Skakdi and Skaven.
And now his true form was shown. A hideous, eel-headed beast with a grotesque, bloated torso and malformed gorilla arms. Truly a Demon of Chaos.

There was something that Queen Zeal had to give Coachman, it was his ability to lie and lie convincingly. As the demon thrashed in front of her, she felt its true malevolence and evil. Even stacked against the Skaven Council of 13 or Bad Blood Predators, he felt disgusting and evil, hungry and endlessly resentful.

As the shark head of the turtle tank started to rip into him, the Coachman's demon body began to crumble and fade. For a moment, Zeal raised her arms and attempted to trap his essence, but that faded into the Warp. It would take him much time and energy to build a new body, one that could survive in real space, far away from Warp or Chaos energy to nourish it.

But by now, his scams had been public, and he would forever be on the run...or at least take a new form to torment others.

A moment of silence passed.

"Aw, man. That demonstration was lame!" Iggy sulked. "Only the lamest one died."

"Well, point stands," said Moira, "The creatures tanked powerful Chaos magic as well as laser weapons that can normally tear through the armor of medium sized tanks and aircraft."

"And don’t forget, Snake went into a Chaos portal," said Bowser, "Maybe there’s horny Chaos Spawn on the end of that portal. It could be a happy ending after all!"

"Riiighh," Zeal muttered with an eyeroll. "Just hook me up with this when you can."

"Will do," Bowser said as he looked over the creations. "Heh, with these, we can take on anything, even those damn Hyrule Champions."

"Oh, but they did die once." Zeal pointed out.

"Yeah, but it took some freaking powerful artificial beasts to do so," Bowser replied, referring to the ‘Blight’s. "And now they are back thanks to cloning, and tougher than ever." He straightened up. "We’re just about ready to get into mass production," he said. "Let me know if you want monsters that can fight underwater, in space or against magic users and demons. We’ve got creatures for all occasions and the catalogue is only growing as Doomguy here gives me more raw materiel to work with."

Zeal looked at the monsters and their white eyes, "It's a good show, I'll have to take you up on the offer. And let me know if you ever need Settra around; he's good at tracking space ships and he'd be perfect to track down Snake if he's still alive."

Bowser nodded. "Aye, that I will," He crossed his arms in thought, always wondering what Zeal was thinking at times like this.

Zeal walked through the testing area, looking to get up close to Bowser's monsters, stomping through the blood and gore as she did.

For her part, Schala felt a great sorrow for the animals that Bowser mutated as well as anger that the Coachman and Snake Jailbird had escaped justice.

She had learned that the galaxy was cold, cruel place...and yet, she still found solace in her bother, her friends at court, and the library at her home station, where she and her brother would spend hours
going through tomes.

Maybe there could be a brighter future, that all this was worth something. That there was a warm and glorious future that was worth fighting for. Shy as she may seem, Schala was ready to fight for that better future.
Black Mesa

An arid world...

On the surface, it was quite unremarkable...a last desert planets with various canyons and animals of standard type...

...which made it the prefect hiding place for the Black Mesa Research Facility, a vast complex decimated to all fields of science, and owned by K. Rool.

As far as desert worlds went, this wasn't even that special. There was no real dangerous wildlife to speak of and the most dangerous thing were the mountains of exposed uranium in the northern ranges.

As things went, King K. Rool's personal starship fold spaced into orbit above the Black Mesa facility.

At the controls of the Starship, Agent 47 checked the star charts. Everything had gone off without a hitch. "Keep us in orbit", he instructed the navigator floating in a tank of liquid Raven Spice. "I'll accompany his majesty to the surface."

"As will I," Relius stepped forwards. "This is my area of expertise..."

Coming along were two Space Marines, several Kremlings...and Euron.

Euron took a moment, unphased by the deadliest assassin in the galaxy and one of its most brilliant mad scientists. He took a second to inspect his gun, check the power generator on his phase sword and once more to adjust his stylish jacket. "Well then," said the King's pet Kraken, "Let's not make Doctor Breen too comfortable now; we want the old man to sweat."

"Indeed," K. Rool confirmed. "And this visit will hopefully show me the results he promised me," He turned to Euron. "Before we go, a question: Can I trust you?"

"No sir," Came the casual response.


The King boarded his shuttle with 47, Relius, and Euron, the Space Marines and the Kremlings following. The luxury shuttle descended with a shudder of mechanical parts. The King spoke to 47, "Let Dr. Breen know that we are here, but don't tell him why. The man's a brilliant scientist, but an utter weasel."

47 nodded as he tapped into the ship's coms and began to broadcast the proper authorization codes.

Relius stood nearby, waiting for the code to come through. Upon arriving, he knew they reach they frontal area, where they would take rails to the various labs of the facility. Tedious, perhaps, but all for security measures...and he was a patient man.

The entrance of Black Mesa was an unassuming shuttle platform built into a canyon. There were a million others just like it in the galaxy. From there, it was a step into a trolley car system, a famous trademark of the base.

Other monarchs would object to such banal travel, but K. Rool knew that he needed to see things at
peasant level to get an accurate look.

The trolley took the King’s party deeper into the facility, past pools of green radioactive waste, rivers of molten metal and gigantic rooms the size of buildings stacked with crates and boxes. Only a pre-recorded voice alerted them that they were reaching the first research levels.

Metal doors opened and the King was greeted by a grey bearded man in scientists lab coat.

"Welcome back, my lord, to Black Mesa. I hope your trip has been comfortable."

K. Rool shrugged. "In a sense. At least no beast had attacked us," He gestured to Euron and 47. "But before we start, these two will need HEV suits. The rest of us will be fine."

Indeed. K. Rool and the Kremlings were resistant to radiation, Relius could repel with magic, and the Marines armor and genetic makeup kept them safe.

The auto systems in the Marines armor started injecting them with red spice, to keep their reflexes sharp. Black Mesa had a reputation and it wasn’t a good one.

Euron smirked as he looked over at the orange suits passed to them from an automated rolling rack. "I like these," said Euron to the scientist, "Pirates use them in the outer regions; they’re good as space suits and battle suits. Get some tinkering on them and the suit'll let you crush a man's skull like an egg and let you run like lightning for days."

The scientist paled, "Dr. Breen is working in the central physics lab, but he wanted to invite the King and company to his office."

K. Rool nodded. "And we shall start our visit with him, in that case," He began to follow the scientist, with the rest of his escort following close behind.

Euron took some glimpses around. Basic things right now, with monitor, computers, and paperwork. But this was all for the future...once could not neglect them.

Situational awareness was important to any warrior who wanted to live longer than a Skaven clan rat. Nothing in an environment could be taken for granted. It was how prior to Gregor becoming a Space Marine, Agent 47 actually managed to wrack up a higher kill count.

For now, Euron had to keep K. Rool safe in the event of interdimensional beasts or structural failure. He remembered one time as a pirate he tried stealing crates of warp stone from this place and a failed experiment accidentally summoned a Greater Demon of Nurgle.

That was fun.

Lot of people died, but it was cool. Place was getting crowded anyways.

"A question, Euron, once of curiosity," Relius suddenly spoke up.

"Go for it."

Relius smirked. "Is it true you cut out the tongues of your crew?"

Euron chuckled as the party passed door after door, laboratory after laboratory. "I've struggled with mental illness all my life. During a very bad warp storm, I lost control and had to be chained down. So I cut out everyone’s tongues."

"Any good reason for that?" asked Relius, "It's not like an Ironborn to fear a storm or two."
Euron shrugged, "I needed the silence. It let me focus on the voices in my head and how best to kill those. And at any rate, it's not hard to run a ship on sign language alone."

"I suppose that's reasonable," Relius shrugged.

"Now, my turn for a question," Euron began with a grin. "Is it true you turned your wife into robotic puppet?"

Relius snapped his fingers, and large crimson metal puppet appeared, armed with curving claws. "Ah, you speak of Ignis, my greatest creation, then?"

Euron honestly looked impressed. Not horrified or disgusted like most decent men would have been. "So were you looking for a more docile wife in bed? Or were you just looking for a better killing machine?"

"You think too small," said Relius, wagging a finger. "I was trying to make my wife more like the God Machine, Nirvana. She's surpassed Event Weapons and Prime Fields. I've made my wife perfect."

"Just like your sweet, fine daughter?" Euron asked with a wink.

"Ada...she was an early experiment...close, but not quite good enough. My foolish son, Carl, was the one who completed her to save her life, then he took her to places unknown...but it no longer matters."

Euron smiled at Relius, "You shouldn't have to apologize for your mistakes. You learned from your daughter and made this fine murder machine. I heard stories about what she could do."

"My wife is a work in progress," said Relius, "It's unlikely I'll ever be finished with her, as I'm always looking to perfect her further."

But before that talk could go any further, they had reached Breen's office. Time for the start of business.

The scientist knocked on the door, and it slid open, allowing the group to enter.

Wallace Breen wasn't much to look at. He was a brilliant theorist and more than that, he was a craven survivor who would cozy up to anyone that could give him power and influence. "Ah, my lord!" He said to K. Rool, his voice just a few pitches too high to be anything other than frightened. "Welcome to Black Mesa, we weren't expecting you. I'll have food and drink brought to you, my King."

K. Rool held up his hand, "Go and ahead do that, but not before I can see progress with my own two eyes. Would you be willing to show me the fruits of my investment, Breen?"

"But of course, my lord," Breen went on. "Shall we start with the top and work our way down to the lower levels."

"Hmmm, might be for the best," K. Rool noted. "Wish to see what has been going on in most of the sectors."

Breen bowed, "Yes, lord," the man groveled. "As you understand our public works begin at the top, while our most top secret projects work in the maximum security levels at the bottom. Please step onto the elevator and we can begin."
A large, glass walled elevator popped up from the floor, a luxurious departure from the utilitarian and ill maintained trolley car.

"On the first level we have basic research into farm and hydroponics; we're hoping to beat House Dreemurr at their own game," said the doctor as the party climbed in.

"Fat chance," Euron grumbled, knowing all too well of the bounties of the Gourmet World. Nigh impossible to top. It's why he made excursions there as well in the past.

"Next," Breen went on. "We have our sector of Anomalous Materials. Here is where we study mysterious materials we gather across the Galaxy, and study how they work."

"Since the death of our colleague Dr. Edward Mobius and the loss of his research," said Breen, "Our attempts to replicate the indestructible metal Adamantium have stalled; however we are rapidly making new breakthroughs. Not to mention our study of Besker or "Mandalore Iron" alloys for the better production of spacecraft chassis and sword blades."

Relius seemed unimpressed, "You seem hardly more advanced in your research since our last visit, Dr. Breen."

Breen cringed. "You...have my apologies...things have been going slow the days up here, as efforts is being devoted to the lower levels. Boss Cass had been quite demanding of us."

"He should be putting pressure on you," said K. Rool, "You can't forge iron without hammer and fire. You can't train an athlete without pushing them to their limits. Why would you think yourself exempt?"

Breen bowed his head, "Never, lord, we are slaves to your will. But here as you can see the less public sector operations. Here our men are attempting to replicate Skaven Warp lightning cannons with less unstable fuel sources than Warp stone; such as Eridium, plutonium or bottled plasma."

Euron grinned, "I've seen those cannons up close. They'll either cut through a ship and the seven behind it or it'll explode and take out everything around it."

"Indeed," Breen nodded. "But perhaps I have tarried to much up here. It is time for you all to meet with Cass in the lower levels. He has some...things to show you all. Our professional rivalry notwithstanding," said Breen, "I believe you'll find that Boss Cass has made considerable progress in a number of fields."

"Excellent," said the King as they neared the lowest levels of Black Mesa, where all the good stuff was kept

It was...dark, with lightings doing little to dispel the shadows, giving the place as sense of foreboding. Euron found it to his liking.

The Ironborn man didn't feel entirely comfortable until someone or something was trying to kill him. After so many years as an outlaw, mercenary and later pirate, danger was like air to him; he just needed it.

Boss Cass himself was also to Euron's liking, the big cassowary dropping his surgical tools and stomping away from a (maybe?) dead Xenomorph on an operating table.

"My king," he said, without paying any attention to the rest of the party.

Boss Cass was a arrogant, yet brilliant scientist of Black Mesa. He was at expert in both mechanics...
and biology, which helped in the creation of rather...unorthodox beings. While not in the inner circle, K. Rool still respected him and valued him for his talents.

Fiercely racist against mammalian species, the avian cassowary scientist had no problem with the Reptillian Kremlings. In fact, he respected them and their might makes right philosophy.

The bird scientist pointed to the Xenomorph on the vivisection table, "Be careful. We pump the body full of acid neutralizing agent, but it's still poisonous on contact with exposed skin, and worse yet it kills pain receptors before it melts your flesh."

"Lovely," said Euron, "I haven't been this close to one of these beauties in too long."

He got closer, but still remained behind the painted line. No sense in getting pointlessly killed for no reason.

K. Rool turned to Boss Cass. "Ah, Cass, it is good to see you. I trust things have been going well in my absence."

"Indeed they have, my lord. Better than Breen did," Cass nodded. "All the better for taking Stark down. Allow me to guide you about the area."

As he did so, he spoke. "Things have gone well with your patronage, lord," said Cass, "We've learned much. Like how Xenomorph queens control their drones through a psychic receptive organ in the head; remove them from the hive for too long and the organ atrophies. From then, a strong and unethical magic user can control the monster to a point."

"And I so happen to have allies with one," K. Rool grinned, knowing Zeal would be happy to do so.

"Excellent." Boss Cass grinned. "Now it's time for the hybrid I've been working on.

Another short walk down the halls, and they group came across a sort of containment area, with a glass viewing area. The pen was mostly based off of thick jungle.

"Xenomorph hybrids are always a bit of a crap shoot," said Cass, "A lot of the time you never know what you're going to get or how it'll behave. But as a rule, they will always attack an armed target over an unarmed target, they'll attack a target that smells like fear over a target that doesn't and above all they'll kill a threat over attack prey, even when they're about to starve to death."

The thing inside the enclosure slammed into the safety glass, causing not just the cage but the entire floor to shake. Euron went for his weapon, priming his sword and gun. Relius raised a magic shield.

Peeking through the class was a pale thing, like a grub from under a rock. Twice as tall as a regular Xenomorph, the pale monstrosity hissed, drooling profusely. "Meet the Neomorph," said Cass, "A fine blend of xeno, human, predator and even Tyranid DNA."

K. Rool stared at the beast with a sort of grim fascination. "Ah, a killer to the core... and is this the only hybrid you have?"

"Oh, no." Cass grinned. "We have another jungle enclosure up ahead. Contain one that was made via various Dinosaurs and other animals of Ark." He motioned them to follow again, ready to show his bred hunter. "Mixing in a number of DNA blends helps to make the monster more ferocious, but also gives it a social instinct that we can leverage. So far there are five in total. Each one has a bit of a different blend, but so far they've resisted both powerful magic and heavy weapons."

"And the prime one?" Relius asked.
At this point they reached another pen. Within it was another jungle setting...

...and glimpses of a large, pale Theropod dinosaur of unknown species.

"Behold!" Cass grinned. "The Indominus Rex! A beast bred to be the prefect hunter, 40 feet tall and 50 feet long! Able to move up to 30 mph and resist heavy weaponry! It's not just a bastard of bastards," said Cass proudly, "It's a telepathic, highly intelligent killer with limited access to the winds of magic. It uses the Lore of the Wild, much like the Beastmen shamans."

"Pitiful creatures," said Relius coldly, "Hardly lethal save for exceptional specimens."

"Wait until you see my puppy in action," said Cass.

47 looked at the prowling beast with intrigue "Fascinating...I'm surprised you did not make more of them," He noted.

"Er, I did make two actually, siblings in fact," Cass admitted.

"Then where is the other one?" K. Rool asked.

Cass gestured to the I-Rex. "She ate her."

47 looked impressed. "It started off early, I approve. Much like tiger sharks in the womb; they kill their siblings before they're even born."

"It took a lot of work and tweaking," said Cass, "But so far it's killed all the android soldiers we sent in, it's even begun displaying new and unplanned powers; such as scan resistant color changing."

"That'll be useful in covert ops," K. Rool noted.

"Not only that, she can hide her heat signature as well, making her suitable for killing Yautja." Cass grinned. "I'd like to see those Dreadlocked fuckers hunt this baby!"

"They'll find a way," said 47. "When you kill them, their tactics, their technology, their attitudes change."

Cass glared at the bald man, "Who asked you, cue ball? I'm always upping my game, this thing is going to be the future of biological warfare. Right now it can digest even the hardest Tyranid carapaces and it's only growing more powers."

47 decided not to argue further. No point in dragging out a childish argument. He turned back to the I-rex, which had come close now, so they could see her in the full glory. Pale in color, covered in spike-like protrusions, and nasty jagged teeth. Her eyes shown with keen intelligence...and also madness.

He’d dealt with madmen in his line of work. 47 had seen madness in the eyes of convicts, gangsters, warrior of Chaos and all sorts of people. Behind it all was a sort of desperation that broadened a creature's behavior, rather than defined it.

Mentally he began to work in his mind how to kill this creature if the need arose.

Cass turned over to another enclosure, "Oh, and there is another fine creation you'll enjoy, lord."

"Oh," K. Rool raised an eyebrow in interest. What other horrors could be dwelling in the dark down here?
Inside the jungle enclosure a Xenomorph moved across the foliage, illuminated by laser tag.

The Xenomorph shifted as if sensing something and then tried to bolt. Suddenly, it was crushed, as though the foot of an invisible predator had stomped on it.

Four giant pawprints appeared in the foliage and Cass grinned, "It wasn't easy gentlemen, but we managed to capture and keep alive a monster of the Id. We have to melt down the brains of captured Chaos Sorcerers every day to keep it in existence, but finally we can really study the thing."

The trees brushed back ominously as the unseen beast moved past, growling.

Id beasts were typically invisible, but other than that came in all shapes in sizes. However, they were all savage creatures. This was, of course, logical, as the creatures were the manifestations of the darkest parts of a sentient mind: Hatred, lust, rage, envy, greed, and so on.

"Give us a light show," said Cass.

Laser blasts from hidden turrets struck the Id monster, illuminating it, irritating it but otherwise doing it no harm. The thing thrashed around, giving glimpses of claws, teeth, animal snout but nothing concrete.

"At first it destroyed the retrieval crews sent to get it," said Cass, "Even magic didn't seem to help, but we found a way. The souls of psychics sustain it, let us analyze it."

Psychics, or, in this specific case, Psykers, were people with intense psychic powers...and were seen by less savory individuals as living power sources.

Believed by some to be the next step in human evolution, by others to be a subspecies of magic users; their powers could be devastating, profound but also volatile. They were always under danger from demons, monsters of the warp and as recent evidence would provide, monsters of the Id.

Strange cults in the distant past had sacrificed them, using them as power to drive interstellar flight instead of spice. Religious movements of zealots treated them as devils and inadvertently drove many innocent Psykers to evil.

Such was life in the galaxy: Both of scientific advancements and mystical powers...and beliefs. For better or worse.

"Lord," said Cass, "We have every monster for every season; for every enemy and every environment. With I. Rex, she's ready for a test trail as soon as you see fit. And as for our monster of the Id, I'm confident we can recreate it and develop the first prototype in ninety days."

"You might have to shorten your timetable, Cass," said K. Rool, "Be prepared to have less time than you ask for."

Cass grimaced. "Moving ahead with things?" He asked.

"Indeed," K. Rool confirmed. "I have invited Ned to be my Hand, which will start things off...but I only consider Zeal and Koopa to be my main allies."

Cass scoffed. "I'd trust them as far as I could throw them."

"I don't do trust," deadpanned K. Rool, "But they have something I want and I have something they want. They have everything to gain and everything to lose if they betray me."
47 didn't bother to say aloud what he'd do if Zeal or Bowser turned.

Euron was not so subtle, "I'll just have a gentle talk to them if they think they're being treated unfairly."

K. Rool just grunted at this as Cass moved on.

"We've also been working on some equipment as well, used for a bit more practical purpose," Cass went to a wall and typed some numbers on a keypad. A section opened up and he pulled out a white, gun-like object. "Like this Portal Device."

Grabbing the device, Cass fired a blue orb at one wall and an orange wall at another. Miraculously, the two seemed connected, like a window. "Aperture Sciences Portal Gun," said Cass proudly, "They were our main competitor for years before their founder, Cave Johnson, croaked under mysterious circumstances.

47 adjusted his tie. It was one of his more satisfying jobs, strangling the life out of that arrogant blowhard, Cave Johnson.

"And unlike the old model, this one can shoot portals on any surface," said Cass, "Perfect for special forces or even civilian applications if you want to license its use for extra cash."

As one Kremling fooled around by sticking his arm in the portal and waving, Relius spoke to Cass. "I do recall Cave. He WAS brilliant, but completely lacked any sort of practically and even basic knowledge of marketing. He simply did whatever came to mind."

Euron remembered a few of those fondly, "Exploding lemons, deadly mantis people, shower curtains that kill people. There was always a niche market for those among the pirates. You should see what the Slaanesh worshipping pirates got up to."

"Further proof of Cave Johnson's unmooring from reality," Relius asserted.

"Eh, what can ya do?" Euron shrugged as the Kremling stopped fooling around, allowing Cass to close the Portals.

"At any rate," said Cass, "We have piles of research and assets from Aperture's closing. We even have the Atlas and Peabody droid types for cheap and effective testing models. It saves a fortune rebuilding robots instead of buying new slaves."

"That's no fun," Euron huffed, crossing his arms.

"Useful, yes," said K. Rool, examining the portal gun, "I can see this turning to be most effective in space battles."

"Oh, and we also made this," Cass held up another odd-looking gun. "The Zero Point Energy Field Manipulator!"

... 

"Just...call it the Gravity Gun."

"Noted," K. Rool muttered.

"A former employee here, a Doctor Freeman, used one to great effect a few years ago on Death World Xen," Cass explained. "While Dr. Freeman did go native and free our Vortigaunt slave stock,
he did provide valuable combat data for what was intended to be a machine for handling hazardous waste."

Turing to a firing range, Cass grabbed a metal crate with the gun, levitating it some distance from him. Pressing a button on the handle, the crate shot forward and slammed into a ballistic gel dummy, crushing it flat against a wall.

"...I think I want one of those," Euron looked upon the device with awe.

"Prototype right now," Cass muttered. "Right now we are trying improve it so it can fling bodies around as well. It's going to be a real game changer for soldiers that lack power armour," the bird gave an evil grin, "But that over there is something I'm very proud of."

A large machine, unassuming and with no obvious purpose crackled with energy.

"That is a suppression field," Cass explained, "It stops the formation of proteins and DNA in zygotes. Essentially, when it's done and scaled up, it could stop the people of a planet from reproducing; so if they want their species to continue, they have to bend the knee or go extinct in a generation."

"That is inhumanly cruel and malicious," Euron noted.

"You don't like it?" Cass asked with raised eyebrow.

"I didn't say that," Euron grinned. "Fear is a weapon of war, and few fears are as strong as losing your children."

"Right now we're tweaking the field frequency, trying to cover a whole planet with minimal power input," said Cass. "But over here, while it's not as sexy the stalker is a very good way to handle problem prisoners."

Relius eyed up the emaciated humanoid with its hands and feet amputated.

Criminals reduced to lobotomized slaves...no skin off his back. He turned back to Cass. "And how has the work on 'Hell' been doing?" He asked.

"Ah yes, Hell, separate but parallel to the Warp of Chaos." said Cass, "It's a realm of fire, ice and blood. Our demon capture crews take heavy losses with each trip. Presently only the so called Doomguy has come out unscathed; and that's debatable if you consider his mental health."

In a row of cages, captive Demons howled, clawed and drooled. "On the plus side, we finally managed to capture a Hell Knight, tasked with guarding Hell's most sacred locations and relics; former bodyguards of the last Dark Lord of Hell . . . who or whatever that was."

Demons were a...brutal race. Leadership was not done by inheritance or vote. It was whoever was the strongest and most brutal...and as such, leadership tended to fluctuate often.

But always at the top of the hierarchy was the Dragon of Chaos, Urgash. A creature of immense power, he served as a 'God' to the Demons of Hell. Not actual leadership, since he was often too caught up in his own mad mental ravings.

Known as the Snake that eats its own tail, Urgash was a cosmic being of raw, untamed potential. Underneath him, greater demons such as the Spider Mastermind, the Maledict and the Pit Lords waged infinite war in the realms of hell; fighting for dominance. But they all toed the line when the great Urgash threatened to bring the hammer down.
They sought to destroy the forces of both order and chaos; driven by unspeakable wrath and hatred.

As it stood, these demons could also be transformed into powerful cybernetic soldiers. "And wait until you see our captive Cyberdemon," said Cass.

K. Rool said nothing, but looked intrigued about this. He also knew they should keep hush about this. If Doomguy found out about this, he would crush all of Black Mesa.

From what the records said, the man had spent several thousand years in Hell, fighting demons. Killing demons were all he could do now, and even his mercenary work was a means to an end; get better weapons to kill more demons.

On the other hand, they could bring him in if the Cyberdemon got out of hand.

Was he even human himself anymore? Hard to say. All one could say he was VERY good at his job. They said even the Chaos Gods were terrified of him.

Compassion, it was rumored was the source of Doomguy's rage. It apocryphal, with no way to prove it; but the legends went that when he'd been a mortal man, demons had killed his pet rabbit. Driving him mad with rage.

Ridiculous no doubt, but if true it helped to explain by a mentally unstable man consumed by rage didn't just join the chaos gods or try to become the New Dark Lord of Hell.

And the man wasn't even a Space Marine, and still he was extremely tough. Few would dare cross him.

Speaking of Space Marines...K. Rool turned to Cass. "How is the recent Marine research doing?"

"We have all bases covered!" Laughed Cass, "Armor is now lighter and stronger; you could use the new ceramite to shield probes on the surface of a star. We've tweaked the green and black spice formula to cut the rate of transplant rejection in half. And better yet, we've managed to successfully start implementing Psykers in the form of chapter Librarians."

"Psyker Marines," said the King, "Is that wise?"

"Definitely!" insisted Cass, "We've already hardened the minds of ordinary marines to withstand magic and telepathy, but now our Psyker marines use runes to control, refine and enhance their powers. It's not unlike the runes in Hyrulian Shekiah Slates."

Ah yes, the runes were very powerful, and Zelda had recently replicated hers to give to the 5 Champions, able to produce bombs, using magnetic powers, put objects in stasis, produce ice pillars, take pictures, serve as an encyclopedia...and recently, able to produce a sort of motorcycle.

As far as magic went, it was both powerful and even convenient for the user. Link, while a powerful melee fighter, was an utter novice magic user; the tablet had allowed him tremendous utility and combat prowess he would not normally have.

Likewise, Cass had worked to give that same utility and ease of use to the lethal Space Marines. Magnetic powers would be devastating in ship boarding action, stasis would be good in any environment. There was no limit to it.

Space Marines...Relius was the one often in charge of creating several. It was a...complex process. Young men and women would be handpicked from various dangerous worlds to have shot at becoming one. Trials would be done to rest them, which resulted in a lot of death.
The hard part about Space Marines was the rate of organ rejection. Being remade from mere humans into superhuman killing machines took a lot of work. Vital to the process was the Gene Seed, or Progenoid glands.

This tiny, pea sized gland was full of the unspecialized cells that would be cultured into a Space Marine's abhuman organs. Rejection rates were high and tended to kill a lot of subjects who had otherwise proven themselves strong, ruthless and adaptable.

Lately, red spice had cut back on rejection rates, but K. Rool was always pushing for more. Cass's work would be crucial for expanding the numbers of space marines and preserve specimens who had the strength and cruelty to serve their king.

Though the Space Marines were divided into numerous Chapters, and each one had to their own views on life...which did not always fit that of the King.

Their ferocity was unquestioned. But their concern for the poor and their defiance of Imperial Inquisitors meant that K. Rool always regarded the Space Wolves with suspicion. On the other end of the spectrum, he trusted the honorable Ultramarines even less due to their code of ethics.

Always hard to pick them...especially in the vast scale of the Galaxy.

In the end, the King needed the Space Marines. Under his personal command was the Deathwatch Space Marines, of whom Gregor Clegane was one of the senior officers. K. Rool had the closest supervision of them, control of their candidates and as of late they had not disappointed.

"New research on Purple spice has yielded better obedience in Space Marines," said Cass, "Taken with red spice, you get the obedience of a robot and the ferocity of a starving dog."

K. Rool nodded. "Good, good. Zeal has been using the Purple Spice as well to breed a legion of Elder Dragons under her command."

Cass seemed surprised, "I had not heard that, Dr. Breen restricts my information from the outside world. We're going to have to add that to our research schedule. Start saddling dragons to carry Space Marines into battle; end some more lives."

"Sign me up." Euron grinned.

Relius looked about the area. Truly a place of wonders and madness...as he liked it. He spoke up again. "In regards to Aperture, I am assuming you managed to salvage other technology from the ruins."

"Well, we did find some types of gel," Cass admitted. "Still trying to work on it." Cass gestured to three large vats of viscous substance. "Ah yes, amazing that Cave Johnson wanted to market these as dietary supplements. The Conversion gel forms the basis of the Portal Gun Technology, and we've found a way to manufacture it without expensive and toxic moon rocks."

The large bird then pointed to the other two vats, "So far the propulsion gel is showing promise; allowing people and vehicles to move at high speed while walking on it. As of late, Clan Eshin keeps sending assassins to try and steal the formula. The garbage disposal is clogged with rat-men corpses."

"Hmmm, get you some scavengers when I can," K. Rool muttered, not liking the idea of clogged chutes either.

"And for the Repulsion Gel," Cass gestured to the blue vat, "It's proving useful for maneuvering to
high places...provided you don't miss and break every bone in your body." He chuckled, then stopped. "Though that, er, did happen with one test subject. Gruesome, but informative."

"This should be good for movement on high gravity worlds or worlds with dense atmospheres," said Relius, "Send me your latest data samples, I'll see what I can do with the repulsion gel."

"And send me pictures of the test subject," said Euron, "For research."

"Right," K. Rool deadpanned. Euron was likely to frame it and hang it up next to other gruesome kills for his own amusement.

At the very least, having Euron around lit a fire under the old admiralty. Euron was a man who admired ability, rather than birthright, accolades or political connections. And he wasn't afraid to burn someone alive for incompetence.

He just needed a good leash. "Excellent work, Boss Cass," said K. Rool, "You continue to impress me. Have you any further weapons against a Grox offensive?"

"Hmmm, well, we've expanded on our terraforming abilities," Cass replied.

"Terraforming?" Euron asked.

"Grox live only on barren worlds," Cass explained. "Atmosphere of any kind is deadly to them. It's this reason why they follow Tyranids: After the swarm moves out, the Grox move in. Furthermore, we've begun work on attacking the Grox slaves, such as the Dronox and the Insectrox. Working with staff from the old Aperture Science food services division, we began prototyping a poison to destroy Grox Infection Pods."

"This would spare us the use of Planet Buster weapons to remove the pods if they put down roots," surmised Relius.

Planet Busters...weapons of last resort. Able to destroy an entire planet with a single shot, they were frowned upon by most.

They had their uses. When Grox pods poisoned the atmosphere of a world, began killing all life. When Tyranids were close to using up all of a planet's biomass. When Xenomorphs began producing enough black goo to completely mutate a planet.

Long term, use of such weapons could only weaken the kingdom and resulted in Pyrrhic victory.

So yeah, best save them for cleansing instead on conquering.

And while it was rumored one could ally with the Grox, it was impractical, with them being EXTREMELY foul tempered species that could be easily offended and will hold a grudge without any chance of repairing relations.

Wrath seemed to drive a large number of the Grox's actions. In some ways they were harder to predict and anticipate than even the paranoid and mentally unstable Skaven.

As it stood, they'd been at war with the Galaxy since before the Valaryan empire, Since before the Long night.

"And while it's a bit less sexy and deadly, we've managed to gather large samples of Grox speech, alphabet and military codes for translation and decoding," said Cass, "We need to win the information war before we can win the shooting war."
K. Rool nodded grimly. Indeed, sometimes knowing the enemy was the first step of the battle. Some were easy to figure out, others...not so much.

"Have you made any progress on stopping the spread of Ork spores?" the King enquired.

Cass grinned, "Well lord, we've found that modified atomic weapons enriched with Eridium will produce J-rays. These rays will burn all the Ork spores in the atmosphere and those starting to settle into the soil. The only downside is that the rays will melt the eyes of any organic being softer than a space marine within a hundred kilometers. Best to give your troops blast shields over their eyes when you set my bomb off."

"My troops, yes," K. Rool nodded. "Anyone else...that's their own problem."

"Noted," Cass replied without sympathy, before perking up, "Oh, I just remembered. Aside from Hell, we also have been looking into a portal into Paradiso."

"The realm of the angels?" asked the King, "Do you intend to make war on the divine? Or weaponize the creatures there?"

"While hardly as ferocious as the creatures of hell, the monsters of Paradiso compensate with discipline and mental toughness," Relius cautioned, "Do not underestimate the higher plane, my lord."

K. Rool nodded. Cass was right. The angels there could be TOUGH, notably the Audito, representing nature and virtues...

Angels...despite what people thought, they could be just as bad as Demons. In fact, if one would peel away the stony faces, they would find creatures of intense ugliness.

Angels were fiercely hierarchical creatures; while not very smart or creative as individuals, it meant that they lacked the intense infighting so common to Demons. And on the Angels hierarchy, mortal beings ranked close to rats and insects, worthy of only extermination.

"Right now, we have automatic cloaked drones mapping the topography of Paradiso," Cass pointed to a large 3D map. "We're getting a good look at their defenses, their garrisons. We have much to thank the Lumen Sages for; they're suddenly cooperative after your friend Euron threatened to wipe out their order."

Euron grinned. Pompous twats, the lot of them. Much preferred the Umbra Witches, with their dark and mysterious ways.

Only a few were left now, and rumors had it one had recently entered contract with House Nui.

"I am a most godly man," explained Euron, "When I appear, men pray for protection from me. For the Lumen sages, their god jubileus decided not to stop me."

"Save your energy, my violent friend," said Cass, "the Sages have their way, but the last Umbra Witch is out there and the rumors say she's the most powerful of the lot. Bring all your tricks when we finally corner her."

Euron simply nodded at this as Cass lead them onwards. The place was full of wonders, it seemed, and the Greyjoy soaked them all in.

They called Euron "crow" back on his homeworld, something meant as a curse. Among the Ironborn technically it marked one as a lowly scavenger. But as Euron had proven time and time again, few
birds have sight keener than the crow; and crows always feast well on the aftermath of battle. With Cass's weapons on his side, Euron could do much feasting.

Behind a containment field, an Ork Nob roared, raged and beat its fists. Halfway between a common Ork and a Warboss, an Ork nob was a veteran of many battles who grew stronger, larger and even a (very little) bit smarter with each victory.

Orks...dumb creatures, but crafty on the battle field, and savage as something else. They LIVED for fighting, they LOVED to fight. To fight was the main part of their culture. Heck, if they weren't caught up in fighting each other all the time, they could have caused serious damage to the galaxy.

The real bastard thing about Orks was their fungal nature. Due to being part fungus, they reproduced through spores. An Ork killed in battle released a vast number of them. So wherever they went, they left behind mushrooms that would nourish them, that would eventually grow into war beasts and Gretchin slaves with some time. They had a ready made logistic system wherever they went.

Annoying as heck to their enemies, of course. But that was just life...but now they could change things.

"And now Lord, I have something very special to show you," said the bird scientist. "There, on that pedestal, powered by Black Spice is our new Null Field Generator."

"I care because why?" sneered the king.

"Because this device can prevent all space folding faster than light travel once it fully powers up," said Cass, "You want to keep an enemy fleet from escaping and scattering? You want to blockage a planet and keep them cut off from the galaxy? This machine is your ticket."

K. Rool took this into considerations. Yes...the ability to cripple fleets would be big game changer.

The key was finding Black Spice. Already it was notoriously rare, the legend went that it never appeared in the same place twice. it could be used to hard counter magic or Psyker powers. Certain alchemists could make the stuff hide individuals, families and even whole worlds from future sight of seers or scans.

The only place it turned up regularly was in ancient vaults from before the Long Night.

Vaults of ancient kings and lost species, which held priceless objects, often hidden on the most remote locations on the most remote planets. Not an easy task.

But worth every penny and every life lost for what was found within. As it stood, K. Rool wasn't truly a national leader. Under the feudal system he was a local leader with national obligations. To meet those obligations he needed every advantage he could get. "You've done well, Cass."


Cass was a good bird to have around, always learning and innovating, unlike those stupid Tech-priests, always rooted to the past and treating sciences with too much mysticism.

They were still valuable. K. Rool had used their support to secure the crown and prevent a war of succession. Their armies of cyborg warriors, known as Skitari were invaluable to him. They ranged from wimpy creatures barely removed from Black Mesa Stalkers to giant space marine sized bio-monstrosities, but they were all fearless and driven by logic in battle. Useful traits in a soldier.

Although sometimes they could get a little TOO caught up in their work, especially those who
removed half their brains and replaced it with a computer to remove all emotions. Thankfully, those were down only by the most extreme.

Lack of emotions was useful in a low level grunt, but high ranking leaders actually needed to have a brain on their head and the computer brains of the Mechanicus were too useful for advanced theoreticals and useless for war strategy and practical applications.

They hated and resented Cass, especially after he tore apart a few of their sacred artifacts. K. Rool allowed this rivalry, it lit a fire under the Mechanicus and let them know he wasn't totally dependent upon them.

And it was fun to make them squirm a bit, pompous louts.

Cass smoothed his feathers. "Well, I believe that's all we have for now."

K. Rool patted the bird on the shoulder, "You've done well, my friend. Keep doing well, I have confidence in you."

"And I have confidence in your too," smirked Euron, thumbing at his sword.

"Our next visit will likewise be unannounced," Said Relius, "Forever be on your toes."

"I do try." Cass grinned as some of the scientists escorted K. Rool's section out.
The Dreemurr shuttle folded out of time space tunnels, approaching its destination: Metru Nui, the massive space station of House Nui. On board the shuttle were several representatives of House Dreemurr, ready to trade ideas and discuss happenings.

Zelda found her breath taken away by the view of Metru Nui. Even after all this years, the immense architecture and beauty of the station just got to her. While it was as defensible as Winterfell, the station was known more for its art decals, its beauty and experimental architecture. It just seemed to scream, "This is a safe place, stay here and be welcome."

Silent footfalls landed behind Zelda and she smiled, "Hello, Link, I missed you."

Link, the Hylian Champion. Master swordsman, survivor, amateur cook, nice guy...

...rumored cross-dresser.

Link shot the princess a knowing smirk. He was a mute, and in battle he communicated with sign language. But around Zelda, it was just body language and facial expressions. Even when outsiders saw her talking to a deaf man, she saw a man who was the perfect listener and the perfect conversation partner.

Not to mention she was secretly a fan of him in Gerudo outfits, and she gladly let him use her dresses and makeup in private.

Sure, it was mainly used to get into Gerudo Town, a section of Hyrule that only allowed woman, but he did look good in it, helped by his 'pretty boy' appearance.

Zelda and Link also turned to the other four Champions of Hyrule. Both of them were deeply upset by their deaths...and elated upon their rebirth thanks to the power of science! Zelda remembered the massive hug she gave Alphys.

"You fought well, Link," said Zelda, "Mata Nui wants to commend you."

Link shrugged, he didn’t do what he did for money or praise. He fought because it was the right thing to do. He fought the guardians and Calamity Ganon’s dark powers because it was the right thing. And even an alliance with the Beastmen could only delay the end for Ganon.

He was just happy the fel beast was gone, and his friends were back.

"You don't give yourself enough credit, Link," Tal, a swordsman from the planet Sudeki, a Dreemurr owned world known for producing great warriors. He laughed, "You smashed 100 years of dominance by Ganon, opened a wedge for Zelda to bring back our friends and beat Kazrak the One-Eye in a duel, that says something about you."

"Mostly that you get the job done," said Buki, a bad tempered woman with a love of battle.

Zelda blushed. "Now, now. I couldn't have done the revival without the others."

Urbosa laughed in a friendly manner. "Don't put yourself down like that. You did well in our comeback."

"I agree," Princess Ailish, a gifted sorceress with free spirit nodded. "You were-and still are- better
than you think you are."

Link put a hand on Zelda’s shoulder. She had done good. Her magic and grasp of science had enabled him at every step.

“Stop,” said Zelda, “you’re going to embarrass me.”

Buki huffed playfully, “and when Link delivers Ganon’s head on a platter, we’ll still embarrass you. Now get ready to meet with our Lord Nui. He’s going to thank you.”

"And we're approaching fast," Daruk noted. "Better open the hailing frequencies."

"Ah, yes," Zelda looked up and walked over to the consoles to open the signal.

The viewscreen popped open to reveal a young woman in a white dress. Agnès Oblige grinned, "Zelda, and company; you are all a sight for sore eyes."

"Permission to land at Metru Nui?" said the Princess of Hyrule.

"Granted," Agnès replied. "Lord Nui has been expecting you all."

Agnès was a mage and the head of religious affairs for House Nui, making sure all diverse religions of the House were recorded and studied. A polite young woman, she sometimes suffered from putting too much on her shoulders...and a lousy sense of direction, at times getting lost on a straight path.

Nonetheless, Mata Nui had chosen the young girl for her strong moral compass. Polite and motherly, she had guarded the four crystals without fail. She had allowed the faith of the Seven to Flourish while also fighting against the fanatical Sparrows. She had the vision and depth to understand the difference between religion and zealotry.

The ship began to dock and Zelda felt like she was back home again. Link stood next to her, Master Sword and shield sheathed.

The main docking station was locating at Le-Metru, a section of the station that served as the transpiration hub. Using vehicles and chutes, one could get anywhere in the city.

The interior of the station was all marble, statues and artwork. If Dreemur station was like a homely farming community, this was like an educated, urban paradise of contrasting and complimentary ideas.

Even from the entrance of the spaceport, Zelda could see theaters, art houses and restaurants. It was this which she and Link fought for. A place of freedom and joy.

The great hero, Captain Falcon, snapped the group a salute, "Greetings, Dreemur Party! Our Lord is expecting you!"

Captain Falcon, as he was so called, was a fine bounty hunter and superb F-Zero racer...which took a lot skill considering how fast those things could go.

The dentination currently was the Coliseum, the center of the station, where announcements were made, power was distributed, and games were held.

Besides being one of Mata Nui’s warriors, Captain Falcon was an ongoing favorite of the crowds at the Arena within the city and around the galaxy; from the Black Walls of Volantis City to the snowy
areas of Winterfell, he was a champion racer in any form.

Link smiled at the Captain and bumped fists with him. Many a times they'd gone to war together and watched one another's backs.

Soon, they reached the Coliseum, the massive tower tall over them all, and in the center of all six sections of Metru Nui. Mata Nui himself would be inside, waiting with his inner circle.

The lord of Metru Nui sat upon a marble throne. Somehow, the leader of House Nui made the act of sitting on a throne seem humble, easy going. The ease with which he sat upon his throne made it look at though he hadn't a care in the world.

"Zelda, Link," Mata Nui said in a warm voice, "Welcome back."

Click, perched on his shoulder, chittered happily as Link and Zelda bowed, as did the other members of Dreemurr. Good to show respect around here.

Link bowed before the leader of House Nui, Zelda looked him in the eyes. "It's good to be back, Master Nui."

"You've had a harsh time, and you've done much to stop Ganon, or stop pirates and bandits in your own space," said the leader of Nui, "Please stay and rest for a while. Though I must share some news with you."

As all took their seats, Zelda noticed aside from Falcon and Nui, only Agnès and D.Va were present among the inner circle. The rest were likely doing their own tasks...though she sensed they would be here soon.

"Much is right with the universe," said Mata Nui, "But something is changing, and when the moment comes we will all have to stand with House Stark."

Zelda was confused, "The Starks have never been stronger. Their economy is strong, as is their army and their civilian population has never been better fed, better educated or more supportive of them."

"Aye, that is true," Mata Nui nodded. "But something has come up. Ned Stark has been offered a position as K. Rool's hand...and he has recently accepted."

The Dreemurr representatives looked up in shock.

"What?" Zelda sputtered, unable to believe this.

Link's eyes widened at the implications. Agnès herself seemed saddened and worried by the news.

"Why would Ned accept?" Zelda demanded, "Why would K. Rool extend the offer?"

"Likely to keep an eye on him," D.Va replied. "Or maybe take apart the wolf pack."

"Oh, so many things that could wrong," Revali, the Rito Champion, grumbled. "Old Ned will get himself killed with his honor."

"Ned always knew the risks of honor," said a newcomer, a red and crimson cyborg, "As did his father. What matters is that his children have the tools and skills to survive the coming chaos," said Zero, one of Nui's main enforcers.

"True," Mata Nui agreed. "From what I understand, Arya Stark has been sent to a Death World to train herself as well."
"Yeah..." Ailish nodded. "She never was the 'lady' type."

"On Ark, Arya has already found a tribe, made her first kill and shown herself to be a leader among men," said Zero, "Her education is beginning, but it is promising."

"And her brother, Jon, while not a legitimate heir, is a strong leader who's come out on top against Skaven and Xenomorphs," said Ailish.

"So you see, as the King divides the Starks, we must be their pack," said Mata Nui. "And a pack we will be!" Daruk proclaimed bravely, always ready to help friends.

Mata Nui nodded, then stood. "Now then, perhaps I should show you around, and detail the working of my sector."

Mata Nui faced the delegation from Dreemurr and stood from his throne to walk among them. "As you have your knowledge and resources with me, so shall I with you. Behold the fruits of House Nui's endeavors."

"I'll take it from here," said Zero.

Mata Nui nodded as Zero began to speak. "As you know, we are a very technically advanced house, aimed to better the lives of others, and to invite new people within. Metru Nui itself, aside from the Coliseum, is divided into six sections, representing fire, air, water, earth, ice, and stone. The arena serves several purposes," Zero elaborated, "Besides being a highlight for warriors and athletes to show their strength and intelligence, it is also a fine recruiting ground for soldiers and servants of our house. Unlike House Lee, we prefer to rely on a well trained and motivated national army as opposed to expensive mercenaries."

"It's also where our operations are run," Agnès went on. "As for the various sectors, each other has an overall function. Le-Metru, as you have seen, controls the transportation units of our House. Ko-Metru is where the meanings of the stars and planets are studied. Onu-Metru is a museum of various objects and specimens of our planets. Ga-Metru is our learning and spiritual center. Po-Metru is our art and goods manufacturing area. Ta-Metru is where our weapons and Kanohi are forged." Agnès brought up a map of a district of the station, a place of vast towers, great crystalline spires and immense beauty. "Ko-Metru has always been known as the Silent District; home of scholars and seers trying to predict the future and divine the winds of magic. In modern times it serves a more mundane but essential purpose," she stated.

Mata Nui bowed his head, "In recent times, the spires of Ko-Metru broadcast information across the galaxy; free and accurate, available to all. Even the lowliest people can have the sum of galactic knowledge at their fingertips; whether it's for personal betterment or to help comet miners cure alien plagues does not matter."

Zelda raised an eyebrow, impressed. "You should aid us in that one day."

"Indeed we will," D.Va grinned, as she fiddled with the map. "Here we have Ga-Metru, where the Great Temple stands. This place is both a haven for scholars learning about the galaxy, as well as those of spiritual faith, not to mention we try to heal those with deep trauma. Recently, we rescued a Mercury Adept named Mia."

"What happened to her?" Mipha asked.

Zero grimaced. "You...are aware of the pirate Juri Han, correct?"
"I know of her," said Zelda darkly. To the side, Link's hand went unconsciously to his Sword at the memory. "She was born on Stygia, working in the slave pits beneath the hotel resorts. She led a gang for years after the planet fell to anarchy; her trademark being rape and cannibalism of captives."

"And she performed experimental brain surgery on Mia, draining her Psyenergy to feed her own Feng Shui engine eye," Agnès elaborated. "We helped Mia."

"Not just that," D.va snarled, her usually cheerful nature fading for a moment. "She used the poor girl as her bondage toy..."

"Mia is not unique in her situation," said Mata Nui with great sadness, "Many beings such as her have been exploited and brutalized for a truly unforgiveable crime."

D.Va seemed on the verge of tears, "We've worked to help bring Mia and others healing. We want to change how survivors like her are treated, how they're perceived and let them grow strong again."

"That, my friend, is truly wonderful," Ailish admitted with a nod and small smile.

"A number of armies in ancient and modern times use rape as a weapon of terror," said Mata Nui with dark eyes, "Among our army and navy, those who commit the crime of rape are executed. We do not tolerate this breach of another sentient being's autonomy."

"But it isn't all gloom and doom," said Agnès, "Po-Metru is our station's natural section; a place of both agriculture and wilderness preservation, breeding rare and endangered plants and animals to restore planetary ecosystems. Mia herself helped our most recent refinement and expansion of the area."

"Not just that," Zero added, "It's where statues and general goods are made for trade, and it helps bolster the economy. Art has always been hated by tyrants and underrated by the bureaucratic, but stories, artwork and experimental art always push a society forward in the long run."

"Of course, we still need to defend," D.va added. "Ta-Metru comes into play there. It forges weapons for our army, as well as Kanohi Masks, masks of great powers and abilities."

"This is where we forge and mold Protodermis and ship it off to Po-Metru and Le-Metru," said Zero, "The Kanohi masks, crafted from Protodermis or Kanoka disks allow users the ability to tap into the fundamental, elemental forces of nature. They give us an advantage against dark magic users and the forces of Chaos."

"And," Mata Nui stated, "We're hoping to adapt them and spread them to our allies."

"Ah, that does sound useful." Daruk grinned with a nod.

"Tell me about it," A voice caused them to turn. Spyro, a scout of Mata Nui, came fluttering in.

"I'm glad you've had fun with the Mask of Fire, Spyro," greeted Agnès.

"I didn't think I'd need it," said Spyro, "I've been breathing fire for years, but it gave me an edge over that fire breathing Khornate Berserker."

"Yes," said Agnès, "We all know how you melted the brass fortress the demon resided in, trapping it."

"But we've been working on more unique masks as well, like those that allow shielding, translations, truth-telling, and even flight!" D.Va looked excited.
"Meanwhile the Mask of Emulation permits a user to analyze and copy the powers of another spell-caster," Mata Nui explained. "It is for my most trusted commanders, but tests have been promising."

"But I'd give anything to have another spin with the Mask of Growth," Spyro said playfully, "It's fun being a hundred foot tall dragon. Really took the fighting spirit out of those pirates."

"Yes, yes, we all saw that spectacle," Agnès sighed. "And even there are certain masks of which only...one of each can exists." Mata Nui tapped his own mask to make the point.

"Each mask is a work of art as much as science," said Mata Nui, "even weaker masks represent a great sacrifice and skill. Then there are the Legendary Kanohi, weapons of last resort."

"Like the Ignika," said D.VA with a touch of fear in her voice, "Something that can undo the corruption of Chaos . . . or be worse than it in the wrong hands."

Best not mention a more recent project...the Vahi, or Mask of Time. It was still too early, and too risky for it to be public knowledge.

Mata Nui was ancient, and deep were the secrets he carried. He'd been a force for good largely, but even his best efforts could turn bad if the fates willed it. The masks of Kanohi were too powerful to let into the wrong hands, used correctly they could bring about galactic peace.

Key phrase, if used properly.

For now masks such as the Mask of Growth were more useful and safe, little more than tools in the hands of trusted soldiers, scientists and artists.

"Anyways," Agnès thankfully helped changed the subject. "Onu-Metru is the museum of the station. We have gathered numerous objects AND animals from the various worlds we control, so that other may learn from them," She smiled. "That place, along with Ko-Metru and Ga-Metru, is where Ciel spends much of her time. Ciel has worked hard helping us restore old museum exhibits, translate ancient documents and decode old computer files. The girl is a true prodigy and she's taught me as much as I've been able to teach her."

"She's also helped spruce up Le-Metru," said Spyro, "it's the transport hub of the station, and the abandoned tunnels and railways are the best places for dragon flight racing and cave exploration. You just never know what you'll find."

Things were looking good for the Nui House.

Tal turned to Mata Nui suddenly. "If I may ask, what worlds do you have under your command, Mata Nui?"

"This may sound ridiculous," said the ancient and venerable ruler, "But we've managed to take over the Isle O' Hags world from Gruntilda. The last we saw of her, Banjo and Kazooie banished her to the pits of Hell."

"And she's probably fighting it out with the Spider Mastermind who's prettier," quipped Spyro.

"Er, anyways." Mata Nui said as Click rolled his eyes. "We cleaned up her lair, that allowed access to several pocket dimensions, each one having a specific purpose, before we spread to the rest of the island.

"Oh, cleanup of that old castle was such a pain..." Spyro groaned.
"Now, now, it was all good," All turned to see another member of the council, Elora.

The faun bounced over her deer-like hooves, her ears twitching. It was good to see Spyro again. "And thank you again Spyro for helping us map out the Vaults of La Maluna. As well as freeing the Four Philosophers from their stone hibernation."

"I've heard about that world," said Zelda, "A place of much danger and mysticism."

La-Maluna...a vast, underground series of ruins full of treasure, secrets...and dangers. One did not casually stride in.

"So, you say you spread through the rest of the Isle O Hags?" Revali asked with some snark, as usual.

Mata Nui nodded. "Yes, and most of the realms showed to have their uses...but they were two main problem ones: Witchyworld and Grunty Industries."

"Grunty Industries was an environmental nightmare that threatened the whole planet at first," said Elora, "it wasn't easy upgrading the several hundred square kilometers of factory. But we now have one of the largest star fighter factories in the galaxy thanks to the centuries of effort that Gruntilda put in while she was CEO of that pocket dimension and its industry."

"And Witchyworld is an actual theme park now," said Spyro, "And not just a death trap straight out of a comic book."

"What?" Urbosa asked flatly.

"Er, let's just say it was kinda expensive and risky, but worth it." D.Va replied. "Though the workers complained endlessly about Industries. Said it was too big, labyrinthine, and roundabout." D.Va smiled, "Witchyworld now one of the galaxy's most popular vacation spots and the industries are actually a decent place for industrial workers to make a living. We put a lot of effort fixing up those two places."

"Ah, good," Zelda smiled. "And the lair is being put to good use?"

"Yeah, it is." Spyro nodded. "We'd been thinking about remodeling the head-like entrance, buuuut, it has it's own ugly charm."

"The lair still provides access to nine other worlds within the planet," said Mata Nui, "so outside of its function, we try to keep things as are, so that we may better remember history."

"Plus the dragon aerie and anti-aircraft defenses in the Spiral Mountains are a fresh new addition," said Spyro.

Mata Nui nodded. Yes, a bizzare world, but it had its functions.

"But, as said, art and culture are still a major part of our House," Agnès spoke up again. "That is why we have colonizes the planet known as Nippon."

"Nippon, land of Ōkami?" asked Zelda, "D.Va, don't you have ancestry there?"

The gamer and fighting champion smiled, "I'm technically from Korea, but our two planets have exchanged immigrants and wars for thousands of years. There's Nippon in me somewhere."

A world with ancient and deep cultural roots, Nippon was the land of the Gods, who used special
brush powers to channel their abilities. Greatest was the Ōkami, or the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu.

Amaterasu, mother of all and the spiritual if not political ruler of Nippon. Nearly as ancient as Mata Nui himself, she was a being of great wisdom and power. In recent times, she had faced her greatest challenge against Yami the Demon King.

In that moment the fate of Nippon had nearly been decided forever. It would have swayed in favor of demonkind if not for a young artist named Issun.

His works of art inspired faith among the people, allowing them to lend their aid to the wolf-like goddess. She triumphed over the demon, and kept watch over the people ever since. Now Nui was using the place to learn, experience art, and train against the savage demons that remained.

The world held the promise that magic could come from something other than aggression or hatred. That it could spring limitless from creativity, love and growth; infinitely renewing and changing.

"The world also has some of the finest sword masters in the galaxy, the venerable Samurai of the world keep it safe and make the sword and the paintbrush extensions of their own body."

"Hundreds of clans, deadly ninja groups and demon holdovers make the place deadly as it is beautiful," said Zero, "But in all my years I've never seen a Death World hold such wonders."

Not the WORSE Death World, but it still could be quite fearsome at times.

"But if you want something more exciting and somewhat safe," D.VA grinned. "The City Worlds Inkopolis and Mute City got ya all covered! Besides being the place I grew up, Inkopolis is the place I first knew I wanted to become a mech pilot. It's also the place where we finally threw back the Salmonid and Skaven stranglehold. The city can breathe easy for the first time in a decade and the Innklings, Jellyfish and Octarians have agreed to send regular reinforcements to join House Nui's armies."

"And I've seen their ink magic," said Zelda, "Messy as a horror show, but shockingly effective."

"and my old home, Mute City has also agreed to send a portion of their finest pilots to Nui's space force every year," said Captain Falcon proudly.

"And they are both home to awesome games!" D.Va pumped her fist. "From friendly shooting games to races. And if people can't make it, they can just steam it from home."

Link nodded with a smile. Good to hear that people could still find joy and fun. Helped them forget that a bunch of Hostile Aliens could attack.

"When things settle down, Link and I would love to volunteer for the games. Marksmanship has always been one of Link's strong points," said Zelda on behalf of her protector and friend.

Urbosa smiled, "I haven't been in a race proper since calamity Ganon, maybe I can give the local racers a run for their money; show the galaxy that you can't catch a Gerudo in space."

"Indeed, I would live to see you all play the games," Mata Nui smiled as he moved on, using the map to show another world. "This is Gielinor. A lighter Death World, which allows for civilizations to thrive, but also tough in certain locations. But it serves as a wondrous training grounds for a variety of skills, be it combat, fishing, crafting, mining, smithing, and far more. Aside from training for special forces, the planet's more unruly and dangerous areas are good proving grounds for regular ground armies, places for mercenaries to upgrade their skills or adventurers to prove their mettle."

"A lot of refugees settle on the planet," Agnès explained, "While not strictly safe, the town and cities
provide a place to raise families and the wilds allow the bold to earn a living. It's proof of concept of the idea of multiculturalism."

"To say nothing of the work we've done on Poke," added Zero.

"Poke?" Mipha cocked her head.

"Oh, yeah." Elora spoke up. "It's a Death World, though one that also allows for major civilizations in 'Safe Zones'. The Pokémon there can be quite dangerous...but we have managed to learn to tame a vast majority of them and use them for all sorts of functions?

"It's an arrangement that works well for us," said Mata Nui, "In the fortified towns and frontier fortresses, men and women grow used to hard garrison life and frequent attacks by hostile Pokémon and other threats. In the wilds, special forces can show their potential not just by hunting the Pokémon but by taming them."

"Pokémon can assist in a variety of roles," explained Agnès, "they're not just useful in combat,"

Zero nodded. "They can functions as transportation, guards, sports...even just pets."

"That's sounds like it could be good on the market," Revali noted.

"Pokémon are sentient beings," Mata Nui clarified, "Taking them on is more than a pet, it's about opening up one's soul. Taking them to the wider galaxy could have immense boons to artists, warriors and scientists,"

Zelda was just about to ask more when...

"Ah, entertaining the children with such grandiose stories, eh? I suppose it does have its uses, though sometimes it can wind up as quite dull."

All turned to see who had spoken. Not a council, but a hired mercenary under Nui employ...and Zelda's eyes bulged.

She was a VERY attractive female, wrapped in a skintight black...suit, with high-heels made from guns, and glasses that added to the allure. A small lollipop was in her mouth.

"Thank you for bringing a certain amount of flair to the proceedings, Bayonetta," Mata Nui said, like a father dealing with a rebellious but beloved teenager.

"Anything for you, Master Nui," said the Umbra Witch, sucking on her lollipop suggestively, "I'd be lost without you." Then, like she had no decorum at all, the witch flashes a flirtatious wink at Zelda.

Zelda turned bright red. Bayonetta, real name Ceraza, was always a tricky person to read accurately. She appeared to be causal, laid-back, flirty individual who would gladly tease anything that would move...but she was an Umbra Witch, and her demeanor belied intense power, both physical and magical.

For someone who looked like a super model, she'd wrestled Ork Warbosses with her bare hands, hunted against Predator Elder Hunters and she even fought a greater Demon of Khorne and won.

A mercenary by self admission, she was driven by more than money, though she didn't bother to share what Mata Nui gave her that other could or would not.

As powerful as she was, Zelda was happy to call the hot-blooded witch an ally if not friend.
"So, from what I have gathered," Bayonetta grinned like a cat, "You have yet to mention some of the more...dangerous Death Worlds. Like this." She summoned a planet map of a world with continents arranged in the shape of a fire-breathing T-Rex head.

"Oddly specific arrangement there," Revali muttered dryly.

"This, my feathered friend," Bayonetta chuckled, "is Urth. Ruled by seven mighty gods, ruling over a ruined land. One of my favorite places. When I feel bored or I feel sad, I go down to the surface and I pick a fight with Vertigo, goddess of insanity." the screen flashed with a giant cobra lizard hybrid. "I walk away from fights with her feeling like a Queen.

"To say nothing of the savage tribes, savage Orks, Yautja bad bloods and Beastmen who are half beast and half demon that live on the planet," said Zero, "The place is a hellhole and if it wasn't useful as a training ground, I'd say it should be bombarded from orbit."

"Oh, my, how hasty," Bayonetta cooed. "And you should know how people feel about Planet Busters."

"Those are last resort weapons," Zero countered. "And not even meant for warfare."

"Besides love," said the witch, "you can destroy the forms of the seven primordial gods, but they'll only pop up elsewhere. Urth wasn't always like this, not like it was before that meteor."

"All that is violent, is not strictly evil," cautioned Mata Nui, "All that tries to help you is not strictly good."

Sauron, the God of Hunter, was a good example. He was Virtuous Beast...but only defended the people so he could feed on them. Nice.

"But if one wants more excitement-and resources-Mustafar is always a treat," Bayonetta went on. "Volcanic heat, barely any atmosphere, and lots of dark side ghosts and evil spirits/Oh and the lava flows bring rare metals and precious stones to the surface for easy gathering."

"The world has been a considerable source of mineral wealth," said Agnès, "Helping us build computers, ultra pure spice refining and a dozen rare technologies that give us a crucial economic edge."

"Ah, we have a similar planet back in our sector," Ailish stated. "Called Nocturne. One hell of planet there. A volcanic one as well, populated by some of the meanest, toughest creatures out there."

"Not to mention," Buki added. "The Time of Trials period in which the planet undergoes massive tectonic activity, tidal waves and eruptions happening all over...before a bitter winter settles in."

"I know the place," said Bayonetta, "It's also home to galaxy class smiths and forges. And while he was alive, the Superhuman Primarch Vulcan was a personal friend. And I do use that label on very few people."

"He passed with honour," said Mata Nui, "His martial traditions and knowledge of the forge lives on."

"Assuming one survives," Urbosa muttered, knowing just how harsh Nocture could be.

"Ah," Agnès turned to Zelda. "House Dreemurr has another Death World they sometimes use for food, code-named PNF-404, am I correct?"
"Filled with large lifeforms and food," Zelda confirmed.

"Home of the Pikmin," said Ailish, "Small but some of our greatest allies. Able to lift over 200 times their own weight and some of the greatest gardeners in the galaxy."

"They showed us how to fight the boulder beetles and other dangerous wildlife," said Urbosa

"And the fruit there are HUGE!" Daruk grinned. "One is able to feed several dozen people."

Bayonetta nodded. "So many worlds...all having their purposes...even if they are deadly. And at the end of the day, it'll be the small folk like the Pikmin who serve as the foundation of a house and a nation, giant fruit or no giant fruit."

Mata Nui nodded again. "Well, my friends, let us head to the Great Temple and find some peace there."

The party headed out of the throne room, to the tube train towards Ga-Metru.

The leader of House Nui was silent, pensive. The Great temple had immense significance to him personally, not just spiritually to his people and house.

It was a place of mediation for him, to really expand one's consciousness beyond the stars, to search or higher meanings.

Even the adrenaline charged Bayonetta seemed to have some sort of peace here, like a predatory cat laying down for a rest; the temple brought out something in her not normally seen.

Link especially seemed to respond to the temple, a structure older than even the Wall in the Stark's homeworld. Maybe in thousands of lifetimes and rebirths he'd seen this place, but it still took his breath away.

Link and Zelda...said to be incarnations of legendary Hero and the Goddess Hylia...born time and time again to protect the galaxy at large.

As much as there was evil in the galaxy, there were always those looking to do good; those who believe in might for right, not might makes right. That cruelty is never worth it and decency and kindness are the most desirable goals and states of living.

The temple was vast but it was never intimidating. Beings from all walks of life prayed in the station. But their prayers were not out of fear. They weren't praying for more money, a better future or materiel goods. They were giving thanks for what they had and more importantly, the people they had.

There was a sense of community in the temple utterly unlike the fearful zealotry of the Sparrows or the blind hatred of Chaos worship.

Idols, paintings, and others images of the various Gods and Goddesses of the Nui controlled worlds adored the Temple, allowing worship for all sorts of pilgrims to the area.

Mia was there as well, praying.

Mia bent her head with contemplation. Once she'd been a healer and once she had been gravely hurt by Juri Han in worse ways than physical. She'd never be the same person, but that didn't mean she couldn't grow strong again.
She leaned against her staff over a pool of ceremonial water, her magical element.

She gently allowed it to flow, calling silently upon the powers of Nuregami, a snake-goddess of Nippon with power over water.

Snakes...like crows, they were viewed with both fear and reverence. Some associated them with sins and lies, others with beauty and wisdom, hence why House Zeal used serpent motif in their constructions. But all agreed the serpent was strong and powerful.

The Serpent Goddess of Nippon was a creature of renewal and birth. The shedding of its skin would grant new life, new habits, new ways of being and thinking. And just as a shedding snake was at its most vulnerable, so too was Mia as she drew upon this power.

But in this place, she was safe to be vulnerable. In her free time, she practiced bondage with Bayonetta; something that some saw paradoxical but she saw as cleansing.

And Bayonetta was happy to help: Both to satisfy her urges...and along with a true desire to aid the girl (though she would deny that part).

She was always soft with Mia in a sense...a welcome change from listening to fellow mercenaries Ragna and Noel loudly fuck each other in some Space Bar room next to hers.

Noel was a powerful female gun user whose youthful good looks and odd behavior belied a veteran warrior who'd faced great peril and moral temptation to rise to the occasion time and time again.

Ragna was a former criminal and anarchist who at one point had one of the highest bounties available on his head. Mata Nui granted him clemency and refuge in exchange for his services and the services of Noel.

Bayonetta had them both in bed, but sometimes she really just wanted to sit around and read a book. Not everything had to be screaming and spanking.

Somewhere on this station right now...maybe meet up with them at the Kohlii game that was being hosted soon at the Coliseum.

--

Ragna and Noel were cheering for the teams in the Coliseum, watching a fine game of Kohlii on the go. Originally created to settle minor disputes between villagers, the game had burgeoned into a galactic smash hit broadcast on almost every world and starship.

Two teams were kicking around the comet, much like soccer or football. The two fighters were technically here to provide security for Mata Nui and his entourage, but they so rarely got a chance to enjoy the games that they could barely contain their excitement.

Indeed, the two teams were those from the various worlds of Nui control.

The first team was from Inkopolis, the Squid Sisters Callie and Marie. These two cousins were highly popular and cheerful idols of their home planet.

They'd made a name for themselves in the various ink battles of their homeworld and their bravery as front line soldiers. in peacetime they'd been success stories as powerhouse athletes and hugely influential celebrities.

Their opponents however were no less famous or determined.

All looked at the two opponents of the Squid Sister, ready to win...
Kicking the comet away was none other than Mei, famous climatologist and long time warrior friend of D.VA. Next to her was the famous Tracer, war hero and some would say sex symbol. Her winning grin and tight pants saw to that.

"Try harder next time, love!" she shouted playfully as she intercepted the comet and started running into the squid sister's corner.

Callie grinned, holding her staff. "Well now, pretty quick, and you're not quite fresh enough for us!" The watched as the comet came flying and scooped in up as well, shifting into her squid form to prove more flexibility.

Mata Nui, his circle, and his guests were watching from the control dock.

Urbosa grinned as she watched the squid sisters leveraged their ink powers for extra speed. "We have a sport just like this on Hyrule, I was a master among my tribe." she pumped her fist in the air as Callie kicked the comet only for Mei to block it with an ice wall, which then saw Marie use her squid form to snatch the ball from her.

"Some things are constant across the universe," said Mata Nui.

Mata Nui believed in a sense of connections among people, from hope, dreams, desires, wants, needs, riches, games, religion, battle...all forms of life had it.

All living beings wanted companionship. All beings wanted some form of community. Even the truly insane sought out similar beings because the road to damnation was a lonely one.

In sport, Mata Nui could bring some unity to diverse peoples as they supported their favorite teams, celebrated the same games and championships. Unlike K. Rool's gladiator arena, admission to the Kohlii arena or live streaming was dirt-cheap. This sport was for everyone.

And was certainly not a brutal, bloody melee of death and carnage. There were organized, if rowdy sports.

The sport was a test of teamwork, skill and dedication. Traits that Mata Nui wanted to foster in all of his citizens, from the lowest to the most high. Beings could use their powers and abilities within reason.

Other than archery, this was the most widely endorsed sport by House Nui.

Down in the field. Marie was about to score a hit for Team Ink when Tracer phased in time and blocked the shot.

Marie pursed her lips; this was going to be tougher than she thought. Well, nothing an Agent couldn't handle.

The crowd was eager for this all, watching the synchronized moments of the two teams trying to gain the upper hand.

Urbosa was now unashamedly rooting for the Squid sisters, while Link sat next to her with an ear-to-ear grin. It reminded him of similar games he played Gorons back on Hyrule; just with a rock instead of a comet.

Tracer took the ball forward, Mei keeping up.

Calie squid formed forwards, catching up with the Overwatch speedster. She'd not be beaten!
The two teams had been battling for three periods. The clock was counting down and one goal would mean the difference between a win or loss. Since this was a playoff’s game, a tie would result in an extra period to make a tiebreaker.

Tracer kicked the comet at the Squid Team's net, with Marie leaping to intercept.

It all seemed to happen in very slow motion...

Just four seconds were left.

Tracer's foot was about to make contact.

3 seconds.

When Marie's squid form knocked the comet away from her.

2 seconds.

Only for Mei to kick it in at the eleventh hour, skating in with her ice gun and riding to win.

1.

The comet glanced off the goalpost and went into the net

Game over.

The crowd went wild over this, as Callie and Marie simply took their loss with grace. Fun match either way.

Calie and Marie both looked furious for a moment, before hugging one another. The sisters then turned to the screaming crowds and bowed. Getting up from the bow, they proceeded to shake hands with Mei and Tracer.

"Champions don't shake hands," said Tracer gleefully, "Champions hug!" she cried out as she pulled Marie into a rib creaking hug of affection.

The dryer Sister squeaked as she was hugged as the applause sounded out. Another great game for the day.

Sportsmanship was critical to the games. Many of the athletes in Kohlii participating for the love of it. Likewise the athletes themselves encouraged sportsmanship from their fans, taking away control from rioters or cheaters.

"Thank you for that exhilarating performance," said Zelda, as Urbosa and Link tried to calm themselves.

Mata Nui nodded. "My pleasure," He turned back to the crowd. "I do this, not because of culture, but because I wish to give them hope and peace...that even in this dark galaxy, love and joy can still be found...I believe in peace, order and good governance. My House governs with the consent of the people and with the aid of the House of Lords and the House of Commons. Even in the event of my death and no heirs, the people of Nui space have a set of shared ideals, beliefs and a constitution to guide them."

"Not that I'd ever let anything happen to you, Lord Nui," said Bayonetta like a devoted daughter. "You’ve got your best years ahead of you."
Mata Nui nodded, happy for the turn of events, and left with his guests back inside, hope in their hearts.
Final Hunt

Death World Jumanji was the first world to gain that distinction. In the time before the Long Night, before the Valaryans and even before the discovery of spice and fold space, it had been known and feared by galactic travelers.

In times that were beyond ancient, it was a stop for sublight spacecraft that took thousands of years to complete their voyages; underground caves providing cheap and ready sources of carbonite to freeze their crews in cryo-stasis and the large freshwater seas providing readily available fuel for fusion reactors.

In these times, the King of the Galaxy called it his own and Pridak oversaw the latest batch of soldiers. It was also the time for him to get one last hunt before war struck.

Pridak himself was currently dwelling the base that was set up in this world. Designed like a hunters lodge, yet still with modern technology to keep wildlife away from the area.

Pridak looked out the window of his quarters. The jungle seemed to stretch on and on, with no end in sight...and plenty of ways to die in there.

The setting of the Hunting Lodge made Pridak feel at home, not at ease but at home. Giant mosquitoes, man-eating lions with near human levels of intelligence, carnivorous plants and those were just the most obvious threats out there.

It felt like this world shared the hatred that drove Pridak, the hunger beyond hunger and the need for power that would never go away. It was his job to observe the last group of recruits before they proved themselves worthy of becoming the next generation of Space Marines. He could see all of them on the monitors, selected for intelligence, survival ability, killer instinct and cruelty.

He took a moment to observe them as they were herded along by Kremling overseers...let's see who they managed to get.

The recruits were having a higher survival rate. Not because the job was getting any easier. If anything, the predators of the jungle over the years had evolved to be more deadly. What changed was that the men and women chosen were getting deadlier to start with.

On screen, the armed Kremlings marched the hungry, beaten group of men and women towards a large stone temple built by a civilization that went extinct long before space flight was ever dreamed up.

Men AND women...Pridak recalled the times of early Space Marine creation. At the time of past, the Marines could only be male, and had to start the process of becoming one at age 10. Adulthood might not work.

But as time passed, and due to the efforts of Relius and Black Mesa, both male and female could be Marines, and the election process could start into adulthood, as long as they were in their prime.

It wasn't that Pridak has a problem with child mortality, it was that because the graduates could be much older they were more likely to get the mental hardening they needed to perform their duties before getting the dangerous and expensive augmentation procedure.

Not to mention that there were some women out there who were nearly as twisted as Gregor Clegane, and it would be a waste not to exploit their talents.
As it stood, the recruits who'd so far survived for ten months here in the jungles were now being forced to fight what lived in the center of the ancient temple.

Pridak grimaced, and he made his way to the rendezvous point to meet up with the Kremlings and the potential recruits.

He left the base, unafraid. He had...shown himself to be a fearsome predator in these parts, so many of the life forms would stay away from him. And does that did not...well, he was always happy to teach lessons.

The local wildlife didn't exactly fear him, but they were wary of him. They would watch for potential weakness on his part, but he would never show it.

Pridak began jumping through the branches of the massive trees, swinging on vines and leaping like an acrobat. His sharp claws assisting him in climbing. While mostly aquatic, he was like all of his kind: highly adaptable.

The sounds of life surrounded him...ironic that this type of life brought mostly death to those who traversed here.

Pridak landed atop the great stone walls of the temple, the vines here were present, but not as much as they should have been, not as much as they normally did with artificial structures. A flower fired a poisoned dart at him, only for Pridak to catch it with his claws.

Without a thought, he ripped the flower from its roots where it shrieked like a living animal. Grinding it under his foot, ants and insects already were ripping it apart and eating it.

He looked into the center of the temple, where ancient priests held sacrifices. The Kremling guards began to ring a large brass gong; ringing the dinner bell.

Yes, let them eat and be ready. No use going in with an empty stomach. Before he made his descent, he scanned the crowd to see who was there.

Down in the sacrificial area, Brienne of Tarth took a bowl of thin gruel from the Kremling overseers. The stuff was nasty, but it would keep her alive for one more day. A fallen woman who'd backed the wrong leader in a local war of succession. When her side lost, she'd been thrown into various maximum security prisons for years, nearly been raped and murdered more times than she cared to count and finally been tossed here; ironically her last hope for freedom.

She eyed others around her.

Ramsay Bolton, a sadistic lunatic, the sole remaining member of a fallen minor house, and bastard. He belonged here in the nightmarish jungle, and he ate with a dark look in his eyes.

Grimmjow Jaegerjaquez, an Arrancar. He seemed to be laid-back, but was aggressive, violent, brutal, and ill tempered, but had a feral cunning to him, allowing him to survive in this planet.

For her part, Brienne wanted to kill all these pigs. But if they survived, she would have to work with them. And as ugly as that sounded, it was better than staying on this shithole or going back to another prison.

Another man, Ash Williams flashed Brienne a winning smile like they were at a single's bar. Brienne ignored him, but she noticed how Ash was scanning the other prisoners and scanning the biomechanical figure of Pridak.
Pridak was watching them feast...and soon a good amount of them would be feasted ON. The creature within was nothing to sneeze at...no...

Pridak's vision began to cycle through various modes, first regular, then infrared and finally in ultraviolet. in this vision mode, he could see a giant therapod moving stealthily through the jungle.

Some would consider it unfair to unleash Indominus Rex on unsuspecting trainees, but Boss Cass needed a way to rapidly test the effectiveness of his monster and this was an easy way to do it.

If it died, they had the means to breed a new one...right now, testing came first. The doors and field would keep it away right now.

Now was the time to let them know this was their chance.

"Prisoners!" Pridak bellowed as he jumped onto the ceremonial altar. "You are worthless scum! But this will be your last day on this planet! I promise that you will either ascend into golden graces of the King's Space Marines and become the ultimate killing machines . . . or this will be your last day on this planet."

"Hey, aren't you one of those who hunted ud as well?" Mr. Stone asked from the crowd.

"Aye, and those I killed, I had their heads stuffed and mounted on my wall," Pridak sneered. Grumbles met him.

"Your lives don't matter," said Pridak, "but I'm sure you already knew that." He could see the I. Rex coming closer, he looked to the Kremling guards who were getting ready to let it in.

Down in the crowd, Ramsay sniffed the air and smiled, as if expecting the worst and loving it. "Hey, would you like to be on my team?" he asked several people in a deceptively playful fashion.

They all blinked at the 'mad dog', wondering what that would entail.

"Well, I hope you all enjoyed your meal," Pridak stated. "And now the final test is at hand...starting right about...now!" The field went down and the doors flew open as the Kremlings made themselves scarce.

The I. Rex exploded through the sturdy wooden drawbridge. Her snout was pitted with sensors that would allow it to sense magnetic fields like those generated by living brains or mechanical objects. She could also detect magical or psychic artifacts and fields.

The crowd of initiates scattered as the rampaging monster charged at them. Brienne powered ahead of the competition, eyeing the crude bronze spears and swords that had been left around this place.

Of course that's all they would get. It would have to do, though. She and the rest of the small group, who had managed to survive so far...

Screams brought her to attention, and she looked to see the I-Rex had opened her jaw unnaturally wide and scooped up some recruits, crushing them in her jaws.

The survivor, Ash, cringed as he grabbed a large bow and quiver of arrows. "Oh man, you're ugly!" he shouted at the monster as if she cared. As the I. Rex turned towards him, Ash thrust his stump into his belt pouch and withdrew a hook extension perfect for stabbing or shooting a bow.

The arrow flew straight and caught the thing in the corner of her eye, stunning but not killing or
Behind Brienne, Ramsay smiled as he drew two large bronze axes; they’d provide much more penetration than swords would, at the cost of defense.

Mr. Stone charged and began to grapple with the beast. The I-Rex responded by her large claws to get a good grip...before hauling him to the ground and stomping him into pieces.

What was left of Mr. Stone splattered like a bomb at a ketchup factory, mixed with rock. There was nothing left that could be identified as a person when I. Rex was done with him. The giant theropod turned as the inductees began climbing the temple walls to get to higher vantage points or places where they would pepper her with arrows.

The giant dinosaur raised her hands as Ash fired another arrow that would have blinded her, the bronze tip shattering against her scales.

Ash cursed as he tried to reload, but was forced to jump out of the way to avoid the massive jaws of death.

Luckily he had more than one weapon up his sleeve. "Pocket Sand!" he shouted as he threw a fist full of sand from his front pocket into the nearest eye of the I. Rex. The monster shrieked and began pawing furiously at her eye.

It wouldn't be long, but survival was a game of less than seconds here on Jumanji, as Ash had learned.

He readied his bow once more and fired off, this time into the underbelly of the beast, piercing it...

...and the monster was knocked over by Grimmjow, gleeful for battle.

Powerful and battle hungry, Grimmjow had gotten this far on Jumanji and a hundred other battlefields through raw power and ferocity. Even cut off from most of his higher level powers, he was still a powerhouse on this planet.

Lions, crocodiles, other recruits...all fell before his might, and this was not going to be any different.

More unfortunate recruits were crushed by the bulk of the beast as she fell over.

Grimmjow charged at the monster with his enhanced strength and his passive ability, the hierro; something which made his skin tough enough to block the sharp edge of swords with his bare hands.

The I. Rex swiped at him . . . and cut through his skin like a hot knife through butter. A strong kick took Grimmjow away from the monster, a giant gash running up from his hip to his shoulder. It wasn't deep, but the smell of fresh blood would attract more predators in the jungle, which at the time Grimmjow couldn't afford to handle.

From behind him, someone threw a length of intestines at the I. Rex, splattering all over her snout. Ramsay grinned as he stood over the body of someone who was unlucky enough to get in his way. Maybe he had his own idea about attracting predators with blood.

The creature turned to him, the two feral beasts staring each other down, ready for each other to make the right move and-

The I-Rex charged, just as Ramsay and Grimmjow rolled about to dodge the attack, with Grimmjow punching the leg and Ramsay carving a gash alongside the saurian.
The wound began to close almost immediately as the Dinosaur's regenerative factor kicked in. The sand in her eyes was washing away and only the arrow in the corner of one eye stayed due to the wicked barbs in the head.

On this world and other battlefields, Ramsay had buried better swordsmen than himself. He never used the same trick more than once and he stood by that philosophy against this mutant dinosaur. As Grimmjow struck the monster's leg and caused her to stumble, he saw the giant statue holding a massive sword and got an idea.

Grimmjow himself was already back on his feet, cut but no worse for wear. Brienne stood nearby as well, ready to cut down the beast.

"So, ready to go down fighting, eh?" He grinned darkly.

"Shut up, you," Brienne hissed. "Still have things to do. As a Marine, I can finally help safeguard people."

"Save people!" said Grimmjow as if that was the most ridiculous thing he'd heard in years. "Clearly you don't know the King."

"Shut up," hissed Brienne as she hurled her sword like a javelin and stuck it in one of the monster's ear holes. The I. Rex shrieked in pain, her long tail sweeping out and crushing two dozen more initiates to pulp. The sword had ruptured her eardrum and thrown off her balance.

"Nice aim," said Grimmjow, "Want to fuck when we get off this dump?"

Brienne simply gave him a murderous glare...just as Ramsay did something crazy.

Ramsay threw both his axes into the I. Rex's mouth as she bit in half ten more men. The axes flew straight through the air and down the beast's throat between gulps and chomps.

The monster froze where she stood as it healed from the Damage that Brienne dealt and started choking on a pair of razor sharp bronze axes. Mosquitos began to land on her face, drinking from the bloody intestines that Ramsay had thrown there.

I-Rex was pissed. The ultimate understatement of the year.

"Come and get me, you fucker!" Ramsay shouted with open arms. "That's right!"

The creature, blind with rage and hatred, tore the mosquitos apart, and charged at Ramsay, crushing a few remaining recruits, leaving only Ramsay, Brienne, Grimmjow, and Ash as the potential recruits.

Ramsay thought it was amazing how the monster had healed from nearly a hundred people hacking and slashing at it. It was going to be even more amazing when the beast ran into the giant extended stone sword.

Mad as a hatter, Ash seemed to pick up on Ramsay's plan and jumped directly onto the I. Rex's mouth. He tossed the last of his pocket sand into her healed eyes.

Brienne and Grimmjow charged, hoping to make sure that Ramsay's insane scheme didn't fail.

The both rushed and slashed at both of the legs, causing her to tumble, just as Ash fired and an arrow down the throat...right to the heart.
The I. Rex slammed into the giant sword, the end coming out of the side of her ribs. The impact shook the entire temple and caused flocks of birds to take off for miles on end.

Pridak watched with approval. He saw the I. Rex twitching. Against all belief, the thing was alive. Her heart pierced, her lungs cut in half and half her bones broken; the thing was still alive; still fueled by hate that would only grow as she was nursed back to health.

Cass would be commended for making such a resilient monster; no doubt because of the extensive sorcery and cybernetics involved in its making. For now he had to congratulate the winners. Stepping over the hundred odd dead bodies, he regarded the winners as he sent a silent signal for a clean up crew to pick up I. Rex.

As a group of Servitors, mindless cyborgs, entered, Pridak turned to the remains four. "My compliments. You have the final test of Jumanji. You will all be patched up, then sent to the Imperial City's lab for the implantation of the genes. If you survive the process, only then will you be considered Marines."

Ash nodded grimly. He heard stories of that, being crammed with several new organs...and you were not put under or given anesthetic.

It wasn't like Ash exactly liked K. Rool. But given that it was this or death row, he preferred this. Here at least he had a chance. And he got to look at sexy ladies like Brienne of Tarth, even if she hadn't bathed in a year and was starved and sunburnt from her time in the jungle.

"Can I get a bath, Skeletor?" he asked Pridak directly, "Or some deodorant? Anything?"

In response, a Servitor Skull knocked out Ash by firing a dart into his neck.

"Any other dumb questions? No? Good," Pridak growled. "The ship is ready and waiting for us. I suggest we leave soon before we attract...company."

The distant yelps of hyenas caught their attention. Looked like it would be better to go.

The party marched towards the shuttle that would possibly take them to death on an operating table. Grimmjow couldn’t contain his smile. His future was bright.

Ramsay managed one last quip, “So when do I meet my next victim?”

Pridak growled and bared his claws, “Keep talking and you’ll be the victim.”

Ramsay found himself silent. Despite what he told himself, Pridak was his better: Tougher armor, more skill, and sharper mind.

Ash was dragged aboard by some grumbling Kremlings as Brienne looked back out into the jungle. Jumanji...truly a hell of green. She watched as the I-Rex was drugged, strapped, and loaded up as well.

Brienne looked at the jungle one last time. She hated the place, but it had shaped her and molded her. She could not forget it, no matter how unpleasant the lessons were.

And what she looked forward to most was the chance. She’d been a knight once. She would be again.

A different type of one, yes, but a knight nonetheless.
Once all were aboard, Pridak gave the order to his crew. The ship lifted off.

Pridak eyed the recruits with contempt. In his eyes, they had done the bare minimum. They had survived, now they would need luck. If they had luck, they would need more of everything they showed on Jumanji.

For some people, they committed violence in the name of their religion. For Pridak, violence was his religion.

With that in mind, he watched from the viewport as his ship flew out into space, before folding away to their destination.

Time to add Marines.
The galaxy was a big place, to be honest. The foolish only thought it was small due to communication and warp-folding techniques. But the truth that they were stills secrets in many areas of the Galaxy, lying hidden...

...and more places were perfect hiding spots for pirates.

Foldspace technology was a double edged sword. You could travel thousands of light years in seconds, but this ease caused nobles and nations to expand too greedily and too quickly.

After the war with Hive Fleet Kraken, there were scores of dead worlds that became pirate havens.

And Juri Han saw herself as the Queen of this strange, dangerous world.

Her massive ship was docked after a raid on some traders, and she was currently enjoying herself in her fortress that she and her crew built on this planet...

A Queen needed a throne and a castle. Juri built hers to hide from scans and withstand orbital bombardment.

She savored a long pull from a bottle of one of the finest wines anywhere in the Galaxy. In her other hand, she held a beating human heart as the kidnapped women watched.

Juri divided her crew into two parts, aside from herself.

The first was the warrior unit, a section of brutal females of various species who fought loyally under her command, eager to act out their sadistic urges. A good number of them were Skakdi, a species notorious for brutality and cruelty...with the females of the species being more so than males.

The second unit were the slaves, also all females, but forced into service. They were workers and pleasures slaves, with the dress code being Arabic harem outfits with puffy pants and bra tops...and they were constantly kept OTM gagged.

Lately Juri needed more harem girls. Her Skakdi were getting restless. And when they got restless they got a bit too rough.

Juri herself had the same problem. Raiding the Stark Merchant Navy was high risk and high reward, but it didn’t always provide beautiful women.

She leered as she fed the human heart to one of her pet Slaangors. “Welcome to my world!” She shouted to her new slaves.

She took stock of her newest catch.

Nakoruru, a miko, once dedicated to nature, now reduced to a mere slave. Her eyes were wet with tears.

Juri picked her out because of her tears; she tossed her wine bottle aside and let it shatter on the floor. "You, slut, dry those tears. You serve me now! I own you. Any family or friends you had, to them you’re already dead. All of you are dead, I own you and I am your goddess."

Whimpering past her gag, Nakoruru began to wipe her eyes as she and Juri took in the other slaves.
Juri was a woman with standards. Unlike Snake Jailbird, who only preyed on the weakest, slowest ships, or Temuri who went after the most vulnerable women; Juri sought out the richest, most heavily armed convoys to attack and the strongest, most beautiful warrior women to be part of her harem.

This batch, this batch definitely met her standards. She'd had her Skakdi strip the lot naked except for their bonds and their gags. The lot were nude, flesh ripe for Juri's appraisal. She bit her lip as the sea of tits and asses just there for her plundering.

She stood and walked about to see up close who she got, stopping right next to a selection of girls.

Juri smirked as she saw her old foe, Mai Shiranui, "Don't worry Mai," she said as she copped up a feel of the female fighter's large breasts. "I won't let the Skakdi fuck you until I've had my taste. I need to take my time breaking you."

Mai managed to muster up a defiant glare in response, her gag stifling her words as next to her, Rouge the Bat growled and wiggled.

The Skakdi started moving in, Slaangors on leashes. The biomechanical beings giggled and laughed as their Beastmen pets frothed and raved on their leashes; their pent up lust too much to control.

Juri gave a grab at Rogue's hips and ass, "I heard you were a whore, now I'm going to make it a fact."

The bat mumbled something past her gag as she was hosted up by some crew mates, and she and the others were carried off for their 'indictment'.

The girls in Juri's harem would be processed, shaved, scrubbed, cleaned off, checked for disease and then served up to Juri's discretion. The Pirate Queen would go and break the lot of them, with help from crewmembers of her choice.

She paused to lick the blood off her hands. The raids on Stark convoys was profitable, but she was already thinking of the next raid.

She would look at the girls later. The shaving part was annoying, since it took away from them, but needed to break them in. They would thankfully grow hair back.

She settled into her throne, with two Skakdi at her side.

The Skakdi looked away from Juri's gaze. No saluting here. Juri ruled by violence and animal submission; it would be futile to shackle the cruelty and ferocity of the Skakdi to something as mundane as military protocol.

Sitting back on her throne, the Pirate Queen thought long and hard about her next target. She pulled up star maps to help her pick the richest, most dangerous targets. Guild ships were always good.

She wondered if she SHOULD steal from them directly. Guild members were extremely greedy and neutral, working and selling goods to anyone who could pay up, for better or for worse.

Roodaka in particular was favorite client of pirates, eager to sell weapons for good sums.

With a little pressure, Roodaka could be persuaded to give her the location of some of Treasure Knight's gold stashes, or even may hit up the personal holdings of higher guild members like Moneybags or Tamatoa.

It wouldn't be easy, but it would pay off more than what most pirates could steal in a lifetime.
But right now, she thought about where she could raid. Perhaps the Gourmet World to pick up some prime ingredients to sell at the Black Market?

The world itself was crazy well guarded, but the key was to hit Dreemurr convoys as they were leaving and about to go foldspace. Raids on the Gourmet World was how Juri had paid for the construction of this castle and the slaves she murdered after they finished building it.

All she had to do was wait past the moon, out of reach of the Snake King and she’d be in prime location to ensnare ships and raid their cargoes before patrols could find them.

Too many unauthorized rouge ships had met their end when the Snake King, sensing ill intent, shot out into space and swallowed them up.

Juri hated the old serpent around that world. She hated anything that she couldn't directly kill. Maybe one day she'd lure one of the more malevolent Kaiju to that world and see who won.

Well if she didn't hit up Gourmet World, Black Mesa was another target.

They seldom got hit by pirates, but Juri had it on very good authority that in the next few cycles the research station in the ass end of nowhere would be offloading a shipment of ultra pure drugs whose street value would be astronomical. All she needed to do was get past the space marine chapter guarding it.

Space Marines...tough to kill, but not impossible. You just needed to know where to strike, and how hard...and that would be that.

And it would be worth it. Black Mesa had much technological advancements that would aid her in her conquests.

Money wasn't the only thing Juri was after. Weapons of all sorts made her as wet as a beautiful woman. Just ask the Valaryan Steel sword hanging behind her throne.

LV-426 wasn't a bad place to hit up. There was no law there and the Governor K. Rool had set up over the place had been dead for a year. Yautja had words with him and took his head.

If you survived the Xenomorphs, then you could have your pick of ancient artifacts, powerful magic objects and deadly weapons from a bygone era.

Usually she liked to kick her foes, though for Xenomorphs, ranged weapons were more useful, due to acidic blood.

Sometimes you needed a tactical nuke to take out smaller hives. It would draw out the warriors of the larger hives away from where you intended to go. If you were someone like Juri who didn't care about collateral damage, this was perfect for you.

Of course, if she really wanted some good weapons hardware and a good risk, she could always rip off some Grox military patrols.

Grox were smart, but could be a little too rigid and logical...allowing chaotic beings like Juri to get the drop on them.

For now, she decided to lay low for a bit.

She still had a shitload of Grox bombs and anti-ship mines just sitting in the cargo hold of her ship and in the basement of this castle. Outside the window, a few rogue Tyranid Hive organisms ran
across the barren, airless landscape. It looked gorgeous to Juri.

Too far from the 'Hive Mind', they ran mostly by instinct now. Still highly dangerous, but not as much as they could be.

She began to walk down the hall of her lair, musing to herself.

The things on the surface seemed to breed at a slow rate without a Hive Tyrant or Norn Queen to guide them. Meaning there were enough for good hunting but not enough to overwhelm the planet . . . not that there was much left to maintain any significant biosphere.

Her ship was currently in the castle's main bay, getting much needed repairs and retrofit. She peered through a large window into the bay. Down there, stolen and modified Mechanicus cyborgs toiled; most of them painted up in a shade of purple that Juri found pleasing.

The color of royalty...how she felt while she was here.

Most pirates tended to do so. Euron Greyjoy was once such example, always calling himself 'The Storm'. Last she heard, he actually managed to join up with K. Rool.

She had always admired Euron's cruelty and his audacity, even as she repeatedly tried to kill him. She was saddened by his decision to join the King like some common lackey.

Then again, Euron came from aristocracy, he had a legacy and joining the King would net him more than the handful of planets the Ironborn controlled.

Juri came from nothing, but for her that was a blessing. Her life was a blank slate to forge as she saw fit, building her own Pirate empire on a thousand small deaths and acts of violence.

She was more of a monarch than K. Rool could ever hope to be.

More so than that idiot, Terumi.

No one really knew of his origins, and some said that 'Yūki Terumi' was nothing more than an alias. All that was known was that the man was powerful fighter and pirate...and possessed and tremendous streak of cruelty and sadism matched by very few. He thrived off of misery and despair of others, almost as if he literally 'fed' on hatred. But he had no grand plan: Only to destroy and corrupt.

Terumi was an asshole no matter how you sliced it. Even Juri thought he was scum. That said, she was glad to have some competition. Against a rapist maniac like Terumi, Juri had to work hard to stay feared and that was how she liked it.

Plus it was always fun to steal Terumi's kills or his slaves, which was a good exercise.

Though she did have a ton of merchandise she'd have to sell soon, better get in touch with Buggy and Caesar Clown.

Bunch of losers, those guys. It was only thanks to their Devil Fruit powers that they survived for so long.

On the other hand, those clowns usually paid good cash for whatever Juri had to sell. And they gave her a good deal, as she was a preferred customer. Mostly because if they so much as dreamed of ripping her off, she'd castrate the bunch of them and blast them into space.
Where the cold, airless void would claim them...as it had many fools.

The pirate soon arrived at her destination.

A large, steel door with access codes only she had access to. Juri smiled and stepped through as the vast door built in valaryan times creaked shut behind her.

The Skakdi waited outside, though they to wandered off. The code would keep Juri alone in her...room.

The room was a reflection of Juri's inner self. Shades of bright purple made up everything, from the walls to the massive plush bed large enough for twelve women to fit on with room to spare.

Around the walls hung whips, chains, collars, muzzles and leashes. Around her, various sex machines stood in states of well-oiled readiness. This was where Juri enjoyed her private time.

The mad pirate woman cracked her neck and grinned, "Form a line and get on your knees, whores!" she threatened the two harem girls hand picked to serve her.

From the shadows, the two stepped out.

Dawn, a young adult with blue hair. Once an aspiring Pokémon trainer, her capture and abuse by Juri reduced her to this state. Her harem outfit was blue, its sheer material hugging against her form.

May followed, another former Pokémon trainer. She too had been a promising youth before she was broken. As it was, she was one of Juri Han's longest serving harem girls; she'd grown up fine. The translucent silk top could barely contain her ample bosom, which jiggled with each step she took; it suited Juri just fine.

In a twisted sense, Juri did make sure her girls were in good shape. Sagging skin, rotten hygiene, and the like were NOT good slave material.

It was like a master caring for prized animals. And these girls were prized. They could both do things with their mouths that most people thought impossible. On a good day, Dawn and May could lick the chrome off of an airlock seal.

Juri circled around her girls like a predator, taking in May's large breasts and Dawn's full, round ass.

As they usually did unless eating or using their mouths for...other purposes, both girls were tightly gagged with stuffing and a cloth wrapped over the lips.

Those gags looked lovely on the girls right now. Juri sat on the edge of her bed, spreading her legs. She signed and watched as the girls crawled towards her like dogs. Her pants felt way to warm and Juri stood up, shimmying out of them.

The panties were dark purple, and left little to the imagination. Dawn and May whimpered as they crawled.

"Today, girls, I'm feeling a little...generous. The gags stay on. Just let me take care of things," Juri stuck out her tongue obscenely, "I'm thirsting for pussy tonight and besides, I need the practice," She reached out her hands and cupped the rump of each slave girl, "Take off your panties, whores."

They knew better than to disobey. Tried that once. ONCE. It earned them both a month in 'power pod' that kept them full, hydrated, and eliminated hygiene needs...yet fed off their sexual energy to power the ship.
They whimpered as they pulled down the puffy pants and silky underwear.

The power pool was another thing picked up from Slaneeshi cultists; turning sexual feeling into literal energy.

The girls turned around and began lowering their pants, pulling down their panties. Both were slick and wet. They were putty in Juri's hands. She glanced around to the nightstand, "Let's see, whores, are you good enough for the butt plug?"

"Hmm, mmm," May nodded slowly.

"Ymmm," Dawn also nodded carefully.

Juri pretended to muse. "I dunno...first I need to test your butts. Lay down and I'll go get a paddle."

Like obedient sluts they dared not defy their master. Juri selected for herself a nice, big paddle with holes drilled into it. And for just a lark, she grabbed a strap on dildo from the wall and hooked it on. It was a nice thing, very old; but also thick, ribbed for pleasure and best used on the most experienced pussies.

She approached the two slaves, taking note of their rounds bums. She reached over and began to caress them, feeling them up gently. Soft and silk to the touch. She seemed to be lost for a moment, just taking in how they felt.

Her strike was swift and merciless. May squealed through her gag at the force of it. She'd endured paddlings for years, but Juri was strong and swift enough that the shock never went away. Perversely, at this point she mostly leaned into the punishment.

Dawn took her paddle more timidly, like she wanted to beg her master for mercy. It was the contrast in the two girl's reactions that kept it fresh for Juri.

Two contrasting girls, even after all this time of abduction, they still pleased her.

She WAS grooming a third girl, named Mia, as another personal servant...but a careless moment caused her to be attacked by Nui agents D.Va and Zero, who's unit killed a chunk of her crew, caused a lot of damage...and retrieved Mia.

Juri had killed a bunch of people after Mia escaped. She'd divided up the crew into groups of ten and then gotten the other nine to beat to death an unlucky tenth.

It stung, knowing that Mia was out there out of her reach...for now.

The thought made her swing harder at May and Dawn. Feeling hot and bothered, Juri ripped down her top, letting her perky tits hang free.

She did manage to have some fun with the Water girl, biting her, dressing her...abusing her...let's see her heal through that.

She shoved her breasts into Dawn's face with a sneer.

"You want these, don't you, whore?" she mocked her slave. Dawn looked up at her with longing, mumbling through her gag. Despite being more submissive, she still had a strong, wanton desire in her. "Well, I'll be the judge of that."

She laughed as she dropped her paddle to give May a smack on the ass, get her hands on it. Juri's
breathing quickened as the excitement took over.

She kneaded the ass hard, like it was the fresh, softest piece of dough. She had these girls in her thrall now. They would obey her words, no matter what.

Without warning, Juri shoved her thumb into Dawn's pussy. The submissive girl moaned and leaned hard into it, pushing up and down with her wet cock sleeve. Juri laughed and did the same to May, who for all her depravity still was afraid of her master.

"I'm hungry for cunt," she said, "I want you little whores to start fingering each other while Mama Juri gets her strap on."

Obeying without a protest, the two gagged girls began to lean against each other and began to thrust their fingers in their respective nether regions.

Juri watched her two trained sluts go to work on each other. Spreading the pink pussies, playing with the clitorises and fingering deeply in one another. She started to shove her own fingers into her pussy, spreading wet slickness across her thighs. "Yeah, start finger fucking each other until you're numb," she began to attach her large, pussy wrecking strap on. "Do it until I say it's time for more spanking."

More and more that worked on each other, eager to please their mistress, who had taken them and trained them under her own. Who they now lived to serve.

The girls were starting to get lost in each other's fingering and fucking when Juri pushed May on top of Dawn.

Eyes glowing with lust, Juri waved her fine, ceramic cock like the dick of a horny dragon. "May, keep fucking your fellow whore, Dawn, I've got my own stuff to do."

Juri pushed the two girls on top of one another, their bountiful, sweaty breasts rubbing together as they formed a girl sandwich.

The began to kiss past their tight gags, knowing they would be soon lost in world of pleasure and pain.

May was shocked but not surprised when Juri took her ass, spreading her cheeks wide and thrusting in like a Beastman in mating season.

“MMM-MMMPH!” she cried through the gag as her master ravaged her. This left Dawn free to start rubbing their two wet pussies together.

The two clutched each other and Juri rode May's ass, grinning like a wolf. She was the spider, and these two butterflies were trapped in her web, never able to break free.

And while they lived at her pleasure, Juri was going to suck those pretty little butterflies dry. Lashing out, she struck Dawn across the face. Laughing with lecherous glee, she pushed her strap on to the hilt, bottoming out in May's tight butt.

The strap on was very well designed; every thrust rubbed up against Juri's pussy and made her clit electric with desire.

Pain and pleasure, that's how she tamed her slaves, driving them into states of insanity with the dual nature of these concepts. Making them easily molded under her command.
Anybody could get used to pain, everyone did it. When you made pain terrible but inconsistent, then they couldn’t handle it. Their brains just went . . . pop!

Strong arms grabbed the girls and rolled them over, Dawn hardly had a second to spare before Juri began to claim her ass; the large, jiggling butt wiggling with each thrust of the pirate queen. Juri panted and moaned and roared with lust.

Dawn’s eyes rolled to the back of her head as she felt her mistress violate her. It hurt! It felt good! It was terrible! It was wonderful! This was a nightmare! This was a dream!

Juri hadn’t hit her too hard, but she’d been hit hard. The pain in her ass was agonizing but she knew that she deserved it. She was a whore with a big ass and May was a whore with big tits. They both deserved the fucking and pain that her mistress had to give them. She felt her butt clench and she pushed against Juri, pushing into the violation and degradation.

And she gave it to them all, edging ever closer and closer...

Juri roared in triumph as she reached her limit, as her slaves screamed past their gags.

May and Dawn fell into each other as the pain and pleasure took them over. They howled into their gags and their pussies clenched, squirting juices everywhere.

From behind them, Juri Han squirted behind her strap on, her tongue hanging out in ritheous ecstasy.

And soon, all the energy was drained as Juri stood up and removed the strap-on. She cleaned herself up as she tossed a towel to her girls.

The pirate queen reveled in her hot shower, totally exposed for all to see. Her girls weakly called through their gags, wanting a touch of the pirate's fine, tight body.

But she shook her head. "That's enough for one day, I'm afraid," She smiled darkly. "You need to rest for now."

Juri grabbed herself another bottle of wine off the shelf, another vintage that would cost an arm and a leg for most places.

She lay down on her bed to think. While she'd been sodomizing the two girls, her mind had been on Mia. It rankled her still, spoiled an otherwise perfect night of debauchery.

A priestess from the planet Weyard, Juri had taken her while she was enroute to a place of worship. She enjoyed wrecking the faith of Mia as much as she could.

Mia represented not only a lost opportunity, but a personal mistake that Juri could not forgive in herself. She was the best because she proved herself the best. Sipping her wine, she would not make such a mistake again; no matter how small.

She got out of the shower, dressed herself, and turned to her girls. "You did well today. Look forward to next time," She turned and left, locking the door behind her.

Juri felt much better after that. With any luck, her ship should be ready to go and the repairs complete.

Oh, speaking of repairs...she remembered her forced engineer, Winry Rockbell, was in charge of upkeep. How was she doing now?
Winry stood in the main hangar, repairing the shield generator after a difficult battle with the King's Space Marines. Next to her stood two reprogrammed Skitarii and a few slaangors on leashes; the slavering monsters dripping venom from their elongated jaws and suggestively pawing at her silken loincloths.

"How is my little engineer?" Juri asked loudly.

Winry turned about, the gag tight over her mouth. Her glare was dark, yet the fire was out, it seemed.

"Fmmm..."

"I like you, Winry, that's why I don't want to have to kill you," Said Juri, leaning against the Skitarri like living statues, "Or have to rip off your thumbs. It would be hard, but you could still work without your thumbs."

Winry continued working at the guts of the shield generator, the damage was extensive; Space Marines packed weapons most pirates or military outfits could only dream of.

A shackle was around one of her ankles, to which a long chain as attached. Long enough to let walk about her work area, but it kept her there.

As the gagged mechanic worked, she began to think on how she wound up like this.

Winry once had a bright future. She once worked with the Stark Merchant Navy, hoping to prove her worth and make herself a spot in the Stark's small but highly trained war navy.

The convoy she travelled with was never supposed to be attacked. They were well within Stark space, well within friendly space.

But Juri was never one for caution or common sense. She struck without warning. Raiding the ships, killing countless and enslaving the girls.

Winry was among those taken. Juri noticed her skill in mechanics, and so put her to work.

Winry knew she was lucky in a way. She was pretty, but not as much as some of the captive women. And the prettiest women didn't have her skills. There had to be a way out of this, but she hadn't seen this.

"You know, Winry," Said Juri, examining the repair job, "If you just came to me willingly, you wouldn't need the ankle chain. You're not pretty enough to be my private woman, but at least you could get lucky and get me to fuck you during my busy schedule."

Winry ignored her and walked over to a tool table, the leash dragging behind her.

Juri shrugged, and walked off. Oh well, she'll just force herself on her later.

For now, she basked in her life. A pirate's life, that served her well in the harsh galaxy.

It was good.
The Station known as Zeal, seat of House Zeal, was a beautiful work. A masterpiece in the terms of architect, it invoked the idea of a mystical place, full of books, labs, areas of prayer, aquariums, museums, and more.

Zeal's history was truly ancient. As a noble family they were scholar knights before the rise of the Valaryans. Zeal ancestors wise in the art of magic and healing appeared before the long night in the very few historical records to survive.

Zeal station was by far the longest serving space station in the galaxy, the oldest and the one with the longest continual ownership by one major family. The secrets it held were indescribably and beyond number.

But in this place, Schala of House Zeal took a moment to read a book by a fireplace.

She preferred the old tomes over the datapads, convenient as they could be. Just a preference, that's all.

The massive libraries contained many things, such as stories, histories, and encyclopedias, all detailing the Galaxies ways of life and the things within.

Knowledge was the ultimate good, in young Schala's mind. Knowledge could be used for evil, but nothing good ever came from ignorance. Ignorance led to superstition and terror; ignorance fed into the worship of Chaos as a way to escape the evils of the world.

Zeal had done almost as much as House Nui to preserve ancient knowledge. Some of these books were older than the current noble houses, and they ranged from dry science text books to books of poetry, works of fiction and philosophy.

Their originality and the love put into writing them made these works special. It was what Schala treasured most.

And now this station held a large collection of them, perhaps more than the others. That was one claim to fame they had as a people.

She traced her hand along her armchair, the arms designed like serpents.

Unlike some people, Schala loved snakes. More than a symbol of her house, she loved them for their adaptability, their resilience in the face of change and their strength. She wanted to emulate that strength and that affinity for change.

She put her book back into the bookshelf, taking off the white gloves, which let her handle the ancient tome; keeping finger oils from it.

These were old books. Best keep in good shape. She walked down, looking through the rows of book, coming across the encyclopedia section, notably on of the world of Wyveria.

The world was dangerous, but her family had spent years not only hunting the monsters that roamed the land, but also learning from that world and even acting as gamekeepers for the various dragons and large creatures.

She would not soon forget the wyvern hunts her mother took her on.
Mother...once she had been a kind person, bravely watching over her daughter as they traveled to the lands, showing her both the wonders and dangers of the world. After the Janus was born, she planned to do the same for him once old enough.

Then tragedy struck when Schala's father, while on a recon mission in far space, was ambushed by a swarm of Tyranids. He and his unit managed to kill them...but they too succumbed to the wounds they received.

Queen Zeal, also on board, survived the poisons of the Tyranid Lictors. She survived the terrible virus the hyper-Lictor infected her with as a backup assassination plan. Her body had survived, but the person who got off that hospital bed was more viper than human; ready to turn her fangs against the whole galaxy.

She wasn't the same, but she still fought for many of the things that Schala still believed in.

Protection of their home sector, and an accumulator of knowledge and magic...though she HAD grown more ruthless in it the pursuit.

There was no denying her mother's effectiveness. She's waged an endless war on pirates, looters and slavers. Her fury when she discovered Skaven eating ancient books and using them as nest bedding was truly apocalyptic.

Schala was worried about her mother's alliance to the King and his underlings, but she knew that sacrifices had to be made to preserve peace.

She began to walk towards the aquarium, hoping to calm her troubled mind.

All around her were galleries, each containing various types of fish, reptiles, invertebrates, and some marine mammals.

One such tank she passed contained an Energy Arowana, a strong jumping fish from the Gourmet World, Capture Level 39. Only four were in existence. One was here as a gift from the Dreemurr's, and they had another one in their private collection. It was not eating material, though.

Studying the fish had not only yielded more efficient anti-gravity for ships with atmospheric capability, but it had also shown Zeal battle mages more efficient ways to use speed bursts and telekinesis.

In another tank, one of the famous Frost trolls of Skyrim ambled about, gnawing on a reindeer leg as it did.

Not aquatic material, but still, quite informative about biology and evolution.

Schala came across a much larger tank, containing a rather...impressive specimen.

Looking around, Schala saw something closer to home. A massive Lagiacrus sunned itself in its enclosure. Home in land or water, this specimen had been captured in flooded forest.

It was actually a more widespread species, found it both saltwater and freshwater. The massive Leviathan-class creature was an electric being, able to both discharge of field of lighting as well as spit out balls of electricity.

Wherever they lived, these creatures were apex predators of their respective ecosystems. Known by sailors as Lords of the Sea, their durability helped them out as much as their offensive electric powers.
In another tank was a truly rare treasure, a Gold Beard Ceadeus, a monster known for living near deep sea ruins, it was prized for its golden horns and its rare coloration and horn symmetry.

This was an Elder Dragon. This taxonomy of creatures came in a variety of shape and sizes, linked together by ancient lifespans and sheer destructive power, to the point they could be considered natural disasters.

"Amazing we have one of these on display," Schala turned to the source of the voice to see the fairy Ly.

Schala looked up at the fairy who served as one of her tutors. "Our house has always worked towards conservation. You see it on many worlds, the most passionate hunters are the ones who work the hardest to manage and preserve wildlife."

"And show off her house's wealth by flashing crazy captive dragons," countered the fairy.

"...Maybe," Schala sighed, knowing the fairy had a bit of wit to her.

Ly, along with two other Zeal banner men, Rayman and Globox, were residents of the Zeal-controlled world Glade of Dreams. A realm practically SATURATED with magic, it was an important location for the Zeal empire.

The place was half in this world and half in another. Just look at Rayman himself, a weird thing with floating hands and feet with no arms and you'd know he wasn't from around here.

Still, the bannermen of Glade of Dreams were some of her best friends and Glade of Dreams was home to some of her fondest memories. "Have Rayman and Globox returned?" she asked the fairy.

"Still in Wyveria, gathering resources," Ly replied. "Might still be a while."

Schala nodded. Still better than being stuck in their Death World Dagobah, a large swamp full of carnivorous creatures.

And like Glade of Dreams, Dagobah was a hotspot of dark energies. The massive life reading fed the immense force presence on that world, which in turn was a great place to train and strengthen mages and magic users of all disciplines.

Now that place was home to some of Schala's most miserable memories; but her mother insisted on putting through the nightmare of a dark side nexus in order to toughen her.

Insects, fish, mud...horrific hallucinations of demons.

Yeah, not fun at all.

Ly put a hand on her shoulder. "Come, let us walk through the museum to clear our minds."

Schala and the fairy walked into the Museum's open archway. The first thing they saw was a preserved rocket engine of incalculable age. "I still can't believe it," said Schala.

"That space travel used to consist of crazy people sitting on top of thousands of tons of burning hydrogen?" asked Ly satirically. "Space travel had to start somewhere and it wasn't very safe or fast; but I admit, it does blow my mind how far we've come."

Schala nodded numbly, passing by the bones of ancient lost species, old minerals, unknown machines, preserved specimens, and more that spoke of great knowledge gathered here in one place.
Schala and others often found peace here...

...so she was not too surprised to see Janus in the area.

Her brother was examining notes and papers of his own in the sight of several Grox who had been killed and stuffed like game birds. The Grox were bastards as a whole, but degrading their corpses like this spoke of something more than scientific curiosity.

"Hello, sister," said Janus casually, poring over notes regarding an old Tomb Kings outpost.

He was only about 9...and yet he behaved almost so...adult-like. Some would find it creepy. Schala was not one of those people.

She herself had been a strange, awkward child. Kids who acted different, who acted older than they were usually needed more love than typical; not scorn and harsh looks. As her mother grew more distant and aggressive, Schala took it upon herself to show her brother that love.

"Hello Janus," she said cheerfully, "Encounter anything new with Khalida?"

She was a queen of the living once, now preserved beauty in the passion of the Tomb Kings...though every now and then, she would stir, bringing death to the enemies.

Janus nodded, looking up at his sister. "Yeah...hard to believe a once glorious nation became reduced to that mess."

"I suppose that was their problem," said Schala, "They focused too much on the afterlife and not enough on the realms of the living."

"Though their tomb wards protected them from the mind control of Nagash," Janus countered.

"True enough," said Schala, "But would Nagash have gotten as far as he did in the art of necromancy without his culture’s mortuary cult and their findings?"

"We could argue the point all day," said Janus, "But it's good to see you, sister. And Khalidi was very creepy."

"Yes, she was. They all were, and even more now," Ly agreed, her tail waving about, glancing about the museum, seeing several Arakkoa mull about, researching and partaking spells.

The avian scholars moved to and fro, shifting with their magic palates of alchemical supplies. "Better keep your distance, lord and lady," said Ly, "They're topping up the Station's Philosopher Stone power core and working to build a new one."

Both siblings nodded. Arrakoa were intelligent avians, forming a good portion of Zeal army with their mastery over magic. Very cold, though, and not to be approached lightly.

Just like the Visorak unit. The spiders, when not engaged in battle, acted as guards in the station and other facilities, and they could be seen crawling about in various area. They were not ones for chit-chit...and in fact, only the Oohnorak breed could speak their language, speaking in the voice of those they heard.

Zeal had been instrumental in reorganizing the House's military forces. Emphasizing not only heavily on battle mages and spell casters, but backing up by a shockingly intelligent corps of foot soldiers in the form of the Visorak.
For their bestial appearance, they were both intelligent and highly tactical; flanking enemies, using cover, using their four-legged stature to get in places where bipeds couldn't and exploit an enemy's fear.

And mutating both war mounts and enemy soldiers to force into their service.

Nasty things, but needed to help keep pace with the rest of the Galaxy.

Schala found herself turning back to the stuffed Grox. When one really looked at a Grox, they were...less than impressive, with small, stunted bodies.

Grox strength lay in their discipline and their intense antipathy towards other lifeforms. They were ultimately alien. But they were not strictly "evil." not in the sense that the warriors of Chaos were, or even the now extinct House Bolton with their habit of wearing their enemies skins like cloaks.

The Grox wouldn't be deterred by the desecration of their dead. However, the process of stuffing and mounting them very much reminded her of the Flayed Man sigil of House Bolton; turning one's enemies into subhuman trophies.

Magic though, was something the Grox feared. They had no souls, which could be detected by Demons or used in Chaos magic, but they could be harmed by elemental spells.

And most distressing thing about them was part of their way of life involved the dreaded Tyranids.

Tyranids were a race of aliens, known for swarming entire worlds and eating EVERYTHING, leaving only a barren, airless rock...which the Grox found a suitable habitat. They would send scouting parties to track swarm movement, wait for them to devour a world, then colonize the dead planet.

That was how the war with Hive Fleet Gorgon started. The Grox worked covertly, planting psionic beacons on rich, life bearing planets. These beacons then lured the Hive Fleet and its splinters to these worlds and scoured them clean.

From there, the Grox set up shop and bred in record numbers; actually thriving on the desolate, airless worlds left by the Tyranids.

Half of the war consisted of removing Grox settlements in the wake of Tyranid devastation; giving the galaxy a one-two punch of horror and murder.

It took a lot of effort and bloodshed to beat them back, but they did. They still were out there, of course, and now measures were being taken for the day when they would raid again.

Among their arsenal, House Zeal and their mages had worked tirelessly on detection spells; designed to spot Genestealers; Tyranid infiltrator units who could appear on a world months or even years before a Hive Fleet's arrival. These creatures took over a population and undermined a world's defenses and government, weakening it before ground war ever started.

Other spells included planetary defensive shields formed by a basis in Alchemy.

Many times in the history of the galaxy, magic users had been feared or lumped in with unstable Psykers or explicitly malevolent Chaos users. They were associated with the demons of Hell, even though the modern Doomguy had never shown a grudge against magic as a whole.

Zeal had always provided refuge for magic users, and they'd grown strong and knowledgeable about it.
And this could be a place of peace as well, at times...as which...

"Come now, brother," Schala stated. "Let us head to the shrines and mediate there."

Her brother was hesitant to leave his research and notes, but he knew the importance for magic users, such as their mother was grooming them to be. The shrine would provide much needed balance.

The three of them left the museum behind to head to the main shrine of worship here on the station.


In terms of elemental magic, they came, mainly, in six 'Colors': Light, Shadow, Earth, Fire, Air, and Water. The Dragons were the source of the Colors, and drawing from them, combining them, and utilizing them was the Zeal way of life.

The great Dragon and her children had long ago helped Zeal ancestors to turn against the forces of Chaos and resist the might of hell. Archenemy of Urgash, Asha had fought her equal and opposite as long as time had existed.

All around them, the shrine was tended by the Silent Brothers and Silent Sisters; healers and practitioners of the magic arts who guided the faithful and provided medical healing as well as Demon exorcism in the more advanced orders.

There was no one priest giving a sermon, such as other religious orders; only books laying on pedestals everywhere, so that followers might find their own knowledge and their own path.

Janus found this good. He hated the idea of sitting still for over an hour listening to someone drone on and on. He rather read the teachings on his own terms.

Around the rooms were stained glass portraits of the Dragons, their majesty captured in these works of art. Asha, the mother dragon and creator, had the largest one. Her wings depicted constellations within.

Among painting and tapestries, she could see the followers of Asha depicted following her. From the Silent Sisters, the Silent Brothers, and even the necromancers.

Asha was a deity of order, not strictly of good. In that sense, the necromancers themselves worshipped the more austere aspects of the celestial dragon and were tolerated by her mother and incorporated into Zeal's armies.

As her brother settled upon his own sacred tome to parse over, Schala found herself drifting to a blue bound book atop a pedestal enchanted to float atop a fish pond. To read it, one must either float or use magic to walk on water.

Concentrating, Schala walked out into the water, gracefully stepping across the surface, leaving ripples in her wake.

She opened the book, finding within a tome about the water dragon, Shalassa. A being worshiped by fishermen and prophets. Yet she was also a dragon of great knowledge, versatility and diplomacy.

In such magic books, Schala would find what she sought, but not strictly what she needed. What she needed was insight into diplomacy and invisibility, something she's struggled with for some time.

Tough times were common in the Galaxy these days. It was good to be both tough and intelligent.
Diplomacy could also help in making allies against common threats. Namely, beings that could NOT be negotiated with.

It was often hard to negotiate with various aliens, given that some of them fought as hard and as violently as species who could not be. The Supermutants of New Vegas had been thought of as unerringly violent until Sylvanas Windrunner made them her foot soldiers and House Dreemurr researchers managed to somewhat tame a few of them and slightly befriend them.

When he walked as a man of flesh and blood, even a violent, wrathful conqueror like Settra had known when to pacify enemies with peace treaties, trade rights and gold payments instead of the word.

As an undead revenant, though, he had become even more savage and brutal, to the point he would wage war over a single stolen gold coin.

Zeal, however, proved to be...persuasive.

Settra was ruthless, but he wasn't a mad dog like the now extinct Nagash had been. Her mother had been a hair away from beating Settra into bone dust and extinguishing his soul once and for all. He was ruthless, but always pragmatic.

And the lessons he imparted to Schala were the worst sort.

She tried to dismiss them, but sometimes...they stuck.

She recalled some of them now...

She remembered, remembered Settra's grating, hissing voice as he tossed her into a pit with one of his magic constructs. A Tomb Scorpion, a blend of advanced technology and the darkest magic. The rules of the pit were simple.

Kill it, or be killed.

Yeah, a sink-or-swim mentor. Perfect.

It took a bit of an energy rush, but she managed to destroy the fell beast and escape.

And Settra didn't say a single word afterwords. Not an insult. Not a bit of praise. He told her to locate water and meet him at the next death trap.

The larger lesson, told over many, many harrowing situations was that violence is. In Settra's simple philosophy, violence happens without justification or purpose. He wanted to make her as unthinkingly violent and fearless as any one of his skeleton soldiers.

Schala thought about the blood on her hands from his tests, but her take away was that her humanity had remained; despite what the old skeleton wished or believed.

Eventually, she returned home after that ordeal, and took a long hot shower to scrub herself off after the harrowing ordeals.

Schala sighed as she looked over the Book of Shalassa, taking in the learnings. Underneath her, fish of various species and worlds swam about.

In the waters, giant salmon of Agata Forest moved lazily about. For their humble nature, they were creatures of surprising magical power. Rumors abound that they served as a magical key for various
ruins and hidden places on Nippon.

Still others swam about. The Luvdisc from Poke, symbols of love. Hoopfish of Subnautica, glowing in the dim light. And many others.

The aquarium itself was an act of balance, using magic and zoology to perfectly maintain and keep alive these species from diverse worlds and habitats. That alone was a fitting tribute to Zeal's patron god. Her brother took great interest in the aquarium; the balancing act and the intellectual rigor to keep the ecosystem going fascinated him.

Schala sighed and closes the book after much complementation, heading back across the water to the dry land...

Only to find another addition alongside Ly and Janus.

Ahri the Kitsune, another magic tutor of hers...as well as her self-proclaimed 'bondage instructor.'

"Have you finished playing in the water, my lady?" asked the Kitsune in a breathy voice. "If you like we can play together."

The pun wasn't lost on Schala, who was aware of both the busty Kitsune's reputation as well as the services she provided for her mother on the side.

Ahri was a rather...lustful individual, who had a taste for about anything that moved. Her 'position' as Schala's trainer was supposedly to educate her how to escape captivity...

...But, as Schala recalled several moments in the past, she suspected it was more than that.

The lessons were mostly valid. Ahri trained her how to pick locks, crack safes, hack computers and get around ropes, ties and other restraints. She couldn't deny how useful it was to learn to escape from measures designed to hard counter her magic. But she always noticed how Ahri would drool as she watched, how hard her nipples became at the displays and always insisting she escape naked from a variety of traps and bounds.

Her mother knew, but did nothing to stop it, so for now she had to endure. "Don't test me today, Ahri."

"Oh, but the water was giving me an idea: Chain you and gag you, attach you to a weight, and dunk you in a pool of water." Ahri teased. "With a water-breathing spell of course."

Schala sighed at the mere suggestion of it. "I feel like I'd rather throw you in first, let you test the waters before I try it myself."

"What makes you think I haven't?" breathed the half nude kitsune, pushing her cleavage together. "You know your mother expects you to be ready for anything."

Schala, flustered, turned away from the fox. "Sorry, Ahri. Today is simply a day of meditation and walking for me."

The Fox woman was visibly perturbed, but she had no way in the matter. "As you wish my lady, but know that your mother will inevitably want you to pass this test."

With that, she turned around, flashing her tails and waving her hips seductively as she walked away.

Janus watched her leave, looking both bored and relieved. "That woman is trouble," he muttered.
dryly.

"But needed," Ly replied with some reluctance.

"I know," Schala replied with grudging acknowledgment.

"She’s a heavy hitter when it comes to soul magic," said Ly, "She consumes the souls of the people she kills, lives their memories. It's a kind of addiction but she’s given your mother game changing information more times than I can count."

"Grotesque, but effective," mused Janus, "Not unlike when Tyranids recycle the memories of dead synapse creatures."

Schala sighed. "So many evils we have...yet every time they have proved our survival in the galaxy."

Ly put a hand on her shoulder. "One day, my lady, we can move all past this and live in peace for all."

Her brother walked up to her, with a stack of books from under his arm, which he would no doubt spend all night reading. "If it means anything, sister, you have my confidence as a leader and as a warrior."

Above them, the metal ceiling turned transparent, giving a perfect view of the nearby nebulae.

Schala and the others looked upwards, staring out into the starry abyss. An abyss which held both horrors and wonders. Only those with great courage and willingness to proceed despite fears would be able to venture out there.

The sentients of the galaxy had come a long way, as had magic. There was a time in the long ancient past when magic was conjuring a few tricks by a fire and making a little show. Now, skilled magic users could turn the tide of battle, overpower the deadliest creatures and machines and work wonders on anatomy and the very fabric of reality.

The torch would be passed and the light carried forth. By Asha, Schala would make sure of it.

Schala turned and walked out with her brother and Ly. Where to next to rest and think?

The Alchemy Lab seemed a viable spot. Not exactly peaceful, it had its fair share of daily explosions. But something about the constant action of alchemic processes and arrays was soothing in its own right; like a well-tuned machine endlessly plugging away.

It was one of the lower levels of the station...just how the Alchemists liked it. A place out of the way to do their work without much consequence.

Schala and the others made their way down, the area growing darker, with the jellyfish-like Lightfish in their tanks lining the walls and hanging from ceilings, lighting the way.

It was for the better, really. Simon the Sorcerer was currently yelling at Plague Knight for dropping a large container of glowing green liquid. "What the devil are you doing? You just dropped a tank of Dragonfire!"

Plague Knight was unconcerned. "Listen, you wanted my help. Besides, if it exploded, several hundred tons of sand would fill this area and smother the flames; no harm to the rest of the station, no worry."
"Could still cause some major issues, like the loss of the lab itself!" Simon snapped back.

"Zeal could get some more," Plague Knight shrugged as some Visorak began to clean up the mess...carefully.

Dragonfire, or Wildfire as it was called, was a highly volatile liquid that, when ignited, exploded with enormous force and burned so hotly water could not put it out. Clearly a weapon of last resort.

Plague Knight turned around to spot his princess, "Ah, my lady, welcome to the alchemy lab! This isn't my usual haunt, but I lend my talents where House Zeal needs me. Someone needs to be bold around here."

Simon grit his teeth at Plague Knight's impudence, "Welcome to the Lab, Princess Schala; we are at your disposal provided you keep safe distance from certain experiments."

"Like peeing on wildfire!" Plague Knight explained, "We need to settle conclusively whether that will quote-end-quote, burn a man's cock off."

Simon just face palmed as Schala struggled to hold back a giggle. Even she had to admit that had some humor, while Janus just rolled his eyes.

"Ah, fooling around again?" Another alchemist, Mona, stepped forwards from the shadows. She was an tall, attractive human female...with an attraction to Plague Knight, and vice versa...though they had EXTREME difficulty acting on it.

"Erm...yes," stuttered Plague Knight, "Sometimes play is useful in clearing the mind and preparing it for further scientific exploration and discovery."

"Well, if you're done laughing, perhaps you can help me build this alchemic array?" asked Mona in a friendly way, "We need it to process the Raven Spice into a useful form and it'll take too long to do by myself."

Plague Knight nodded numbly, knowing the importance of the Raven Spice to predict enemy movements.

Schala watched the two of them talk, recalling more than once she caught the two of them practicing dancing alone, with never enough courage to do it with each other.

It was a bit sad in a way. There was really some chemistry there. Not just in the sense of physical attraction, but honestly liking one another and having the possibility for friendship as well as romance. It increased Schala's resolve to be bold with her love. Or at least have a mate or mistress she could love if her chosen mate proved unlovable.

Oh, well. One thing at a time.

"So, any new developments?" She asked at last.

Mona seemed pleased to answer the question, "Well my lady, you'll be happy to hear we're on the verge of igniting a new Philosopher's Stone to power the station or serve as a magic enhancer for large scale armies."

"It's been constructed from the psychic energies of destroyed Tyranid Zoanthropes," said Plague Knight, "So we've been getting a lot of bang for each brain we melt down."

"And you can thank me for capturing the filthy creatures," cut in Simon.
Tyranids were never easy to capture. Simon recalled how many Visorak kept getting killed trying to web up the beasts, as well as him using magic to try and sever contact with the Hive Mind.

Schala found her mind drift to the 'Philosopher's Stone'. An alchemic object of intense power, it could bypass the usual rules of 'Equivalent Exchange' to produce results.

Alchemists were renowned for transmuting matter, altering it on a fundamental level; and like magic their talents had considerable battlefield application.

The Philosopher's Stone massively amplified the abilities of both magic users and alchemists. It was the difference between a stick of dynamite and a tactical nuke.

To be created, however, the Philosopher's Stone needed souls. While it didn't have a conventional soul, a Zoanthrope's powerful psychic signature was just as good.

Good thing as well, as normal souls would be in torment while trapped in such a liquid...unable to get free, unable to move on, lost in the madness and pain.

Such an act was normally considered a crime against sentient species, the creation of such a thing. The one that powered this station, which gave off more energy than any anti-matter reactor, was a result of the previous King giving House Zeal a special charter to do so, during a large Grox invasion.

Now King K. Rool had given the House permission to build a second Philosopher's Stone.

"Progress goes well, my lady," continued Mona, "And if we are short on supplies we've been informed that Black Mesa Research facility can make up the difference."

"...Those guys hardly tell us ANYTHING," Janus noted dryly. "You are aware the scientists practically live there."

"Well, yeah, but some things are known to us," Mona said casually. "Like the development of Spice and the workings of Marines."

"And it's our house who supplies the sSpace Marines with the finest Chaplains and Librarians," said Plague Knight. "Our alchemy helps build better gene seed and opened up recruitment to women."

"Black Mesa does specialize in science," said Mona, "But it's to the detriment of their understanding of magic and alchemy. Hence we do what they cannot. Our astropaths are involved in faster ways to fold space and we train the best navigators."

"Folding space..." Janus muttered. "Still even I don’t get how it works exactly."

"In truth, the blend of magic and science involved is beyond most people," said Mona, "But ultimately it's simple in theory. The fastest way between two places isn't a straight line; it's to make them in the same place."

"The first attempts to fold space resulted in crews passing through Hell or the Warp," added Plague Knight, "A ship's engines can fold space, but without a navigator you may as well be flying a star fighter blind in an asteroid field. Spice changed everything."

"Not to mention the technology prowess that has happened," Mona added. "Now, we can avoid those nasty dimensions...which is good, since those involved a lots of sacrifices, and the chance of getting stuck for a long time."
Schala nodded. It was not a pleasant though, trapped in dark place were demons would love to rip you apart.

"Building foldspace capable ships is still very difficult and technically demanding," Mona added, "It's why the Guild uses slower but cheaper and more reliable warp engines. But even those are based around fold space engines."

"Instead of folding space," said Plague Knight, "Guild ships fold a small bubble of space around a ship and move that, that way a guild ship can move thousands of times faster than the speed of light without actually relying on momentum or acceleration."

Janus nodded, absorbing this information. Still quite hard to fathom, bring two different places spread across a vast distance into one place.

"Just think of space time as a piece of paper," interrupted Simon, with a rather crude and unflattering drawing of Plague Knight on it. "We all live on the surface of the paper and stand on it."

He started folding the paper in half and poked a pen through the little stick figure Plague Knight, "Our starship folds space like this paper. So even when you're on the other side of the page, you and Ser Plague Knight exist in the same place. Except our modern fold ships don't just rip through the paper or space, they open a hole like a surgeon and close it back up again."

"Er...what happens to the space in between?" Janus had to ask.

"Well in theory if it's caught in the ship's folding process, it will usually be torn to pieces," said Plague Knight cheerfully, "Or if it's intact, the tiny bubble of space is flooded with high energy ionizing radiation; sometimes Xenomorphs cling to the side of fold space ships. They have no problem with radiation that would melt almost any other living thing to goo."

"...

"Of course, that's why we have sensors for traffic control, so it doesn't happen," Mona hastily added. "Though hostile xenos are not given the luxury. We plow right thorough them.

"Sometimes small fighters piggyback onto a larger ship's foldspace bubble," said Mona, "But that requires some incredible shielding to survive that only the most advanced military's have."

"More recent generations of foldspace engines use spice as a catalyst," said Plague Knight, "Blue and Green spice mixed into a fuel chamber and atomized helps the nagivator see more clearly and helps the engines use less power. In the time of the Valaryans, fold space ships had to borrow power from planetary energy generators. Now they're much more compact."


Janus nodded. Even now, a good portion of the Galaxy was left unexplored.

Likely where the scums like to hid.

Foldspace made the idea of space lanes largely obsolete. But while guild ships were essentially flying fortresses, pirates with fold space could easily evade capture and go off in virtually any direction. This meant that smaller ships, lesser merchant companies and less protected worlds could get attacked out of nowhere.

And then there was Tarantuals, who maintained hold of rare technology called 'transwarp', which
was ripping a hole into the fabric of space, and taking a shortcut...but not via Warp.

Transwarp worked by travelling through a realm with non-Euclidean laws. In this place, a ship could move faster than the speed of light without a guild style warp engine. Allowing a vessel to move thousands of times faster than even a warp ship could.

Cybertronian technology...rare outside that culture. As such, it was extremely valuable and coveted by many. Cybertronian's shared their secrets with few. Mata Nui knew some, but he for the most part would not use what he knew outside the most dire circumstances.

Many years of persecution and fear by organic beings had made the Cybertronians slow to trust outsiders. The Maximals and Predacons, therefore, joined no House. They remained distant from most.

Schala often found it hard to blame them, what with all the tension between certain Houses, and the various angry aliens bearing down on them all the time. That was part of her desire to learn more about diplomacy. Many friendly or peaceful aliens got lumped in with the hostile. The Maximals and Predacons both were powerful warriors and gifted scientists; just think what the Kingdom could achieve with their aid and what they could achieve in return. Wasted potential is what it was.

She was especially interested in their recent developments of alternate modes: Scanning life forms, both alive or dead, they could now take on the abilities and forms of the various animals of the galaxy.

This trait gave these machine races tremendous adaptability. Beast modes allowed them to pass as local wildlife, while also resisting electromagnetic or magical energy fields that would otherwise damage their mechanical innards. Beast mode also allowed Predacons and Maximals to regenerate from battle damage without external assistance; repairing all but the most catastrophic damage.

So many wonders to learn...and Schala intended to learn much as the princess.

...

Now that she thought, maybe it was time for Janus to get a good look at Wyveria?

He was a strong magic user for sure, and his understanding of historical tactics and strategy was second to none. But he'd never been truly proven in battle. She’d seen him practice martial arts and he knew every move perfectly; yet it was one thing to know the movements and another to put them to use against a potentially unpredictable foe.

And none were more dangerous or Unpredictable than the beasts of Wyveria.

Risky, yes, but he had to prove himself soon in this Galaxy...and she would be with him every step of the way.

"Say, Janus, why don't we go for a little trip?" She spoke up.

"Did you have something in mind for me, sister?" Janus asked, knowing full well this wasn't going to be some pleasant day trip.

"Just the chance to test your skills," she said playfully.

Janus sighed, "You could have just said that right away."
"Come now, Janus, it'll be good. I'll be at your side the whole time," She assured as she and Janus took their leave.

"Are you just taking me on some hunting trip like a middle aged man trying to prove his manhood?" he quipped.

"Nothing like that," said Schala, "I just want to show you some of the tests mother put me through when I was your age."

Janus swallowed, but decided to trust Schala on this. He usually did and-

"Oh, shall I accompany you?" Ahri appeared next to them without any warning. She leaned forward, smiling sweetly at the young heir. "You like women, don't you, young prince? You'd love a woman of strength on such a dangerous journey?"

Janus cocked his head, seemingly immune to her feminine charms. "Only if you take the front line."

"If you insist." Ahri turned and led the two away.

Once again, Schala found herself ruminating on the 'lessons'. More than once, she awoke from sleep to find herself bound and gagged, with Ahri smirking nearby.

Ahri had an iffy understanding of consent at best. If she was going to be completely honest with herself, Schala didn't mind the idea of bondage or domination. She definitely had a submissive streak in her. But that didn't mean that she'd let someone like Ahri walk all over her…or her brother.

Best keep an eye on her the entire time...just in case.

She did not trust Ahri. Then again, perhaps the most important lesson Settra had imparted to her was how easy it could be to kill someone; not just a monster or an inhuman other.

"Let us do our own preparing," she said cheerfully to her brother.

And she whisked her brother away to her room.

There, they began to stock up on equipment, like potions, weapons, maps, binoculars, books, and the like to survive in the wilderness.

"Has something made you worried for my safety, or doubt my abilities?" Janus asked her bluntly.

Schala shook her head, "Honestly there's not a day that goes by that I don't worry about you. So no, it's not something you've done. I fear for mother as well and I want you to get the best training possible if something happens to her."

That, and it was common sense to stock up and prepare for this world. Those monsters could pack quite a punch.

With him, Janus took a weapon that he'd begun showing an extreme skill with and a strong affinity for. The scythe collapsed and was placed under Janus's travel cloak; a click of a button would return it to fighting form. One day, when he was bigger, he would be master at the scythe...right now, it looked...comically large next to him.

Janus smiled at the scythe; it was his pride; even if he looked like a kid who raided the local farmer's tool shed. "Am I intimidating?" he asked his sister.

He looked...kinda cute and adorkable, actually.
"Sure do, Janus," Schala tried not to giggle.

"I'm ready to go hunting, sister," he said, leaning on his staff, "Let's go and bring home some specimens. I'll protect you on the planet's surface."

Schala patted him on the head as they made their way to the docking station.

Ahri greeted them aboard the shuttle, as did Dr. Stephen Strange; someone that Schala actually trusted and had fond feelings towards. "Welcome aboard, Schala, Lord Janus," said the Sorcerer Supreme and Queen Zeal's Chief Magical Adviser.

"Greeting, Strange," Schala said as they all settled into the ship and prepared to lift off. "Plot a course to Wyveria."

"At once, my lady," Strange began to work the controls.

The sorceror supreme started punching in coordinates, setting up the backup autopilot in case of the worst and scanning internally for bombs and traps. Meanwhile, Ahri looked over at the Doctor with a lustful look. "I like your beard," she said.

"Uh, thank you," said Strange, as the shuttle began to detach from the space dock.

Like Schala noted, anything that moved...though she seemed to lean more towards females.

The ship left the station, and after traveling outwards, folded space.

The sensation was always strange to her. She could feel the manipulation of space-time in ways very very could. It was uncomfortable, like biting down on a live wire. Not fatally charged but it rubbed every nerve in her body wrong.

Then it was over, Wyveria was out the viewport. A vast, multi-biomed planet, it serve hosted to many villages, towns...and even more wild locations full of might beasts, ripe for the hunting.

Time to work.
"We will be landing at Castle Shreade," said Dr. Strange, "It's home to a goodly number of deadly lifeforms as well as the great dragon Fatalis."

"That will work," confirmed Schala, "But take us to the outermost walls."

"Don't want to alert it right now, right?"

"Well, we need our ship to get back," Schala replied casually.

Entering the atmosphere, Schala could feel the planet's impact on the winds of magic, it was very much the opposite of the feeling of folding space.

Coming up on the desolate wastelands that held the castle, she could also feel the unique taint of this place, where millenia ago a chaotic force brought the Kingdom of Shrade to its knees.

The Fatalis...even among Elder Dragons, this species was in a class of its own. A very powerful animal, this species was said to melt the armor of those they killed onto their scales, increasing their durability. Their wings were both flexible and like iron, allowing to flight that could not be easily disabled. Possessing terrifying dragonfire, it could reduce unguarded foes into ash in seconds.

But worse was the effects of which one would receive if they made equipment from the beasts body parts. They were said to send nightmare of the screaming abyss, possess the user...even eat them.

The running theory among monster hunters was that these creatures were somehow touched by the power of the Chaos Gods. It fit their modus operandi; they basically were a threat to all lifeforms they encountered, without reason or provocation.

Given their propensity to eradicate entire veteran hunting parties, the reward and the preistige for killing a Fatalis was nothing short of monumental. Such a deed would not only prepare Janus for anything, it would also give him immense cultural adoration among the commoners and soldiers.

...Schala wondered if sending her 9-year old brother on a mission to kill THIS was the best idea. Was she going insane? Or just paranoid?

Or maybe spending a year in the Death World Nekehara had warped her way of thinking. In those desert sands she'd been reduced to an animal, one who could use magic, but still just a creature of pure survival.

Janus was a child prodigy, and maybe what he needed was the chance to make his bones with the wider galaxy. He was more powerful and smarter than Schala had been at his age.

"We are ready," said Janus as the shuttle touched down.

But deep down, her compassion and love for life remained. She would see to a better future, one of peace and joy.

She stood tall, magic brimming, as she escorted Janus, Strange, and Ahri out.

She would become one day a wiser and more compassionate queen than her mother, and her brother would not turn into some hateful husk like Settra.

The smell of dust hit her as they exited onto the outer wall of the castle. This place was the very
opposite of the lush and life filled rest of this planet.

"The beast resides in the castle courtyard," said Stephan. "It wasn't moving on the scans; it may be asleep."

"Or our scent could have woken it," purred Ahri.

Not a pleasant thought. Schala knew Elder Dragons were not beasts to be easily dealt with...

The Chameleos, the invisible hunter most would never see...until it was right on top of them.

The Dalamadur, the great snake over a 1000 feet long, with the ability to spit meteors.

All lethal beasts, the oldest of which were sometimes hundreds of thousands of years old. Worse than their tremendous physical power and magic resistance was the fact that some of them were remarkably intelligent and had outwitted many a hunter.

Holding her hands together, Schala summoned a simple Clairvoyance spell; learned from a Skyrim tome. A simple tracking spell, it would point in the direction of their prey without much effort or alerting a magic sensitive monster.

She closes her eyes and focused, scanning the area...

...Nothing at the moment, but it might as well just be hiding somewhere. She focused more and-

...There...it was asleep, unaware of the battle at hand.

More than once she'd brought down a bone giant or Heirotitan by striking it when the monster was unaware. Janus would too be aware of this tactic, though this would be his first time applying it.

Ahri led the way, her fox nose sniffing the air and following Schala's tracking spell. The kitsune woman began to summon her trademark magic orbs. This battle she savored the idea of sampling the elder dragon's endless bloodlust and hatred.

Just as well to do it in battle, and not risking more by using the hide and scales as clothing.

As they party grew closer, they heard the deep breathing of the slumbering beast.

Janus saw the monster and his breath caught in his throat. The books and projections of the monster that he'd studied for years failed to do the creature justice. Like his sister, he could feel the sense of wrongness that came off the beast in waves. Even a non-magic user could feel something was off about the creature.

The boy held up his hand and started to form an Arrow of Kurnous, a high-powered spell designed for use against high value, high armor targets. "Schala, I need to you to wake it. I'm going to fire the Arrow into its mouth and hopefully stop its fire breath."

Schala felt like she just swallowed her tongue. A risky move...but could it work?

"Young master, please," Strange spoke up. "This idea is too risky! Should you miss or should the arrow fail to work..."

"The Arrow of Kurnous always has a chance of misfire or overcast," the boy explained as if he were giving a lecture. "But the dragon's fire glands are in its throat. And the glands to produce flammable
dust are there as well; which will be its deadliest area of affect weapon. We need to destroy its strongest weapons first."

"Don't be such a housewife, Sorcerer Supreme," said Ahri, "My rule is strike hard, aim for the heart and run like hell if you fail. Go cautious and the dragon will eat us alive."

Strange was about to respond...when the beast began to stir. All fell silent as the Fatalis shifted about...before settling down.

"Trust my brother," said Schala, "He's not prone to rash action," She began to raise her arms, summoning a net of Amuntok. Something used to trap large groups of men to make them more vulnerable to snipers or ranged attacks.

The net at its strongest would hold something like the Fatalis for maybe three seconds if Schala was being generous. But it would be enough to wake the creature and anger it enough to make it open its maw.

They got even closer, enough for Janus to make the short.

They beheld the beast in its fully glory. A truly massive dragon, with an unnatural appearance. A feeling of dread came over them.

Even Ahri felt the dread, veteran of a hundred conflicts and killer of men and monsters.

But Janus rememberd the litany of fear. Fear is the mind killer, it started. His mind was his greatest weapon as he beheld the creature that so effectively weaponized fear. Today, the fear the dragon wielded would break upon the strength of his will.

His sister cast the magical net on the monster and his time was now.

The Fatalis was up instant, bellowing with rage, though staggered by the net. It managed to turn and open its maw, with a hellish grow lighting up the back of the throat...

...and Janus let loose.

The dragon's otherworldly roar turned into a shriek of pain as a giant spear made of amber energy shot from his hand into the dragon's mouth.

"Arrow" was a bit of a joke by the amber wizards who invented the spell.

The Fatalis extended its wings and smashed the net that Schala summoned, but the damage was done. Blood gushed from its jaws and it coughed as it struggled to summon fire breath.

Janus and Schala smiled. It worked!

But it was far from over. Though unable to breathe fire for the time being, the Fatalis was still a huge and massively strong animal.

The dragon's claws cut deep trenches in the stone of the castle courtyard and its whiplike tail split boulders in half. Janus summoned another Arrow of Kurnous, only for the spell to miscast and miss the dragon's wing joint as he'd intended.

It was then that the dragon locked its hateful eyes on the party.

Those crystal eyes...a frightening sight to behold, speaking of deep power and hatred.
The beast reared up on its hind legs, ready to smash back down.

It was then that Ahri started to show herself as something other than a seductress. Launching three balls of flame, her foxfire attack went straight for the monster's eyes. The attack would melt most armoured men and probably reduce medium vehicles to melted scrap, but it would only annoy the dragon.

Except striking its eyes, the dragon found itself temporarily blinded. Dr. Strange raised his arms for an attack.

Calling upon his mystical practices, Strange used the power of light to help negate the Fatalis' fel aura, weakening it.

It was standard practice when fighting magic users. The more that one could throw off their concentration, the more likely it was for spells to misfire, overcast or backfire. The more they could focus, the stronger the damage would be. And as it was, Strange was siphoning off the deadly aura of the monster and channeling it right back to the warp.

Schala slammed her foot into the ground and a wave of geomantic energy surged through the stone. It travelled like a mini earthquake and it hit the base of a guard tower; which began to tilt.

Tilt right on top of the Fatalis, slamming it back into ground with an unholy screech, a rumble, and a cloud of dust.

Not lethal by a long shot, but killing a dragon wasn't like stepping on a bug. Best-case scenario the thing would cause a lot of hurt before it went down. The Fatalis exploded from the rubble of the tower, enraged and dizzy but still homicidally insane.

Strange flew up into the sky and started calling down lightning on the monster, at the same time, Janus and Schala were sprinting full tilt towards the beast. A ghostly light coming over Janus's weapon as he tried to use spirit power to augment it against the dragon's scales. Ahri kept peppering the beast with foxfire, in order to distract it.

The Fatalis was angry. Some roaches had come and woken it up from its nap, disabled its fire breath, and dropped a building on it. It was pissed, to say the least.

Wings extending larger than the wingspan of some aircraft, the Fatalis took a beat then lifted of the ground like a rocket.

Schala screamed as her brother jumped upwards, hooking his scythe between the thick plates on one of the monster's forelegs. This wasn't what she'd had in mind or planned.

That was just crazy thinking right there, especially as the Fatalis took higher to the sky. If Janus lost his grip...he would be dashed to pieces.

Not to mention that Fatalis could survive on virtually no oxygen and at temperatures a human would freeze solid.

Dr. Strange froze, as a lightning strike from here would possibly hurt the boy. He flew after the ascending monster and its precious cargo.

Janus, meanwhile, held on for dear life, with the Fatalis seeming to take no notice of him...but he felt the coming chill seep into his bones as they rose into the air.

He'd seen diagrams and manuals about monster hunters who climbed up on the beast they were
hunting in order to get access to its vitals. This elder dragon had the melted armor of various fighters all along its underbelly. Getting through that could take all day.

But in hindsight this was probably just as dangerous. So before hypothermia and hypoxia could kill him, Janus grabbed onto the thick scaled and started climbing into the back where the armor was weakest.

If he could just strike at a right point, he could cripple the flight, sending them both crashing to the ground...

...He hopped to the top to cushion the impact.

He felt a lot more confident about his levitation spells when he was still on solid ground.

His vision was starting to go black around the edges as he saw the base of the wings. Thrusting his scythe forward, the spirit enhanced blade slid between the gap in the crocodile like scutes of the monster and through the strong muscles anchoring the wing.

Almost instantly, the Fatalis began to nosedive.

Janus held on for dear life as the he felt the beast plummet, with it screeching in confusion and pain.

Strange, seeing this, quickly swerved out of the way of the beast, before giving hot pursuit.

Strange caught the boy under the arms, "Are you alright, my prince?" he asked the lad over the roaring wind.

He didn't get his chance as the dragon's whiptail caught him across the head, breaking through his defensive wards and knocking him out.

Janus watched as Dr. Strange fell limply as the dragon did its best to take them with it in its terminal fall. A strange feeling came over him; he did not often feel anger but this was a new kind of anger. Summoning white, feathery wings, he held his scythe and zoomed towards the dragon, aiming for the weak spot where the skull met the spine at its base.

Schala saw, and watched with bulging eyes as freaking ANGEL WINGS poured from her younger brothers back.

"Wow...that's awesome there," Ahri muttered.

Janus's studies of the Celestial Plane and the tomes of the Lumen Sages had paid off. His mighty pinions took him straight to the dragon like a missile. His scythe edge drove keep into the bone, but not enough blood spurted out.

The dragon's whip tail flew over his shoulder and one of the spikes tore the fingers from his hand.

Schala screamed at her bother's injury as he just started with disbelief.

It was then that Janus got very angry.

Those fingers could be regrown with magic and other potions. Right now, he was going to tear off this bastards HEAD!

Ahri looked about. "...Hopefully your mother won't be too mad from this all."

If anything her mother would love it. She would applaud Janus for fighting through injury and pain.
Schala on the other hand would be more worried about her brother's wellbeing.

Janus drove the scythe tip in further, the creature's skull much tougher than he'd counted on. The tail swung again and almost took off his head, but this time the spikes took off the rest of his hand.

With a final scream the scythe tip broke through the bone and cut clean through the spine, turning the dragon into a quadriplegic.

Dead weight began to drag the Fatalis down faster, just as Janus began to slow his own descent. He made sure to help Strange to keep him from dying...speaking of which, he quickly froze his stump to prevent it from bleeding out.

Janus put his arms around the unconscious Sorcerer Supreme, the added weight straining his magic wings. Exhaustion, freezing and low oxygen were all taking his toll. Janus was struggling and as the dragon plummeted like an asteroid, he could feel his vision start to dim, his lungs burn and his heart strain.

But he had to hold on before-

A hand of shadow reached up from below and grabbed them both, and began to pull them down. Schala focused her shadow to do this stunt.

There was a chance the dragon could heal itself, which she could not risk.

Ahri spirit rushed under where the Dragon would land, firing bolts of energy at it. As the monster roared one last time, Schala readied an arrow of Kurnous as she held her brother and Dr. Strange in the shadow hand.

With intense focus, she fired, striking right through the head of the dragon, killing in almost instantly.

There wasn't a word invented to describe the sound of a thirty-ton dragon slamming into a stone floor at near supersonic speed. But Janus would invent a word for it.

The impact shook the entire castle and knocked Schala and Ahri off their feet. The shadow hand released, but Janus was now at least focused enough to spread his wings and start to casually glide down with Stephan Strange in his arms.

It was over...all lives were intact, if not limbs, but that could be easily reminded with a trip back home. Right now, they needed to catch their breaths.

Janus landed like a sack of potatoes, a far cry from the grace and dexterity he'd visualized when first learning the wing spell. But the impact was non fatal and his sister was able to scoop him up off the now shattered stonework. He embraced her like a mother.

"Let's cut it up and take back a trophy for the mighty hunter Prince," said Ahri, salivating at the chance to experience the dragon's memories and revel in the kill.

"Just the head right now." Schala instructed. "And have it cleansed of anything once we get home."

"Of course, my lady." Ahri replied.

Water formed around Schala's hand as she began to heal over the frostbite her brother had endured. In the short term this would take away some of the pain he was feeling. "Are you alright?" She asked him.
He grunted, his usual stoicism shining through his discomfort. "I need a vacation," he deadpanned, causing his sister to laugh.

"Well, back at the station, we'll put your stump into cast of magic elixir to grow it back, and then you can take a break," She smiled.

Janus looked down at his arm, "Good. I need to start writing all of this down both for posterity and so I can step back and analyze my failures and successes from this mission."

"You also saved Dr. Strange," she reminded, "You went above and beyond this mission and stuck to what was really important."

"...Thanks sis."

"Don't mention it," Schala lifted her brother on her shoulders as Ahri cut off the head of the Fatalis while Strange came to.

"Is the prince alright?" were his first words.

"I live, Stephan," said Janus, "You've done exemplary as our bannerman. You shall be commended."

Strange breathed a sigh of relief, "Thank the divine;"

"Indeed," Ahri said as she hosted up the head of the Fatalis. "Now help me load this aboard so we can boast to the Queen."

Strange sighed, but did as he was told. Enough excitement for one day.

And soon...they had returned.

The first thing the party saw as they exited the shuttle was the Queen herself.

Zeal eyed the party sternly, her arms crossed over her chest. Next to her, her main back breaker, Settra stood like a murder machine passing itself as a dusty museum piece.

... 

... 

"Um, I can explain," Schala began.

"I'm sure you all can," Zeal replied. "Especially that fact Janus seems to be missing a hand," Zeal looked over at her daughter and son, before she burst out laughing. "Is that a Fatalis head? Did you do that, Janus? I knew you weren't worthless."

"Thank you, mother," grunted Janus at her backhanded compliment.

"Only a Fatalis head?" rasped Settra, "Do you expect applause, little lord?" he jeered through bony jaws.

"No, but your comments are best left to your self, servant," Janus spat, knowingly pushing the buttons.

"WHY YOU LITTLE-"
"Now, now," Zeal held Settra back. "He did well today."

Settra's hand went away from his kopesh sword. There was a lot that Zeal would tolerate, but beheading her heirs wasn't it. Settra would get his punishment in somewhere else, at another time.

For now, Zeal was just glad to see her son throw his weight around. "We'll display the head in the museum," said the Queen, "Put your picture up next to it so people know how dangerous our young lord is. Schala, if you don't want to be eclipsed, I suggest you try to match or exceed your brother's kill today."

Schala bowed her head, "Yes, mother. May we take Janus to the apothecary now?"

In a rare moment of concern, Zeal nodded. "Yes, and please make haste."

Schala nodded as she ushered her bother off, Ahri following with a joining Ly.

"You killed a Fatalis?" Ly asked with undisguised shock.

"It was a group effort," mumbled Janus, "Please let us hurry."

The room in question was a room of healing, from surgeries to limb regeneration. Here, one could come when badly wounded to get fixed up.

As it was, Janus was seated on a chair while a vat of liquid was rolled next to him.

"Just dip your arm in there, Janus," Ly instructed.

Janus winced in pain as all the nerve endings in his stump came to life. But that was good, it meant that the nerves were alive to feel pain. A sense of relief began to wash over him. The sheer insanity of what he'd done suddenly became apparent to him as the magic potion started to regrow his arm.

He took on a Elder Dragon numerous times his size...and won. Though just barely and due to some insane ideas.

In the heat of the moment, it felt like no risk was too great to take. Far from being a measured affair, it felt like every move was all or nothing. Everything had favored the dragon. Everything might have changed if the dragon had been awake when they arrived on world.

Janus shook his head, he could not let fear cloud his mind. And he could not afford to let Victory and success skew his perspective. He had to stay humble,

It was times like this he remembered the previous rulers of the Galaxy, the Targaryens. An ancient family, they were a group of magical humans with affinity over fire and dragons...and a habit of marrying their own siblings to 'preserve the bloodline'.

They were the last of the Valaryans, the storied empire told of in myth and legend. The ancient civilization who'd single handedly rebuilt the galaxy after the long night and saved interstellar civilization. Only for them to vanish in a single night.

All that was left was Aegon the Conqueror and his two sisters. Which is probably where the incestuous tradition started.

Taking control of the Galaxy via great warrior and dragons, they established the House System and the family ruled for countless years, with ups and downs.

For every external threat dealt with like Aenys Targaryen killing the Ork Warboss known as the
Beast or Maegor killing the oldest Xenomorph queen in recorded history, there was also an internal threat.

The Dance of Dragons, the particularly bad Blackfire Rebellion a generation before the war with Hive Fleet Gorgon. And lest anyone forget the War of the Ninepenny Kings.

But then rule began to slowly fall apart, with insane madmen taking charge...which eventually led to their downfall.

King Aegon Targaryen lived for over three hundred years and reigned as king since he was fifteen. He’d used spice to prologue his life and extend it beyond human limits. But while the spice preserved his body, it did nothing to aid his deteriorating state of mental health.

Things were peaceful for a while, when Tamatoa was the King's hand. Peaceful, but he hadn't hesitated to enrich himself at the expense of the Kingdom. It was when he was dismissed as the King's hand did the real trouble start.

Tamatoa...an ageless crab-like being of unknown origins. He was greedy to an extreme extent, always decorating his shell with shiny objects to make up for a sense of inferiority.

Once dismissed, he was embittered...and plotted. He began by creating the Guild.

In the short term this wouldn't pose much of a problem, but long term the Guild took away substantial trade from Crown run trading companies and ruined a number of smaller businesses. The loss of tax revenue meant that Aegon and later his even more insane descendent Aerys would take increasingly brutal measure to extract gold.

It started with having space marines wipe out whole planets when Peasants could no longer pay taxes. Then when Aerys started losing his mind, he started using his military power to bully the great houses and extort them for money.

Meanwhile, Tamatoa just laughed to the bank as his trade guild grew like a fungus.

And then rebellion came, which caused Tamatoa and the Guild to grow even richer. Wars were profitable after all. Xia, the weapon manufacturing planet, was quite happy as well.

But all things must come to an end.

The Targaryens had built the feudal system. They used it to expand rapidly across vast distances while investing almost nothing in conquered territories. Everything was up to the feudal lords and their bannermen; as long as they paid up to the Targaryens.

Aerys had cracked down on House Koopa and House Zeal. Targeting the former in order to steal their shipyards and the latter because Aerys believed they were chaos worshippers. This pushed the two houses into the corner of House K. Rool who declared war on the King and branded him an outsider. House Stark later was thrown in when Aerys believed in his madness there were Xenomorphs on Stark worlds and stated sterilizing the planets without warning or cause.

The battles were brutal, with countless dying and falling...aliens forged and broken, lords and houses falling...a nightmare.

So bad, in fact, the tide turned when the Marines, realizing this was not going to end the way they wanted, threw in their support to K. Rool.

Years passed, and then the day of reckoning came, and the rebel army stormed the Capital.
But as it turned out, Aerys was actually assassinated by one of his own bodyguards, and the lord of K.Rool took the throne the help stabilize the throne, ...while the remaining Targaryens fled, spreading across the galaxy.

For years, they hid, with some zealous hunters tracking them and picking them off,

Samus Aran took out Viserys Targaryen when he tried to employ the Space Pirates under the command of Ridley as a Mercenary army. Upon finding out that he was trying to tame Metroids as war beasts, she melted him with a fire blast.

Aerys's wife, somewhat tragically, was killed by newly minted Space Marine Clegane, an act of supreme cruelty which amused K. Rool to no end and he continued to hold up as an example of what happened to those who threatened his throne.

And still some remained in hiding... the most notable, Janus remembered reading, being Rhaegar, the wise princes.

Rhaegar had been something of a people's favorite. a man who had vision and wisdom which had been absent from the Targaryen dynasty for centuries. Years of inbreeding had destroyed his physical health, so he needed powerful drugs and a suit of power armor to get by. Still, he was a force on the battlefield and a master of magic.

Then, one day, he emerged from hiding with his followers and, according the history, abducted the sister of Ned Stark, Lyanna, and seemingly raped her...or something. Janus did not take history books at face value. Alway written by the winners.

At that point in time, K. Rool had begun censoring and burning unflattering books about the rebellion. He built a propaganda machine finer than anything in the galaxy. Much of it played up his own heroism and smeared Rhaegar.

Rhaegar had met his end when Stark Forces destroyed his army at the battle of the Trident Nebula and the King's former assassin; Van Pelt had put a bullet through Rhaegar's eye at ten kilometers.

That was verifiable, as Janus had found out, Van Pelt was meticulous with his diaries and provided video and photo proof of each kill.

As for Lyanna...she died. Found in bed in a remote tower on a remote planet. So young...

...And it was also this time that Ned fathered the bastard, Jon Snow.

Yet Janus found the timing of Jon's birth and Lyanna's death to be rather...suspect.

He would have liked to have done a genetic test, but K. Rool had erased even that; destroying all copies and records of Targaryen DNA. If anything, K. Rool desired to wipe out even the memory of them.

And that left only one surviving member of that ancient house.

...Who knew where she was, though. Likely nowhere, and-

"Er, young master?" An Arrakoa snapped him out of his thoughts. "It should be healed by now."

Janus withdrew his hand from the potion, the hand was good as new. The only issue was he could tell it wasn't his original hand. The Fingerprint pattern was different, his old training scars were gone and everything unique about it had changed.
He'd never forget what caused him to lose it. "Thank you," he said to the bird mage. "I should get back to my studies"

A nod was given, and Janus got off his seat and walked off silently. Time to rest in the museum.
Once upon a time there was a princess. She was beautiful, but she didn't believe she was. All her family were dead and she was the last of her line.

The white haired woman with purple eyes looked longingly out the window of the abandoned space station. The stars were beautiful, even in a galaxy where every bounty hunter and maniac with a grudge wanted to kill the last Targaryen heir.

Daenerys Targaryen's musings were interrupted when a large armored figure broke fell through the ceiling. "Um . . . my lady," said Alphonse Elric, "I've gotten the life support systems online. We can get out of our environmental suits soon."

Dany did not initially respond. She simply stared out into the abyss. She spent her life on the run, hiding in the most remote and unknown locations, hiding from K. Rool's Marines, various hunters, and psychotic pirates. Her life...was not easy.

Once her family was strong and powerful, ruling for hundred of years...but now, she was all that was left.

The hardest thing about being on the run for so many years, was the way she'd seen the repercussions of her family's rule. Could K. Rool have ever taken the throne without her father and grandfather's insanity and cruelty? Had the feudal system the Targaryens built to quickly conquer the galaxy only left it ripe for internal strife and external conquest?

This station alone was a former slave processing facility for a Targaryen Crown corporation; this was her family's legacy.

And yet there was somewhere a glimmer of hope, "Thank you, Alphonse," she said to her trusted alchemist.

He smiled and bowed, the suit hiding most of his features, as it did hers. She was eager to get out of them, being a bit cramped. But soon power would be running again.

She walked down the dark halls of the station, knowing this was just another hiding place in the long run.

The last Targaryen princess looked over the station, seeing all the hallmarks of her family's once illustrious history; that was anything that looters and salvage teams hadn't run off with. The Triple head dragon hung proudly on a holographic banner above a large meeting room. Symbolizing Aegon the Conqueror and his sister wives.

Black and red were the overwhelming color schemes, designed to inspire awe as well as fear.

Fire and Blood. A motto of her family. But now the fire was almost out. She was the last to carry on the flame...

...and she would see it burn brightly one again.

"My lady Daenerys," said a proper female voice, "The station is clear and void of threats," said a woman with pointy hair.

"Thank you, Ashi" said Dany, "You're too good to me."
"Only because you've earned it, my lady," retorted the female assassin.

Ashi was a mysterious one. Her origins were relatively unknown. Some said she was raised by a now defunct cult worshipping some kind of demon that had been killed in the past.

But her skills in combat were unquestionably high, and she earned her place.

Dany had watched Ashi cut her way through a literal army of Orks. Seen her master every weapon she picked up and become a legend in the rave dance circuit. She was definitely a worthy member of this ancient and noble house.

On cue, a man in white robes walked into the mess hall. "Temperature is up and oxygen levels are optimal as of now." said the Samurai, "Alphonse has proved himself yet again."

Jack...another skilled fighter, and even more of a mystery. His real name was unknown, taking the name from some city street punks. But his sword was something else, able to cut right through the toughest of demons as if they were made of paper. But he was a calm, kind, and patient man, always willing to do right under Dany.

Jack and Ashi were a couple, friendly at first but later romantic. Dany had the honor of performing their marriage ceremony. More than anything, Dany wanted to do it again; a proper wedding for those two, without them being fugitives.

"With your permission, lady Dany, I can get started on dinner."

The Targaryen princess nodded once more, "Thank you Jack, though you need not ask me for permission."

"Dinner?!" called out the voice of a certain Maximal

Dany let out a small smile as the sound of the voice. The Maximal Razorbeast, possibly the most loyal of her comrades, and considering the high loyalty she had from the others, that was saying something.

Possessing a beast mode based off a razorback, Razorbeast was a stubborn, fierce, yet devoted warrior, always willing to die for his lady.

The huge Maximal with the appearance of a boar stomped towards Dany. Most others would have steered clear of a being with such anger and vengeance in his posture and eyes. Even Ashi and Jack had taken ages to learn to trust him.

Dany just smiled as the big Maximal bent the knee to her. "My lady, I am at your service,"

Dany nodded. "How has the patrol been working out?" She asked.

Razorbeast looked up at her. "So far, silence. This place is mostly ignored now that it has been stripped clean long ago. Not even Xenos are about. The station is clear and even the surrounding solar system is clear," He went on "There's nothing to attract miners, traders or pirates. We'll have all the time we need to repair your ship, and the Seven Help any who'd interrupt that."

"With any luck, we'll have a bit of reprieve," Dany said hopefully.

Some things did not really need to be attracted. Sometimes something just passing by could attack, like Tyranids or Salmonids. If they sensed something edible, they would attack.
But right now, it was time to eat themselves.

Ramen was something that Jack was good at. He'd done his best to try and teach his technique to Ashi, but she always had a habit of over or undercooking the noodles.

Though to be honest, Dany preferred Jack's ramen best. He always kept in mind how spicy she enjoyed it and she was grateful for that small comfort in her life.

The heat always seem to work well with Dany, as it was she was attuned to it...even at times taking baths that were overly hot by most people's standards.

That was a fabled trait of the Targaryens. Their mastery of dragons were rumoured to give them a mastery of fire. But Dany had never seen that. Her brother hadn't shown that when Samus incinerated him.

Slurping up her noodles in a way most princesses couldn't get away with, Dany mused at how desperate she'd have to be to test out if she had the mastery of fire that Aegon was said to have.

Well, best not to be reckless, lest actual fire did burn her alive. But then again, she had showed some traits of it, unlike her brother before he died pathetically.

Samus Aran...Dany would forever remember her.

The Metroid Hunter was someone to be feared. The image of her as this pretty blonde thing in no way did justice to this frightening warrior.

Constantly upgrading herself and her weapon, constantly fighting; she'd seen more action than anyone except maybe Clegane and the Doomguy.

Viserys had been cruel, power hungry and manipulative. Yet his death had been horrifying for Dany to witness, both for how effortlessly Samus had snuffed out her brother's life...and for how much better off she was without him.

He always thought of himself as something powerful.

He wasn't.

Now Dany had more supportive allies in her quest, and transwarp drive thanks to Razorbeast. That made travel far easier.

Viserys had been cruel and he wanted to use that cruelty to punish the galaxy that had turned on their house.

Dany wanted to be different, she wanted to buck the curse of genetics and nurture that had tainted her house.

As it stood, Transwarp was a valuable asset to her. It allowed her and her entourage to escape a Skaven fleet with a ramshackle device meant to block fold-space travel. Not a problem for them, especially given that the machine blew up shortly after they'd jumped and taken out a portion of the Skaven fleet.

But how much longer could she run? Eventually, she knew, she had to gather some forces and take the battle to the enemy, and other thrown the fat usurper.

Easier said than done, due to Houses supporting King K. Rool (or at least not thrilled to see the
Targaryen's come back), Space Marines and Kremlings, Bounty Hunters, Pirates, hungry aliens, wild animals, and so much more.

She'd toyed with the idea of going to the Starks for help more than once, but they had plenty of reasons to hate her family, even if they had no love for K. Rool and his enforcers. Mata Nui might be a better person to approach; at least to gain diplomatic recognition. It was unlike the master of House Nui would give direct aid.

Short term, she needed some good fighters, gain a power base. Something more than just stealing from the pirates who tried to attack them.

Maybe a army for hire, or a neutral force looking for a leader to follow? She thought of some forces.

Zyglak came to mind, a reptilian race of beings that were feared by many. Angry, bitter beings, the entire race hid on a remote, distant ocean world, killing anyone who was fools enough to arrive.

...Likely too brutal and nasty.

She knew that the Sangheili had a long and storied warrior culture. They were also falling on hard times, with their empire, their fleet and independence taken away from them by K. Rool. They had a reputation for zealotry, but also a sense of honor.

They would be better, once she convinced them. Another potential pool would be the group known as the 'Monster Girls', a civilization of various female demihumans known for their skills in battle and other practices...as well as a deep lustful nature.

Despite their reputation for being raving nymphomaniacs, these variety of creatures had enjoyed much privilege under the Targaryen reign. Queen Daenaera in particular had a whole harem of the creatures; who had also occupied administrative and military positions. The werewolf subclass were famous for their small group tactics and special forces raids.

K. Rool did much however to reverse that, enslaving a number of them, hunting them and bombing their homeworld. Not to mention the unspeakable crimes that Gregor Clegane had visited upon their kind.

However, they were still good number of them, and they would gladly ally with anyone willing to overthrow the fat bastard.

Sangheili and Monsters Girls, then, were prime choice for recruitment...but first, she needed more officers and aid as part of her upper circle.

There were no shortage of mighty warriors in the galaxy, but getting one she could trust was another matter. An insane thought that crossed her mind was recruiting Samus Aran. It was riskier than sticking her head into a Kroxigor's jaws, but the Metroid warrior was reliable and dependable to a fault.

Or if not her, there were ways to draw the lost and the damned; warriors who'd been exiled or lost their way for one reason or another. Men and woman who wanted more than a mercenary life, who wanted honor.

...One that came to mind was another mercenary, known only as the Drifter.

No one knew exactly his origins, the best saying he came from a beautiful, yet deadly world, once ruined but rebuilding slowly. He was a skilled fighter, utilizing both an energy soar and various types of firearms. He passed the ability to 'flash-step' to doge attacks, and he carried a robotic sprite to
work with technology.

At the very least, the Drifter would be reliable, by all accounts. He shouldn't be too hard to find and his homeworld was within easy reach of the transwarp. And who knew, maybe he liked noodles as much as Dany did.

Oh, boy...but still, she also needed, at times of great needs, a cold-blooded killer...

Grayson Hunt was one candidate. Former Special Forces soldier turned pirate. He had a particular grudge for K. Rool and his cronies for manipulating his team into killing civilians; journalists, free thinkers and innocents.

While he had something of a noble cause and only attacked military vessels and never civilians, he had a ruthless streak. Blasting bounty hunters into space, killing enemies with a variety of gruesome environmental takedowns. Watching him on video kill someone by shooting them in the groin and then kicking their head off had deeply shaken Dany.

But another person who came to mind was Rattlesnake Jake, a hitman for hire originating from some desert based planet.

Often referred as a 'Grim Reaper', Jake was a snake who embodied 'cold blood'. He was ruthless and sadistic in nature, and quite good as his job at killing anyone he was hired to take out, even able to take down rouge Marines. And yet, he still possessed some forms of honor, like a dislike for liars and respect for those he deemed worthy.

Jake held a great deal of promise. For the most part he kept out of regional politics, avoiding working for the King's war department and his governors. If she could get Razorbeast to keep an eye on him, Jake could prove to be a valuable ally.

She ate her noodles in silences, still thinking about this enormous task ahead of her...so many threats, so few allies.

There was so much too do, and in the face of so many odds.

"I sense a dark mood about you today, my lady," enquired Jack in a friendly way.

"More than usual," Razorbeast said bluntly.

Dany turned to her small team. "If I am to reclaim my kingdom from the Kremlings, I need more than just us. I need more officers, and a large army."

"And you have been thinking, my lady?" Razorbeast asked, arms crossed in thought.

"I need officers, generals, and I also need soldiers," she looked to her samurai friend, "how much do you know about the Monster Girls of Zipangu?"

Jack scratched the back of his neck, "Well, I helped them in the past defeat an evil Chaos sorcerer and his demons. Some of the older monster girls will no doubt remember me, if we need to speak to them."

Ashi simply grimaced, hearing all about how...sexual those females could be at times.

Admittedly, feelings were not Ashi's strong point. most days it was a struggle to maintain a healthy relationship with Jack and keep her own anger in check. She'd once nearly assaulted a waitress because she was being polite to Jack.
She really did trust him and believed he would not go astray, but the monster girls would not be as innocent and professional as that waitress.

But she ALSO knew they needed an army. Even she and Jack could not cut down the considerable forces of K. Rool, Koopa, and Zeal. It would like standing against a storm.

If there was one thing that Ashi knew, the monster girls could fight as a unit. As ditzy and slutty as they may look, they'd already been at war with K. Rool since the start. They booby-trapped convoys, sabotaged vehicles, blew up ammo depots and infected starship computers with fatal viruses.

Their high sex drive had the side effect of giving them a very high reproductive rate; one of the reasons that the King and his forces hadn't wiped them out yet.

And they had hidden themselves way in more remote locations than before, to regain their numbers for the next time.

"You were...thinking of others as well?" Al guessed.

"The Sangheili," said Dany, "They're a proud people and as it stands, they're in the middle of an artificial food crisis. King K. Rool stripped their empire and navy, now he's using guild ships to buy up meat and grains their population needs to survive. We can give them the means to take back their world, take back their right to live."

"I know the split tongues," said Razorbeast, "Tough as nails and sharp as razors. And proud beyond all logic or reason. You're going to have a hard time earning their trust."

"Perhaps, Razorbeast, but if they see we have a common enemy, perhaps they can be more suggestible." Dany responded.

"Their swords are precious to them," said Jack, holding hid own katana like a child. "the King has outlawed the use of energy swords on their world. Many were destroyed, but many others were stolen and sold to collectors. Raid the right guild auction house and you may find enough plasma swords to outfit an army. To the Sangheili, their swords have religious and cultural importance beyond any military value."

Dany nodded. So get them the swords they like, eh? That sounded risky, but could be worth in the end.

She looked about once more. "And now I am still needed of advisor and officers," She said once more. "Where are the best neutral candidates?"

"Esbem!" shouted Alphonse.

"Uh, bless you," said Ashi awkwardly.

"No, Esbern was a person," explained Alphonse, "On Skyrim, he taught me more about magic and dragons then I ever thought possible. He goes way back, to before Aerys dissolved the King's blades and during the Skyrim civil war with House Lee."

"And now?" Dany asked.

"Now, from what I have heard, he's kind of a recluse, hiding out in the sewers of some old kingdom," Al replied. "He wants to stay out of the fight as much as he can...but I believe we can convince him to fight for our cause."
"Good," Dany said. "And in truth, in times I needed a ruthless fighter to do the dirt work, I had been considering Rattlesnake Jake as well."

"Rattlesnake Jake tried to collect a bounty on me more than once," said Jack with a hint of annoyance, "He was tenacious, only stopping when the bounty was rescinded. If nothing else, he performed his job without emotion or malice."

"And if he steps out of line," said Ashi, clutching her meteor hammer, "I think the princess would be happy with a new pair of snakeskin boots."

Dany actually had to pause and think on that one. Some scaled boots would be nice...

"Or if worst comes to worse and nobody wants to join our suicidal crusade, I know someone named Hobbes who'd be a cool and tactical head," said Razorbeast. "He might not look like much, but he had a good head for strategy. And little bastard friend Calvin wasn't bad either."

"Oh, yeah." Al said. "Heard they were some kind of people that are...'out of synch' with most of reality."

"Eh?" Ashi looked at him. "What do you mean?"

"Well I don't know the particulars," said Razorbeast, "But Hobbes kind of has this thing where he's either a big, ferocious tiger about to rip someone's throat out... or he's a literal stuffed toy animal. Honestly, I just learned to go with it as long as he was helping me kill my enemies."

"A toy?" Ashi deadpanned,

"Not sure how it worked, either." Razorbeast replied. "As for Calvin...well, he could change 'identities', as well as make cardboard boxes into useful inventions, simply because he believes it so."

"Isn't that something that Orks do?" Jack asked.

"Well, yeah, but he's no Ork either. Nor are either them demons." Razorbeast responded. "They've been chased by Witch Hunters and assassins for years. Those little bastards don't play by the rules well. They got a death bounty last year for making fun of the King's weight."

"So why would they work for us?" Ashi asked, "And why would we even want mental children on our side?"

Razorbeast grumbled, "They're pretty crazy, but if you give them candy they'll follow you to hell. Calvin once went to war with House Lee because Braev let him ride a dragon, once."

"Really?" Ashi asked.

"Calvin looks-and acts at times-like a six-year old, but he may be older than that." Razorbeast replied. "Some kind of experiment, maybe?"

"Well I've always had a way with children," said Jack brightly, "He will probably ask to hold my sword, I will probably say no and he will probably pout. But I think I can work something out if I play a game with him."

"Strange," said Dany, "But honestly a bit of fresh faced optimism could be useful on the campaign, do you have any idea where they are?"

"Er, well, not exactly." Razorbeast admitted. "But if I would hazard a guess, somewhere more
natural. Always got along better with animals than people...which is good, since we could also use war beasts."

"So more or less think like a child," said Dany, "Possibly somewhere with Dinosaurs like Ark or Lustria. I know Mazdamundi was neutral to my family; as long as we don't raid Lizardmen temples we shouldn't have a problem."

"Except those are in Windrunner territory," Al responded. "Doubt she'll let us just waltz on it."

"Well, more or less anywhere is hostile to us," said Dany, "Mazdamundi will warn her if we mean her harm, but none of us here have a grudge with her house. Barring that, Esbern and Rattlesnake Jake can be reached out covertly."

"And then you need an armada to get everyone around," said Jack, "And a shipyard to service those ships."

Dany sighed deeply. It was always more and more to worry about. Some would call this task impossible...

...but they also forget that Houses had to start SOMEWHERE at the bottom to work up, and so would she.

"We can start with our officers. We can get Jake, Calvin, Hobbes, and Esbern," she instructed her people as Jack began to gather the dinner bowls, "Reach out to them quietly. We go slow so that we can sell or steal what we need to pay them. Once we have our officer corps, we open communications with the Monster Girls. There's more than enough places on their homeworld to hide stolen ships."

"All we need is time," said Jack, "Let us see if time is our ally or enemy, my lady."

"Yes, we need to keep a low profile." Dany responded. "I rather not see this end before it had even begun. We're going to make time our ally, Jack; if the world is falling around our heads, we won't rush the plan. At the end of the day, we do what we do because we want to break the wheel of history that's trampled everyone, powerful and powerless alike. I'm not asking for blind trust, but I'm saying things will get harder before they get easier."

"Story of my life, princess," said Jack.

Dany stood from the table and began walking, speaking. "All the lords and nobles, always ready to gain the upper hand over each other, no matter the cost...it is time for things to change..." She turned to her allies. "How long to do you think we can stay here?"

Alphonse scratched his chin, "Well, we have enough noodles to last for the next five years, when I last checked. But the station's oxygen scrubbers will hold out for roughly a week. Repairs should last about five days if nothing goes wrong."

"Is there any way we can move the process along?" Dany enquired.

"Hard to say, my lady," Al admitted with a sigh.

"You did the best you could., Dany replied. "And in any case, we should move on anyways if we are to proceed."

"Once we're finished repairs, we can put this shithole behind us," groused Razorbeast, "From there we cut through the Tyranid ravaged worlds and make for the monster girls."
Dany nodded grimly. She remembered seeing some worlds that had been infested. Nothing left by barren, airless rocks. The Tyranids were quite thorough.

The one good thing about that was that the Tyranids destroyed all scanners, minefields, satellites and hazards to faster than light travel. As it stood, it was extremely unlikely that the pirates in the region had anything that could impede or slow down transwarp.

"I will be tending to my scrolls," said Dany, "The rest of you stay on guard and keep me posted. Keep twenty-four hours shifts on the long range scanners."

No other words were needed as Dany retired to her private room. She sat down and let out an exhale of breath. She felt so...heavy.

Magic always ran in her family, and normally the ancient scrolls were a pleasure to read. They’d been her only friends growing up, before and after her childhood ended. Yet even the scrolls could not take away the bone weariness of a life on the run.

So many times had she barely evaded capture or death. It was...difficult to trust, after all that had happened.

Much as she loved and trusted her team, she was their commander; there would always be a bit of distance between them. Except maybe for Razorbeast, someone who’d been with her the longest and knew her the best.

Razorbeast...he found her alone while traveling the stars, and listened to her story. He himself was a wandering Maximal, tending to keep to himself mostly...but he had lacked real purpose. Now he found it.

Razorbeast was a violent Maximal, hot tempered; his fellow comrades usually walked on eggshells around him. Among his kind, he was too violent for the Maximals and too ethical for the Predacons. He knew what it was like to belong to neither world.

Like how Dany belonged neither to the commoners nor to the aristocracy, she was a ghost for all intents and purposes.

From this, they found some companionship...maybe even friendship...

Made Dany consider the Zyglak again. Shunned, alone...maybe she could relate?

They were not pretty or nice by any measure, but neither were they truly evil in the way of demons or truly monstrous like the Tyranids.

There was bad blood and racial feuds between them and the Matoran; allying with them could shift Mata Nui. But the benefits were great. They had an ancient and advanced culture, they were immune to the Pit's mutagens and nearly immune to all elemental attacks.

Mutagen...it was an unknown substance that could mutate people if they would doused in it, leaving them hideous beings. Dany had no desire to make contact with it.

The Targaryens had used Mutagen in the past when their dragons began to die out, employing their alchemists to create it and other weapons of mass destruction in order to cling to power.

In the short term it had worked, but at the cost of the goodwill of not only the noble houses but the common people.
So...likely not a good option to use now...

Speaking of dragons...where could she find some of her own? Countless planets possessed them, though some would be out of the question, like the Dragon King of Gourmet World, a Derous so large it could easily walk over mountain ranges.

Wyveria had potential, but that was Zeal territory. Not a good chance to go there.

Going back to Alphonse's idea, the man Esbern was a dragon expert and Skyrim had one of the largest stable dragon populations anywhere. The question would be reaching their leader Paarthurnax and convincing him that hers was a worthy cause.

Paarthurnax was an ancient creature, countless of years old. He was a mystical being, once a beast to many atrocities, now seeking to repent by guiding others to the light and knowledge.

He’d proven himself in battle and he was a valuable ally to House Lee, but they did not control him and he was not their bannerman. If anything he was more like an independent spiritual leader who cooperated with the dominant house.

Paarthurnax would not listen or follow one who was driven by conquest or greed, but he would follow someone who could bring peace to the galaxy and could unite it. More than that, his wisdom would go a long way in securing that peace; even more than his claws and powers would in fighting for it.

Dany sighed as she thought. Her family was once mighty...Now, this was all that was left of it.

It was times like this that Razorback and her team were more important than ever. So many times she felt tempted to just give into violence, anger and hatred. The Gods knew she had reason enough. Maybe it was her genes and maybe it was a family curse, but there was always the temptation to fall into darkness.

Small things like Jack holding Ashi's hand, Alphonse smile while reading a book or Razorback's brusque jokes showed her a reason to stay in the light.

Still, an army WOULD be needed, as certain foes could NOT be reasoned with, or refused to do so. Sometime brute force was a needed object.

But another thing Dany felt was her mission was the elimination of slavery.

K. Rool profited from it. Imprisoning beings from across the galaxy for minor crimes and then implanting bombs into their cranial cavities. From there, they would be purchased by private individuals or mega corporations looking for cheap labour. Any attempt at defiance would be met with instant execution.

A kingdom which created a demand for both prisoners and slaves was not a just one; it was a kingdom built on a foundation of sand. A kingdom could only thrive with the consent of the governed.

Not just the King either. Pirate scum also enjoyed enslaveing others to their own will. Dany heard of particular noxious one known as Juri Han, who raped women she caught. She really wanted to crush that bitch.

Juri was legendary for her ferocity and cruelty. Having her head on a spike would win her a few friends and show everyone that she was serious about her crusade.
Victory was all about symbols; crushing symbols of oppression and getting at those who thought themselves untouchable. Killing Juri would show her tough on pirates. Toppling the Slavers of Volantis, of which the bear Moneybags was a majority shareholder, would also let people know her stance on slavery.

She breathed deeply, calming herself before she got carried away with such bloody thoughts.

A knock on her quarters pulled her from her musings. "Come in," she said.

"It's me, Princess," said Razorbeast, "I had to see you weren't getting cabin fever."

"Enter." She said, and Razorbeast did so. "I am fine...though I do believe we must move on soon if we wish to proceed."

"Understood, my lady," Razorbeast nodded. "But where to?"

"We're going to the Monster Girl's world," said Dany, "We keep a low profile and make contact with the local guerilla leaders. If the Monster Girl's can increase the intensity of their insurgency, we find Calvin and Hobbes and we hire them to start recruiting our captains."

"Everything with that could go wrong," admitted Razorbeast, "but everything has to start somewhere."

"And after that," Dany went on. "We seek out the Sangheili, and find some way to forge an alliance with them."

"And...something tells me you may seek a similar idea with the Zyglak..." Razorbeast said simply.

"Perhaps...only if I must," Dany replied.

"If I may," Razorbeast began. "Another faction we should consider are the Snowmads. I fought against the Snowmads in the Tunguska Sector." Razorbeast went on, "They used to be a prosperous people with a population surplus until Hive Fleet Gorgon took out their best farmland. They were enemies with House K. Rool for years so the King outlawed them from all merchant trade; so they had to turn bandit in order to survive."

"Give them back their standing and dignity and I shall have their allegiance," Dany offered.

"And have a champion of yours beat the stuffing out of their leader, Fredrik. I volunteer for that job," said the large Maximal.

Dany nodded. "So we have four factions for potential armies, others rouges for officers...and now we need dragons...but we can focus on that later." She began to move out. "Inform the others we will departing soon."

Razorbeast nodded, "Ashi ran some scans, we found some old mining ships stuck in the comet cloud around this solar system. With the spare parts, Al can be done repairs in about two hours."

"Make it happen, Razorbeast," said Dany with determination, "I have a galaxy to win."

Razorbeast nodded as Dany walked on alone. She was BORN to rule the Galaxy, and rule it she will. King K. Rool, Tamatoa, Pirates, Hostile Xenos...nothing more than enemies.

All of them would be consigned to the scrap heap of history, forgotten relics of another time. But the work she did would carry on forever.
Hand of the King

Ned breathed a nervous sign as he slipped on his finest robes. He patted the ceremonial sword at his side, having left his old Valaryan sword to Rob. Somehow, this felt worse than running headfirst into a hive of Xenomorphs. It felt worse than when he'd gone to war against Hive Fleet Gorgon. In all of those places, he would count on fellow soldiers to have his back.

The arena he was going in was political and he could count on nobody but himself. If his gamble paid off, the danger would be taken away from his family and House Stark could prosper vastly.

"Urp! Ned, you should-you should wear the blue tie," grumbled Rick Sanchez, as he finished ironing Ned's cloak.

Ned turned around, fear replayed with annoyance, "I'll wear the blue tie if you comb your hair. Is that fair to you?"

"...Eh, whatever. Not like the ol' king really cares much about appearance," Rick shrugged. "Though I gotta say, Ned, this smells of deceit. This is a bad idea."

"Perhaps...but I wish to get into thier circle and perhaps work from there to improve the Galaxy," Ned replied.

"That's not-urp-not impossible," said Rick, as he took the cloak off the ironing board. "For the amount of time K. Rool sits in his tower jerking off, someone like you could do some good. Or that fat cunt could just kill you."

Ned took the cloak from Rick and began to fasten it around his neck, "If he wanted me dead, he could send 47 without any other pretenses. And I think I will wear the blue tie."

"Hmmm, good point...which means he has something else planned," Rick noted as he handed Ned the tie. "Take care of yourself."

"...You too." Ned nodded. "And, if you have time, look for Silicon Valley if you have the ability. Time for you to shut it down."

Rick groaned, but reached into his lab coat and pulled out a comb. Haphazardly he began to comb his hair for what felt like the first time in decades. "All that work down the shitter... well at least with Silicone Valley shut down, the Yautja will stop sending me beef."

"While I'm gone," said Ned, "My arrangement with you still stands, Morty will be safe and his education will continue."

Rick gave a rare genuine smile, "Thanks, now fuck off before Catelyn changes her mind and tries to stop you."

Ned gave a grim chuckle as he nodded and left for his shuttle. Here went nothing.

The first person he saw on his way to the shuttle bay was his son Robb, wearing an equally ornate outfit. "Hello, father," he said in a measured voice, "I'll be meeting with the bannermen and the comet miner's guild when you leave. For now I thought I'd send you off."
"Thank you, son," said the Lord of House Stark. "Walk with me."

Robb did so as his father spoke. "What I am going to do will be highly dangerous. I expect you to watch over the family."

"I will," Robb promised. "Speaking of which, I have been hearing reports about Arya. She seems to be doing well."

"I think I aged ten years since your sister left," said Ned.

"She's found a tribe, father," said Robb, "She was always a good shot, but she's hunting, she's become the beast tamer of her tribe. She'd eat most hardened warriors for breakfast."

"And I hope success does not dull her edge," said Ned, "Learn what you can from her, Robb."

Robb nodded as they continued to walk down the halls to the docking station. He himself found something odd about the whole thing...but he wasn't sure what.

Jon Snow rounded out the family reunion, dressed more plainly than the rest he still looked like he belonged. "Take care, father," he urged.

"It's only a temporary goodbye," said Ned, "I'll do everything I can to make sure you all see me again."

Jon nodded, as did Ned. While Jon lacked the name 'Stark', the blood of the family ran through him...

...perhaps, one day, he would tell Jon the full truth.

Last in the assembly was Catelyn, the woman who was not only his wife, but also his oldest friend and greatest support. She seemed both happy and devastated by the occasion. The life of the aristocracy came with sacrifices, but at least she was grateful that her sons would be close by. "Come now Ned," she took his large, calloused hand in hers, "The shuttle is waiting and you'll not keep them waiting."

Ned nodded grimly, giving the rest of his children one last look as he was led to the shuttle to take him to his destination.

Piloting the shuttle was Rooster Cogburn, and inside acting as Ned's bodyguard was Volibear; for the King's hand was allowed just one escort. "It is time, my lord," said the armored bear.

"Best of luck, boss," said Rooster.

Ned nodded, and got settled into a seat. Rooster breathed, and activated the shuttle. The ship soon left port via airlocks, headed out into space for a few moments...then folded.

Ned always hated Space travel, even before the war against Hive Fleet Gorgon. In his teen years, his younger brother Benjen had been lost due to a faulty airlock venting oxygen. That always stayed with him and he never, ever felt comfortable aboard anything except the largest ships.

Looking now out the shuttle window at the Imperial City, at K. Rool's stronghold, Ned knew that he was truly in the Lion's den.

The upper circle was a nest of Sevipers. One misstep was all it took for have your life end. From what he heard, all had gathered today, even Pridak, who was usually out and about the Galaxy.
"Gregor will be down there," said Reuben, as if reading Ned's mind, "I'm sorry the Xenomorphs didn't eat him."

"Don't worry," said Ned, "That just means you'll get a chance to bag him yourself."

"Just watch out for the bald man," said Rooster, taking them to the shuttle VIP bay, "He won't give you any warning if he comes for you."

Ned nodded grimly, watching at the ship entered the airlocks, being processed, then allowed to dock. He took a deep breath, and exited with Volibear.

Here goes nothing.

Ned did not expect the King to greet him personally, but there he was. Flanked by the likes of Euron Greyjoy and Gregor Clegane.

Dressed like the latest male model meant to advertise clothes to teenagers, Euron produced a bottle and a glass. "A drink, Sir Nedward. This is a time to celebrate."

"It's not poisoned," the King confirmed, "Euron has already tested it, but we will all be toasting my newest appointment."

Ned blinked. He HAD heard that Euron had curried favor with the King, but to actually see him there...

"Oh, don't look so grim," Euron grinned as he put an arm over Ned's shoulder. "We have much to celebrate. A new Hand, and four upcoming Space Marines. Old men like us can't join the Space Marines," said Euron wistfully, pouring Ned a glass of champagne before drinking straight from the bottle himself. "But we get by, us old warriors."

"Indeed," said Relius, who was sitting down by nearby looking relaxed, "As Hand, you'll be expected to manage trade and taxation. A far cry from your glory days as a warrior, but utterly critical to the Kingdom and the upcoming war effort against the Tyranids and Grox."

Ned nodded grimly. Even he knew that eventually, he would have to hang up his sword, and pass it down to the next generation...

Ned took the wine glass politely as a floating drone provided a special glass for the king. House Stark stood to profit greatly from his position, the last Hand had amassed a huge fortune despite coming from the most obscure of social stations.

Then there were the shipyards and defenses that would help the galactic north weather an invasion.

"The work is demanding, Lord Eddard," said K. Rool, "But despite your modesty, I don't believe you're an idiot. And the aristocracy need to know I have an honest man collecting their hard earned gold."

"Gold?" Ned questioned.

"The wars will be expensive," K. Rool replied. "Soldier upkeep, defenses, Marine production, weapons manufacturing...quite costly, I must say. But I'm sure you can help smooth things out. Tamatoa will be here in a few hours to discuss fundings as well. I already have the Space Marines to threaten the nobles into compliance," said the King, sipping from his glass, "But they try to hide their wealth in tax havens, no name planets not on any chart. What you need to do is make it clear to them their gold won't matter to invading Tyranid Hive Fleets."
"And Tamatoa?" Ned inquired, "From what I understand, greed is his God; perhaps more so than the infamous Moneybags. Will I be expected to convince him to pitch into the war effort as well?"

"Well, war pays at the same time, and he'll do it to help fund himself," Relius stated. "That is how his mind works."

"Simple, yet easy to work with," Pridak growled.

"Tamatoa stands to gain lucrative trade contracts at a time of war, shipping foodstuffs and raw materials to supply the war effort," Relius elaborated. "Likewise, in time of war his guild ships will need military escorts."

"And that's where the Stark Navy comes in," said Ned.

"Indeed," K. Rool stated. "Warfare also causes pirate activities to increases, taking advantage of the madness and chaos. They will raid guild ships for anything they can get their hands on."

"Pirates are like a secondary infection, jumping in after a major injury; threatening to undo everything," said Pridak, ignoring his wine. "The war can also give us a chance to wipe out the pirates once and for all."

"And have a good time doing it," quipped Euron, drinking from the bottle again, "I've wanted to get even with some of my old pirate associates for a while; the ones who tried to bully me or rob what I stole rightfully."

"And my beasts shall enjoy the flesh of all our enemies," Krux stated, his mask still on, never removing in it public. No one, not even the King, knew what he actually looked like.

Ned sighed. "It will not be easy. Pirates are a tough breed, the Grox had advanced technology, and the Tyranids are evolved to be ultimate killers. Who knows how many actually exist?"

"I understand your frustration, Ned," said the King, in an easy tone, "In the last war, your House spent more blood and treasure to stop them than any other house. This isn't the last war though. Our defenses are better than ever, as is our command of magic."

"I can beat up the nobles for more money, if that's what you really want," said Ned, "But you'll need the commoners to walk into the jaws of death to buy time for your Space Marines and deadly monsters. Winning them will be the ultimate test of your regency."

"...You said something similar to me," 47 noted dryly.

"Your memory is as good as ever," Ned retorted to the bald assassin. "But while I'll be shaking noblemen down for spare change, who is going to lead your war effort?"

"You leave that to me," Pridak stated. "Already the four new recruits have been undergoing their enchantments."

"And taking it quite well, I must add," Relius stated. "They don't scream, and just barely flinch as we cut them and insert the organs. The woman had the greatest pain resistance, though all the specimens are amazing. I so rarely get to work with an Arcannar."

"I assure you," said the King, "My Space Marines will be the hammer to your commoner's anvil. You wouldn't doubt them if you could see the trials they went through."

"I have seen them in action before," Ned nodded. "But wasn't there one organ that was slowing
down or becoming useless? Some kind of acid spit?"

"Yeah, but we fixed that," Dice replied. "It's works in all the Marines now. Good thing, too. Quite useful."

"I'm proud to say we've ironed out the genetic kinks in the Black Carapace," said Relius with satisfaction. "In the past the depredation of this layer of skin prevented them from controlling their power armor; now they can control it at the speed of thought."

"And are these Marines still travelling around in battle barges, with their own fighters and ground vehicles?" Ned asked.

"Indeed," Dark replied. "While they ultimately answer to the crown, they mostly act on their own accord, with their fortress-monasteries, and maintaining their own tools and vehicles. The Tek Priests help out considerably. They have a great working relationship with the Marines, with the exception of a few Chapters. By allowing them to maintain equipment for generations the marines can greatly avoid resupply costs."

Ned nodded. "That is all good to hear...though we have other problems, such as the Skaven. I think they may be weaponizing Xenomorphs."

"Ah yes," sighed the King, "the rat infestation. Just another thing getting worse every year."

"While I peg the probability of the Skaven as taming Xenomorphs as non-existent," said Relius with a hint of derision, "They may definitely end up seeding planets with Xenomorph spores and eggs through sheer negligence. Very likely, the lab you stopped on your personal world was not the first or the last such lab."

Skaven numbers were...very high, to say the least. Jon and Robb's job on that lab wouldn't even been counted as a significant loss to their numbers.

Their warrens and breeders were notoriously well guarded, the species being masters of cloaking technology. For years, Space Marines and conventional armies alike had been searching for Skavenblight, the mythical capital city of the Skaven; where their god, the Horned Rat, kept a warpstone pillar to communicate with the Council of 13, their main governing body.

For all the Skaven the Kingdom destroyed and fleets they wiped out, as long as Skavenblight was left untouched, the minor hives and cities could be rebuild and replaced.

A frustrating concept.

"But not to worry. Koopa and Zeal have joined forces with us, and with them, we shall reign victorious against foes!" K. Rool stated proudly.


"Nothing more than a small problem that we will nip in the bud," K. Rool cut in.

"You know the power of steel, guns and fighters," said Euron, "But don't underestimate the power of magic at killing large groups of people."

"And when we win this war," said Ned, "Do you have a plan in mind to reintegrate the large number of soldiers and veterans back into civilian life? Other than career soldiers, mercenaries and warriors, you'll find a lot of men and women who will still want to return to a quiet life."
"We'll come up with that soon," Dark replied casually, robes shifting about. "Now then, what else do we have to discuss?"

"The Stark Shipyards, among other things," said Pridak, "We'll need your signature, Lord Eddard, before we can fully commit construction crews to starfighters and capital ship building facilities. You already have the capacity to train the crews. Help us help you."

Ned stared for a moment, as a paper was slid over to him. He looked it over carefully. Everything seemed to be in order, from construction details to split ownerships...

"And it would be my men who crew these ships?" he asked as his pen hovered over the paper.

Volibear watched silently from the sidelines. The ursine alien was perfectly still.

"That is correct," said Pridak, "Your pilots and crews will fight on the front lines. After the war's end, the shipyards will be converted for civilian use."

Ned nodded. "That is good to know," He breathed. "Sometimes I wish we could attack the Hive Mind itself."

"That has been attempted by psychic users," Relius replied. "They either went mad or they perished. Which is why it is important to know that our four new Marines have some of the highest recorded psychic resistance in the last thousand years. The shadow in the warp affects both magic and Psykers. But at least magic can punch through to harm the lesser soldier creatures. And Queen Zeal has been diligent about using larger spells to attack their Hive ships."

Ned felt like his head was spinning form all this. So these were the advancements made by the other houses, known for their secrecy.

Individually he knew that House Stark was stronger than any of them, but united they were a force to be reckoned with. At the very least, his family would need to be warned. While he was loyal to the King, House Zeal and House Koopa were not strictly covered by his oath.

Before leaving, Rick built a recording device into his ring. Information on the ring could be transferred to a wafer crystal and passed off to a loyal courier or broadcasted on an encrypted channel at a set time. It was just his job to pick the timing of how to leak that information.

Certainly not right now...he would be caught without effort from the others.

Thankfully, Rick had also made sure the information would go to Stark's chief allies.

None of the king's scanners had discovered the ring, Rick had made sure it would be untraceable; especially with his long standing rivalry with Relius.

Ned finished scrawling his signature on the document. "I feel much better now. Like we're working towards a brighter future."

"Good, good," K. Rool smiled. "Now then, how fare your territory and allies? How are the Worlds coming along?"

"Spice production is at the highest it's been since my grandfathers time," said Ned, "Dreemurr helped the outlying regions recover from a famine and the merchant Navy is forcing the guild to cut prices."

"You must have been a busy man to make it all happen," said the King, "Your son Robb must have big shoes to fill."
"You know my warriors are some of the best outside of your Space Marines," said Ned with a bit of pride. "I started adopting the old Valaryan state model of troop training, refined our officer structure and improved our sniping, skirmishing and sapping elements for a more effective combined army."

"Our lord has never held back on taxes or goods," rumbled Volibear, "You should know that."

"Shut your fucking mouth," snarled Euron at the ursine, going for his dagger.

K. Rool held back his companion, "Excuse Euron, he's not the nicest man."

Euron simply sat back in his chair silently. Maybe the drink was getting to him.

Maybe it was the way that Ned stared at Euron like he wasn't even there. But Euron knew better than to strike now. In his experience, there was only a right time and a wrong time to land a blow; getting the wrong time could mean your end and your enemies.

"As you know, my lord," said Ned to the King, "On all our death worlds we have cultivation of rare animal pelts and parts, we have rare woods imported to the finest craftsmen in the capital. New Vegas gives your scientists the most rare radioactive elements in the galaxy. House Stark and our allies are in a time of plenty."

"And your prosperity is my prosperity," said the King.

“And the Lee’s...What of their Death World Minecraft?” Pridak asked.

Ned mused over the world he visited. A vast land of multiple biomes, it was all a place where recruit forged their own lives, crafting a building...and surviving the night beasts.

"You’re better off asking the Lee’s," said Ned diplomatically, "But if it concerns you, the Endermen have been driven back to their home dimension, the Creeper population is at a thirty year low and the production of pork and chicken on that world is at a hundred year high. If you want to know more, ask their Bannerman, Steve; who is the nominal planetary governor."

"His name is Steve? Just Steve?" asked King Dice.

"Best not to think to hard on it," Ned replied.

“Noted,” Pridak replied, eyes gleaming.

"Tell us about Ark, Ned," said the King with an inquisitive gleam in his eyes. "I spent part of my youth there, where my Uncle expected me to die. Didn't even give me an implant. Has the place changed at all?"

Given that was where Arya was, Ned had a feeling this question wasn't innocent.

"I don't know much..." Ned admitted. "But I have read about. Full of creatures of great strength and abilities. It consists of several regions, one even being a massive desert. Still some places even Windrunner does not now about."

Made Ned think of another world Sylvanas had colonized. The 'Unterzee' as it was called. On the surface, it was rocky, yet breathable world...yet underneath lay a vast cave system that was mostly ocean. Full of secrets, some people were attempting build settlements there...

...but they rarely ventured out far...

The Sunless Sea, which dominated the underground caverns, was home to myriad monsters and
Some of them believed to have been Skaven experiments that escaped and reproduced. More than that, the world was home to various technological marvels from a past age.

Even now, Ned had special forces helping Sylvanas in secret trying to understand machines like the Dawn Machine. He'd almost sent Arya to Unterzee.

But either way, she would get her education...and hopefully, if they DID find out her location, they would write her off as doomed and ignore her.

"I'm happy that Ark is well for you," said the King, "There are some mammoth pelts from Ark in my private room that are unmatched by any furs anywhere else in the galaxy. I look forward to more such gifts from that world."

Ned swallowed, but said nothing, only nodding. Leave it to the king to have many luxuries.

"You should try it sometime, Ned," said the King, "Take a turn at King Dice's poker tables, visit the brothel a bit; even just take an evening for a snifter of brandy. I've the finest wine and liquor cellar in the known universe."

Most of that held little appeal for Ned, but he'd been good at poker during his days as a soldier against Gorgon.

Mainly a quiet game of Texas Hold 'Em, sitting in a tavern or bar, passing the time before the next big storm hit.

It always helped to get his mind off the swarms that were everywhere, snarling and roaring as they ate everything.

Poker was a good game. It taught Ned how to mask his feelings better than any of his father's political tutors. It showed him better ways to calculate odds and how a good bluff at the right turn make a win from a losing hand. This, all of this with K. Rool, was his biggest bluff yet.

"I believe I would enjoy a nice game of cards," he looked at King Dice, "Just make sure you don't stack the deck."

King Dice smirked as the others stood as well.

"I do believe we have enough grim talk anyways," K. Rool agreed. "Let us head to the casino and enjoy ourselves for a bit."

Ned was grateful for the distraction. A few hands of poker would be just enough to calm him down. This was no different from playing cards as chittering insect monsters ate whole worlds. They were still monsters, they just used smiles and politics instead of chitin and acid teeth.

Just like before, the monsters would be beaten. Ned was sure of it.

His mind drifted to various casinos. Most of the Houses owned several, used as income. The Dreemurr's, notably, had over a million Gourmet Gambling Establishments on the Gourmet World. The largest was the Gourmet Casino, a massive casino where money and valuable food were gambled on.

It had two main sections. The basic sections where most of the games were, and a small VIP section where dangerous games, used to get out of debt, were played. Another section did exist, but it had been shut down.
Ned had to admit that he’d lost a small fortune over the years in card games of various types, and betting on other things when the soldiers he worked with got a few beers into them. Dreemurr had vast gambling houses, but unlike King Dice, they never targeted children and they were nowhere near as predatory with debt collection.

Gambling had a place, he had to admit, in the economy and culture. Betting on Jousting was a hugely popular sport on Winterfell.

He never saw the Casino here, though. He wondered how extravagant it was here in this massive station.

As long as he stayed away from the notorious gladiator pit, Ned would be happy. He could be sociable as long as he wasn’t required to watch people fight to the death for others entertainment.

He glanced at Riptor nearby, who was silent as usual. A killer to the core. Ned kept his distance.

Soon, they arrived at the casino proper...and Ned stared.

It wasn't quite as crazy as what he'd seen on Gourmet World, but King Dice's Casino was something to behold. to say nothing of the name of the Casino. "Welcome to the Titty Twister," said King Dice.

Euron breathed in deeply, sniffing the scene of cigarette smoke and liquor. "Now, this is my kind of place," he purred as the group walked into a room larger than most religious cathedrals.

Ned sighed at the name of the place, Relius grimaced, and even K. Rool fought down the urge to groan. Titty Twisters...really?

King Dice was known for a lot of things. He was not known for class and good taste. True to the casino's name, topless harem girls in cages danced, suspended from the ceiling as high rollers lost their money at the slot machines, at the roulette wheel, and the hundreds upon hundreds of card tables.

Around them, nude and gagged women served drinks, cigars, cigarettes and concentrated doses of spice for anyone rich enough to afford it.

Ned sighed deeply again. Gourmet Casino has far more class than this, even with the dangerous areas. He remembered watching the Gamble Berry game with the Hyrule Champions. They tasted excellent...except for the one-in-ten berry that killed you in five minutes.

Of course, nothing quite beat seeing Link in a deadly game of Chicken. Where in an individual was thrown into a pit had had to fight off one hundred enraged chickens. The hero of Hyrule had never looked so bad or so beaten down, by a victory. Mipha was happy to heal him up, though, and Ned was grateful for that as well.

That night on Hyrule, the whole audience was treated to chicken dinner; including Link.

Ned wondered if the chicken at the buffet table here would be as good as what Link could cook on a campfire in the wild. He seriously doubted it. Too...ritzy for that kind of simple meal. He would have to do with what they had.

Link...he remembered reading that before the Calamity, he was taking on full-grown men...when he was FOUR years old.

The boy was tough, a master warrior and someone surprisingly proficient with advanced technology, chemistry and the culinary arts. He was quite the Renaissance man; a warrior poet who was also a
well rounded out individual.

Link had done him the honor of teaching Robb and later Jon the skills of horseback riding and archery. Though only Jon had ever taken a shine to cooking; Rob could barely make a sandwich.

His reverie was interrupted by King Dice. "Don't eat the public buffet, it's laced with stimulants to keep people up and gambling all night."

Ned grimaced again. Seriously, Dice would do anything for money. He was led over to a private table with the others, where servant woman, also nude and gagged OTM, where waiting. Pridak looked at how they had, his face indifferent.

Relius was likewise disinterested, indifferent to the women around him. While Euron drank in the sights and was wondering how badly King Dice would let him hurt the girls and how much it would cost.

Already someone had brought the King an aperitif; some liqueur so expensive the bottle cost as much as a small starship.

Keine Kamishirasawa, nude and muffled, handed the king the wine. Her large breasts were on full display.

Almost as a matter of reflex, the King gave her tits a slap and sent her on her way. Ned bit on his tongue to avoid saying anything to offend the monarch; but only just.

He took equally expensive liquor from one of the girls; something brewed with herbs and spices that smelled of cinnamon. "Thank you," he said to the girl in OTM gag.

Ned's father taught him how to fight, but his mother taught him how to treat a women.

Pridak looked at the girl who had given Ned the wine...what was her name again?

"Ah Joy," said Euron, "Nurse Joy, I found her on Poke almost ten years ago; I always wondered where she'd end up once I sold her to the slave market."

Once Nurse Joy still held a spark of life in her eyes. It only broke Ned's heart more. He sipped his wine faster than he meant to.

Pridak had no interest of her. He had another in mind already...

He recalled a time when Dice, trying to play off of his ambitions, had a girl dressed as Ciel to serve Pridak.

Pridak's response: To calmly let the girl leave unmolested...then proceed to beat Dice into a bloody pulp.

The King had to send in Gregor Clegane to stop Pridak. Maybe the one time ever that the violent man had prevented a death. If not, Pridak may have torn out King Dice's guts and let him take his chances with a good surgeon.

Dice was all about show, about flair and using cheap parlor tricks to obscure the higher intelligence.

And here he put on a good show with the Casino. Ned looked about as Dice spoke.

"Yes, sir, all these people here to have fun and lose their funds...and minds if it happens." He looked about and grinned. "Ah, there's a regular chump now!"
Ned looked out into the crowd to see the person, and he appeared to be...a anthropomorphic cup with yellow hands.

Cuphead and his brother Mugman were standing by the craps tables, winning hand after hand.

Ned had a very bad feeling, he was sure of few things. He believed in honor. Plans never survive contact with the enemy and the house always wins. Cuphead gleefully and recklessly called for more and more, larger and larger bets.

They were lucky...unlike another cup, by the name of Master Shake.

"I got plans for those two boys," laughed King Dice at Mugman and Cuphead, "But I haven't always lucked out with cup people. Did I ever tell you about a gent named Master shake?"

Ned shook his head as the waitresses returned, bringing a small dish of the chef's choice.

"Well he lost big and tried to work as a hitman to pay off his debts, but he tried to run," laughed King Dice, "That's when I sent Riptor after him, they had to take away the body in buckets when she was done."

Euron laughed loudly at this.

Ned looked about the gathered crowd. He was stuck in a gathering of demons, it seemed. Each one brutal and dark in their own way.

At least enemy soldiers wore different uniforms. Dangerous Xenos stood out for their strange shapes and mindless violence. For the first time in his life, he was totally alone.

Even against the fabled sword master Arthur Dayne, he could count on his armor and sword. For now he must walk with devils, get all information to Rick as soon as possible.

"That's absolutely fascinating," he said to King Dice.

Dice grinned as the sounds filled the air. The buzzing of Zingers could also be heard, looking for anyone who would try to cheat the system...whereupon they would swarm and sting an offender to death.

Ned decided to question something else. "So, any word exactly when the Hive Fleet will arrive?"

K. Rool nibbled on some sort of caviar dish with a platinum spoon, "From what we can gather, the astronomican has pegged them as being on a vector to collide with Planet Springfield under House Dreemurr's purview. It's not important strategically or economically, but the biosphere can be used by the Tyranids."

Ned gave a grim smile. So not a immediate threat quite yet.

"But other factors in the galaxy still draw our attention," Relius stated. "Like Rick's failed experiment, Silicon Valley. Have you heard on its whereabouts?"

That actually made Ned smile a bit, "My spy network says that Rick Sanchez is working to try and shut that place down. Especially after last year when it attracted an Ork Waaagh that wiped out a dozen planets."

"And what of the Orks?" Relius pressed, "What is their status in your space?"

"Problematic, but nothing unmanageable," Ned replied. "It helps that they are prone to infighting,
and fire helps curb their numbers. We've systematically blown up their fleet," Ned added, pushing around his own caviar with a fork. "Without a fleet, they're stuck on the few worlds they hold, hitting each other with sharpened pieces of metal."

"Indeed they are," K. Rool grinned. "Their own bloodthirsty nature works against them at times."

"And you had a Beastmen incursion not long ago," asked Pridak, "How did you solve that?"

"We didn't," said Ned as the dishes were collected, "The Beastmen navigate by the will of their gods; utterly random. Their fleet landed in the middle of a pirate haven. They killed and ate most of the pirates, all our fighter corps did was shoot down as many pirate vessels as we could so the Beastmen couldn't steal them and convert them."

"And that left them stranded?" Krux asked.

Ned grimaced. "We had no choice, they had spread over the planet...so we Busted it."

Pridak seemed genuinely surprised, "I didn't know you had the stones for it, Lord Stark."

Ned glared at him as a lavish meal of fish and meat was brought. "I've used them before on Tyranid held worlds. Left to their own devices, the Beastmen would have multiplied and their shamans would have stranded lost ships until their fleet was up and running again. It had to be stopped at all costs."

It was not an easy decision to make...but they had no time to debate it either. So, with a heavy heart, Ned personally oversaw the destruction of the infested planet. He was grateful, at the least, no innocents were on it.

At any rate, the planet had life, but no settlers or native sentients.

"I was told you were an honorable man," said Pridak, "But I was worried until now that meant you were a soft man."

Ned gave him a cold gaze, which seemed to carry a lot of strength within it.

Pridak felt better, like now he finally had a good measure of the man. This man of the North. This was good. "I applaud your decisive action,"

Before any further talk could occur, a Kremling of the Kobble breed came upwards, escorted by two gagged women. "Er, your grace? Tamatoa has arrived."

The King huffed and took a plate of rare roast boar from Gourmet World. "Ah, and here I was just staring to get used to being around people with integrity. Hold onto rings, Ned" he laughed.

Ned turned to see something huge and gold plated scuttling through the casino floor.

Tamatoa, founder and leader of the Guild. Large crab-beast. Totally obnoxious. But business savvy and a vital part of the Galaxy's working. His habit of decorating his shell was rumored to compensate for something...perhaps insecurities? Who knows? Those dumb enough to ask him usually got eaten.

The large crab monster scuttled up to the King's table and crossed his claws in a salute of sorts. "My gracious and noble King, thank you for having my humble self here tonight."

"You're late," growled K. Rool, "But I'll overlook it if you don't steal any light bulbs this time."

King Dice bit his lip as the crab creature laughed. "You know my weakness for shiny things, but I'll
do my best. And who is this new face?" He asked, looking at Ned.

"Ned Stark, lord of House Stark, now Hand of the King," Relius responded dryly.

"Ah, moving up in the Galaxy, eh?" Tamatoa grinned. "How's life been going for ya?"

Ned sighed. "Things have been going well, actually. I only just arrived, though."

"Now that you're finally a somebody," said Tamatoa, "We can really talk finally. Your worlds are impoverished and my guild ships can bring in all the supplies and equipment you could ever need."

"I need the Guild like I need a Tyranid invasion," Ned said more darkly than he meant to. K. Rool laughed at the look on Tamatoa’s face. Though the large crab put a smile back on when the Space Marine guards shot him a look.

"Now, now. The Tyranids ARE coming for us all, and we need to support each other to win the war," Tamatoa replied. "You know how those things listen to no reasons whatsoever. Force is the only option we have."

Ned KNEW this was correct. The Tyranids were savage and brutal in their attacks. Mercy was a foreign concept to them. The Hive Mind could never be comprehended by any of them. It was a malevolent intelligence, one that held all Tyranids under its thrall...to the point the entire Tyranid race was said to be like a single super-organism.

And to beat Tyranids, he needed logistics. The Tyranids took whatever lived and used it for their own ends. Armies needed food, fuel and ammo to fight. Even armies of war beasts needed some kind of upkeep.

"If you want to operate in Stark space," said Ned, forcing himself to take a bite of the rich food in front of him, "You'll get standard warzone contracts. You bring in ammunition and spare parts for starships where they're needed. You have my word that your captains will be paid fairly and on time, always. By the same token, you are not to interfere with my and my allies merchant navy."

"Oh, really?" Tamatoa leaned forward, grabbing bit of boar and chewing it up.

"I'm afraid so," Ned replied coolly. "They operate best under Stark direction, not Guild direction."

Tamatoa shrugged. "Guess that makes sense. We ARE simply traders and merchants after all, not war leaders."

"You'll get your money," said K. Rool, "Whatever Lord Stark pays you, the Crown will match down to the penny. You'll actually be getting double the standard warzone contracts. With the tradeoff being that you won't price gouge, be late on deliveries or try to war profiteer."

Tamatoa lit up like fireworks, "Well, now that is something to celebrate. Who says there's no such thing as a good war?"

Ned grimaced. To the Guild, War was made for fun and profit. Something Roodaka could relate to, seeing as her entire race were weapon designers, who lived off of warfare. In fact, they were some early rumors than in the past, Vortixx were backers of the now defunct terrorist group, Black Ghost, a group of arms dealers who perpetuated warfare to sell their weapons for profits, creating a savage cycle in a sense.

It was always the same. Some group or radical faction somewhere would find themselves in possession of state of the arms weapons. A small-scale brush war would occur; not usually big
enough to attract the major houses but enough to scare the minor nobles and Hedge knights.

Whether it was Black Ghost or the Brotherhood without Banners in the aftermath of the Targaryen overthrow, the Vortixx would supply weapons to anyone who could pay.

But their weapons would just rot in warehouses without the opaque and unaccountable guild to deliver them.

Which is why Roodaka, a high-ranking member of Vortixx society, joined up with the Guild to help distribute the weapons.

"Not to mention that outside of Stark space, you'll be given shipping contracts to deliver supplies to Tyranid ravaged worlds," said K. Rool, "Those dead worlds will otherwise become pirate havens and we need to put settlers and civilization on them in order to pay back the cost of the war."

Tamatoa was just ecstatic, "Oh my king, your generosity knows no bounds."

Ned thought about sending the Stark Merchant navy to these regions after the war, to undercut the guild and perform the same function for often half the price. He might do that, but he wouldn't tell anyone about it now.

Right now, it had to wait. The Guild was firmly centered in the Galaxy way of life. It couldn't just be SHOVED out, it had to be nudged out. Slowly enough for an alternative to come in.

Ned knew that as the Hand, it would be him to allow the Guild into Stark space. More papers for him to sign over his soul and his life's work for. Still, by now Robb would be taking control of their House and Jon would be finding a place as a military leader. As painful as this all was, it was a necessary passing of the torch.

"Also my King," said the crab creature submissively, "At no extra charge, you'll be able to use the Guild's security forces to stabilize behind the lines and keep away the pirates. You know they'll be smelling blood in the water before long."

"True," K. Rool nodded. "Pirates always are a savage bunch, unless you know how to speak to them." He gestured to Euron as an example.

Euron smiled as he took a bite of steak that was so bloody it was a miracle it wasn't still alive. "You can't put a price on good Privateers," he said, blood dribbling down his chin. "A lot of the pirates I know can fight good and for the right price, they'll run interference, run raids behind enemy lines. Give them lavish rewards and the threat of painful death and they'll play ball."

"And as we figured out in the last war," said Relius, "You can render down dead Tyranids into useful petro-fuels. They benefit from our dead and so we follow their example."

"Hope you have good refrigerators on your Guild ships," smirked Euron, "Those things breed disease pretty fast once you scrape them off your boot."

Tamatoa scoffed. "Well, too bad not all pirates can be bargained with."

"Ah, you speak of Terumi," Euron grinned. "Met him several times. Stupid twat, but tough as something else. Always liked to do things for his own entertainment, now matter how cruel it was. I watched him rape women, kill children, bomb whole settlements just for the fun of it. I don't think I've ever laughed so hard. But if I was really given the choice, I'd probably put his head on a spike."

"Very noble of you, sir," sneered Tamatoa,
"Thank you," said Euron, "But he won't be as hard to kill as Juri Han. The girl is a natural at whatever she puts her mind to."

"Yes, yes, one thing at a time," Tamatoa waved his claw dismissively. "First we must focus on Hostile Xenos of the Galaxy."

"And the fortifications I've designed should aid you in that great," said Pridak, "I've been working on plans for decades, but construction is almost finished. We just need to start fortifying the galactic north; No disrespect to what you've already built, Lord Stark."

"None taken," said Ned.

Ned once again looked over all gathered. Deep down, he knew them all to be dishonorable killers, liars, thieves, and madmen...but they were needed to help stand against the coming swarm.

"Right now the northern Houses don't have many fortress worlds," said Ned, "But we have more minefields per light-year than the entire rest of the galaxy combined and our FTL capable fighter corps can be anywhere they're needed in a moment's notice."

"I can have Euron moving the capital ships by the end of the week," said the King, "faster if Tamatoa can get munitions delivered to Winterfell."

"And it will be done, my lord," Tamatoa nodded.

"Good to hear," K. Rool nodded. "Now then, let us all feast to a brighter future!"

The real main course came in, roast Boneshark from Subnautica cooked in its own armor plating. Ned wondered how many people died to catch that fish.

As the delicate, white meat was plated, the King raised his glass. "A toast, to the future, to the Kingdom and to our New Hand."

All raised their glasses in response to the toast. To a bright future indeed...

...for who, exactly?
Autumn of the House of Stark

Sylvanas Windrunner sat alone in her chamber. She did not sleep, she never slept. Mostly she preferred to train with weapons; improve her skills further and catch any mistakes she might be making. But sometimes she really did just need to sit and think.

Unlike someone like Settra, Sylvanas lived for more than just killing. She valued friendship, she valued honour. She knew deep in her heart that Ned Stark would die. All men must die, but she would rather see him die with a sword than with a dagger in his back or 47's garrote around his neck.

The knock at the door interrupted her. "Enter," she said as Specter Knight made himself known.

The undead warrior floated in. Like the station of Undercity, he was a grim figure. Once a thief by the name of Donovan, ambition got the best of him, and he was corrupted by an artifact, and killed a friend for it, before the temple of the artifact collapsed around him. Dying and regretful, he was approached by Windrunner, who offered him chance for redemption...as a servant under her. He agreed.

Specter Knight bowed to her, "My lady, it is as you anticipated. Ned Stark is now officially sworn in as the Hand of the King."

Sylvanas slowly opened her striking eyes, "How fast is he working?"

"My lady, he's opened the North to the King's shipyards and Pridak will be bringing fortifications to the region."

Sylvanas scoffed. "Pridak...brilliant general, yet utterly lacking in anything else worthwhile."

"True, but he's a dangerous one, my lady," Specter Knight replied. "Many a fool have lost parts of themselves to him."

"I trust his fortifications to stand up to the Tyranid fleet," said Sylvanas tiredly, "As much as I trust his depraved sexual predation to influence his treatment of civilian populations and his allies."

"But if we need to, my lady," said Specter Knight, "We can take his fortresses and turn them against his and the King's armies and fleet. Give me twenty good undead soldiers with climbing hooks and I can impregnate any of his bitch space fortresses."

Sylvanas smirked. "I like the attitude...but for now, we must bid our time. Acting too soon will work against our interests," She stood off her throne. "Now then, I understand LeChuck has been overseeing operations at the Unterzee. Any reports?"

"Hard to say," Specter Knight admitted. "The Sunless Sea is vast and full of the unknown, monsters and hidden civilizations about. Often time, sailors don't come back to the main base."

"And who knows better than LeChuck about sailing in dangerous waters with very little light, pirates and sea monsters?" Sylvanas ventured. "I have him out there hunting for ancient relics and useful artifacts. He's due around this time to send a report, if not, he's late but unlikely to be fully destroyed."

Specter Knight was silent for a moment. LeChuck...a less trustworthy member of the inner circle, and Sylvanas knew this. But the truth was he was good at naval travel and battle, and as such was needed.
He was a thief, a rogue and a pirate before joining up with Sylvanas’ team. On the other hand, his knowledge of necromancy rivaled that of the Tomb Kings and his magic prowess gave House Sylvanas a fighting chance against House Zeal; who'd spent centuries perfecting their anti-undead spells.

"Don’t worry, milady," said a smooth voice as a dapper man in a top hat stepped into the light, "Captain LeChuck is just fine. My friends on the other side say he's within reach of the goal you set."

"Good to see you, Dr. Facilier," said Sylvanas.

It wasn't really, to be honest. Facilier was a voodoo man from some swamp region, always known how to get under people's skin in order to make unsavory deals with them. The boker drew his power from otherworld spirits-Not demons, but some 'Loa', who he called 'Friends on the Other Side'.

Facilier was a collector of dark artifacts; Sith Holocrons, Chaos artifacts, Blood Echoes and even three of the Nine Books of Nagash. For him being an unscrupulous scumbag, Facilier was one of the top-notch magic users in this half of the galaxy.

And unlike the Chaos Gods, the Loa he drew power from could be counted on to fulfill their end of a hellish bargain.

Assuming you kept YOUR end of the deal.

"Facilier..." Sylvanas stated. "What brings you out from your area of study?"

"I been feeling a stir in the winds of magic," the good Doctor smiled, "The young master of House Zeal has bagged himself a Fatalis dragon; not exactly your average big game. Killing a creature like that makes a ripple in time."

"Then good for him," said Specter Knight, "One less of those abominations left alive."

Sylvanas had been to Wyveria herself several times. The Elder Dragons in general were...something else, as if disaster and raw untamed power were personified. To take one down was no easy feat, especially for a young boy like Janus.

"The boy is strong," Facilier cautioned, "Ya'll better work on a plan to kill him while he's young; in case he turns out to have too much of his mother in him."

"And you'd just kill a child like that?" Specter Knight was outraged.

"Hey, in this galaxy, you gotta do what needs to be done to survive," Facilier countered to Specter Knight. "Otherwise our enemies will eat us alive."

"Still, your solution is quite rash and unreasonable." Specter Knight spat back. "Killing him like that would only cause more issues."

"Killing Janus would be a short term solution," said Sylvanas, "Not to mention it would alienate his sister Schala, who is a far cry from her mother. Indeed, she is much like her mother once was before the soul rot set in."

"The ends justify the means," sneered Specter Knight at the witch doctor, "But the ends themselves have to be justified."
Facilier shrugged. "If you insist...but best be careful nonetheless."

"Believe me, I don't let my guard down THAT easily," Sylvanas replied with a dark look, her hood shadowing her crimson eyes. "I learned that much when we colonized the Death World Gunsmoke."

"Ah, the No Man's Land," Specter Knight mused. "The world of an endless desert...and with populations of Insects that control bodies..."

"I like Gunsmoke," said Dr. Facilier, "There's nothing like a Death World to remind you how good it is to be alive. Or remind you how painful life can be. But some of my best rituals took place on that planet."

"And we have some of our finest snipers from that world," added Sylvanas, "though Unterzee is providing us with some fine space combat marines."

"True..." Specter Knight mused. "Assuming they don't lose their minds in the process, due to the horrors that dwell below."

"Indeed. Mental resolve in a necessity in this Galaxy," Sylvanas confirmed.

"Oh, is that why you also use the Dwarf Fortress World to train your recruits, because of all the insanity there?" Facilier asked.

"You of all people would know the value of mental toughness as a counter to magic," Sylvanas pointed out, "The winds of magic bend to sentient thought, and resisting just a little with one strong mind can sway a battle. Just like how a martial arts fight is ninety percent mental and only ten percent physical. Besides, the Dwarf Fortress World offers training for enduring and breaking sieges."

"I never liked sieges," said Specter Knight, "Too much sitting around. And if you have living beings inside there's always the risk of running out of supplies."

Sylvanas was silent as the moment as the thought of 'Dwarf Fortress'. A Death World of great size, it was full of many types of creatures, nearly all of them deadly. The dwarves themselves were...kind of crazy, prone to doing stupid acts. Fortress rose and fell on a regular basis, either by raids, or by idiocy by the dwarves. Soldiers in training were sent there to see if they had what it took to live.

If Ark taught warriors how to hunt, scavenge and wage a guerilla war, Dwarf Fortress taught warriors the value of base management and construction. Fortress designs were constantly tweaked and refined amidst waves of hostile goblins, dwarf grudges and other environmental hazards.

Every fortress was eventually destroyed, as was the motto of the dwarves, "losing is fun." Strange until you learned to take failure as a lesson rather than a punishment.

Sylvanas sighed as she stood from her throne. "Perhaps what we need is some reflection, not just going out right now," She turned to Facilier. "Return to your studies, and work on if you can figure out a way to disrupt Hive Mind connections...WITHOUT looking into the Mind itself."

Facilier was taken aback, "Oh, I'd sooner stick my willy into a nest of Khemrian flesh scarabs. But I promise, my lady, I'll have the bugs running in circles and gnawing on each other instead of us before long."

"Make sure you deliver," said Specter Knight. "I've lost too many good people alive and undead to the damned creatures. I'm looking for payback."

Facilier tipped his hat, and walked away.
"Troublesome man..." Specter Knight mused.

"But useful," Sylvanas said as she turned. "As for you, travel to Lustria and speak with Mazdamundi for me, regarding more soldiers for the upcoming war effort."

"At once, my lady," Specter Knight bowed.

"Though, before you do, send for Momo Hinamori and Hinata Hyūga, and tell them to meet me at the Library."

"Doing research, my lady?" Specter Knight asked.

"Yes...and it does tend to get lonely at times," Windrunner admitted.

"It's good to know you still have a heart, my lady," said Specter Knight kindly.

As he left, Sylvanas looked once more at the window outside her station. All was cold. Being undead inured her to most drops in physical temperature, but it had heightened her to the warmth of personal relationships. She valued her people, she tried to husband close friendships with others.

The library of the station wasn't exactly like that of Zeal. It wasn't a fancy building, it was loud, messy; a place where people worked and performed often risky experiments.

Old tomes were scattered about, detailing dark magic and the deep secrets of Death Worlds, or those gathered so far.

As it stood, Hinata was standing over a miniature forge, over which hovered an ancient, ornate sword.

"Be careful, Hinata," said Momo, "You might set the ancient scrolls on fire. We need them in order to recreate Valaryan void swords."

Hinata nodded slowly as Sylvanas took them in. Both were clad in revealing Arabic harem outfits, with a bra top, puffy pants, and a veil over their mouths. Hinata wore purple, while Momo wore black.

Both girls were part of Sylvanas' personal harem, a group of woman who served as her lovers, informants, and assassins if need be. She watched over them lovingly in return, and no one else—not even Duke—was allowed to touch them.

Duke had his own women in his casino. Besides, his ego wouldn't survive losing another fight to Sylvanas.

"You girls are dressed nicely," said the Lady of Uncercity Station, "But you're playing dangerous by this fire with all that exposed skin."

Hinata gulped, "We are careful, my lady."

Sylvanas drifted a hand over the shoulder of the girl. "Yes...I know you are. I don't wish for any misfortune to fall upon you."

The Lady of Windrunner walked around her girls, running a hand along Hinata's shoulder and stroking Momo's hair. Both girls turned beet red.

Gulping, Momo tried to recite the words that were so clear a moment earlier. "We're getting close to Valaryan steel's ability to cut through the fabric of space and time; making them useful against both
magic constructs and physical armor."

"Is that so?" said the Lady Windrunner, getting too close to Momo for comfort.

Momo swallowed. "Y-yes. We're hoping to use it to sever the connections of psychic beings, disrupting their powers and abilities."

Sylvanas ran a long nail along Hinata's cheek

Hinata looked like she was going to have a nosebleed. "If we perfect the design, using one of these swords on a Tyranid synapse creature would catastrophically affect the hive mind, increasing the amount of time it would take to re-establish the psychic link at least ten fold."

Sylvanas WAS listening, true, but, as always, she let herself be caught up in these two beauties. She loved all her harem girls, yes, but these two were something special.

Soaking in beauty was what she did. But Hinata and Momo had this humility about them, especially Hinata that drew in Sylvanas like flowers to bees. It was intoxicating and every time she was here, she savored it.

Momo stepped closer to her master, "So far, only the most skilled technicians have been able to reforge one of these swords. Even Rick Sanchez never replicated the technology."

"He doesn't know everything," purred Sylvanas, moving her hips gracefully as she eyed the prototype sword on the forge.

Getting them flustered was a sort of hobby for her, one she found quite entertaining.

Momo focused. "Still, we still need some time to work out the processes. I promise you, we have been working hard."

"So what does someone as lovely as you two have to be shy about?" asked Sylvanas, "What are you not confident about the sword?"

"Ah-ah," Hinata's voice caught in her throat. "We're afraid we haven't built the sword's internal heuristics right, that the carbon-steel crystal tubes are off. The sword could explode if it hits a psychic target."

"So you'll need a psychic target to find out," said the Lady of Windrunner.

They HAD been working hard. Just a few more things, and she would take them to bed with her.

"Hmmm, we might have some rouges in the dungeon that I can have Thresh pull up. And what have you got?" Sylvanas asked, fondling Hinata's breast and looking over at Momo to make her jealous.

Hinata bit her lip, "We-we have an Ork Weirdboy in the dungeon, a Necromorph Ubermorph and a Tyranid Zoanthrope."

Sylvanas pursed her lips, gripping a breast still. "Someone send for the Ork..."

Sylvanas moved to put a hand on Momo's ass, teasing her as well and giving a squeeze. Truly, it was the fresh innocence and emotion of these girls that invigorated her; made her feel truly alive.

--

Down in the dungeon level, Thresh kept an efficient system. Pain and suffering fed him, which is why Sylvanas appointed him to guard over her most dangerous prisoners. The Ubermorph glared
back at him with a very dark, almost intelligent look. In some ways, it was even more alien than the demons of the Warp.

The voice over the intercom, however, let him know to grab the Ork Weirdboy, and he would enjoy this. "Come, monster," he growled, hefting his chains, "My mistress has need of you."

The Ork growled, but had no choice as it was led to its doom...though it was looking forward to an end then sitting around doing nothing.

As Thresh moved, her passed by a cell occupied by two undead: Charloss and Shalulia.

Ah, now THEY had some interesting stories. Some years back, Braev was colonizing a Death World known as 'The Blue' a world mostly ocean and home of the mysterious Devil Fruits.

The initial rulership there was the 'World Government’ that was overseen by World Nobles...which Braev saw not only as wastes of skin, but monstrous wastes of skin with decisions of grandeur. Needless to say, Windrunner was happy to aid the Lee's in wiping them out to establish a fairer rule.

The old One World Government of The Blue had been in microcosm of what King K. Rool hoped to build across the wider galaxy. It had been a stable government for sure; with a single language, single faith and strict regulation over Devil Fruit users.

Unity came at the cost of lives of the innocent, with the agents of the world government slaughtering not only ocean going pirates but dozens of innocents with each criminal they took in. The system was built on fear, designed to enrich the noble classes and the predatory trading companies who squeezed the small settlements for everything they had.

The fall of the World Government was aided by the Pirates, the Starw Hat Pirates in particular, who helped Braev set up a more free and fair Parliament on the world; one with a House of Lords, a house of Commons and a House of Pirates.

As for the tyrant World Nobles, they were executed for their countless crimes...but as for Charloss and Shalulia, Sylvanas had something else in mind. Upon killing them, she re-raised them right after as undead...but in contrast to most of those she raised, who retained freedom, she took their hearts, leaving them their free wills...but binding them to her service. Ironic justice, in a way, as they had enslaved others to their twisted will-now it was their turn to serve. Braev, though somewhat...put off, ultimately felt that it was a fitting fate.

Thresh could see why she did that. The brother and sister duo had a habit of murdering and abusing their slaves; with the brother doing much, much worse. Though Shalulia was sadistic and brutal in her own right, particularly by her habit of mass crucifying slaves to keep them in line.

Now the two enslaved undead watched with hollow eyes, stripped of all status and their vaunted space suits.

"Oy, git!" shouted the Ork Weirdboy at Thresh, his fists crackling with green energy. "Git over 'ere so I can tear yer 'ead off an' shit down yer neck!"

"Shaddup!" Thresh whipped the Ork with a chain.

"Bah, dat all ya got?!" The Ork scoffed in defiance.

Thresh ignored him and turned to the two siblings, rivaling two hearts within his cloak. "As for you two, remember now who owns you!"
Thresh's chains wrapped around the Weirdboy, restraining both its physical strength and its magic. Weirdboyz relied on the WAAGH power of the Ork horde they were with, but even a weak Weirdboy on its own could vaporize a man or do something random but lethal... like turn him into a Squig or a pair of old shoes.

Thresh tugged on the Ork Weirdboy, who continued to curse at him. That was what he loved about Orks; no torture could break them. He could hurt and torture them and the weakest of them would always come back for more.

Same could not be said for the zombie twins, who tried to talk but could not because of Sylvanas' personal command. "Don't worry," Thresh laughed at the siblings, "Your suffering will end one day."

Likely in the far, FAR future. Thresh snickered as he led the Ork out of the dungeon and into the Library, where the Dark Lady herself was waiting, as well as two of her lovers. He bowed in deep respect.

He gave a tug of his chains and knocked the Ork to the ground. "All hail the great Lady Sylvanas Windrunner!" Thresh gushed, "May your blade be forever wet with blood, may your labia moisten on the lips of maidens, and may power and strength to you and your house!"

"You try too hard, Thresh," Sylvanas purred as she took the unpolished, unfinished sword from the forge. With a lazy swing, she sliced off Hinata's bra and left her topless. Squeaking, the girl tried to cover herself. "But this blade could explode if it doesn't work, try to contain the explosion with your magic if that happens."

Hinata blushed deeply. Yes, Sylvanas really DID love her girls...but still had a darkly playful personality around them.

Thresh paid no attention to the activities. "As you wish, my lady."

"And unchain him as well," Sylvanas instructed, gripping the sword. "Let him go out as they like it...fighting to the very last."

Orks fought, it was in their nature. They literally could not do anything else. Sylvanas could not find it in herself to hate them for it. Not like she hated the twins in the dungeon who she'd personally murdered with her bare hands and brought back as undead slaves.

Orks fought, but humans should know better.

The Ork Weirdboy laughed as the chains fell of its muscular frame. Growling, it held up its hands, the green energy crackling from being pent up so long. With a loud cry of WAAAGH! it unleashed a foot of Gork spell on Sylvanas.

But Sylvanas, a dark grin on her own face, uses her own dark magic to dispel the attack as it came at her, her new sword still in her hands. This was interesting already.

The lab shook as the giant foot dissipated, and Hinata shrieked and held onto Momo, grabbing the other girl way too tight.

Sylvanas charged the Ork with her prototype sword. In response, the Ork laughed and conjured a giant, crude club from similar green energy. Stone shards flew from the floor and attached to the club like spikes. He roared with rage and pleasure, lunging at her.

Sylvanas simply rushed into the charge, ready to give the Ork a glorious death it deserved. Just in a
rather unexpected way. Time to test out the new sword. The undead noblewoman swung her blade and struck the Ork's magic weapon and both were thrown back in a great crash of energy.

Rising to her feet, Sylvanas saw the Ork floating in the air just below a small ball of black anti-light. The Ork cried out in pain as the psychic weapon it had summoned went crazy, like a crossed wire or short circuit.

The Ork twisted and jerked unnaturally as the psychic abilities worked giant it, rending its mind and body. Then, with a flash of light, the Ork suddenly collapsed into a dead heap.

Thresh looked down at it. "Well, whatever the plan was, it seemed to have worked."

Sylvanas swung the sword in her hand experimentally, "The edge alignment is still good. I don't see any cracking or warping in the blade. The balance is beautiful and the hilt is as comfortable to hold as anything." With another swing, she sliced through Momo's silken pants and panties, leaving her bottomless as she clung to Hinata. "You girls have done a fine job. I could feel the sword cut through the very winds of magic themselves."

Thresh himself was impressed even as he used hooks to grab the dead Ork off the ground before the body began to leak. "It felt like a Valaryan blade. If I didn't know better, I could have sworn it had the same impact on the Warp."

"Yes...everyone has done well today." Slyvanas purred as she put the sword back onto the forge. "Still needs a bit more of a refinement though...See to it." She grasped Hinata and Momo, "For now, though, I shall retreat to my chambers...see to it that some of the others are brought there as well."

"At once, my lady," Thresh nodded. His lady's desires were great, and they would be granted.

Thresh very much wanted to see if the new sword would work on the infinitely regenerating Ubermorph or any number of other horrors they kept in the dungeons. He knew the lady herself would be wanting some action and she was entitled. For now he needed to head to the garbage disposal.

Walking to her chambers with her half naked handmaidens, Sylvanas took in the sights of tits and ass. She purred, "Do you have any reports about Arya on Ark?"

Hinata looked up. "Reports say that she joined a tribe shortly after landing, and has earned a place as a beast tamer...though she's using an alias for some reason."

"She was never one for special treatment," Slyvanas mused. "Likely the main reason for that."

"Not to mention there are plenty of rogues, murderers and malcontents on Ark who would love to kill a noble to boost their reputation," offered Momo, in awe of Sylvanas's beauty.

"True," said the undead Elf, reveling in how tight her pants were. "But Arya is a warrior first and foremost. She concerns herself with the mechanics of fighting before the plots of others, something which Ark will teach her a few lessons on."

The chambers were reached. A spacious area, with a large bed meant to fit several. Perfect for Sylvanas' activities.

"So...you think Arya will be fine?" Hinata asked.

"She will be," Sylvanas assured, pulling her girls down with her on bed. "Do not worry..." She turned to the doors as she heard others approach.
A huge Centaur-like creature knelt down to Sylvanas, who ignored him and pulled a cloth gag from out of her cleavage. "What is it, Hecarim?"

The spectral mix of man and beast kept his eyes to the floor. "My lady, Duke Nukem has crushed the Beastmen on New Vegas, but a number of them jumped into foldspace. Our Raven Spice seers predict they will land on one of our worlds."

"What do you think, girls?" she asked of her two lovers, who were panting to get the gag on. "Should we be worried by this?"

"The Beastmen will be destructive...but they will die more than they will take." Momo stated.

"By the tribes, by the beasts...and by the Yautja." Momo added.

"Hmmm, yes," Windrunner mused. "Those things are always visiting the area...I'm so close to making a treaty with their elders," said Windrunner, as she reached under the pillows for a paddle and a whip. "Unlike Orks, their violence is controlled. Yautja tribes act as pest control for things like Beastmen and Skaven. Taking out the Beastlords, the Bray shamans and their most powerful monsters."

"Just the same, my lady," said the centaur figure, "Please allow me to take a special team and a fold ship if the Beastmen land somewhere they can steal more ships or hide and breed."

"Breed," said Sylvanas playfully, pulling down her tight pants and showing off her lack of panties. "I shall look into that...now, are a few others of my girls coming?" She asked as she bound the wrists of her two girls.

"Ah, yes, as you requested." Hecarim replied, not at all put off by this. Underneath the coy, casual demeanor of the Dark Lady was sharp and calculating mind, who knew how things worked and the best way to approach stations was.

Hinata and Momo were starting to kiss Sylvanas' feet and work their way up to her thighs when Nico Robin and Orihime Inoue walked in wearing similar harem girl outfits.

Sylvanas licked her lips. She worked very hard at what she did; master the art of war and the art of good government. As a reward, she felt she was entitled to young, hot pussy and fine tits. "Take your team and be on standby, Hecarim," she instructed. "I'll be busy for a while."

Hecarim nodded and made his leave, making sure precautions were taken that the Dark Lady was NOT to be disturbed unless needed.

Sylvanas watched with amusement as the two girls made their way to the bed, and their hands were quickly bound as well.

"Tell me what you all want..."

"We want to be used," Said Robin.

"We want to be gagged and tied by you," said Orihime, pushing out her chest to emphasize her massive breasts.

"We want to be broken and tortured by you, my lady. We want to please you," said Hinata, panting like a bitch in heat.

"We want your body and to give you ours," said Momo, rounding off the group.
Though, unlike Juri, this was all part of the game. No really horrific breaking would happen here. They would stay sharp and ready as ever, ready to gather info...and kill if needed.

"So, then, little ones...you gags...light or heavy tonight?" Sylvanas teased, red eyes gleaming.

The girls were here because they wanted to be. Sylvanas knew their limits and while she might hurt them, she would never cause harm.

Hinata began to rub her thighs together, already full of lust and unable to touch herself. "Heavy, my lady. We need the harsh punishment, we've been bad girls"

"Indeed...and such, the punishment will be met out," Sylvanas stated, reaching into a drawer, pulling out a large amount of cloth and tape. She took some thick wash clothes, balled them each up, and crammed them all into a mouth of her girls.

Sylvanas smiled as each girl had a nice, thick cloth wad in their mouths. The next step was to grab thick, silk cloths and tie them over the girl's blocked mouths. Each one had the gag tied on, just a hair too tight; enough to cause discomfort, but not really bruise the skin.

Sylvanas looked over her handiwork, before reaching into the special drawer for thicker, sturdier cloths than the silk.

She tied them over the mouths again, double knotting the gags in place. Following that, she wrapped rolls of tape over their gagged mouths to shut them up even more. Then, she took several thick cloths and tied two over each girls gagged mouths and noses.

A final large gag went over each girl, more like a hood than anything. It served to totally block off all sensory output from the eyes and ears. The more, then, that the senses could focus on pleasure and pain. Sensory deprivation was something that Sylvanas enjoyed, with others of the very few she trusted to do it to herself.

With each girl mumbling and moaning through their gags, she went for the leg spreaders, so none of them could keep their pussies hidden from her.

Each one felt the ankles gripped and their legs pulled apart, with their ankles being fitted with tight shackles, with a bar between said shackles.

Each girl writhed and thrashed against their bonds, but had no real desire to break away. Each one twisted and leaned into it when Sylvanas ran a riding crop over each girl's slit, promising pain to come. Innocent little Hinata was the first as Sylvanas struck the inside of her thigh with the riding crop.

Hinata squirmed, mumbling past her thick gag, but she could barely make a sound. She groaned, her large breasts swaying about...causing an amused Windrunner to put them into a harness.

Sylvanas was definitely a breast lover. She'd been this way since she first began to bud and grow her own many years ago. Smiling, she started to pull down her top and let her own considerable mammaries breathe.

Leaning down, she started to rub her free tits against Hinata's bound ones, the harness keeping them tight and red.

Lifting up, she lifted the riding crop and took a swing at Momo.

Momo Hinamori...young, petite, innocent, and growing well. Yes, Sylvanas had taken a liking to
her. Teach her the ways of the information and assassin...and bed-warmer as well.

She was a beauty, physically and mentally. She was a fine fighter, dancer, and, as she'd seen in the library, a master smith. To hammer such beauty into shape was not just a pleasure for Sylvanas but an honor.

Playfully she brought the crop down on Momo's mons, causing the girl to cry in pain behind her many gags. It was a delightful “MMM!”

Sylvanas cropped her again, before kneading her ass, feeling up the soft, pillow-like flesh. Momo groaned in contentment as the hands of her mistress.

Then, reaching for the paddle, Sylvanas prepared for a quick and direct assault on the peach-like bum.

Sylvanas flipped Momo over, and Nico Robin too for good measure. While fuller and riper than Momo, there was something to be said for the diversity of asses in the room.

The first strike came down on Momo’s left cheek, while the second took Robin’s right. Both women bucked, but leaned into the strike rather than away from it. Each strike caused flesh to jiggle wonderfully and the pale skin to turn a nice shade of red.

Beat the ass tender and raw, make it nice and red...that was how this punishment worked. Unable to see or hear, they could not predict the blows.

She was the musician and the girls were her instruments. She brought down the crop across breasts, pussies and asses. The moans and muffled cries from the gags were sublime. The girls were all growing wet, dripping down into the sheets where they lay bound and exposed.

Sylvanas herself could feel arousal running down her thighs, her pussy lips engorged and her clit peeking out of the hood

She forced Orihime down and clambered on top of her, sucking on her large, bountiful chest.

With a mouth full of warm, succulent nipple, Sylvanas reached out and put her two fingers into Momo's pussy, and with her other hand did the same to Hinata. Fingering each girl, she skillfully found the g-spot and started to work it, making the vaginal walls clench around her hands.

Good. Eager and willing as always. Like the devoted lovers they were. They lived for their Lady, and she watched over them in turn. Their lover, their guardian, their mistress...their queen.

Sylvanas lived for her girls. Their warmth, their joy, their growth fed her. It was very much symbiotic. Dehumanized by the rules of this sadomasochistic game, she would give them as much as they gave her.

She stepped away from Orihime, she put her mouth over Robin's fine, supple ass and started making love bites leading up to her thighs. Grinning, she loved the taste; so sweet and fine. She gave that ass a sore slap on the love bites before proceeding.

Paddles were nice for the spanking, but she always liked using her hand more. The feel of the rippling flesh was always a wonderful feeling, providing warmth for the undead elf.

Flipping all the girls over, she gave herself the chance to grope and spank every ass on display. Her pattern was random, each girl had no idea when the next strike would land or on which cheek. It was an expert display from someone who knew their way around the female body.
Speaking of that, she might have to get out the dildos soon.

Pleasuring them was part of the game, cramming them with false cocks, in order to give them the feeling without actually having a crude male violate them.

The members were good, each one was a hand crafted work of blown glass; large, thick and ribbed. Gentle, sweet Hinata got the first and the largest. She was the newest to these sessions and needed to learn the hard way. Hinata moaned and bucked as the glass dildo stretched her out.

The next one, something shorter, but thicker and knobbed, rubbed against Momo's slit.

Momo instinctively tried to close her legs...but the bar held them fast open, leaving her vulnerable, and she was soon stuffed. She moaned in a variety of feelings.

The feeling of fullness was delicious, the knobs on the dildo tickles every nerve inside of her and the thick base held it inside her. She pulsed against it, savoring every sensation.

Robin got a thinner one, but easily the longest. This one pushed past her pussy lips, up through her cervix and began vibrating.

Orihime got a unique one, this one having a 'ring' pattern, causing a lot of pleasurable sensations run through her. Both she and Robin moaned with bliss.

Sylvanas just loved seeing these confident, powerful women turn into dirty whores at her touch.

It was good, she didn't stop to give the girls time to adjust to their dildos before the spanking renewed.

Their asses were red and sore as they could be, inciting the lust within the Dark Lady even further. Spanks soon came with rough grips and shaking to make them jiggle.

Sylvanas ground herself on the bed, her sex dripping with from the sight before her. Her heart did not beat but she felt on fire, full of life. The girls were struggling, in a frenzy from sexual arousal and pain.

Selecting a lucky girl, Sylvanas lifted up Orihime's hips and started to lick at her exposed clit.

Orihime screamed with pleasure past her gag, her covered head shaking about in the bliss of the moment.

Sylvanas licked the erect nub with decades of practice. She knew the girl well and how rough she liked it down there, nipping and nibbling the way she always begged for . . . when her mouth wasn't blocked off.

She stopped licking...and put her whole mouth on the silt.

Orihime, at THAT, was driven to a insane frenzy. She twisted and flex, howling past her gags in bliss as the cold yet comforting lips claimed her.

Sylvanas went over the girls, rudely kissing their pussies, licking and biting their clits and sucking up as much of their musky juices as she possibly could. She herself was as much of a slut as her girls, she adored it so much. She needed pussy every day, otherwise she'd go mad.

And as the lady of a noble house, she could get all the pussy she could ever want. For good measure, she grabbed the spare dildo, modeled after the dick of some enormous mythological fertility god and
shoved it deep into herself.

She panted deeply as she fucked both herself and her girls, just four of her many. All of them were precious to her, she would protect them to the bitter end.

She started to moan herself, the sight of the squirming girls before her, the bare, red abused asses and the overfull pussy were nearly too much. She could feel her insides tightening up, feel her legs start to give as the feeling of orgasm came close to her.

And in the moment, they all let loose at the same time, liquids flowing out all over each other as they howled in bliss.

The bond was sexual, spiritual, carnal and pleasurable all at once. That was what set Sylvanas apart from the likes of Juri Han of the Tomb Queen Khalida.

She loved and she was loved.

As the gagged girls groaned with orgasm through their gags, Sylvanas could feel their pleasure on a fundamental level. And more than that, that they were fulfilled by this.

They all collapsed in a heap after that event. Lying together in bliss. Afterwards, Sylvanas removed the dildos and the spreader bars, retying the girls ankles together. Then she removed their hoods, leaving the rest of the gags on.

"You’ve done well," she said without reservation, totally exposed emotionally to the girls, "I love you all."

She began to kiss each up and down the neck, nipping and toothing, but it was all in good spirit.

They snuggled up against her in the gentle bliss, a good way to trail off a passionate, erotic event.

Sylvanas could not sleep, literally. As one of the undead, that pleasure was forever beyond her. But with four bodies of women she loved around her, this was a close to heaven as she would ever experience.

For these women, she would move heaven and hell. for now she would rest and soak the warmth; that warmth would propel her to be a better person, a better leader and to fight for peace in a war-torn galaxy.
Beasts of Ark

Arya dreamed and they were bad dreams. She was always a vivid dreamer, but she never really remembered them. This time was different; it was like she was there.

She saw fires consuming the forests; she saw green meteors bombard the land. Twisted parodies of man and beast danced over the corpses. High in the sky, Gods of Chaos laughed.

She saw the wider galaxy, burning not just from these beasts, but from a hundred and one threats.

Then she woke up.

"Get the fuck up, girly," the Hound growled. "We've got to keep moving. Those meteors made planetfall in a couple of hours and they will touch down in water. When that happens, we need to be far from here."

"That's right," said Bullet," The impact will create a tsunami that'll put this whole forest under water."

Oh. Joy.

"That said, the waters do recede over time," Kari added. "So once this whole matter is done with, we should be able to move back here."

Arya nodded as she pulled herself out of bed and-

"By the way, 'Arry',' Bullet spoke up once more. "Mind telling us your real name?"

Arya looked at her companions, in particular, the Hound. "I'll tell you my name if he tells me his. I don't think Hound is his real name; not unless his parents really hated him."

"My parents did hate me," growled Hound noncommittally. "Spill it, girl."

Arya was about to speak, when Bullet raised a hand. "Now, I puzzled out you were highborn, and you were actually avoiding special treatment, which I admire. Just wanna know so we can trust each other."

"...My name is Arya Stark."

"I knew your wolf and sword were something fancy," said Gendry, "But Arya Stark, as the royal house from Winterfell?"

Arya nodded, "That's me, I wanted to tough it out like a proper warrior."

Hound rolled his eyes, "You never were that smart, girl."

Arya glared at him. "And your name?"

"...Sandor. Sandor Clegane."

"Clegane...as in Gregor Clegane?" Arya raised an eyebrow.

"So you met my fucking brother, eh?" Sandor scoffed, then tapped his scars. "He did this to me when we were young, over a toy."
Arya had no words, her wolf Nymeria standing by her side.

"You ended Polliver, thank you," Hound spat, "But don't let it get to your head. One day you'll meet a man like Gregor, or woman, and then you'll really know what hell feels like."

"Bring it," Arya sneered up at him, "My education is just getting started."

Sandor snickered as Berix turned to him. "Gregor Clegane...he's part of the Space Marines...you didn't want that?"

Sandor scoffed. "Wanted no part of that horseshit. All Space Marines are in the end are mighty killers in fancy amour. I was also not keen to the idea of being cut open and stuffed with bloody new innards."

"You're ashamed of what your brother did," said Arya, realizing a little bit about the man's gruff exterior. "Like what he did helping King K. Rool destroy the Targaryens."

The Hound's smirk was grim, "So you know about Princess Martell. You got a good head for facts, you better start using them."

Berix stepped between Arya and Hound. "We can talk and walk. We need to get as far north as we can."

Arya and Sandor nodded as they quickly packed up, and all the members, along with the beasts they had, began to travel.

"A word of caution," Bullet began. "Apparently the tundra regions in the north are lorded over by a tribe who don't kindly to intruders."

"And that's before we talk about the arctic predators, like the Yetis and the Ice Wyverns," said Berix. "They're like the dragons you see up in the mountains, but with elemental powers and breath. They and the other elemental Wyverns make up some of the deadliest flying creatures on the planet."

Arya helped the others load their essential gear aboard their giant vulture. Around them, tamed pterodactyls itched to fly as the tribe members fastened the saddles. "Are these northern tribes worse than anything I've seen yet?"

Mainly a bunch of greedy assholes," Tarduk started. "But they know the land well...dangerous to cross them casually."

Arya listened, and learned. Here, she learned fast, it was survival of the fittest. But that translated in various ways.

Here on Ark, fittest often translated to 'the most adaptable.' Tactics ideal for killing a gun toting human would often be useless against a cunning pack of raptors or opportunistic troodons. Weapons to bring down giant prey like T-rex and other megafauna would be useless against the medium sized predators.

Every predator, man or beast was its own physics puzzle that required skill, strength, ingenuity and luck to beat.

"John Marston and his Marsh King gang aren't all bad," injected Bullet, "We sometimes trade them bullets for whiskey and food stuffs. They won't shoot if they think we're giving them a fair trade."

"But trust nobody," Sandor snarled as he jumped on his Pterodactyl and kicked the creature into
flight. Arya did the same, jumping onto her loaded bird with Nymeria, and kicking the huge bird into flight.

The sight was amazing, as usual, and they flew on past the trees, with various animals upon the ground. Up here, Arya could see the white of the tundra, still a good distance away. Good thing they dressed warm.

Flying on her giant bird, Arya was afraid that Nymeria would fall over; but her loyal direwolf took in the sights without leaning too far out of the saddle. Behind her, Gendry manned a rear-mounted machinegun on the bird's back. He looked back at her and grinned, "It's beautiful, right! We sometimes come up North when the Yautja leave their colony and prowl for prey!"

That got Arya's attention, "Yautja, with a colony?"

"Yes!" he shouted over the now freezing winds, "They live permanently on the planet, hunting the native beasts and anyone who isn't smart enough to run. Lucky for us, they always hunt around the same time."

Arya had heard stories and research on them. For the most part, they hunted only the most dangerous species, or at least those that could put up a good fight. Unarmed or pregnant targets were ignored...unless they were rouge Yautja, who were criminals who hunted whoever, and were looked down upon by other members of their race.

But nearly everything she learned about them said they were nomadic. They lived on fleets of fast moving stealth ships. Their shipyards were built in secret among asteroid fields and in the high radiation atmosphere of gas giant planets. She'd never heard of them setting up colonies on planets before.

"What are they doing with a colony here?" she asked of Gendry.

"They're raising their young in a suitably dangerous environment, they're also mining resources for a new fleet of ships. Their elders are also in talk with Sylvanas Windrunner" Gendry elaborated, "She wants to set up a yearly tournament with fighters on this planet, so the Yautja always have powerful and dedicated enemies to fight without having to target Sylvanas' military or her army candidates. She thinks they'd be valuable allies!"

So Windrunner was hoping to forge alliances, huh? Well, just as well. The technology those things had would be quite useful.

The air soon began to grow cold.

The Yautja were unparalleled masters of stealth, and so far nobody had been able to crack the stealth of their ships or their personal cloaking devices. Under K. Rool's reign they'd already shown themselves to have found a way around thermal and sonar detectors.

That was when Arya looked up into the skies and saw a meteor burning.

Quite a sight, it was. It seemed to be heading to the southern part of the island, and towards the sea.

Up in the sky, Arya could see more meteors. It looked like a regular shower of them. She dared to smile at this display against the growing cold and the aurora borealis.

One meteor, brighter than the others hit the atmosphere. It was also coming in their direction.

As it tore through the sky, Arya realized something was wrong. Particularly the eerie green tint it
gave off.

“Bank right!” She screamed over the thunder of it. Everyone veering right, Arya just briefly saw it as it passes close enough to feel the heat off it it.

It was a starship. A merchant vessel, badly damaged by space and combat and it was on a collision course with the rising arctic mountains.

What had damaged it? In the brief glimpse, she noticed it was badly...mangled, as if something had torn right into with reckless abandon.

And her team was not the only one to notice the falling...

The ship was covered in damage; from space debris, from lasers, from plasma weapons, from mass effect weapons and even teeth marks. In this sorry state, it was a miracle the ship had ever gotten off the ground.

Down below, the tribes of the North were converging on where the ship would land. Riding atop every kind of beast mount on land and air, they were looking to loot them ship and take anything of value. Be that weapons, energy reactors or even scrap metal.

The ship slammed into the permafrost, carving a channel into the snowy ground as the burning hot hull threw off steam and smoke.

A moment of silence passed as she ship began to cool in the cold air...

Then the sound of approaching individuals began to make themselves known, as a prominent northern tribe closed in on the ship.

Sejuani, on top of her mighty boar, headed the pack. As a leader of her section, she was a fearsome individual, with no tolerance for weakness or compassion. To her, only the strong were allowed to live.

The chief of her tribe, Sejuani saw only a land infested with the craven, filled with the unworthy and teeming with those who deserved to die. Screaming with rage, she swung a mighty iron mace from atop her boar and smashed a man like a bug.

Behind her, her others recruits were also engaging in the bloodbath, riding upon their mounts.

Jin Kisaragi sneered with disgust as his Megaloceros ran through these little bugs with its antlers, while he sliced down stragglers with Yukianesa.

Moving on all fours, the anthropomorphic snow leopard Tai Lung used his martial arts to tear the heads off men like chickens and shatter steel weapons like glass.

With contemptuous ease, the mystic martial artist kicked an armored man and his yeti mount into the side of the ship. So great was the force that the abused, damaged hull broke open.

Inside the vessel, Tai Lung saw wires, metal ... and whole sections of bulkhead replaced with raw, red muscle. A diseased, deformed eye blinked at him where a computer console should have been.

The only thing which could change the ship so, was passage through the warp

"Bah, anything to loot in this piece of crap?” Strakk, upon his wooly rhino, came riding up. A Glatorian of unsavory reputation, Strakk worked only for his own gain, and even his alliance with
Sejuani was a means to an end. But he was a good fighter, so he was tolerated...for now.

“Burn it,” said Tai Lung. “Burn this tainted hulk to nothing and forget it ever existed.”

“Coward!” Strakk accused the Snow Leopard.

“I will have this ship!” roared Sejuani, “The only devil worth being afraid of is me”

It was then that the fluttering of leathery wings and the bird like shrieks began to echo from inside the ship

Behind her, Sejuani heard her last two tribe members, Drake and Fenri Lunaedge. Drake was a muscle-bound penguin with massive strength...and an arrogant blowhard. Fenri was a wolf-based cyborg with power over ice and berserker fighting style.

Around his belt Drake had tied several severed heads, his latest trophies. The penguin hefted a crude shotgun whose stock was actually a brutal axe head.

Fenri sniffed the air, growling and bearing his claws. Bleats, roars and atonal drums and flutes all sounded from the innards of the ship like hell’s symphony.

Sejuani looked to her people, “Look lively, the other tribes are the last of our worries.”

Shifting about, her tribe heard the unmistakable sound of a particularly noxious Xeno race. The calls of the Beastmen. Strong, smelly, fearsome, nigh-mindless creatures, these servants of Chaos sought to destroy all in their path, especially those they considered 'civilized'.

They were the original children of Chaos. In a time before time when Mata Nui was still young, a Warp gate exploded over a lonely planet and poisoned everything. Fusing man and beast in hideous combinations. There they multiplied and spread across the Galaxy until the great heroes of Metru Nui drove them back to the Drakwald Nebula.

The Harpies emerged first, hideous fusions of woman and predatory bird.

But Sejuani hissed and swung her mace about, splattering the fell beasts into a bloody mess. The boar eagerly gobbled up any those downed, yet still alive.

The Harpies flooded the skies and fell on those with flying mounts. On the ground, those not as skilled as Tai Lung or strong as Fenri were lifted off the ground. Men and women were torn clean in two or devoured and dropped as bloody bones.

Sejuani raised her shield as a hail of Warp stone tipped arrows flew from the ship and peppered the snows

Her squadron was still among those on the ground. Good. Those lifted up would received not kindness from her. She would attack right through them if needs be.

Drake simply shot at the harpies with no remorse.

Fenri fired ice crystals at the harpies, throwing up a wall of permafrost to block the hail of arrows. In his bestial heart, he truly despised the mindless, rabid hate that drove these things.

He smelled a new threat as a tidal wave of Ungors emerged with crude weapons glowing with unholy runes. These were small hornless beasts used by the herd as meat shields. He would be happy to grant them their deaths
Snarling, he rushed at them at top speed, blades sprouting from his arms. He cleaved them up good, slicing them in half as he ran, bathing in their blood. One tried to axe him. He responded by ripping the axe free and slamming it into the head of his aggressor, splitting it in half.

Something tall and strong blocked him. The huge creature looked at eye level with Fenri; possessing the head of a goat, the fangs of a wolf and the body of a powerful, primitive man.

The Beastman roared at Fenri, blocking his blows with two huge aces. It lunged, trying to rip out his throat. Fenri struck faster and got his fangs in first.

The unholy creatures howled, but could not dislodge Fenri, and fell over as the cyborg tore at its throat. Blood poured down as the Beastman's howls were reduced to gargles.

Strakk, meanwhile, swung his axe about, slicing down anyone dumb enough to get in his way.

Strakk laughed as he sliced down the Ungors, sidestepping their arrows. Behind him, men and beasts were struck by arrows and felt the effects. Some began to foam at the mouth and died, some went rabid mad and attacked their own tribesmen. The fewest, but most unlucky, changed into Warp Spawn. Hideous piles of muscle, teeth and hate that defied mortal description or logic.

Strakk did not care, as long as he survived, that would be fine with him. He grabbed one Beastman by the horn, ripped said horn off, and shoved it down the throat.

Drake laughed as his shotgun blew away the Ungorns three at a time, firing buckshot the size of grapes. Between reloads, he swung his gun like an axe and cut down more enemies.

Sejuani kept on her boar, keeping the creature clear of arrow volleys and using her shield to protect herself. She knew that the ship was precious. She also knew that the Beastmen were killing off most of her competition; all she and her people needed to do was survive the oncoming waves until only they were left.

Secretly she was hoping that this ship didn't have a Jabberslythe or a Cygor on board.

Nasty beings, those things.

Jin scoffed as he cut down any foes in his way with minimal effort. "Feh, nothing more than garbage to dispose of..."

"Don't get too careless, Jin," Tai Lung ordered as he battered more skulls in. "That's how they get you."

Beastmen armies as a rule were pretty squishy. Their troops were vicious, but not very well armored. They relied on speed, surprise, and guerrilla tactics to win the day. Things got really scary when they started mixing giant monsters that could deal massive damage or magic-using shamans who would melt the brains of soldiers without psychic or magical defense.

Jin was ready to laugh off Tai Lung's warning when something fast and pink zoomed across the tundra. It was a Beastman, tinted bright pink; totally shaved of fur and wearing bits of scavenged jewelry and a human skin as a cape.

The Slaangor swung a long, thin blade at Drake as he reloaded his shotgun. It only grazed him across the han; but that was enough to have Drake start foaming at the mouth and screaming in agony.

Jin could hear Drake's bones break and his spine snap as the Slaangor charged in orgasmic glee at
him, poison swords ready.

Jin had no real concern for his idiot comrade...but still, he could be of use in the future, so better bail out his asshole. He sighed as he flung blade of ice across the field, impaling the offending Beastman. It screeched as it tumbled to the ground, blood staining the white snow.

The Slaangor gurgled its last breath and sighed. As though its death had given it some last final orgasm. Sickening.

Running to Drake, Jin jabbed him with a shot of general anti-venom. The penguin's injuries were massive, but with a bit of medical help, he could be salvaged to fight. Sejuani hated to lose assets and she'd have his balls in a jar if he lost an asset on her watch.

Meanwhile, Tai Lung dodged a charging Khornegor. This blood red Beastman had no weapons at all. Just its rage and brute strength. Snorting steam, it trampled a man into jelly before ripping the head off another like he was a doll. Spinning around, the Khornegor ripped the heart out of a nearby Ungor and caved in the skull of a sabre tooth cat with its club-like fist.

Tai Lung, though, was no easy mark. The snow leopard Beastkin ducked and dodged with amazing agility. He then used his special nerve strike technique to paralyze the overgrown ugly.

The Khornegor snapped at him, nearly ripping out one of his eyes with its yellowed fangs. Tai Lung followed up with a blow to the back of the neck, stopping the thing's heart and lungs and finishing it off. He'd fought servants of the Blood God before and his rule for that was always strike fast and go for the head as they often had multiple hearts and no ability to feel pain.

Fenri eyed the tide of beasts, seemingly without end. They were surviving, but the Beastmen were probably going to cause a local extinction of the arctic tribes. They'd all be replaced in time with new convicts and recruits on Ark, but for the short term they'd become kings of the frozen land.

The wolf smelled rather than saw his next foe, a slow moving, stinking Beastmen covered in sores and boils from disease, its rotten flesh soaking up gunfire and arrows. Each swing of its heavy rusted axe struck men and beasts down with terrible and fast acting disease. He truly hated Pestigors.

Already his blades were forming along his arms, ready to hack and slash...and so he did, gleefully going at the smelly, diseased beast. Sickness did not affect him at all, so he was the perfect killer of these things.

The movement speed was incredible, and in a few moments, the fell thing was nothing more than sliced pieces.

Jin had finished fastening Drake to Sejuani's saddle as he saw Fenrir dispatch the Pestigor. Good, he had no wish to stick his face in a walking pile of disease like that.

"Just a little longer," said Sejuani, crushing another Beastman with her mace, "There can't be many more left and their fleet must be scattered."

On cue, a midnight blue Beastmen with glowing ghostly blades danced around the fray, strategically taking out men with heavy machineguns or women with flamethrowers. Where it hit, its magical weapons ignored armor. Jin eyed the Tzeentchgur as it killed their enemies. "I hope you're right," he growled.

But as this was happening, Arya and her team were staring to close in on the situation. TK looked down from his mount.
"Whoa...looks like we've got some Beastmen around the area now." He noted. "The snow's practically painted in blood!"

On the back of the vulture, Gendry fired off the mounted machinegun against the incoming harpies.

On a pterodactyl, Sandor fired his long pistol at the flying monsters. "They'll fight until they think they can't win!" he shouted over the wind and gunfire, "They'll try to make for any caves or forests they can find where they'll try to set up a herdstone and blood the area with Chaos energy!"

"Then crush every last one of them!" Bullet readied her powerful gauntlet, and pulverized one Harpy that got too close, just an Arya sliced down another by the wing, sending it plummeting to the ground, fatally.

"End the Beastlord!" shouted Sandor, "And kill the Bray Shamans first and foremost! Without them, they have no leaders and can't build the herdstones!"

Arya screamed as a glowing blue boulder soared past Sandor's mount, nearly crushing him in midair. Down on the ground, she could see the one eyed monster who pulled another such boulder seemingly from thin air.

They did have a Cygor after all.

Well, then...time to take the fucker out.

Arya began to dive-bomb, Nymeria baring her teeth, as the Stark girl gripped her blade.

She could see the Bray Shaman and feel him. Everything about the goat horned monster in tattered robes felt wrong. It wasn't like the hunger of a predator. It wasn't driven by survival or anything sane or logical.

A green forcefield protected the Bray Shaman from gunfire. With a wave of its staff, it summoned a second Cygor seemingly from out of the earth. Now the two monsters began acting as living artillery units, throwing boulders with enough force to crush a tank like tinfoil. One such boulder flew at Arya and her mount only to be diverted by a rocket launcher hit from Bullet.

And the forcefield protected it from gunfire...but nothing else, as it soon learned when Arya was right on top of it, and it met with a slash of blade, claws, and fangs. It howled in pain as it collapsed to the ground.

The blood of the Bray Shaman on her sword, her victory was short lived as she saw Gendry ripped off the side of the bird and thrown to the ground. Holding the reigns of the bird, she gulped when she saw the Bestigor climb into the saddle with her.

Taller by a head and shoulders than other Beastmen, the Bestigor was covered in armor that was directly nailed to its flesh. The creature bellowed and swung its surprisingly high quality vibro axe at her.

Arya barely parried, the creature's high frequency sword throwing sparks in her face as she struggled to stay alive and steer her mount.

But the overwhelming brute force was getting to her fast, and it looked as if-

Tarduk leapt from his mount and upon the back of the Beastman, and dug his long claws into the foes eyes, gouging them out.
The Bestigor roared, but what would bring down an ordinary beast kin would not work so well on it. It reached around and took Tarduk by the head. Bellowing with blind hatred, it squeezed the Agori's head while pressing its thumbs into his eyes.

Tarduk screamed as the Bestigor was about to crush his skull like an egg.

It was only Arya grabbing the dropped axe of the creature and chopping off its arm did she rescue her companion. Even then, it swung out with its remaining arm and knocked Tarduk off, blindly reaching for Arya.

Tarduk may have been wounded...but hopefully they could figure something out. Right now, Arya took her anger out by stabbing the thing right in the chest.

Her sword went in the gaps of the thing's armor. A broadsword or axe wouldn't have worked against it, but her weapon found the weak point. Driving upwards, it went through the creature's double hearts and into its brain. She knew enough about Beastmen and how the bigger ones could be harder to kill.

But if you found the vitals...it would die. The fell thing fell off her mount, and Arya wasted no time afterwards to check on Tarduk.

His pterodactyl mount had caught him in midair, and riding behind him was Gendry, saved from falling to his death. The Agori rubbed his injured eyes, but he'd live.

Without the Bray Shaman, the Beastmen were starting to fall back, despite the savage casualties they'd inflicted on the arctic tribes. If the Beastlord escaped they'd flee even further north and their high reproductive rate would allow them to come back stronger and more numerous than before.

Better to cut out the infection before it could spread. At least in this area of the world.

Tarduk's eyes, as it turned out, were sturdy stuff, and would heal with time. Now for the Lord...who was trying make a retreat...

...but Sejuani was gunning for him.

The Beastlord was a huge thing, with four horns and almost twice the size of his compatriots. Fleeing with the remainder of his army, the cloven hooved monster was trying to flee the ship and head for a frozen and inhospitable mountain range north. It would have been suicidal for humans to try and live in such mountains, but Beastmen were a tougher breed.

This wasn't however the first time the Beastlord was hunted. As Sejuani charged on her boar, the bestial monster swung a titanic hammer and crushed the boar's skull like a china cup.

The northwoman was thrown off her mount, but quickly rebounded, rolling into a combat stance. She snarled. That boar was a prized animal! This thing was going to pay for it...with its life! She swung her mace expertly about, ready to take on her foe.

Fenri charged at the Beastlord while she charged from the front, but the monster swung its mighty hammer and bowled the wolf back twenty feet until he slammed into the nearby ships hull, denting it badly in the process.

His metal hide kept him alive, but he was stunned for the moment, leaving the woman to face the monster alone.
Fenri would let the Norse woman fight the Beastlord. He would use his implant to start stripping the ship for as much as he could get as quickly as he could.

Sandor had other ideas. Unslinging a mini nuke he kept for special occasions, he hefted the shoulder-mounted weapon and screamed to Gendry. "Get me a targeting vector on the ships reactor!"

Below, Sejuani blocked the Beastlord's biting jaws with the metal handle of her mace.

The others of Sandor's team did not even hesitate or protest...that thing had to go.

Sejuani was thrown to the snow as the Beastlord towered over her and slammed a hoof down on her hand. She screamed as the razor edges of the hoof sliced her hand off. Bleeding and injured, she wasn't defeated yet.

With her remaining hand, she reached into her coat and withdrew a grappel gun. As the Beastlord raised its hammer, she squeezed the button and fired a grapple hook through its brain and out the other side of the creature's head, dropping it like a bad habit.

The creature twitched in the response of nerves shutting down, before it simply collapsed in a ugly, bloody heap.

The battle was over. Sejuani looked at her mangled stump.

Seeing her bleeding stump, the grabbed a gun from the frozen hands of a dead man and fired a spray of bullets. Pressing the stump against the red-hot barrel, the wound sizzled, but she made no cry of pain. She’d live to fight another day.

Just as Sandor had locked onto the ship's reactor and was ready to blow it to kingdom come.

Sejuani noticed him, and she bared her teeth. "BLOW HIM OUT OF THE SKY!!!" She screamed.

She could see the weapon Sandor was holding. Recognized the model and make, something only created by the most leveled up warriors on Ark. And he was going to blow her prize into bits. After the loss of her hand, this was about more than just surviving; it was about pride and the desire to take it all.

"With pleasure," growled Jin, drawing a long, brass scoped sniper rifle from his back.

Sejuani suddenly noticed something...a deceased cyborg named Blizzard Wolfang, another wolf-based ice being. He lost his life, but some of his limbs were intact...including a full hand...she wondered...

Rushing over, she ripped the metallic claw free and slammed in on her stump.

Ye gods it hurt. Sejuani's eyes bulged and she nearly bit through her tongue, but she still made no cry of pain. It was ugly and brutal, but it would work, and she was smart enough to fine tune the hand for whatever she needed of it.

She felt the nerves and wires connect, and she flexed her new hand. Good. It worked.

She heard Jin shout in irritation, and she looked up to see Berix had dive-bombed him, knocking him off balance.

Kicking the Agori off her companion, she looked up and saw that Sandor was within critical distance. "Fenri! Get Drake! Jin, run if you don't want to be vaporized!"
Taking off at a run, the woman jumped on the back of a riderless bear. Not her old boar, but it would do.

The mini nuke fired off and Sandor and his tribe veered hard right. This wasn't going to be pretty and in the short term it would add to the already massive casualties of the north.

Berix was scooped up by TK, and all were soon out of distance from the upcoming explosion...

...which was quite intense.

The initial explosion alone was quite powerful, shaking the earth and causing earthquakes in the region. The ship blowing up threw one thousand tons of soil into the atmosphere, caused landslides and avalanches across the planet, and released a plume of vaporized water a mile high into the air.

The planet Ark would be rocked to the core, but the largest single group of Beastmen was vaporized along with it.

And in time, the North would heal...rapidly in fact. The nature of Ark was a mystery to all. Indeed, no matter what was harvested or how many animals were killed...they would be replaced.

The longest thing to be replaced would be the people. The tribes of Ark had endured tornadoes, tsunamis, and meteor strikes. But the Beastmen had wiped out nearly all the tribes of the north; so driven by their need for plunder that they walked to the ship like lambs to the slaughter.

With the exception of the hardiest warriors, like Sejuani and her crew, the arctic was now mostly empty. But even that would change in time as the strong came seeking out either a challenge or refuge.

Assuming they weren't picked off by the wild beasts that still thrived in the north.

Sejuani, once the explosion had settled down, turned around, seeing Arya and her team fly off.

"I know Sandor," said Sejuani, "But that girl they were with, she's new. She helped him take away my prize," She looked at the rest of her battered and exhausted party, "Do any of you idiots know who she was?"

"How the hell should I know." Drake growled. "I don't track flat ones like her."

"Of course not," Tai Lung growled.

It was Strakk who spoke. "I...think I know her...somewhat. During my time as a freelance mercenary. She's...a Stark, I believe."

This made Sejuani laugh. "I would have pegged her for a waif; an orphan. Someone who stole from the wrong people and got caught. Maybe her parents wanted to sell her into prostitution and she wound up on this shithole. Why the hell should I believe Ned "Bleeding Heart" Stark would jettison one of his brats?"

"There was a sword she had," said Strakk, "And a wolf, a direwolf."

"Perhaps training purposes..." Ferni mused.

"...Point there," Sejuani concluded. "But we'll deal with her later." She flexed her new metallic claws. "For now, we rest and recover." Sejuani looked to Drake, "You take first watch as soon as we find camp."
Drake groaned through the pain, "Why should I? I need the rest!"

The woman ground her teeth, "You let yourself get hit. Take first watch and count yourself lucky that I don't spike your head on a fence post. When we refuel and reload, we can find the little Stark bitch. Some of my old friends from the wider galaxy would pay plenty for her."

"Careful, my lady," Fenri noted. "Wolves have a lot of bite to them..."

"That's why I pull out their fangs," Sejuani responded. She looked to Fenri, the only one she remotely trusted. "Do you want to be on this planet forever? Because I have higher goals in my life. If you don't want to take risks, you can just take up farming."

"Just make sure the risk is calculated," Fenri cautioned as Arya and company disappeared in the cloud and dust throw up by the exploded ship.

Sejuani nodded. Fenri did have a point. One must always have a sense of caution to survive...otherwise, one could rush right towards death...and in this Galaxy, death had many shapes.

She'd seen lots of good fighters go down to rookie fighters and to rookie mistakes. Someone who caught a lucky strike with a knife and died to an inferior foe. Someone who got cocky and took shrapnel from an opponent or died from an infected cut or scrape that never got proper disinfectant.

She feared that kind of fate more than any other. "We'll watch them, wait. It'll take me a while, but I know how to reach my off-world friends. Take it slow and deliberate. For now, someone see if any of the dead people here have a liquor flask; I need a drink."

As her crew began to look about, she looked again at her replacement hand. She flexed to test it once more. It worked well, and it would serve in the future...but also serve as a grim reminder...A reminder of the harshness of the world and others beyond.

She knew her end would be a violent one, but she aimed to go out in style. To die at age eighty, with a harem of maids servicing her and the heads of hundreds of warriors decorating her own personal castle.

All one step at a time, one step at a time.
Shadow of the Doom

The Forbidden Lands...a Koopa controlled world full of mystery and uncertainty...It was mostly a dry realm, picketed with forests, lakes, and ruins of a lost civilizations. Now, the only things that lived here were birds, lizards, fish, tortoise...and the Colossi.

The Colossi were 16 massive entities of flesh and stone, scattered about the world. Little was known about them...only that they held a portion of power of a powerful spirit, and as longed as they lived, the power would remain safely sealed.

House Koopa worshipped these creatures as deities, and the Shrine was their main place of gathering to pray. As for the actual Colossi, only the upper circle and those authorized by them could seek them out legally.

The Doom Marine, or the Doomguy as some called him, did not care about any of that. The Colossi did not bother him. Most of them would not attack him unless he attacked first. And contrary to the violent psychopath most people thought of him as, he deliberately avoided the more aggressive Colossi.

He did what he always did between jobs for Bowser; settle down in his isolated cave fortress and maintain his vast arsenal of guns. This world for the most part was peaceful and quiet; giving Doomguy the time he needed to spend with his own rage and his weapons.

And oddly enough...he liked it here. Sure, he liked big guns and explosives and killing the crap out of demons...but sometimes he would like to sit back and just breathe, allowing the tranquil air to flow through him.

Doomguy was a bit like Link of Hyrule. Both of them were left-handed with the ability to be ambidextrous. And both were always reincarnated to be where they needed to be.

Unlike Link, Doomguy's life was a merry-go-round of murder and shit. So when he had a quiet moment, he spent it usually among creatures like the Colossi; unknowable, ageless and ancient spiritual beings.

As it stood, he had just finished sharpening the teeth on his chainsaw and the backup blades for his chainsaw. The Colossi were in a foul mood today; when that happened, it usually meant that something no good was up spiritually.

He wondered...

A signal to his armor caught his attention. He looked down and answered it.

Reaper spoke on the line. "Listen up. We received reports of Demon Cultists on the Forbidden Lands, and you're on the planet anyways. Find them and waste them."

Doomguy nodded from behind his visor.

"Your usual sum of money will be delivered upon confirmation that the cult is wiped out," Reaper barked before the transmission ended.

The money didn’t matter, not really. Doomguy wasn't a greedy guy. His main worry was that somehow the Cultists might do harm to the Colossi. Hefting his super shotgun and putting two shells into it big enough to bring down a T-rex, he grinned behind his visor.
He would rip and tear.

And that would be how he got his message across. He was not a talker. No one knew if he simply
couldn't speak or chose not to...but it was unneeded, as his actions tended to speak louder than any
words.

Doomguy drew up a map from his central battle computer, a device made up of both modern tech
and arcane runes from another universe. His time in the Universe of Hexen had taught him much
about how to detect evil as well as kill it.

There was a beacon of demonic activity in the hills by the ancient temple, The Shrine of Worship.
They would pay in blood for defiling that sacred place.

Putting the map down, he left his cave and began to move out across the plains, the vast emptiness
spreading all about before him.

It would be a long journey for some, but he was made of something else. He had the strength to carry
every single one of his weapons at once and run until the heat death of the universe. Running and
gunning was his strength and few could beat his stamina.

Night began to fall by the time he reached the temple but the long run only increased his appetite for
murder. His hands tensed around his super shotgun as he noticed the mutilated, skinned deer
mounted on wooden spikes at the temple entrance.

Ah, yes, deer were on this planet. Rare, though, and killing them was seen as sacrilege...

Demons cultists all right. Chaos, Hell, Inferno...didn't matter, they would die all the same.

The difference between them were mere coats of paint. At the end of the day, they all wanted the
same things and thought the same way. They were all people who were prepared to hurt, kill, cheat
and torture to get what they wanted.

That was what set him apart from them, no matter how many times Khorne the Blood God offered
him a fancy crown and demon princehood.

What made Doomguy angry was seeing the innocent hurt. Be they people or local wildlife.

He made his way to the shrine, keeping to the shadows for the ambush. As he crept closer, the heard
voices within.

"And so we gather here today," a female spoke. "To honor the great Gods who will aid us in striking
down the false idols and lords, and reign supreme over all of sentient kind!"

Mother Gothel wanted to be forever young and beautiful. The God Slaanesh was willing to deliver
that, as long as she raped, tortured and killed. It was a small price to pay really. Above her altar, the
dead bodies of raped virgins hung on meat hooks.

Doomguy saw this. Doomguy's fingers clenched around his weapon. He kept to the shadows still,
and managed to get into position still, looking at those who were gathered.

Mother Gothel led the congregation, resplendent in revealing robes of such bright colors they'd drive
most people mad within minutes.

Chained up and high on drugs, was a tall, lanky man known as Nnoitra Gilga, an Arrancar and
known killer and sadist. The man savored battle like a fine wine and took pleasure from humiliating
and torturing his enemies before killing them.

Standing under the Banner of Tzeentch was the witch Maleficent, who Doomguy knew all too well. A dark fairy with a dry wit and black heart, her powers were considerable...and not one to be crossed lightly.

William Afton, a man once dressed in purple, now...something else. Oh, HE had a quite the history. Genius mechanic, animatronic maker for kids...and child serial killer. He offered the blood of innocents her slew to the Gods he worshipped. Under the Nurgle banner he stood. William would have gone onto worship Slannesh, but for the Plague God trapping him in a rusted, diseased animatronic suit. The purple visage before everyone was simply an illusion, to draw more children in; it seemed Nurgle shared Afton's passion for children dead or alive.

Rounding out the gang under the banner of Khorne was none other than Kuvira; failed tyrant and master of Earth and Metal bending. After being defeated on her homeworld and her ambitions for domination crumbled, she went a little crazy. Rather than rot in prison, she sold her soul to Khorne, who delighted in her use of sheer willpower to manipulate metal.

And then they were one last Slannesh worshipper, Queen Grimhilde. A cold, cruel woman, with insane narcissistic tendencies, going to great lengths to be considered the 'fairest of them all'.

Whatever the hell that meant. Doomguy quietly began to move to higher ground.

Grimhilde and Goethel got along like two nuts in a ballsack. They worked as well as Chaos worshippers could reasonably be expected to.

Stealth wasn't something people normally attributed to him, but stealth was a weapon, and he never turned down a weapon if it was useful. As it stood, the shotgun may not be the best weapon for the first strike. That might fall to his Gauss Cannon.

He scampered up a stone statue as lightly as a bird.

Others were gathered as well, but mostly just random punks looking to make it big.

Gothel kept on yakking, oblivious to their impending doom.

"Ladies, gentlemen, freaks and fiends," said the youthful looking woman as she showered in the blood of one of the girls hanging from meat hooks. "I love Chaos and Chaos loves me. But we need to be real, Chaos needs to be honored and to do that we need dead bodies. Let us eat these fine sacrifices in the name of our Gods and take the Warp portal to somewhere vulnerable. We'll start a fire so big the Gods will notice us again!"

To make the point, Gothel’s depraved cultists with metal hooks in their flesh began hauling in young girls with cages; to be corrupted by plagues, pulverized in wrathful fury, raped to death or torn apart by the forces of magic.

They were terrified, certain this would be a painful, horrific demise at the hands of these monsters... unaware that Doomguy was watching, and getting more and more pissed by the moment.

He understood Demons well enough. And he understood people who allied with Demons. Simply, they were selfish and it didn't get more complicated than that. When you started treating people like cattle or treated living beings like toys, you were either a Demon or you may as well be.

He aligned his rocket launcher and pointed it straight into the crowd of worshippers. It might make
more sense to attack the stronger members such as Maleficent or Kuvira, but he wanted to punish the venomous swine who thought that cannibalism and rape were an acceptable price to pay for more power and long life.

He fired the three round burst and the party began.

A good chunk of lesser cultists were blown to bloody chunks instantly by the attack, and survivors looked around in panic.

"What the fuck!?!" Vultraz’s eyes were wide.

"We're under attack!" Larxene cried out, knives ready.

Doomguy charged into the mix with his chainsaw roaring. It was all about making a statement. Like when he swung his tool and sliced off Larxene's legs at the knees.

"Stop him!" screamed Mother Gothel as she began to use the blood of the dead girls to write a run of summoning.

At that, Kuvira snapped her fingers and unleashed Nnoitra from his chains. She felt glad she had an enemy who could please the Blood God with either his death or victory.

Doomguy had just punched Larxene's head in when he noticed Nnoitra rushing towards him with a feral grin, his massive, odd-shaped blade ready to cleave the Doomslayer.

Doomguy was forced to roll out of the way of the first attack, and fire out shotgun rounds at his foe. Any normal person would have been shredded. Against an Arrancar, though, it did not do too much damage.

Doomguy had fought the Arrancar before. He'd even gone so far as to rip out one of Aizen Sosuke's eyes and force-feed them to him. He was very upset when a young boy named Ichigo had finished the job and killed the son of a bitch.

Nnoitra laughed off the buckshot as she swung his blade at the Doom Marine, not caring if he killed his fellow cultists. Betrayal was a staple of Chaos, naturally. He simply chased after his foe as Kuvira formed massive iron gauntlets on her fists with her metal bending powers.

Doomguy was forced to use his chainsaw to block the sword swipes, all while trying to reach for his Gauss Cannon to blow of this fucker's head.

Nnoitra laughed at he launched what he thought was the killing blow, straight for the Doom Warrior's head. His sword passed through air as the agile warrior used his thruster boots to push in and close the gap.

The Gauss Cannon pressed up against Nnoitra's chin and Doomguy pressed the activator.

The metal slug left the barrel travelling at over six kilometers per second, Nnoitra's head became wall art.

It was along the lines of a Jackson Pollock, a long-dead but famous artist.

Vultraz, all of the sudden, leapt onto Doomguy and attempted to drive a dagger into the armor...but the warrior simply grabbed the little shit and twisted his head off.

Doomguy threw the head like a softball, crushing the skull of a cultist who was going at him with an
assault rifle. He raised his Gauss Cannon and fired again, the round overpenetrating through at least seven people and blowing apart an obsidian pillar.

He felt sad about the damage to this fine temple. But killing took precedent as he lobbed a napalm grenade at the confused mass of cultists. They writhed in flame as he took the chance to square off against Kuvira and the Keeper of Secrets that Gothel had summoned.

Keepers... hermaphroditic Demon scum that were designed to tempt and seduce any warrior to take their soul...but Doomguy had no time for that. He looked about.

Afton, his facade broken and his mangled, rabbit form shown, stood ready with Grimhilde and Maleficent.

Keepers were horrific, masters of torture and mind breaking. You’d be better off begging for mercy from Juri Han than one of these malignant beasts.

The demon danced around Doomguy and thrust out a crab-ike claw at him, its long tongue hanging out as it openly lusted for the Demon killer.

Afton charged at Doom guy, wielding a vast, rusty cleaver covered in the blood of children. Maleficent watched with a cruel smile, her form shifting to that of a monstrous dragon.

Nice. So now the Gods granted their followers the power to turn into giant fucking reptiles, eh?

Doomguy, for a moment, glanced at the caged girls. Still safe and away from harm. Good. Now back to business.

Punching the Keeper away for the moment, Doomguy turned back to Afton. For all the 'blessings' he got from Nurgle, he was nothing more than a rotting body in a decayed animatronic suit...so Doomguy thrust both hands into the chest of the freak and parted him curtain style.

Afton gurgled inside his suit, the eyes of the rotting robotic rabbit moving like a separate orgasms. Like he was a parasite stuck inside another, slightly less disgusting parasite. Afton swung his cleaver but struck only more cultists, who melted down into piles of puss and disease, reforming as Chaos Spawn.

Ignoring this, Doomguy punched a hole into Afton's chest and tore out the beating heart inside. The rotted eyes on Afton's human face opened wide with unadulterated terror, and with a crushing motion, Papa Nurgle lost a follower.

Maleficent, meanwhile, stomped forward, crushing demons and cultists alike, uncaring for their lives. Doomguy turned to her, and leapt out of the way of the fiery blast.

Dragonfire...one of the hottest known things ever.

Doomguy had been burned by dragonfire many times. It had burned his soul as well as his flesh. It was part of the reason he was less of a man and more of an avatar of bottomless rage. His speed had always been his edge, and he zoomed out of the way of the dragonfire as Afton burned literally and spiritually.

For the dragon, he might need something bigger, his BFG.

Technically it stood for 'Bio-Force Gun' but most people called it something else.

Big. Fucking. Gun.
He grinned under his helm as he whipped out the massive gun.

The ammo for the gun was rare to come by, unless he was fighting Demons. The gun was armed with something called "Argent Energy" basically refined Hell energy. His suit already did that and with the aid of a special magic rune built into his armor, he could make his own BFG ammo on the fly.

Squeezing the trigger was like poetry in motion. The last of the minor cultists were burst from the inside out by the green energy blast; like bugs hitting an electric screen. There weren't even bone fragments left.

But the others elite members were tougher cookies, using metal or magic to shield themselves from the worst of the attack. Still, Doomguy liked a good challenge. Maybe he-

A screech caught the attention of all, and all heads turned to see what had come.

Avion, one of the Colossi, was coming in fast. A large bird, it had left its territory and arrived at the Shrine in response to the disturbance it felt.

Doomguy scowled under his helmet at this turn. He rolled out of the way of Maleficent's dragon jaws and threw a punch at Kuvira which would tear through the armor of a tank; but she just shrugged off.

Avion was one of the most peaceful Colossi. Only something like the presence of Chaos would make the great stone and flesh bird turn warlike. It pounced and drove its beak into the joint of Maleficent's right wing.

The Colossi was an innocent, though it was not harmless. Doomguy would protect it with his life if he needed to. But preferably theirs as he drew out his chaingun and let it split into three chainguns that would give him triple the rate of fire.

That said, it tuned our Colossi were...very hard to kill. In fact, only one known weapon was known to be able to kill them: The Ancient Sword, a artifact from days gone by...

...and it was currently under lockdown at Darkland Station, accessible to only Bowser and his son.

Kuvira slammed into Doomguy with the force of a meteor strike. An angry woman as a mortal, she was now an engine of destruction. A worthy foe for the Doomslayer, who retaliated with a punch of his own that could take the head off a Hive Tyrant.

Momentum kept Kuvira flying backwards and slamming into Mother Gothel.

Both woman tumbled into a heap as Maleficent struggled with Avion. Although she could irritate the beast, she had no real way of killing it.

As strong as Chaos was, as strong as Maleficent was, the power of the Colossi was equal to the task. The great dragon began spewing green fire everywhere. Dead bodies touched by the fire began to fuse together and rising as hideous abominations of flesh and hate.

Doomguy had his work cut out for him, it seemed. He noticed the captive girls trembling in their cage.

Throwing a whole string of grenades, the flash of fire and shrapnel gave him the cover he needed. Swinging his chainsaw, he sliced through the padlock on the door. He stood between the women and the monsters. They had their chance, and he'd protect them as they fled.
Kuvira charged at him again, and she would not care if her momentum crushed those escaping girls to a pulp. She only thought about killing Doomguy. Who already had his plasma rifle ready.

He let loose with a barrage of bullets, shredding through the armor of his foe...and Kuvira herself.

As she was gunned down, the woman snarled. "Shit...to think...it would end...like...this..."

Doomguy knew a few things about Khornate warriors; they were usually extremely well armored and very tough. It was for that reason he brought out his armor piercing ammo for this; specially designed, explosive tipped with mercury compounds to destroy the nervous system.

Kuvira reached out for him, one last act of futile hate for the sake of an uncaring God. He didn't even watch her fall before turning to his next victim.

Grimhilde stood, eyes dark. Doomguy stood ready. No telling what SHE could do.

He wasn't disappointed, as giant bat wings exploded from her back and her arm exploded into a set of slimy, tooth filled jaws. She flew at him, snatching his minigun from him as her arm jaw ate it.

Now he was really mad. He hit the side button on his weapon, spraying a wave of plasma which burned the evil queen flying past him.

"Fool!" Grimhilde screeched as she whirled back towards him. "You DARE fight against the almighty power of Chaos!?"

Doomguy simply readied his super shotgun, and took aim.

His gun blew off half of Queen Grimhilde's head, only for eyes and tentacles to grow out of the gaping wound. Like many other Chaos creatures, you had to kill either the heart or brain to end it. Looks like he'd have to go for the dark queen's heart.

He noticed, then, some sharp rocks to the side as the result of the battle. He wondered...

Grimhilde was coming at him again, and Doomguy waited until she was closing in...

...then swiped at her, knocking her into the sharp stones, piercing her body all over...including her heart.

Grimhilde shrieked and howled on the rocks like a dying coyote. A final shotgun blast to the heart finished her off on the rocks. Just in time as Avion was thrown into the side of the cave, crushing what was left of the queen.

Maleficent was not at all happy and the wounds inflicted on her by the Colossus were healing already. Riding on her back, the Keeper of Secrets laughed at the tremendous skill and violence of the battle.

The Doomguy was once more ready for battle, just as Avion picked itself back up. Good thing Bowser had that sword sealed. It would be a mess if cultists had it. They could wind up unleashing the... thing known as Dormin.

Doomguy was sure that Dormin wasn't a Demon. But that still left a lot of room for the potentially ageless spirit to do irreparable harm. It had even offered to help him in his quest to wipe out demonkind if he would slay the Colossi. He never listened. No good could come from such deals.

He began to spray plasma fire all over Maleficent and the Chaos Spawn she'd created with her
dragon fire.

Dormin... did not seem to upset with this, not even disappointed. It simply acknowledged his resolve, then went silent again. Hadn't heard it since.

Dormin hadn't seemed too bothered either by the presence of this cult. Like many spirits, it was monomaniacal; neither proper good or proper evil. But dangerous in its own way.

Doomguy charged Maleficent, swinging his chainsaw only for it to bounce off her scales.

Doomguy growled, then whipped out his BFG again. Time to waste them all.

The Keeper of Secrets jumped at him, "KISS ME, BIG BOY!" it snarled at him as it thrust its crab-like arm at his heart. Mother Gothel herself was channeling more chaos energy to presumably summon more demons.

All of this would fuel his BFG, making for a bigger fucking blast than the first shot.

Perfect.

He just needed to wait for the right moment... to take them all out...

He began to move, shifting to the sixteen pillars which were the avatars of each of the Colossi. Avion was charging behind him, as though to back him up. He looked at the creature from behind his faceplate, as though asking it to lend him its strength.

It would soon leave, he felt, to recover, but not before one last move...

... which was to ram the dragon, knocking both her and the Keeper onto the ground, sending them sprawling, while Avion returned to its territory.

The green ball of energy crackled and spider webbed out lightning. it wrapped around the sixteen idols of the Colossi and seemed to grow even stronger from there. Smashing through the defensive barriers that Gothel and Maleficent had set up, even overriding the Keeper of Secret's lightspeed agility.

No time to think for any of them, as Doomguy fired off the highly powerful weapon.

The force of the energy was like nothing comparable to the mortal world. Maybe a star going supernova or a black hole forming were the only things this shot could be compared to.

Doomguy watched dispassionately as Mother Gothel was torn apart down to her atoms by his weapon. Even her immortal soul would simply be deleted, forgotten like a bad dream.

The Keeper was shredded with a screech of pain, while Maleficent had a hole torn into her body and head, killing her fast. The rest of the demons were annihilated by the blast as well.

The battle was over.

Doomguy scanned the room, snapping pictures with the camera built into his helmet. In a few seconds, he'd send those pictures to Bowser and Bowser would pay him.

More important to Doomguy than any kind of monetary reward was the burning of the dead. Soon he would build a giant fire and burn the bodies as well as any surviving artifacts or symbols of Chaos.
It wasn't long before he had heaped up the bodies and artifacts into a pile and set them all aflame.

With that down, and sensing his payment done, he began to make his way back to his cave. Lemmy would be arriving to pick up the girls and take them to the Koopa-controlled Mushroom Kingdom to recover.

It was part of his agreement with Bowser. He would free any captives taken by Demons for sacrifice or torture. In return they'd be released to neutral territory, somewhere they could recover and heal.

The Mushroom Kingdom, with its progressive system of laws and effective medical and spiritual centers was the perfect place for that.

Doomguy didn't care what Bowser did in the wider Galaxy, but if he found that the survivors of demonkind were harmed by the Bowser, then he'd turn his wrath against House Koopa.

The sun set over the lands as he walked on, and he could feel the Colossi settling down after the battle.

The world seemed . . . not exactly peaceful, but it was wild. It was free. This world once more was free of demonkind and their ways.

Doomguy knew there was a war on the Horizon and he wouldn't lose any sleep over it. The only thing that concerned him was that the coming bloodshed would draw in Demons of all types and sources.

For that he would be ready, regardless of who won the war and whose side he was on. His only side would be the one that helped him kill Demons.

For now, he would rest and bid his time.

Reaching his cave, he eventually settled down for some rest.
Knee Deep in Tyranids

Shelbyville Station was a few dozen lightyears away from Planet Springfield. Springfield itself was a nowhere planet with very little in the way of population or resources.

Shelbyville Station itself was named after a small, low gravity planetoid orbiting a blue dwarf star. Maybe a few hundred thousand people called the planet home. The station itself was an ancient relic mostly used by mid to low grade mercenaries. People who were one bad job away from turning to piracy. Indeed, most of the station's staff and governing body were ex-pirates.

"I’ve waited enough!" Ragna the Bloodedge shouted, "I need beer," As he slammed down a wad of credits in front of the Quartermaster.

His fellow hunter/lover, Noel Vermillion, sighed at his actions. Ragna could be a nice guy, but sometimes his temper could cause issues.

Still, he was a guy who loved her for who she was, even if her chest was rather...lacking.

Ragna saw no issue with her body, if his enthusiasm in bed was anything to go by . . . or how well he used his tongue.

As it was, Ragna was trying to pick up some treats for their team after a long mission that paid exceptionally well.

The local quartermaster, Marcus Kincaid, just smiled, "I deal with customer complaints, then I sell you beer," despite his friendly tone, it wasn't a request.

Marcus was a man of business, selling goods, mostly guns, but other things as well. His friendly and helpful personally WAS genuine, to be honest...he was just quite amoral at the same exact time. He was the type of guy who took killing the competition literally, and refunds by him were nonexistent.

Case in point, the escaped criminal Snake Jailbird had arrived after his captivity with Bowser, only to try and return a gun to Marcus. "Give me a new gun that actually fires, or I'll jump over that counter and strangle you," threatened Snake.

Marcus smiled politely, hefting the revolver and pulling out a bullet from his pocket. Without blinking, he popped the bullet into the chamber and fired, blasting Snake right through the knee. "No refunds," he told the screaming criminal on the ground. "Now, I believe you wanted to buy beer? Again, no refunds."

Ragna, without so much as a glance of Snake, handed Marcus the money, taking the beer.

"So, what brings you two all the way out here?" Marcus asked. "Heard you under Nui contract now."

"Nui gave me and my crew a leave of absence," Ragna shrugged, making sure none of the bottles in the case were broken. "We served out a two year contract to serve him, and he have us a few months vacation until we renew the contract. So until then, we're going to run a few quick jobs for extra cash."

"The Creed is greed," said Marcus, "I like that in you."

"He's a good employer," Noel added. "We'll be sticking around him for some time, I believe."
"It helps that Nui has offered to give our future children an education and a parcel of land as part of a ten year contract, if we choose to sign it," Ragna added, grabbing the first of the bottles and handing it to his loved one.

Marcus laughed, "If we were all so lucky to have such an employer. Come back again, and if you buy beer from anyone else in this sector, I'll have you killed."

"Right back at you," said Ragna, cracking open his bottle.

Ragna knew that eventually, after all the exploring and hunting and stuff, he and Noel would like to settle down, in their house in Gielinor, which, like many merc houses on that planet, resided in a pocket dimension.

They wanted a future together, something to look forward to when they were both old and gray. Mercenary work was often feast or famine and if you didn't end up dead, there was often very little chance you'd end up rich. There was also the risk of turning pirate to survive, something both Ragna and Noel wanted to avoid.

As Ragna and his woman went to have their drink in peace, another station resident went up to Marcus. "Hey, the communicator you sold me only turns up static," said Peter Griffin.

Marcus aimed his gun at Peter's head, "Try turning it off and then on again."

A long pause followed.

"You know what? Maybe I need to do that AND adjust my location." Peter replied as he hurried off to another corner.

"Yeah, that's what I thought." Marcus scoffed.

Ragna and Noel walked away, ignoring the second person in a day to have problems with a communications device. "I think we should do it," he said to his lover, "Sign the ten year contract."

"Is there any reason we shouldn't?" Noel asked, picking her partner's brains.

"Well, there is a war about to break out," said Ragna, "And we can always wait it out."

Indeed they could. While the two of them LOOKED human, they were actually...something else entirely. It was hard to explain, but the basic ideas that they were artificial (yet organic) beings with great combat skills.

As much as they were artificial lifeforms, they had no wish to fight mindlessly. They were not like Euron Greyjoy, pillaging and slaughtering like there was nothing else to live for. Nor were they like the King's Space Marines; single-minded murder machines who lived only for orders.

"I never pegged you the type to avoid a fight, Ragna," said Noel, as a third person came to complain about communications problems.

But this was no ordinary individual. This blue-skinned humanoid was known as the Drifter, a mysterious mercenary whose past was an enigma to many. All that was known was that he was a supreme swordsman and gunner, and his robotic sprite aided in accessing tech.

Drifter muscled his way past the people in the crowded station and shoved past Marcus's customers. "There's a problem with your communicator," he deadpanned.
Marcus seemed shocked. "Sorry, no refunds."

"I've checked it," said Drifter, "The hardware is fine, I don't think you ripped me off or sold inferior merchandise. But I want you to repair the software, I'll pay you whatever you want."

The violent merchant flashed a smile, "For your money, anything, my friend."

But deep down, Marcus was starting to get...confused. Drifter had stated nothing was really WRONG with the tech.

So why wasn’t it working?

The Merchant of Shelbyville station welcomed Drifter's money, just the same. "For you, I'll make an exception."

Turning around in his shop, Marcus noticed that his personal holo-screen was going on the fritz. Instead of getting Galaxy News Radio with host 3-Dog, he was just getting static.

"Hmmm, power must be on the fritz again," He muttered. "Gotta see if we can get someone to fix it."

Still in her seat, Noel was disappointed to realize that their transmitter too was on the fritz. "Shoot, we're going to miss the next broadcast of 3-Dog."

Ragna shrugged as he pounded back his beer. "We're on a station on the edge of civilization. Bad transmissions aren't anything new."

"Perhaps you rely too much on it," A cool, calm voice caused Ragna to look over his shoulder.

Another merc, Kisuke, stood there. Hailing from planet Honshu, he was a top-notch fighter, using the 'Muramasa Blades' to fight. Such blades were dangerous for most people to use, driving them mad with bloodlust and rage without proper training. Kisuke was one of the few who could use them, alongside his partner.

Kisuke rubbed his head. "I always try to rely on alternative communications methods. Whether I'm in a war zone or listening to radio stations. It may cost more, but I know at least that people won't be listening on me."

"I heard you were dead on Gourmet World after the last Skaven invasion failed," said Noel, truly surprised.

The young ninja shrugged. "Rats are dumb as hell. I just sliced though them with no issue."

"With my help." his partner, Momohime, spoke. "The real dangerous thing about the Skaven is that nearly all their tech explodes. If you so much as sneeze near half of it, you get taken out in a nuclear blast."

"Other than that, Skaven armies have the toughness of wet paper," Kisuke growled.

Ragna nodded, looking again at the katanas Kisuke and Momohime wielded. Good thing they trained for use of such weapons. Most people went insane once they drew them, soaking the swords in red.

"What I wouldn't give for some decent enemies," said Kisuke, "I need a little excitement, and aside fighting Yautja Bad Bloods, I haven't seen decent action since Hive Fleet Gorgon."
"Be careful," laughed Ragna, "You might get what you want. And this time a lucky Skaven with a pistol might get you."

"As if," Kisuke scoffed.

Momohime crossed her arms. "In all seriousness, times are changing. You all heard of the new merc, Kuroko Koumori?"

Noel spun in her chair, disbelief on her face. "Kuroko? That serial killer that killed over 715 people by herself?" She was shocked. "I thought she was caught and executed!"

Momohime shrugged. "She was caught, but officials were impressed by her skills, so her pardoned her...on the terms she becomes a hunter."

Noel scoffed. "That bitch only cares for two things: Killing people and laying with whatever woman she can find."

"Some days it still feels like we're living under old King Scab, Aerys the Mad," said Kisuke, "It feels like any killer can get their hands on a mercenary's license."

"Without being treasonous," said Momohime cautiously, "But I think the King is getting desperate. I think there's something big on the horizon. That's why he's getting every hired gun he can get his hands on. And have you seen the going rates for warzone contracts? The pay just jumped by double."

Ragna sighed as he rubbed his head. "That's why it's important to keep these jobs as mercs, so we can keep payment up," He turned to the others. "So, who are you going to contract for?"

"We're heading out to Skyrim," said Momohime, "Braev is putting out more contracts than usual and the money is good."

"We think he might be gearing up to fight Xenomorphs," said Kisuke, "Thecontract stipulated we be ready to fight swarm enemies and be ready for acid attacks. We're on this station stocking up on the right weapons and supplies."

"Hmm, cold place there," Ragna noted. "And full of dangers."

"We get paid well enough," Momohime replied. "Just avoid the underground areas..."

"I've always had good luck with dungeon exploration," said Noel, "When I worked for House Lee years ago, I was allowed to keep most of my loot as long as I turned over cultural artifacts and dangerous objects."

Kisuke reminded himself Noel was older than she looked due to the process of her creation, just like his and Momohime's ages were slowed by their blades. Yeah, in this day and age, one could slow the aging process to a crawl.

The added advantage of that was if you weren't murdered, a fighter had a longer period of time to hone their skills. Unlike maces, guns or axes, swords had a higher learning curve, but the payoff was great. Providing users with increased versatility in fights, something that only grew when the swords had mystical properties.

But Momohime always reminded herself that just because you'd been doing something for a long time didn't mean that there wasn't more to know.
And while she and Kisuke were GOOD at killing people, it did not mean they ENJOYED it. It was actually a truth of a good number of people. They killed simply because they had to.

To her, being a mercenary had a kind of spiritual aspect to it. She wasn't a pirate or a bandit and she didn't want to be. She and her partner chose to fight the strong, to test themselves against seemingly impossible odds. Not merely prey on the weak like Poliver had, before he was exiled to Ark. Hopefully someone had finished him off by now.

The foolish, like him, tended to have short lifespans in this Galaxy, as killers and predators to drawn to such folk, ready for an easy target.

The cruel made short term gains, but failed to notice that their reputation worked against them in the long run, drawing either the truly insane like Juri Han or righteous killers looking to bring justice, like her and Kisuke.

Worse still were the broken men. People who'd been drafted to fight and either died far from home, or became totally broken after bleak and endless wars; often being reduced to piracy or fighting for the likes of Euron Greyjoy and the now extinct Boltons.

She sighed at last as she settled down on chair with Kisuke, hoping for some sake to calm her nerves. Little did anyone know that nerves were about to shoot sky high.

In the central hub of the station, every single radio and communications device was shot. The only thing that was working on the shady space station was Marcus Kincaid's quantum entanglement communication. "Look, I don't give a shit, just get the ship prepped to leave and warm up the hyperdrive. Not the fold space, the hyperdrive. Just get to it, Rattrap!"

He shut off the communicator before his Maximal associate could protest. Now, he'd shut his shop for the day.

There was only one thing able to block out all these communicators, and it would not be long before the Shadow in the Warp also started blocking off faster than light travel.

And just in case, he began to arm himself, something the others noticed.

"Er, the hell's going on?" Ragna asked with a raised eyebrow.

Marcus turned with a grim look. "Tyranids."

"We have to stay and fight," said Ragna.

"You have a hearing problem?" Marcus exclaimed, "I said there are Tyranids going to hit the station. You have maybe ten minutes before your ships foldspace drives are useless."

"Not strictly," said Noel, "We know how to punch through the interference. There's over five thousand souls on this station. We can allow the ships to get away and we can lure the first waves of Tyranids to go after us instead of the evacuees."

"I have an addition to the plan." Drifter spoke up. "Once we get everyone off the station, we set it to explode." Seeing Marcus was about to protest, Drifter raised his hand. "If they finish here, they'll just move on. We can delay more from coming immediately if we take out this unit, allowing nearby worlds to ready their defense."

"The station's reactors use a spice fusion reactor with a liquid salt cooling system," said Kisuke,
"Blow it and any biomatter in the area will be sucked into a dozen alternate dimensions. The Tyranids won't be able to recycle their dead or the heavy metal of the station."

Momohime smiled, "A solid plan. My partner and I can go to set the reactor while the two of you can lure the Tyranids. I know there's a cargo ship full of buckthorne. Take it out of water and the plant will stink worse than a week old carcass. Tyranids will come to it like flies at a barbecue."

Marcus sighed. He hated to lose a station...but if he did let those fuckers go about their business, he would lose even MORE money and customers. A big no-no is his book.

And he hated Tyranids as well.

It was hard to make a business when everyone and everything was dead. "If you blow up the cooling pipes, you can flood the lower levels with molten salt. You could wipe out a lot of those fucking bugs if you time everything right and leave bait to draw them into the lower bays."

Everyone nodded as the fighters got ready. "Let's go," Noel stated.

Some distance outside...

A relatively small fleet of Tyranid Bio-Ships were slowly but surely closing in on Shelbyville Station, with the various occupants waiting, a voice going though all their heads.

"Swarm...consume...evolve...adapt...proceed..."

Tyranids, Star Locusts, or whatever one wanted to call them had been floating in the void of space longer than most civilizations had been around. From the smallest to the largest, the Hive Fleet was unified in its need to feed; the most primitive yet most powerful of impulses. Concentrated across quintillions of beings until it almost became a god unto itself.

The Hive Fleet was narrowing its sites on Shelbyville station, full of useful carbon based life to consume and an easy target before more fortified worlds.

Bio-Ships containing boarding parties advanced, while Fighter organisms scrambled to shoot down as many escaping ships as possible.

Guiding them all was the Hive Mind. No one really knew what it was...only it was the 'force' commanding every Tyranid, to the point each organism was part of it in some way, like a massive creature. And while highly intelligent, it was ruthless and uncompromising.

The Hive Mind had suffered losses in this galaxy. Against the frail, laughable Kingdom that ran most of it. Against the elusive Yautja and the frustratingly adaptive Xenomorphs. However, the Hive Mind was not driven by petty emotion, like some so called sapients in this galaxy.

It was strategic; it could take short term losses if it meant bolstering long term gains. With the loss of Hive Fleet Gorgon, a wealth of genetic information was lost. Attacking this station was a good, low risk way to sample the genetic resources of this galaxy.

All it had to do was kill every living thing in the system.

Right now, though, it was about to take more losses than gains...

People being herded out into space shuttles as the fighters readied their best weapons.

"Don't launch the ships yet!" Noel screamed above the din as thousands of traders, pirates and mercs
readied their swords, guns and explosives. "We're going to launch a freighter full of explosives and take out as many of their fighters when they pass low to attack the anti-air guns. The rest of you hold fast and keep the choke points when their boarding parties come!"

"Let's hope we know what we're doing," said Ragna as he set the last of the explosives on the molten salt pipes.

A detonator was in his pocket, to remotely set off the bombs when everything was ready to. He watched as others load up fighters with other bombs to factor in Noel's plan.

The detonator was wired to several frequencies. A secondary set would blow open the crates of preserved buckthorne; used to bait everything from wolves to dragons. Tyranids associated the aromatic chemicals in it with protein and food.

He felt a shudder in his feet as a freighter loaded with fuel, bombs and even contraband warpstone fired its boosters into the swarm of Tyranid fighter Bioforms.

The loaded freighters soon reached the fleet, and were fired upon...

...and the explosives began to wipe out several of the Bio-Ships, giving the mercs an advantage already.

The Hive Mind sent out its message to the rest of the troops. "Opposition...engage...kill..."

The remaining fighters scattered as long range batteries on the Bio-Ship dreadnought opened fire. Not enough to destroy the station, but enough to take out the anti-ship batteries.

The boarding forms powered up their fusion engines, slamming into the hull of the station like darts. Unleashing their deadly payload.

The Tyranids began to disembark rapidly, ready for the feasting. Blood was going to be shed by the gallons.

Ferocious as they were and relentless, the Tyranids were only as smart as they needed to be. The six-legged Hormigaunts forming the vanguard of the boarding party operated on a simple set of hunting algorithms. Their crude brains sought out certain chemical compounds in air and water as well as certain sights and sounds. There wasn't anything in there for running away or spotting an ambush.

So they ran towards the exposed buckthorne plant, believing it to be ripe organic matter for the killing. The Hive Mind would not mind their loss, as their deaths would save more important and energy intensive organisms.

That was when Ragna blew the first set of bombs to rupture the coolant pipes.

The molten salt doused the beasts, and they screeched and bellowed with fury as they were disintegrated by the lethal compounds.

Ragna ran through the mass of scalded monsters, inhumanly hopping over a surface of highly radioactive and red hot salt. With a swing of his sword, he shattered the cooked, salted Tyranids like glass figures, their shards flying at near relativistic speed and impaling their incoming brethren like buckshot.

"The coolant is blown!" he shouted into his communicator, "Start the countdown!" he ordered to Kisuke. "Give Noel the time she needs to cut through the interference with her drive."
Kisuke nodded by the station's main reactor as a Bio-Ship crashed above him. "Roger that," he said as it began to disgorge something deadlier than Hormigaunts.

A Tyranid Warrior, a rather deadly breed of Tyranid. Not only was a fast and strong fighter, but it also functioned as synapse creature. These types of Tyranids acted as 'beacons' for the Hive Mind to reach out and control the lesser breeds.

"Wonderful," Kisuke deadpanned, one of his Muramasa blades at ready. The Warrior turned to him, and it felt the command.

"Kill..."

It was ready to obey.

The Tyranid warrior was a towering bastard. Both strong and fast with cutting arms and a secondary set meant to hold a biological gun of sorts. The thing raised its weapon and started to fire poisoned barbs at over ten thousand rounds per minute.

Kisuke reacted like lightning, blocking the incoming steam of barbs harder than steel with his sword while side stepping the thing's rate of fire. This would be the challenge he'd been hoping for.

He was a warrior, trained in countless battles against bandits, samurai, oni, Orks, and other dangerous threats. He was not going to die here.

His blade moved impossibly fast as he deflected the barrage of bullets, looking for an opening.

He'd fought in the war against Gorgon. Even trained under some of the Elders of the Yautja by gaining their graces in gladiatorial combat. He knew one thing about Tyranids that most forgot. They might be ferocious, but they had no sense of self-preservation or self at all.

The Tyranid warrior blocked his sword with acid coated, poison dripping chitinous arms. It activated the secondary fire mode on its weapon and launched a stream of organic napalm where Kisuke had been standing seconds ago.

Tyranids fought without pride. To defeat a Warrior of the Hive, you not only had to consider strategy within strategy, but also the creatures by the millions that would come after it.

His sword struck behind the monster as he ducked out of the way of its fire attack.

He dragged his exceedingly sharp sword down the back of the Warrior, carving along its back, making sure he did not get any unwanted fluid on him. The Tyranid screeched before collapsing, dead.

Kisuke, ready for the next, heard something behind, and whirled about...to see another Guard right above him...

...unmoving.

It soon collapsed, Momohime's sword planted in the base of its neck. "Don't let your guard down."

Kisuke thrust his blade downwards as the twin bodies of the Guards began to thrash. Even in death, the death rattles of a Tyranid could end an unwary warrior. And with a strike to the nerve stem, he ended each monster for good.

"Thanks," he said, "The charges are set?"
She nodded, "We're ready, we just have to hold them off. It'll be easier without a synapse beast."

Meanwhile, Noel was also battling swarms of the beast, gunning down Gaunts with Bolverk, a pair of mystical handguns able to change gun shapes, able to fire of magical blasts according to her will.

Her acrobatic nature also made sure she was always on the move. On the move where she needed to be. The Hormigaunts moved faster than most ground vehicles and had no fear whatsoever. From a higher causeway, a volunteer force was firing on the advancing beasts while waiting for the moment when the station went critical and Noel and Ragna used their powers to open a way through the Shadow in the Warp.

Moving in, however, were the flying, grotesque monsters known as Gargoyles.

Similar to Gaunts, actually, except airborne. They moved in, swarming the gunners above, eager to feasts. Some were gunned down, but others were lucky and began to attack, ripping the force limb from limb and eating them alive.

High on the causeway, Rattrap was firing his plasma weapon at the flying monsters as he scanned around frantically for his business partner, Marcus Kincaid. "Oh man, this is not worth it!" he moaned as someone next to him got lifted into the air and torn in half, the intestines splattering all over the metal grating.

One of the fuckers got near him, but he blasted its head off. "Oh, we're all gonna die..." He moaned, still blasting against the horde.

One of the Gargoyle's went for Rattrap's head, but it was blasted to pieces by Noel's bullet attacks. Which had the added bonus of showering the Maximal in Tyranid guts. Just beautiful.

He sighed as he kept on shooting.

Drifter was a master at this. He faced down the massive Carnifex without a trace of fear. A big, huge, nasty piece of work, the beast had sharp blades and a thick carapace...

But Drifter had intense agility, able to 'flash-step' with little effort, peppering the Tyranid with his energy guns and sword.

Given that a Carnifex was a biological tank that could go one on one with Space Marines, it wasn't going down easily. Arming its own weapon, it began to fire a broad acid spray that started eating everything around it.

Only for Drifter to leverage his agility to create a vortex that diverted the acid stream away from him.

The beast snarled with rage, and charged forwards...but by then, Drifter had pulled out his handheld railgun, and took aim...and fired. The resulting beam of energy tore right into his foe.

The heavy tungsten slug travelled at twelve kilometers per second. It punched through the chitinous armor and ripped through it like tissue paper. The Tyranids organs and brains were atomized. So heavy and powerful was the slug that it kept travelling and punched through the Tyranid ranks thirty deep before finally stopping.

He nodded grimly as the Tyranid collapsed in a useless heap of flesh. Drifter moved on to other targets.

Not much longer now...
Drifter felt the station start to rumble and began to sense something very bad.

A noxious green gas was drifting through the vents. "There's a Venomthrope on board," he spoke to his compatriots over the channel, "The filters in my armor should protect me. If we don't kill it, very soon the poison gas it emits will overwhelm the entire station."

"Move fast!" said Noel, "We're starting to get people aboard the ships and the reactor has only minutes before it blows!"

Luckily, most people had made it to the ships by now, and the surviving fighters were also falling back.

Ragna snarled as he used his Blood-Scythe to hack down his enemies. Tyranids were amazingly adaptable beings...and he hated that. That had also any kind of weapon to use against their foes.

The Venomthrope as a species were used en mass to destroy planetary ecosystems and start the process of liquefying the biosphere into a nutrient rich soup. In space combat, they were used in singles or pairs to poison a ship's oxygen supply, which had the double effect of making human flesh more digestible.

As it was, magic was a good hard counter for Tyranid defenses. Like his Bloodedge, which turned Hormigaunts into hamburger.

Now if Drifter would just move his ass.

Drifter was moving fast, slicing and dicing his foes, sometimes slamming into them with such speed they bisected halves when flying and crashed against walls, splattering.

Elsewhere, Peter Griffin, in a moment of supreme stupidity, went to face off some Tyranids.

"Alright, I'm going solo in the old teleport system that Rick built years ago!" Peter shouted, while holding something close to him. He'd gone and stolen Marcus Kincaid's lockbox; taking most of the man's valuables. A double stupid move.

"You son of a bitch!" shouted Marcus as he ducked to avoid a flying Gargoyle.

"Mine now!" Peter said arrogantly as he ran off, laughing...

...right into a Lictor.

The assassin creature thrust its stabbing arms into Peter, making the fat man gurgle. Tearing up, it cut through flesh and bone like it was butter.

Marcus began to laugh until the Lictor started vomiting acid all over Peter and the lockbox. The box sizzled and melted, destroying the valuable merch inside. "Fuck you!" he shouted, blasting at the monster with an assault rifle.

His partner, Rattrap, however, stopped him from making rash moves. "Live to fight another day, chief. Don't pick fights you can't win." As the Lictor squealed and used its inhuman agility to jump back into the vents.

Marcus sighed. Rattrap had a point. The crap was melted now, but, he realized, he could always get more. It was how he became a successful businessman.

Soon, he, Rattrap, and the rest of the fighters were on the last ship, and quickly disembarked from it.
Noel looked out the viewport at the wrecked station.

"Kisuke, Momohime, get out of here! Everything is set to blow!"

"Don't forget us," said Ragna, pulling up to his battle hardened lover. "Our ship is prepped and the engines are warmed up."

"We're all set!" Kisuke noted from his ship.

"As I am." Drifter said calmly.

Soon, the only thing aboard the station were swarms of Tyranids, and they were just about to depart...

When the claw of a Lictor burst from the shadows. But not just any Lictor, the infamous and dreaded Deathleaper.

The tentacled, chitinous monster swung its claws not at Ragna and Noel, but at the controls of their vessel, hoping to keep them stuck on the station and unable to use their powers to punch through the Shadow in the Warp.

But Noel and Ragna were tougher than that, and began to fight fiercely against the beast. Ragna with his sword, Noel with her guns. Both of them thinking once this was all over with, they would retreat back to their house for some R&R...and fuck each other senseless.

Noel fired a shot that blew out the Deathleapers main chitin joint, causing its claws to go through the control system for the ship's oven. They'd be eating canned food for a while, but the ship would fly.

The Deathleaper was more than a match, twisting seemingly in all directions at once. Slippery as an eel and strong as an Ork.

Ragna jumped on the monster's back and drove his fingers into its compound eyes. Noel raised her hand and telepathically activated the ship's thrusters . . . and a special artifact in the cargo hold which was powerful enough to let slipspace ships navigate.

The creature screeched in pain, just as Ragna used his immense strength to snap its neck, and slammed into the ground, before kicking it into the airlock. He activated it, blasting the body into space. Just as Noel and all the other ships activated the drive, and made their escape.

Slipspace came and went, but the ancient tech in the cargo hold shone through the darkness, allowing the survivors of Shelbyville station to evacuate. Each one had their own destination. Honest folk would try to flee to the relatively bandit free Stark Space, mercs would head for friendly ports in House Lee or House Dreemurr worlds. Criminals and their enablers would try to head for the wild unknown regions. But all would escape safety.

It was milliseconds after they jumped that the station exploded. Ripping apart the very fabric of space-time and the Tyranid scouting fleet with it. More than that, the damage to subspace would slow down the rest of the fleet and force them to chance vectors. Buying the nearest worlds some time.

Only a small handful of Tyranids remained, and they received their orders from the Hive Mind.

"Retreat...regroup..."

The couple Hive Ships moved out, heading back into the outer rims of the Galaxy.
The Hive Mind had lost genetic information...but it had learned. Some of these fighters were TOUGH, not to mention crafty.

More than that, weapons which it had previously thought of as foolproof were showing their limitations. The Shadow in the Warp was no accident and the Hive Mind relied on it to keep its enemies stuck to slower than light travel.

The Hive was not only adaptive, but also needed to adapt faster than its enemies. Such as it had when adapting to the strange silicon based lifeforms which turned its own genetic diversity against it, or the powerful green organisms which could function by believing in something hard enough.

For now, it would hang back from large conflicts and learn...evolve...adapt...
Skyrim was a planet noted to be...cold. Sure, parts of it were relatively warm, but over all, it was quite a 'grim up north' kind of place, ESPECIALLY in the northern parts, where snow covered the lands, and fearsome beasts dwelled.

But that was not Braev’s destination now, no.

People had been living on Skyrim since before the Long Night. When Ysgramor and his companions settled here from the Altmoran cluster, civilization on Skyrim was already old.

From the earliest times, the mountain looming over the lands had one name, just one.

High Hrothgar.

The Throat of the World.

And that's where Braev was now, alongside his children Edea, Tina, and Eilonwy, a young princess of Prydian and expert magic archer. Mahzer was at Dragonsreach, her health not suited the climb.

"You think you could build an elevator, father?" Tiny Tina asked.

"No," said Braev, having had this conversation with Tina every single time they’d come here. "It's tradition to climb the seven thousand steps to High Hrothgar. It humbles the king and the lord, puts them on the same level as anyone else."

"...Guess that makes sense," Tina sighed as they made their trek upwards. The first stop would be the Greybeards, an ancient order dedicated to the study of the Thu’um, or 'Voice', a powerful type of magic that used the language of dragons to produce Shouts, focused dragon magic.

Following a brief chat, they would climb higher, to meet the leader, Paarthurnax...himself a dragon.

Braev's biological daughter, Edea, adjusted her travel cloak and looked up the winding cobblestone trail.

"I know what you're thinking," said Braev, "We will stop at each one of the plaques on the way."

"That's true, father," said Edea, "But then I won't be able to practice my skills against wolves, frostbite spiders and sabretooth cats."

"Hmmm, you'd be surprised." Braev noted. "The beasts are fearsome, and will attack without much warning. You'll be practicing plenty. And we stop to read the plaques for reasons of our faith," Braev went on, "The dragons aided our lands, broke away from their brethren and the tyranny of Alduin under the guidance of Talos."

Edea rolled her eyes, "Yes, father, as I hear again and again every Sunday."

"Can I use my bombs on the wild animals?" Tina asked.

"No," said Braev instantly.

"Too risky," Eilonwy added. "The Greybeards shake this place up enough with their Voice practices."
Tina nodded grimly, then looked up, a serious look on her face. "But I've read something...even after the Dragons sided with humanity against Alduin in the past...the Blades still wiped them out. Why?"

"The Blades were an order dedicated to protection of the Targaryen Kings," said Braev, as the family began working their way up the mountain. "But they had their origins in Skyrim as dragon slayers. Not all Dragons share Paarthurnax's love of peace. Some of them still share Alduin’s love of carnage and conquest."

Eilonwy frowned. "But did they hatred really extend to the ones that aided the people of this world?"

Braev sighed. "That was their problem. Too caught up in their hate to consider some Dragons had changed. Many of the Dragons were wiped out...but the Blades themselves were brought to ruin later." Braev paused to kneel before one of the plagues written in the ancient language of the Nords. "Many a warrior only remembers what they fight against, not what they fight for. At some point, hate is like a power source that a warrior can choose to tap into; but it is one that will take six fold what it gives."

"..." Tina was oddly silent at that.

"And even today, the remnants still wish to wipe the Dragons out, despite all they have done for us," Braev sighed. "Personally, they should not be concerned over the idea if Paarthurnax COULD revert to evil. They should focus on the CURRENT threats."

"Like Tyranids?" Eilonwy asked.

"I had honestly hoped you would never have to fight them," said Braev, as he looked down at his hand as if remembering some ghost from a battle long gone. "The Skyrim Civil war hardened me, I was only your age when I slew my first men. But it did not prepare me for the Tyranids."

Tina brightened as the family went up the mountain, "I'll do you proud, papa! I'll give the bards a bastard of a hero's song to sing!"

"You just focus on staying alive," said Edea, "And remember to leave some of the glory for me. A soldier is only as tough as her teammates."

Braev gave a small smile at that. The daughters could be handfuls at times...but he couldn’t be any prouder of them.

Unlike some worlds, Skyrim had never blocked women from the path of the warrior. Many were the ballads sung about mighty shield sisters and battle maidens. Women who used guns, steel or even magic in some cases to dominate the battlefield.

Braev was snapped out of his reverie as his daughter Edea put an arrow through the eye of a sabre cat that was just padding past a snowy outcropping.

Dang. He didn't even hear it. Getting lost in thought again. He turned to the dead beast. "Well done. We can carve resources from it."

"I never even got the chance to name that murderous kitty," Tina fake-sobbed. "I shall name him posthumously, Waggleton P. Furrybutt."

Edea was at a loss for words, "Just get over here and help me carve the pelt off!"

Braev looked up at the mountain. Only a few thousand more steps to go. It seemed to fly when he took the journey with family.
Eilonwy also helped carved the cat up, taking the teeth for something to be sold later at a decent price. The fur could be crafted into hide armor, while the meat could be cooked and eaten.

Granted, sabre cat wasn't particularly tasty, but it was nutritious and easy to preserve for travel. Braev had always reared his girls, adopted or trueborn, to be able to survive off the land and respect it. Some might hide from nature in space stations, but for House Braev the harsh surface of the planet was like a mother. Harsh, but it made them who they were.

Up and up they went after finishing, towards the very top. The storms grow tougher...and it was not natural one. No, it was the result of the Greybeards training in the Voice. Powerful, they always had the habit of producing the storm...which also had the effect of keeping all but the most determined away. The most determined, therefore, were the ones worth their time.

As King of these Lands, Braev would both answer the call of the Greybeards and power through the storm. Winds whipped and threatened to freeze men solid. It was not the worst cold or the worst storm that Braev had endured.

Though for Tina, this was one of her worst yet. Though her teeth chattered, she made no outcry and her hands remained steady at her weapons.

She had endured through much in her young life already...this was nothing in the long run.

And soon, they reached the first part of their destination.

A flight of stair leading up to an ancient castle, with a simple wooden chest surrounded by candles. "Leave the offerings for the Greybeards," said Braev,

For once, Tina didn't try to steal the sweet rolls from the bag, either too frozen to try or too eager to meet Paarthurnax to think about eating.

Before they met him, though, they would meet with the others of the monastery.

The vast oaken door creaked open as an old man in faded robes opened it.

"Good to see you again, Master Wulfar," said Braev, bowing to the elder of the Voice.

The man bowed back, as though he were the equal of the King, silently.

For the most part, Greybeards could not speak without using the Voice...and since their control was so powerful, a wrong word could cause the entire temple to collapse.

Thankfully, one of them could speak in a normal voice, and acted as the spokesperson.

"Sky above, voice within," said Master Arngeir, "It is good to see you once more, young Braev Lee."

Braev broke out in smile, "It is good to see you again, Master Arngeir."

Edea broke into a bow, which Tina grudgingly imitated before rushing to warm herself by a hearth.

Arngeir merely chuckled. "Ah, your youngest. She had done well to scale the mountain..."

"I've seen things, old man," said Tina, "And nothing is stopping me from meeting the big bad dragon."

"You are right for two of three about Paarthurnax," the old Greybeard chuckled.
Eilonwy was also dusting herself off as Braev spoke. "So, he remains on top of the mountain for the most part, am I correct?"

"Aye," Arngeir nodded. "The place most suited for the deepest of mediation and reflection."

"I can't believe that he's over twenty-five thousand years old," said Eilonwy with awe.

"And yet in the cosmic scale of things, he is hardly a baby," pointed out the ancient man.

"Oh, the things he must have seen and learned in his travels," gushed the sorceress girl.

"He has learned much...especially about himself," The old Graybeard noted. "Dragons of this realm are naturally inclined to arrogance and power. For him, he managed to keep it in check via his meditations. While he has risen to battle during apocalyptic times, Paarthurnax and his Dragons focus on bettering themselves. Being born violently inclined and becoming good through persistent and constant effort. It is a thing many humans would be wise to emulate."

Tina listened, and was oddly silent. All of sentient kind would be good to do that...but the truth is some reveled in their madness and cruelty...

This Paarthurnax must have a good heart under it all, Tina reasoned. There were some people who relished madness and evil, totally and willingly embraced it even. For those, she'd give them the taste of her bombs and the steel of her knife.

All others could join her for tea sometime. Like that boy Chara.

Weirdo, but an OK guy, just like the rest of the main Dreemurr family. King 'Fluffybuns' they called Asgore at times. He looked intimidating, but he was really a big softie.

King "Fluffybuns" might go apeshit if his family was threatened but otherwise he was an honest and kind as they claimed. That honesty got him in trouble with King K. Rool from time to time, and in the old days it really got him in trouble with King Aerys.

She was interrupted as Edea popped a question to Master Arngeir. "Master, will I be able to learn the voice?"

Arngeir stroked his beard in thought. "In time, child, in time...it's a tricky process, and misuse of it could lead to disastrous consequences. The founding on this order actually stemmed from misuse, and a resolve for proper usage," He sighed. "Pity the Blades only see it as a weapon."

Edea seemed frustrated, "I understand, Master, but a time of war is coming and I'll need every advantage I can get to protect our people."

The old master raised an eyebrow, "You speak of the Tyranids. Your father did not possess the Voice when he and his kin went to fight the Great Devourer."

"I admit, that was the case..." Braev nodded. "But that was then. This is now. Some say they may be coming in full force this time. I received a message from Kisuke and Momohime earlier. They had recently dealt with a small scouting fleet."

"Small being a relative term," said Edea, referring to the Tyranids endless numbers.

Suddenly, something shook the castle, the mountain and the world seemingly.

Master Arngeir looked up as he recognized the shout of the Greybeard's grand master. "Tyranids or
no, I think at this time it would be unwise to keep Paarthurnax waiting."

Braev nodded as the three girls were also quite ready. Best not keep a dragon waiting.

Soon, they were in the courtyard, ready to continue their ascent.

Past the courtyard through the hallways of the monastery they went. A large metal gate opened up into a storm worse than the one they passed through on the seven thousand steps.

Steeling themselves against the cold, the family marched on, up to a lonely stone outcropping. It was mostly empty, save for a few spirits that were driven back easily...

...and at last, they reached the very top.

At first they didn't see him, so well was he camouflaged. Even Braev's experienced eyes could hardly pick it out.

But when the thing atop the rocks shifted, that was when Master Paarthurnax chose to reveal himself. Wings as wide as a Royal Thunderhawk ship spread wide. With a flap, Paarthurnax shot into the air in a way no thing as large and heavy as him should have.

The Dragon came down, touching on the frozen earth as gentle as a sparrow. "Greetings, Duke Braev Lee," the creature purred.

"Master Paarthurnax," Braev returned, bowing his head in return, as did the others.

"So you have braved the elements to climb the mountain...I presume this must be a matter of great importance," Paarthurnax noted.

Tina and Eilonwy took in the large dragon. His age was obvious, with cracked horns and slightly tattered wings.

While Paarthurnax was devoted to peace and peaceful ideals, he was not weak. Tina looked in awe as she picked out what was a bullet hole in the dragon's snout, damage on one of his flanks that looked like it had been caused by a missile and scarring caused either by acid or some kind or strange magic spell.

"Don't be shy," came his baritone voice, as if the mountain itself were speaking to her. "I've dreamed of you, Tiny Tina, and I have seen great things in your past and future," The huge golden eyes locked directly onto her.

"Er...me?" Tina was honestly confused at that.

"Yes...one who suffered much for one so young, yet endured and survived in a hellish world, run by the uncaring...and yet, despite all, and despite your...colorful personality, compassion remains in your heart," Paarthurnax settled onto another segment of his area as he spoke.

Tina blushed, "Ah, I'm not all that."

"Not right now," said the Dragon, "But you will be. You and your family will be tested, but I believe that is nothing new for you."

Edea knelt before the dragon, supplicating, "Master Paarthurnax, we answer your summons and come seeking your guidance."

The old dragon nodded. "Times are tense...Stark has taken up the mantle of Hand, the Tyrannids and
Grox are closing in, and pirates are on the rise," He flexed his neck. "Nightmares have also been present to me...The Chaos Gods are plotting, waiting for their chance." The Dragon shut his smoldering eyes for a moment. "Chaos feeds on war, on pain and fear. Like the Grox, they indirectly profit from the actions of the Tyranids. Much as I wish to avoid the temptation of battle, the stakes may be higher than my own soul. I've even begun to dream again of Akatosh, my ancestor God. And Bahamut, draconic deity of order."

"And...Tiamat?" Braev asked cautiously.

"Her too, I am afraid," Paarthurnax confirmed. "We may have to be on our guard, more than ever. The Dragons must and will play an integral role in the coming conflict. All we can hope to control is the cause for which we fight. My kind will help House Lee fight the Tyranids, just as the Chromatic dragons will seek to scavenge upon the dead and dying; individuals and whole planets."

Edea swallowed, her pulse racing, "Master Paarthurnax, will you teach me the way of the Voice?"

Braev did not scold his daughter. He figured that kind of training would be important.

The dragon turned to her, intrigued. "Hmmm, you have great potential indeed. Hot-headed, yes, but can be tempered with this type of training," He paused in thought as he got closer. "Perhaps...we should start simple. Your potential is strong, and in my dreams I saw that you had been reading the old books of runes which your father kept supposedly hidden from you.

Braev did look up, but he would talk to his daughter later.

"Remember that for a Dragon, our shouts are simply our language. Magic is the very syntax we use to communicate." the Dragon went on. "Start with a simple one. FUS, meaning force." As he spoke the word, a glowing rune appeared on the snow.

Edea looked down at the word in the snow. She composed herself, trying to focus...then spoke.

"FUS!"

A powerful wave emitted from her.

It was not like how she'd imagined it. The force pushed her back as much as it pushed forwards. She was thrown backwards onto hard packed snow, nearly as hard as ice. She gasped for breath as she tried to right herself.

Paarthurnax nodded, "You know the word, but you have yet to fully understand it. It is force, a basic concept in your human physics. Try again, and let me add to the challenge."

The dragon opened his maw and a new rune appeared in the snow. "RO!"

Edea groaned at the mounting challenge.

Braev watched as this happened. Training could be tough, but needed. The war was coming soon. They had to be ready to be ready by any means necessary.

"FUS RO!" shouted Edea, a wave of invisible energy crashing into Paarthurnax. This time, the girl stood strong. Her legs in a powerful position mostly used against taller, heavier enemies in sword combat.

The girl knew she had to project force, and she remembered that every force has an equal and opposite reaction. She must master the reaction as well as the action.
Paarthurnax purred, like some gigantic wild cat, "Krosis, good, young one. Let us try the final part of the Thu'um, or shout. DA or Push. While RO is balance."

Edea breathed as the others watched, ready for the next blow.

"FUS RO DA!" The Unrelenting Force was a powerful thing to behold, causing even the Dragon to brace himself.

Edea stumbled, from that one shout she felt like she'd just run a marathon... then run a second one right after. She panted, out of breath and face flushed.

"You start to grasp a small bit of the Thu'um," said Paarthurnax. "You're a quick study and passionate. I can teach you more words, but you will find more of the words in hidden crypts. Consider that part of your education. Now, are you ready to know another word?"

Edea gasped, barely standing up, "Yes, Master Paarthurnax."

The Dragon paused in thought. What word would work next...?

"Fighting the Tyranids, you will face waves of enemies like the pounding seas," said the Dragon, "But also threats unseen and hidden. Learn the Aura whisper to locate mutants, animunculi, spirits and undead. There is a hidden threat not far from us. Try using the shout on that."

Paarthurnax opened his jaws and let out a new call and a new set of three runes, "LAAS YA NIR!"

Edea looked at the runes and focused again as the others looked about, weapons at ready. Eilonwy focused, channeling light magic into an arrow.

She was tired, still not recovered from her first Thu'um. But she needed to do this, not just to prove herself to her father, but to show that she had what it took to fight in what would be the greatest war in the last thousand years of galactic history.

"LAAS YA NIR!" she shouted. Life. Seek. Hunt. These were things she knew better than the back of her hand.

There it was, a red outline visible through stone, snow and blizzard.

...What was THAT!? Eilonwy did not bother to ask, she simply fired away.

Something shrieked and fell over, though the red glow did not fade away.

Though Edea saw something out of the corner of her eye, something fast and moving for her father. Her own bow came up and fired a shot at the thing moving under the snow.

The Deathclaw shrieked as the arrow struck between its armor plates.

Originally nothing more than chameleons, the creatures were mutated into savage creatures and spread across the galactic map, killing whenever they could. They were seen as dangerous threats and eliminated whenever possible.

Braev let out a battlecry and drew his Valaryan void sword. For these things to start appearing so soon after the scout fleet at Shelbyville station. The Tyranids must be more prepared than anyone suspected.

Last war, the Hive Mind had used Lictors and Deathclaws to take out the Kingdom's leadership, destabilizing the war effort and making the war drag on on far longer than it needed to.
Exhausted though she was, Edea let out a great shout and drew her own sword. "FUS RO DA!"

The creature, a servant of the Tyranid race, howled as it was knocked over the edge of the mountain by the cliff, tumbling all the way down to the ground...fatally.

"Your hired mercenaries are wise and powerful to survive such creatures," said Paarthurnax, "Just know that the war is not coming, it has already begun, like a cinder sparking a great forest fire."

Edea collapsed into her father's arms while Tiny Tina was overwhelmed with excitement.

Once she was older, maybe she ought to take up the way of the Voice. That'll knock some bastards about.

"Will you help us?" Braev asked, "We need your help in this fight. they're stronger than before, better prepared and they've gotten farther than last time."

Paarthurnax cocked his head, "You will have our aid in fighting the Tyranids. That is the beginning and the end of our participation. Against other enemies we will stay neutral, but the Great Devourer threatens all."

Well, no arguing with that. Likely for the best. Braev did NOT want to get them involved in Chaos. A corrupted dragon would be a headache to deal with.

"I'm gathering mercenaries," said Braev, "Largest group of them anywhere since the civil war and K. Rool's rebellion. The first of them will start arriving on planet by nightfall. I'd appreciate if you could fly over, just to let them know we have dragons on our side."

"And I want to ride on your back when you do it!" Tina demanded.

Paarthurnax ignored the girl for now, "A show of intimidation or proof of strength?"

"Perhaps a bit of both, depending on what kind of people they are," Brave answered simply, arms crossed in thought. "I pay well, but there's few mercenaries I truly trust." Braev iterated, "And the rest just need a gentle reminder of the force I can turn against my enemies. It'll keep desertion to a minimum."

Yes, certain mercs would only in it for payment. A few notable ones were trustworthy, as once they formed a contract, they would stick with it to the end...

...and then they were those like the Hooligans, consisting of Fang, Bark, and Bean, a trio of Beastkin who would only work for the highest bidder, and change sides at the drop of a hat.

In peaceful times, House Lee could afford to be picky with mercenaries. Hire only the best. The cost was almost always worth it. But with the Tyranids fast approaching, they'd need every man or woman who could swing a sword or fire a gun.

Much as Braev loathed to admit it, he was desperate. He needed all the weapons and firepower he could get right now. He just needed to watch his back.

"You will have your display," said Paarthurnax, "Though I must decline giving the child a ride. However, I suggest that young Edea flex her newfound voice. If nothing else, it will show your hirelings the extent of your and her power."

Tina simply shrugged. It was worth a shot.
Braev nodded as well. "Thank you, Master Paarthurnax," he said, and with that, he and the others once again began to descend.

Edea was standing again as the family went down the steps and away from the Monastery. "Father, are we going to talk about how you nearly lost your life?"

Braev shrugged, "I'm used to it, I nearly lost my life when I was Tina's age. By now I have a sixth sense to detect both danger and ugliness."

Braev had a tough life in his youth, but that was often times the way of the Galaxy. One must always be careful.

He looked up into the sky, seeing the stars above...full of so many dangers, but also wonders. he would protect it all to his last breath. He kept that in mind as he walked on.
"It's been years since I've been to this world," said Asgore Dreemurr, "I know I left it in Captain Olimar's hands, but it's been years. What if the Pikmin don't like me anymore?"

Toriel held her husband's hand aboard the fold space ship, "Dear, you are their noble lord. They will respect and revere you. You'll be just fine."

Asgore nodded as he took in who he selected. Undyne had come with Papyrus, the oddball but kind skeleton. The six Hyrule Champions were there as well. Additionally, he had the three Keybladers with them as well...Sora, Riku, and Kairi.

"I've never been to Pikmin world," said Sora, "Is it as beautiful as they say?"

Kairi corrected him, "The technical term for the world is PNF-404. That's the accurate term."

"That's not nearly as romantic, is it?" Riku joked.

Such good friends...even if they did tease each other.

Asgore spoke up. "Quite beautiful, thought it IS a Death World. It's full of large creatures and environments, and some of the animals would be happy to eat us, and..." He paused. "Night time is when we don't work, but either go back into orbit, or hide in an underground base."

"There's always high radiation on the planet," Urbosa pointed out, "Take your pills. Though night has its own dangers; that's when most of the predators come out."

"The Red Bulborb is one of the strongest," Revali elaborated, "And one that I hate the most."

Sora sighed and rubbed the back of his head. "Death Worlds...can't live with them, but can't live without them."

"And this Death World gives House Dreemurr most of its starchy vegetables," Asgore happily pointed out.

"So risk of death and dismemberment in exchange for potatoes and carrots," said Sora, "That's . . . a fair trade."

"AND FRUIT." Papyrus cheerfully added in. "VERY BIG FRUIT, I MUST ADD."

"Yeah, and those big bugs are ALSO a good source of food." Undyne added with her own grin. "So be a man and tough it out. And it's what I like about this place," she went on, "Normally predator meat is tough and nasty, only good for a famine diet. But these giant bugs taste like crab and lobster. If they don't kill you and tear your intestines out your asshole, they're good with butter."

"But luckily we're arriving in the day," said Asgore, "And the local vassal is very friendly, I still hope he likes me."

"Er, of course he would." Sora replied, somewhat put off by the idea of having his guts pulled out of his ass.

"And the Pikmin...cute little guys as well." Kairi smiled. "Reminds you that sometimes it's the small ones who can contribute a lot."
"Oh, don't we know it." Daruk chuckled warmly, as he, Urbosa, Revali, and Mipha all owed their revival to a certain small creature.

"Yes indeed," said Toriel, "They're small, but they can lift twenty times their own weight and they're tremendously intelligent as a group. As small as they are, they're valuable for finding lost relics on the planet and they've learned to defend themselves against local predators."

"Nothing like teamwork to get one across." Riku noted with a nod.

Mipha was silent, thinking privately about the revival of herself and the fellow Champions...

Princess Mipha of the Zora species reeled her weapon, a trident. "I'm hoping to get to explore the planet's seas. Since my resurrection, I can't get enough of good seas water. I'll never take it for granted again."

Revali...was not too fond of being reminded of the process. Very shortly after the liberation of the Divine Beasts, Zelda and the other Dreemurr scientists had arrived and transferred their 'data' into disks. Taking them back to the main station, they utilized said data with the genes of an axolotl, growing perfect copies of the original bodies, which the data/souls were transferred into.

He had his pride. His loss to Ganon years ago was bad enough. But being raised from the dead with the help of a wriggling little worm, not even a full amphibian, was deeply embarrassing. After spice, these little aquatic amphibians were the most valuable creatures around, as either food or sources of age defying stem cells.

He still hated the ugly bastards. And PNF-400 had a large population of domestic and wild axolotl. All the more reason for Dreemurr to hold onto this world.

They were small, and hid themselves well against the large predators of the area, be it Bulborbs, Shergrubs, Snagrets, and more.

"Now remember that the atmosphere has a very high oxygen content," said Toriel, "At first it'll be invigorating, but it might cause hypotension. Be ready to adapt to magic and with the balance pills."

"YES!" shouted Papyrus, "IT IS A HAZARDOUS DEATH WORLD, BUT I, THE GREAT PAPYRUS, CAN PROTECT YOU!"

Kairi winced, "Thank you, not so loud next time."

Papyrus had a rather...bombastic personality, and a strong voice to go with it.

Soon they would be landing, and it would be time to disembark.

The landing was soft, they barely even noticed. Just as good, as Papyrus would have mad a rather big deal about it. The docking bay door opened and the combined Dreemurr team was treated to one of the most beautiful Death World in the galaxy.

A large garden, full of plants, fruit, and some vegetables. Still, the sounds of various wild beasts could be heard, marking this place as dangerous.

"Pikmin generally live in communities of a hundred or so," said Toriel, "They grow from seeds like plants, but live and move like animals. Their natural enemies are the various species of Bulborbs"

"So don't pluck anything here," said Urbosa, "Or else you might disrupt the Pikmin seedlings."
The group moved on, walking through the densest plant growth, making sure to keep out of sight of any predators.

Among the plants they passed was a tall stalk with berries on it.

"Ah, the Burgeoning Spiderwort." Asgore noted. "We use the berries to create sprays that either invigorate our allies or petrify our foes."

Toriel pointed a a lagoon with dense vegetation by the shores. "Over there, fiddleheads. Very nutritious when cooked, very easy to store and preserve for long space voyages."

Her face suddenly fell, "And there . . ." she trailed off.

By the north edge of the lagoon was a mass of dense, yellow resin.

"And that is the remains of a Xenomorph nest," said a crestfallen Asgore.

"Wonderful." Riku muttered as he summoned his Keyblade with Kairi and Sora, while the others readied their own weapons and magic. Looks like the trip was about to face some unexpected issues...

"I'd hoped there wouldn't be another infestation," said Asgore, heartbroken, "I don't want this for my people, be they monster, Pikmin or human."

"Captain Olimar has been a good vassal," said Toriel, summoning a magic fireball, "We should link with him as soon as possible."

A scurrying sound caught all their attention, and they whirled about...

...nothing.

Kairi bit her lip as he held her Keyblade in fighting position, "I miss fighting the Heartless. They just show themselves and attack with overwhelming force. No stealth."

"If only we were that lucky," said Riku, "But if the Xenomorphs aren't attacking in force, it means they're either asleep or the infestation is just starting."

"Then we have a chance to squash them like the roaches they are!" Undyne snarled, spear at ready.

A Red Bulborb stumbled out of the underbrush. Moaning and panting, something was wrong with this example of PNF-400's apex predator. Classified as stem-mammals, the Bulborb species of various types covered every single biome and habitat on this planet. Their bite could also kill even seasoned warriors.

Which made it all the more horrifying when a section of the rounded monster's chest just bulged out and burst into a shower of blood. The Xenomorph Chestburster squealed its first cries as the party beheld their enemy.

A swift arrow from Revali quickly ended its new life. The Rito scoffed. "Disgusting little bastards..."

Sora sighed. "Well, good thing we came here now to help stomp out the invasion."

"Says the guy who wanted to pick up food from Ferngully, Popstar, or even the Land before Time." Kairi teased.

"That's called being a grownup," groused Undyne, "You want a meal and a cigar, and then a world-
"Judging by the remnants of that resin," said Toriel, "The Pikmin must already be fighting. It's still early in the infestation."

"Which leaves the question of how they got onto this planet in the first place," said Kairi.

"Meteors?" Daruk guessed, before he growled. "Or maybe some damn Skavens came by to seed them here for their own amusement!" He readied his Boulder Breaker. "Either way, they're going down!"

Privately, Daruk hoped the Xenomorphs did not have a dog type with them. As a kid, dogs tended to chase him, implanting him with a fear of them.

"Meteor, maybe," said Revali, "It would have to be a small one to get past the orbital scanner network. That or they're getting better at aiming and shooting eggs from their hive spires."

A cloud passed over the sky and blocked out the sun. Rain began to fall, freezing and cold.

A mechanical whine filled the air and the party readied for a fight.

Tensions could be high on a Death World. Never know when a wrong move could be your last. Especially when invaders where involved.

However, the small humanoid on a floating platform hardly looked like a threat. Though like the Pikmin, Captain Olimar was a being who held his own against some of the worst forces in the Galaxy.

"Lord Asgore!" he gasped through his helmet, designed to protect him from the toxic oxygen atmosphere. "Lady Toriel! I have terrible news!"

"Is this about the Xenomorph invasion?" Revali deadpanned. "We already know about all that, so save your breath."

"It's not just a local matter," squeaked Olimar, waving his arms frantically. His short height certainly did nothing to make him more intimidating in Revali's eyes. "I've been scanning the subspace networks, sending messages back and forth with learned men and women. I think the Xenomorphs finally have themselves a fully matured Empress and I know where she is!"

"Then why are standing here for?!" Undyne snapped, spear at ready. "Let's take the bitch out! NYYYAAARGGGGHH!"

Hot-blooded to the very core.

"The Empress is not here!" shouted Olimar louder than he meant to. "The Empress arose when the most ancient and powerful of the Xenomorph queens fought to the death. Last word I got said that she is somewhere in the vicinity of planet Demonzu! And the local infestation, those have popped up everywhere that someone knows where she is. Most of my research contacts have gone dark in the last twenty-four hours."

"Then what's changed?" demanded Urbosa, "We kill the local infestation and find ourselves a way to kill the Empress."

"And do it soon," said Asgore gravely, "In the war with Hive Fleet Gorgon, Rickon Stark killed the current empress and took the Xenomorphs out of the war. It's the Shadow in the Warp that's
triggered the need for an Empress in their species; they're ready to stake their claim on this galaxy."

"Right, and so now, focus on this invasion." Toriel stated firmly.

Already, she heard the sounds of Pikmin approaching, sensing Asgore and Toriel, ready to aid their leaders. It was good to know they still knew and trusted the Monsters.

Already, seven breeds were emerging. The fireproof Red, the high-jumping and shockproof Yellow, the aquatic Blue, the strong Purple, the toxic White, the stony Rock, and the Flying breed.

Pikmin as a rule were adaptable. That more than pure ferocity or size had delivered their species through more than one mass extinction on this planet. Olimar was their leader, but by virtue of the antenna on his helmet and the victories he'd secured against the predatory Bulborbs.

"My flyers will scout ahead," said Olimar, "Let the white ones take point, as Xenomorphs find them bitter to eat."

"Lead the way, but be quick about it," growled Urbosa.

The Flying Pikmin took flight to scout the area, looking for the ebony abominations. The Whites also went ahead, as did the Rocks, which the Xenomorphs also found...unpleasant to eat.

White Pikmin followed after them. Pure white and with eerie red eyes, they could see hidden things and through stealth fields. They'd be instrumental in locating the nascent hive. It also helped that the newest generation of White Pikmin exploded in contact with alien blood, helping to kill the beasts.

And if any Pikmin were lost, well, the bodies of the Xenomorphs could be carried back and processed to create new seeds from the organic Onion ships.

The Pikmin used the bodies of their own predators to produce seeds. It was an ingenious adaptation and a triumph of evolution.

Urbosa was so busy scanning for the undergrowth when she saw something leathery and yellowish flying through the sky. She gasped as she realized what it was.

Just in time to see the flying, winged Facehugger snatch a flying Pikmin out of the air like a hawk.

As the two went tumbling down, Revali once again fired an arrow, striking the face hugger down. The Pikmin perished, but nothing else could be done.

Say one would about Revali, but there was no denying his skill as an archer.

"Looks like they've found a new way to spread their accursed seed," said the Rito archer, "Let's be moving."

"The Hive will be located somewhere near geological activity," said Undyne, "You know anywhere to fit the bill, Olimar?"

"Yes, there are some hot springs less than a minute from our location."

“Well then,” Urbosa drew his sword and shield. “Let’s take the fight to them.”

Zelda herself was armed with a powerful laser weapon, based off the Guardians of her home world.

The air grew humid as the hot springs approached. Holding her laser, Zelda spoke to the small vassal of House Dreemurr. "Olimar, when you can, I need you to link me all information you have about
"The last one was born from a Queen who was at least five thousand years old. I'll give you my files in hard copy, I believe the new Empress has figured out how to read our communications."

"Truly the Xenomorphs hive intelligence is something to fear," said Zelda as they were greeted by bubbling pools of water and volcanic rock.

Footprints of Xenomorphs were about the area, showing they were here. Only...where exactly?

Urbosa closed her, just listening...

...and without a word, snapped her fingers. A bolt of lightning came down...and struck the Xenomorph sneaking up on the group.

The Xenomorph warrior twitched and thrashed once or twice before laying still. Urbosa breathed a sigh of relief before looking through the mists, seeing a rocky outcropping that gave off a stream of sulphurous fumes. A rocky outcropping surrounded by alien resin.

No doubt about it now...this was Xenomorph territory. Just lovely.

The group moved in, finding most disgustingly a large, pulsating abdomen. Part of a nascent queen, the large, fleshy, translucent organ was actually a heavily mutated drone who'd bitten the Queen and become a permanent part of her body. That drone would then metamorphosis into the Queen's main egg producing organ. A sickening parody of sexual reproduction.

The abdomen was putting out tendrils, sucking up minerals from the hot spring water and absorbing silicone from the surrounding rock. But the Queen was nowhere near.

But still, might as well crush this abomination, since they were here anyways. Daruk seemed to take charge.

"One pounding coming right up!" He said with a loud voice, charging in and using his Breaker to smash up the ugly thing into pieces.

Goop, gore and slime exploded everywhere. Daruk shouted as the evil smelling slime landed in his mouth. Despite the seriousness of the situation, Riku couldn't help but laugh at the Goron's misfortune.

Riku almost missed it when the long, black tail swung at the Goron's back.

Daruk cried out in pain as the bony point of the nascent queen's tail struck him in the shoulder blade.

Thankfully, he was a sturdy fellow, but it still hurt quite a bit. He reached over with a free arm and grabbed the tail, and swung the queen about, slamming her to and fro.

It was their luck this was a small queen, not fully grown and with no Preatorians to protect her. She was still, however, a ruthless and remorseless killing machine. Even Daruk's prodigious strength wasn't enough to kill her. Like an eel, she slipped out of his grasp and tried to escape.

"Stop her!" screamed Toriel as the party unleashed their projectile weapons.

Kairi, Revali, Undyne, and Zelda all unleashed their considerable ranged attacks, mowing down on the queen. The queen began to stagger, taking heavy damage from these four alone. The acidic blood
dripped on the ground, body covered in arrows, fire, spears, and burns.

Then, with a great aim, Zelda fired off a powerful laser, ripping right through the queen's body.

As young as the Queen was, she'd taken enough firepower to burn a Space Marine to ashes. Thrashing and twitching, she remained alive still.

Of all people, it was Asgore who stepped in to do the job. With his magic, he fired a bolt of magical fire-lightning through the monster's head, ending it once and for all. The monarch of House Dreemurr breathed heavily, as though exhausted by the act of violence.

Maybe he was exhausted. The Xenomorph Queen was a parody of the familial love that he held dearest.

All she really did was give birth...but no love, kindness, or affection of any sort...just breeding weapons to fight and die for her.

Nice.

She herself formed the cornerstone of a dangerous weapons system that posed a threat to all carbon-based life. Spawn, face huggers reproduced entirely through rape. In later stages, the black goo infested air and water, hijacking the reproductive organs of sentient beings and caused them to fatally give birth to monsters of unspeakable forms.

Toriel yanked her husband back as the queen's acid blood spilled over the ground. Throwing up a magic shield, the queen's blood reacted with the ground water and exploded violently.

"Thanks," breathed Riku as the acid blood evaporated on the magic shield. He did not look forward to being melted down by acidic blood. He still had a long life ahead of him.

Kairi sighed as she looked over the mess. "Sheesh...they leave such a mess, these beasts. Now we have to clean up since they don't bother with it."

Mipha surveyed the damage, "The bodies should be burned, a simple matter; it's the most effective way to avoid any secondary infections."

"I hate the stench," said Sora, already wrinkling his nose, "They smell like burned computer parts when they go up. It's the silicone, I think."

Some of the Pikmin, mostly the poison-proof White, came scurrying up, ready to take back the bodies, though, for reproduction. Scooping up the bodies, the hummed to themselves as they carried off the corpse back to the Onions, ready to covert them to seeds, which would then rapidly grow into more Pikmin.

Zelda watched them go. "Well, at least the Xenomorphs are good for something..."

"We have the science of Nui for helping us safely dispose of the dead creatures," said Captain Olimar ruefully. "The creatures were only on planet for an hour and they managed to devastate the local wildlife, but they will recover."

Asgore sighed. The Galaxy bred terrors the likes most have never ever imagined, and sometimes it felt like a never-ending battle against them all.

But still they preserved, in hopes for a better future for them all.
Inevitably, however, the horrors of the galaxy bred savagery into the peoples among the stars. "We can't afford to fight a two front war, Xenomorph and Tyranid on either end," said Toriel. "Time is against us," He turned to his ensemble team, "I will deal with Captain Olimar and this world. I need you to head in the direction of Demonzu; find the empress."

"So...we will need there help as well..." Asgore noted solemnly.

"It's more than that." Toriel sighed. "I feel that eventually, we may have a civil war on our hands. Tensions are rising, with all the invaders and schemes between houses."

"Lord Stark's acceptance of being Hand is not helping." Kairi noted

"We may have a civil war," said Toriel, "But the North remains strong. Ned Stark might be in a vulnerable place, but the real pressure is on the King. He's the one who can unite us, or burn everything in the name of greed and power."

"Oh, I have no idea which one King. K. Rool will choose," muttered Riku sarcastically.

Zelda sighed, then noticed the sun was setting. "Ah, perhaps we should relocate to our underground base here for now..."

"Agreed," said Kairi, "I've had enough fighting for one day. I don't want to stick around and meet the native predators."

"AND WE MAY FEAST ON ROASTED ROOT VEGETABLES!" belted out Papyrus,

"My ears!" groaned Riku, who'd been standing next to the very loud skeleton

The lab was an underground facility stocked with food, kitchens, beds, living rooms, test rooms, books, and more. Good to settle down for a night.

Beds were provided, the Pikmin themselves put down roots and hibernated like the plants they were originally descended from. The meal provided was simple but nourishing, and with the amount of butter in it, it was a very comforting soup.

A good way to end such a rough day.

As the team gathered about the table, more discussions were made.

"So how old is this Empress?" asked Sora over a bowl of stew.

"The last Xenomorph Empress was put about ten thousand to five thousand years old," said Captain Olimar, "The current one, before my research partners went dark, was estimated to be about the age of the Doom of Valarya. As that ancient empire breathed its last, she would have burst from her host."

"These creatures live long...but they lack history." Asgore noted. "All they do is kill and evolve in never-ending bloody cycle."

"We've been lucky," said Toriel, "For the last thirty years, the species has been at war with itself; between the black and the so called red Xenomorphs. The emergence of an Empress would end the war and unite the two splinter groups of aliens."

"I've never seen a red Xeno," said Sora.
"It's due to the name of a rare gene they have," Toriel explained, "They're more aggressive than the black strain; but visually they look alike."

"So...good chance we may have seen some already." Riku noted.

"Possibly." Asgore nodded. "And to prepare for this, we are having you, Sora, and Kairi travel to the Gourmet World in person to train. You'll start in the Safe Zone, then work your way to the Gourmet Zone."

Sora blushed at this, "Wow, you actually trust us with that?"

Undyne laughed as she inhaled her meal, "You kids have taken out Heartless, that's good. I heard you've even taken on minor Chaos demons, also good. That's fine for the minor races, but Gourmet World is where the big leagues are at, and that's where you kids need to prove yourselves to House Dreemurr."

It would be dangerous, that was sure. Even the 'Safe Zone' had a great number of dangers. Certain regions of the Safe Zone were on Gourmet Zone level, such as the Death Falls, a powerful waterfall also known as 'Executioner's Fall, because it killed anyone who tried to get through it improperly.

Another Safe Zone danger area was the Death Season Forest, a hellish area where the Honey Prison was located, and where the worst the Dreemurr worlds had to offer were kept.

Time on Gourmet World would hopefully teach the kids respect. While Dreemurr owned the world to the eyes of the Galaxy, they shared it with the Eight Kings. There were powerful and dangerous forces in the galaxy, but not all of them were evil. Some required respect, some demanded tribute. Some were simply neutral.

And when they were old enough, perhaps Asriel, Frisk, and Chara would be sent as well. They could use such training to survive in a tough Galaxy.

 Granted they'd already gone through some hard times, especially where that bastard Flowey was involved. However, survival had the unfortunate side effect of breeding complacency if it became a source of pride.

Gourmet World was a place with no room for the arrogant. Something Asgore definitely wanted to avoid encouraging in his kids.

Flowey...he was nothing more than a flower once, until, with Asriel's DNA, they attempted to create a form of life that could acts as Soul Containers, like the Divine Beasts.

But Flowey was an early experiment, and flawed.

The flower proved angry, homicidal and even tried to manipulate Frisk and Chara into committing genocide upon the monster race. At some point, the Flower had even entered a pact with the demons of Hell to exact his vengeance on House Dreemurr and realize his twisted ambitions.

He was severed from that, though, and they decided not to kill him, but seal him away...perhaps giving him a sense of peace. Asriel was a bit unnerved by the whole event, and they decided to do more research before trying again.

As much as Flowey was an evil little shit, they didn't wish to yet hand him over to the maniacal Doom Marine for his dealings with Hell.

Nobility needed to forgive as much as they needed to fight.
For now, Flowey was in the past. Now it was time to deal with the current threats.

Speaking of which...

"I know we have to deal with Demons, Hostile Xenos, and pirates," Urbosa began. "But I've been hearing...things."

"Things?" Toriel looked up.

Urbosa sighed. "An increase in activity by Chromatics."

"Oh, wonderful," groaned Asgore, "I haven't had to fight those infernal creatures since the civil war. I still remember when they took to plundering our smaller stations trying to find treasure."

"Vile beasts," spat out Revali, "Ruled by greed, evil to the last and opportunistic as vultures."

"They were keeping to themselves," said Urbosa, "They've been staying near the low population sectors of space, plundering farm animals here and there. But six months ago, a large force of them hit a warzone near Jumanji; a local conflict and made off with a considerable fortune and many dead."

Mipha blinked. "Don't they usually not associate with each other for the most part?" She asked.

Daruk sighed. "Time's are changing. Maybe they recognize the need to align with one another to make bigger payouts." He grimaced. "Even those Reds know it, and they're as greedy and vain as hell."

"They'll band together if they smell a big enough threat," said Urbosa, "Usually, though, they join up when they're being pressured by other Dragons; usually the Metallics."

"What's the difference?" Sora asked.

Revali rolled his eyes, "Uneducated heathen,"

"Shut up, turkey." Kairi growled. "Basic line is, the Chromatics are rude, evil, greedy, and vain. The Metallics are good, wise, and... odd at times."

"Aggressive, definitely. and proud," said Toriel, "But they're for the most part creatures of order. Some of them are even quite noble. While they appear quite ferocious, they're actually sentient beings of honor."

"We could use some help," said Undyne, "I don't care how many sheep or cattle I'd have to sacrifice to them, I'd give my left leg for a few dragons in the fight to come."

"Well, for now, we must focus on making sure we are prepared for the coming storm." Zelda noted. "It's not going to wait for us, and sometimes it can sneak up on us."

"Eh?" Toriel looked up. "You're referring to the incident on Popstar."

"Yes, when an unit and I caught a small group of Grox trying to plant a beacon to lure in Tyranids. Now there was a bloody mess," said Zelda, "The Grox live and even thrive on worlds that Tyranids have turned into airless husks. It's their dream environment."

"Truly twisted," muttered Asgore, "Some days I think it's easier to fight the threats who are mindless than the ones who can think."
"At the end of the day," said Undyne, "There are no good threats."

"Thankfully we drove them away from the planet before they could plant it." Zelda added. "But it was quite the close call."

"Indeed." Toriel nodded. "Popstar is a vital world to us, with its food production. It's more vital than ever to safeguard the agro-worlds, the mining worlds, the small worlds," she noted. "From the far away farm planets to tiny planetoids whose main export is liquid methane and natural gas. It's going to be a million different, boring raw materials that keeps the war machine going."

"Don't tell me you're going to stick us guarding ammonia ice mines or a fish farm," groaned Riku.

"We go where people need us," chided Kairi.

"Well, make sure nothing stupid happens." Revali noted dryly.

"Oh, that does remind me." Sora rubbed his head. "A platoon of Orks once almost snuck past me and a unit of soldiers on one of our worlds.

"...How did Orks of all species almost sneak by?" Undyne asked flatly.

"...They were purple." Sora admitted lamely.

"Orks as a rule aren't stealthy," reprimanded Undyne, "Even Ork Kommandos are quiet up until you get close to them. Then they're as stealthy as a landmine."

"Orks paint themselves all the time to gain various buffs provided by their Waaagh field," Mipha pointed out, "Maybe these ones believe hard enough that purple paint gives them a stealth boost."

"ER, WHY?" Papyrus asked.

"Because no one would ever expect to see a purple Ork." Mipha smiled in a odd way.

"By Hylia, I hate that fact about them." Riku muttered. "They can do anything as long as enough of them believe it so."

"THAT . . . IS ACTUALLY THE KIND OF ASS BACKWARDS LOGIC AN ORK WOULD USE," remarked Papyrus very loudly.

"Lucky with Orks, their beliefs are pretty inconsistent. So is their tech," laughed Revali. "At range, they got about thirty percent accuracy with guns, and while it's powerful their tech can be almost as unreliable as Skaven tech. One time a whole Ork artillery battalion went up in smoke because a Goblin got some wires crossed."

"Yeah, well," Undyne spoke up. "Keep it mind poor accuracy matters little when a hundred of those guns are shooting at you."

"It was a strategy that a number of unscrupulous leaders in the galaxy used," remarked Urbosa, "Take raw recruits, give them a rapid firing weapon and march them in waves across an open space. They'll do damage and you can raise an army quickly that way. While Orks do it better because their recruits are utterly fearless and tankier than most humanoids."

"They only reason they haven't killed us yet is because they often focus on fighting each other." Riku noted.

Asgore sighed. "Yes, sometimes our survival depends not he fact our enemies also fight amongst
themselves." He stood up. "Well, enough grim talk for now. Let us all retire for now and face the future with hopes and dreams."

"I'm all jittery," said Sora, "I'm not sure I can sleep.

"Get over it, kid," said Undyne, "A soldier who fights tired or hungry if they can help it is a fool. Take care of yourself like you take care of your weapons."

Already Link was making his way to his quarters, Zelda and Mipha with him. Yes, those three were in a relationship together.

Link had always been an easygoing guy. While Zelda had old-fashioned notions of monogamy, Link was a more free spirited soul. He'd gone on many heated romps in the wilds, while he never grudged Zelda her affairs with women; in fact he encouraged it on her part.

And Mipha, she was something special.

The Zora Princess was a childhood friend of his in the past before the Calamity. She had been working on the attempt to marry him after the whole ordeal was over.

Like Zelda, she too grew up with old school notions of what being a woman and wife meant. She was afraid that Link would ask her to give up her own affairs with women; something which had not happened.

Link was many things, but possessive was never one of them.

He was a good man, and they knew that as he led them to his bedroom.

Revali watched them all go with a scoff, before he made his to his own room.

He knew what they'd be getting up to. But he didn't care; he was a man without attachment.

"Hey, bird boy," laughed Urbosa, "Care for a roll in the sheets?" said the confident desert woman.

Revali grumbled and retreated to his room as Urbosa laughed as she headed out to sleep as well, Daruk soon going as well. Riku had his own chambers as well, while Sora and Kairi shared one of their own.

Revali didn't have much time for romance. He had no wish to get attached, not with a war coming up. One day, he dreamed of siring a whole slew of offspring to carry on his name, but he needed to earn that.

For so long he'd been dead for all practical purposes. He needed to redeem himself for the imprisonment of his soul by Ganon. And while Ganon might be losing his war on Hyrule, he hadn't fully lost yet.

He was weak now, and the Guardians and Divine Beats were under Dreemurr control...but the beast would not go do quietly. He would fight to the bitter end.

Soon, only Asgore and Toriel were left in the dining room.

"How are you feeling, husband?" Toriel asked.

"Less sure of myself then ever," said Asgore.

Toriel smiled. "Let us get some rest for now, and we'll face the days with optimism. And don't worry
about the kids. Sans has an eye on them."

"I'd be lost without you," said Asgore to his wife, "I need you to help me."

"I'm not going anywhere," she said sweetly, embracing her husband, "All the Tyranids in the galaxy won't be able to move me from your side or lay a scratch on me."

Asgore nodded as they went to their own room for the night. Time to rest...and face the new day.
The world Fiore was a glittering jewel orbiting a young, white star. The Space Marine Battle Barge heading towards it was like the tip of a knife, prepared to destroy.

The barge floated through the void, just having jumped through fold space. Onboard was a military force stronger than most planetary defense forces and one that had ended more lives than any of the local xeno threats.

Not just Space Marines were on it. Kremlings and Zingers also occupied the depths of the massive ship. In addition, hired help in the form of Gnolls were about, ready to pillage and plunder.

At the head of it all stood Pridak.

The Space Marines in their black armor walked back and forth, for as the King's Guard, they were the elite of the elite. Lethal, merciless and utterly obedient. Pridak could hear them chant as they prepared their weapons.

"We fear not out mortality, we'll serve to the best of our ability, we vow to serve our master, we vow to smite our enemies."

It was a low, humming chant in an ancient language that Pridak knew well. While he had no patience for the Marines ancient religion, he did admire their ability to back up all their claims.

'No fear' indeed. The Marines were practically fearless in the heat of battle, never backing down unless it made sense to do so. Rarely did they ever, so strong were they. Pridak was glad he had the privilege to serve as the military commander.

There was a time when the Space Marines were divided by civil war, Chapter fighting Chapter and battle brother fighting battle brother. By might and by strategic ability, King K. Rool had proven to the Marines that he was a worthy master, worthy of their lives and their kills.

The Marines even welcomed the Kremlings as support staff and backup soldiers, something very few races of warriors could claim.

Pridak shifted as the Tech-priest on board brought up a display of their target, The Fairy Tail Guild. Apparently, the Guild was getting a little too...rebellious and rowdy for its own good. K. Rool did not like that. At all. So he decided to clean up the mess before it spread.

No skin of Pridak's back. He could level an entire planet and sleep peacefully that night...but only if he had a reason. No use wasting resources for no good reason.

In that sense, the Fairy Tail Guild was a much more logical target than the rest of this world. While the Space Marines could easily kill all life on the planet in a few days, the real threat was the magic users that the Fairy Tail Guild housed.

This world was still valuable, as it contributed resources to the King's arms industry and it gave up surprisingly powerful conscripted armies whenever K. Rool needed large numbers of men at arms.

Taking out the Fairy Tail scum would send a message to the rest of the planet. Indeed, it was
important to remind people that King K. Rool only punished the guilty.

Otherwise, people would just see him as another Aerys. Last thing people needed right now while threats were being down. In fact, as if Demons, Hostile Xenos, and Pirates weren't bad enough, rumors were spreading of Chromatics making a comeback.

The dragons definitely were not going to take a vacation just because Tyranids were invading. If anything, they'd likely band together out of desperation and greed. Same went with the other little threats that bled off K. Rool's Kingdom like leeches.

The Space Marine Chapter Master stomped over to Pridak in an ornate cloak stitched with records of his various battle deeds. "Shall we begin with orbital bombardment?" The commander asked.

Pridak shook his head, "No, that might scare them into the bunkers beneath the Guild or cause unwanted collateral. Send in your men with drop pods, strike fast and kill first responders. From there, cut off communications ahead of the main invasion force."

"Yes, sir." The Master nodded in respect.

"The Marines will go first to thin them out," Pridak explained. "And the rest of our forces will follow to clear up the rabble." He held his blade in his claw, ready to shed blood. He could hear the Gnolls baying for blood. "How have the gnolls been keeping?" He demanded of the Tek Priest.

"The Gnolls have been starved for the last thirty six hours, per your instruction. They have been kept hydrated and their water dosed with aggression stimulating chemicals," came the priest's mechanical voice.

Pridak nodded, "Good, nothing like a bit of corpse eating to instill fear in the guilty."

Gnolls...savage brutes, but good for fighting, especially when spreading terror.

And now the hour of reckoning was here.

The Marine Vanguard ran for their pods in full battle armor, guns loaded, chainswords ready and seals of purity and magical protection attached to their armor. Like a stampede of muscle and ceramite they went. One of them even crushed a stray Gnoll under foot; not that the Marines noticed or cared.

It was like stepping on an ant, and it was going to get worse for those down on the planet.

Jumping into the drop pods, the Marines were blasted out of the ship at thousands of kilometers per second, shooting at the planet below like bullets.

A bloodbath was about to begin...and it would serve as a lesson to all. The Kremlings prepared themselves, grabbing weapons of all type, delivered right from Xia, courtesy of Roodaka.

Roodaka cared little about the lives of others. Only the payment mattered to her. Why did she care if hundreds, or even more, were killed? She had a good payment, good food, a place to call home out of the polluted shithole of Xia where she could keep her feet warm, and a high rank.

K. Rool wanted his forces to be the best armed in the galaxy and Roodaka was only willing to step up to fill the demand. So far, the King had paid well and on time for weapons so she had no complaints.

He had forced her to stop her development of biological weapons for now because they'd be as much
threat to his armies as his enemies, but that was small potatoes in the grand scheme of things. For now, the emphasis was on long-range sniping weapons and brutal melee weapons; perfect to hack through tough armored foes and inflict psychological terror.

Soon, the pods would reach landfall, ready to massacre their foes, all for the glory of their King.

The Marines relationship with the Crown House was a semi-independent one. While they were mainly loyal to the King, Marines, for the most part, acted on their own accord and beliefs unless called.

That was fine with K. Rool. The Marines didn't need to be handled with kid gloves. They were war machines and as long as they had an outlet for that, they'd be content.

The pods ripped through the atmosphere like meteors. High above the Fairy Tail Guild, the drop pods smashed through a magic barrier designed to stop most orbital and laser bombardment. They carried on, crashing through a second technological force field.

Braking thrusters halted the pods mere milliseconds before they crashed into the courtyard of the guild. The package had arrived.

They began to open fire upon the shielding that had sprung up suddenly in self-defense, and they took hits as well from various magic attacks.

The Guild members were stunned by this. What the hell was going on?!

Erza Scarlet came charging from the training grounds at the sudden explosion. Truly she had no idea what was going on, but as one of the high-ranking mages in the Guild, it was her duty to defend this castle and its people with her life.

The red haired warrior mage produced two giant swords, "Everyone to me! The castle is being invaded! Everyone to battle stations!" she cried out. "Assume the worst and get the children, the elderly and the support staff to the inner keep!"

She stared down the Marines, their helmets hiding their features, with the eyes set in dark glares. Erza returned it in kind. She was not going down without a fight, and she was going to kill some bastards tonight.

She was no fool. She knew what a Marine was capable of. Very deadly and hard to kill...but not impossible.

Erza stood with her compatriots, Mirajane Strauss and a few others. They only stood a chance if they fought together. These were only the vanguard. At their disposal the Marines had tanks, Thunderhawk Fightercrafts and even basic artillery.

The head Marine raised his weapon, a flamer; sending out a blast of fusion fire hot enough to melt stone.

Erza herself raised a magic shield, blocking the fire.

The Marine cursed under his breath as his flame was deflected as his comrades kept on shooting. The King had an order, and they would follow it, even if it meant their death.

Mirajane reacted, unleashing her full demonic powers. A dark purple aura engulfing everything, dark purple beams of anti-matter lancing out at the Marines. It could have cracked their armor open like chestnuts if not for a plane of Psyker energy blocking it.
One Marine, a Librarian held up both his hands and a staff rather than a gun. Glowing runes along his armor channeled his abilities, as did his own raw, inhuman will. His cold eyes met those of the demonic girl. Even without King's orders, the charter of their Chapter demanded the death of such individuals.

The demonic energy was strong...and the Marines would not tolerate this. Already other Chapters had fallen from grace due to Chaos. It would not happen again.

The Marines ultimately saw themselves as a force of order. Unlike their fallen Chaos brothers, they killed not for personal gain, but to serve. Anything was better than Chaos, both the cosmic force and disorder in general.

An assault Marine with a heavy bolter marched up, looking to change the tide of battle with his .75 caliber ten thousand round per minute weapon. As he pushed the firing button, Natsu charged the marine from behind with a flaming fist.

"Eat it, you sons of bitches!" he cried as the Marine was knocked over like a ninepin.

Natsu, a mage of fire, leapt around, punting foes about as he moved. He swallowed any flames that were used against him, practically nullifying the flamethrowers.

The Marines hated to admit it, but backup would be nice now.

Natsu got under the guard of the flamethrower Marine and threw a mighty uppercut that sent his helmet flying off.

The Marine staggered as the impact drove pieces of his helmet into his face and glass shards from his internal lenses into his right eye.

Natsu grabbed the Marine with a flaming hand, shocked at how human he looked under the fancy plate. "This is for my friends," he grinned as he readied another fist to crush the Marine's head in.

That was when the Marine lunged forward, ignoring the pain and sank his teeth into Natus's neck.

"NO!" Erza screamed.

Natsu gurgled as the deadly blow was dealt. Marines...they would do anything to win at times. Especially this chapter...

Natsu fell, but before his body hit the ground, the wounded marine drew a combat knife from a hidden compartment in his armor and stabbed him through the temporal bone.

Erza charged the Marine with her swords, slashing him across the eyes and blinding him.

Yet at that moment, a tank shell crashed through the walls of the castle. The Marines reinforcements had arrived.

The Kremlings of various breeds howled and bellowed in bloodthirsty rage and glee, ready to bring in the noise.

It should be noted, as bad as Marines could be, Kremlings could be worse. Marines, for the most part, were single-minded in their duties, simply blowing things up without the pillage and rape (though exceptions did exist). Kremlings, on the other hands, also pillaged and rape with reckless abandon.
The Kremling culture glorified war. They believed that fear was a weapon as potent as bombs or blades. K. Rool himself during the civil war practiced a method of war where he spared those who surrendered and crucified those who resisted. In one battle, he cowed the Mad King’s general by building a four-story pyramid made of the heads of Targaryen soldiers.

The Kremlings now with their Gnoll backup were ready to do their part. The Marines, the Spear of the King has opened the wedge. Now the foot soldiers would be the Hammer of the King.

Gnolls were actually sent first, being used as cannon fodder, but by now, they were too crazed to care. They charged in, ready to rape or eat (or even both) anyone who got in their way. Their howls spread terror among the ranks.

Gnolls bred at a good rate, they weren’t cowardly like Skaven, but they weren’t very smart either. At best they were about as intelligent as Orks. Hell, the King often used them against Orks where it inevitably turned into a slugging match.

Erza screamed as she swung her twin swords, cutting a Gnoll in half as well as the one behind it. With a scream, she summoned another sword and thrust it forward, running through a dozen Gnolls and crashing into the Space Marine librarian; knocking him off his feet.

The Gnolls were pushing in, but despite their ferocity and hunger they were doing little more than eating magic attacks. The Gnolls attacked with crude weapons; spears and pikes, shields and swords and officer Gnolls attacking with old surplus hunting weapons and rusty machine guns.

Mirajne grinned evilly as she summoned a specter which caused Gnolls to fall to the ground as dried husks; utterly ignoring armor.

In short, the Gnolls were doing their job as the Space Marine's Leman Russ pattern tank aimed the turret for another shot.

And before long, things would get worse for the Fairy Tail.

Pridak himself soon made landfall, armed with a Cordak Blaster and his Shark Tooth Blade, a extremely sharp and deadly sword made form the teeth of various shark species.

With him was a mercenary by the name of Kuroko Koumori, a female human with a long black hair, a tall figure…and developed curves. Once a prolific killer, she was located by the Crown house and taken in as a merc. She was a brutal and skilled fighter, playfully sadistic…and a lover of girls.

With the King's permission, Pridak had given her an offer. She could work for the Crown as a licensed bounty hunter, killing targets chosen by the King directly. Or she could be raped, chopped into pieces and then have the pieces fed to some of Relius' hungrier experiments.

Naturally she chose the former. The King gave her good work and she was allowed to rape and kill to her heart's content. Subtlety was for Agent 47, hers was a very different role.

"Kill all the mages," Pridak instructed her, "Take lover if you must, but take their eyes if you have to. We can't afford fully able mages running around."

The woman grinned. It was an...unnverving expression on her face. Her hollow eyes and lewd smile spoke of great madness of this woman.

She DID have a partner, a bubbly girl named Hinako Tozakura, who was a skilled pilot, but she was left behind for this job.
Kuroko drew her guns and readied herself.

Kuroko grinned and laughed like a madwoman as she charged at the Mages castle. The other guilds on this world had bowed to K. Rool one by one. Only Fairy Tail was the lone holdout, clinging stubbornly to their neutrality and independence. The Targaryens allowed the various warrior guilds to flourish, but they'd never controlled them in any meaningful way. That ended today. The only legitimate source of power was the King and his armies, that was the way of the future.

Kuroko ran past the Space Marines leading the assault. While she admired their killing power, they were too cold and sterile for her tastes. Even the female Space Marines were stone eyed and grim in their butchery. Turning into a Space Marine took away a woman's ability to feel pleasure. A fate worse than rape and dismemberment as far as Kuroko was concerned.

She fired her weapon and took down Mirajane as she struggled against two Marines with chainswords. Good, blood made her so horny.

She pinned the girl down under her, her intense strength winning out. Her eyes were glazed with perverse lust, and her abnormally long tongue slithered out, similar to a snake. She began to rip off the clothes of her victim.

Marijane gurgled as the shot pierced one of her lungs, and sadly, due to her mage physiology, the shot would not kill her like a regular person. She could only choke on her blood as the madwoman above her tore off her clothes and she was unable to defend her friends.

"I love you," Kuroko purred sarcastically, as she made a deep love bite on the side of the girl's neck.

As this was going on, Pridak was tearing though mages easily, blood standing his white form. Gray ran up to him, ready to impale him with a shard of ice...

...but Pridak was faster, his teeth sinking into Gray's neck and tearing out this throat.

Pridak had been turning people into corpses for thousands of years. He'd killed mages, Xenomorphs, Tyranids, Yautja, the assassins of Skaven clan Eshin and much more. There were few tricks he did not know at this point.

As he observed Kuroko teleport away her victim Marijane with a portable device, he focused on cutting through a thick length of chain which held up a draw bridge. Sparks flew as the chains spun around, crushing some Gnolls and killing a few mages. This would allow the tank to enter and offer more close range support.

As this all happened, Erza kept on fighting...but soon became aware of the loss they were taking...

People blown to bits by enemy fire, faces smashed in by Kremlings with knuckles dusters, others getting eaten alive...

If there was a Hell, then this was as close it came to existing on earth.

The Leman Russ Tank rolled into the castle square, opening fire with laser cannons and an automatic bolter. The main gun fired, blasting open the castle keep; the final safe place in the fortress.

The Fairy Tail guild had been lost. "Retreat!" Erza cried to any who could still hear her, any who were still breathing. "Retreat!"

Despite it all, they had to fall back...
...but even that would not be easy.

The mages who survived began to run for the center of the castle. The sewer system was ancient and led to a massive underground maze. The maze itself had hidden escape routes to starships and access to the sea.

Erza screamed as someone next to her was blown to bits by a bolter shell; the heavy projectile punching through their magic defense and exploding inside their chest with the force of a grenade.

It had to be slowed down...she turned back to see a horde of Kremlings rushing towards them.

She would hold them off...enough for others to get free.

She clenched her fists and summoned an a storm of knives. The raging Kremlings slowed, but did not stop at the blades that would cut humans to pieces. It did what it needed to, as she charged into the fray and began to take their heads off with her swords. She was chewing them up like she was popping bubble wrap.

Deep down, she knew she might not make it. That was fine if any one of her friends could escape.

She never knew Zingers had been sent ahead to head off anyone who tried to escape.

And then things got worse when Kremling came with a disruptor weapon, used to negate magic and other abilities.

Erza stumbled and fell as she felt her powers stripped from her. It was as traumatic as losing eyesight or hearing. She still had her swords, as she blocked a disruptor shot with her sword. Even without magic, she was still far from toothless.

Until a sonic shot shattered it and her armor, leaving her in her pants and bandage bra. Stunned, she collapsed onto her stomach.

Her ears rang and she could feel blood out of her nose. She couldn't hear Kuroko, but she felt the serial killer turned rapist bounty hunter jump on top of her.

"This one is mine," she purred as a Space Marine reluctantly turned her weapon to another target. It was no business of the Marine what the king's other servants did. As long as she could kill, she could focus on fulfilling her oath.

"Not yet!" A Kremling hissed. "Let us restrain her first. Pridak wishes her fate to be...slow."

Kuroko sighed, but got off...and Erza was swarmed by Kremlings. One stuffed a wad of cloth into her mouth, before tying another large cloth over her mouth, with a bandit style point.

Multiple sticks and stones struck her body, shocking and jarring her. As her hearing returned, she could vaguely hear the sound of the Kremlings fire shots in the air to keep the Gnolls back. Cruel as the Gnolls were, they lacked the refinement for dedicated torture.

And the Kremlings and Kuroko couldn't very well do what they wanted to devoured scraps and bloody bone.

Erza felt her hands being jerked behind her, before her wrists were shackled tightly behind her back. Her ankles were next, tightly cuffed together.

Bound up tight, she was brought up, held up by the Kremlings.
"Let's do some drowning!" Kuroko shouted gleefully.

In the background, the Marines kept marching. Erza could feel rather than hear the sound of depth charges collapsing the underground tunnels. Tears stung her eyes as someone brought a whip to her back.

Not just depth charges, but the sound of Zinger's swarming...

...it was all for nothing...

Later, on the ship...

The bound and gagged Erza glared at Pridak and Kuroko, who stared down at her. Pridak turned to there merc. "We'll be reaching our destination soon. You may have...fun if you wish until we do." He left the room without a word.

Kuroko gave a sort of hollow laugh, a parody at best of human happiness. She looked over her captive. "Hey girl, I know in your profile it said you weren't lesbian, that you were straight. But spaghetti is straight until it gets wet, right?"

Erza could only look ahead at her captor with emptiness. Was she really all there was? Did no one else make it from the Zingers and other threats?

"Yeah, everyone else is dead but you." Kuroko said, her head tilting to the side 90 degrees...unnatural for a human to do. "And soon, no one will be left. So until then...fun time!" She said in a singsong voice as began to unwrap Erza's bandage bra.

There were no words as Ezra's whole life purpose was ripped from her. Someone like Kuroko might be lying, but the truth would hurt worse than any lie at this point. Even worse, her mage senses could smell the honesty coming off of this psycho.

She was only snapped into reality as the killer turned bounty hunter started fondling her breasts, "Now that's what I work for," she giggled.

"Nnnmm, mnn!" Erza whined past her tight OTM gag, squirming in her bonds as her large chest was squeezed and pulled, nipples being flicked and licked by the long, serpentine tongue.

"How many people did you kill?" Kuroko asked, "Before I was caught, I snuffed around seven hundred people. Working for K. Rool, I got so worried. I was afraid I'd always kill people who deserved it, but your friends were a nice touch."

Grinning, she began to feel up Erza's labia. To her shame, Erza could feel herself growing moist. There was no stopping her body's reaction.

The slick fingers were down her pants, all to humiliate her. This sucked! She wanted to kill them all to what they did to her friends! K. Rool would pay for this!

"I've always done what I do in the name of love," said Kuroko, "I've killed for love, kidnapped, and done a lot worse. I'm a lover at heart, and you sweetie, seem to love me." She laughed as she lifted her captive with one arm.

Choking the girl, Ezra found herself thrown on the bounty hunter's surprisingly large and comfortable bed.

Erza was quickly straddled, and her gagged face was slapped several times in succession. Then she
was turned and spanked on the ass.

"MMM!" Erza screamed through the gag. She wept freely.

The thing was, she enjoyed bondage and spanking. She hated that her body responded this way to the killer of her friends. She hated that this woman was stealing something from her.

The bounty hunter laughed, "That's some ass you got! I'm jealous! I really am."

Erza prayed this would all end soon and-

The door knocked. "Hey, uh, we're here, at Subnautica. Get her ready." A Kritter spoke though the door.

Kuroko frowned and fired a gun a gun she'd left on the nightstand. The bullet whizzed past the Kremling's head and struck a lighting panel.

"Okay!" said the crazy woman with faux cheer. "You're very lucky, Erza, I won't kill you this hour."

"Mmm?"

"The water will!" Was the cheerful add-on as Erza was hauled out, and soon found herself kneeling before Pridak, and a ball-and-chain was attached to her ankles.

"Okay, girls!" Kuroko shouted, "When we get into atmosphere, land us over the water! I want to see if my new girlfriend can swim! And make sure that pedo-Pridak's underwater cameras catch the whole thing. I want to remember her."

The Kremlings nodded as a few stray Gnolls loped through the halls, eating bits and pieces of dead mages; wearing the flag of Fairy Tail as trophies.

Pridak gave Kuroko a withering glare, before he turned back to Erza. "Let it be known that none of this is personal. The King merely wishes to make sure things are in order for the coming storm. You refused to obey," he went on as the space craft began to enter planetary atmosphere, "Under the current War Measures Act; all entities which do not surrender to crown control during a state of national emergency will be considered traitors; with treason punishable by death. It is all legal you see," and he turned on his heel to review combat footage with the head Tech priest and the Space Marine commander.

Erza ground her teeth behind her gag, her friends all died for a legal technicality?

And soon, the hatch door opened, to reveal the deep blue sea down below, and both Erza and the weight were hoisted up by Kremlings, ready to be tossed to the abyss.

"Let this serve as a message." Pridak stated coldly, as Erza was tossed out.

"That's the last of them," said Pridak. He addressed Kuroko, "For your services, you'll get your standard fee as well as access to the drowning footage. I believe this will suffice in lieu of an actual victim."

The woman laughed, "It's not like you give me a choice, but a nice snuff film is something I can't turn down."

As for Erza...

She stared wide-eyed as she fell through the cold air towards the water. Her long red hair whipped
upwards as she fell, and all she could do was hold her breath and brace for impact...

'SCHUMM'

The water struck her like a sledgehammer. Rapidly, gravity took her as she plummeted through what was one of Subnautica’s more shallow seas. Around her fish and strange creatures swam, afraid of her. She wondered how long until a major predator arrived on the scene.

She still had time to sink, though, and she began to wiggle furiously, twisted and turning her body every which way. Her large breasts bounced up and down.

"Hnnngg, urrrgg, mmmnn!"

She slammed into the ocean bed, where she could see the sunlight still. Sea creatures began to swim past her as they returned to their routines. She thrashed against her bindings with all her might, but she was still weak from the torture on the ship and the disruptor weapon.

She was not going to get out of this on her own. She eyes were wide as she looked about, trying to find some way out of this.

Something was moving in the water, something huge, scaly and with some difficulty. As though it could swim, but the water was not its native environment.

Erza thrashed and struggled, her vision starting to darken as the large figure approached.

So...this was how it was meant to be...drowning at the bottom of the sea...bound, gagged, and topless. She failed her people. Maybe she deserved this.

As she started to black out, she noticed the metallic sheen of the creature's scales and the wings wrapped around its broad back.

A metallic dragon. interesting. She thought as she blacked out. You usually didn't see them this far out of the galactic wilderness.

Then...darkness...

...

...

"...on..."

"Come on..."

"BREATHE!" A female voice spoke though the dark.

Erza gagged and spat up water, her body still weak and rubbery.

"Don't move too much," said a dignified, female voice, "You've had a rough time."

Vision spinning, Ezra saw someone with white hair and youthful features . . . and the most distinct purple eyes.

What...was that...
"Just do as she says." Her reviver, a black haired human female, spoke. Erza also took note her chest was covered back up.

A man in a white gi handed her a towel, "Here, towel yourself off. When you're ready, I can make you some noodles," said the friendly samurai type man.

Erza coughed up more water as the dark haired woman put a hand on her shoulder. As stern as the woman looked, there was something trustworthy about her.

"How...how did I get here?" She muttered weakly.

"We're...not sure, honestly." The silver hair replied. "We found you dumped in our docking station, out cold and...alone."

"Where did you come from?" asked the dark haired woman. Erza didn't have the strength to be defensive.

"I came from Fiore," she said in a flat voice. She looked up at the white haired woman, her vision clearing. "Do you have any need for an armor mage, Daenerys Targaryen?"

"You know my-?"

"We heard stories of one last Targaryen." Erza replied. "And I'm assuming you wish to restore your dynasty...and now I seek to make K. Rool pay for his recent crime of wiping out all who I cared for." Erza pulled her soaking hair out of her eyes. "There's no mistaking your eyes or hair, princess," she sighed. "I was on Fiore, with the Fairy Tail guild. We refused to accept direct control by the King or his armies. We stuck to our independence and neutrality, like the other guilds had for thousands of years. And all that of changed."

"What happened?" asked Dany with true concern, writ too large for lies or subterfuge.

"Nothing good," growled a huge, intimidating Maximal that Erza hadn't noticed until now.

Erza glanced at Razorbeast and nodded. "His troops came and wiped everybody out. I'm all that's left, it seems."

"The Fairy Tail Guild has stood for thousands of years," Jack gasped, "The Kings of this Galaxy have always respected the autonomy of the Guilds and other knightly orders."

"Times change," said Erza bitterly, "Wartime laws branded us all as traitors. It's why they spared the other guilds on Fiore."

"And so...what do you plan now?" Dany asked.

"To serve you, and take down K. Rool." Erza respond, sitting up. "What are you planning now?"

"Building ourselves up." Dany replied with a sly smirk.

Erza suddenly bowed before Dany. "I live to serve you, Lady Targaryen. Consider my life yours until either I am dead or until King K. Rool is roasting in hell."

Daenerys narrowed her eyes at Erza. Something about the tone of her voice chilled her. It was the sound of someone who'd lost everything, something that she knew only too well. There were nights . . . where she relived it all in her dreams. When K. Rool's men had killed everyone, not just her family but the servants and staff who served her family.
"I accept your terms," said Dany.

Erza nodded as she stood back up as Dany spoke into an intercom. "Al, Erza had decided to join our ranks. She'll be helping us with out campaign. For now, continue our course."

"It's seven standard hours until we reach out destination, Dany" replied Alphonse Elric, "Get some rest while you still can. We've got a busy day ahead of us."

"I suggest you follow Al's advice," said Dany, "Tomorrow we start work."

Erza nodded, staring out a viewport. She made a vow to herself, to serve her new queen to the last of her breath. She owed it to her kinsmen...her friends...her family.

They would be avenged.
A New Arrival

The space above Ark was quite, as space tended to be. Nothing seemed to stir, allowing the inhabitants down below to go about their business to become skilled warriors and tamers...

...but things were about to change.

A space-fold tunnel opened up in the area, and a small, beat-up ship exited it, carrying two passengers.

"Ah, think we lost them, Chomp," A young female voice spoke from within, prompting a happy chirp from her companion.

A floating, tan and orange creature floated next to the girl. Its blue eye shone with relief and it seemed to communicate with the girl in a way that went beyond mere words.

The young girl brushed her hands through her blue hair, taking a moment to think. "Okay, so we're out of fuel, the navigation system is shot and we are about to run out of air to breathe."

The creature, Chomp, chirped once more, nuzzling up against its companion.

Ellie smiled, tired yet happy to be alive. "Whatever is down on that planet can't be worse than Terumi and his raiders."

She took a deep breath and made the descent fast, quickly feeling the air rush into the ship for both of them.

But then, the ship, thrashed by the atmosphere, began to plummet faster.

Various dials and warning lights started to creep into the yellow. Ellie was only too aware of the battle damage that the vessel had sustained, and how she and her companion had repaired the ship with little more than duct tape and prayers.

"Come on," she whispered as more and more of the dials began to turn red and the planet's strong radiation belts buffered her shields. "Just a little longer."

She didn't face one of the deadliest pirates in all existence just to die like this. Pops would be...displeased.

With all her might, Ellie managed to stabilize the vehicle...but they were still careening downwards to the island below.

"Okay, Chomp," she said to her floating companion, "I need you to hold onto me."

The creature made a timid squeak before hugging her chest tightly.

Impact on the planet's surface was shocking and painful, but Ellie knew that she was alive to feel pain, if nothing else. Every single alarm on the ship sounded off and with just a little more g-force, she was sure she'd have a broken neck.

Looks like lady luck was on her side.

The ship was a smoldering wreck, and it looked like it would not be able to fly again. Ellie and Chomp managed to exit the wreckage and took stock of their surroundings.
A shoreline overlooking a pristine ocean, with the land going in a thick forest.

The girl appraised her environment with guarded optimism. "Well, the forest could be filled with monsters, rapists and horrors."

Chomp chirped at her.

"You're right," she admitted, "For us, that's a step up and a lot safer than where we came from." She glanced at the paper copy map she'd taken from the ship. "According to this, we leapt through fold space somewhere in Windrunner space, I'm just not sure which planet."

It was a rough map, taken in haste due to being pursued by hordes of angry pirates, who would have ripped her to shreds and fed her to the Spikit on the ship...voracious, two-headed bastards.

The Skrall that Terumi fought with were no picnic either. Crazier than Orks, more treacherous than Skaven and obsessed with war. She thought that some god or goddess was watching out for her, given the number of times she'd just escaped death.

Something moved in the underbrush . . .

An Irish Elk with antlers wider than she was tall walked in Ellie's field of view. As magnificent as the beast was, it was mating season, so it could be more dangerous than any wolf or bear.

Nice...just what she needed. She stared at the creature as it pawed the ground in an aggressive manner, ready to charge at the slightest action.

The elk's ears twitched and its large, brown eyes were unreadable. Its nostrils flared.

It may have been her girlish imagination, but the creature seemed to be some kind of minor forest god.

Then the Utaraptor jumped out of the underbrush with claws and teeth extended, making a straight line for the elk. Though the forest king was not unprepared.

It turned and thrusts its powerful antlers into the raptor, impaling it in several places, before hurling it away. Ellie chose that moment to bolt with Chomp, heading right into the forest.

So this place had dinosaurs. A few planets had dinosaurs, they were bred on a few world for use as war mounts or beasts of burden on agricultural worlds.

But very few worlds features dinosaurs coexisting with more evolved mammals. Through a clearing, she ran past a family of Dimetrodon. The head of the family snapped at her heels as she ran.

So proto-mammals as well. This really narrowed down the list of worlds. Ellie knew where she'd landed.

Ark...a Death World know for raising survivalists and soldiers. Many came in...few came out. It was a harsh world, full of predators and other tribes, all willing to get a leg up from each other.

The way Ark worked was that there were almost no way off the planet, but nearly anybody could come in. If Ellie wanted, she could survive here, fight and make a name for herself. Maybe she'd win the right to join Sylvanas Windrunner's group of special forces soldiers.

It was that or hold out to find a starship that let people leave here.

She stopped and petted her companion, "We're not really safe, Chomp, but at least Terumi will have
a devil of a time finding us."

Well, she looked over at the Band over her wrist...where it seemed to be impossible to remove.

She didn't know much, except it was an artifact of ancient and unknown origin. The exact purpose was not known...but it did enhance her physical prowess and allow her to fire energy blasts.

She was grateful for it on some level. It had allowed her to fight off Terumi's enforcers and the hostile monsters that had taken over her homeworld. It also led her to chomp.

Without him, she might not have survived Terumi or the two headed purple dragon.

Chomp...found him as an egg aboard the ship. He hatched, and quickly bonded with her. Helped her survive the hoards of Skrall, Skakdi, Dark Elves, Dark Eldar, Yuan-Ti, Bullywugs, Jiralhanae and Saurok that served as Terumi's crew.

On a cosmic scale, Terumi's crew was a toilet that refused to flush. Anything and everything that liked to rape, kill and maim lived under his banner. Terumi himself led this anachronic band of misfits by virtue of being a frothing loony with a hunger for blood that could not be quenched.

During their last fight, Ellie and Chomp had torn out one of his eyes, the most damage he'd taken in years. But what would deter lesser pirates would only drive him to homicidal, obsessive fury.

He was strong, as was his equally sadistic 2nd mate, Jinmen, a turtle demon of unknown birth place. Jinmen lived to eat, and those he ate lived in agony as faces upon his shell.

Soul eaters were not uncommon in the wider galaxy. The Space Marines and individual fighters such as the Doom Slayer targeted them, but the former were being increasingly drawn away to fight the King's political foes and the Doom Slayer was but one man.

The turtle demon had found his home with Terumi, who offered protection from Witch Hunters and demon killers. It was a working business relationship.

Luckily, she managed to avoid them, get into a small scouting ship, and blasted away from the main fleet, sabotaging the beacon so they could no track her as she folded away.

And now here she was.

"Well, Chomp, we need shelter, food and clean water to start," her companion purred and nuzzled next to her. "I know, we'll be fine. I think I recognize some edible tubers growing here. We can have roast yam if we build a fire."

Thoughts of dinner and sleep were lost as a camouflaged figure stepped out of the underbrush, wearing a gillie suit. The camouflaged warrior was hardly taller than Ellie, armed with a bow and a rapier of all things. "Identify yourself," came their surprisingly high-pitched voice.

Oh, great, just another thing after another. And then, to make things worse, a rather large wolf came striding silently out next to the figure.

"You don't have an implant, so you're not one of the prisoners or one of the potential recruits," barked the short figure, "so who are you?"

Ellie held up her hands as Chomp growled at the huge dire wolf, which licked its lips impassively. "I'm from Meadeland, this is my friend, Chomp. And no, I'm not a prisoner. You must have seen me crash land earlier."
"Well...I admit I DID see something fall from the sky," The figure replied, and Ellie was sure this was a female talking. "And you fell here yourself...that's a little far-fetched if you ask me."

"Look, I'm on the run," said Ellie, "But nobody around here is innocent. We're on Ark, right? And I don't have any money or supplies. I have nothing you want or need."

"Maybe," said the figure, taking off her camouflage mask, revealing a young girl no older than Ellie. "But I don't know you or why you're running. You could be a cannibal for all I know, or someone who took their grandmother's speeder for a joyride."

"Er..."

"So tell me," The girl pointed a, energy sword right at Ellie. "Why should I trust you?"

"Well I can either run away, or I can fight you, or fight for you," said Ellie, "I'm warning you, I just spent most of my day fighting pirates like Terumi; so I'm a handful."

"Yūki Terumi?" asked the girl, "That pirate?"

"Yeah...I stole from one of his ships, and blew it up as well," Ellie admitted. "Though he tried to kill me as a result..."

The girl in camouflage shrugged, "Chances are, Terumi would never had needed a reason to kill you. I'm Arya by the way. And if you'll show us your talents on a hunting trip, we'd be happy to let you join our crew."

"Wait," said Ellie, "There's more of you?"

"Just end that cunt now!" shouted a rough voice as a man in armor and a heavily scarred face popped up from a concealed hunter's nest. "I'm dying of boredom and it's been nearly a day since I've killed anything," said Clegane.

Ellie looked up at the man. This guy was TALL, and well-muscled to boot. But she was drawn to the facial scars of the man, looking like he had been badly burnt.

"Any reason I shouldn't tear off your head and shit down your neck?" the man snapped, as he unholstered a large sword and a sawed off shotgun.

"Would it kill you to unwind for a day?" Arya asked her ugly companion. "Let's just take her to fight some dinosaurs. Give her a chance."

The tall man growled and sheathed his sword. "Wuss..."

Arya scoffed as she led the way, Nymeria following close behind, keeping an eye on the two new arrivals.

"We're still recovering from a tsunami," said Arya, "We lost our old home and a lot of our pack animals. To start things off, we gathered basic vegetable food stuffs and now we're looking for prey to hunt for food, trade and crafting items. Do you think you can kill dinosaurs?"

Ellie blinked, not taking her eyes off of the large man, Hound? "I think I can do that, Chomp will help me."

"Chomp?"

The creature purred in response, floating over to Nymeria and nuzzling her. The wolf in response
licked the floating monster affectionately.

"I'm...not sure what he is exactly. Only by some notes I stole from Terumi." Ellie pulled a few pieces of paper from her purse. "He's some kind of extremely rare species that can change form as he gains experience. Right now, his power is over fire," The Hound flinched. "And he can gain power over wood and water eventually."

"Well, we're on a planet with vast oceans and forests," said Arya, "So that could be extremely useful. How comfortable would you be about helping us fight a Lava Elemental? We were heading to kill it before it burned down the entire forest."

Ellie immediately felt uncomfortable, "Do I have a choice?"

"No," snarled Hound,

Well...not much else to do, it seemed, other than run off into the wilderness and die horribly.

"So...where is it?"

Arya pointed to the horizon as more of her compatriots came from the underbrush. "See the smoke on the horizon? The Elemental is hibernating for now but who knows how long it'll last. We need to strike it while it sleeps; standard hunting procedure in these parts."

"So," Berix looked at Ellie. "New around here and-" The kleptomaniac Agori noticed the Band. "Oh, that's a nice bracelet, c-can I see it for a sec-?"

"It's stuck," Ellie said flatly.

"With Glue?" Berix asked honestly, "I think I can get it off. I might even deserve a reward if I can get it off."

"Uh, no promises," Ellie said uncertainly, "I don't even know if I want it off."

"Back off, Berix," said Bullet, "If she survives, this girl could be one of our crew. We also need to keep our eyes open in case Terumi followed her here."

"Terumi, as in Yūki Terumi?" Tarduk noted. "You actually saw him and SURVIVED?" He cocked his head. "What was he like?"

A long pause, as Ellie recalled that...that AURA she felt when encountering the pirate.

"Do the words 'evil incarnate' mean anything?"

"Not a thing, not to me," Hound scoffed, taking a swig from a wine skin.

"Then he's probably just like the one who did that to your face," Ellie snapped at the tall man, "Maybe worse,"

Hound grit his teeth at the nerve of this girl. Then again, she'd need that nerve; Ark was no place for the fearful.

Yes...his brother was a monster, in every sense of the word. How he was managed to remain a Marine, it was amazing. For the most part, Marine had more straightforward emotions, simply doing their duty without much thought.

Gregor...still retained the madness, though.
If nothing else, being a Marine only made him worse. The chronic pain he endured as a mortal man stayed with him and grew worse. Red Spice kept it manageable, but he'd seen pictures of what happened when Gregor really went off the chain. In most cases, it looked like a bomb went off at a slaughterhouse.

Maybe this Terumi shared a little of what Gregor had in him. Hound clenched his hand, "If he shows his face, I've experience with dealing with men like him."

Ellie nodded, smiling honestly, "Thanks, you know, you're not half bad."

"Shut up."

Chomp just growled.

"ANYWAYS," TK spoke up. "We should get going before the beast wakes up and burns everything down."

Ellie huffed and puffed along the forest trail. She wasn't unfit by any means, she's grown up in a farming community on her homeworld. But these people were just hardened in ways she wasn't . . . yet.

Even Arya, shortest of the crew, moved with seemingly limitless stamina and with the same loping grace as her wolf.

Up ahead was a vast crater at the bottom of what looked like a cave that collapsed. Heat poured from the crater as Ellie saw it was full of boiling lava and a large mound of black stone in the center.

"Huh, looks like it caused a bit more of a ruckus than we thought." Tarduk noted.

"This is not good." Kari noted. "Look at the smoke plume. The Elemental must have been driven out of its caves by the tsunami. It's probably building up a new pit for itself."

Arya turned to Ellie, "When we shoot it, it'll throw lava at us. It'll also shoot flames. Can you do something about that?"

"Well, I have this other idea, but first, you need to make it show itself," Ellie responded.

"...Fair enough."

Berix reached into a leather pouch and withdrew a pipe bomb, "Oh yes, I've been looking to drop the stealthy approach." Throwing the pipe bomb, Berix hummed with joy as he pulled a set of car keys from his pouch.

With an innocent beep, the pipe bomb went off, showering the stone mound with nails and shrapnel. At that moment, the pile began to shift and take on a humanoid form.

The creature rose and snarled, ready to rip apart any intruders in its domain...

...and Ellie extended her arm, the Band glowed...and fired off several waves of massive energy blasts at the golem.

The golem staggered, falling to its knees. Roaring, the massive monster raised up a chunk of glowing red rock. As it did though, Ellie's energy attack faltered, and the rest of the team opened up with rocket launchers and explosive tipped arrows.

The blast had opened up several weak points in the rocky hide, allowing the rest of the team to do
The lava golem bellowed and raised its hands, showering the area with molten rock and fire.

However, in response to this, Ellie raised her hands as she and Chomp summoned a shield, protecting the team and blocking back the area of effect attack.

To the right of her, Hound readied his sniper rifle with a super caliber armor piercing round.

When he struck the core, the whole thing would fall...any moment...

There!

He fired, piercing the exposed core, knocking the beast over at the same time, sending crashing into a pile of rubble.

The Lava Elemental's death was as violent as the element that birthed it. It thrashed and roared and finally exploded,

Ellie was thrown backwards, her and Chomp's power not enough to shift this blast. However, Arya stepped in front of her with an armored shield and protected the two from the flaming blast.

All the team did the same, with shields crafted to be fire and explosive resistant.

A moment to catch their breath...

"What was that now?" Tarduk asked, turning to Ellie. "That bracelet...what is it exactly?"

"I...still don't know much about it myself." Ellie admitted.

"Did you ever use magic before?" Arya asked, petting Nymeria.

Ellie shook her head, "No, I was a farm girl before I found Chomp and the Bracelet. It's been pretty touch and go. I'm not even sure what it is."

"There's a lot of ancient tech that nobody knows much about," Bullet concluded, taking off her camouflage vest to let her cleavage hang out. "You could have something important on you."

Ellie chewed her lip, eyeing the bust, before she continued. "I'm not sure...though Pops did tell me the same."

"Your father?" Berix asked.

"No, my birth parents died when I was just a baby. Pops, or Xalbor, is the Golden Metallic Dragon who raised me."

Tarduk was mind boggled, "Wait, you were raised by a dragon? A real dragon?"

Ellie nodded, "Yes, he was kind and he lived on my home planet. He was smart, he showed me how to take care of myself and gave me an education when otherwise I wouldn't have had one."

"And here I thought Gold Dragons were huge sticks in the mud," Bullet muttered.

"Oh, don't be like that," Ellie replied. "He had a lot of book and scrolls he always let me read to further my studies, and showed me how to take care of other life. It was his knowledge that helped me care for Chomp, care for him when he was still newly hatched," she said as she nuzzled her
companion. "I don’t know what he is, but he’ll definitely grow if what I learned holds true."

"Well, you showed yourself a valuable asset," said Arya, "You don’t have an implant but we’d be happy to show you how to craft weapons and tools. There’s more to Ark than just fighting. We’re surviving here."

"Well, we could always use and extra set of hands around here," Berix nodded.

"Yep, welcome to the fold," TK nodded.

"Don’t do anything stupid and you’ll have an easier time here," said Hound,

"And maybe in the future, the lot of us can get a place in Sylvanas’ armies," beamed Arya, "Or even just get off this world."

Ellie could not help but smile.

And so...

"So, it’s not much, but here’s our new home," Berix gestured to the series of small houses and pens for some dodos they had for eggs.

"It’s beautiful," said Ellie, "I know how to raise crops, and I used to care for chickens. I can help you here."

"But we could have used you up North when the Beastmen tried to invade," Hound groused, rolling himself a cigarette. "You should work on being a better killer instead of just girl’s work."

Which earned him a punch in the shoulder from Bullet.

"Quiet you..." Bullet growled. "Anywho, take a moment to breath right now, and look over the journals we have over the animals here."

"Speaking of which," Tarduk spoke up. "I’ve been looking through old journals of a guy named Rockwell. He writes something about ‘Aberration’."

"...What’s that even supposed to mean?" TK asked.

"No idea." Tarduk admitted.

"It means a departure from the normal, something unwaned," said Arya, checking the dodos for eggs. "From what I can see, old man Rockwell meant it for a region most of us haven’t explored."

"Not normal, on Ark," Bullet asked, "That’s a tall order given how not normal everything is."

"Still, not even Windrunner mentioned a place like that," Berix noted, sitting down on a chair.

"Planets are still being studied, even after they’ve been colonized," Bullet noted.

"Yeah," admitted Tarduk, "Can’t tell you the number of times I’ve run around this planet and seen things nobody understands or things just changing overnight. Sometimes whole mountains and areas just pop up from the sea."

"It’s like the place is cursed," bemoaned Berix.

"And that’s why it breeds good soldiers for Windrunner’s armies," Bullet said. "The ability to adapt
to changing circumstances."

"I can't wait to get off this rock," Hound grumbled, washing and peeling root vegetables for a stew. "Soon as I can, I'm heading off to kill some pirates, steal everything they have and lie low for a bit."

"Weren't you a former King's soldier?" Arya asked, perking up Ellie's interest.

"Fuck the King," Hound rumbled, "I'll face down any abberation to be free of cunts like that."

King K. Rool...Ellie had never seen him, as few did, but knew he was mighty warrior, leading against the previous Mad King, and restoring sense of Order to the Galaxy at large.

But Pops usually did not think much of aristocrats, seeing them as 'pampered fools'.

"I always thought the king was a mighty warrior," said Ellie.

Hound laughed, there was no humor or happiness in his voice. "Maybe once. The fat bastard has lived the good life. But his cruelty has never gotten dull. The fucker beat the Targaryens by being more evil than them."

"Hmmm, perhaps." Ellie noted, settling down on a chair. "I hope Pops is ok..."

"Much as the King has tried to kill the dragons, the Metallics take care of themselves," said Bullet, "Most likely he's fine."

"True," said Ellie, her lip starting to quiver with sadness, "My fear is that Terumi got him. He's a hard, dragon killer."

Terumi...still a monster that spread fear to all those who heard his name.

Ellie felt shaken. She really hadn't taken time to process it all. Terumi had destroyed her life, killed most of her friends. She could only keep going for so long.

To her surprise, Arya took her hand as she was about to lose control.

Ellie let out a deep breath, there would be time to grieve later. Though now at least she had something approaching a community.

As terrifying as Terumi had been, she needn't face him alone. This lot had already shown their worth against the Lava Golem.

She looked to the sky, lost in thought.

Looks like it was time for a new path in her life...

The sun was setting on the world of Ark. Soon, her and her new tribe might have to trek into this 'Aberration' in search of treasure. Maybe she'd even get a spot in the armies of Sylvanas Windrunner.

A soldier's life was never something Ellie wanted, but she may have no choice.

Well...time to see where life would take.

With Chomp cuddling next her, she soon fell asleep in her bed.
Morty held up a dead mouse to the hooded owl, "Come on, girl, say Polly want a cracker."

"Morty-urp," belched Rick, "That's a fucking owl."

"I know, Rick, but you said that some owls talk in other universes," as he tried to get the owl to speak.

"In some universes, and guess what, Morty. This isn't-urp-this isn't one of them," Rick groaned at his grandson's sheer stupidity.

Over on his own, Jon snow casually watched the exchange, sharpening his word after oiling his pistol. He smirked lightly as the owl leapt off its perch and attacked Morty with its claws. Only to turn and attack Rick as he started really laughing.

Those two...for all their skills, they could be pretty freaking stupid at times. But still, they had skills, and were worth sheltering from the King. It was good practice to mess with Kremling patrols heads, in an attempt to get them to back off.

"When you've done fucking around with that bird, we can get ready to leave," Jon announced as Rick tried to shoot the owl with a laser, only to miss and blow up his mini fridge full of beer.

Face cut up from the owl's talons, Rick was not in a happy mood. "We'll leave when I say so, Jon Yellow-Snow! And I need a fuckin beer before we leave!"

Behind Jon, his sister Sansa patted him on the back, "I hope you have fun. After Silicon Valley it's off to New Vegas for you, and I won't see you for a while."

The relationship between Jon and Sansa was...not too close, due to him being a bastard. But Jon still cared for her, no matter what. He felt a kinship despite it all.

Arya leaving had thrown Sansa off center. Robb being called to oversee the war effort and their father leaving to serve the king had all contributed. The members of family were put in increasingly tenuous positions and Sansa was feeling more and more protective of her loved ones.

It was enough to make everyone's heads spin. Bran kept to his studies while Rickon did his own thing.

At least Rickon acted like a child, playing with his dire wolf and exploring the woods on the planet below where it was safe to.

Bran kept on pouring over star charts and raiding Rick's personal library for information about demons, magic and history from before the long night.

"I'll be fine, Sansa," said Jon, " I might not trust those clowns outside of a fight, but in a fight they're solid. And New Vegas is like a second home to me. Sylvanas and Duke Nukem need someone to oversee construction of the King's space fortress over that world."

Sansa just gave a solemn nod before walking off, with her Direwolf, Lady, trailing behind her. Just as Jon's wolf, Ghost, came up to him.

The Direwolves of the Stark Children were found as pups, lost and alone, their mother dead. Ned
wished to kill them, simply to make their deaths quick...but Jon had vouched for them, noting they were the same number of pups as they were children. An omen.

The Direwolf had always been the symbol of house Stark. A symbol associated in history with both warriors and devils. They were strong, ruthless and contrary to popular culture; the alpha male got that way by being a good father and mate. Same with the alpha female of the pack.

John sheathed his sword, turning to his sister. "Before I go, take this," he said as he handed Sansa a Pearl-handled revolver. "For defense."

Sansa nodded, deep down wondering she would use it for.

Time would come soon enough.

As Jon walked, he felt the cold, judging eyes of Catelyn staring down at him from an upper level. He tried not to show his discomfort.

It wasn't easy when Catelyn saw him as a symbol of her husband's infidelity. It didn't bother him that he would never be lord of Winterfell. It did bother him that Catelyn could never be a mother to him like the other Stark boys.

He'd never tell this to anyone, but he actually enjoyed being away from here. Much as he loved this place, out there in the wider galaxy he was free to be his own man. And not be either Ned's bastard or Ned's greatest mistake.

He turned away from the woman who he wished was his mother.

Well, no time to think now, he had work to do.

Rick and Morty were already on the ship that would take them to their destination. Rick had managed to track down the station, and that would be their goal.

Rick punched in the navigation coordinates. From the cuts on his face, the owl won the fight. Morty sat next to Rick, with one of his eyes covered by a gauze Bandage. He avoided his grandfather's gaze while Rick tried getting drunk from a bottle of mouthwash.

As Jon sat down in the passenger seat, he saw someone he'd normally welcome. "Bran! Get of the ship! We're going somewhere dangerous!"

Rick and Morty turned with a start to see Bran inside the ship, simply standing there. Hey...how did he get on without any of them noticing earlier?

Rick was outraged, "Did you steal my-urp-Hand of Glory?"

Bran looked down at the skeletal hand holding a pitch-black opal. "It helps with the visions. I see them more and more."

Jon was aghast, "Bran, what are you doing, stealing from Rick?"

"Visions?" Morty asked, being a step behind the others in this conversation.

"...Dreams." Bran said. "I've been having them more and more, and so vague as well. The only thing that seems to be consistent is a raven with three eyes...I was hoping Rick's things could help with some answers."

Rick groaned, "Kid, you're talking about things way over your head. If you want me to do a gene
test when we get back, fine. But if I catch you stealing again, I don't care who your daddy is; I will bust your ass!"

"How'd you get on board?" Morty asked a question too obvious for his grandfather.

Bran shrugged as he handed Rick back the hand. "Lately, I just think about being invisible and people don't notice. I feel like I'm sliding between worlds."

The others simply stared, but Bran simply shrugged. "Just like that...Take care, Jon." With that, he left.

"...Odd..." Morty mused.

Rick just mumbled to himself as the airlock closed behind Bran. "Goddamn kid is lurking around like some creature of the night."

"Will he be alright?" Jon asked.

Rick blew him off, "Of course! Kids all the time get visions. Bran might have the navigator gene, a strong version fit. Can we focus on the mission right now? I need you in the game and I need Morty to turn himself into a microchip bot."

"WHAT!?" Morty cried, shocked.

"Er, well, let's get close first, and I'll tell you the full story first."

As the ship took to the space, Rick began his tale.

"See, Silicon Valley was commissioned by a President named Mrs. Frank Bloke, ruler of some backwater planet, as an experiment in artificial environments and evolution. Helping me was some guy named Professor Cheese, and we were aided by marines. Not badass Space Marines, mind you, but lame regular marines."

"And everyone died," said Jon,

"You're ruining my story, ya bastard!" Rick groused, "Anyway, these band of drunks who called themselves marines got killed. So did everyone they sent to that station. Turns out the animals onboard had merged with the station's technology. Whoa boy, last time I was there I saw a Yautja kill a steam-powered hippopotamus; that was amazing. Also there's an evil brain controlling the whole thing who's threatening to crash the station into the nearest planet."

"So where do I come in?" Morty asked, not liking where this was heading.

"Oh, Morty." Rick grinned, not a good sign. "You actually have the most important job. I'm gonna transfer your entire body into a mobile microchip that can control the robotic animals once they die. You will infiltrate the station and and work your way through the four zones, taking them all down! And do some crap for me while you're at it!"

Jon frowned, "Even for you, Rick, that's a terrible plan."

"I don't want to be a microchip, Rick! Can't we just shoot the animals?" Morty pleaded,

"No Morty, the security systems don't recognize the animals. It'll make things way easier unless we bring in an actual army to do this. Also it's a way for you to man the fuck up and not depend on me so much."
"Er..."

"And the reason why the security won't work? Because the animals have likely taken control over the entire station." Rick went on. "And for reasons possibly related to alcohol, I MAY have installed a shrink ray on the Station."

Jon was just looking at Rick, truly at a loss for words.

"So anyways, Morty, if we turn you into a microchip and shrink you down, the Shrink Ray can't hurt you! And didn't you say you wanted to get into a fox with six wheels or something?"

"I said I like Foxy Roxy, Rick! Not that I want to computer possess a robo fox!"

"And here we are"! shouted Rick, ignoring that last part.

The huge, circular station was coming into view, and Rick could see the four zones: European, Ice, Jungle, and Desert. All full of deadly animals ready to rip people apart.

Sheesh, as if Hostile Xenos, Demons, and Pirates were bad enough, this became an issue. Not to mention the increasing rumors of returning Chromatics...

There was also the chance that they'd run into a Yautja hunting party amidst all those mutated and cybernetic animals. Jon groaned as he checked his sword and eyed the displays in his power armor. "There's one docking bay that's functional."

"It's mined," said Rick, "Set to blow. I know because I mined it when I was drunk. We're teleporting Morty onto this bitch!"

"WHAT?!"

"Yeah, but first," Rick pulled out some sort of gun. "Hold still and don't scream. Otherwise, your tongue might melt."

"Don't scream for-" Morty was cut off by the ray hitting him. "WAHBBBBBBB!" He was suddenly converted into data pixels, which where drawn into the gun. Rick approached an insect-like microchip, inside a pod, and shot the pixels inside.

"Okay, Morty! You're going to be fine! When we get back to Winterfell, Sansa is going to totally suck your dick! Now good luck, Morty!" Rick cried out as the pod shot towards the station.

Jon just looked at Rick in awe at how much of a douchebag he was.

"Not literally!" yelled Rick, knowing what Jon was going to say. "But I gotta promise my grandson something. And he really likes your sister. If Catelyn wouldn't cut my nuts off for saying it, I'd say they'd make a great couple."

Jon groaned, "You need help, Rick."

"RICK!" Morty's tiny voice came from the chip over the radio. "What's happening?!"

"A word of advice, Morty." Rick went on, ignoring Jon. "You're safe in that pod, but that body can't survive outside a host for long! So you gotta spend most of the time in a body of an animal."

"What?" Morty demanded as he felt the pod slam into something solid.

Over the com, he heard his grandfather say, "Look Morty, you had to get your dick wet sometimes. It was this or stick your dick into a Xenomorph nest. This will be an easier life or death thing,
Morty!

"WHY MEEEEEE!!!!" Morty shouted as he fell through space.

"You said you were-" Jon began.

"Oh, I will." Rick assured as he observed the capsule as it went out into space. "A short-distance version. Just get though the glass walls and into the ship, where he can remain in the pod until something comes up...

European section...

A dog, Roger, and a sheep, Flossy, approached each other lovingly.

Since becoming part of the station's systems, Roger and Flossy had gotten . . . a little weird. Besides fighting hostile predators aboard the station and strange aliens with dreadlocks, their newfound cybernetic brains had become rather, amorous.

Specifically they were very much in interspecies love. They communicated with each other by a binary microwave transmission. "Oh Roger," said Flossy, "Fuck me like one of your french bulldogs!"

"You love me," Roger cried back, "You really love me!"

It was then that Morty's pod crashed into the European enclosure and struck Roger in his titanium skull.

And killed him instantly. Zero climax whatsoever.

"NOOOOOO!!!!" Flossy wailed, running back in forth.

The pod opened, and Morty, in his new form, scurried out. Already, he could feel a bit of power leaving him.

He was on the dead Roger. He sighed, then burrowed into the body, working his way into the control core.

There was a rush, like someone had shoved Morty's head into the power coils of a fold space engine. When he came too, he had four legs, a mechanical neck and fur. Near him, Flossy the sheep was presenting like a bitch in heat.

"Uh, Rick, I'm a dog, and that sheep is getting way too close for comfort."

Rick belched over the intercom as he helped himself to a beer. "Dammit, Morty, this isn't time to be thinking with your dick. Look, you need to herd this and the other sheep into the pen. The sheep carry gamma wave generators that'll nuke Jon and me. So move your ass!"

Morty, once again, found himself in a bad situation. What SHOULD he do to herd these sheep into the pen? Fuck them? Or just be a typical dog and bark?

Morty knew that Rick liked to do everything as stupidly complex as possible. Even opening a jar of pickles back on Winterfell could be a technical nightmare.

But from what he could see, even though these sheep were emitting deadly radiation, they still acted like regular sheep under their steel wool.
"RUFF-RUFF!" Morty barked with his stolen vocal cords, causing the sheep to bolt in one direction. Ahead of him, he could see a fenced enclosure with anti-radiation signs around it. That was his destination!

He could see more sheep scattered about, all acting mindlessly as they gnawed on the grass. This wouldn't be so bad.

"Good job, Morty." Rick said in his head. "Just keep herding those sheep...but be careful when you get close. Some of them MIGHT be rams, which will pummel you if you get close. Also the Ram horns have void generators built into them, so they'll blow you up and kill you," Rick grunted.

Normally Morty would have been afraid, but today for whatever reason, he was just out of fucks to give. "Thanks, Rick," he said sarcastically over the comm as he barked as a few more sheep.

And speaking of rams . . . there was the first one now, climbing out of a stream.

Technically, the rams did not have eyes...but they could still see quite fine. Sheep tended to gravitate towards them as well and-

"Actually, Morty, I just remembered. If it hits you, it'll hurt, but unless it pummels you enough, you should be fine. Yeah, the animal bodies have adapted to each other, making all the crazier powers moot again one another. Mostly for intruders."

That was another thing that Morty didn't like about his grandfather. He was the smartest being in the multiverse . . . supposedly. And he had the memory of an eighty-year-old senile grandmother.

Unfortunately for him, the dog body wasn't as agile as he wished. The ram struck him and it hurt like a mother.

Stars lit up in Morty's vision and he jumped back. Grinding the doggy teeth, he knew he'd have to change up his strategy for the ram with a crude radar dish instead of eyes.

The ram was aggressive, he noticed...and when he turned on the sheep's pen, the gate was made of an electric beam.

He wondered...if he just lured the ram into the electricity...

For all its cybernetic parts, the ram wasn't much smarter than a real sheep. Probably even a bit less intelligent.

Morty took no small amount of satisfaction seeing the horned mecha sheep light up like a Christmas tree and fall over with its legs standing straight out.

"Fuck you!" Morty snapped at the downed ram.

"Shoulda used a cool one liner, Morty," Rick grunted, "But we're getting there."

Now, as for more sheep...Morty looked down at the dead ram.

Body jumping proved to be easier than he thought.

Now it the body of the ram, Morty began to wander about, picking up sheep, their tiny brains following the leader.

It was a bit of a mindfuck to see the world through radar images. But if offered Morty some advantages. The Ram's radar eyes could make out every blade of grass and see through less dense
objects.

He could see where sheep hid behind bushes. He could see a bit into the level blow him and see indistinct shapes. And he could see lines of radio communication through the station's various communications arrays.

It was...weird. Just how much effort was put into this ship?

Ah, mattered not right now. Soon, Morty had led all the sheep around into the pen and fenced them in. Being sheep, they soon went about their business, gnawing on the grass.

"Good job, Morty!" Rick grunted over the com. "Now Jon boy can show up without melting from the radiation. He'll help you set up a perimeter and then I'll direct you to possess a robo mouse to get to the next stage!"

"Is Jon teleporting?" Morty asked.

"Shit no!" Rick nearly shouted, "He's way too valuable for that shit. I only teleported you because I see more of Jerry in you every day and I needed to bring out your manhood."

"Gee... thanks Rick,"

"So...I don't do much here?" Jon asked flatly from the radio, his displeasure showing as well over this whole situation, which he rapidly found to be utterly ridiculous.

"Look, Snow," snapped Rick, "We're going to keep this station from crashing into the local inhabited planet. And we're going to power down the deadly cyber animals using the kill switch I built at the center of the station. If you see something deadly, just hit it with your sword."

That was a shame, Morty could have used Jon’s help. But he'd triumphed under much worse places.

Oh, man, and this was just the START! He still had to go through the Euro region, and then three whole other regions to do his job.

Morty didn't wait for Rick or Jon. Jon could take care of himself and the same went for Rick. They would be arriving soon and doing their own job anyways. Morty was going to need to stand on his own two or rather four feet.

Painfully, he detached from the ram and began crawling across the grass in chip form. It was unpleasant, as it was draining and tiring. And there was the mouse with wheels instead of legs, just as Rick had said.

It was...dead already, and so he hopped in.

It was small, and likely weak...but DAMN, could he go fast! He sped along the fields, boosting about to get used to his new form.

"Great job, Morty! You're really getting the hang of it all." Rick said. "And just as I side note, don't get the mouse wet. It's one of the animals that had bad water resistance."

"Right," Morty muttered over the comm as his new mouse form buzzed like a real mouse on a meth frenzy.

"Don't die on us, take care care of yourself," came Jon's soothing voice.
Water seemed easy enough to avoid, Morty hoped as he started zipping through air vents to find his way to the next stage. it was times like this that his obsession with racing games was paying off. He navigated the tight corners, turning on a dime and speeding past glowing devices that were probably bombs or something nasty.

Exiting one went, he found himself in farm based area...and this one was patrolled by what about to be a dog with wheels...

...and missiles on the back. Luckily, it ignored Morty and just patrolled for larger animals.

"Okay Morty, in this area the dogs set up an electric fence . . . smart mutts," his grandfather barked over the comm. "Problem is the fence they built is slowly overloading the fusion reactor and it's going to blow in about ten minutes. You need to shut off the fence and kickstart the growth of the turbo-carrots I created."

Ten minutes until they all died. Morty could handle that. Something about all these animal forms gave him confidence. Maybe it was just because he was doing it to keep Jon alive, and maybe it was to prove himself for himself and nobody else.

It was then he noticed a switch...and a heavy box hanging above the patrol route of the dog.

Morty simply waited until the dog was close...then hit the switch.

It killed the unspecting bot instantly, and soon Morty had a new body. The Racing Dog was slower than the mouse, but it had a better punch to it.

"Oh, great job, Morty! That's using your head!" Rick praised. "Now let's move out, and watch out for bears! Top killers of the Euro region."

"The form you’re inhabited contains a pod of anti infantry missiles, “Jon advised. “Use them sparingly."

“Thanks, Jon!” Morty replied as he came upon a fence near a farmhouse. Inside was a rusted, beat up fusion reactor that Rick had probably built while drunk.

Now...how to make it go off...

Oh, a lever. Morty nudged it, and like that, a crisis was averted.

Lights and klaxons went off and temperature dials began to fall into the green.

Then Morty saw a simply enormous bear with a satellite dish on its head stomp by.

“That’s Shardik, Morty,” said Rick, “built him to be station security. Sneaking past that hairy fucker may be the best option.”

Morty did not bother to argue. He simply slid by as best as he could. He managed to evade detection, and rolled on for more assignments.

Meanwhile…

"So...what I am doing here exactly?" Jon asked, looking about the field in his suit of tech armor, having beamed down with Rick earlier to stake things out.

"I lost contact with this station years ago," Rick said as he found some moonshine hidden in a false tree. "I can track the robo animals, but anything else doesn't register on this station. Basically you
"Is there anything specific I should be looking for?" Jon asked, "Normally you just shoot thing yourself. It has to be very bad for you to ask for help."

"Well, Tyranids might be about, as well as Yautja and Orks...but I'm also worried about Chromatics, honestly. They do anything to get they scaly claws on powerful tech." Rick admitted.

The massive acid jet that shot up from the center of a vast cornfield told Jon all he needed to know. Rick stumbled, nearly spilling his precious liquor in the process.

The Chromatic Dragon stomped out of the high corn stalks with a gigantic Ork Nob in its mouth like a hunting dog with a bird.

Jon suddenly started mentally counting the number of grenades he'd brought with him and wished he'd brought more.

He looked at the color. Black. Not the strongest, but certainly the most vile and sadistic of their lot...and still damn stronger than humans.

Given that this one had killed a nine foot tall, six hundred kilogram Ork Nob it should not be underestimated.

The dragon stared at Jon and Rick with pure hunger. Not just for food but for gold, for pain and blood.

Jon drew his sword as Rick focused on draining his moonshine before the huge reptile spilled any.

The Black Dragon swallowed the last bits of the Ork and grinned. "So...it seems like hairless apes have made themselves known...but I suppose you're just here to clean up the mess, eh, Rick Sanchez?"

"I don't know you, you scaly dickhead," Rick blurted out as he tossed his moonshine bottle aside. "I've killed cockroaches uglier than you."

Jon said nothing as the Black Dragon laughed. "Oh, but WE know you, Rick...as well as many others of my kind, both same and different colors."

"What do you mean?" Jon had to ask.

"Naive fool." The Black scoffed. "Do you really think we sat in complete solitude for generations? No, we have eyes and ears all across the galaxy."

"Anyone who's anybody wants to kill my ass," Rick snapped, "Get in line!"

"What I want the coordinates to the vaults you built," the dragon snapped, "You stole from those who ordered this station. You intend to leave all that gold to your idiot grandson. It would be better in our capable hands, especially with war on the horizon; with all its horror and all its glory."

Rick glared at him. "And you do know the others Chromatics will try and kill you for it, right?"

"Ordinarily, yes." The Black admitted. "But times are changing, and we find ourselves staring to band together...even those lowly Whites. We can smell the war coming," he took a step forward, "And this may be our last chance to plunder the galaxy of its riches. And while you're posturing like
a fool, there's another Black Dragon heading to intercept your grandson."

Jon turned to Rick, who suddenly froze.

"How-

"I told you: We know all, and see all." The Black smirked. "You’ve an entire world of treasure, a whole planet of gold and we want it. Not to mention the magic jewels and artifacts. Tell us the coordinates and we let Morty live."

As Rick's attention was held by the dragon and the mad scientist went for his weapon, Jon spun around as a White Dragon sprung from under a synthetic river.

White Dragons were the weakest of the Chromatics...though in the grand scheme of things, they were still Dragons, and freakishly strong.

"Stark Bastard!" It yelped. "Kill you!" Unlike other Dragons, Whites had a more rudimentary grasp of spoken language.

The White Dragon opened its mouth and unleashed a blast of ice breath. Ice crystals and frost shot at Jon.

Immediately a modified shield lit up on Jon's belt and blocked the ice blast. The Starks had always had trouble from the White chromatics; even during the days of the Barrow Kings and the age of heroes. They'd learned to fight these beasts on their own terms.

While the White had been beaten into not harming Rick-yet-, it had no such rules against killing Jon.

A mere bastard child between Ned and some whore in the far reaches of the galaxy. What good was he in the grand plan of the Chromatics?

None, that was the answer.

Even a ransom would be worthless, as his adopted mother wouldn't pay a mouldy turnip for his fucking life.

Jon, however, had fought such beasts before. On New Vegas, a White Dragon had been plundering Duke Nukem's casino and he'd blooded himself by taking the beast's head. It was old practice.

In response, Jon grew a grenade from his belt, which extended wings. The grenade began to flap like a bird and launched itself at the dragon.

The White responded by unleashing a cold breath attack...

...but the grenade was designed for the cold, and went down the mouth of the dragon, and exploded, taking his off clean off.

The Black snarled and spat out a gout of acid.

Rick fired rocket thrusters in his shoes and sped out of the way of the black acid which burned everything it touched. "You're a handbag, you motherfucker! I'll erase your ass!" Rick promised vengefully. He neither surrender Morty’s inheritance or risk his grandson's life on the shaky chance these fucking lizards would keep their end of the deal.

"Morty!" he shouted into his earpiece, "you got a Dragon coming on your ass soon! Chromatic! Don't be a hero, just run!"
Morty didn't need to be told twice. He had just blasted another mouse, and took over its body. He took at top speed, reaching a hole and zooming in...

...just in time, as well, as the other Black soon arrived.

The Black Dragon's talons furrowed the environment and ripped through dirt and steel alike. Snarling with primal anger, it vented its anger on the local wildlife; spewing acid on anything that moved. Cyber animals screamed in pain and died horrendously; their screams would haunt Morty on top of all the other awful things he'd seen in his time with Rick.

He moved through the vents, the path taking him to . . . hopefully the Arctic zone.

Only time would tell...

Rick, meanwhile, still struggled with his skull-faced foe.

Chromatics as a rule utilized powerful magic. While they lacked the reality warping shots of Paarthurnax and his kind, they were still durable and dangerous. Rick reached into his own jacket and held out something like an egg. "Pocket sand!" he shouted, as the egg device created a blast of sand that hit the Chromatic Dragon in the eyes.

The beast crashed, smashing through metallic walls and concrete supports, but it was barely stunned . He back on his feet in an instant...and then 'help' came for Rick and Jon...in the form of...

"TAKE THE FUCKER DOWN!" The leader of the biplane-like dogs shouted, as he and his squad began to pepper the beast with machine gun fire.

Dogs with biplane wings soared through the dome, firing onboard machineguns at the Black Dragon and dropping payloads of bombs. Many of these bombs hit secret stashes of hard liquor that Rick hid during construction of the station and caused a great alcoholic firestorm

Jon Snow covered his face to avoid inhaling the booze smoke and turned on his personal shield to avoid shrapnel. He felt like he was stuck in one of the planes of the Warp.

The Black Dragon was taking damage...but it wasn’t enough for the dogs. The beast snarled in complete rage and fury as he melted several them with acid, and actually chomped down on one that got close. He shook it about, tearing it to pieces.

The Dragon was ferocious, feeding as much on the dog's cry of pain as it did the actual flesh. the acid of the Black Dragon had paralytic effects without numbing the pain in any way. Ideal for such a sadistic being know to feed off of Dark Eldar Torture pits when it could.

But the dogs did more than they realized. As they were flying about, Jon and Rick were taking advantage of the distraction to prepped up a handheld Ion Cannon...a powerful laser beam which, despite being able to punch through several layers of steel, was actually a weaker version of a true Ion Cannon.

Used mostly against mechanical targets and useless on the greater dragons of Chromatic and Metallic variety, the Black types were weak enough for the Ion Canon to affect their nervous systems.

Rick grinned as he prepped the gun on the bleeding, enraged Dragon. "Eat shit, lizard!" he snarled as he pressed the red button near the handle.

It the creature was still at full strength, it would have shrugged off the blast. But Rick saw an open
wound in the beast, and took careful aim at it.

The laser ripped right through wound, fatally wounding the Dragon. It screeched as it slammed to the ground, before groaning.

"Rrr...damn it..."

Jon approached the Dragon. "Have you any last words?"

The Black chortled. "So...this is how I die, eh? Well, it no longer matters. As I said, we have spies everywhere...from commoners to soldiers." Noticing the look of confusion on Jon's face, he sniggered. "Oh, do you really think EVERYONE would be willing to fight and die for some pompous Lords and Ladies? The dragons will take what we will," he rasped. "Such is our way, and even your pet mad scientist does not know the full extent."

Rick pulled the trigger and it was gone. He sincerely hoped that the things black soul would be claimed by the ugliest bastard demons of the Warp.

"What did he mean?" Jon demanded, "How can the Chromatics have such pull? Was he lying?"

"Not important," Rick blurted, "Morty comes first!"

"Right." Jon nodded. "We have to find him and reestablish contact."

The two headed out, leaving the body behind. Rick knew they would be more on this station. But he was troubled deep down. If what the Black said was true, then the Chromatics now had a vast spy network, more than anyone else in the galaxy.

Rick started doing the math in his head. How many spies the Chromatics may have, where they have them and how they'd gotten there or what they'd been offered? By his most generous estimates, they quite literally had people everywhere. By his minor guesses, it was too late to stop them.

In short, Rick needed time and resources his employers and himself just did not have.

"Morty!" Rick shouted into the comm. "Morty! Talk to me!"

A bit of static...then.

"Uh, Rick, I'm still in the Euro regions, just in some engine room."

"Good! Keep there until we find it." Rick stated.

"With all those bigs dragons about? I'm staying here until you come!" Morty replied.

"Copy that!" Rick shut off the communicator as he and Jon moved on with the mission...which just got a whole lot messier.
A Pirates Life

In the deep reaches of space...

A fleet of massive dark ships were cruising across the massive void, as if searching, but not super carefully. No House or Guild banners were upon these ships...

...for these were ships of Pirates, notably...of Yūki Terumi.

Aboard the various ships, Skrall, Skakdi, Dark Elves, Yuan-Ti, Bullywugs, Jiralhanae, Saurok and other foul species all worked on their various duties, such as ship upkeep, mapping out regions, feeding animals...and other unsavory tasks.

Terumi was a man of supreme cruelty and ferocity. He was also however a man of vision. He knew how to motivate the freaks, thugs and psychopaths under his command. Knew how to get the most out of his crews and put to work those that even other pirates would steer clear of.

Unlike his main competitor Juri Han, Terumi avoided slaughtering his crews and losing ships in glorious but futile battles.

Though the mission that motivated him now was a purely personal one. And a slight such as this must be repaid.

That was going through his thought right now as he sat in his main control room on his central, his eyes narrowed, having one of them healed after it was torn out by the little shit...

Terumi’s main bridge was also his quarters, and where he kept his various tools and weapons...and toys.

Weapons were a passion of his. Knives, swords, blades. In some cases, blades fine and sharp enough to get between the skin and the connective tissue for fine flaying. Such was his prowess in battle and torture that he'd been invited to the Dark Eldar City of Commorragh as a guest rather than slave.

Then there were his more sensual torture devices and machines.

Like the wooden horse, spiked scourges, chains that would drain energy, and more...

...and among his most deadliest of objects was the legendary tome, the Book of Vile Darkness. An ancient and forbidden work, it detailed numerous foul and cruel spells, techniques, paths, ideas, skills, and all sorts of the hideous imaginations.

Terumi had seen far too much in the galaxy not to trust in magic. It wasn't an act of faith, it was proof. Magic and the gods revealed themselves as plainly as thunder and lightning.

In these dark times, a man needed an edge against the truly depraved. The various Chaos Sorcerers, the demons of Hell and the orderly devils of Hell.

Acquiring this evil tome was something Terumi would always be proud of. In a way, it was the physical embodiment of his philosophy.

Depravity, madness, and cruelty...all things he relished in! He always enjoyed crushing settlements as he went among the stars, making sure all knew their place.

For him, violence was more than a means to an end. Violence was his religion.
Among the halls of his starship, a champion of Khorne stood, sedated and in chains. The brute snored like a wounded dragon, but Terumi didn't mind. It was a show of his skill to capture one of the World Eater's Space Marines alive. When not on enough drugs to put a planet to sleep, he just pointed the brute roughly in the direction of his foes and . . . presto. Instant massacre.

"Heh, not so tough once all drugged up like that, eh?"

Terumi turned to see who spoke. A large, turtle-like beast stood there, a dark grin on his face.

Jinmen, Terumi's 2nd Mate and a demon of unknown origin. Perhaps a regional demon...but that did not matter. What did matter was that he was an immensely depraved individual as well.

Jinmen was scum. A rapist. Murderer. Torturer. Just the kind of guy who'd thrive under Terumi's command.

The demon himself was brutal, without mercy. He just needed Terumi's divine spark of vision to really bring his cruelty to a new level.

"I seem to remember that thing nearly cracking your shell like an egg," Terumi mocked his subordinate.

Jinmen simply flexed his claws. "Perhaps he needs a reminder on what I did to HIM?" He sneered.

Terumi looked at the Marine. "Eh, later. Might need him soon." He chuckled. "Amazing, isn't it. Marines were created to the best of the best, mightiest of us all...and yet, a good number have-and still do-fall into the thralls of Chaos."

"I can still smell the blood off of him," Jinmen growled. The faces along his lower shell began to move, scream in pain. "Think of all the lives this thing took before I could."

"That's what I like about demons," Terumi smiled, "Purity of purpose; no remorse and no altruism. These Marines at best are only ever deluding themselves, or becoming puppets to unworthy puppeteers."

Terumi paused in thought, also glancing at Jinmen's back. Full of faces contorted in pure agony and suffering.

When Jinmen ate sentient beings, he would add their faces to his shell to prolong their suffering...for as long as he lived. Terumi found it quite interesting...and soothing to hear those screaming.

The demon had grown mightily strong for this. Each soul adding to his power. In a way, he wasn't so different from Terumi himself. "Have you given the crew an extra ration of rum and human flesh?" he inquired.

"They took to it like hogs to slop," the demon chortled, "Suckers, I got a living one with a fresh soul, so pure and untainted."

"Good," Terumi grinned, "I need them energized for the hunt."

"Yes, but I must say." Jinmen began, "We should regain some of our resources before we find the monster and Band again."

"True..." Terumi admitted.

"Which is good that we managed to track down some Dahl Corporation ships not too far off." The
turtle went on. "Readings indicate they are full of mineral deposits, ripe for the taking!"

Terumi laughed at the thought. "The minerals are all good and fine, but the guns and the crews are what interest me. Dahl's business is that dead customers can't be repeat customers. Let the crew sacrifice the Dahl employees the way they see fit. We divide up the guns and take the ore."

Jinmen laughed, "I thought you'd see things my way. As it goes, they're strip mining everything they can from a moon in former Tyranid space."

"So no Space Marines or King's fleets for lightyears," Terumi's grin grew wicked. He went to helm and spoke on the intercom for all his ships to hear. "All right, you all! Get ready for some plundering and killing! This is the Dahl Corporate boats we're hitting!" he shouted, his voice growing in pitch and intensity. "They're armed, dangerous and rich. Fight well and you'll be rewarded with loot, guns and meat!"

In the engine room of his flagship, one of the Dark Eldar overseers cracked a whip. "He said get ready, so get ready now!"

In Terumi's crew, it was a harsh hierarchy. The strong were the dominant ones, with the weaker ones either being bullies about...or killed, either by the beasts of other crew members.

And they were a considerable amount of animals.

Many of the Dark Eldar Corsairs among the crew brought skills as beastmasters. Terumi had no interest in simply taming animals. He wanted them ravenous and homicidally insane. Foaming at the mouth psychotic.

A team of such creatures herded a massive seven-headed hydra, with a gang of Gnolls to act as meat shields and encouragement for the insane, snarling monster.

Two-headed Spikit strained on their leashes, ready to eat anything that got too close. In a pool of water, a Kharibdyss prowled, ready to be unleashed. And others sorts of horrors awaited as well.

As were the Talos Pain Engines, techno-organic monstrosities of Dark Eldar design, ready to cause untold suffering to all that got in their way.

It hadn't been easy to get his hands on those things. Terumi needed to kill the entire population of a whole moon to convince the owner to work with him.

The Talos Pain Engine existed as a living tank and mobile torture chamber, spreading terror and darkness across the battlefield with each soul it devoured.

Moving around, armed packs of Jiralhanae moved. The bestial aliens were stronger than the Gnolls and a hell of a lot more ferocious. They'd made the choice to back old Aerys the Mad during the civil war so King K. Rool bombarded their planet. As a result, a good number of their kind became raiders and pirates.

Terumi needed their talents where brutal power and animal cunning were needed.

Skakdi, as usual, were part of any pirates crew. Hailing from Zakaz, they were warlike, cruel race, ready to do anything to satisfy their bloodlust. A vast majority of them, therefore, became staples for pirate crews.

Terumi grinned as his crew worked the machines on the ships to propel them forwards, his golden serpentine eyes flashing under his orange hood.
It took time and effort to turn his band of misfits into something approaching an army. Where he walked, his crew looked away. There was no saluting or real ranks here. When they looked away, it was pure animal submission taking over their bodies. Why shackle such unbound ferocity to something as banal as military protocol?

"Captain, we are ready to launch boarding pods!" shouted the Brute commander over the comm.

A one-eyed creature wreathed in mist peered into the skeins of time, "They are within range and their ships are not given slipspace drives," hissed the Fimir Balefiend.

Good, it was time to strike. The way it would go would be the cannon fodder first, before the big guns.

While Terumi was not one to casually kill off crew members himself, he still saw them as nothing but expandable pawns in his games.

Terumi's Dark Eldar members had cooked up something lovely for the occasion. Slaves loaded with suicide bomber vests and mind control chips. It might not faze the more ruthless enemies like the Yautja or Space Marines, but these corporate mercenaries and salvage crews . . . they'd just totally be rattled by it.

Behind them would be the Gnolls, among the most cost effective cannon fodder that money could be. Then the big guns like the Brutes and other monstrosities.

The displays lit up, the first of the pods had struck the largest of the Dahl Corporation's frigates.

It would be time to rock the whole house soon. Terumi grinned as he fingered his pocketknives, actually powerful weapons forged from countless souls. Ouroboros, used to attack the mind and soul of the target, causing horrific damage.

As evil and chaotic as he was, he was far too greedy to ever surrender the souls of his murdered victims to beings from another world. He had broken apart the very souls of his victims and use that power for his own ends. The Chaos Gods would have to find their own meals.

Soon, swarms of pirates were staring to board the Dahl ships. Battle soon broke out as the Dahl people brought out the firepower and began to fight back, killing lesser members of Terumi's crew.

A Dark Eldar fireteam charged up the corridors, armed with energy shields and shard rifles. Unlike their noble kin, their shard weapons were designed to cause maximum agony and deal poison damage. The got into a kneeling position and opened fire, their weapons unleashing one million shards of razor sharp crystal per minute.

Gnolls were cut down by the friendly fire and even a few Brutes, but far more Dahl mercs were being cut down; the molecule thick crystal shards finding even the tiniest gaps in armor.

Things grew darker for the salvage and mining expedition when Terumi himself entered the fray.

His long orange and black cloak flowed as his twisted grin shone under his hood. His knives were at ready...and soon, they entered out into chains tipped with metal snakes heads, chains that could stretch forever.

The disciplined Dark Eldar and even the Brutes moved to the sides to give their master room.

The chains shot forward and impaled, seven, eight, twenty men in a single go. Yanking the chains back, the demonic steel sprouted spikes and ripped the bodies to pieces, Throwing blood all over the
walls and throwing an organ carpet on the floor.

The Gnolls bent down to lap up the blood and even the Brutes started eating organs without too much grit on them.

Meanwhile, a squad of Skakdi charged in with swords, axes and flamethrowers for maximum carnage.

And when Skakdi worked together (a tricky task) they could use mighty elemental powers, used to wreck havoc on anyone dumb enough to get in their way.

The lucky ones died in battle by normal means. The unlucky ones had thier souls absorbed by Terumi and Jinmen, who delighted in adding more faces to his shell.

The REALLY unlucky ones were dragged off by Yuan-Ti and Dark Eldar, likely for dark experiments and rituals that would be...most painful.

The mercenaries tried to flee, valuing their lives above that of the cargo or even the lives of the miners and staff of the company. They began to flee in escape pods and long-range shuttles, only to be shot down by robotic point defense drones.

Skakdi under Terumi's direction unleashed elemental storms that destroyed the escape pods, while the Fimir Balefiend baffled the navigation systems of the shuttles.

Yes, things were going quite well for Terumi and his crew already...made him wish something would just spice it up...

...and sure enough...

...in a relatively short distance away.

A fleet of Ork ships, unnoticed by the fighters, observed the situation. Large, cobbled rust buckets, they should not have been able to fly, much less space travel...

...But the Orks believed they could, so they could.

On board, one Ork examined a screen showing the carnage. "Oi, boss! Sum pompous gits are lootin' them fancy ships before we'z could!"

The Ork Warboss in question was a huge fucking beast of a Warboss by the name of Ghazkull. A heavy hitter with nearly a century of constant warfare under his belt. Part of his endearing power came from the adamantine skull given to him by a mad doctor some time ago. It rendered him immune to headshots and twice as nutty as an Ork like him had any right to be.

Ghazkull peeked into the scanners, as a Gretchin adjusted the rabbit ear antennae. "See dat git! I want his shiny chains for meself!" He bellowed at the sight of Terumi's killer soul chains. "What're you gits lookin waitin for? Fekking attack!" To make the point he slammed his fist and turned the Gretchin into a green puddle.

His soldiers didn't need to be told twice.

Orks and Gretchins hurried about, ready for some stompin'...and as they did, they began a mighty chant as thier ships propelled forwards.
"ERE WE GO! 'ERE WE GO! 'ERE WE GO, 'KROSS DE KOSMOS!!"

As a rule, Ork ships were ramshackle pieces of shit, kept aloft only by the mythical Waaagh that all Orks produced. That said, the frontal plating was stupidly thick and when their crude engines were ramped to full power, the results were devastating.

Aboard the main frigate, Terumi turned his head as he saw the Ork Kruiser about to cut this ship in half. "What a lovely day," he smirked.

The other pirates noticed as well, and quickly activated their suits to protect themselves from the void...the Dahl mercs were not as lucky, and were sent hurtling into the void as the Ork ship smashed into theirs.

Mining crews trying to escape were blasted into space or violently decompressed, turning them into human meat piñatas. Many of Terumi's crew wore environmental suits against such disasters and Terumi protected himself against the void with dark magic. This was the perfect kind of disaster that Terumi wanted.

Chaos and murder was what he wanted, and Orks presented a challenge in that they were completely immune to fear.

The Warboss slammed into the ground. "Oi, pansies! We here for all da loot, and we iz gonna stomp ya all into nothin' to get what we here fer! WAAAAAAGGGHHH!!"

Terumi hoisted his chains and pulled a throwing knife into each hand. "Let's play."

Immediately, a wave of Gretchins and Ork Boyz charged. The pirates retorted with a bellow of their own and a wave of guns, bullets and blades. The sweet, sweet carnage was worth it. It' would purge Terumi’s crew of the complacent, and if they won, they could melt down the Ork’s garbage vessels for valuable ore.

And the Orks would fight because they didn't know any other way of being.

They fought, they drank, they looted...and they LOVED it! It was pretty much their goals in their short, brutal lives.

"STOMP 'EM, BOYZ!"

"I IZ GONNA THROTTLE YA!!"

"MORE DAKKA!!!"

"WAAAAAAAAAAAGGGGHHHHHH!!"

And they were quite loud.

Not that Terumi’s lot were little choir girls themselves The Gnolls barked like starving hyenas and lunged at the Orks with just about anything they could get their hands on. They ripped open throats with their teeth, smashed skulls with rusty iron maces, and fired off crude black powder weapons that belched fire and smoke.

Brutes charged with bare hands, breaking Ork Boyz like toothpicks. Their powerful firearms shot grenade launchers that turned the Gretchins into mist. While the Dark Eldar switched to mono-molecular swords and shields for close combat. The Saurok were crude, but effective, running in and using their teeth and sword to rend their foes to pieces. Skrall, natural fighters, were even deadlier,
using shields to deflect gunfire, and using their sword to kill Orks by the many.

The Ork Knobs were charging in now. Hardened veterans who'd grown big and strong from success. They came in with massive cudgels that could turn a man into paste. They bore down, wearing crude, but heavy plated armor.

Worse yet, Ghazkull was bringing in the Weirdboyz.

These Orks were the 'Psykers' of the species, but drew on the battle frenzy of the Orks. It was a...crazy effect, as they constantly had to vent psychic attacks out at foes before they let their own heads blow up...also taking out other Orks as well.

The effects were many times, random. The Weirdboy thrust out its staff and cried out, "WAAAAAGH!"

Terumi deflected the spell and it hit a Saurok, which then turned into a chicken. That was new. Said chicken was then trampled underfoot. What a waste of good poultry.

Well, might as well kill the fuck before it caused more trouble than it was worth. Terumi flung out a chain, and it wrapped around the Ork, and squeezed. Attacking the mind and soul would be pointless: Orks did not process such things like others would. Even their souls fought back.

So instead, Terumi tugged on the chain and the Weirdboyz head flew off like a hat. The screaming head sailed through the air and hit a bulkhead where it exploded like rotten fruit.

Most people would be disgusted to be covered in Ork brains and blood, but not Terumi.

Carnage and rage...he thrived on them. He went back into the battle, knocking down one Boy and stomping on its head, caving it in brutally. His knives found holes in armor and his chains ripped limbs off. They grabbed one of his suicide bombers and threw them at Ghazkull. The Ork Warboss though shrugged it off and tore a Jiralhanae in two.

My, my...this would a bit more work than he thought.

"So, shithead, come to die?" He hissed.

Ghazkull powered up a cannon in one of his cybernetic arms, the weapon crackled with arcane energy and glowed with Hell runes that were glued on. "Not today, gobshite!" the Ork Warboss growled. "Let's tango, git, I'll lead!"

Hellish green energy flared around Terumi as his grin became feral. Jinmen, meanwhile, was pounding Orks into paste. He did not eat these fucks. Adding THEIR faces to his shell would only give him headaches. No despair from them, just constant yelling of anger.

Jinmen screamed as the Ork Warboss's cannon misfired and went wide. The blast of Warp lightning bounced off of his shell and blew another hole into space. Soldiers from all sides were sucked into the void but that was always a risk in space warfare. Jinmen just laughed. Maybe he'd take a few of their own soldiers if Terumi was too busy to stop him.

Jinmen's habits were of no concern to Terumi, especially in the heat of battle. Maybe it could even make them work harder in fear of being eaten themselves.

This Ork, though, was a pain in the ass. Sometimes, Terumi wished he had his old form back...when he was practically a god...
That form could have eaten this Ork Warboss for breakfast. Like the lunatic he was, Ghazkull began firing explosive weapons inside the loading bay of this damaged frigate. Orks were remarkably hardy, they could even survive in the void of space for a few hours unaided.

Ghazkull pulled up his power klaw, blocking Terumi's chains. For him, Terumi was nothing special and he was determined to wear the magic user's face over his codpiece as a trophy.

But even as he was, Terumi was no pushover. At all. He was considered one of the deadliest pirates for a reason.

He rushed the Warboss and began slashing Ghazkull about, before snagging him with one of his techniques, Snake’s Binding Dust Seal, summoning two giant serpent heads that pumped the Ork full of dark energy, before kicking the fuck across the area with one powerful strike.

Ghazkull went flying, screaming in pain as he did. The snakes tore apart his insides and the dark magic threatened to make him come undone at the subatomic level. The flew through a meter of solid steel and kept going, flying through bulkhead after bulkhead until he went flying into the void of space.

Terumi grinned as the Ork Nobs looked at him gobsmacked. They weren't afraid, but they were impressed.

But he wasn't going to have them about his crew. A bit TOO much trouble, more than it was worth.

"Destroy the Greenskins!" Terumi bellowed as his own crewmen fought with a renewed vigor.

The Orks fought back with the same ferocity but without their Warboss, the Ork fleet and the Ork ground forces lacked focus; often turning on one another.

This day's haul would belong to Terumi, as would anything of the value the Orks had.

Soon, all the Orks and their minions were dead, and their junk being collected to use as scrap metal by the pirates. Weapons and ore form Dahl had been looted as well.

Terumi soon found himself back in his own quarters, Jinmen with him.

Terumi hadn't wiped the blood off his face, though he's stripped his shirt off. Lounging in a throne made of dragonbone, he looked at the object of his desire.

The girl, Ellie. Unremarkable save for the involvement of a Gold Dragon in her life. Her, and that damn Band.

Smiling, he stopped and licked the photograph of the girl.

Oh yes, once he got her back, he was going to take the Band, and rape over...and over...and OVER!

He wasn't crazy, but he needed that Band. And he needed to repay any slight against him with overwhelming force. And what was rape but the most intimate and highly advanced form of violence?

"Getting a little obsessed, eh?" Jinmen asked with dark grin.

Terumi returned it. "That Band...it allows one to unlock their full physical potential, allowing for extraordinary feats. It's a valuable artifact."

"Ah, but I'm sure it still wouldn't match up to your original power...Takehaya Susanoo." Jinmen
"You know me better than any of the halfwits in the rest of the crew," said Terumi, hands clenching around the picture. "So you know better than anyone what I look like when I lose my temper."

"You never got over it, the loss of power. That's why you want the Band, and the girl," Jinmen mocked his master. Terumi had the demon's subservience, but not his loyalty.

Terumi...or rather, Susanoo...once was a mighty god, an armored wolf-like being, and the patron of devastating storms. But his ambition and madness overtook him, and was struck down when he tried to rebel and take control of the Galaxy. His true body was spirited from him, forcing his will to take control of a vat-grown form.

The slaughter of today was nothing to what he was once capable of. Once, he'd been able to stand toe to toe with the Greater Demons of Chaos, the mightiest spirits and dominate them utterly.

So what does a man with power really want? Simple. More power.

And for Terumi, power was a means to an end. "Maybe if I feel generous, you'll get what's left of the girl when I'm done. But not before. Sometimes you have to destroy the pure to make the finest sacrifices."

Jinmen licked his lips. "I look forward to it."
Two things were of note today for the youth of Jump City. The first was that the harvest was over. All across Jump World, the huge farms were finishing up for the year and the grain, fruit and livestock were being picked up by the Stark Merchant navy.

The second critical thing was that school was out. Ultimately that meant for now, no more tests, no more teachers dirty looks, and no more hard picking on the farm.

Normally for the likes of Robin, Starfire, Raven, Beast Boy and Cyborg, it would mean drinking themselves stupid at the tavern. But this time instead of heading for the local watering hole, they went to the recruiting office for the Starks Army outpost.

They had heard things from senior officers. Like Lord Stark becoming Hand of the King, and the fact Tyranids were returning to finish the job they started years ago.

They wanted in on the action.

"I always wanted to travel to faraway lands," gushed the Temerian girl Starfire, "See exotic people, fight dangerous monsters, and secure the love of scantily dressed maidens!"

"I just want off this planet," Raven brooded, "I'll snap if I have to be part of one more harvest."

"And I'll take the head of a Hive Tyrant and put it above my wall!" Cyborg grinned ear to ear.

"And you won't do it without me!" Beast Boy jumped onto his friend's shoulders, turning into a large green panther as he did.

"We can be heroes," said Robin with more than a touch of awe in his voice.

It sounded glorious, and they were all willing to go for it, to see all the worlds the Galaxy had to offer, and work to defend the future of their friends and loved ones. Even against terrifying horrors.

"You know, for the life of me, I actually forgot what it was like to be young." said a weathered voice from behind the group who called themselves The Teen Titans.

"Father Ray," said Starfire, "May the Seven smile on you."

"Hey father," said Raven, bored.

The older, bearded man with kind eyes smiled at the kids, "I take it you're not just going to the recruitment office to pick a fight like you did last summer."

"Nah," Beast Boy shrugged. "Might actually sign up this time. Get off the planet. See the worlds. All that crap."

Ray nodded wistfully. "Ah, I thought the same myself once."

"Was that back before the Long Night?" Cyborg asked with a laugh, giving Beast Boy a high five.

Ray, however, didn't take it personally. "I guess I do look older than I am."

"We're here to do our duty to Lord Stark and our King," said Robin, taking this a lot more seriously. "We're strong, we've fought bandits and raiders. We can take on anything."
Ray gave a small smile. "Aye, you're all young, and you can be strong like that...but," he sighed. "All have limits. I wasn't always a holy man," Ray went on. "Once I was a soldier. Old Lord Rickon called on his bannermen to fight the Tyranids, and I joined to be with my brothers."

"Damn, father," said Cyborg, "You've been holding out on us. We didn't know you were a badass."

This time there was no warmth in the father's eyes, only sadness, "It's not something I'm proud of. I definitely didn't feel like a hero when we were marched hundreds of miles until our clothes rotted and our guns rusted to pieces before we were pushed in front of a Tyranid swarm."

"..." Robin was silent at that.

"They came by the millions...perhaps billions." Ray recollected, a haunted look in his eyes. "A cacophony of screeches, as numerous forms rushed out, are willing to rip us to pieces for the sole purpose of growing ever stronger. Teeth, blades, acids...all sorts of weapons were used against us."

"Oh, father," said Starfire, "You were so brave to go through all that."

"You got my respect," said Beast Boy.

The father almost recoiled, "Brave isn't the word I'd use. I was lucky. When all was said and done, I had no brothers left and we were handed over to another lord because our unit was so badly depleted. Not long after, I became a mercenary and fought in the war of the Ninepenny Kings, though I never saw a King or made a penny."

"...People give battles weird names." Raven noted.

"Ah, but they are battles nonetheless," Ray noted. "And in this Galaxy, they would never end. Demons would swarms from their realms to plunder us. Chromatics would exert their influence to expand it... If you kids want to enlist," he said sadly, "I'm afraid I can't stop you. But I must warn you to beware the broken men. You'll face all kinds of dangers, but one day you might be the danger."

"You're right, father," said Robin determined, "You won't be able to stop us."

"Broken men don't sound that intimidating," said Starfire.

Ray sighed. "I admit in terms of words it does not...but I hope you can stay strong...unlike I..." he walked off at that.

"You know what else I won't miss?" said Raven, "I won't miss his damn sermons. For the last eighteen years those have wasted every Sunday morning I've had."

"I like when they bring out the communion wine," said Beast Boy.

"He's a good man," said Robin, "But he's old and tired. Look at us; we took on Snake Jailbird and his gang. And we've been with the militia reserves since we were fifteen, so we're almost trained already."

"I say let's go!" Starfire grinned.

It was not long before styke faced down the recruiter. An ice Agori by the name of Metus, who was said to have an eye for talent and good fighters. Quite true, and he always had a pleasant attitude for most people...
...which hid the fact he was actually kind of a smug prick.

The Agori sat upon a swivel chair behind a desk. All the better to conceal the fact that his legs had been blown off while storming a minefield during the war with Hive Fleet Gorgon. When he had a few beers in him, he told this fact to everyone involved and showed off his replacement legs.

Today, he didn't insult the Teen Titans because he was too busy talking down to a bunch of anthropomorphic cats.

Two of them, Danny and Sawyer, known for heading a group of Beastkin working as filmmakers.

"So...you want to do what now?" Metus asked.

"A War Documentary!" said Danny with stars in his eyes, "Galactic War T: or Galactic War Tyranid! It's our way of preserving the real human interest of the war without getting lost in empty stats. Just real, frontline views of our boys and girls in uniform."

"We're working with the College of Winterhold," said Sawyer, a bit more level headed, "Last time, most of the records were destroyed during the war. So the College and a few other higher learning institutions are trying to preserve the records for future generations."

Metus frowned. "Well, good luck getting it. The higher ups usually don't like that sort of thing. They say it leads to the deaths of more people than needed...not to mention the footage tends to get wrecked, making the whole ordeal pointless."

"We have written permission from the regional governor," Sawyer pointed out.

"Yeah!" Danny said loudly, "Look, in the past they sung songs about heroes, but this is the modern age. We need to capture our heroes in glorious High Definition Hologram. Old man Rickon would have let us film."

Sawyer produced the notes, and Metus looked them over. It was all legit, he noticed, and he would not do well in turning such a thing down.

And if they wanted to get themselves killed, no skin of his back.

"And what do you wastes of skin want?" he barked.

Danny and Sawyer turned around to see the Teen Titans standing in the doorway of the recruitment office. "What do you think?" Robin asked, "We're here to enlist full time with the Stark Mobile Infantry."

"Oh, really?" An oily smile came across the face of the Agori as he leaned forwards in his chair. "So you finally decided to pull your weight in this unforgiving galaxy, eh?"

...Raven really did not like Metus. At all.

"You'd better watch your mouth, or you'll lose a lot more than your legs if I lose my temper," Raven deadpanned.

"Shut your damn mouth, witch!" Metus snapped, "Don't think I don't know about all of you, your background, your crimes. The lot of you have criminal records as long as my arm."

"You're perfect!" Danny shouted.

"Uh, what?" Metus looked blankly at the Beastkin.
Danny rushed over and put an arm around Robin, who looked bewildered. "5 young people, ready to take on the threats that plague the galaxy. From day one to their dying day, a journey shall be chronicled!"

"I'm going to be famous!" shouted Cyborg and Beast Boy at the same time.

"Who are you?" Raven asked.

"We're official war correspondents from the College of Winterhold," Sawyer produced a card for the gray skinned mage.

Raven took it and looked it over skeptically. Seemed a little...overboard, since the College was meant to be a quiet place of books and spells.

"Why does the College care about the war?" Robin asked.

"House Zeal refuses to let them or the other magic schools look over their materials," Sawyer explained, "And last time, a whole bunch of books and scrolls got burned in the last war. So the College is making sure everything gets recorded accurately."

"And by filming, we put a human element to it! See it right from the ground," said Danny happily.

Robin had to wonder is Braev Lee had something to do with this. Perhaps he wanted to record war as well?

"Yeah, well, you five just go ahead and sign up so we can start your training." Metus spoke up. "Against my better judgment, you delinquents are part of the militia reserves, so that'll fast track the process for you. You start by providing your own weapons and taking them to the proving ground. If you pass, you'll get access to the Dahl Corporation gun vendors and House Stark's own armorers. You'll get a brigandine and starting pay is a two pence a day."

"Sign us up!" said an excited Starfire, "We're on the road to greatness"

"You'll all do just fine," said Sawyer, "We're staying at the DC Inn, and Danny can give you our contact information."

Robin nodded as he made sure all the forms were in order. Perhaps a documentary would be a nice idea. Giving the galaxy an informative view of war.

Still, in Robin and his friend's heart was the need to serve. Life on an agriculture world was hard. From bandits to mercenaries coming in trying to throw their weight around, they stood and fought where others hid. They were a family, a unit.

The lot of them were orphans and troublemakers. They wanted more from their lives than to dig in dirt endlessly. They wanted to make a difference.

And make a difference they would...and soon they had signed up and were on their way out.

The sun was setting on Jump World. It was beautiful. Robin had never really stopped to look at a sunset in all his eighteen years.

"Tomorrow we show up at the proving grounds," said Cyborg to Sawyer, "You be there for that. We need to start this early."

"We're always ready," Danny supplied eagerly, "Got my gear read to go at the Inn."
Robin nodded. "Good. Always like to start early."

"A good way to start our new trips!" Starfire grinned.

"I can't believe I'm saying this," said Raven, "But we should go to the tavern one last time. It could be our last time."

"Who are you and what did you do with Raven," Robin gave a rare joke.

But in the end, they all actually had a good laugh and heard back for one last night of fun...

...unaware of darker deeds afoot.

--

Once alone and closed, Metus had retreated into his room and removed a floorboard. An arcane communicator showed itself, one not connected to local networks. He pulled it out and began to connect...

...and the voice of a female Red Chromatic made herself know. "Ah, Metus. What news do you bring?"

"My lady," said Metus, "We have more lambs coming to the slaughter. Collect at your own leisure."

"Hmmm, perhaps so..." The Red mused to herself. "But some of these lambs still have bit of bite to them...we still wish to make our operations scarce and few until we are ready to strike."

Dragons...always willing to plan things out, thanks to their long lifespan.

Metus recalled how he got recruited. The loss of his legs, combined with a lack of overall gratitude for his war efforts, turned him bitter and angry over the Houses.

Lord Rickon decided to clear out the minefield . . . by having less valuable soldiers just walk through it. That was a hell of a way to repay over a hundred years of service to house Stark on the Agori’s part.

"These ones are raw, but powerful," said Metus, "They could grow into powerful rams. Though shepherd is ripe for joining the pack," Meaning the planetary governor was on the cusp of signing on with this conspiracy.

Indeed, Metus and the governor were dissatisfied people...and this made it easy for the Chromatics to approach and make an offer for a better life.

K. Rool's plans were costing the Starks. Many of the costs had to come from their end to build the fortifications and mine fields. To make up the difference, a lot of the colonies had to pony up. And many bannermen and governors had to pay out of pocket.

War was nothing if not useful for the dragons, and now they had help from disillusioned individuals, who were hoping for more in their lives.

The Chromatics were not seeking to rule the galaxy, just plunder it for all they could. For all the destruction and war, the universe had grown rich and fat. Trade had only increased despite everything. Everywhere was gold and riches to be had. Helped in large part by proliferation of the guild.

This was the start of a protection racket, not an empire proper.

"And these...recruits?" The Red asked.
Metus chuckled. "Ah, such young people...though I do believe Ray had been giving them the old 'Broken Men' speech at times," he noted.

The Red laughed. "Well, plenty of people will be broken once we're down with them, in more ways than one. He’s a tired old man," she sneered over the comm, "Did he tell the lambs about how the massacres? How he and his unit cut the throats of children under K. Rool's employment?"

Metus laughed, "No, the old goat left that part out, sadly."

"Old fool..." The Red mused. "Anyways, do your duties. Remember at the end of all this, you will be rewarded handsomely." She hung up after that.

Metus hung up, grabbing a flask of liquor from the desk. A century of service repaid with this, two of the cheapest prosthetic legs on the market.

He spilled a bit of liquor on the ground; it was a way on some planets that they honored the dead. There would be a lot of dying in the days to come.

He raised a glass mockingly. "A toast...to all the fools willing to face horrors of the Galaxy head on...and paying the price to do so." He drained his glass.

If those kids were lucky, they'd only get eaten by dragons. If they weren't, he'd still have a good laugh about it.

Well...he would see what would come...
Brienne of Tarth knelt in a meditative stance. To the outsider observer, she seemed much the same before her prison sentence on Jumanji. To the keen observer however, much had changed.

Beneath her simple fabric tunic, newly grown muscles pulsed; like a snake ready to strike. She’d survived the first round of genetic modifications and all her vitals were green. Already, she was becoming something more and less than human.

She remembered how she was taken to a lab, where Kremling scientists and Tech-Priests worked on her, cutting at her, without putting her under. But she had endured much before that. She barely felt a thing.

Pain was a way of life for her. It would continue to be her best friend and greatest teacher.

Already she could hear things no mortal could, see in spectrum beyond human sight and move with feline speed.

Yet she was only a Scout, not yet a proper Marine.

She, and her companions awaited their first test under the Chapter rules.

Ramsay, Grimmjow, and Ash were not far behind, also armed and dangerous...and enhanced as well.

It took some adjusting from all of them. While Relius's research had made the process of Space Marine recruitment safer, there was still a lot that was dependent on a person's genetics and history.

Ash himself was being fitted out by a Tech priest for a prosthetic hand. "So I'm a transhuman and you're a cyborg, what do you say we have dinner together? Nutrient slurry is on me."

The (maybe) female Tech priest zoomed her multiple eye lenses on Ash, "No." came her mechanical buzz.

"Worth a shot." Ash noted.

The priest took note to further to deaden such emotions in this prospecting Marine.

Rage and sadism were acceptable factors in this chapter, the Blood Ravens. Recruit Ramsay had ideal traits for shock and awe tactics. Hitting on anything remotely female was not useful on the battlefield. Though the Tech-Priest would still have to endure Ash's one-liners.

Brienne's meditation, however, was interrupted by the Captain, the commanding officer in charge of the new recruits.

"We are approaching our destination." He stated simply. All looked to see said destination.

A Space Hulk, a haphazard fusion of wrecked ship, natural space debris, and other forms of junk. They usually tended to simply drift...but also could hide unsavory beings.

Captain Diomedes pointed at the ramshackle lump of rock and metal that used to be a spaceship. "For this mission you will get basic weapons; one main weapon, one sidearm, one melee weapon. You all return or none of you return. If you return from the mission with a squadmate missing or KIA, you will all be executed."
"That's not very fair, is it, my captain," said Grimmjow as playfully as he could.

"You live or die as a unit," said the Captain, "These are the conditions."

Sheesh. No sense of humor whatsoever.

"As for what the mission is exactly, as a reminder, is that we have picked up life form signals inside. Of what exactly, we cannot say. It will be your task to investigate."

"Dead or alive?" asked Ramsay, ever to the point as he clenched and relaxed his hands.

"That depends how much it's worth in either state," grunted the Captain, "Live capture is good when ordered or when we need intelligence. Otherwise, get freaky."

The Hulk loomed before them, quite massive. Anything could be hiding in that mess of a thing.

Ramsay cradled a heavy electric mace that most regular men could barely lift. "So I vote that we leave no survivors. It's for the better."

Ash revved a chainsaw and adjusted the power output, "Agreed with the crazy man, psycho style is the way to go."

Brienne said nothing, still holding her Bolter, designed to shred anything that got in her way. It would be of good use to her in her career.

They might stealth it for a while, but when the first beast came, or whatever lived on that thing, there was only brute power. She felt over the weapon, an exquisite hand crafted piece of custom engineering that would normally be mounted on a vehicle, but she could use like a regular rifle.

"Just get behind me and everything will be alright," she ordered the squad in a way that brooked no dissent.

"Yes, man," Grimmjow laughed.

Brienne simply glared at him, and before long, they were out of the main ship and onto the massive Hulk.

It was even bigger once on it, and it would take some time to look through.

Grimmjow sniffed the air and shifted the massive sword in his hands. "Smells like meat. Rotten, but a long time ago. Smells like nothing has lived here for a while."

Ash shook his head, "I got a sixth scent about these things, and we're not alone in this fucker."

"Let's go get their attention then," Ramsay muttered

Brienne marched forwards, ready as always. The hallways were dark and twisted, and were an ideal spot for an ambush. Of what, she was not certain.

It was dark, it was twisted. There were places where it looked like the former crew had fused with the walls and died in horrifying agony. Yet, unlike Jumanji, she wanted to be here. This was her choice and her personal mission.

The group as a whole stopped, their senses registering the same thing.

Ramsay decided to draw out the thing watching them, "Genestealer, come out to play," he creepily
sang, "Oh Genestealer, come out to play!"

Brienne turned to him. What made him think-?

It came with very little warning. The six-limbed creature darted from a crevice in the ship, snarling, tongue lolling and claws extended.

Genestealers...a particularly nasty bioforms of Tyranids. Capable of operating independently from the Hive Mind, these creatures were used to implant their DNA into a local population for the purpose of infiltration and sabotage.

Ramsay sidestepped the attack. He didn't even use his mace. He tore one of the smaller limbs off and used it to slit the creature's throat.

The Genestealer thrashed like a wounded animal, dying but unwilling to go quietly. Brienne raised her foot and crushed the skull like an egg.

"My father dealt with these on our homeworld long ago," Ramsay remembered fondly, "He kept a few alive to feed prisoners to. The got pretty crazy when they were hungry."

"He actually risked having those things about?" Ash asked flatly. "They could have signaled a fleet to decimate everything."

"That was why Lord Ned had my father executed," Ramsay explained, "Oh, don't mourn him. He was a cunt and he deserved it."

"Well, you're your father's son," remarked Grimmjow darkly, "So if there's Genestealers, there's probably a head honcho, a Patriarch here somewhere guiding them."

Genestealers...they knew the twisted breeds would be on every nook and cranny of the ship.

But what else could be dwelling in here...?

The four began their trek down the dark halls, turning once more into another room, to see a whole bunch of Genestealers...

...dead, torn apart.

Whatever had done this, had done a thorough job. Not only were the bodies torn apart, but steel bulkheads had been ripped open where the monsters had hid. It was like a scaled up version of the dog that digs for rabbits, just more psychotic and destructive.

Brienne started to scan the environment for any hints to their "helpful" neighborhood monster.

Ash had also examined the bodies at bit more closely.

"Say...looks like they were kinda 'withered out' before they were killed. As if someone sapped the strength right outta them." He noted.

"I can think of about thirty things off hand that suck out life and souls," said Grimmjow, "But this has got to be the first time we've seen it done to Tyranids."

"So how can we kill it?" Asked Ramsay.

Brienne looked about, "Well, something came through the floor crawlspace, and where it moved it rusted out the deck hull."
"But before we look..." Ash looked again. "They didn't get soul drained...just physically weakened."

"There's no need to worry," said a voice from behind the Marines.

Brienne spun around and pointed her weapon between the eyes of a man with bronze plate armor and strange bronze colored skin. "Identify yourself!" She shouted. Knowing full well that she was very well saving this man's life from her more bloodthirsty compatriots.

"I'm unarmed," said the man, "Save for a small dagger. I mean you no harm."

Brienne still held fast. Something about this man felt...off. Not bad, just off.

"So, I see you have seen the infestation that has taken hold of this hulk." The man in bronze looked about. "Nasty things, Genestealers. And even then, still only a small part of something much larger."

"What are you doing here?" Brienne demanded as Ash pushed forward with his chainsaw.

"I'm here to fight evil," said the man, "Just like you are. I have a bit of magic power. Maybe I can turn that to help you fight what infests this Hulk before it can reach a vulnerable world."

"Or we can kill you and steal your armor and weapons," Ramsay said in a joking tone that wasn't a joke.

The man smirked. "Ah, you could always do that...but would it be in your best interest, or even the best for your health?"

"The bloody hell do you mean?" Ramsay asked, his mace at hand, ready to crush skulls.

"My armor isn't space proof, but i'm engineered to survive in the vaacum," he pointed out. "And you'll have to fight your friends for the scraps."

"I just wanted his wallet," Ash admitted.

Ramsay smiled, "You're right, we can be friends. Would you lead the way and trigger any possible traps ahead of us?"

The man smiled once more. "Perhaps I can...as long I can fight some of those beasties. I do like a good brawl every now and then."

Something really was off about this man.

The bronze stranger pointed to a random hallway, "The Patriarch of the Genestealers is this way. I can smell it." he said.

"I can't smell anything," said Brienne,

"Give it time," said the stranger, "You're new to this, and you don't have full control of your senses yet."

At this, Ash stepped up. "Right, I have to ask...WHAT are you?"

"Ah...perspective..." The man replied. "You'll see soon...as you will see the rest of my comrades."

The bronze man started to walk down a corridor that seemed partly made of flesh and muscle. Without hesitation, he jabbed his finger into an exposed eye. Like pressing a button, it opened a section of the sinewy wall. "I live to fight evil," said the man, "And there's an evil down this way
that can't be left unopposed."

"Of that, we are in agreement," said Brienne, "Squad, move out!"

Ash was right behind. Ramsay and Grimmjow decided it would be best to allow for now. They were upcoming Blood Ravens, and would prove it eventually.

"There," the stranger pointed to a bulkhead. Ash responded.

He thrust his chainsaw through the thin sheet metal and was rewarded with a spray of blood and a short-lived animal shriek.

"Got you, fucker!" he laughed.

"Good show," the stranger said warmly. "That was a nasty one, a Lictor."

"So, more than Genestealers, eh?" Grimmjow asked.

"Oh, yes." The man replied. "Toxicrene are also about, for one thing. Try not to breathe too much when you get close to one of those."

Brienne reached for the fire grenade at her belt and set the timer. "Which direction?"

The stranger pointed to a vent.

Brienne hit the wall and felt the metal vibrate through her hand. Then she tossed the grenade, using the vibrations to build a complete picture and sense where the bloated poison breather was squatting.

She heard the creature grunt in reaction to the noise...

...right before it was blown to bits by the powerful blast.

"Lucky shot." Ramsay noted. "Thought it would be tougher than that to kill. Not to mention you're taking all the sport out of this," He groused.

The man stopped and crossed his arms, "The door that way holds the Genestealer Patriarch and a special Carnifex called Old One Eye. How is that for sport?"

"Guarded by numerous others swarms, no doubt." Ash muttered.

"Oh yes, but my comrades are in position. Once we go in there, we will aid in the fight. These Tyranids are a threat to all living things. They must be stopped."

Brienne nodded. She had heard numerous stories about these things, and how...DANGEROUS they could be.

"Say the word," said the stranger, "And we can truly begin."

Brienne gritted her teeth. Wordlessly, she kicked open a steel door. The force of it struck several Genestealers and flattened them like meat pancakes.

She opened full fire with her bolter as she opened an attack path for her compatriots.

Genestealers were all about the area, and they moved into attack...

...just as the man transformed, shifting into a massive Dragon with a bronze, metallic hide.
Suddenly, it all clicked for Brienne, especially with how he didn't need space-rated armor. That didn't matter though, as she rained unholy hell upon the giant, one eyed monster known as One Eye. Fabled to be immortal, her squad would put that to the test.

More Genestealers would come as the Bronze wrestled with One-Eye...but soon, walls burst down as more Metallic Dragons, on various colors, came barging in, ready to rip the abominations to shreds.

Ramsay snarled as he waved his mace about, splattering any Genestealer who got too close to him, while Ash used his chainsaw sword to shred the army.

Grimmjow himself went for the fabled One Eye. It was said the creature had killed thousands, maybe millions. The one-eyed Carnifex snarled and shot atomic fire at the Neophyte Space Marine. But Grimmjow would not go down to an ugly cockroach like this.

With a swing of his blade, he took off the monsters head. Only for it to start spinning and blindly attacking like a headless chicken.

The Bronze kept on trying to hold it down, as his comrades stomped, crushed, ate, and blasted the other Tyranids about the area.

They fought not only with tooth and claw but with magic and eldritch fire. Bioforms were ripped apart in ways that there was no physical way to adapt against.

The Neophyte Space Marines fought like demons possessed. Brienne blasted with her bolter, slashed with a monomolecular edged knife and threw grenades like a madwoman. Even in the midst of incredible bloodlust, she felt like she was calm enough to perform advanced calculus and enact highly sophisticated battle strategy.

Everything slowed down and her mind could pick out every flaw, every weakness in her enemies from their strategy to their armor.

The enhancements really worked for her quite well...made her feel so alive and precise. She really could get quite used to this.

Most little girls wanted to be like Ellaria Sand. Brienne wanted to be like Queen Nymeria. This was a galaxy that was especially hard to women and girls. She had to do something about that. So she traded her life for the chance to stop it. And she had no regrets.

She gazed upon the Genestealer Patriarch, huge, bloated and psionically powerful. It ate at the fabric of reality with its strength of will. She did not look away.

The Genestealers rushed, sensing her intent, but most were killed by the Metallics, while the few remaining were simply swatted aside by the Tarth. She glared up at her target and aimed her gun, firing off rounds of deadly bullets. They began to rip right through the foul beast.

One Eye’s body thrashed, but Grimmjow was taking it apart piece by piece. It may be immortal, but he’d like to see it come back from being hacked into a thousand pieces and buried in adamantium boxes across the galaxy.

Ramsay laughed as he fearlessly tore apart the insectile killers. They meant nothing to him. They were just meat, no matter how fearsome their appearance or claws.

Ash kept on going, this time using his gun as well as his sword. "HAIL TO THE KING, BABY!!" He shouted as he routed the swarm. Nothing quite like using his boomstick in combat.
During his childhood, Ash's whole family were hunters, including the women. So he always had a taste for fine boomsticks growing up. Now as a Neophyte, the Mechanicus just happened to have a shotgun for him. A big bastard with eight gauge shot that would rip off an ordinary man's arm off if he tried to shoot it without a tripod.

Ash just laughed as his shot turned a Genestealer into a fleshy paste on the wall.

The whole place stank of death. But none of the fighters were deterred. Do or die in this place.

The Tyranids couldn't stop because they had no way to retreat and no capacity for self-preservation. Blind animal ferocity guided their actions, but it was for a purpose.

The giant, bloated Patriarch was summoning crackling psychic energy. Maybe trying to teleport away.

The Bronze Dragon would not allow it. He whipped his head about and took aim, and fired off a blast of lighting. It struck the Patriarch head one, frying and shocking it brutally. Its form burst and spasmed by the death blows.

The Gene tealers fought no less hard, but now there was no purpose to their actions beyond dealing damage to the enemies of the swarm.

Brienne holstered her bolter rifle, strapping it to her back. She went for a more brutal weapon. From her belt, she drew an electrified morning star. Swinging it around her, the heavy weapon atomized the first thing it hit. Not even any gore left over.

More and more they fell, blood and bodies staining the area...

...until all of the enemy was gone. Now...time to think about the Dragons.

"What now?" said Brienne, as she became aware of just how covered in blood and fluids she was. Her skin must have been made of something tougher, because it would have melted the skin right off of an ordinary woman. "We have no orders regarding Dragons."

"Now, we have no grudge with you or your Chapter," said the Bronze Dragon, exhaling steam through his nostrils. "We leave, you leave and you take trophies as proof of your success before the battle barge blasts this Hulk to pieces."

Had a point there...and with that, the dragons began to file out. Metallics...always aloof once the situation passes. That was there way of the Galaxy. Usually keeping to themselves, unless something caught their attention. They would deal with it, then go back into their lairs across the worlds.

The Dragons departed and Grimmjow held up the severed head of One Eye, still snapping and inexplicably alive. Driven on by some inhuman hatred and a need to serve the hive mind. "I'm happy to live and let live," he said as he admired his trophy.

"Indeed," said Ramsay, "I'll have better weapons to skin a dragon."

"We need to leave, Captain Diomedes will be waiting for word," said Brienne, wiping the blood off with her sleeve.

"No arguments here." Ash said as the upcoming Blood Ravens headed out of the Hulk.

Yet, they all knew this was just the beginning of the coming storm, and this battle was nothing compared to it. All they could do was prepare, both by enchantments and battle.
"You're alive," came the rumbling voice from the shadows near the entry point for the insertion pod. Captain Diomedes loomed like a statue of a war god. "You're not only live, but you racked up kills aplenty according to the computer implants in your brains."

"All in a day's work, cap," Ash flashed a winning smile, "Now let's jet to the next fight and grab a beer in the meanwhile."

Diomedes said nothing as he let them board and prepared to blast the Hulk to bits, the Dragons already having left. He readied the missiles of the ship...and let them loose.

The massive missiles shot out from the ship and struck the Hulk in numerous spots.

“Send out the scavenger drones," the Captain barked. "Salvage anything useful from the rubble. Melt it down for fuel and ammunition."

the resident Tech Marine bowed, many mechanical arms sticking out of his armor. "As you command, Captain."

Diomedes growled as he peered over the video footage of his Neophytes. They were tough, he had to give them that.

But would they survive the future? Hard to say. And what were those Metallics up to?

He neither liked nor trusted the dragons. Anything he could not directly control always had the potential to be a threat. "Back up these files and send them to the chapter master," Diomedes growled to a technician. "And inform the liaison to the King."

The technician nodded, and they all left the destroyed Hulk behind.

Mission Complete.
Fall of the House of Stark

Bran Stark tossed the empty pill bottle into the waste bin. As his visions grew, so too did the headaches. He was long past the point where normal painkillers could help him. What did help was spice, which he stole from Rick's lab whenever he could.

Today though he had a different solution. In the frozen surface of the planet, he sat in an ice cave where tiny albino axolotl swam. Floating to the top of the pool was the legendary Raven Spice.

Touching it, Bran proceeded to rub it over his gums. As the spice took effect, he saw things he wished he could unsee…

Agent 47 stared as he and Relius unwrapped and catalogued a mass of clothes and personal items. What lay before the two was very much clothing meant to mimic the style and effects of Lord Eddard "Ned" Stark.

47 turned to Relius. "Is my disguise ready?"

He twitched as he sensed things going about...

Swarms of Tyranids of all forms consuming planets by the score...

Demons bursting from Hell and the Warp to lay waste to civilization…

Chromatics devouring and plundering…

Bran spasmed in the cae, as his headache gave way to a worse form of pain. Existential horror.

He saw Relius smile and point to a tank full of fluid.

Floating in the tank was a human skin, grown without a body to accompany it. Relius pointed to the skin in the tank, "The cloned outer casing of Ned Stark, as your request. And definitely the most interesting challenge you've provided me with thus far."

47 looked at the skin, while visions of Ork WAAAGHS and universal annihilation danced around Bran's vision. "Good. Now all I need is an expert on flaying."

"Yes...one of the recent recruits to the Blood Ravens should be an expert on that." Relius mused.

The scene shifted like water, into the void. Bran saw, for a moment, what appeared to be a mix between a giant dinosaur and crystal fly by, but it was out of sight in a flash.

Water surround him, and he caught sight of Pridak...forcing himself on...someone, but the scene was distorted and grotesque.

His hands applied more Raven Spice to his gums, soaking through the moist membranes to sink into his bloodstream.

The visions he saw were less than pleasant. He saw a man with twin chains and glowing golden eyes ravish the headless corpse of a young girl, his countenance full of madness, lust and fury.

King K. Rool stood atop a mountain of skulls as he held a banner aloft, marked with an ominous symbol of a two headed eagle.
An endless sea of Space Marines marched on, faceless under their helms.

"...an..."

A figure, looking similar to Arya, surrounded by wild beasts, dressed in animal skin, with a saurian skull mask.

"...Bran..."

Zeal unleashing magical destruction and plagues across settlements, taking on draconic features. Bowser was nearby, seeing lowly people coverted into metal...

"BRAN!" The powerful voice of Olaf, the massive bodyguard of the family, shattered his trance. The massive berserker towered over the boy, "Where the hell have you been? You've been stuck in this cave for almost two days! If you were my son, I'd tan your hide for that! No doubt your poor mother will do worse."

"Two days?" Bran asked, feeling groggy and drained. But at least the headaches had stopped. "It was that long?"

"Yes, yes..." Olaf sighed as he scooped Bran up. "Let's just get you home..."

"Please...hurry..." Bran said weakly before passing out.

More dreams haunted Bran as Olaf carried him back to Winterfell station.

This was clearer. He could see it; see it like he was actually there.

There was Agent 47, there was Gregor Clegane and the newly minted Neophyte Ramsay Bolton.

"I need people flayed, on Jump World," said the bald assassin.

"How many?" Ramsay asked happily.

It began to fade.

Another image...blurred, and all he could make out was fire raging and torrents of blood against the ground...

"Bran!" Screamed Sansa as she looked over her brother, whose eyes were glowing blue. "Someone get a doctor!"

Bran saw in his vision Robb at the height of his military glory be pricked by a Tyranid sting. And that was all it took to unglue his DNA. He watched his brother fall apart.

No...no, he couldn't die like that. Robb was out and about, directing campaigns against scattered pirates, Skavens, and Salmonids. He wasn't ready for those things.

He saw Robb begin to fade, not just from life but from reality itself.

Then he saw Robb stabilize, saw that his timeline continued.

Suddenly Bran froze as everything went quiet. He felt eyes around him. Felt something looking into his soul.

And saw the four Gods of Chaos leering at him with hatred.
Khorne, the Blood God, his crimson body shimmering with raging malice.

Nurgle, the Plague Lord, filth and disease about him.

Tzeentch, the Changer of Ways, form always shifting into different shapes.

Slaanesh, the Prince of Pleasure, seductive and deadly in any gender.

They had noticed Bran. One could burn entire planets, wipe out whole species and ravage the galaxy in their name and still be swatted aside like a fly.

The reason they'd noticed him was because they could not touch him.

Of all the being in this galaxy and in many others, he was above their touch.

Bran stared back at them, some new emotion welling up inside of him.

Fear...pride...anger...? He wasn't sure. It was all too much to take in.

A bellowing roar from down below, and he looked down to see the clashing forms of Urgash, the Dragon of Hell with a ravaged and shifting form, and Tiamat, the five-headed Queen of Chromatics.

He saw the future and it was narrowing. Every outcome increasingly looped back onto a central path, like a river leading to the sea.

The old gods, the Seven, and more forces of Order clashing with forces of Chaos.

He saw his father standing before the executioner.

And behind all of that, at the apex of the timelines and probability was a three eyed raven man.

And he stared back. Everything was silent and dark, except for the two of them, staring at each other.

Then the Raven spoke.

"Seek me out..."

All faded...and he arrived back into reality, in bed.

Bran opened his eyes, seeing the mundane world around him. He gulped as he saw an iv drip in his arm.

He saw his mother and an openly weeping Sansa. He asked the first question that came to mind. “Is father alive?”

Catelyn blinked in confusion. “Why...yes, I believe so. He’s still Hand.”

“He needs to leave...he’s in danger.” Bran muttered. His direwolf, Summer, was nearby licking his hand.

His mother looked concerned for him, “Right now, your father is working overtime with the King’s war council. He can’t pull out now.”

“Father is being set up,” Bran rasped, still too weak to sit up. “Is Robb alive?”
“Bran, you’re scaring us.” Sansa sobbed

His head still pounded. It was all so...surreal. Gods and demons, mixed with mortals and dragons.

“...How long was I out?”

“You were out for two weeks,” Sansa said, starting to regain her composure.

Bran was flabbergasted. “What, how could...”

"I can't say either," Catelyn replied. "But for now, you must rest."

"Sansa," Bran whispered as the medical droid began administering sedatives. "Father is in danger. The King's assassin is setting him up."

Sansa rubbed his forehead as he began to grow sleepy again, "Bran, it was just an overdose. There was enough Spice in you to kill twenty men."

Bran blinked. He wanted to protest...but did he really take too much? He did see more abstract images as well. Maybe it was just nothing more than a fever dream.

Catelyn spoke up. "Brandon...I'm not...going to punish you to harshly, given what you've been through. I am simply confining you to the station for a short time until you fully recover."

"Mother..." Bran croaked, "Check the galactic news."

Catelyn blinked at her son. "Son, please rest."

"Mother...please, now." there was urgency beneath the drowsiness.

The Stark Matriarch looked up as the holoscreen in the medical bay lit up.

Was something happening? She wasn't sure...

"Breaking news just in from Segmentum North, I'm your host, Kent Brockman," began the news anchor. "At just 2200 hours galactic time, reports came in of massacres on Planet Springfield. Where Stark forces have wiped out a number of refugees from Space Station Shelbyville."

Catelyn's eyes widened, "What?"

Ned Stark would NEVER do that...not unless he had a reason. Genestealers? Or worse, Demons? In that case, it had to be purged.

"In lighter news," Brockman went on dryly. "A entire Guild, Fairy Tail, has been wiped out." An image of Kuroko Koumori, her expression apathetic and uncaring, was shown. " Witnesses and reports say this woman was among those responsible. But nothing can be confirmed."

While Kent babbled about inane fluff piece news stories, the screen lingered on fields of dead bodies hunt on wooden crosses; their skin flayed off. Worse yet, there was a fleeting, blurry shot of Ned Stark himself on horseback, commanding troops in the massacre.

Was Ned possessed by a demon? It would explain this behavior. And it would also mean that the King's Witch Hunters had all the reason they needed to attack and interrogate the rest of her family.

Catelyn turned to Rooster, "Something is amiss, be prepared for assassins and Inquisitorial forces."
Rooster stared at the screen, stunned. This HAD to be a bad dream...it made no sense and-

He took another look at Ned...Was it just him, or did his lord look a little...off?

The footage must have been captured by cheap, low quality drones normally used by planetary weather services and farmers trying to spot predators among their herds.

It looked like Ned, and some kind of mind control would explain this. Might explain the sinuous way he moved, the way he held himself like a person playing Ned Stark.

But the only people he knew who practiced flaying like that were the extinct Boltons. he could buy demon possession, but it was fishy if the demon in question was good friends with that cursed house.

Something was not right...and in following his Lady's orders, he would also sneak around, trying to gather whatever intel he could.

Kent Brockman was still rambling on, bring his own views into the picture...as he ALWAYS did, which was unprofessional.

Kent was a hack and a fool, more interested in getting views and selling papers than telling the truth. It was a testament to K. Rool's leadership that the king had slashed laws forcing journalists to tell the truth.

And if there was one thing that Rooster knew, a lie would get halfway around the galaxy before the truth had time to pull its pants on.

It was then that he noticed the incoming Inquisitorial barge approaching the station in a priority vector. "Oh, fuck," he cursed. He really hated the Inquisition.

They were powerful people, skilled in the arts of many things, loyal to the King alone...and utterly ruthless when dealing when people. Pompous assholes, in Rooster's view. And no sense of humor. Once he had tried to 'Nobody expects the Inquisition' joke on them.

He got dry looks.

Winning the control of the Inquisition had been the final nail for the Targaryens and the crowning victory for K. Rool. Now he had under his force something much more subtle than the Space Marines but also just as deadly.

Under their control, the Inquisition fielded powerful psykers, magic users, strange cyborgs and robots and much more. They were forever vigilant against Chaos and mutants and their hatred of Beastkin, abhumans and other "deviants" was well known.

It made Rooster sick to admit, but there was a time when he'd given them his aid...

"What the fuck do you want?" he greeted them callously over the comms. Fuck them if he hurt their feelings.

"We simply wish to ask questions." That was the honest answer. No acting yet, those were the orders from K. Rool. Acting too rash and fast would undermine things.

"You got probable cause?" Rooster demanded, "In case you hadn't noticed, we're in the middle of a war and there isn't much time for guided tours."

"Let us in," came the clipped reply.
Rooster grit his teeth, so much for stalling tactics.

Catelyn, nearby, sighed as she began the procedures...

And soon, she, Sansa, Lady, and Rooster were in the dock station, watching as the Inquisition ship landed.

This was what Catelyn had trained for all her life. Everything could be won or lost in this battle of wits, with lives just being the opening ante.

The inquisitorial guard stepped forth from their ancient, foreboding, gothic vessel. Leaving the vanguard, a Terminator Space marine in pitch-black armor stomped, purity seals dangling from its breastplate. Behind that, a fearsome looking figure with a chainsword marched.

"I am Inquisitor Adrastia," said the morbid looking woman in a large hat. The Marine and the Commissar stepped away to allow her passage.

Catelyn bowed her head. "We welcome you to Winterfell. But I must ask, what business do you have today?"

"Your husband Ned Stark stands accused of Witchcraft and consorting with demons," the Inquisitor snapped, "Your son Jon stands accused of consorting with mutants on New Vegas and your daughter Arya stands accused of Chaos Worship."

"These are serious charges," said Catelyn, meeting the Inquisitor’s steel gaze, "What is your evidence?"

"Do I need such things to send them all to Superjail?" The Inquisitor asked.

Superjail...K.Rools' toughest Prison World. Outwardly, it was a barren planet, but the prison was located in a volcano...inside another larger volcano. The complex nested deep underground, and was quite surreal, run by a man known only as 'The Warden'...who some claimed to be a cross between Willy Wonka and the Mad Hatter.

Nobody knew who the Warden was or where he came from, or if he even had a name other than Warden. The only thing people knew was that Superjail was meant to be somewhere that even the most hardened feared to be sent to and stood apart from the myriad other prison planets.

"The Warden might not need evidence or due process for everything from multiple murder to littering," said Catelyn, "But I'm entitled proof as the wife of the Warden of the North, particularly now that my family's military machine is poised to take the brunt of the Tyranid invasion."

Adrastia glared, "Your war efforts are meaningless if your husband undermines the Kingdom from within, that is my job. To defeat enemies from within who do not wear uniforms or adhere to the rules of warfare."

"And I feel something is off about this whole thing." Catelyn replied. "We need time to investigate. We cannot afford to be divided. The Tyranids are comings, and Demon activity is rising."

"More than that." Adrastia replied. "Chromatics have been sighted. Everywhere they appear, planetary defense forces have surrendered without a fight, mercenaries have reneged on their contracts," said the Inquisitor. "There's no reason to assume your family are not in alliance with such creatures."

"And your mindless suspicion may in fact undermine the very kingdom you seek to protect," Catelyn
stepped forward. The Marine raised his bolter, but the Stark mother did not flinch.

A long pause followed, before Adrastia sighed. She was jumping the gun a bit, she knew. If she simply took them now, it could cause massive issues. No, she needed to gather more before she could go after a Great House.

"I'm going to need full transparency from you," said the Inquisitor, "I need access to everything. My people are already on Springfield and my team here will investigate your station. Any evidence of pacts with Dragons, Demons or heretics will result in your house being sanctioned and erased."

"I have nothing to hide, neither does my family," Catelyn said to the steel eyed woman. "My family is spread across the galaxy, but you may find them at your convenience, as long as it does not disrupt the war effort."

True...that was part of K.Rool's plan. He had visions of a united Galaxy, united to face the multitudes of threats that plagued them. To him and the Inquisition, that would mean taking ruthless, pragmatic actions...and Ned's strict adherence to honor would severely hamper those plans.

For their supposed good intentions, the Inquisition had no honor, no integrity and no mercy. All threats were equal in their eyes, which was why they'd thrown all their support into Superjail, even recruiting some of their best killers from that desolate shithole.

The Inquisition knew of the king's fascist ambitions, and embraced them mind, body and soul.

"Do not give me reason to do my job," the Inquisitor said to Catelyn. She turned to her space marine, "Tear this station apart, let no document, no scrap of paper, no computer file go untouched!"

Catelyn remained calm. Yes, information remained...but some more imprints documents and books had been scattered about the worlds, hidden among the most trusted of allies.

Sylvanas had been good with Ned's secrets in the past. Even standing up to ten years of torture under the Inquisition centuries ago. She'd had plenty of time to betray the Starks then.

Rick had hidden certain documents in different dimensions. Duke Nukem guarded a number in his vaults scattered across the wasteland. House Nui hid evidence in ways that even Rick couldn't find.

All coordinating the effort to build a united Galaxy, united under rule of Law and Order instead of fascist violence. A more decentralized, stable kingdom based off of peace, order and good governance.

It was so real, she and her husband had worked on it for years. Only for K.Rool and his trained monkeys to threaten it all.

K.Rool and his allies were growing annoyed with lack of progress...so they decided to lay on the pressure. It could be tough, especially with Tyranids coming down on them.

The Tyranids gave everyone no choice. They also showed a path to unite the galaxy, either through loyalty and honor or through fear and terror.

Catelyn turned to Sansa, "Do you have the gun that Jon gave you?"

Sansa nodded nervously, "Yes, mother."

"Never let it off your person, even when you are sleeping or bathing. Keep it loaded at all times, always be on guard," her mother warned. "Use what I taught you."
Sansa nodded numbly. Lady kept vigil as always.

Bran's room was entered, but soon saw no reason to search. And Summer was not intent on making things easy anyways.

Aside from the Space Marine, with the group was a hired thug named Jacknife. A former prisoner of Superjail who had been deemed "reformed" by the Inquisition.

What that meant was he'd had part of his brain cut out by Relius and now he only raped and killed when ordered to. Though Sansa couldn't help but shudder as Jacknife tore apart her wardrobe as Lady growled at him.

Jackknife had potential as a solider, but was deemed a little TOO unstable, even more so than Ramsay. As such, lobotomy was needed to allow the Inquisition to accept him.

Soon, they decided nothing of interest could be found, and decided it would be time to leave.

Inquisitor Adrastia whistled for Jacknife like a half tamed wolf. She had a way around the ruthless man. As the disturbed man walked past, Catelyn returned with Rooster and Volibear. "Satisfactory?" she asked.

"I did not find anything yet," said the Inquisitor. "I will find what I'm looking for."

"May the Old Gods smile on you," said Catelyn, as the Inquisitor visibly flinched. The Old Gods were technically legal, but the Inquisition had always hated their worship, preferring to ally with the Seven and the animistic faith of the King's house.

Hard to do in a Galaxy like this, as all Houses had their own gods. Like Zeal and their OWN Seven...in the form of dragons.

The Inquisitor and her troops were back on the ship, and were on their way.

Catelyn watched their ship fly off like she was watching a predator head off to search for easier prey. She didn't turn away as she addressed Sansa and her wolf, Lady. "Make sure your brother is alright. Also, I have to insist that you stay with a body guard at all times."

Sansa nodded, "Yes, mother." She paused before looking up at her mother, "What will happen to father?"

"Your father will be fine," said Catelyn in a flat voice, "There is no other option. See to it that Bran recovers. Go into Rick's laboratory and find the scrolls about future-sight. I will gather the civilian leaders for a council, as we may be on our own sooner than we imagined."

Yes, as allies, in the end, sometimes had to look to their own, not of out cowardice, but out of necessity and need to protect their resources.

The truth was out here in the North, the King and the Kingdom were abstract concepts. K.Rool's fleets didn't protect them from pirates. K.Rool's armies didn't crush Chaos uprisings or exterminate Skaven infestations or Salmonid spawnings.

Much as the Starks tried to be stewards for all people, the sheer size of the North proved a barrier. Many people lived under their own laws. From grey market racketeers who bought goods from pirates, to nomadic asteroid and comet miners, to hundreds of small out of the way planets with only one city upon their surface and not a space station at all.
All of those had to be brought into the fold in order to rule effectively and peacefully and they were needed more than ever if the King turned his armies and navy against the Starks.

Catelyn took some breaths to compose herself. It was her, Sansa, Bran, and Rickon here now. Robb...out in the space field a few weeks ago, fighting against any deadly Xenos that were in their realm.

Robb was zipping ahead of the heavy frigates and dreadnoughts, skirmishing against Salmonid raiders, Skaven ambush fleets and the Tyranid's own splinter fleets; buying time until the big guns and heavy fortification could be brought on line.

But could he do it all on his own?

--

Meanwhile, on a shuttle leaving Springfield world, a man wearing Ned Stark's cloned skin turned to Ramsay Bolton in Stark uniform.

Ripping the face off, Agent 47 revealed his face in a shower of blood and shredded tissue. Soaked in gore, he met Ramsay's gaze head on. "You did exactly what I asked, Recruit Bolton."

"It's my specialty," said Ramsay proudly.

"I'll see you are commended for service to the King," said the bald Hitman. "We depart as planned. I will notify the Inquisitor of further evidence against Ned Stark. I'll let you know if I need you in the future."

Ramsay simply nodded as he mused on the plan.

K.Rool, as it turned out, had planned well for this. Though he had once thought of simply convincing Ned to join him, he realized it was not going to work out due to conflicting viewpoints.

So, he decided, after some thought, to simply cut Ned out entirely, and work to unify the Galaxy in the panic that resulted, giving the North a new and better leader.

What the King wanted was being involved in an all or nothing attitude. No longer was he content to bargain for the loyalty of his vassals like a merchant getting a better price for used starships. The entire galaxy belonged to him, to his government to be.

A man like Ned Stark was dangerous in that he invited compromise, invited dissent. Both of those two things were like poison to the King and would only strange his new galactic order.

This new fascist nation was his baby, and he would kill to see it born. Didn't matter who he had to kill.

Though deep down, in his own mind, he felt this was the RIGHT thing to do. After all, they needed to be united to protect themselves from their numerous enemies. A needed evil if one must say.

There was that old saying, better the devil you know than the devil you don't.

The galaxy may fear him, it may hate him. But it would obey him just the same.

That was how life worked. And 47 knew this. He looked on the window as his ship traveled.

Today's performance had gone off without a hitch, but 47 knew there was so much more to come. He could not afford to rest on his accomplishments.
Wiping blood from his eyes, he punched a code into the ship's autopilot. It would take some time to get to the Inquisition's headquarters on Superjail, and he'd have time to shed the dying cloned skin and take a shower.

Such was life in the service of the King.
Robb Stark, upon his massive cruiser, stared out into space. Everything was silent now...but that could all change within a moment's notice. Everyone one could look, everything was willing to kill. Skaven and the Xenomorphs they created and spread, Salmonids spawning all over (especially on Zoness), occasional Demons...it was a lot to handle.

In a sweat stained flight suit that looked more fitting for a commoner than a lord, Robb wiped the sweat from his brows and took a bite of something that was probably meant to be food. Some sort of compressed bar made from who the hell knew what. It tasted as bad as it looked, but it gave him the energy he needed.

Robb threw the wrapper aside as he took a swig of lukewarm water and chased it with some high-powered stimulant pills.

Around him, Lizardmen skinks were busy refueling and repairing the armada of fighter craft that Robb commanded.

Lizardmen were mostly Windrunner soldiers, though they did aid the Starks, as part of the alliance. But while Robb did appreciate and respect them, he was more comfortable around the Lylat people.

Lizardmen were useful in that they did not need to sleep, just constantly being stuck in a state of constant activity and single minded determination.

Among the beastkin of the Lylat system, Robb felt much more comfortable.

"Ready for the next round, Robb?" said the familiar lit of Fox McCloud, famous mercenary and ace pilot.

"I've only gotten two hundred confirmed kills," said Robb, "I need some more or I won't be able to show my face to father."

"Sheesh, would it kill ya to show some sign of slowing down." Falco Lombardi, ace pilot (and jackass), spoke up.

"It might." Robb said. "All they need is the slightest opening, and we're dead."

"What ya need is to keep a good head on your shoulders, Rob," said Peppy Hare, old veteran and nominal lead of the Star Fox Team. The old rabbit had been there back when old Rickon Stark wasn't even old enough to shave. "More than kill counts, we need to be hitting smart, not just hard. Tankers, fuel ships, transports, anything to slow them down long term."

"He's right." Fox added. "The enemies numbers are beyond count. And Busting Zoness has proven futile, as the Salmonids have built defenses against such weapons."

"The heavy fleet can blast Zoness into rubble," said Rob, "But we can still hit the vulnerable parts of their power grid. Weaken the anti-missile defenses; draw off ships from the offensive against MacBeth. From there we can strike at any target across the galaxy and be home for another bombing raid."

"But all this galaxy hopping is taxing the engines and nav systems to breaking point," protested Slippy Toad, team technician.
"True..." Robb sighed.

"Not to mention Salmonid acid really does a number on our ships." Slippy added. "We can't repair them all forever."

"We have to hold on," said Robb resolutely, "We hit and run, slow them down until the King's armada can join us and we can fall back to the fortifications my family built."

"But the signal for the King's army to join us is twelve hours past due," said Slippy, "Something has to be up."

Robb finished the last of his plastic tasting canteen water. "It's probably the Shadow in the Warp. We keep to the plan until we get the call, or we're all dead."

"...I hate Tyranids..." Falco muttered.

"By the way, has anyone seen Krystal?" Robb asked, looking about.

"Last mission with a Zoanthrope took a lot out of her," said Peppy, "She's recovering in her meditation room."

"That was amazing," said Robb, "She exploded that psychic menace from a light minute away."

She was a great ally to have around, with her psychic powers, able to detect things from countless light years away...as well as use powerful psychic powers that could turn the tide of battle.

The low, friendly growl of Grey Wind caught everyone's attention.

"Hey cutie!" shouted Slippy as he petted the nearly two hundred kilos of dangerous Direwolf. The big creature who'd bonded with Rob, however, just licked him affectionately.

"Mind my friend Slippy," Robb rob, "his dignity is at stake."

"Fighter launch T-Minus Two Minutes!" came the automated voice over the loud speakers.

All were at ready, with fighters rushing about to get ready for the next attack! Who would it be this time? Skaven? Grox? Orks? Worse?

The ships jumped to fold space and back to real again.

What greeted them was a full Grox invasion fleet engaging a regional defense force. They might be brave and motivated, but their numbers and equipment was nowhere near enough to survive this fighting.

But maybe Robb and his team could tip the scales.

It was time to move out and take down the Grox ships. Arwings were already being prepared.

Over the radio, the Ship's controlling AI belted out a mechanical staccato. "Arwing systems within acceptable parameters. Launching fighters. Preparing chaff deployment and point defense systems."

"Thanks, ROB," said Fox to the robot who shared the same name as their noble commander.

"Indeed, ROB," said Robb, internally cringing, "Keep it up and I'll buy you a new software upgrade when this is over."
Slippy readied himself. "Well, here goes another round of fighting monsters. Grox, Demons, Tyranids, Orks...sheesh, hard pressed to find even worse scum out there."

"What about incels?" Fox asked.

"We take it one step at a time," said Peppy, zeroing in the sights on his ship's weapons, ready to launch form base. "But the Grox have a big spice freighter at the core of the fleet. Blow that up and the chain reaction will take out half their ships."

"And we just need to get through an entire Grox fleet first," groused Falco.

"But half the fleet is occupied, so we'll only fight half of a suicidally strong force," said Rob with a smirk, as his and other Arwings few out.

"Just be careful." Peppy said. "What those bastards lack in emotion they make up for intelligence, both in technology and tactics. Never know what they may plan out."

The crew took a moment to look at the Grox ships: Tough and well-armored, filled with nanotechnology to repair damage, and armed with accurate weapons.

The Grox fought more like robots then living beings. They knew no fear in combat and their soldier class was notorious for being unbreakable. That could also work against them.

Robb pressed a button on the control panel, "I'm launching a holodrone. Great Fox, begin scanner scrambling."

From his ship, a specialized torpedo launched which projected holographic illusions of further Arwings. The Grox opened fire as they blindly trusted their scanners which were being messed with by the Great Fox's electronic warfare mods.

This allowed several small fighters ships of Robb's armies to fly out and attempt to flank them from the sides.

Monitoring the battle form the main Stark ship were two droids, protocol droids C-3PO and astromech droid R2-D2.

"This is madness," said the fussing protocol droid, "I shouldn't be here, I should be with Master Ned, assisting in the halls of diplomacy."

Rhe astromech next to him beeped annoyedly.

"Yes, R2, I CAN coordinate movements of every ship in the fleet and in every language spoken, but that doesn't mean I want to!" As he spoke, the droid typed away at a holographic keyboard, taking and feeding streams of data to the vast and diverse Stark fleet.

Their effective chain of command and even more effective use of communication often gave them an edge over most space navies, and they'd need every edge they could get.

Even if the people involved got distressed by the whole scenario.

Eventually, the Grox caught on that something was not right, when their weapons seemed to have no effect.

"Feh! Organic scums have tried to trick us!" One Grox officer snarled.

Robb and his Arwings zoomed past the first line of fighters. While high powered, Grox fighters had
terribly ability to change direction. It was one of the weaknesses of their starship design. They only thought to move forward on the attack, not swerve, feint or barrel roll like the venerable Arwing.

"Do a Barrel Roll!" cried peppy over the comms as flash fire went at them.

Energy shields and agility protected the fighters as Robb and the team opened up laser fire. The second wave of fighters, caught off guard were wiped out and only the slower gunboats blocked access to the spice hauler.

But the Grox were nothing if not tenacious. After the initial attack, they quickly recovered and regrouped...and began to their own counterattack, firing volleys of missiles at these pesky organics.

If nothing else, the Arwings and their variants were resilient. Originally based off of a long-range-prospecting fighter, these ships could take a beating that left other fighters in pieces. It helped the Starks retain veteran pilots and train up rookies in the field.

"Launching bomb," said Fox as the team spread out. The B button pressed in the cockpit and a powerful plasma torpedo shot out, dealing both blast damage and EMP shortages to the Grox fighters.

There was still stiff resistance and the spice hauler itself was armed and armored to the teeth. But the Arwings were not going in alone. Longsword bombers jumped out of foldspace and began delivering a payload of high yield anti-matter bombs to the Grox heavy support cruisers.

The flak and AA fire was still there, but now Robb and company had the chance to sneak through it to the vulnerable targets.

And just in case, Robb had also made sure to send out the...special troops, namely...

"Feh, is this all they can muster?" Wolf scoffed from his Wolfen fighter, flanked by Leon and Panther.

Star Wolf...a group of three fighters with top-knotch skills...and ruthless to the extreme.

"Thanks for showing up, Wolf," came Falco's sarcastic retort, "So good of you to let us do the heavy lifting."

Wolf O'Donnel was no doubt a dirtbag, a ruthless murderer. He was also an ace pilot up there with Robb and Fox. Robb’s mother, Catelyn, had offered Wolf a privateer contract and while he'd been amoral as ever, his killing power was welcome on the Stark side.

Leon was likely even more of a rouge, known to be an assassin of high regard. Panther was a lech, and also quite cold-hearted...

...but they knew how to do the jobs, and were essential against the ruthless enemies.

Against the likes of the Grox and the Tyranids, a bit of cruelty was just what the doctor ordered. And if nothing else, Wolf was a businessman. There was more cash to be made and more consistently in mercenary work than outright piracy. Especially since under Fox’s advice, Lady Catelyn had former Star Wolf member Pigma Dengar executed by firing squad.

That bastard had too many strikes against him to be forgiven.

Truth be told, Wolf didn't like him much either. Most would not have guessed it, but Wolf had SOME sort of honor, and Pigma's greed and cruelty was too much even for him. Good riddance,
Wolf would say.

Wolf glanced at the kill counter on his HUD as his squad concentrated their fire and blew hold into a Grox medium cruiser. Not enough to kill the craft, but they'd brought it down to half speed and took out fully half of its gun batteries.

Shifting their attack vector, Star Wolf unleashed a unified bomb blast and crippled a heavy cruiser guarding the hauler. The cruiser went down to one-quarter speed with over half of its weapons disabled.

"Don't let me steal all your glory, Fox," Wolf gloated over the comm as his team went off in search of easier targets.

"Just stay on target, Wolf." Fox replied as he fired down some fighters as well. Things were looking go-

The space began to shimmer, and larger ships of the Grox appareled, disabling their cloaking technology.

"DIE, ORGANIC TRASH!" The missiles and lasers came by the shitload, and Starks ships were being shot down.

Robb cursed and veered his craft hard port. This was terrible, awful. But it was also what he'd trained for. Plans never survived contact with the enemy and the Grox were many things, but they were not stupid. They played for keeps and saw all of life as a zero sum game where any gains were their losses.

"Evade!" shouted Robb, "Break off! That Hauler is too well defended!"

On the command vessel, C-3P0 was aghast even as he gave general orders to withdraw, "We're doomed," he moaned.

And just when things seemed as if they couldn't get any worse...

A series of beeps from R2 suddenly caught his partner's attention. "Oh, you detect something coming, from another dimension?" C-3PO threw up his arms. "Oh, just what we need, a pack of Demons to-" Another set of beeps caught him off. "What? Not Demons? Then what-"

A heavenly light across the battlefield caused all fighters to pause for a moment.

"Dragons . . ." trailed off the protocol droid as he stopped typing for less than 0.6 milliseconds from the sheer shock of it. "By Jove, Dragons."

At least, what he thought it was, as the scanners were a bit blurred...but then, he began to focus...and he panicked. "Ah, those aren't Dragons! Those are Angels of Paradiso! We're doomed!"

Robb heard the news over the radio and cursed. Demons he could handle. They brought weapons to handle those, but Angels were another thing. These things were no friends to mundane life. They were cruel, proud and looked down on the mortal races with contempt. "All Units in full retreat, this is Robb Stark, I'm ordering a full retreat!"

"We can still take them!" shouted Fox, "We hit the hauler's navigation dish and nudge it into the dimensional gateway! It'll go off like firecrackers in the oven and seal the portal!"

"Fox, don't be reckless!" Peppy advised. "We don't know what they brought. An Audito could be
"If an Audito is here, we can destroy his physical form!" said Slippy, "That explosion would wreck him and send him back to Paradiso until he could build a new body!"

Beams of light were igniting space as the Angels opened fire on the Stark fleet and the local defense force.

Robb grit his teeth at the sight of his own people caught between the Grox and the Angels. Things had only become worse since his team arrived here. "All fighters concentrate your firepower on the hauler navigations array, ROB, prepare to jam on my mark!"

"Affirmative."

One good thing about the Angel raid was that they ALSO attacked Grox forces, hoping to gather all sorts of life force to make more Angels. But the Grox simply fired back at them as well.

In the Grox language, Angel and Demon were represented by one word. They were one and the same, no matter the cosmetic differences. They hated these heavenly creatures as much as they hated Demons, maybe even more. Given that Angels regularly snuffed out Grox colonies to harvest the rapidly growing life energies before advanced military could be brought in.

And truth be told, for all the glamor Paradiso Angels had, break the stony faces away, and one would see them for the repulsive beasties they really were.

Aboard the command ship, C-3P0 frantically punched at the keyboard, wishing he'd been installed with multiple arms for this job. "Oh, I was not programmed for this!"

R2 beeped back angrily, plugging into the system and aiding his counterpart in getting the hauler ship to line up just right before the big attack.

"Oh, switch off!" grunted 3P0

R2-D2 beeped and clicked, working the controls to see if he could find any sort of weapon he could deploy to aid his allies.

"Of course we can't use the MAC cannon," 3P0 scolded his counterpart, "It's never been tested. It would be useful to launch a tungsten projectile at half the speed of light, but we'd risk our own fighters as well!"

More beeping and codes across the screen.

3P0 suddenly understood, "Where did you get that targeting data—oh never mind. Aiming Magnetic Acceleration Cannon, Master Robb!"

Robb, from his position nodded. "Granted. Take out as much of those fuckers as you all can!" He looked about from his cockpit, seeing the massive carnage.

The Great Fox delivered covering fire toretreating fighters and attacking as well. Meanwhile, the command ship moved to target the hauler. Inside the ship, a long tube lined by reality breaking supermagnets began to fire up. Red lights powered up as a projectile capable of cracking a planet shot out.

It eviscerated a whole squad of Angels, turned a Grox destroyer ship into metal shavings and blew off the Hauler's nav satellite like it got a haircut.
Aboard their ship, the Grox suddenly were blind and deaf. The Captain barked orders as lowly technicians worked to get back the data flow.

At the same time, 3P0 began uploading the false nav points to their computer. The Hauler and its escorts began burning at full speed to the heart of the Angel invasion force, to the creature that looked like part stone and part flesh.

"Go to hell, Audito," Robb Snarled as the hauler got in line with both the Angel commander and their flowing portal to Paradiso.

This one was the one known as Fortitudo, the Audito of Fire. This massive angel resembled a two-headed wyvern, with a upside-down humanoid face serving as a torso. Mighty wings bore him aloft as he spoke in the language of Angels, Enochian.

"So, you resist us?" He rumbled, his foreign speech sending chills up spines. "We are preparing to aid the Galaxy as a whole by preparing against the forces of Hell and Chaos. Do not interfere."

"I am Lord Robb Stark of House Stark!" came Robb's reply over the translated radio. His human voice was paltry next to that of a creature who was old when the Long Night happened. "Leave our sovereign territory now or face lethal consequences!"

Fortutido was nothing if not arrogant and condescending. "You spit at our offer of salvation, you willingly treat with Demonkind. You should greet us as saviors. If you value the lives of your people, you will surrender and beg forgiveness."

"Here it comes," said Fox to himself in the cockpit as the Grox hauler began to burn its engines into overdrive. It was pointed straight at the dimensional gateway.

It would quite the mess, and maybe even hard to follow...but one thing was sure, sparks would fly.

"My, this could be quite interesting." Panther noted.

The Angels were tough, but they didn't differentiate between Grox and Stark forces. It was one of their weaknesses. Like Demons, they seldom bothered to learn or exploit faction differences.

The Angels themselves devoured the Grox, their smaller units ate AA fire while their larger units utilized massive area of effect attacks, which ignored armor and vaporized beings inside their starships. So none of their attacks affected the spice hauler heading for the rip.

Robb and company peeled behind the speeding ship, "On my mark, launch all remaining bombs at the aft exhaust port," he ordered his men.

Leon chuckled. "Oh, the bloodshed is almost too much to bear!" He cackled, taking a few moments to blast down some Inspired that got too close to him. Damn snake angles.

"I'll give you a bonus for every Angel killed," Grunted Wolf, "I have a personal grudge against these things, so go ham."

Panther laughed as her weapons shredded one of the lesser creatures, "What's the matter, Wolf? Dad forced you to go church one too many times as a kid?"

"Quiet you." Wolf growled. "And take out these holy freaks of nature." He grinned as he pounded away at Angels, taking pleasure in stripping away the finery, and showing the bug-eyed, drooling monsters underneath it all.
That was the thing, Wolf always knew that order did not equal good. not by a long shot.

Underneath the glamor and glitz, the Angels were ugly as any Demon of Hell or minion of the Warp. If he could, he’d happily kill these freaks for free.

And now from the look of it, Fortutido was going to destroy the rampaging Hauler ship himself. The crew inside had been melted by his powers, so now the ship was totally under control by R2 and 3P0.

Time for them to work their magic.

"Oh, this is going to be ghastly." C-3PO moaned, as R2 activated the weapon.

The Spice Hauler suddenly lurched ahead of the remaining ships escorting it. The Grox would not lose that vessel by choice. The Spice Hauler was their food and fuel reserve in one. They could use the pice to build extra ammo and electronics, not to mention give their soldiers a massive boost in combat stats over a long, costly war.

So when the Hauler burned all of its fuel in a few seconds and shot to the portal like a missile, they were unprepared.

"Fire," said Rob over the com.

The bombs on the Arwings struck true and detonated the ship's power cores.

Too late, Fortutido realized the oversight he'd made.

And he was a little too close to the ship as well, and felt the explosion wrack his body, destroying half of his stone cover, showing the red-skinned, and pissed off beast within.

Even the remaining Grox were rattled by his hideous appearance. Their lowliest soldiers and highest officers hissed like they'd seen some unspeakable horror that should not exist. So great was their hatred for the Angel that they directed their last firepower upon his form.

Fortitudo howled with pain and rage as he was blasted brutally, even as Angels and Grox went down all around him. His psychical form badly damaged, he knew it would be time to return to Paradiso to heal...

...Sapientia would NEVER let him hear the end of this.

The sting of defeat took him even as his physical form was blown to bits. Unknown to the Grox, the death of the higher angel caused a secondary cascade in the portal. Glowing lighting shot out of it and began frying the last of the Grox Fleet. Angels fell like puppets with their strings cut. Unlike Demons, the lower Angels could not function without a hierarchy over them.

The figure did not always have to be in an immediate area...but once that power was disrupted, they would fall into nothing.

Both Angels and Grox, lost in the madness, were soon routed by the Stark forces.

In the books, song and holo-movie,s there would be cheering and celebration. Robb could afford none of that. With the Angels and Grox destroyed, he spoke over the radio, "C3P0, what were our losses?"

"You have lost approximately twenty-five percent of your forces, Master Robb," came the
annoyingly cheery reply, as if that was a good thing.

Robb just let out a sigh. He got careless, and the Grox had capitalized on that earlier. Clever little shits.

"All right...for now, we all fall back to Arrakis and regroup there."

The craft fled, back to repeat the cycle. Arrakis was a safe port and the native Fremen were sworn loyal to House Stark; being some of the toughest non-augmented fighters in the galaxy.

In the brief moment of slip space travel, Robb became aware of just how short on time he was. His father always told him that in war, he'd have half the men and time he needed. It felt like that his father was being generous with that guess.

Felt like he had only 10 percent of both. In this Galaxy, once you stepped out of your Station, everything that was not part of your faction wanted you dead.

In ancient times, the Barrow Kings had seemed unstoppable and eternal until the Starks overthrew them and their barbaric ways. The Starks might meet the same end.

Robb was losing resources he could not afford to replace. And as highly trained and motivated his men were, they had their limits. Robb and his pilots could not keep this up forever.

"We're docking for Arakeen Station," said Robb, "We refuel, repair and take an hour's rest."

"Thanks for your generosity, Robb," snarked Falco.

Robb sighed. It was tough being in charge, making all these decisions. Eventually, who knew? Maybe he would have to go into the far reaches of the Galaxy, where the houses held no territory. Such places included Norsca, the frigid home of Chaos Warriors.

Heading into Norscan territory and carving out a mini-empire for himself sounded like some dumb boyhood fantasy. Living there would inevitably lead to the touch of Chaos. Though the Norscans had served as particularly bloodthirsty mercenaries in the past; more interested in killing and eating their enemies than collecting gold for it.

He might have to bargain with the Norscan Jarls if he wanted to get enough men to win this without the King's help.

Eh, he couldn't focus on that now...he was landing at port.

Exiting the ship, he took a moment to view the sunset of the desert planet...simply watching for a moment.

Arakks had the honor of being one of the highest yield Spice Worlds in the Galaxy. It was a cornerstone of the Stark economic power and a source of some of the deadliest guerillas in the galaxy.

If the intense heat didn't finish you off, the giant fusion powered sandworms and lethal storms might. Those Coriolis storms could rip a Tyranid Bio-Titan to pieces.

But still...it was nice to look at times, especially when this sunset was happening...helped get the disaster off of Robb's mind...

"Eh, don't beat yourself up too hard today." Peppy assured as he came over to Robb. "Truth is,
before this is all over, a lot more people are gonna die. That's just how war works."

"Honestly, Peppy, that doesn't help in the slightest," said Robb despondently.

"Good," laughed the greying hare, "It's not like I ever forgot all the friends I buried over the years. The guys who really scare me are the ones who don't feel anything."

"Squads of Fremen are leaving to reinforce our men near the Rift," said Robb, "Sometimes I wish I could copy their cold blooded attitude about killing and death."

"Might wanna be careful there." Peppy cautioned. "Lest we lose ourselves and become one of the many monsters trying to kill us. People don't need monsters," continued the grey hare, "Leadership is hard on the best days, but you are a good one. I'd march into the jaws of Hell for you, a hundred times over."

"And I just want to see your cranky self do the impossible and retire," Robb roared.

Now Peppy really laughed, "And have you and Fox throw me into an old folks home? No thank you, I'll go down fighting instead."

Good to hear such loyal and friendship from his allies. Grey Wind gave a low and friendly growl as well from nearby.

Robb scratched his direwolf behind the ear. "Well, this is beautiful, but it's not going anywhere. Let's get something to eat that's not made in a lab."

"Nothing with fish," Peppy groused, "Gives me heartburn."

"You truly are old," Robb laughed.

With this battle done, the group headed in for a bit, to prepare for the coming storm.
The Immaterium, or the Warp as most call it, was a realm where few dared to tread. It was a place of pure psych energy, fueled by the thoughts, dreams, and emotions of all sentient kind. Here, time, space, and any sort of logic had no meaning. Perhaps you could travel miles in seconds, or get nowhere at all.

Simple as it sounded, the Warp was everywhere and nowhere. It existed under realspace and served as a gateway between multiple universes, through time and in dimensions some have only theorized.

What the Warp also was, was a volatile place.

The emotions, dreams, deaths, pain, suffering, anger, despair and ambition of mortal races had left their mark on the Immaterium. Forever changed, the chaos in the Warp would not be halted.

And it was just how the inhabitants liked it.

Demons...creatures of psychic energy, representing rage, disease, scheming, and decadance, depending on who they served.

The Warp was always at war. It as at war with Paradiso and their hypocritical angels. They made war on Hell; both on the lawful evil Devils and the more anarchic Demons who called the Doom Slayer their enemy.

The Warp even made war on itself. For the denizens of the Warp, the calamity of the Galaxy was welcome and embraced.

Yet there was something that had the potential to spoil the fun.

Namely...those known as the ‘Untouchables’. Those unable to be corrupted.

Most of them were the Grey Knights, a hidden and powerful Space Marine Chapter dedicated to fighting Demons of all types. Very few knew about them.

The Grey Knights would always oppose Demons and their masters in the Warp. Their origins were shrouded in mystery and their founding predated the Valaryan Empire.

War in the Galaxy had the potential to spark off a war in the heavens the kind of which not seen in sixty five million years; when the Old Ones still roamed the Stars and the Necrontyr called forth false gods of metal and hunger into the living world.

Like a conventional explosive setting off a nuclear reaction, it had the potential to be . . . beyond what mortal minds could understand.

Cthulhu and his kind, though, have been not been seen in countless millennia.

In ancient times before the universe had cooled enough to allow planets and stars to exist, there were beings of spirit who could resist the corruption and madness of the old Ones.

In later times, there were those rare beings who could look the likes of Cthulhu and his brother-nemesis Hastur in the face and not go mad.

But two individuals of Untouchables stood out to the Warp. Bran Stark and Schala Zeal.
The Warp knew that Cthulhu and his kind were stirring, waiting for the stars to become right. But something had changed, something big. The likes of Schala and Bran had the potential not only to resist the old ones but to defy them completely.

And their powers if left unchecked could do the unimaginable and bring peace to the warp.

This, along with many other things, were going through the minds of the Gods of the Wap.

Khorne sat upon his brass throne, atop a mountain of skulls, evergrowing. The God of Blood, martial might and bloodshed was his domain.

Khorne was a rare creature in the Warp in that he was totally honest. There were no word games, no tricky deals or vain calls for prayer.

The violent sought him and he sought the violent. He would reward the most violent and blood thirsty. He was the only Chaos God whose word could be taken at face value.

In Bran and Schala he saw much potential for bloodshed, hatred and killing. But beyond his touch, they had the chance to bring about lasting peace. True peace of nations and hearts.

Khorne clenched his sword as everything in his realm suddenly flinched in fear of him.

War could not be allowed to end.

He looked down from his perch to see his endless armies constantly fighting each other, honing their skills and bloodlust. It was in their very nature to fight.

Everything in Khorne's realm, from the Demons to the rocks and trees, made war in some way shape or form. Around him, his Valkyries flew, bringing him the souls of warriors who died in battle that they may continue the eternal war of his realm.

He would send his finest warriors to destroy Schala and Bran. Either by Demon hands or his mortal champions. There were no shortage of those violent men and women who would take the heads of these Unspoiled children.

Khorne was very much a creature of instinct. To an extent, he was a monotonous creature. He embodied the consistency of primal violence in all its unending glory and its ability to crush nations and civilizations under its foot.

His archenemy Slaanesh took interest for very different reasons.

He (or she) dwelled in a realm which, at first glance, seemed almost idyllic, but hid dark undertones, as they were all based on debauchery. Greed, gluttony, pride, love...all of it was here, to extremely deadly excess.

One could anything in Slaanesh's realm. One could find any pleasure, any pain, any drug or torture. All that could be imagined and all that couldn't be found here.

The Prince of Pleasure sat upon a throne tailored for the cosmic sadomasochist. The god/goddess of pleasure and decadence eyed Bran and Schala with lustful greed. The Pleasure God snarled and laughed alternatively, shifting between loathing and lust.

Two pure and noble individuals, all ripe to debasing and brining down to lewd and mad lows. It would be satisfying to watch and do...
...except...

"Why can't I touch them...?"

Slaanesh screamed and threw aside his/her servants like a child throwing a tantrum. The Pleasure God screamed. It could see in their hearts their lewd desires, could sense they felt lust and pleasure like other beings, so why the resistance.

How dare they resist She who Thirsts!

And as quickly as it started, the raging stopped. Slaanesh settled back down and thought...

"Master...why do they resist us? We simply wish to play with them..." A Daemonette spoke up.

The Prince of Pleasure petted their Daemonette like a cat. "Oh they're just scared, they just need the right encouragement."

The Pleasure God laughed at the prospect of drugging and torturing those two kids. They had to move fast before dear, loving Khorne's people got to them. But there were so many pirates who lived by pleasure and pain and would love to turn those two into perfect love slaves.

Let's see their purity then!

"Maybe we can convince sweet Juri Han to talk to them," the Daemonette laughed.

Oh, yes. Juri Han. She proved...resistant to mutation, but always offered her services to the dark gods, engaging in almost every kind of sin to fulfill all dark desires.

Juri was a sweet, sweet girl. Maybe when she died, Slaanesh would be kind enough to elevate her to the rank of Demon Prince. Her skill at torture was second to none and her hunger for sex had only increased over the years.

And she also had a tremendous singing voice.

Slaanesh giggled as she/he waved their arms, "More wine and song! More slaves! I haven't been stiff in a good microsecond!"

His/her servants went to work, and Slaanesh was left to ponder...

Elsewhere in the Warp...

The Gardens of Nurgle, despite the name, was actually a place of death and decay, full of every disease known to sentient kind...and then some. The Demons here there, though, were actually quite friendly and pleasant...in an odd sort of way.

None showed this better than Nurgle himself, a bloated, diseased creature, known for being jolly, affably, and loving...and he spread his love via diseases.

Nurgle found his origins in times long past, when sentient beings were at the mercy of disease and the elements. In those ages past, they begged for relief from sickness and pox. And it was Nurgle who answered their wishes.

He cursed his followers to eternal sickness, eternal despair and long life. He wanted to farm out his followers for despair. And he meant it when he said he'd protect his followers from death.

The plague father, though, was not at all happy as he eyed the happy couple in his cauldron. The
normally jolly God of disease, pus, shit and decay noticed that his curses and diseases would not touch those two.

Ordinary sickness, yes, but not anything severe, like rotting plagues. Why? Why did they not want his gifts they he was so happy to give?

The way Nurgle saw it, they were spitting in his face with their perfect health. They were so young and healthy. He hated it.

Wouldn't they rather live eternally in his rotting embrace? As eternal, unfeeling, bloated zombie corpse monsters? Such an existence would truly free them of fear and death.

Snorting, the plague father stomped on one of the plague toads that got too near. The squishing of such creatures always made him cheerful when he was down.

He looked over his cauldron, the size of all the oceans in the Galaxy, where he created his delightful gifts. Yes...all would be under his embrace soon, as the part of the death and disease...

...too bad Tzeentch, the embodiment of change, had his own ideas...

Tzeentch probably had more names and titles than there exist alternate universes.

Archenemy of Nurgle, Tzeentch stood for unbound ambition and endless change. As such, he hated the bloated, fat fuck Nurgle and his dedication to unchanging rot.

Changing shape with every movement, Tzeentch peered into his fractured crystal; holding a billion different fates on its surface and a quintillion more possibilities with each passing second.

He floated in a meditative position, features changing every few seconds. Next to him, Kairos Fateweaver, a powerful Lord of Change, stood and mumbled things that had happened and were yet to come. The two heads always saw in the past and in the future...but not the present.

Fateweaver was one of Tzeentch's heavy hitters. A grand champion liar and orator, he was Tzeentch's right hand man. He'd almost managed to claim Rick Sanchez’s soul, until Rick’s stupid moron of a grandson won a game of chance for the old man’s soul.

Tzeentch hadn't forgiven Fateweaver for that. But even more than the old Mad Scientist, these Bran and Schala threatened to make all his plans come unraveled.

War was good for Tzeentch. It meant ambitious men would lead, try to change things, do bold strategies, attempt new and desperate measures they'd never tried before.

Peace was as anathema to Tzeentch as it was to Khorne. Peace was stable, quiet, boring.

Boring, boring, boring!

The most annoying part? Tzeentch was master plotter. Every scheme, every plan, all of it was part of his grand game. All were just pawns for his board...

...so why couldn't he plan for them?

The two of them were like a grain of sand in his eye. No matter how small and insignificant they looked on paper, he could just not be rid of them. It was driving him mad.

In a maelstrom of chaotic hellfire, they were two points of stability. They were just there . . . mocking him with their presence unknowingly.
Tzeentch jabbed a shapeshifting claw at his crystal, "Oh I'm not done with you two, your time will come!"

The God of Change turned one of a million heads to his minion, "Fateweaver! Put out an all points bulletin on those two! Promise them anything, offer anything. Take their families hostage! Steer a couple of Khorne's goons to take them out if you have to."

"Of course, Master..." The bird-like Demon noted, his twin heads looking about, having already heard what he said and having heard it.

Kairos was a powerful magic user, one of the finest...though close combat was a low point for him, since he was blind to the present.

Kairos knew that getting these kids would be no easy task. But servants of the changer of ways never backed down from the impossible.

To do this, he'd have to go into Realspace.

The easiest way to do that would be to Journey into Hell, specifically the Khadingir Sanctum. There the Grand Fabricator of Mars, Samuel Hayden had the bright idea to plunder Hell as a source of renewable energy. What that gave Kairos was the biggest gateway into Realspace since the Eye of Terror.

He would need time, though, to get into Hell into the first place. Even traveling between such hellish dimensions needed effort.

But he was grateful he was not going though Inferno. That place was a real wild card. Those Demons, among all Demonkind, were seen as the least dangerous, simply because they chose not to interact with mortal affairs, preferring their own home.

The problem was that the Demons living there were utterly unpredictable. Their animalistic natures meant that even just tracking their basic movements was a futile and pointless task. Only Umbra Witches had the ability to utilize them...and even then, it was tricky business...and only one Witch was left.

The Inquisition wiped out the rest of them, combined with dedicated assaults by the Angels of Paradiso. Such actions were orchestrated by the Fateweaver, as the Umbra Witches had too long stood against Tzeentch and his legions of sorcerers and Demons.

His own plan had turned against him, but such was the way of Tzeentch.

As the embodiment of change, he actually could not let any of plans win: His sole purse was to keep things and constant change, always scheming for the sake of scheming.

And that was why he had to break into Inferno. Despite the challenges, there was no better way for a being of eternal change to thrive.

Fateweaver pulled up a map from magic lines. He could see the paths. The ways. Even though the demons were unpredictable, their home itself was stable enough to be predicted. And Hayden's Hell portal would shine like a beacon in the night

The issue, of course, was the Demons of all types HATED intruders. Urgash would be displeased to see some Warp idiots stumble into his domain.

Urgash was no lightweight. In his realm of Hell, he ruled by virtue of iron fist.
any sort of hierarchy or protocol. More than once, he'd sent Chaos invasions of his realm packing.

Maybe . . . maybe a few of Khorne's demons could be tricked into invading the dragon's realm. It wasn't like they needed an excuse to fight. Throw some fire and destruction around the place; provide the perfect distraction for Fateweaver.

And it would be all part of the incredibly complex and detailed scheme, after all.

It would be truly glorious. The complexity of it would defy mortal sanity. A dream here, a vision there, a few bribes and a misplaced inheritance. It would all be there.

And that was just getting through hell. Getting after bBan and Schala would be Fateweaver's crowning achievement. The crown jewel of conspiracy.

And still, he would aid in making this war happen, so he would have endless plots and schemes to feast on.

Remove those two kids, suddenly everything was open to infinite change. It was going to make the previous billion years of Chaos domination and cruelty look like a little checkers game. It would bring out a full invasion from Paradiso, get Urgash to finally break into Realspace and a thousand and one more horrible things.

Carnage and blood would rule, and it would be...great.

Kairos Fateweaver made his first steps. Play on Samuel Hayden's arrogance, on Doomguy's bloodlust, on Urgash's mercurial mood swings, on Khornate wrath and Slaaneshi decadence.

And that was what Chaos was all about.

Chaos itself, to spread destruction and mayhem wherever they went...

...but was it not what mortals wanted? After all, it was they who made them. The Chaos Gods existed because of them.

These feelings had been around since the first microbes started fighting one another over access to sunlight and minerals. The first war in Heaven didn't create Chaos, it just gave it a growth boost, a shot in the arm if you will.

Aye...in the time of microbes, they were nothing more than mindless, harmless flickers...it was only due to true sentient minds that they were given form.

That was the first major kickstarter for the beings of the Warp. Before that, it was a realm of nothing. Animal hungers littered the Warp like detritus falling to the bottom of the ocean. But it was the beginning of something truly great.

And now...here they were, the future rulers of the Galaxy.

The Galaxy itself was small potatoes, the door prize really. For all its quintillions of souls, it was just the beginning. There was so much more beyond that to despoil, rape, kill, manipulate and violate. This Galaxy would be the stepping stone to the ultimate victory of Chaos

All in good time...

All in good, short time.
March of the High Elves

Schala hated this.

When the High Elf craftsman took her measurements, she hated it. She hated it when it came. A suit of armor tailor made to her body. Special crystal and runes could channel and enhance her magic abilities.

"You are a vision of might and grace, my liege," said Tyrion, Lord Protector of the High Elves.

"She hates it," said Teclis, Warden of the White Tower.

Tyrion scowled at his twin brother, but he could not deny the look of despair on Schala's face as the armorer placed a grand, white helm atop her head in the style of the High Elves.

But it was not just in the style of the Elves. It also contained the typical serpent motif of House Zeal. The pauldrons were the top halves of snake heads, while her helm was in the form of a pit viper, opening and closing at the 'mouth.' The armor itself also had designs resembling scales.

"You will fight valiantly, Princess Schala," said Tyrion. "I have records of your battle with the Fatalis. Even your mother could not slay such a beast."

"And that is the least of your challenges," said the sorcerer elf. "When you go to war, every minute of every day will be like fighting that Fatalis."

Schala gulped, feeling out of body in this serpentine suit of armor. "It fits nicely," she said in a tiny voice.

"Good," said Teclis. "It will need to be well-suited for you in the wars to come."

Schala nodded. Already she had heard the rumors, about Lord Stark. His House was now under pressure...yet it made no sense. Why was he doing this now? It made no sense! He was an honorable man!

Tyrion lacked his brother's raw magical power, but his perception was second to none. "You fear for Lord Stark?"

Schala nodded as the suit's power systems and onboard computer came online.

"Well if it means anything to you, Malekith, the King of the Dark Elves, was once considered an honorable man before he sundered my species for petty power grabs," said Tyrion casually.

"And yet, deep down he was always ambitious." Schala noted. "Ned Stark...he wasn't like that..."

"True..." Tyrion noted, thinking on what could have happened. Men and all other races, it seemed, were odd beings at times. "I'm old enough to remember the rise of humans to the stars," he went on, "Ambition is built into your species. Even if you are not as single-minded as my kind."

"Chaos corruption can take any man," warned Teclis. "That is their greatest advantage, child."

Schala nodded. The helmet was perfectly balanced and the armor fit like her own skin. But this wasn't a version of herself she wanted to get used to. "When will the Salmonid spawning arrive?"

"Hmm, not much longer now." Teclis noted. "And we must be ready when they come...otherwise,
they will overrun his entire world, turning it into a polluted cesspool."

"My men are ready," said Tyrion to the Princess of Zeal. "Protecting you, you'll have the White Lions of Thrace. The least of them are veterans of a thousand wars and have been fighting since the Long night."

"Then your men shall be well protected by me," said Schala, standing tall in her armor. The boots she wore have her a small height increase and she intended to use it. "I will lead our people like they are my own beloved sons and daughters. Lead the way, my commanders."

She and the brothers soon made their way out of the fortress, looking upon the World of Ulthuan, a beautiful world of magic and power.

Ulthuan was a world with a small magnetic core and light crust filled with light metals and precious stones. Green and full of life from the poles to the equators, Ulthuan had been the home of the High Elves before the Valaryans even dreamed that Space travel was possible.

The whole City of Averlorn had come out to watch Schala lead the military procession. The Elves were a proud people, but they respected the House of Zeal and they respected Schala despite her young age and relative inexperience.

She gulped as a chariot pulled up to take her to the shipyard at Caledor.

The Salmonids were coming by sea, as befitting their nature. The little bastards would gunk up the area as they moved, and they saw Elves as a delicacy. Many Elves had watched as their comrades were swarmed and eaten alive by these freaks in the past. It would not happen again.

Schala, her helm closed, obscuring her features, stepped onto the boat, and looked over her mount of choice: The electric Lagiacrus, decked out in royal armor, stylized with spikes and horns, and designed to help channel its powers.

"Remember," said Teclis, "Don't be emotional, as this is purely business; losses and gains. You’re going to be cold out there."

Schala petted her mount. "I can't promise that. But I love the waters of Ulthuan as much as you do and the Salmonids will pay for what they've done."

Tyrion unsheathed his sword, climbing atop his dragon mount. "Know yourself and your enemy, and you need not fear the results of a million battles, my Princess."

"May Khaine give your blade strength," Schala said, lightning crackling from her fingertips.

Schala mounted her large Leviathan, and stood to attention as dragons and boats took off, ready to face the threat head on.

Schala's helm portrayed no emotion, appearing cold and impassive. She would be the serpent she resembled today, striking and killing without mercy... ...right?

Truth was, on the inside she was full of fear. She knew what was at stake, she'd seen the dead sea creatures poisoned by Salmonid pollution, she'd seen Elven fishers and sailors devoured.

As much as she wanted to be as merciless as her own mother or as brutal and cruel as Settra, she wasn't.
Soaring over the fleet, she could see the water change. She could see the Salmonids killing the delicate ecosystem.

And she knew that while she couldn't be fearless as her mother, she could still crowd the halls of hell with her magic.

Already she saw glimpses of the shits. Gleeful wide eyes as they devoured anything in their way, and pricing together scrap technology as they went. Disgusting, but efficient.

It was rumored that they used the Warp to travel about...and their odd mindset and feral rage made them immune to any bad effects in there. Not to mention their supreme sense of smell helped them get around the area.

Chances are they blended in with the festering madness of the Warp. Their own souls were so blackened and corrupt that the Demons couldn't do anything with them except kill their bodies. Though it was rumored that Slaanesh adored their creativity and gluttony.

Schala raised her hand and felt red seething rage enter her body. "Be blind!" she shouted.

Just like that, all the Salmonids who'd dared to look at her had their eyeballs explode.

Next to her, Tyrion's dragon opened a blast of fire down and boiled the sea like a kettle.

Screeches filled the air of the dying fish as their forms boiled and burst into showers of blood and poison...alerting their distant comrades.

The Elves of Ulthuan were one of the few space faring species to also maintain a maritime navy. Elves always had an affinity for the sea, they were powerful swimmers and phenomenal fishermen. Spoiling the oceans was a personal insult to their whole species.

On the water's surface, a fleet of boats, sails driven by the winds of magic advanced. "Fire!" shouted Teclis as bolt throwers used railgun technology to fire multi stage magic bolts into the air.

The bolts arced and split apart into thousands of parts. Each needle thin arrow came down and arced into the water. Hundreds of Salmonids were run through by such anti-infantry bolts.

This barely put a dent into the swarm, but this wasn't the only trick the Elves had.

Griffins and eagles took flight and dived about, scooping up the fish and tearing them to spreads with their talons. A real horror show of blood and guts.

The point of the opening salvo was to bring out the big Salmonid units. The high tier infantry and the space fleet proper. Floating in the air like a cavalcade of garbage, the Salmonid fleet would act as air support for their ground and water armies.

"They're moving in!" cried out Tyrion to Schala. "Withdraw our forces and retreat to the bombardment position."

She looked up, seeing the Flyfish coming it, propelled by jets of poison, missiles at ready. They would be bombarding as well. Schala pursed her lips in thought. Her Lagiacrus growled.

“Fall back, but keep on guard.” She ordered.

On the water the ships turned, their magic sails giving them great speed and mobility on the water. A number of the vessels began to submerge via water magic. But there were casualties.
The flying fish spread poison on the water, which burned through breathing equipment and left men and women dying in their own fluids.

"It's only two ships of hundreds," warned Tyrion, "Do not ignore the plan."

Schala took a deep breath, fighting her urge to take on the flying fish single-handed. The rest of their fleet was fleeing and the overconfident Salmonids would be following them.

Turning around, she called lightning down into the waters, electrocuting the Salmonids in the water. "Then let's give them a fighting chase."

Her beast spat out balls of lightning, frying even more fish...but they wouldn't let up so easily.

Stingers rose for the waters, taking aim with their long-range weapons. With amazing accuracy, they began to fire poison across the ships, eating through material,

The biomechanical piles of pots moved in, their deadly weapons devouring the Elven marines. Crew fell to the acid sprays and deadly poison.

There were always going to be casualties in this part of the battle. There was no way around it. But the Elves had taken minimal losses and the dead would be remembered.

They were coming onto the Shifting Isles. An eternally changing set of strange islands, interdimensional portals and mountains that rose and fell overnight from the sea.

Still the sound of chittering and slavering rang in the armies ears. It was not a pleasant sound. Schala scowled and summoned a horde of long icy spears, then shot them forwards.

The spears smashed through the Salmonid stingers and ripped apart the biological creature stuck inside. Served them right, but the main event was yet to come.

A heavy mist began to come up from the sea. Salmonids in the ocean went into dimensional portals and wound up in the middle of space or in the center of stars. Some got stuck in volcanic vents and were cooked alive. The strength of the swarm was chewed up, but not destroyed.

They were almost there, an island totally shrouded by mists.

Hopefully things would not go wrong now...but sometimes...

"MOTHERSHIP!"

Schala looked up when she heard the shout. Sure enough, the crude but effective square ship was coming into range, and replying flying Salmonids holdings small boxes...which each held an absurd amount of Salmonid foot soldiers.

"Unfortunately but not unexpected," said Teclis to her by magic. "See that the mothership flies directly over the extinct volcano."

Schala kicked her mount into high gear. The Lagaicrus leapt into the water and swam at top speed as Tyrion summoned a shield of energy to block incoming laser fire.

Schala grit her teeth. The Caldera of the Volcano was only five seconds away, if they could live that long.

Atop her aquatic beast, Schala charged under the shadow of the Mothership, blocking enemy fire with her energy shield and leading following Salmonid units to their deaths. From the depths, sea
serpents and krakens rose, taking the Salmonids and turning them into dinner.

Looking through the Wind of Magic, she could sense now the powerful lightning canons that the Elves had hidden.

Good...if they activated with the volcanoes, the ensuing blast would wipe out numerous Salmonids. Now, if only she could make sure her army did not get caught up in the blast.

Victory in battle required perfection. Perfection like the strike of the serpent.

In that moment, Schala understood the nature of the serpent. The lightning cannons were built by Elven craftsmen to bring down superheavy starships in high orbit. Turning the cannons towards planetside was a risky call. The secondary explosion could change weather patterns on Ulthuan and cause a mass extinction.

Teclis and his fleet of boats would set up a shield that would contain the explosion, and cook the Salmonids like the fish they were.

But still, would it be enough...? Back-up would be needed.

And Schala saw it: A gunship high in the sky, orange in color. The ship of the famed hunter, Samus Aran.

Schala was glad to have her on the side. Samus had cut her mercenary prices nearly in half. Having already set herself up financially, the Bounty Hunter could afford to commit to causes close to her heart.

In her gunship, Samus eyed the Salmonid fighter ships emptying from the Mothership. "Follow me, you fuckers." She whispered as she opened fire. It would not be easy, but she would keep the fighters within the kill zone.

The Mothership was blasted badly, and slammed into the sea as a mangled wreck. The flyers of the Salmonid army looked up with angry eyes, and began to swarm, attempting to knock the gunship down. Missiles and poison streams fired off rapidly.

Schala saw the blue shield contain everything and knew it was time to flee. The great sea serpents were fleeing as the great water monsters. The Salmonids were swarming around the downed Mothership, willing to protect it with their lives. And they would.

Schala reached out as her great water beast began powering through the water. "This is Princess Schala Zeal, all units retreat. Lightning cannons, open fire!"

The Lagiacrus sped through the sea at top speeds as the fleets began to fall back. The Salmonids, distracted by Samus, did not see the danger...

...until it was too late.

The cannons fired, and the explosion that resulted was...quite powerful to say the least.

The lightning canons had the ironic effect of being environmentally friendly. The Salmonids weren't just vaporized; they were reduced to their constituent atoms. Even the poison they brought was broken down into its most basic submolecular particles. The sea would be cleansed quite literally by fire.

Unlike many humans, Elves kept their worlds pristine. And when they had to kill, it was directed
precisely against their enemies.

Countless Salmonids would die that day...but in the cosmic sense, it was still nothing. Breeding grounds were scattered about the Galaxy, and the survivors of this battle would retreat to those grounds to recover.

Still, a respite was nice, and showed the monsters the people of the Galaxy would not be trifled with.

The Elves were nothing if not resilient. Like the serpent which inspired House Zeal, they survived the heat, the cold, and the seasons. Like the kelp, they survived the pounding waves that reduced the rock to sand and pulverized the shores.

Schala expected a great joy in her heart. What she felt inside was coldness. The cold allowed her to think clearly, do the math in her head. Losses versus gains. The mission was a resounding success on all fronts. They had taken no losses they could not replace and has lost no ships or war beasts of great import.

What worried her was getting out of this cold state, she feared having to feel again.

Was this...how one fought wars? To seal your emotions off so one could not feel the weight of the loss and horror?

Her Lagiacrus growled and shifted, ready to rest after massacring those smelly fish.

Back on land, Schala soon disembarked, and noticed Samus had landed as well.

Samus saw Schala. The dead eyes, the quiet walk. The girl looked like a ghost.

Putting her hand on the girls shoulder, she whispered in her ear, she told her, "Get a drink when you can, take some time to cry if you need it."

"I can't," said Schala in a quiet voice. For the first time in her life, she looked and sounded like her mother. "I can't afford to."

"You will," said Samus, "the demons in your head are harder to kill than any flesh and blood enemy. Don't be too proud to ask for help."

Schala paused, then walked, Samus trailing behind, until she reached privates barracks, allowing her guest to come in with her.

Once the two were alone, Schala wrenched her helm fully open. "How..." she gasped. "How does one do it?! Take life so easily?!"

"By understanding that if we don't, many other innocents will die." Samus replied. "This job isn't easy or even good, really," the hunter admitted, "and if you find this job easy or rewarding then you have no business doing this. You'd be a threat same as those Salmonids."

"It's not like hunting," said Schala the emotion returning to her voice by a trickle, "I've never felt so powerless. And this was for a victory. How will I act when we lose?"

Samus reached into a supply crate and grabbed a bottle of hard liquor. "Honestly, we'll have to find out. Everyone thinks they'll be a big damn hero. Some people will crack the first time. Some people only think they can be warriors. We'll have to see."

Schala stared at the liquor, wondering if she should get soused...
...and now, she found her mind wandering to her Houses secrets weapons: The Officio Assassinorum. This was a set of 'temples' that produced some of the BEST assassins in all the Galaxy. Each temple had different types, but all had the same thing in common: Being raised from birth and enhanced to be the perfect killing machine, with no remorse whatsoever.

She's felt one of their Assassins before. Felt, not seen. Contrary to the hot, leathery bondage women the media portrayed them as, the truth was their Assassins could look like anyone, anything.

And that assassin, for her perfect disguise, felt like the void of space. By Schala's magic sense, the assassin felt like a block of ice in a room of warm embers.

Should she become as cold and monstrous as such a creature, one who did not deserve to be called human?

Yes, and there even worse, like those gave no presence at all, and others who were berserker who would explode if the job called for it.

The origins of the Assassins were long lost to history, but what was not lost were the creative and brutal ways with which they committed murder.

Only the legendary Agent 47 had ever survived being targeted by them. They'd taken out Space Marine Chapter Masters, Chaos Cult leaders, Ork Warbosses, Skaven Grey Seers, even Red Chromatic Dragons had fallen to them

And most of the Houses were actually unaware of their existence, or at least their points of origin.

Just how Zeal liked it.

Schala knew her mother had once been considered for the Assassins, for whatever reason she'd been passed over. But her mother always had the power of an Assassin, and tried to teach that power to her children.

Zeal hoped to command the Assassins under K. Rool's fascist kingdom, that much Schala knew for sure.

She sighed as she focused back on the present, staring at the bottle.

"What's our next move?" she asked Samus, not drinking anything.

"Next, the Elves space fleet dock in orbit," said the Bounty hunter, "After that, the fleet joins up with the regular Zeal fleet and we head for New Vegas."

"Windrunner territory?" Schala asked. "Why must we go there?"

"Your mother's orders," said Samus, "Since Ned Stark turned to Chaos, we have to see that Windrunner doesn't turn on us. The Undead have always been unreliable. You don't know how many friends I buried at the hands of vampires and zombies."

Schala was still uncertain about this whole thing, but she nodded.

Deep down, Samus felt something was off about this whole thing as well...but she was under Zeal contract now, and it would be bad for her image to back out suddenly.

Samus had enough experience to know the dangers of Chaos. She'd seen men become monsters because a Tzeentch wizard had spiked a shipment of tea that turned humans into Chaos Spawn.
And she didn't trust Zeal or the King as far as she could throw them, but she was sincere in her hatred for the Undead. Not to mention she had a personal ax to grind with Duke Nukem, the overseer of New Vegas.

Lecherous prick. She some missiles with his names right on them. Oh, yes indeed.

His ego had also nearly cost her the lives of some close friends. For that reason alone, she ought to drive her foot right up his ass.

For now, she simply followed Schala as she left the barracks, ready to aid her.

Schala looked to the skies as the fleet prepared to enter orbit. She would not be alone.

Yet bubbling through the cold veneer was a fear stronger than any yet. Her brother would be going to war as well. Would he survive? If he did, how badly would he be changed?

Her helm closed by mental command, to help portray a stone-faced person. One must look their finest in front of their troops.

Though she did pause and turn to a sculpture of Asha, and knelt before it in prayer.

"Asha, all mother and savior of all, mistress of order and savior of the Kingdom, hear my oath heed me when I fall short," she intoned, She looked up at the statue, trying to feel the love of her family's goddess. "It is by your hand we are raised from the sea and to the sea we shall return when we fall in your service."

Samus watched in silence. Her patron of choice was the Jackal. Little was known about it, only that it was an avatar of Death. But not of cruelty, no, it seemed to represent the more natural cycle of death and rebirth.

The Jackal was ancient; during the Valaryan empire it had enjoyed eminence as their God of Death. Even in later ages, the Jackal endured as a guide to the spirits of the dead and the slayer of the wicked.

When one passed, the Jackal would judge the deceased by their deeds and thoughts.

He was not kind...but not cruel either. He simply was. A judge. An arbiter. And he would strive to do his duty as best as he could.

Samus found him a good Deity to worship, knowing how deadly her task could be.

Her God was a God of Balance. His role would be to fight for order when it was good. He would fight for freedom when order became oppressive. Neither would or could be allowed to reign supreme. For the Jackal, There was only balance. Give and Take. Equal exchange.

Such was the nature of life and death...and she would fight to see it remain, against the countless Demons and others who would exploit to their own ends.

She had been forged in the fires of war, taken on the cruellest the Galaxy had to offer. Samus had been killing since before she was Schala's age.

For her hardening today, the younger girl would need Samus's help and maybe, just maybe even her console in the coming days.

And she would gladly stand by her side in the coming storm.
The ships were soon ready, and all launched into space to rest and prepare.
Jon Snow sighed as he traveled on the ship, staring out into space. He had left Rick and Morty to their nonsense on Silicon Valley, as he had more important work to do. Namely, getting ready for wars against everything out to get the Kingdom. Ghost, his loyal Direwolf, stood nearby.

Jon ran a hand through his hair and thought about Rbob, about Bran, his father and more. Bran had nearly overdosed on spice, his father was an in Imperial prisonm and the Tyranids were not going to stop for any of it.

More than once, he beat himself up for playing escort duty with Rick and Morty when he could have been helping his family.

As if reading his mind, Snow licked his hand.

Sitting up, Jon adjusted his pip boy, an arm mounted computer hardened against nearly all forms of electromagnetic warfare.

"Master Jon, we'll be arriving at New Vegas in five minutes!" announced the loud speakers.

Jon nodded, letting this all run through his head as he stared at New Vegas...how did this all happen?

Ned Stark, his father, had been accused and imprisoned not too long ago. Some shit about Chaos and murder. Lies, all of it. He would never do anything like that.

His brother Rickon was being sent off planet and Jon had no idea where. Catelyn hadn't told him, and that truly hurt worse than any knife or bullet.

Where was Rickon being sent to?

Jon ground his teeth as he saw the familiar irradiated hell of New Vegas loom in the screens.

As of know, he knew only Bran, Sansa, and his mother remained on the Winterfell Station. He hoped Arya was doing well...

They would be landing soon, and meet up with Nukem...and Mikasa Ackerman, apparently, from what he heard.

The head girl of Windrunner's harem, Mikasa, like the rest of the girls, was more than just a lover. She was a skilled and deadly warrior, known for single-handily killing titanic foes, and once lopped the head off of a Bio-Titan.

The girl's skills in the bedroom and in the battlefield were the stuff of legends. Barely eighteen, she had ended more lives than the average Space Marine.

At the very least, Jon was happy to have her as an ally. If the rumors were true, her code of honor was unbending and her sense of loyalty was beyond reproach. The four Chaos Gods could torture and she wouldn't crack or turn on her allies.

Jon wondered about the strange mix of Casino Planet and Death World. He knew there were defenses to set up, and he had no interest in gambling or drinking. But a very big part of him wanted to return to the Mojave wastes, just him, a pip boy and a sword. Everything was simpler when he'd proven himself in the radioactive wilderness.
But now, he had responsibilities as a leader. He had people to command and watch over. Their lives were in his hands...and that was a scary thought.

As they began to approach the landing zone, he and Ghost put on custom armor to shield themselves from the radiation.

His ship set down in the New Vegas strip. Busted, rusty and beautiful, Jon felt at home in a way he did not in Winterfell.

Walking down the street with his anti-rad armor and his wolf, he felt at ease.

"Jon, lord in heaven it's good to see you," said a man with Greaser style hair and a white suit.

"It's good to see you, King," said Jon to the gang leader turned mercenary commander.

"No, thank you, thank you very much," said the King, "Last time, you saved my bacon from that Deathclaw. I still owe you for that."

"I owe you too for saving me from those Ghouls," Jon laughed.

Jon nodded. Ghouls...nasty things, and even said to be part of the ancient Old Ones...

But now, for business. “Duke and Mikasa are here, correct?”

The King nodded, and adjusted the toothpick in his mouth. "Things are on the move, Jon. Me and the boys have the hills covered and the Powder Gangers are covering the badlands. Mikasa and Duke are up by the Casino where Mr. House used to rule. You should have a drink with the kings before you go see them."

Jon shook his head, "I need a clear head, there will be time for drinking when this war is over."

"But you don't know if you'll see the end of this war," countered The King, "so have a drink when you're done, before you go out into the wastelands."

Jon simply sighed as made his ways towards the Casino. He wanted to get this done soon. Who knew when an attack could come. Last thing he needed were Marines...or worse, Dreadnoughts.

The Lucky 38 was the head of Government on New Vegas and the biggest Casino as well. Next to King Dice's personal gambling house, there was no bigger gambling spot in the Galaxy. Wheelers and dealers from all over the Galaxy came her to lose their money.

Jon took a deep breath. Smelled like home brew alcohol and cheap tobacco. Just like home.

"Well if it isn't little Jonny Frost!" shouted Duke Nukem in the Casino's main hall, arms spread out. "Back from the frozen anus of Winterfell! Come here, you fucker, you look great!"

"Nice to see you finally." Mikasa said evenly. The girl was not dressed in the casual harem garb. For this, she was in a more practical (if form fitting) battle armor, designed for both defense and flexibility.

"It's good to be back," said Jon, "And it's good to finally meet you, Mikasa."

"We've got a pig roasting for you, Jonny," said Duke, "We got cigars and champagne. And we still got the Deathclaw heads you bagged last time. Had them mounted and everything!"

"We also have scouts and sensors all over the planet," said Mikasa, "We are on full alert and all
military forces on the planet are mobilized. If anything, be it Tyranid or otherwise sets foot without our permission, we will know it."

Jon nodded once more as he moved up with them to the upper area, reserved for elites. Here, planning would happen.

He was happy to do so. It was time to make a plan, before things went even more south. The situation was unstable as it was. All it needed was spark.

“Oh, I should mention the mercenaries Sam and Max will be with us.” Mikasa added.

"They should just be getting back from the peep show!” Duke announced, grabbing a cool bottle of champagne and snapping the cork off. "Boys are nuttier than a bag of monkeys, but they'll do you right in a fight."

More than liquor, Jon was more interested in the collection of guns and swords on display. This was something he could get excited for. "I need all the help I can get. My father has been kidnapped and there's a chance the Inquisition could declare Exterminatus against Stark outposts and allies."

“That may be impractical.” Mikasa noted. “Blowing up planets leads to a loss of land and resources, which I’m certain the king wishes to avoid.”

“Unless that asshole, Fyodor Karamazov, decided to act.” Duke growled. "Yeah, that skid mark is still alive.”

"A zealot, a maniac and a closeted serial killer," Jon nodded, "I know of the man. He's as bad as they come, made his reputation hunting the Targaryens. Destroyed more planets than the Grox."

"The Inquisitor also destroyed many loyal planets,” Mikasa added, "His continued presence and position of power is worrying and may undermine the war effort."

"Here's hoping he chokes on a dick," Duke took a swig of champagne. "But alright, we could get bombed. We got missile silos all over the Mojave with enough firepower to turn the Inquisitor's fleet into scrap. We just need you to help arm them."

“I will aid to the best of my abilities.” Jon promised. “The King and his cronies will fall for the insult on my family.” Ghost growled in agreement.

"K. Rool is a fat fuck motherfucker," Duke agreed, guzzling more champagne while a scantily glad server girl brought him fresh baked donuts. "He was an asshole in the rebellion, but there's no bottom to this greasy barrel. If he does what I think he's going to, he's going to go down."

"While you are talking about treason, the King has failed to live up to his feudal obligations,” Mikasa pointed out. "Aside from killing the King, we should focus short term on arming the missiles, Long term, we should focus on replacing the King and possibly replacing the monarchy as it currently exists."

"That's a tall order," Jon pointed out, as he snatched a donut for himself

“Not to mention,” Mikasa added on. “He is more clever than we think. Even he would not risk this without planning and considering everything.”

Jon had to admit, she was right. What WAS the King planning?

“Eh, well, I’ll just do to their necks what I do with the necks of others.” Duke spoke up.
“Strangle them?” Jon guessed lamely.

“No...shit down them.”

Suddenly. Jon had no taste for donuts. "You're a sick man, Duke,”

Nukem just laughed, "Well, Sylvanas didn't hire me for my sparkling manners. Or I might rip out their eyes and piss on their brains. Either way, I win."

"Oh, speaking of that, the bathroom is flooded again,” said a zany white rabbit, "Can you get the janitor on that, Duke?"

Max...one half a duo of mercs known for their...unconventional methods. Max, notably, was known to be a barely stable maniac, likely to go off on violent killings at a moments notice...

But he was good at his job, and him and Sam would uphold a contract to the end.

"I need to go out into the worst parts of the desert and prime the missile defenses," Jon told the white rabbit, "I could use your help. And nom you can't set the missiles off."

At this, a brown dog in a suit put his hand on the rabbit's shoulder, "Don't worry, little buddy. You can take out your insane aggression on feral ghouls and those Cazadores bugs."

"Killing ghouls isn't the same since I started seeing Carol in Underworld,” said Max with unusual sadness.

"Congratulations on smashing that radioactive, undead pussy," Duke patted Max on the back hard enough to knock him over.

Yes, they all got along quite nicely, due to the liking of insane violence.

Mikasa, on the other hand, was a cool, calm, and professional fighter, always maintaining a stoic attitude. The only one said to be able to break it was said to be Sylvanas herself.

"Go with Jon into the Mojave,” said Mikasa, "You'll be paid the usual."

"You got it, little miss," Sam said, tipping his hat.

"Won't you come with us, Mikasa?” Max begged.

She gave a small smirk, "Then there would be no victims left for you."

The white bunny nodded, "Well when you put it that way..."

Jon, Ghost, Sam, and Max soon began to depart, while Jon was thinking still on the situation. The King was not the only house that was problem. Koopa and Zeal had sided with the King as well.

Koopa had the best weapons available in the Galaxy, used to crush anyone who got in their way. Zeal knew every Magic Wind, Class, and Schools, and they were masters at it all.

And outside the Adeptus Mechanicaus, Bowser had the largest concentration of industrial output in the galaxy. From what he remembered from his history lessons, an external enemy could unite the Kingdom or cause it to blow up as the hidden peacetime weakness were exposed.

The gates of New Vegas opened and out there was nothing but endless desert.
Jon felt at home, and he felt guilty for it.

"Don't get down, Jon boy," said Sam, "Your old man's tougher than a Space Marine and he could charm the dreadlocks off of a Yautja. He'll get out just fine."

Jon simply nodded numbly, and armed himself with his gun and Longclaw, a sword of Valaryan origins. He held up his pip boy and turned the dials. A green pixelated map cropped up, "The first vault is less than an hour’s march from here if we hurry. We go in through a vault that has the local radio network built inside."

"Oh, I love vault crawling!" gushed Max, "They're built to kill both visitors and the people who used to live in them."

Yes, Jon had heard rather...ugly stories about the vaults, used more for experiments than safety. Now they were home to unpleasant creatures and other horrors.

Oh well. It was worth it to dig in and try to find something of value.

A long time ago, New Vegas had been a green and lush world. Before the planet's now extinct ruling house had descended into civil war and eventually all out nuclear war. Vault Tech, a shadowy corporation long extinct, had played a part in exacerbating the conflict.

The fools knew not what they wrought.

To make a long story short, it became the hellhole it was today. Windrunner had made it their base, due to the secrets it held.

Yes...the House of Windrunner was known for being a gatherer of secrets of numerous civilizations.

Vault Tech gathered many relics of the Valaryans over the years. Rumors swirled about that they'd even collected Chaos artifacts and once held the Book of Vile Darkness in a vault with no name, number or identification, a vault found on no map and remembered by nobody sane.

Sylvanas had forged an alliance with the native Ghouls, radioactive powered zombies who in some cases held all their former humanity. Through Duke and Mikasa, she'd also won the loyalty of the Super Mutants; giant hulks of immense power and questionable intelligence.

In ages past, Jon's grandfather had killed the Master, a Tzeentch worshipping Mutant who'd once tried to wipe out humanity from this world.

The Chaos God ate his soul up, and that was that.

But now, they had arrived at a Vault, ancient and decrepit. Jon sighed as he looked down the opening, the sense of death coming from the bowels.

"Well...we go in?" Sam asked.

Jon felt a thrill and a fear as he entered the vault. These places had nearly killed him as a boy. If it wasn't for a few good friends, he wouldn't be alive today.

He felt humble, as the giant blast doors cracked open.

``
Up on high, a figure cloaked watched the party with thermal vision.

Inquisitor Vega, his mask covering his handsome face, watched with silence as he observed the
mangy party enter the Vault. It would no be much longer now, before Deathwatch arrived...

Creatures like Sam and Max were the bane of the Inquisition. Letting them spend their strength on the Vault denizens would greatly aid in their death.

He dropped his thermal binoculars and looked to the skies. He was expecting Zeal's fleet from Ulthuan, but he would not depend on them.

The Inquisition had abstained on Exterminatus for this world. . . so far.

As K. Rool had noted, blowing planets up was only a last ditch resort, mainly for infestation. Vega had to agree, and he had to make sure Fyodor knew as well...

He would be coming as well with the Marines, as was Pridak, Kuroko, and Hinako...why was that bubblehead coming? Eh, must have been he good piloting skills.

"This is Vega," he spoke into his communicator, "Vault is open. Missile control will be disabled when internal defenses have fallen. Have fleet stand by, prepare stealth craft to enter the system."

Those missiles would be better used elsewhere, as there were so many ways they could be used to slow or halt a Tyranid fleet, or blow up a dragon stronghold.

But now, it would be used against these ugly creatures and their allies, and help start the seeds of a new order. His claw would know blood soon.

---

Jon took in the flickering light of the vault, consulting his pip boy as he moved to hack a computer terminal. "Cover me,"

Max smiled, whipping out a minigun seemingly from nowhere, "Gladly, Jonny on the spot!"

"Like paint, Jon boy," said Sam, pulling a shotgun from under his trench coat.

He began to do his own work, digging up whatever info he could find to give to both his family and Windrunner. Every little bit helped.

He always found it odd that even after all this time, planets still held many secrets from the Houses.

Information was one of the great underrated treasures of the vaults. The former owner of this planet, Robert House, had kept himself alive as a cybernetic monstrosity. He gathered oodles of blackmail data on various royal figures before his death. They hadn't even begun to unearth half of what Mr. House had learned.

But Sylvanas had time...she was Undead, after all. She thirsted for great lore, evidenced when she took the ancient planets El Dorado and Atlantis under her control...though Jon, seeing the women there, wondered if she had additional reasons...

Jon's pip boy was coming up with useful information. Missile targeting data, access codes for turret systems, hidden subterranean vaults that even Sylvanas did not know of. And . . .

"A Targaryen family free," said Jon.

"Was Aerys a gardener?" Max asked while scratching his head.

"No, it's records after the war, the whereabouts of the last Targaryen holdouts," Jon noticed.

"That's some dark stuff, Jon," said Sam, "Anyone who the King even thinks smells like a Targaryen
winds up dead."

Yes...the King was quite dedicated to stomping out the line, all to solidify his rule. Not helped by rumors one remained.

"We've got the family tree, and yes," Jon smiled, "the Vault access codes."

"And that means bottlecaps!" said Max gleefully,

"And preserved apple slices from another era," said Sam just as happily.

Jon took another look at the tree...and noticed...it seemed...recent, almost. As if someone came only a few decades back and planted it here.

However, it was also quite encrypted and faded. Trying to decode it would take time.

The vaults were strange, evil places, secretive. They were home to many strange creatures, and stranger people.

"We need to move to the main dining hall," said Jon, "From there we can access the Vault Overseers office."

Sam and Max nodded...and readied their guns. Who knew what might dwell in the depths...though likely something nasty.

The lights flickered and the tunnels grew dim. Jon examined his pip boy. "Radiation levels are within acceptable parameters."

"I'm lucky I injected my anti-rad meds into my scrotum," Max bellowed happily.

"Too much information, little buddy," Sam groaned.

A lone can rolled across the floor in front of the group, their eyes followed it to the source…

…And all quickly opened fire at the Necromorph, which had been poised to strike. They aimed at the limbs, pruning it before ether could take it down easier.

The thing thrashed, but bullets that would have blown out the organs of a man did nothing to it. Even blowing the head off only slowed it down.

With its limbs missing, the limbless stump fell to the ground, twitching. It was not dead, for it was not truly alive. Powered by the hideous abilities of the Marker.

"There must be a Marker here in the Vault," said Jon, "That would explain the lack of rad roaches and other pests."

"Oh brother, we're going to have to ask Duke for double for this job," Sam groused.

“Well…” Jon sighed. “At least things can’t get any worse.”

In all of his lessons, Jon forgot the golden rule: Don’t jinx things.

Bone shards started piercing the walls like bullets. Steel over a meter thick was chewed up like bubblegum.

The trio threw themselves to the ground as the fire eviscerated seemingly all of creation, and then the
Necromorph Deathclaw came stomping into sight. Eight limbed like a spider, it had mutated to the point horns were growing virtually every surface, even its ears and eyes. The open maw was a mix of bone shards sharp as glass, the source of the bone gunfire.

"Fuck my life, little buddy." Sam said.

Once again they began to fire at the limbs, hoping to bring it down and-

A tremor knocked all off balance. A piece of rubble crushed the Necromorph.

“What the hell?! From outside?!" Jon looked about in shock.

“THE SKY IS FALLING!!" Max shrieked.

Jon heard vibrations above him, raising his pistol and his sword, he scanned around with his VATS system to try and get a bead.

That was when a chainsword began cutting a red hot hole into the ceiling. A member of the Deathwatch Space Marines came crashing down, turning the remains of the Necromorph Deathclaw into pulp.

Dead, lifeless lenses met Jon as the superhuman killing machine scanned him.

...Oh shit.

“Heretics. Prepare to die.” The Marine rumbled, massive gun aimed and ready.

“Woah, now.” Max grinned. “A little feisty there.” He fired an armor piercing round right at the Marine's eye, and it bounced off like he'd thrown a stone. The Marine powered up his chainsword and raised a heavy bolter. "Battle brothers and sisters, targets are engaged. Move to take the Red Marker," He growled over the vox.

"Well, fuck me inside and out," Max said, "I need a mini nuke to bring you down."

Jon simply growled at this. It seemed, at this point, war had been declared...

All bets were off, and this fucker was going down.

The Space Marine, particularly of the Deathwatch Chapter, was a merciless and nearly indestructible killer who could go toe to toe with Greater Demons and not break a sweat. Using a mini nuke could probably kill the thing, but the armor would still be largely intact and Jon and his friends would likely be nuclear paste from it.

He took a desperate gamble. In his pip boy was a stock of Psycho, a drug that took away fear and pain and replaced it with hatred and inhuman strength. Jon pressed a button and took it all. He figured he might have four minutes to live, and a fifty-fifty chance that Sam and Max could revive him.

He raised his Valaryan steel sword and charged at the Marine, because only his weapon could get through that armor.

The Marine raised his sword and charged.

Already Jon felt...crazed, full of energy, and ready to rip this guy to pieces...but the Deathwatch fighter was just as ready.
Which Chapter did he originate from? Eh, no longer mattered.

Whatever existed under that black armor was just an engine, a vehicle of righteous retribution. The adamantium teeth of the chainsword crashed against the Valaryan steel.

The sword threw off micro black holes and background radiation, enough to erase most targets, but the Marine and Jon stood strong.

Jon swung his sword like a mad butcher, for once the joys of battle overtook everything, replaced all doubt and fears and responsibility. Just the endless red rage.

All for a few minutes. Sam and Max hung back. They knew what they had to do.

Hopefully they would survive.

Necromorphs with the rags of dead raiders came screaming down the corridor at the Freelance Ploice. "Well little buddy, looks like we're fucked." said same

"I know," Max grinned, "So let's go out with a bang."

Jon swung his blade and took the Space Marine's arm clean off at the joint. There was some bleeding, but enhanced above most men, the Deathwatch Marine kicked his severed limb at Jon.

Jon blew backwards from the impact and distantly felt his spleen rupture. Still caught up in a Psycho overdose, he thrust his blade at the Marine as it grabbed its fallen Bolter and pointed it at Jon's head.

The Marine stopped all of the sudden, seizing up, as an invisible figure with dreadlocks drove an adamantium tipped spear through the one weak point on the back of the helmet.

As tough to kill as a Marine was, they, like anyone else, had weaknesses, and if one knew them, they could easily fell one.

And at the same time, the figure flung a dart at Jon…designed to cure.

The Space marine fell. Not fully dead, but the brain stem had been destroyed. It was like pulling the plug on a computer or ripping out the power cells on a robot. With medical attention, the Space Marine could survive having a hand span of steel driven into his brain.

Then the Yautja hunter took the other end of his combi staff, a heavy axe head, and swung it at the marine's neck. The head rolled away. Now even the Gods couldn't help him.

Meanwhile, Jon began refocus as Ghost, who had wisely hung back and kept watch, came close and licked at his hand. Sam and Max, having gunned down the Necromorphs, stared numbly at what just happened.

Outside, the bombing ships had been repelled by anti-air weapons deployed by the rapid attentions of Duke and Mikasa.

In the City of New Vegas, Duke and Mikasa watched the King's forces battle against the anti-air defenses.

"Those Royal Bastards are going to pay for shooting up my planet!" The cigar-chomping chauvinist was furious. "Have Jon and the boys gotten the missile access yet?"

Mikasa observed the space battle via remote eyepiece, "The King's fleet is stalled and we have not received word from Jon Snow. As of this moment, we have a little less than one standard hour before
the King and the inquisition are reinforced by Ulthuan forces."

Duke growled, "Take care of the bastards in the air, I'm going groundside and leading out boys! And Jon boy better be alive or there'll be hell to pay!"

Mikasa watched as Duke stormed out with some big guns...before her attention was caught by a massive Titan war machine in the distance.

She scowled, holding her blade and heading out as well. This is where she shone. Fighting the giants.

The Nevada Rangers were keeping back the Inquisition's ground forces back with armor piercing sniper fire, but they lacked the serious firepower to bring down one of the Mechanicus's war titans.

Mikasa was one of the few with the technology to bypass the war machine's void shield and the gear to find its weak spot.

She jumped off of the top of Duke's Casino, the Lucky 38. As she fell, grappling lines shot from her belt, grabbing two swords she activated her 3D maneuvering gear.

This gear allowed her to fight on all dimensions of space, allowing for intense mobility. It took time to use one, but she knew this, and would take full of advantage of it as she clambered the massive machine. Once she was on, it could not attack her without risk.

New Vegas was full of tall buildings, and the area around the city was full of stone structures left by nature as well as demolished buildings of the old era. All of that would deter most ground vehicles and armies. They'd already funneled large numbers of King's men into minefields and the dens of natural predators; But the Titan had no such problems.

It never noticed, simply stomping over some obstacles like a living god of metal and hate. With the fire of industry and the steel of hatred, it would purge all in the name of its Mechanicus masters.

Yet the operators paid no mind to the girl swinging between buildings like Spiderman. Mikasa gritted her teeth as her personal shield let her through the deadly void shield.

Landing a grapple, she began moving towards the massive Volcano Gun on the war machine's right arm.

She would start by crippling the weapons, and then she would bring it down as a pile of junk by going for the legs. All for the glory of Sylvanas.

She gritted her teeth, making sure to keep away from any hot metal as she reached the shoulder joint of the machine. Still, she was ignored...

...allowing her to jump forward and slice through the metal joint of the shoulder.

Swinging her blade, Mikasa felt like her arm would fall off. But the sword cut true and a massive steam line ruptured. Moving before she could be boiled alive by steam, she shot up even as the aiming gyro's in the gun arm suddenly lost pressure and went dead. The main cannon began wobbling and the operator could no longer precision aim it.

Next she'd fly at the scanning dish, which would also guide the Titan's battery of anti-aircraft guns which were gutting Sylvanas's local defenders.

The dish was soon clattering to the ground, leaving the machine more vulnerable. As the operators
panicked and tried to fix things, Mikasa was back on her way down to the legs. She picked one, ran down...and sliced.

The Titan's fall was slow, as not only did the leg go out, but also the major power cable that was the spine of the beast. Normally an entire fleet of battleships couldn't get through the armor, but Mikasa had a void sword of Sylvanas's own design. The rules were different.

She took off as the Titan really started picking up momentum, where it crashed and formed a medium sized earthquake.

Not to mention is crushed a good number of its allies as it crashed into the ground, now just metal for Windrunner agents to recycle and reuse to their own design.

More than that, Mikasa could see them crawling from out of the sand and dust.

Skink warriors fighting with javelin and blowdarts. Chameleon Skinks all but invisible to the eye launched sneak attacks on the rear of enemy lines, cut communications and blew up ammo dumps.

Being good to the Lizardmen paid off. And through an alliance with Sylvanas, the normally neutral Slann Mages were now closer to their goal of realizing the Great Plan.

A bit stiff at times, but no one could deny their skill in battle on all fields.

The King, meanwhile, would be PISSED to know a powerful and expensive Titan mech was brought down.

The King would be upset, but he would not rely solely on the technical prowess of the Mechanicus to win him the day.

Legions of robots from Black Mesa, dubbed Terminators, marched like an army of skeletal totems of doom.

Tough and hardy, these robots resisted radiation and the poison darts of the Lizardmen.

Hmmm...looks like it was time to really bring in the big guns for this...and sure enough...Mikasa noticed the skies growing dark...as the Vampires came.

The Terminators could feel neither fear nor pain, but the Vampire Counts loyal to Sylvanas had more than the brute force needed to tear apart the steel soldiers of the king.

Isabella Von Karstein shrieked like a banshee as she swooped down on a Manticore. Her mount breathed fire upon the King's soldiers and from the Battlefield, Duke Nukem stopped tearing the heads off of soldiers long enough to get a look at her impressive cleavage.

...And as such, let himself get swarmed by a bunch of Klaptraps who had come as well, their large teeth gnashing with primal rage.

"I'll make suitcase outta ya!" Duke roared.

Duke crushed the aggravating reptilian. He’d lost his gunm but he was crushing their skulls in his hands like walnuts.

As usual, his libido had gotten in the way of the job.

One of the bastards managed to take a bite on his groin. Duke was thankful that he'd chosen today to wear a bulletproof adamantium cup. Grabbing the offending Klaptrap, he threw it into the air where
it was sucked into the jet engine of a passing defensive fighter.

Up above, in space, a Massive Noble Shuttle floated.

Pridak watched this all unfold on a monitor. At his side was the ruthless Inquisitor Fyodor, and hunters Kuroko and her partner, Minako.

Minako...a girl of teenage age, yet had the mind and attention span of a little kid, always seeming to be unfazed by the sheer amount of carnage going about. But her skills as a pilot were top-notch, so...yeah.

Pridak respected Fyodor. He really did. Born of zealotry, the man had a capacity for cruelty that few could match. He was up there with the likes of Juri Han or even himself.

The problem was, the zealotry that fueled him also gave him tunnel vision, made him blind to the obvious, made him easy to fool.

"Your people struck too early," Pridak ground out, "This could have gone much easier, Grand Inquisitor."

Vega soon teleported upon the ship as well, to observe the battle and talk
Fyodor scoffed. "Heretics deserve to burn, and the sooner, the better, I say."

Kuroko smirked. "Well, not good if we also get burned as well...one must always be smart when attacking, waiting until a foe's guard is down."

Pridak also respected this woman. Both strong and crafty...as well as difficult to faze. He remembered the first time he gave her the ultimatum. No begging or screams. Just a deadpan stare, then a smirk, stating that he drove a 'hard bargain'.

"They're putting up a good fight," Kuroko observed, "But they don't have the strength to last out. And thanks to Fyodor's men, there's no sign that Jon Snow has accessed the planet's supply of nuclear missiles."

Pridak rolled his eyes, "Well, that's one single thing you've done right, Grand Inquisitor."

Minako grinned, "Just give me a ship and a few pilots and I can bring down this planet's defenses! It'll be fun, I swear!"

The super hyper girl was ready to fly all over the place, just for the thrill of it all. But now...now was not the time.

In theory, the easiest thing to do was declare an Exterminatus. Emotionally, Pridak could do it without losing sleep. But he had to think practically. Blowing up the planet would lead to loss of soldiers, weapons...as well as potential land and hidden secrets.

"What I need is for the Inquisitor to pull his Space Marines out of the Divide and into the Capital region," Pridak ordered, "While I understand the Mutants and the Ghouls pose a long term threat to our occupation, the Capital is where Sylvanas's lackeys are coordinating their defenses."

Fyodor grunted, "I will take your suggestion to heart," he sneered. "The Sisters of Battle are already deploying with their cleansing flame to fight the undead. You will get your Space Marine support."

Vega frowned. "Don't the Sisters work for House Nui now?" He asked.
"A few of the Sisters are still loyal to us," snarled Fyodor, "Though they defected en-mass, the Neo-Sisters still serve the Seven."

"Faith is such a weak bond," said Kuroko, "It only takes a scratch to show the real test of character."

Pridak was silent as he watched the carnage go forth...Deep down, he was not sure if this battle would go in his favor.

Still, Wars were not won or lost on the very first battle, and this would be quite a long war indeed.

Ned Stark...his coming death would be soon, and after that, all bets were off. Luckily they would have great resources to aid them...and more so once Mr. Dark proceeded with his mission to Rapture, which would be done after the execution.

If the war on New Vegas was lost, it would not be the end. No war was ever truly won by a dramatic knockout punch.

Pridak’s job was to make sure that they took more than they lost. “Inquisitor, have your agents hack the Vaults. Blow them to pieces if you have to. Kill everyone they encounter “

A nod was the only answer he got. It was all he needed. Pridak gritted his teeth as the war raged on. Funny...one would think Sylvanas herself would be here.

New Vegas was one of her Crown Jewels. A pinnacle of her holdings. The Casinos on the city’s capital were a major source of revenue for her. More than that, the Vaults provided her with valuable tech and magical artifacts.

If she wasn’t here, then she was somewhere else more important. If she was here, she'd be planning a counterattack.

There was no way that Pridak could believe someone as ancient and coldly calculating as Sylvanas would be caught with her pants down.

Only her whores could do that...

Feh, time to bring in the war animals of Jumanji.

A punch of the button brought up a hologram of the Indominus Rex. Pridak eyed the thing, wounded badly from its previous match; however its near death experience had served to make the thing more ferocious and bloodthirsty.

I. Rex strained against its chains and howled as the teleporter powered up. Courtesy of the Black Mesa people. It would hopefully work nicely against the undead monsters of the Vampire Counts.

The initial wave of beasts included various war mounts, from the swift zebras, to powerful rhinos and elephants. All were used by Kremlings for the purpose of battle.

Speed is a weapon of war, same as any bullet or blade. The fast mounts of Jumanji brought their own brand of berserk speed as the Kremlings smashed into the lines of the Windrunner forces.

On the ground, Mikasa dodged out of the way as a war rhino nearly trampled her.

She gritted her teeth. Damn. They were not letting up.

Another war rhino charged at her and this time she was all offense.
She swung her blade and pierced the animal through the eye socket. The body kept running for a few more paces before falling like a puppet with the strings cut. The Kremling on top was thrown off and pounced on by Skink warriors.

The crocodile snarled, putting up a fight, but what so overwhelmed.

Next came an elephant, this one being ridden by a Krumple, a notably strong breed of a Kremling.

The elephant's tiny eyes glowed red, the animal super charged with drugs, compounds and things to make it more deadly. On its back, a howdah carried both spear throwers and anti-aircraft guns. The deadly pachyderm trampled all beneath its feet and threatened Windrunner forces in the air. As it charged, Mikasa also noticed its tusks were lined with spikes. Wonderful. She readied herself...

The elephant charged, but then rockets began bouncing off of its heavy armor. Glancing around, Mikasa saw the welcome form of Sam and Max shooting at the rampaging war elephant.

And there was Jon Snow in the arms of… a Yautja hunter?

Well, that was unexpected, as well as the Yautja dragging a Deathwatch Marine behind.

The elephant bellowed with rage, ready to crush and gore. The Kremlings, armed with both blasters and crossbows, readied themselves

The Yautja with its trophy and its . . guest . . was ready. The master hunter dropped the dead Space Marine and produced its multi spear. From its shoulder, the automated cannon targeted the Kremling guiding the elephant.

More trophies, the better...even if a Space Marine was already big bragging rights for any Yautja.

It fired upon the Krumple, the projectile ripping right thorough his chest, killing him instantly. It fell off the large mammal, leaving it without guidance.

As the war elephant charged, the Yautja hunter hung Jon on his back like a mother with a baby. Activating the axe end of its spear, the Predator leapt at the elephant and went for the underbelly.

Beneath its tree trunk legs, it swung its weapon between the armor gaps and spilled the animal's guts. With a cry of agony, the war elephant toppled over.

Kremlings howled in rage and confusion as they fell down with it, and were dispatched in short order by Mikasa, Sam, and Max.

...Gods, Mikasa knew that, once this was done, she would have to go and sleep with one of the girls back at Undercity Station...or, if possible, be bedded by her Lady.

"I really like you, big dreadlocked guy," said Max to the Yautja, "When this is over let's get married."

The Yautja clicked out something under the mask that nobody could understand.

At that moment, Isabella von Karstein landed amidst the group, the haughty Vampire Countess looking upon Mikasa with inappropriate lust. "What are your orders, milady?"

Mikasa looked about, noting the King's forces were pulling out at last, having taken too much damage.

"We regroup and recover." She said simply.
"So cowardly of you," drawled Isabella. "We should stand and fight."

Mikasa pointed a sword into Isabella's cleavage, right near her heart. "And I say we get back to the main city and retreat to a stronger position. If you don't like it, I can end you now."

Isabella licked her lips with a forked tongue, "I love it when you talk dirty."

Mikasa repressed a shudder. Only the other girls and her Lady could touch her...and MAYBE Eren at times.

Von Carstein's preferences were well known. Sylanas tolerated the Vampire Countess's evil ways, but she still made Mikasa's skin crawl.

"As you wish, daughter of mine," the Countess laughed and transformed into a flock of bats.

They all flew away, leaving the battlefield empty.

Mikasa looked about, seeing the mechanics already taking care of the Titan, ready to use parts for their own ends.

The Yautja had laid Jon down and began to collect trophies, already feeling the acclaim it would receive for bring back such items of power.

She turned to Sam and Max. "Did you get the missile control codes?"

"Jon got em," said Sam, "And then he poised himself with Psycho. But our Predator friend saved him."

"So they're stuck in Jon's pip boy?" Mikasa inquired.

"Everything is under control." Sam assured.

It was then when Jon woke up.

"Oh...my skull. What the fuck is going on?" Jon groaned.

"Take it easy, Jonny," said Max, "You had a near overdose and you're being babied by a big bastard with dreadlocks."

"What?" said Jon.

Jon looked, and saw the Yautja...wait...

He knew this one...The pattern of the mask was known.

The Yautja tapped a button on his gauntlet. "You saved me from dishonor by the rat man," he buzzed.

Jon nodded, "I do remember you. On Planet Winterfell."

"A life for a life." he buzzed once more. "Despite what most think of our kind, we do honor debts. Consider us even...and perhaps we will even cross paths again. Put up a good fight, we may even be allies," The Hunter's voice box buzzed as he passed Jon's limp for to Sam and Max. "You have no fear, like one of us."

"I love you, Dreadlocks man," said Max reverently,
No answer was given. The hunter simply walked away with a body, some tusks, and horns.

Jon had what the Hunter valued. Violence, and fearlessness.

His body was permanently damaged from the use of Psycho, but it would not stop Jon, not long term.

And before long, he would be at that point where it would be simply ignored.

He took stock of the battlefield as well. He saw a lot of dead, and survivors of the King's army ring teleported away, including a large white dinosaur, which had not been deployed due to the battle being lost.

The two sides were licking their wounds. The King, however, had the long-term advantage. He had more men, more money and more machines at his disposal. His forces could shrug off the damage more easily than Windrunner and her allies.

The question was then if the forces of New Vegas could turn their short term advantage into something permanent.

But Jon knew now...the gloves were off, and war was inevitable. Nice. As if they didn’t have to worry about. The Tyranids would not wait. Demons, Skaven, and Chromatics would use battle to fulfill their own scheme. Orks would be drawn to battle...would it end?

Jon tried to stand up, but felt groggy. Through his pip boy, he gave himself a shot of stim pack. It helped but there was something else under that, a bone tiredness. He turned to Sam, "What happened again?"

"You overdosed on Psycho, Jon boy," said the dog mercenary, "Your heart stopped. Whatever our dreadlock friend gave you, it's keeping you going now. Never seen a man survive a Psycho overdose until now."

"My life doesn't matter," Jon said grimly, "I have the codes in my pip boy. Now we just need a transmitter to reach the missile silos."

Hopefully, things could work out...

Meanwhile...

Pridak watched with a cold expression as his forces pulled out. Lost a lot of fighters, beasts, and even a Titan...but they managed to get something out of it.

While Windrunner forces were hunkering down in the Capital of New Vegas, with defenses headquartered in the Lucky 38 Casino, his own forces had managed to dig entrenched positions all across the planet.

Radiation, Deathclaws and other hazards had posed no threat to the Deathwatch Space Marines and their forces had considerable access to reserves of red spice hidden in deep caves accessible only through vast vaults.

More than that, the Mechanicus technicians were working overtime to take command of the planet's missile silos.

It would take time, though, and right now, he and his associates would have to fall back to the main Capital.
Stark's execution would be coming soon...

Pridak wanted them to see it, Jon, Mikasa, Windrunner.

Hell, the whole Galaxy would see it.

It wouldn't break the King's enemies, but it would help to set the tone for the New Kingdom that would rise from the ashes of this war.

That the King's power is absolute, untouchable and divine.

Even the King in the North must bow.

Pressing down on some buttons on his console, he had the ship fold away.

Time for war.
"Is this planet safe?" Dany asked as the ship fold spaced into view over the world.

"As safe as anywhere else," Razorbeast grunted, "Place was owned by Aperture Science before they went under. The lumber mills and mines folded and a zombie outbreak finished anyone who couldn't escape. But the place has been in legal limbo for decades. Nobody owns it and nobody wants it."

"I'm used to dealing with zombies," Jack added, "But I try not to get overconfident. Stay behind me if anything happens, my lady."

Dany nodded softly as Ashi and Erza took their places at her sides as AI began to work on the teleportation sequence to beam them down to the dark.

They would rather not come here, but they needed to, for resources they could dig up.

"The planet has no capital," said Razorbeast, "But there was an old administrative hub that's been mostly untouched by scavengers or the elements."

Alphonse pulled up the schematics, "The City looks pretty quiet. Zombie presence is pretty minimal. So let's put down in Ravenholm...er, Ravenholm?"

"They named the administrative center after the planet," Razorbeast grunted, "Aperture Science was never very creative."

"Small wonder it all fell apart." Ashi muttered.

Erza looked down at the dark planet, a symbol of greed and madness...

"How did the zombies get here?" she asked.

Razorbeast huffed as he and Alphonse took the controls. "There was a shipment of bio-experiments and creatures from another universe. Headcrabs escaped containment and turned many of the survivors into flesh hungry zombies."

"Evil," Erza hissed under her breath, "The banality of evil."

"Nothing will ever happen under my watch like this," Dany swore as she tried to comfort the mage.

Erza had seen much evil, as those in charge trampled over the lives of those they deemed 'lesser'. It made her sick, and she would help crush those on top to bring about a new age.

Soon, the team had arrived onto the surface. And...not pretty. The place they arrived at was a dark, decayed set of homes, all in state of disrepair. Ravens were about, picking at whatever they could find. Junk littered the area.

The dark carrion birds were readily picking apart the carcasses of what used to be humans. Long deformed claws tipped the hands and the head and brain had been mostly chewed away.

Alphonse pulled up the map. "The main lumber mill is that way, and there's food, fuel and spare parts in there if the shipping manifest is correct."

"Keep your eyes open," said Erza, "This place feels evil."
"Ya think?" Razorbeast growled. Erza glared at him, but all stopped when their lady simply held up a hand.

"Let us not attract unwanted attention..."

In the distant, the howls of tormented zombies could be heard.

"Ignore them," Ashi commanded, "Focus on getting the goods to the pallette and back to the ship."

Everything changed when a gunshot went off. Every head snapped and Jack and Ashi drew their weapons.

"Someone is alive here," Dany realized. She turned to her people, "We have to save them."

"Let me, Princess," Erza demanded rather than asked,

"I will go with her," Ashi volunteered, "My Lady."

Dany paused...then nodded. She hated putting her allies and friends at risk so casually, but they could defend themselves. She watched as they took off at top speed.

"They might be hostile," Ashi cautioned Erza as they ran.

"And I don't care," Erza grunted as she held her swords, "If I can save just one life in the service of the Princess, this will be worth it. And If I die, then I deserve it."

Another gunshot punctuated the silence and frightened the ravens. Then the sound of a laser blast followed it.

A voice of an elder male spoke. "Come now, my children! I release you from your torment."

"And provide some way to pass time!" A young male voice-almost a kid-added.

Another gunshot went off, and the sound of dynamite going off.

Erza and Ashi made to follow the fireball, which would surely draw every zombie in the region.

"Come to the light! Farewell, brother!" shouted a bald man with a priest's collar as he reloaded his rifle.

By the priest, a tiger of all things kept back zombies with an axe. "This guy is nuts," said the tiger.

"What did you expect?" The kid, a short human with spiky blond hair, asked, using her laser to take down some more slow zombies about the area...all initially unaware that Ashi and Erza had reached the area.

The boy raised his weapon as a spry fast zombie lunged at him, only for the beast to be cut in half by one of Erza swords. "Whoa! A mage! Wait, I know you! You're from the Fairy Tail Guild!"

The bald priest smiled and blew a zombie to pieces with a rifle meant to bring down dinosaurs. "May the light of the Seven be with you, sisters. Welcome to Ravenholm, my humble home."

"Where are your parents, child?" Ashi asked as her spiked chain ripped a zombie in two.

"Who knows...been years since I saw them." The boy replied.
Ashi would have been shocked...but all this did was confirm some suspicions.

Suddenly the boy grew in height, turning into a ridiculous over the top action hero. His laser gun grew seven barrels and he began to open fire on a new swarm.

The tiger turned into something from the cover of a heavy metal album and cut five zombies in two with a single swing.

The priest did not find this strange in the least. "The spirit of the Sven resides in this boy. Show our brothers the light."

Erza blinked, but Ashi nodded. "The power to manifest imagination into reality...we've found you. The Lady will be most pleased by this stroke of luck."

"That's nice, gimme one second," said the boy as he shrunk back to his original shape. He gleefully tossed the priest another stick of dynamite. "Use it well, Father Grigori."

"Thank you Calvin, my boy," said the mad priest, "I can now give my neighbors peace."

The resulting blast sent many zombies 'free'. The blood and body parts came raining down upon the group.

Now, Ashi made her move. Swinging her chain and sickle, she removed limbs and head strategically. A scuttling headcrab ran for her, but it stood no chance against her reflexes. She bisected the thing with a sweep and caught another headcrab in her hand as it jumped from the underbrush.

Crushing the monster, she threw it aside as she focused on more.

Ravens cawed overhead like harbingers of doom.

As if sensing the danger, the other headcrabs fled...for now. Allowing for a brief respite...and allowing the others to join up as well.

Grigori stared at Dany with awe. "Do my eyes deceive me?" He smiled. "Not at all! A Targaryen lives! And without the mad eyes of Aerys!" The priest gave a bow to Dany, "Pleasure to meet you, my lady. I am Father Efeimovitch Grigori. Shepherd of this humble town. I fought for your family during the civil war, and may I offer my spiritual services in this time of need."

"Stand father," said Dany to the man, "How long have you been here?" She was honestly concerned for the man, physically and mentally.

"Ah, that is a good question, but time matters little in the Galaxy." Grigori replied. "Maybe months, maybe years, depending on how you track such things."

"...True." Jack admitted.

"Do you wish to come with us, Father?" Dany asked, "We can drop you of at the nearest station."

The priest laughed, "Far be it from me to abandon my flock, princess. I must take care of their souls and free them from their fleshy prisons."

"Plus fighting zombies is cool!" Calvin interjected.

"I still worry for the bald man." Hobbes, the tiger, admitted.
"...Perhaps we can discuss this in a safe house." Al noted.

The streets were dark and grungy as the party returned to what Father Grigori called home.

Roasting over a slow fire were several headcrabs. Hobbes took one and gleefully took a bite. "It tastes like lobster!"

"And it's good with butter!" Calvin shouted as he spontaneously created salted butter from his own imagination.

"The even are kind to send such blessed bright spirits to an old man these days," Father Grigori laughed as he took a bit of half cooked headcrab.

Dany looked at the meat, and ate silently. Had things gone differently, perhaps she would be eating splendid feasts right now...

But maybe this was all a blessing in disguise, to understand people better.

She wondered for a moment about trying to understand the mad priest. "I lost family. Have you lost family, father?"

Internally, Dany kicked herself. Of all the casual dinner conversations to start with, this was the worst.

Father Grigori laughed, and laughed and laughed. Calvin laughed; not fully grasping that Grigori's laughter didn't signify happiness.

"I have buried a wife and two daughters in the cemetery," he elaborated, "Though I confess I needed an axe to get them to stop moving, once the headcrabs had their way."

"That's so metal," Calvin was in awe, not grasping the severity.

"I won't say I know your pain, father, but know that I care," Dany said solemnly.

"And I have lost much as well..." Erza added. "All in one day...thanks to K. Rool." She spat.

"Ah, K. Rool," Grigori laughed darkly. "He was a great warrior, but a warrior's skills don't always fold into the skills of a King. The Seven scowl on him and he shall meet divine retribution."

"We know that guy," Hobbes groused, "He's had it in for us for years. His Inquisitors and that crazy man, Van Pelt, hunted us for years. And now that bald guy with the bar code is doing the same."

"And we kick their asses each time," Calvin cheered. "Do you guys want to help us kick ass?"

"First off, I'm curious." Ashi began. "People said the reason they was your dead is because you made fun of the bastards weight. How exactly?"

Calvin reached into his pocket and pulled out a paper and handed it to Dany. She and her team looked over it.

A single page comic, featuring a crude drawing of K. Rool standing at a fast food stand, with the text bubble from the King saying thus:

"I'll have two Number 9's, a Number 9 Large, a Number 6 with extra Dip, a Number 7, Two Number 45's, one with Cheese, and a large Soda"
"The amount of calories in such an order would be mind boggling," Jack put his hand on his chin. "Having eaten at both Burger Shot and Clucken Bell, my colon needed serious saving after each trip. Though I have no doubt the King could actually eat such an order."

"So the fat boy got his feelings hurt, and decided he wanted his assassins to rip our skin off," Calvin explained. "It's a tale as old as time, nothing new. Just some guy who can't take a joke."

"The King would need some serious fiber after a meal like that," Razorbeast laughed as he gave Hobbes a high five.

Dany had to suppress her own smirk as she put the picture away. "We were actually looking for you two...but never figured to find you here of all places."

"We were heading to the Monster Girls." Ashi admitted. "To build an army."

"I love the Monster Girls!" Calvin shouted, "When we visit, they always give us cake and pie."

"And they love my monster form, if you know what I mean," Hobbes chuckled and raised an eyebrow. "They show how to make a tiger feel like a tiger."

"Hey lady, can we tag along?" Calvin asked.

"You have to say please, my young son," Father Grigori laughed as he poured himself some homemade vodka and passed Calvin a shot glass.

Dany noticed the act...and had to ask. "Do you really know how old you are?" She cursed herself for that.

Calvin paused. "...Don't know. Not sure even WHAT I am? An early Ork? A Demon without knowing it? Or...maybe a Old One remnant?"

"We're just ourselves, really," Hobbes shrugged. "We know who we are, we know what we like and well, that's about it."

"I think I remember something about seeing Aegon the Conqueror and telling him he was a creepy sister fucker," Calvin muttered, "But that was some time ago. I don't really keep track of time, except for random birthday parties."

"..."

"So, anyways," Calvin went on. "You're on the run as well."

"Considering that almost everyone in the Galaxy wants us dead, yes." Razorbeast replied. "We need to be on the lookout for Marines, Inquisitors, other Houses, Pirates, all that shit."

"But as long as we have faith," Al added. "We-"

Hobbes scoffed. "Faith...faith in what?"

"Why, Faith in the Seven and in friendship, of course," Al said easily.

Calvin shrugged. "Better put your faith in friends, kid. Your Gods the Seven are only Warp projections made up of your desires and thoughts."

"Yeah," Hobbes agreed, "They're only the other side of the coin, with the Chaos Gods on the dark side."
"Not to mention the Idea of Evil." Calvin added. "And even the 'good Gods' see us as pawns in their endless games for dominance over this uncaring universe...and sometimes they inflict madness to each other..."

Dany gulped. This was not what she expected from someone who looked like a child. She honestly had no idea what to say. Faith was strong in her family and education, not so much philosophy or the particulars of magic.

"Think of the Idea of Evil like the concept of the Ideal Forms," said Hobbes, drawing out the shape of a heart in the dirt with his claw. "There are non-physical things out there that are the truest versions of reality. The Idea of Evil is the Flipside of that, being the most true version of reality in the worst way."

"And just like Chaos, it was born from an idea," said Calvin, "The first time someone wanted to blame an evil act or thing on something outside, instead of the own evil that lives within."

"Ah, the young lad often leaves me scratching my head on a daily basis," laughed Father Grigori, "It's good to encourage curiosity in youngsters, dear princess."

Dany paused again. Was this really the way of the Gods? To be created by the sentient mind and act out the desire of the people of the Galaxy...albeit in twisted and odd way?

"Ah, and sometimes the victims of the Gods can also be dangerous." Hobbes went on. "We've heard rumors on our travels. A man who goes form planet to planet, keeping to the untamed ones. They say he is covered in runic signs...and that he cannot feel any physical sensation."

"The story of Baldur is one of my favorites," Father Grigori laughed, unabashed by Calvin and Hobbes wisdom about the Gods and the universe. "It is said that Baldur was a great and noble God, but his mother Freya foresaw him being killed needlessly. So she cast a spell upon him to make him truly unstoppable, at the cost of his feeling and his sanity."

"Think depression," Hobbes said gravely, "But worse. We've only seen the aftermath and Baldur never leaves any survivors. Monster, armies, giant robots. All wrecked. And he's just looking for something, someone to kill him."

"The loss of being able to feel anything..." Jack mused. "Something like that WOULD be able to snap sanity like a twig."

"Any way to make this fucker...killable?" Razorbeast asked.

"As of current knowledge...no." Calvin admitted. "Last we saw, he wrecked a Tyranid Hive splinter fleet by himself," He said without a trace of humor. "Looked like it ended when he tore apart the Norn Queen and then the Hive Tyrant after it. But it wasn't like the bugs were taking it easy on him."

"He just keeps going and he keeps getting crazier," said Hobbes, "We can feel him sometimes in our dreams. Just a human void, cut off from feeling or emotion. The sensory deprivation is killing him and he can't die."

"Such evil born from a mother's love," Erza shook her head, "I wouldn't have believed it a year ago."

A moment of silence passed.
"So, you're thinking of taking back the throne, eh?" Calvin asked. "An uphill struggle, if you ask me. He's got the Marines and Inquisition under his belt, and most of the Houses likely have ill feelings towards your name."

"You seem super nice," said Hobbes, "But your family wasn't. They hurt a lot of people. And being Queen isn't going to be nice. What are you even going to do if you get to the throne?"

Dany felt like the eyes of God were upon her. Or some arch angel at least. She'd spent so long just fighting for survival, that wasn't a question she dwelt on much. "I don't know yet. I want to make a difference in people's lives."

"K. Rool makes a difference," Calvin smirked. "My question is are you taking the throne for revenge? Or do you actually buy your own line?"

"..." Dany found she could not answer.

"Perhaps then, is why we should gather forces first, so you can see from other peoples point of views..." Hobbes noted. "What races were you planning, aside from the Monster Girls?"

Dany swallowed. "The Sangheili, the Snowmads, and the Zyglak." She admitted.

"You're going to want to listen to these people," said Calvin, "Anybody can kill the King, everybody does it one way or another. Being the King is harder, and being a good King or Queen is mythical rare."

"The second K. Rool is dead, your alliance could fall apart," said Hobbes, "you have to give everyone a reason to stay and support you long after the fat man croaks."

"You're pretty good at this," Ashi complimented, "You should do this professionally."

"Eh, like I said, we go where we go." Calvin admitted. "Wanderers by nature. And despite all the death and decay here, this place is at least hidden from-

Something smashed through the wall, startling all present.

It was the top half of a zombie, and the wound looked...brutal.

A swift gunshot from Father Grigori ended the monster rightly, "Ah, it seems our quiet supper has ended. Let us greet this newcomer with the hospitality of the Seven," He cocked his pump action rifle and stuck a sawed off shotgun into his leg holster.

Something creaked above on the dilapidated roof.

Jack drew his sword and Ashi her scythe hammer. Razorbeast fired several plasma shots through the roof at whatever had injured the zombie.

They hit something...but the only response was a cold laugh.

"Really? Even that couldn't make me feel?"

Calvin's face went pale. "Oh no..."

A man dropped through the hold in the ceiling. Lithe, bearded and covered in strange runes that hurt the eyes. His eyes were glazed and there was a slackness to his expression like mentally he was somewhere else completely.
The man raised his arms. "Well come on? What do I have to do to start a fight? Surely the great Calvin and Hobbes aren't afraid to fight back?"

On cue, Jack drove his sword through the man's heart and twisted it. He barely budged. "My turn," he growled.

Jack had no time to react before he was backhanded across the room, slamming into the wall as well. Ashi, in a terrible rage, made her move, whipping out her weapons to crush this fucker.

Ashi had killed whole armies by herself. So she recognized it when the stranger have a halfhearted effort to avoid strikes that would bring down a Space Marine.

She howled as she chopped his right arm clean off. With a ferocious kick, he sent her flying through the window of the old shack. A swing with his remaining arm sent Razorbeast flying through a wall.

"The name's Baldur," the stranger said to Dany, "Can the last dragon princess make me feel anything? Is there any fire to you?"

Dany stood tall, depute the terror, and looked at the man. "Baldur...you cannot feel the pain?"

"What are you, fucking stupid?" Baldur growled. "I can't fell ANYTHING! Not the grass at my feet, not the food and drink I consume, not the earthly pleasures of love...I CAN'T EVEN FEEL THE AIR!!" He charged forwards at blinding speed...only for a pillar, created by alchemy, to block his way. "Stay out of my way, alchemist," Baldur growled, as his wounds glowed and repaired themselves. "You're weak, you can just walk away. I've killed too many alchemists to even bother with your kind."

"Dany is my friend, and I won't let you hurt her!" Al retorted.

Baldur laughed, "I haven't felt friendship since I became like this. Let me show you some of my pain," He said morosely as he lunged at Dany, only for a huge sabre toothed tiger to smash his off his feet and sink its fangs into his body

"Oh, getting a little feisty, aren't we?" Baldur chortled as he shook Hobbes off of him. "You all can try as much as you want, but it won't change a damn thing!"

Calvin picked up Baldur off the floor, taking the form of a hulking, towering barbarian out of comic books and child's dreams.

His meaty fists slammed Baldur's head into the floor, crashing them into the concrete basement. Calvin kept pounding, driving Baldur's head into the stonework.

"LEAVE! US! ALONE!" he bellowed with each strike, until his final punch caused a mini earthquake right where Baldur lay

Baldur lay on the ground for a few seconds...before he picked himself back up.

"HAHA! How can anyone be that-"

The floor collapsed under him, seeing him plummeting down into the tunnels below.

"-DUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUMMMMMMMMBBB!?!"

Old glow strips flickered and of all things, molten lava streams illuminated the darkness. Aperture Science back in the day had the bright idea to build their capital settlement over an underground
volcano. Attempts to pit mine the area had only left the region geologically unstable.

Calvin responded, throwing a rock crusher at the fallen god. The ten tons of machinery smashed the immortal in a shower of dust and rock. But with a howl, Baldur was back for more.

Already, they could see him crawling up for another round.

"He's...unstoppable!" Al gasped as he gazed upon the sight.

"Nothing is unstoppable, dear boy," laughed Father Grigori as he cracked open a dusty case of explosives with his knife. "You just need patience and faith."

Hobbes had charged at Baldur again, ripping huge hunks of flesh off with his claws.

A restored Razorbeast opened fire on the mad God, screaming like an action hero.

Jack and Ashi were back on their feet, grabbing the explosives.

Maybe they had no way of killing him...but they could at least incapacitate him.

Calvin screamed as he flipped the switch on a vast machine. Sparks flew as a rock crusher inactive for decades came back online.

Hobbes threw Baldur like a rag doll, the mad god flying into the rock crusher in a shower of gore and blood.

There was a scream as Baldur smashed out of the inside of the machine, breaking up diamond encrusted duranium alloy chopping teeth with his bare fists.

As he did, Dany and her people ran to the faults in the rock, over the lava flows.

It was time to make sure it would take time to recover. Via bombs and lava.

"Are you even trying?" Baldur demanded as Hobbes tore his intestines out with a swipe. The mad God swung his elbow down, smashing Hobbes across the back; a loud snapping noise emanating from the strike.

This time, a rifle shot from Father Grigori hit him between the eyes. Not to kill, just to distract, allowing the others to plant the bombs and run back, just as Hobbes was fixing his spine.

Baldur stood tall and was about to press the attack...

'BOOM'

The explosives ruptured a volcano line, allowing the molten rock to flow right at Baldur.

Baldur let out a strangled scream as liquid rock washed over him like a wave. Rock and boulders caught in the flow battered him to pieces and took him seemingly to the center of the earth.

The heat climbed and wooden support beams caught fire.

Dany looked around, hearing the voices of her companions. But there was something about this.

She glanced down and saw her own feet be washed over by the lava. Her jaw fell open as the heat burnt her clothes to ashes, yet she felt nothing.
Wait...was she cursed now or something?

No... this was something else. She could still feel the heat and her surroundings...but the fire and magma could not touch her...

...She remembered old tales of her family having the 'Blood of Dragons'. Was this what they meant?

She felt Razorbeast grabbing her by the hand. "Move, my lady!" he screamed as he took her from the magma and falling rocks. "Modesty later!"

Dany was far too stunned to care about her undress. The cave system was collapsing.

Everyone else was on their way out already, the place falling about. Zombies and headcrabs were burned to crisps by the inferno...

...and against all odds, the Father and the others all made it out in one piece.

The whole scene was apocalyptic. Smoke and fire rose from the pit that swallowed the last of Ravenholm center.

Lava burst up from the ground and burned a vast swathe of forest. Zombies and headcrabs alike burned and the ever-present ravens fell as toxic gasses smothered them in mid flight.

Father Grigori looked upon the destruction with watering eyes. Hobbes patted the man on the back, "Sorry about blowing up your home, Father."

"Yeah, bald man," said Calvin, "We're sorry. I'm pretty sure your comic book collection burned in the lava."

For a moment, Grigori said nothing, then he looked Dany in the eye. "I . . . I think I need a ride off world. Can you drop me off at the nearest settlement, Princess?" No hatred was in his eyes. Just acceptance and sadness. Before Dany could speak, he raised his hand. "Do not worry. I am not angry...perhaps this was for the best anyways...in a few hours, the rest of the world may be consumed in fire, and the flock will be freed." He sighed. "My work here is done. It is time to move on."

Dany nodded numbly as Al began to work on the teleporter. "Let's move before Baldur shows back up."

"Will he be alright?" Alphonse whispered to Jack.

"Unlikely," Jack said gravy, "He may start a life again but the man he was is just as dead as his community. For him, healing will mean living around the damage that was done to him."

"You'll ride with us wherever you wish, Father," Dany promised.

"Our ship went into orbit when the volcano went up," Razorbeast said to Dany, "I'm just bringing it down now, and getting you a change of clothes."

Dany nodded once more as she stared over her body. Not a single singe mark. Remarkable.

Erza stared at this silently. So...this was the power of a true Targaryen.

"What will you do with this power?" Erza was surprised at how blunt she was. She owed Dany her life and yet . . . this was new and terrifying.
Dany looked at her, "I want to help the galaxy. I don't want people to hate. I don't want people to go without. I want peace."

"That's nearly impossible," said Erza, "But it's as good a goal as I've ever heard."

As the ship arrived and everyone boarded, Dany was left to her thoughts...what WAS she exactly...and what role would she play in the future of the Galaxy...

...and Baldur...she knew, deep down, they would meet again.

The ship took off into the stars.
Cyborg, Beast Boy, Raven, Robin and Starfire all posed in their Stark Uniforms. The look suited them all. The uniforms were durable, climate controlled and compared to what most men got to wear, they were pretty comfortable.

"And that's what we're looking for!" Danny the Cat cried, "That's our hero shot! The Young Generation rising to face new challenges of war in the Galaxy as the stakes grow ever higher!"

A fat man pushing a huge oil drum of soup had no such enthusiasm, "Fuck off, you little weiner," First mate Homer Simpson grunted as he muscled past Danny. "This soup isn't moving itself and we take off in five."

Another member of the film crew, Pudge the Penguin, stared after him. "Wow...nice..."

"Well, Lord Stark IS currently a captivity, from what I've heard." Sawyer responded. "Making a lot of people tense."

"This is even better," said Danny, "We're covering not just a war, but a revolution seen from the perspective of a common man!"

"Common man?" said cyborg, "Have you seen these guns?" He held up his biceps and gave them a kiss. "A Space Marine couldn't match these guns."

"Narcissist," Raven groaned.

Robin took in stock of the surrounding area. So many men and women getting ready to take off to fight in numerous upcoming horrors. But now, no longer would it be against Dark Xenos or even Demons, but other Houses as well.

Nice. So many threats already, and now civil war was coming.

"The King's a coward to attack Ned Stark at this time," Robin hissed, "When the whole Galaxy should stand united, that fat fool is dooming us all for his petty gains."

"Well, I always thought that King K. Rool was a fat bastard," said Beast Boy, "Now I can say it without getting into trouble."

"He is a repulsive man, and I hope he has a prostate problem," cursed Starfire.

"We need to move," said Danny, "Destiny awaits us!"

Starfire, as they readied, took a look over the rest of the Beastkin film crew.

Cranston Goat grunted as he packed away a heavy film case full of camera lenses, passing it off to Tillie Hippo. "Now listen, you kids. I was a mercenary for thirty years before I went into film. I smoked, snorted and drank away most of my money, so you kids don't repeat my mistakes, you hear me?"

"I promise we don't drink our money away," said Beast Boy, as Raven punched him in the shoulder.

"Leave kids alone, Cranston," said Wollie the elephant, "They're better than either of us were in our youth."
T.W. the turtle looked about nervously as the numerous weapons and soldiers. How did he get into this mess? Frances the fish, though, just looked about with a deadpan expression.

Pudge the penguin was honest with everybody, "Guys, I don't want to get shot. So, if danger comes close, I'm going to run like hell."

"That's fair," said Raven, "Then I won't have to waste any time protecting you."

Pudge flinched at the psychic girl's gaze. Well...this was going to be one heck of a filming.

One of the ship's crew faced the documentary team and the Teen Titans.

"This ship is called the Athena," Barney Gumble, Homer's best friend, let out a loud belch, "But we call this girl the Rust Bucket; because it's a piece of shit. We normally move around soup and tea for the merchant navy. When you're flying with us, it'll be pretty bump, but you'll survive probably."

Sawyer looked to Danny, "If I die, I'm taking you with me."

"That's fair," said the Beastkin.

"Hah, this ship is way too fancy if you ask me!" Abe Simpson, Homer's dad and veteran soldier, grumbled. "In my day, all we had were those long cylinder ships that packed us in like sardines! Half of those men would die before we reached our place, and we would shoot them out of the cannons to clog up enemy machines and guts!"

"Dad, shut up about your time with the Targaryens and just help me duct tape the cracks in the cooling system," Homer snapped as he followed with a large pallet of ammo. "Barney, I need to talk to our new captain; little baby lord Stark."

"Wait, Stark?" Robin was shocked, "You mean there's a Stark on board this . . ."

"Shit pile-URP-just call it what it is," Barney replied in a friendly tone, "Yeah we got a Stark here. I think it's little Arya. She even got a pony like the rest of them."

"You're not making any sense," Pudge shook his head.

"Drunks never do." Frances muttered, leaning back in her fishbowl. "In fact, Arya can't be here. Heard she went to the Ark to train."

"Isn't that...one of the deadliest planets in the Galaxy?" Cyborg asked nervously.

"That's why it makes good soldiers." Robin replied.

"I could be a king on Ark," said Beast Boy wistfully, "I'd be the green king of the jungle."

"and I'm queen anywhere I go," Raven said with a smirk, "I'm not monogamous to any one planet."

"No, it's not Arya," said Abe Simpson, "It's Ned's wife Catelyn,"

Homer groaned, "Oh for the love of . . . it's Rickon! Or Richard, or Ricky or whatever the fuck that kid is called. Now get back to work, Dad, and you little bastards get into the cargo hold. We've lifting off in five."

"...Rickon..." Cranston deadpanned. "The youngest?"

"Well, that's nepotism for you." Sawyer went on.
"Now, now." Woolie held up his hands. "Let us give the boy a chance."

"You suckers will be going to the frontline after we drop you off," Homer laughed bitterly, "That kid stays with us in the commercial shipping lanes. Like I need some young punk telling me how to fly this piece of shit."

"I knew Rickon," said Abe going off on another tangent, "We fought against him at the battle of the trident. I was there when Lord Rickon blew up the fleet while his son Ned and friend Robert Bartaheon killed Prince Rhaegar on the ground."

"I give up," Homer grumbled, "We leave in two minutes."

But Abe wasn't finished. "And now, speaking of the old days, I reminded of the time I went to the Shelbyville Station back in its hey day. I needed a new heel for my shoe..."

"Fuck it, I'll duct tape the cracks myself," Homer grit his teeth. "Barney, make sure that Rickon doesn't steal any of my beer!"

The Teen Titans looked among themselves, "We get on and then it's off to the front lines at Arrakis," said Robin.

"Teen Titans forever," said Cyborg.

"Teen Titans forever," said the group as they put their hands together.

"This is prime TV," said Danny with a grin as he filmed the soldiers bonding.

Abe rambled on, something about onions, but no one was listening...and then, Rickon appeared, with Shaggydog, his Direwolf, at his side.

Robin was shocked. He'd never seen a nobleman up close. He was expecting something...legendary.

The boy before him was small for his age, scrawny. Even the direwolf next to him looked more like a large breed of wolf dog. It hardly gave off an air of menace and nobility, though Robin would not want to test the animal.

"Hey, Captain Rickon," Homer laughed. "Help me take a shit!" he laughed as he pointed to his colonoscopy bag.

"Yeah-URP-Homer needs that since the Skaven tore his guts out last year," Barney pointed out.

"Everyone ready to depart?" Rickon asked, fiddling with his ill-fitting captain's uniform.

He remembered his mothers' instructions: Any obnoxious questions, you brush off and move on. The threats would not wait for such childish behavior, so neither could they.

He was here to stay ahead of the Inquisition. Catelyn had not sugar coated anything for him. The Inquisition were after him, and they would kill him and cut him up if they found him. And that was the best-case scenario if he was caught.

"Let's get on board, First Mate Homer, I've duct taped the cracks in the cooling system. We should last until we get to Arrakis," the boy tried to sound authoritative.

Secretly, his ego was stinging. His brothers went to war, and he got stuck with a space-born garbage pile.
Even Arya was somewhere exciting, making her herself strong on some prehistoric world.

But this was for his own good, so he went with it. Hopefully everyone under his command would listen.

Right on schedule, Barney handed him a toilet plunger as they entered the ship's rusted, beat up hallways.

"Shitter is plugged on level three, I need to check on the beer supply, you can help yourself," Barney urged him. "Actually we all drive and navigate drunk, so knock yourself out."

Rickon bit his lip and Shaggydog looked at him as though understanding his pain. So he decided to assert authority by shoving the plunger into Barney's face.

"I am your captain!" Rickon shouted as Shaggydog growled. "If you want to die in space, go jump out the airlock. I haven't done this as long as you but I know what I'm doing. I'm not a little baby. I can navigate a starship in real space and FTL travel. So you go unclog the toilet or you'll answer to my friend."

"Ah, don't set your pony on me!" Barney cried out as he ran.

This time Shaggydog looked at Rickon as if he'd understood he'd been called a pony. Direwolves were noted to be smart.

The young captain stomped over to a control panel and pressed the intercom button. "Now then, unless you want the Skaven, Orks, Beastmen, or Tyranids to rip you apart, you all better listen to what I have to say." Rickon announced to the crew. "We're on a cargo run, but you are all Stark men and women. If you have a problem with me, say it to my face if you have the balls."

Shaggydog barked into the intercom, as though seconding the motion.

"I will be in the navigation chamber, as though seconding the motion."

Rickon grit his teeth as he saw Grandpa Simpson smile at him through his dentures. "You sound just like old Rickon."

Rickon shrugged, "To your tasks, crewman!"

And with that, he was off, leaving the men and women to power his words.

"Quite forceful, actually." Raven admitted.

"Spoken like a true leader," said Robin,

Starfire cocked her head, "I think he's just as confused and scared as we are."

Cyborg laughed as they shared a crowded space with hundreds of other Stark soldiers. "We're not scared! Right, Beast Boy?"

"Hell yeah!" said the green boy as the camera crew filmed.

They felt like they could take on the Galaxy and win, no matter what was thrown at them, even despite the infinite horrors the galaxy had to offer.

The first test would come soon.
Rickon worked the ship's ancient navigation systems. Sitting next to him was one of the Navis Nobilite, navigators who used blue spice to chart paths through fold space.

In ages long past, they'd used their psychic talents to guide ships through the Warp until fold space made that obsolete.

"So are you going to give me attitude too," Rickon asked the ancient, robed human.

"Just my loyalty." The Navis replied. "They fail to realize, you know that."

"Realize what?" Rickon turned to him.

"Just what lies out there in the abyss." The Navis looked out the viewport. "We're not as important as we used to be, half the time they replace us with computers," the Navigator mused, "But there are things out there in the space between spaces."

"Space travel has never been safe," said Rickon, adjusting the fold space exit vector. "One hole in a bulkhead and you could be explosively decompressed."

"As if that's the worst that can happen," the Navigator laughed, "That's painless."

Rickon sighed and began to work. Hopefully things would not go pear-shaped on his very first mission...

...He certainly could hope, at least.

The crew began saying their prayers to whatever gods they believed in. Whether they believed in the Seven, or the Old Gods, or worshiped Duff Beer, they prayed.

As the slip space engines fired up, something locked onto the ship and stalked it like a predator with a deer.

A lot of bodies and souls on that ship. All for the reaping and taking. All it needed was the right moment to strike.

The ship began folding through space, and their predators followed.

In the ship's navigation center, the Navigator plugged a wire into their brain. For a moment, they pulled down their hood to reveal a shaved head filled with plug in ports. "Something is wrong, something is amiss." Then they laughed ruefully, "My lord, you'll have to prove yourself."

"What is it?" Rickon demanded as the lights flickered and the life support system started going haywire."

"Intruders..."

"What?" Rickon looked about.

"Skaven...and they have a Grey Seer with them," laughed the Navigator, pulling out a plasma pistol from his belt. "That's why I didn't detect them. They're on board our ship, and their ship will appear when we do in real space."

"Then we fight," said Rickon resolutely,

"With what weapons?"
Rickon gulped. "Anything, everything."

Rickon went to his intercom. "All units, prepare yourselves. Skaven are invading out ships...and knowing them, will show us no mercy. To get ready to kill them all!"

Sawyer felt her fur bristle. As a cat, she had a natural aversion to the rats.

"Skaven!" Danny cried out, "This is great! We can get some real first hand combat action!"

"You wouldn't say that if you knew first hand what they could do," said the old goat.

Beast Boy responded by turning into a green tiger. "I'm ready for those bastards! Bring it on!"

Raven held up a hand of dark fire, "I second that motion."

Starfire readied herself, charging up with energy. "Let us bring the fight to them!"

Cyborg nodded. "Right, let's kick butt!"

"Here goes..." Robin noted.

Soldiers of all types began to rush about, getting whatever they could do take on the hoard.

That was the problem though. The enemy wasn't waiting around to be tackled.

Out of the corner of his eye, Robin saw a man vanish into a shadow. Another woman behind Starfire was drawn into a shadow without so much as a gurgle.

Beast Boy heard it with his cat ears.

The assassins of Clan Eshin were so quiet they could get around the hearing of dogs.

Luckily, a cat's ears were better than that.

He struck fast when he heard the next one, pinning down a oversized rat and mauling it, tearing at its throats and guts.

The element of surprise lost, the Skaven came out the the woodworks, pouring at the crew.

Three more of the Eshin assassins pounced on Beast Boy, slashing his sides with brutal looking daggers that ripped flesh.

Beast Boy gave a yowl of pain as Raven summoned her dark fire and melted the rat assassins to a puddle of gore.

All around the hangar bay, men fired their weapons, bullets and lasers bouncing off the walls and dealing friendly fire. Outside the Warp itself, there was no purer representation of chaos.

Skaven, cowardly when alone, were raving nightmares when it groups. Swarms of chittering furry creatures with sharp teeth and claws, deadly poisons, nasty weapons, and more.

Cyborg gritted his teeth as he gunned down several Skaven coming right at him. "Man, these guys are fierce!"

Starfire screamed as he held her hand to Beast Boy's wounds. "Raven, help me!" she cried as her green friend began to foam and spit.
Raven's eyes glowed as she put her hand to Beast Boy, her magic working on the poison within.

Starfire took the job of defending them as the assassins launched ranged attacked with shuriken, sniper rifles and throwing knives.

The whole cargo bay was in pandemonium.

Robin cut down three of the Eshin assassins with his sword when he saw a Poisoned-Wind Globadier.

He HAD to kill that thing fast. He read about them during his school days. If that thing lobbed a glass of toxic...it would kill a LOT of people horribly and shift the advantage to the Skaven.

In a closed environment like this, the gas would kill everyone. Masks would be no help, their Warpstone laced gas would burn through everything but the air filters on Space Marine armor.

Robin made a choice, he charged with his sword. Sprinting over the bodies of dead Star Soldiers, he charged the gas-masked monster as it was aiming its weapon.

With a single swing, he took its head off . . .

And left himself wide open to attack.

A Stormvermin, a black-furred elite Skaven, saw this occur, and made his move, charging with a deadly drawn blade and slashing Robin across the back.

"GAH!" Robin staggered as he felt the sharp pain across his back.

The Stormvermin shrieked with sick satisfaction, raising its weapon again. This time it brought the blade down onto Robin's sword arm.

There was a sick noise as the dull blade shattered the arm bone but failed to cut cleanly.

Robin fell to the ground, pain consuming his mind and body. Over him, the Stormvermin lunged to rip out his throat with its teeth…

Until someone pulled it up and away. Starfire, an uncharacteristically angry look on her face, gripped the rat and twisted its head to the side. A 'snap' told the whole story, and she tossed the limp body aside.

Danny was hiding behind Sawyer, as the camera crew captured the whole thing in gory detail. Sawyer herself was protecting her man with a pistol she inherited from her father. "Die, you rat bastards!"

"Well son," said Cranston, "You got your first look at war, how does it feel?"

While the old goat filmed, Woolie crushed a dozen Skaven by body slamming onto them. Woolie WAS a gentle giant for the most past...but if needed be, he WOULD defend himself and his friends. "Agrh! No end to them!"

"Oh man, I wish I'd stayed on Necromunda," said Pudge as he hid under an overturned cargo crate.

In the ship's control room, Rickon yelped as the Vnavigator vaporized a Skaven with his plasma pistol. The blast had flown over his head, scorching his hair.

Rickon spun around as he heard noise, only to see Barney Gumble eating a Skaven leg like it was a
piece of chicken.

"Hi, Captain!" said Barney happily.

"Don't eat that! You don't know where it's been!" Rickon snapped.

"Eh, ate worse." Barney shrugged.

Rickon sighed as he gripped a lasgun and gestured to Shaggydog. Time to join the fight.

Rickon also drew his sword and bolt pistol, but the Navigator held him back.

"The Grey Seer will be where this ship keeps our cargo of citric acid," he explained, "To the Skaven, it's more potent than crack. Normally ships like this are easy pickings for them."

"So we kill the Seer and they'll scatter," Rickon sounded more confident than he was.

"Aye lad," explained the Navigator. "Though he won't go down without a fight."

Rickon nodded. He had to find and kill the Seer to make this attack stop. He would be hiding somewhere, keeping out of sight for the moment.

Rickon turned to Barney. "Where you keep the citric acid?"

Barney belched as he took another bite out of the Skaven leg. "That stuff is for long voyages for people who don't get any fruits or salads. It's in the aft of the ship next to the--oh shit, the beer room!"

"Then to the beer room we go," said Rickon resolutely as Shaggydog growled.

He had to hurry now. The sooner he killed this fucker, the better.

Rickon and Shaggydog kept on the move, blasting and mauling any Skaven dumb enough to be in their way.

Barney screamed in horror when they saw the floors covered in beer. Desperately the drunk tried to suck up the spilled liquor off the floor. Only to have his head cut off by a flying dagger.

Rickon held his weapons loft as he saw a Grey Seer catch the green, glowing dagger. Around him, Stormvermin looking for easy rewards flanked the horned rat.

"Ssssooo...Man-thing dare stand in way of Children of the Great Horned Rat?" The Seer hissed.

"He's not my God, or that of anyone sane, so that doesn't matter." Rickon spat back. "Get off my ship, or you die now. Take the goods and go!" Rickon pointed his weapon at the grinning Grey Seer. He took note of the Navigator slowly moving like something was behind them.

"Ah, Man-thing does not understand! Yes-yes! Grey Seer Thanquol will destroy you! Eshins, attack!"

The Eshin assassins lunged from behind, just as Homer Simpson charged at them with a chainsaw, dressed in nothing but a towel. His saw turned one Eshin into meat rain as Rickon and the Navigator opened fire.

The rather unorthodox attack caught them off guard, and the Seer snarled in rage. It would not be dying without a fight, and he'd let these other rats soften up his own foes before killing them easier.
After all, it was the Skaven way of thinking: Use everyone and anything to your own advantage.

The Seer had a plan of his own. He reached out with his psychic powers and felt the fusion unit in each Stormvermin's armor. Skaven as a rule do not believe in safety measures. So it took nearly no effort at all to turn his own men into unwitting suicide bombers.

The explosion ripped apart the hold, while the Seer's evil warpstone fueled powers protect him and his prize of expensive citric acid.

Only for a vast direwolf to leap through the flames right at him.

He had zero time to react before he was knocked over the the fangs of the massive canine were tearing out his throat. Blood stained the area as he gurgled his last foul breath...before he went still.

Rickon ran through the flames after his dog, setting his terrible, ill-fitting uniform on fire. The boy screamed and tried to pat down the flames, until Homer Simpson dumped beer on him.

Rickon gasped, but nodded, "Thank you,"

"Thanks for killing that rat fuck," said Homer as retied the towel around his waste. "I don't waste beer for people I don't respect."

At that moment, Abe Simpson walked through with a fire extinguisher, rambling as he put out the flames. "This reminds me of the rats on Gourmet World. City Chicken, they'd call it and they'd put it in chili. And the Chili one time had a human finger in it, so I went to House Dreemurr to complain."

"Dad..." Homer began.

"Naturally, they considered it beneath them. Too many other problems to deal with at the moment, like Demons and Tyranids and Chromatics. To heck with all that, I say."

"Soldier!" Rickon shouted.

Abe Simpson looked like he might have a heart attack, but then he saluted. "Private Abraham Simpson, Stark Merchant Navy reporting for duty, sir!"

Homer was impressed. "I could never get him to shut up. I'm your man, Captain Stark."

In the cargo bay, Robin twitched as a combat doctor, a duck Beastkin named Dr. Quack, looked him over. "You'll live," Quack said in a tone that said he'd lost his humanity long ago. "You'll get a new arm when we hit Arrakis. And your green friend will live too. I don't know if there will be long term problems."

"You heartless bastard," Raven screamed, "He's your patient!"

Quack shrugged, "A real doctor does no harm and only helps. By the time I help one man, ten more have died. My work isn't easy or nice."

Rickon looked over them. Thank the gods for regrowable limbs...and the axolotls that made such a thing possible.

Quack was crass, but it was quite likely due to seeing so many horrible wounds and deaths over the course of wars.

Still, something in Robin's eyes made Rickon shudder. That there was some damage that no axolotl
or cloned limb could fix.

Rickon put his arms around himself as though it was cold.

"If you can get used to it, it means you've lost your humanity," the Navigator's voice nearly made him jump.

"Oooo...not sure if that supposed to make me feel any better or worse." Rickon muttered.

"I let you be the judge of that." The Navigator replied as he walked on.

Rickon looked about once more. His first mission, and already he had taken a big hit, and from stupid Skaven of all things.

Once more he thought about the nature of his mission. This ship had no weapons. The crew had only whatever guns and arms they could buy or steal in their spare time.

Jon and Robb were going into the thick of it with the best arms and armor in the known universe.

He had a standard issue handgun, a run of the mill blade and a toilet plunger.

How would he prepare his ship not only against the Inquisition, but against any other space threats who were not going to take a vacation because the Kingdom was at civil war?

Vacation? Hah! They would take full advantage of the chaos that would result. Plundering, killing, harvesting, al that crap.

Bran and Sansa were lucky, in a way, as they would be out of the fighting for the most part.

Rickon, meanwhile, was pretty sure he was going to get a disease if he brushed one of the many jagged, rusty surfaces inside this shit pile of a ship.

"Navigator, take us back on course, as the war effort needs soldiers and we're needed in the logistics network of the Stark army." He then held his head high, "Long live the Northern Kingdom."

"So you finally realize it," the Navigator smirked, "Let us hope it only ends with being hanged for treason. It could be worse."

Rickon sighed as they all folded out to the next sector. Hopefully, things could improve. Hanging? That was the lucky fate if they failed. They could be easily remade into Servitors for the rest of eternity.

King Aerys the Mad burned his enemies. King K. Rool was far more inventive and so were his loyal lackies.

He would just have to take it one step at a time. One day, one minute, one second at a time and not take his own mortality for granted.

As this went on, Danny and his crew stopped filming. Quite accidentally as they'd forgotten to stop recording during the initial attack.

"Well...look on the bright side." Danny tried to point out. "We got good footage."


"Yeah," Danny agreed, "I think that took eight of my nine lives. Okay crew, when we land, we all
get a hit of my grandma's special moonshine!"

“That's stuff's only good as paint stripper," Wollie groused, "Gimme a large glass when we get somewhere semi-safe."

Sawyer sighed as she took in the carnage. So...this is what they would be filming. It was good...and yet bad at the same time.

They were alive. That was the good.

Then again, "Do we really need to do this?" asked Sawyer.

Danny looked her dead in the eye, "Yes, we can't let this warn turn into sweeping propaganda or pages and pages of statistics. There has to be a personal story to it, no matter how ugly that story might end."

"One ugly story we're gonna get." Pudge noted, looking about. "Man...and to think even worse things exist out here. Let's pray we don't meet a Demon."

"Agreed. Last thing we need right now," Frances noted.

"I've seen a Demon," Cranston murmured, "that's the reason I need pills to keep away the nightmares."

In response, Starfire gave the old goat a hug. "I'm so glad you're okay!" she gushed. "There's been so much death!" She wept onto him

Cranston looked confused...but not angry. Good to have affection.

All flew off into the stars...
Death of a Wolf

Ned Stark was silent as he sat within the dark cell in the depth of the King's Station. Once again he found himself thinking on how this all happened.

It started normally, as Hand. The King had actually done a decent job of running the Kingdom. Making sure worlds were well-equipped for threats, cataloging planets and lifeforms, maintaining proper technology, and so on. Ned was simply there to aid him in the tasks.

K. Rool was many things. He was cruel. A king needed to harden his heart to the suffering of those who hardened theirs.

He was ruthless. A king needed to prioritize the needs of the many over the few.

But he was also a madman, willing to throw the lives of his citizens away for the sake of power.

Then came the rumors...

The rumors framed him, painted him as a worshipper of Chaos. "After all we've done to fight Chaos," he sighed in the silence of his cell.

"And it will be appreciated," came the voice of Agent 47 from out of the shadows. "It truly will be."

Ned turned to see the assassin. Stark, even now, refused to beg and grovel, and spoke in an even tone. "So...I'm assuming this is all part of much large game than I imagine."

"Indeed." 47 nodded. "And your death will be part of that. K. Rool had hoped to initially turn you...but he realized, along with the rest of us, that was not going to be an option."

"...What is your King's plan?"

47 adjusted his tie as he stepped from the shadows. "It's the oldest plan in the book," he admitted. "Start a war, crack down on all civil rights and political opposition. Anyone who doesn't go with you is a yellow coward or a defeatist in league with the enemy. In our narrative, you and your allies are a bit of both."

Ned met the assassin's dead eyes, "And suppose your king's plan fails."

47 shrugged. "I suppose life in the Galaxy ends. Though if he wins, he will remove most of the fatal flaws in the Kingdom's political structure and save life in the Galax. A fair risk in my mind."

"Many will die as a result from this." Ned Stark.

"Oh, we ARE aware of the risk." 47 confirmed. "This was not a decision made easily. Yet warfare has the benefit of natural selection: Only the most worthy will survive." He sighed. "Do not think of us as evil, Stark. Good and evil are obsolete terms. Even Chaos is not evil...they are simply...chaotic." 47 raised his hands, "It's all perception. You can look at an infinite multiverse with infinite versions of yourself. But you only feel small and insignificant for the reason that you also feel sad on rainy days. That's all it is."

"And you've slaved yourself to the will of a madman," said Ned calmly. "Any attempt to rule by absolute dictatorship is fragmented by the wills of those trying to enforce and sustain it. It doesn't
work for a planetary government, what makes you think it can work on a Galaxy wide scale?"

"People need a person to fall behind when the various common threats arrive." 47 replied. "Tyranids, Orks, Demons...the list is endless. The external threats shape the Kingdom as much as any King," he went on, checking his spotless black gloves. "The rule of absolute dictatorship, where the individual is nothing next to the whole, is just a reaction to that. We need that in the face of an unbalanced world."

"I should not have expected compassion to factor in with the thinking of a killer," Ned spat.

"No, you should not have," 47 admitted freely, without guilt. "I'm good at my job because I can exploit the line between Order and Chaos, pluck the strings to my will. K. Rool operates on a larger scale but the concepts are the same."

"And what happens if K. Rool fails to live up to the expectations?" Ned asked darkly.

"Why, kill him...which I told him when I first joined his side." 47 replied. "He actually seemed to appreciate that, having something to make sure he's on top of the game."

"No loyalty from assassins and murderers," Ned strained against his chains. "So are you here to finish me, if so please get on with it."

"You are correct on the first account, wrong on the second," said 47 as he walked around the downed lord, "Your death will be broadcasted galaxy-wide. Beheading is the method. I'm here to get a signed confession of guilt."

"And here I thought you had no sense of humor," Ned laughed, gallows humor steeping his heart.

"...We thought about torturing you, but knew that would make a dark situation worse." 47 admitted, his tone even and calm. "So a quick death...that is our mercy there."

"And Zeal and Koopa...I'm assuming they are here for a front row seat." Ned muttered.

"Indeed they are. Their animosity to your family is well documented," explained 47, "Your death was to be the ultimate reward for their loyalty and if need be, an example to them of those that defy the kind."

"So what am I confessing to?" Ned went right to business.

"Simply, you confess to sedition, treason, Chaos worship and the illegal practice of flaying," 47 produced a written document and a pen. "In the event of your refusal, I will be ordered by the King to assassinate your remaining family or locate them for the King's most sadistic servants to find."

Ned Stark gave him a long, cold look, before speaking. "Staining my honor...would not be the first time."

"Ah, yes, the Snow." 47 nodded as he handed the paper and pen to Stark. "We all have skeletons in our closets."

"...Answer me this." Ned spoke up. "Who do you serve in the end?"

"At the end of the day, Lord Stark, I'm a servant of balance," 47 explained, holding out his pen. "I'm not on anyone's side, given that no one King or nation can be perfectly ordered. I was once a gardener and the skills in keeping a thriving garden require the removal of weeds and pests."
With that, he took the signed paper, nodded, then left.

A few moments before things were ready.

More than honor, Ned valued his family. At least now, 47 knew that he wouldn't be the one to kill the Starks.

He could not speak for the King's other killers.

"It is done," he told his King.

King K. Rool just smiled, "That's all I've wanted to hear for so long."

His entire unit was with him in the council chamber. Gregor Clegane stood silently in his Marines Malevolent armor. Euron, Kuroko, and Hinako were also allowed to join in, as were the main members of Zeal and Koopa.

Three Inquisitors were also in the room: Fyodor, Adrastia, and a particularly extreme one named Mozgus, a flat-faced man known for his ruthlessness and loyalty to the crown.

All eyes went to the King, all with varying degrees of anticipation. Gregor himself hungered to swing the blade that ended Lord Stark, after the embarrassing performance on the Xenomorph Hulk.

"Ned Stark has confessed," said K. Rool, "Let the execution begin."

"This ought to be interesting." Euron noted. "And just so we're clear, we're coming back here afterwards to discuss our next move, right?"

"Indeed." Relius replied. "The gongs of war will sound out after his death, and we must prepare quickly."

"I want to see it," growled Bowser, "I want to stand close enough I can feel the blood splatter on my face."

"Best way to enjoy an execution," Zeal purred, "Why hide a good murder behind masks and screens when it should be experienced directly. We can even engage in some wholesome stoning and torture."

"I would recommend against it," 47 cautioned, "Our security staff cannot guarantee your safety if something were to happen during the beheading."

Janus looked up at the helmed head of Gregor. 47 had a point. The Mountain had quite the reputation, and while Janus had not personally seen him in action, he knew enough.

He found himself gazing over to Tamatoa, who was also invited to the event.

"Oh, Mr. Hitman," said the head of the Guild, "I would pay you a king’s ransom to see Lord Stark Dead in person. The amount he’s cost me with his low rent merchant navy is more than I can calculate."

"Save your money," 47 said in a harsh tone, "This is not up for debate."

"And you really don't want to get too close to the Mountain that Moves," Janus added, feeling out his new arm.

"Oh...how nice to see this all go down." It was Dr. Nefarious who spoke, a member of House
Koopa. While Moira handled the biological sides of the science field, Nefarious handled to more mechanical aspects. Possessing a deep dislike for organics, he nevertheless served his lord faithfully. "Here we all are talking about how to handle his death when he dies no matter what. Our concern is how the other will react."

"True." Schala noted. "Lee and Windrunner will ally with the Starks...which leaves only Nui and Dreemurr as ambiguous."

"I'm confident in House Dreemurr's submission," K. Rool purred, "If not, there are several Space Marine Chapters who would gladly reduce their homeworld into rubble. Not to mention Fabricator General Hayden has produced several new superweapons that he is dying to test out."

"And what of Nui?" asked Nefarious, "He's older than this very Kingdom. It'll take a lot to rattle him or get him to back down."

Pridak nodded. "True, and he won't side with us, and we have no intention of making him. You leave him and his crew to me. Dreemurr, as K.Rool said, will join us out of mutual cause...one we can give them."

"Asgore won't break under torture," said Mr. Dark, "But his family is his weakness. Get his family and we can get him to bend. Or even stay Neutral in the war."

"I admire the ruthlessness," said Zeal, "Though I think I can help with that."

"You just put pressure on Windrunner," said the King, "I have my own designs for Dreemurr."

"And you all leave Lee to me." Bowser said. "Time to see who is the better warrior!"

"Well, enough chat." Mr. Dark stood tall. "The execution is at hand."

"Clegane, you know what to do," grinned the King.

"Make it quick," 47 hissed to his subordinate.

--

The arena was huge, open and public. And the buffoon Kent Brockman was giving his inane commentary all over galactic holo programs everywhere. The tech was a mix of magic and science, used to transfer the videos all across the Galaxy to those who would listen.

"Hello I'm Kent Brockman, and today we're in for the execution of the traitor Ned Stark, brought to you by Sunset Saparilla! The best consumable item in the Kingdom!"

Cameras, drones and magic stones recorded every detail. Everything gave Ned just a touch of visual editing to hammer the home of a man fallen to chaos.

Every commoner at home would see a man with clear signs of Chaos taint, which only fed the King's narrative.

Kremlings and Marines were all about the area, as we other Zeal and Koopa Bannermen. It was quite the event. And already it was being broadcasted to all other major stations.

It wasn't every day that one of the heads of the oldest and most respected houses in the Galaxy was executed so publicly. King Dice was making a fortune off the advertising revenue, which would go to fund the King's war chest. Everything was an opportunity and nothing was sacred.

Ned Stark was soon marching through the hall and to the block. His face showed no fear, only grim
resignation. No pleading or crying for him.

Truth be told, he learned how to die long ago, after so many battles and death of friends.

Mozgus was standing near the block, a Scribe Servo-skull floating nearby, a scroll hanging from it which detailed the speech that was to be given.

Oh all the bigoted zealots the Inquisition had, they had to give Ned one of the worst.

Up close, Mozgus looked like a department store mannequin. his features unnerving and blank, like an unfinished doll. Maybe he was an unfinished human being. It would explain his skewed morals and zealotry.

"Good people of the Kingdom, we are gathered here today to witness the Justice of the Gods," Mozgus began, voice even and even friendly.

Made it all the more creepy. Ned was silent as he was lay across the block. Around him, the members of the Crown, Zeal, and Koopa stood, as well as Euron, Kuroko, Hinako (chowing down on ramen, oblivious to the crime going here), the Inquisitors, and Tamatoa.

Mozgus began his talk. "Eddard Stark, a man once thought to be a great warrior and leader in the face of our foes, has been discovered to be consorting with the Ruinous Powers of Chaos. This, my people, is considered one of the highest forms of heresy! And you might beg for clemency or understanding, but trust me that is what Chaos wants," the change was coming over Mozgus, like clockwork. His voice was getting a little more frenzied, his eyes were bulging out a little more and the veins were starting to pop in his skin.

The mad Inquisitor kept raising his tone and energy. "Chaos preys on your forgiveness, Chaos preys on your laxitude, it preys on all our mercy and kindness!" His teeth clenched and his eyes were mad as veins bulged all over. "THIS CANNOT BE TOLERATED!! CHAOS MUST BE CUT AT THE ROOT AND STEM!! BURN ALL WHO SUPPORT IT!!"

Zeal warriors Rayman and Globox watched the change on his face. "Wow...guy need to use the toilet?" Globox asked.

"There's not enough metamucil in the galaxy to fix this guy," Rayman chuckled, right before Mozgus gave him the book.

"THE SERVANTS OF CHAOS SUFFER, SO HARDEN YOUR HEARD TO THEIR SUFFERING. KILL THE WITCH, THE DEMON AND THE HERETIC! TO SEE THEIR SUFFERING IS TO INVITE YOUR OWN!" Mozgus was fully raving now.

As Rayman rubbed his head, the Inquisitor sighed and relaxed. "And thus...we make an example today." He stepped back. "Let it fall."

Mozgus turned to Clegane with a vast sword of unspeakable weight. An executioner's sword. A weapon tailor made for these kinds of situations rather than direct combat.

With a Space Marine's strength it wasn't like he was going to have a problem cutting all the way through.

"Let it be done, brother Clegane," said Mozgus in a perversely friendly voice.
All eyes were on the doomed man as Clegane came forward.

But Ned...felt at peace. His family...his friends...they would carry on his legacy and work. To ensure a better future for all. Catelyn, Robb, Sansa, Arya, Bran, Rickon...

...Jon. If only...he knew the truth...

But now was not the time for regrets...

It wasn't about a heavenly reward. It had never been about that.

He'd tried to be a good father, and a good husband.

In his heart, Ned knew that his children were better than he was. And that was all a father could ask for.

The blade came down.

And before it did, Eddard Stark let himself be at peace. His ancestors awaited him...

...

He knew no more.

Clegane stomped on the head, crushing it. He'd even gone so far as to ask permission.

The deed was done and the message sent.

"How about that, folks!" exclaimed Kent Brockman over the frequencies, "That was a real doozy!"

Most of the Kremlings cheered, while the Marines watched on with stoic expression under their helms.

Bowser Jr. cackled darkly while Schala looked...ill.

Schala knew for a fact that Ned was not a Chaos worshipper. She was part of the King's inner circle like anyone.

Yet could any good come from so monstrous a lie?

She used to think so.

But now the body was being gathered to burn and spread, to make sure no one could clone him.

An efficient job, one might say...

The body of Ned Stark was being torn apart by one of Samuel Hayden's disposal machines.

A large, insect like device that sliced up the body with sharp mandibles and incinerated everything by vomiting plasma on it.

Schala and Janus, along with a number of House Zeal, could only watch grimly as this happened. Zeal herself look pleased. But all others...

"Wow...what a way to go." Rayman muttered.

"Barbaric...no other word." Strange mused.
"Efficient," came the buzzing mechanical voice. The white-robed figure bearing a Mechanicus seal towered over Rayman and Strange.

Samuel Hayden did not wish his creations to be ill spoken of. "Enemies of the King and the Omnissiah are entitled to no peace, no rest and no hope of mechanical restoration by cloning or digital brain download."

"Duly noted, Mr. Sunshine." Simon growled.

"Do not call me that."

The King took in everything with a smile, while his Fabricator General oversaw everything to perfection. "Have the ashes thrown into a neutron star. Send out word for the Officio Assassinorum to start hunting the rest of the Starks."

"I want video footage of this," Bowser laughed, "And I want video footage of the rest of those Starks being hunted like dogs."

Zeal, however, suddenly snapped her head forwards K.Rool. The Assassins...they were HER secret!

"How..." She hissed.

"Don't worry," said the King, "It's like how I now about Bowser's studies into the Black Marker."

Bowser stiffened.

"Don't get worried, I know all of your secrets, but shall not reveal them," the King promised with as much sincerity as he could.

"Everything is as the Omnissiah wills," came Samuel Hayden's robotic voice, as he levitated into the King's viewing box.

“And to be fair...” The King grinned. “Once back in our council room, I’ll share a deep, dark secret of my own.”

“Fair enough.” Bowser stated.

"I ask for much," the King elaborated, "But I also give much. Now we should leave while the corporate media makes political hay with this."

"Die Ned Stark merchandise sales are up over nine thousand Percent," King Dice grinned.

For some reason, K.Rool found himself grinding his teeth.

--

Soon, all, including Hayden, were back in the council room.

"War is now impossible to avoid." Hayden noted. "I suggest we make strategies, and fast."

"And do you have the fuel, the machines, and the power to make my war winnable?" the King asked.

The robotic head of the Mechanicus glowered, though he had no true face anymore. "Argent Energy production on Mars is growing exponentially. It is because of us, your research at Black Mesa had shaven years and even decades off their weapons design schedules."

"That is most helpful to hear." Relius noted. "Always much to learn, and to apply, in the war
effort..."

"And speaking of warring." K. Rool noted. "My secret..."

The sound of heavy footsteps caught all of the individuals attention, and they turned to see someone step form the shadows.

It was a Space Marine...but...unlike any Chapter they knew of. The armor was grey in color, decorated in scrolls and cloth, with the helm like a knight's helmet.

"Say hello to the Mark 2 Crusader Armor," the King grinned, "This handsome fellow of the Grey Knights is wearing the first suit manufactured since before the Long Night."

"Components were manufactured on Mars and at Black Mesa," Relius allowed himself a small smile. "Assembled by myself from ancient templates, these are the most efficient and well armored power armor anywhere."

"...Grey Knights?" Janus asked flatly. "I thought those were just stories."

"I thought so as well, lad." K.Rool nodded. "They only came to me after I took the throne, me and my council. Said they were the secret hunters of Demons, and since I was King now, they would follow me."

"Why didn't we know about this earlier?" Iggy asked.

"Everyone knows about Chaos," said Relius, rolling past Iggy’s question. "What's not known is the degree and extent of Chaos and how far its influence goes. For all his zeal, Father Mozgus is not wrong to fear Chaos to the extent he does."

"The Grey Knights are old," said K Rool, "They were ancient when the Valaryans first shot themselves into space. They are the strongest of the strongest, the mightiest Space Marines and the greatest counter we have to Chaos. Because Chaos will come to this war like vultures to a carcass."

"Notably, Chaos Space Marines, the fallen." Dark noted. "Good news, the Grey Knights never had one who had fallen."

..."By choice?" Euron asked. "Or because their minds are so modified they really can't?"

"Each of the Grey Knights is a powerful Psyker," explained Relius, "How they use the Warp, how they wield it is anathema to the beings of Chaos. They channel it into order, an Aegis of protection. They are able to handle tainted relics, practice black magic and hard counter other powerful forms of magic and psychic energy."

"We have the records," said the King, gloating, "Going back at least half a million years. None of them has ever fallen. As long as there have been Space Marines, they've never fallen."

"But how well can they kill?" Euron wanted to know, "I'm waiting to be impressed."

"You'll see soon enough, Greyjoy." Adrastia replied dryly, looking over the large crowd as well. "Right now, we need to focus on priory targets...such as Arrakis." A hologram of the planet appeared over the table. "A major source of Spice, and capturing it will swing the advantage to us further."
"The Spice must flow." Tamatoa crooned.

"The Mechanicus is just as interested in Blue Spice as you are," said Hayden contemptuously, "Though we do not value it for its crude monetary value."

"Just a few kilos will buy you a planet," Tamatoa was nearly grinning, "And there's more Blue Spice on Arrakis than anywhere in the galaxy."

"Hence the need to take that world from the Starks and their Fremen allies," the King confirmed. "It's a major source of their income and special forces soldiers."

"Still, won't be easy." Bowser admitted. "Those Fremen can pack a punch...and those worms..."

"Yes, we'll figure it out." K. Rool nodded. "Now, for assignments. Krux," He turned to the silent Beastmaster. "Make sure the war beasts are prepared and well-trained for killing."

"It will be done." Krux bowed.

"Dark, you are to proceed with the mission to Rapture...and have Adrastia join you as backup." K. Rool stated.

Adrastia eyed up Dark, "May your thoughts be pure, may you say your prayers and may you be loyal."

"Don't question me about loyalty," he sneered. "We'll have to work together to survive in that salt soaked hell of Rapture. Your paranoia will do us no good."

"I am nothing if not dependable." she smiled politely.

"Anywho," K. Rool went on. "Pridak, Riptor, Relius, Clegane, you will all directly aid the war effort, leading the troops wherever you go."

Clegane clenched his hands around his sword. War. Proper war. A place where he could really shine. "It will be done. Nothing will be left alive."

"The lot of you will be equipped with neutron bombs," Hayden ordained, "They will allow you to wipe out planets with high but brief radiation; avoiding the messy side effects of Exterminatus."

A bow, as K. Rool then turned to Euron, Kuroko, and Hinako. "You will be conducting raids on planets, stealing whatever you need-and WHOEVER you want- to spread little madness about. This campaign is as much about terror as it is about raw resources," the King explained, "Document your raids, be as brutal as you wish to be as long as you frame your victims as helpers of the Starks and traitors to the king."

"Lie, cheat, steal, kill" Euron smiled, "I've been training for this since I was a little boy."

"Good luck beating my raw numbers, Mr. Euron," Kuroko smirked.

K. Rool suddenly turned to Fyodor and Mozgus. "As for you two...I have a special assignment." A scowl of dark seriousness came across his face. "Loath am I to admit it, the last Targaryen roams the stars. Find her...and terminate her with EXTREME prejudice."

"We've never lost sight of the last of the heathen kings," Fyodor snarled, "The Last of the Sister marrying, heathen kings who made mockery of our religious traditions. We've never forgotten the slight."
Mozgus was a bit more civil, with his flat mannequin face. "Your resources, your support, and royal edict are greatly appreciated in the hunt for the Last Targaryen. We have reason to believe that the last of that cursed house is consorting with witches, heretics, mutants and demons."

"It matters not, honestly." K. Rool replied. "Simply kill her, cut her corpse up, burn the pieces, then scatter the fragments of ashes onto distant fiery hellholes."

Even Bowser and his son found that...over the top, though they kept silent.

If Bowser didn't miss his guess, the King's drive to kill the last Targaryen sounded a bit... personal.

The King could have sent off 47 to find this missing royal, but he didn't do torture.

Which why he probably sent the Inquisition after them.

Still, he had no love for the family either. To him, dead ones were better.

Now, it would be time to depart soon.

They took off like a swarm of insects, seeking to devour everything and everyone. The Inquisition, the Space Marines, Euron's Royal Fleet and Hayden's Mechanicus forces.

It was all going according to plan.

A plan that had only just begun.

And soon...the whole Galaxy would be alight with the flames of war.

People would either die, or become scarred, physically and/or mentally.

War...such was life.
Sylvanas Windrunner brooded as her craft docked with the airlock on with Dreemurr station.

This was not a happy time.

Cold and ruthless as she might have been, there was a heart somewhere in her frozen chest.

"Ned, you didn't deserve this. I should have protected you better," she lamented bitterly

She still saw it, the cheap special effects making Ned looking like Chaos...followed by the actual death that was carried out by Gregor Clegane.

Jon Snow was with her with this was carried out. He just...stared, impassively, stoically...yet deep down...the pain was clear.

"How are you doing, son?" she asked, trying to take her mind off of her own sense of loss. Jon was like a son to her. He mattered more than just the political alliance he brought.

"Terrible." Jon said bluntly.

"Good, never lie to yourself, especially when it hurts." she said. "You did good on your mission. Though I'm going to need you to be more diplomatic with the Dreemurrs and with Mata Nui."

Jon nodded numbly, as Ghost sat nearby. His father was dead...all because of dark ambition. Others would not stand for this, and millions...billions would perish.

Just wonderful.

The station of Home, in contrast to the dark and deathly Undercity, was full of light and life.

Something about the bright lights, lively streets and happy people made Jon feel nauseous. This place didn't feel real. It felt like a bubble.

The dust, dirt and blood of New Vegas felt real. This place, felt like a dream and at any moment he was going to wake up from it. "I'll speak to them as a lord." he said evenly.

"Our main worry is making sure that Asgore and Toriel stand firm," said Sylvanas, "This isn't the first dead stark that Mata Nui has dealt with, so leave him to me."

They had seen the Nui ship earlier, meaning the lord himself was likely here to meet with the Dreemurrs. This was serious...

"Lady Windrunner, I must ask...does Arya know?" Jon suddenly asked.

"I don't think so," Sylvanas replied. "Arya is a feral realm...though I do plan on sending her a message."

"Is she alive?" Jon asked, not looking her in the eye.

"If she wasn't, I would know." She tried to reassure Jon, "Soon I'll be calling mass recruitment from Ark. We'll see your sister soon, I have a hunch about that.

"Is Braev Lee going to be here?" Jon asked.
"He's of Nord stock." explained Sylvanas, "He'll honor his oaths."

"Not sure I put much trust in oaths and bond." Jon said bitterly.

"Don't mistake cynicism for wisdom, Jon." she cautioned him

Soon, they were met by Sans, a skeleton-based monster and Papyrus' older, yet shorter, brother.

Sans was a chill, laid-back fellow, friendly and ready for a good old, dumb pun...and also was quite lazy.

And yet...he was not always what he seemed.

"hey jon, I heard about that bakery you set up." said Sans.

Jon was confused. "I'm sorry?"

"it's called, you know, muffins, jon snow." He paused and chuckled at his own joke.

Jon just rolled his eyes. Ever since Tormund told him he knew nothing . . .

"THAT'S TERRIBLE!!" said Papyrus, "EVEN FOR YOU!"

"oh, hey, papyrus," Sans noted with a smile.

"WELL, JON. GLAD YOU AND LADY WINDRUNNER COULD COME." The taller but younger skeleton spoke. "WE ARE ALL IN A TIGHT SPOT HERE."

"We're fighting a war on two fronts." said Jon, "My father is dead and my family hunted. I've noticed.

"WELL THERE'S NO NEED TO BE GLOOMY ABOUT IT!" Papyrus protested.

Always the optimist, Papyrus.

"We are here to see Asgore and Toriel." Sylvanas replied tersely.

"i want to say they're fine," said Sans, "but they'll still offer you food, no matter what."

"AND OFFER YOUR THEIR SWORDS!" shouted Papyrus,

Sylvanas was skeptical. "We shall see."

The bone brothers escorted the two down the halls to the main room, where the delegation would take place. Hopefully things would go smoothly.

Hopefully.

Upon entering the room, the first thing out of Asgore's mouth was "Ned is dead!"

Toriel held his hand. "Our condolences, young Jon," she tried to be more level headed. "I know your were close to your father."

"That closeness was a rift between him and Lady Catelyn." Jon said dourly, "Because of our closeness, I might have been chosen as heir over her children. We're in some way better off."

Mata Nui, nearby, gave a grim nod. "He was a good man...and he did not deserve to die as a
branded criminal."

Sylvanas pursed her lips. "Indeed...and now we face war. No doubt the Blood God will find this all amusing."

"At least Khorne's word can be taken at face value." mused Mata Nui, "Not like his brethren. But even mindless, bloodthirsty Khorne does not try to get into wars with two fronts."

"But it can be done." said Asgore, "Roboute Guilliman did it once during the war with the beast, in the Age of Heroes."

Mata Nui shook his head, "Guilliman was a genius, but he did not wind up surrounded by enemies by choice and the price of his victory was high."

Jon was silent as he took this in.

"If I may say..." A voice caused all to turn. Propeller Knight, a Dreemurr bannerman, stood there. "We should take the fight to the enemy."

Propeller Knight was a powerful fighter, and capable leader, and a expert at aerial combat...and possessed a high and mighty attitude, just like the other aerial fighter, Revali.

"I'm no stranger to fighting outnumbered and outgunned," said Propeller Knight. "But the best thing you can do for yourself is level out the fight. Throw mud in someone's eyes, blow up some crucial infrastructure that'll halt his war machine."

"The King's spice production," said Revali "The North still has most of the giant deposit of Raven spice. If you hit the King's spice mining operations, it'll slow down a large portion of his war fleet. The Space Marines won't be affected, but the bulk of the King's vassals and conscripts will be tied down due to the spice shortage."

"Keep the King behind his wall of space fortifications," said Jon, cottoning onto the plan, "Face the Tyranids. Kill the main intelligence controlling the swarm. Then strike the King down."

As the others elites of Dreemurr arrived, it was Zelda who spoke. "Strike at the intelligence of the swarm? How do you suppose we do that?! It doesn't have a physical form!"

"Not to mention most who tried to make psychic contact with it either die or go mad." Riku noted.

"Norn Queens control each individual Hive Fleet, with a single Hive Tyrant acting as a field commander," said Nui, "The central intelligence itself, the Hive Mind, is something much more abstract. Almost like a proto god."

"Killing gods," said Asgore, "That's what we're looking at? Wouldn't it be easier to blast the King's fortress into oblivion and him with it?"

"Good luck getting past his fortifications and mass mine fields." said Sylvanas, "The way I look at this, there are no real good options and every choice involves mass death with the looming possibility of catastrophic failure."

"That's war there." Undyne muttered.

"Either way, the best we can do is make it a FABULOUS show!" Mettaton, the rectangular robot star, spoke up. A flamboyant showman, he was both an entertainer and fighter. "Let this be a historic war!" he went on, "We will go out in historic fashion. There's no better time for a warrior to shine
than when all the chips are down."

"There's no way you're getting more trophies or kills then me!" Undyne smirked at him. "I'll have a hundred dead Norn Queens to my name before the week is out."

"They are not the only problems." Sylvanas spoke up. "Orks are still on the rise, as are Skaven and Salmonids. Recent reports and direct sightings of Chromatics are also on the rise."

"Well, like old Nan used to say when Bran wasn’t around, when it rains it fucking pours." Jon grimly joked.

"If we could divert their attention against the King's forces somehow." said Toriel, "Draw the Ork Waaghs towards something they see as a good fight. Put out a psychic beacon to draw Skaven. Take them off of our flanks."

"And what of the Grox?" Sora asked. "Likely try and colonize planets that have been wasted in the fights."

"They're a pickle in that they can just walk right into any devastated world without environmental suits or terraforming." Mata Nui elaborated. "However, I believe there are a number of pirates who would be willing to turn privateer against them."

"Could we rely on that?" asked Asgore, "Can we trust the pirates or privateers?"

"Grox flock to spice and keep large quantities of it with them." said Nui, "If the privateers can keep a share of that spice, they might raid and harass the Grox. Not all pirates are like Terumi. Most are motivated by simple greed and that is enough of a motivator to attack the Grox."

"Hmmmm..." Toriel mused. "Perhaps...but for now, we are also relying on a hunter we hired."

"And who may that be?" Jon asked.

"Why, me, old chap." Jon turned to see...a red squirrel with a blue hoodie.

"I'm hunting day and night." said the squirrel, "Oh, and Conker's the name, killing is my game. Especially if I'm paid."

"I remember you thought my adopted mother was a tavern wench." Jon said dryly.

"And your father Ned was kind enough not to cut off too many body parts." Conker remembered fondly.

"All he did was shave you a bit. Stop whining." Jon replied to that.

"I like my fur." Conker growled.

"ANYWAYS." Undyne spoke up. "We're all wanna take down K. Rool now, but don't forget, he has a lot of firepower, like the Marines and Inquisition."

"And both of those groups are independently funded and equipped." said Jon, "They maintain their own armies and infrastructure from the King's own armies."

"If it comes to it, we can count on some of the Marines to turn on the King if they think his actions will ruin the Kingdom." said Mata Nui, "They are loyal most of them, but to a point depending on the Chapter."
"Who knows when that may come..." Sylvanas mused. "Until then, we must prepare for the worst."

"Our vassals out aiding us," Asgore nodded. "Meta Knight of Pop Star has the Halberd to bring into battle. Some of the dinosaurs of the Land Before Time have volunteered to aid us. Even the fairies of Ferngully have prepared themselves."

"You're going to need money, raw materials, and men." said Jon, "Time is not our ally, but we have to turn it that way. That's going to mean turning your whole domains upside down to dump into our shared war chest."

"I've experienced this many times, Jon Snow," said Mata Nui, "Amateurs think tactics, professionals think logistics."

"Well if you want me stealing as much of the king's logistics as I can, Larceny is my middle name." Conker boasted.

"We need to do all we can to cripple their forces before we can try launching all out attacks." Sylvanas stated. "You leave a good amount of that to me."

"As for myself..." Jon sighed. "Seems I may have to lead some of the Stark armies myself. Right now Robb is running interference with the Tyranid swarms." He explained. "He's doing good. But I'm going to be heading where fighting has taken to planetfalls. By sundown tonight I'll be leading a lightning raid on Mars."

"you want to attack the home of the Adeptus Mechanicus?" Conker was shocked, "Why don't you go and pecker slap Samuel Hayden himself, while you're at it."

"If I take disrupt the Argent tower even for a few hours, it'll stall the King's industrial output across the galaxy." said Jon," especially in key rare components for computers, spice refining and weapons research."

"Hmmmm, risky, but you do have a point." Asgore nodded.

"Perhaps we'll lend you a few of our own." Toriel added. "Just...try not to get close to the Titan, the moon of Saturn. Don't know what goes on there, but likely nothing worth risking."

"Stay away from the Home of the Grey Knights." said Mata Nui, "I was yet young when Malcador the Sigilate established their order on Titan. A moment now lost to history."

"I thought he Grey knights were a myth" stated Toriel.

"Their focus is on Demons, but their battle prowess is exceptional even for Space Marines." Mata Nui cautioned, "And while Mars is well defended, the Mechanicus fleets are smaller than usual to accompany the war effort."

Jon was silent. Mata Nui knew about these 'Grey Knights'. He was older than most would think...

"For now, we should head back to our stations or bases, and plan from there." Jon stated.

"Jon, I want you to know I'll be with you until the end." said Asgore, "Just promise me you'll care for my children if my wife and I meet a fatal end."

Jon did not have to think about it, "I'll cut down Gods and men in order to keep your children safe. You have my word."
All nodded as they made to depart...but as Mata Nui did, he began to think...on something he did not tell the others.

Something he ad to share with the others...

And so...later, as the Metru Nui council room...

Mata Nui looked over his elite circle, along with the three mercs he had hired.

"I am glad you survived Shelbyville Station." said the leader of House Nui. "More than proving your worth, it gives you a taste of the war to come and the kind of enemies you can expect to fight."

"I live for the challenge." said Ragna, "Mercenary work isn't just a job. This is my vocation. I'm a painter and weapons are my paintbrushes. Nobody is going to tell me that any job is too hard to finish."

Noel sighed. "Don't get too cocky." She muttered.

"One must always be careful." D.va noted with serious tone.

Despite that cheery, bubbly, arrogant front she put up in public, Mata Nui and the other elites had seen her as the REAL Hana Song. A good, kind-heated girl who was a dedicated worker-perhaps working too much-who knew EXACTLY what kind of monsters dwelled the stars, and always was ready to make sure they were suppressed.

"There's a lot more than personal glory at stake." D.Va iterated, "Shelbyville was a taste and the Tyranids have grown since the last invasion of Hive Fleet Gorgon."

"We know the stakes." said Noel, "We saw what they did to those innocent people, to anyone and anything that breathed."

"And now this mess." Elora stated. "Might as well be genocide on anyone who thinks differently from others."

Mata Nui sighed. "I know this is all tough...which I know what I am about to say will cause even more headaches." He looked up. "Spyro, Sparx, Elora, Hunter, Bianca...I have a top-secret mission for you all. Only we are privy to it. Not even our allies or bannermen can know."

"We're ready, chief." said Spyro, "Our lives are yours to command."

"This is your final chance to back out." said the ruler of Nui, "After this, there is no escape and no turning back."

Hunter shook his head. "No, something tells me this is an important task."

Mata Nui took a breath. "The Last Targaryen...you are to find her and aid her."

The silence was deafening. The crew was stunned, beyond all shadow of a doubt.

"Who is he?" asked Hunter.

"Why are we helping him?" Spyro wanted to know.

"Her." Mata Nui clarified through steepled fingers, "Daenerys Targaryen, last of her bloodline. And she is one crucial component to ending something much larger than this war."
"You mean to end K. Rool himself." Ciel stated.

"That is correct." Mata Nui nodded. "For countless generations, I have watched the ancient family go through the times. So were good, others were bad, others could be downright worthless. The Princess herself stands not only to be able to reform the Kingdom, bring it into the future, but to aid those who would bring to a close the larger cosmic war."

"What, you mean Chaos?" said Spyro.

"There are older and darker forces afoot." said the leader of Nui cryptically, "Forces that drove the Tyranids from their home galaxy in the first place."

"Eh?" Bianca blinked.

"A story for another day." Mata Nui replied. "For now, you all know your mission?"

"Yes, sir." Spyro as he and the others nodded.

"Right, and before you depart the reaches, do stop by Jolly Rogers Lagoon in the Isle O’ Hags. Rest and prepare. We are taking a risk here." said Mata Nui, "But reward potentially is galactic peace. This could be your final mission. Say your goodbyes before you embark."

"We won’t let you down, master." said Spyro, bowing to his lord.

The five chosen all nodded again, before heading out to a small speedy vessel made for travel. This would be quite the mission.

Mata Nui looked out at the vista of the stars, feeling his years in a way he had not for quite some time.

It was easy to get lost in the cycle, lose perspective. Confuse experience for expertise.

He hoped that a certain princess could make the right decision at the right time.

For now...prepare for war.
Arya's time on Ark was tough, but rewarding. She quickly made a name for herself among her tribe, alongside her new friend, Ellie. Even on this Death World, things looked good...Then came the message via drone, written by Windrunner herself.

She scanned the message, keyed into her DNA only.

"My father is dead." she murmured. She couldn't believe it.

She could read the words, but there was a delay in her brain.

"I don't know what it's like to give a shit about family, but it's probably awful." Hound sniffed as he ripped into a roast chicken.

From Clegane that was heartfelt condolences.

TK blinked as he listened in. "Ned Stark...gone? Wow...a man like that doing so much just be killed." He shook his head. "What a way to go."

"The King is dark and twisted." Bullet replied. "He did this for a scheme, bigger than we can think of."

"So what does this mean for us?" asked Berix. "Are we still stuck here or do we get to leave?"

"The note says Sylvanas is calling all able bodies beings to fight for her." said Bullet, peeking in. Arya remained silent.

"I guess we're leaving." said Gendry, "I just thought I would feel better about it."

Arya was still silent though. Did she...really feel ready to leave right now? This place...it spoke to her for some reason.

She found herself running a hand though her hair. Once short, it had begun to grow long, in a wild way.

She liked it.

She put a hand on her direwolf, Nymeria, feeling the creature lick her hand.

Her father's loss was a wound, like many of the stab wounds or bullets she'd dealt with in the last six months. Or was it longer?

Those healed.

She didn't want to think about just getting over her father's death.

But she didn't want to linger on it either.

What was she to do here and-?

"If I had a choice, I think I may stay here." Bullet replied. "Need to learn the land and myself more."

Arya had hoped for the decision to be unanimous. It would be easier to make.
"I don't know if I want to leave." She whispered.

"Good." snapped the Hound, tossing his chicken carcass aside, "Not like Sylvanas has anything important to do, bitch'll live forever."

Kari sighed. "Well, something tells me my place is here as well."

"And I will remain at your side." TK nodded.

Arya was no closer to her answer.

This place felt like home. More than Winterfell Station ever did. This place where she'd been closer to death and mutilation than ever before.

She looked to Nymeria… and it was like she just knew what to do.

She didn't like it, but she knew what to do.

"I'm getting off world, for my family needs me." Arya announced

"Hmmm, you really think that's the best idea?" Bullet asked. "You're facing against huge odds."

"I agree." Tarduk said. "We'd best be staying here to prepare ourselves."

"They're family." Arya admitted. "What happens to them affects me. I belong to this place, but I need to migrate, just like the birds and other animals."

"Then you realize how many animals perish on migrations." Bullet pushed.

"I do." said Arya, "Which is why I think it's good to prepare, like you suggested."

"And that will still take time." Kari added with crossed arms.

"Where can get crafting materials?" Arya asked, "I mean the best of the best. We join Sylvanas' army with the best weapons anywhere on Ark."

"you're going to want to hit Ragnarok, to the North." groused Clegane. "You can find anything and build anything if you kill enough beasts and stiff enough cunts."

Clegane sat on his haunches, like some half friendly wildcat following a pack of wolves.

"And we may have to sail to get there." T.K. noted.

"Good thing we have the right things to do that." Ellie added.

"I'd feel better if I was killing things." Arya admitted.

Hound gave a rare laugh, "You sure I'm not yer real dad?"

"Don't push it, scarface." Arya laughed back.

"The boat then!" shouted Berix, "Time for a voyage of discovery! And of death."

The boat was a well-built vessel, designed to hold all of them and not sink. All were armed in case some sea creatures decided to get a little snappy.

The sails went up and Arya took in the sight.
The ocean was bright blue and the sea birds were aflight. Moments like this she felt like an animal, wild and free.

Her muscles were coiled, but overall this was a rare moment of peace she would savor.

Ellie herself was looking over the side. She hoped Pops was alright. He was a Golden Metallic Dragon, but even he had his limits. The attack from Terumi was swift and brutal. Few had survived.

Almost as if reading her mind, she felt Arya shift. "I get the feeling you want to leave too. When we're done, find the people you care about and don't look back."

"They can take care of themselves," Ellie tried to look tough.

"I never disputed that," said Arya, "I just need to know you'll have your head in the game when we reach land."

Sandor tuned out the talk as he stared out into the blue. Strange...why did he have an odd feeling?

Some old fortune teller once told him he had a sight to him, a third eye. He thought she was full of shit.

So why did that one lonely little Island spook him so much? "Throw your arms into the water and gain passage to Ragnarok?" he read aloud.

"What?" Arya demanded,

"It's the runes," he explained, "On that Island.” He turned to Ellie, "Throw a weapon into the water."

Eyes darted about, as they all looked to see who would throw a weapon into the sea...

"Er...any takers?" Gendry asked.

Arya rolled her eyes, "I got a knife I don't mind losing. I can craft another."

"Forget that," said Bullet, "I've got a magic axe that returns like a boomerang!"

With a toss it splashed into the water. Bullet held out her hand and waited. "The axe isn't returning."

"Huh, how long have you been holding onto that?" Sandor snarked.

"None of your-"

The sea began to roil and churn.

Something shifted in the water. Something changed in the air.

A few far off islands submerged then reappeared.

"Stay calm!" shouted Clegane.

"What's going on?" Ellie panicked.

The water seemed to burst and flow, the ship shaking within the waves...before...someTHING flew out high into the sky before coming back down and hovering over the ship.

All present could only stare.
The creature resembled a pteranodon, only it was massive in size, with spikes lining the chest.

A gigantic eye the size of a small starship peered at them, judging them, marking them, remembering them.

"What the fuck is that?" Ellie shouted, pointing her weapons at the thing, but wisely not taking a shot.

"A KAIJU!" Arya screamed, though out of joy rather than fear. "It's Rodan!"

A Kaiju...Arya read about those back in home. Ancient beings of tremendous power, said to be incarnations of Nature itself. Other than that and few pics of the known kinds...little info existed.

The beast's maw opened, and Bullet's axe came flying, landing in the boat. "Thanks!" she shouted angrily at the thing, furious but too scared to try and shoot the monster of god-like power and size. "Asshole," she whispered.

Rodan stared down at the group, and...spoke.

At least, he seemed to be speaking.

Rodan started growling, speaking in an ancient language that sounded like mountains crashing, planets ripping apart and species being born.

"What's it saying?" Tarduk asked

"I think it's friendly!" Arya shouted over the din, as if she could almost read the creature's intent.

The tone was deep and rumbling, and drawn out, and once he had finished, Rodan turned and took the skies, vanishing out of sight.

"Well, the water's lowered," said Berix calmly, "And over there is a cave entrance that wasn't there before."

"Yeah great, now my heart can stop racing," panted Ellie.

Arya just stood starry eyed as TK steered the boat to the entrance.

Chomp and Nymeria looked baffled at all this as they sailed to the new island, full of death and vicious creatures...

"I've heard from tales that Ice Worm Queen lives this way," said Sandor, "She drops good loot, though nobody's yet returned who could finish the bitch off."

"So where do the stories come from?" Berix asked.

"From half mad, half dead cunts who bit off more than they could chew," Sandor said dismissively

"...A lot of people die here..." Arya noted.

"Death Worlds...tough places, but they allow one to find themselves." Bullet noted.

"As far as I'm concerned, not nearly enough people die on shitholes like this," Sandor groused.

"I just want you to know, I think you're a good person," Ellie smiled.
Sandor just growled as the team entered the cave, darkness engulfing them.

The trials would be endless in their journeys to better themselves...here’s hoping Sejuani and her posse would not follow...enough troubles as it was.

Sejuani had gotten just a bit crazier since the incident in the planet's cold regions. She'd gotten a nasty infection that while cured, left her in chronic pain. And her new philosophy was that the best way to mitigate her pain was to inflict it on others.

"Oh nice, cod!" shouted Berix as he noticed a fish flopping on the cave floor.

"Time for fish fry later," Arya grunted. "Eyes up and ears open."

The cavern was cool and quiet...leading to a sense of tranquility among the team. But that could often change in an instant.

Arya tilted her head back and sniffed the air. "Get ready for action."

"So you're part fucking dog now?" Hound asked sardonically.

"It's a dire polar bear," said Arya, "Nymeria has been teaching me how to sniff for food and predators."

"Fucking typical," Clegane grunted as he drew his sword and pistol.

Such bears were very big...and ferocious. One swipe could reduce a person’s head into bloody splatter.

As they readied themselves, Bullet looked at Arya...

...and wondered...was she looking bit more...animalistic, or was just her?

Bullet was concerned for the young girl. Dark forces called Ark their home. Death was everywhere and you could lose your humanity even if you didn't eat some strange virus or fall prey to a curse.

The way that ary'a's movements mirrored those of her wolf, the way she bared her (longer, sharper?) teeth as a shuffling noise grew louder.

The girl was changing and Bullet didn't know if was for better or worse.

Or even if for better or worse, or simply changing. Hard to say.

It wasn’t Chaos, that was for sure. Something else.

She’d seen the Norscan wolfkin, rabid beasts who had none of a wolf’s nobility or their love for family.

Arya regarded this motley crew as her pack, her family.

And wasn't the Alpha female of a wolf pack also the mother?

The dire bear charged through the cave, its eyes red and worms leaking out of its nose. Infected and rabid, it was more dangerous than usual.

But the team was ready.
Just because an animal was wounded did not lessen its danger at all.

Ellie was first, used her bracelet to launch energy projectiles at the bear, ripping through parts of it.

The bear would normally have run or died from such damage. The disease ravaging it drove it on suicidally. The creature swiped at her. Deftly, she ducked below the bear's strike and swung a small but sharp axe at one of its hind legs, crippling its ability to run.

Clegane fired a shot that blew out one of the bear's eyes, but it did not relent.

Arya charged in with her weapon, Needle, thrusting the tip into the gory eye socket created by the Hound.

Chomp, meanwhile, had latched onto the back of the bear's neck with his tiny teeth, hot pain running though the bear.

The bear's brain was dying, the body just didn't realize it.

It was truly a horrific way to die. On Ark, drinking tainted water or food could be as deadly as the strongest enemy.

The thrashing bear was the stuff of nightmares as Arya pulled out Needle and drove it through the bear's heart.

A pitiful growl...then it slumped into the waters, blood staining the area red.

Chomp's nature made him immune to such diseases, and he shook off blood in his mouth.

The worms in the bear's snot and blood died upon exposure to air, but the eggs they came from would surely survive and poison more creatures.

"Burn the body," Arya commanded.

The team complied and it was Gendry who produced thermite powder, which turned the body to ashes in moments. "What a horrible fate," he mused.

"This is the brutal world and galaxy we live in." TK noted. "Survival of the fittest."

It was quote TK read from ancient origins from a planet called Terra...an old planet, burned out, looted of both some knowledge and art, and now deemed unimportant and forgotten by most.

There were old stories, traders tales of Terra at the height of its glory. A golden world in control of an empire unimaginable. It was all as dead as dust when the Valaryans had learned to create fire and the wheel.

It now only existed only as a point on obscure star maps and tales for traders. Just a ruined husk of a world.

Like that bear.

The party travelled on as Arya sniffed the air, being faced with three different paths.

Bullet once again looked at her, then Nymeria...
Was the...wolf slightly larger than before? Hard to tell.

TK definitely noticed, though he hardly cared. Ark changed people in strange ways. A wolf getting a bit bigger was pretty tame compared to some of the awful things he'd seen.

"That way," said Arya.

"And what the fuck makes you choose that?" Hound asked.

"Smells like there's less blood and death down there," was her reply.

"Then we avoid that path." Berix noted, rowing on in the correct direction.

Rodan still hung over his thoughts. How long had the creature been staying here? And what did it say exactly? Didn't sound like any language he knew.

"Is there a chance the Kaiju will return and flood these tunnels?" Berix asked.

"No, he told me so," said Arya.

"And when did you learn to speak giant monster?" the Agori asked.

"Well I mostly got the drift of it," said Arya, "I've been listening closer lately, a lot of things are revealing themselves to me."

There was silence apart from the slight dripping of icicles.

The temperature was dropping, they were definitely getting deeper into the heart of the Ragnarok cave system. And closer to their intended target.

Griffins were known to inhabit the island, but they kept to the surface, so they would be of no issue.

Worms, on the other hand...were something else.

The Worms were believed to be part of Ark's native life, existing long before the planet was colonized, terraformed into its current state. The Death Worms and the Ice Worms were the bane of their ecosystems, able to devour whole people in a single bite.

In the cavern ahead there was signs of the worms, bits of bone and carcass remains.

Evidence of their ravenous hunger.

While not as large as Arrakis worms, they were still deadly in their own right. The few creatures deadlier included the Wyverns, of which the ice subspecies dwelled here.

And as deadly as they were, as lethal and driven and intelligent, they would make for the most deadly weapons. Such was the way of the hunt, the deadliest prey brought the best rewards.

Wyverns of this realm were almost impossible to tame...the only way was to make an imprint on it.

In other words, steal an egg and raise a baby as one's own.

A task that had seen many survivors ripped apart by angry mothers.

That egg would grow quickly, if fed properly and allowed to exercise.

It would then be a ride to the Windrunner staging ground, and a valuable part of the war machine.
At the very least they could use it as proof of their talent and bargain with Windrunner's army for officer status.

Now...where to find one.

Ah, there...around the corner was a nest...unoccupied by the parents.

"I can hear the parent," said Arya, "I hear its wings beating."

"How are you doing that? You must have ears like a cat!" TK was shocked.

"Get into fucking position," Clegane growled, "Debate later."

All lay low, trying to keep quiet as so not to attract attention. Last thing they needed now was to get frozen.

The wingbeats came, softly at first.

Arya had not been wrong. Her newfound senses were leading the team right. This was a valuable asset . . . and a worrying development.

Still, not Chaos, Tarduk obsessed. Chaos was sudden and without warning.

This...was subtle and slow...like evolution.

Kari, meanwhile, was reaching for the egg, and close her hands around it.

Almost as if on cue, the sound of wings grew more frantic and a vast windstorm kicked up. Down the tunnel, a burst of fresh air hit everyone's nose. The mother wyvern had arrived and would be on them in seconds.

They had an uncanny sixth sense to know when someone was trying to steal an egg.

"Ok, got the egg. Now let's go, go, GO!" Ellie yelped.

The sound of the wyvern was getting closer as the group ran, only for an ice worm to explode from the cavern floor and lunge at Ellie.

Ellie didn't have time to react as Arya jumped in front of her, driving a dagger into the beast's soft mouthparts, between the armor joints.

The beast screamed but kept coming...

But Chomp, ready to defend his friends, lunged forwards, fire around his small form.

Flames from the flying monster scorched the ice worm, hard countering its elemental powers. Keeping Arya from succumbing to frostbite around it.

Yet the wyvern had come, they were entrapped in a pincer.

And nothing is more dangerous than a cornered animal, as TK and Clegane charged the dragon with Bullet, while Berix and Gendry faced off the worm.

Look liked they were in a tight spot here. Only their wits about to keep them from freezing death.

Gendry's thermite bombs kept the wyvern's elemental powers at bay. It paid to be prepared buy they
were dealing with a ferocious mother predator and this would only work for so long.

The ice worm itself was similarly ferocious, driven by mindless hunger and bolstered by healing abilities that would allow it to eventually heal from the damage Arya inflicted.

But it was getting tough...and it seemed only a miracle would get them out of this one...and Arya had a mad idea

Arya and Nymeria backstepped from the ice worm's attacks,

Ellie saw Arya look up at the ceiling and cup her hands to her mouth.

What came out of Arya's throat was as loud as a ship's horn and made the tunnels vibrate.

Maybe it was the Hound who first realized that Arya had spoken a word from the Kaiju's language.

A moment of silence...then a beak pierced the top of the cave and snatched up the worm, crushing it.

The Wyvern screeched and faltered...and then another miracle happened.

A flash of gold, large in size, followed by fire.

This is what it felt like, being an insect in a log as a bird rooted through the rotting wood for grubs.

"POPS!" It was Ellie who shouted.

The huge Golden Dragon spread out its wings, bellowing. Driving back the Ice Wyvern.

Then turning its huge head, the radiant eyes filled with kindness.

A mighty thrust of Rodan's beak crushed the Ice Wyvern.

And the Golden Dragon turned into a golden skinned man in bronze armor. "Hello, Ellie,"

"Um...hi, Pops." Ellie greeted back.

Xalbor, or Pops, looked over the group. "Well...busy since we were forced to part?"

Arya sniffed the air, as though sensing Pops out. In return Pops seemed to sniff the air back. Like two alpha predators feeling for each other's intentions.

"I won't intrude on your territory, or make trouble for your pack," he told the Stark girl.

"Finally, someone who gets it," Arya laughed in a very wolfish way.


Joy. His scars felt tense.

He wanted to see that Golden Dragon dead. He hated dragons as a rule. Like he hated anything with power over flame.

Years of army discipline and a near atrophied sense of fairness stopped him from trying to end Pops.

Ellie saw none of this as she ran and embraced her old father figure.

A gesture he retuned, even as he saw Rodan leave.
"Ah, I see you all had a meeting with a Kaiju." He noted. "I'm sure you all have quite a story to tell."

"Tell you all about it soon." TK said.

"We've got a trek through harsh country and we've got a space transport to catch," snapped Sandor, "So you can keep up with us. Or not, I don't really care."

"I can give you a ride," Pops chuckled, unphased by Sandor being Sandor as he shifted back to dragon form.

"You sure?" Kari asked.

Pops leaned over. "Be grateful. Not every day we Metallics offer this."

Dragons. Even good ones had their many moments of high-and-mighty nature.

"Don't think I owe you anything for this," grunted Sandor one last time, eager to get the last word.

"Just think of it as a gift, Mister Sourpuss," Pops laughed once more. His mirth getting a growl from the Hound.

The rest were silent as they flew on, but one things was certain...

Things were going to get a lot more interesting.
Rise of War

Braev Lee, High King of Skyrim and Lord of House Lee, lit a candle in the temple of Talos. As far as places of worship went, this was a humble spot. The roof leaked, the floor was dirty, and the pews were splintered.

He'd come to this very temple as a boy when he first went to war. Back then, he thought of himself as the Grand Champion Warrior of the galaxy.

Nowadays he saw himself as a mere public servant. He stood up from his prayers and eyed his wife and children on the pews.

His beloved wife, Mahzer, and three wonderful daughters, birth child Edea, and adopted Eilonwy and Tina, all three he knew would surpass him one day.

Alternis was there as well, his helm concealing all thoughts.

"Go on, children," he said to his young ones, "Say your prayers to Talos."

"But I'm already godly," Tina protested.

"Don't make me pull adult authority," he warned, "Every ruler should connect with their God."

Tina sighed, but did as Braev relaxed. She recited it as best she could.

"Grant us the strength to be strong, so we may vanquish our enemies..."

"Preparing ourselves?" Braev turned to see who had spoken. Reinhardt, an elder fighter and trainer of his children. His massive size and power hid a big heart and seep sense of justice...and despite his age, he refused to retire, and Braev had no intention of making him.

"Live with honor," began the old warrior.

"Die with glory," finished Braev, "Though how much of that do you still believe?"

"I never stopped believing in honor, if that's what you mean," countered the elder warrior. "You know the Crusaders stand by you, my lord."

Those words...helped shape Reinhardt into the man he was today...ever since that fateful mission in his youth...

"Reports on other planets of ours?" Braev asked.

"Well, the Bush Rescue of Australia, though small, are still skilled for a variety of tasks, such as guerrilla warfare and deliveries."

"We're going to need it," Braev said grimly. "Time is not on our side but speed is a weapon we can use to even the odds."

"You may also count on the Valarian Firstborn," Reinhardt affirmed. "Siege experts and men used to hardship and missions with the prospect of certain death. They'll be the anvil to the hammer of the guerillas."

"And what of Demonzu?"
Reinhardt nodded at the name of the dark planets, filled with undead and hunters. "We can draw from there as well..." The old warior laughed, "My favorite planet," he muttered sarcastically. "Worst ale in the universe."

"I'm afraid to ask what they make it from," Braev laughed.

The Crusader laughed along, but sobered up. "The Chose Undead has rallied the rest of his undead warriors. His bride, the Hunter has rallied and rebuilt the Beast hunters. The will fight for us. They'll even capture and release beasts upon our enemies."

The most darkest of beasts, meant to terrify the enemies.

Good, because they had to work with much now. First Tyranids, then Orks, Skaven, Salmonids, and others such nasties. Demons still prowled in their realms in wait. Chromatics were on the rise, and worming into society, he heard. And now they had to face the Crown, Zeal, Koopa, and the Guild. Wonderful.

"I'm confident we can strike the first blow and make it count," said Braev, "But no chess game is won with the first move. We've no idea how long this will be."

"Neither did we when the Crusaders fought for the House Lee in the Civil war," said Reinhardt, "K. Rool was outnumbered and outgunned in his war; but we can use his own playbook against him. And more than that, I think I know how to turn the Pandarens to our side; turn them and the other neutral factions will join us or aid us."

The Pandarens...a race of Panda-Beastkin known for their nomadic ways, always on the move, savoring the many cultures of the Galaxy. They lived for experiences and knowledge, and the lifestyle showed. They stayed out of galactic conflicts as they could, preferring to spend time learning about good food and ale. Even in the Targaryen civil war, they'd stayed out of the conflict.

"Their master of food and drink extends to friendly relations with the most productive growers and manufacturers in the galaxy," explained Reinhardt, "People too small to escape the notice of K. Rool or the Mechanicus. But when they get together, they're an economic force to reckon with."

A nod was the only response he got. Then Braev spoke. "Speaking of which, Momohime and Kisuke had gone to recruit some more mercs...due to come back soon."

"Well, they got back to me late on account of nearly being killed by a hive fleet," said Reinhardt like it was nothing. "But they're both in good health. And more importantly, we've got buckets of mercenaries to our name. At least thirty major mercenary companies and two thousand smaller outfits have answered our call."

"The lure of spice is strong," mused Braev, "And these are quality mercs, not just people who'll take our money and run?"

At that, Reinhardt went grim. " Mostly, yes...but we did, in a need of arms, wind up with a small unit known as Team Hooligan, consisting of Fang, Bark, and Bean...who are only doing it for the money involved, and nothing else."

"My father knew how to deal with men like that," scoffed Braev, "Put them in a spot where they have no way out and no escape. They'll fight like rabid dogs then."

"Even cowards have their uses in war," said Reinhardt as the family continued to pray and a priest of Talon went to the alter to chant a sermon. "On the plus side, there's a lot of Mercenaries from
Shelbyville Station eager for some payback. They've come to our banner like moths to a light.

Another nod, then Brave looked over the crowd. "Paarthurnax and the other dragons will slightly aid us, against Tyranids and Demons. Other than that, we cannot pressure them."

"You know, for some reason I never thought you could get a dragon to do anything they didn't want to," laughed Reinhardt, "The Crusaders tried fighting the dragons ages ago, but we didn't have much success. Besides, there were other enemies worthy of our wrath."

"At the very least we can count on the faith of Talos shielding us from Chaos, "Braev affirmed, "Like they say on starships, Talos is my copilot."

The sermon had ended, and all gathered stood and began to wander about to talk.

"I kinda miss that crazy priest who screamed all the time in Whiterun," Tina lamented.

Edea nodded, "I have to agree, he was entertaining if nothing else."

"Enough about that," Eilonwy chided. "We must focus on the task at hand. I'm certain we'll be fighting in the wars to come now that K.Rool had mucked everything up."

"Finally," said Tina, "I get to show off what a beast champion warrior I am."

"Dream on, shorty," Edea corrected, "You'll be getting behind me. As tough as you are, the Jouse needs to think of its legacy and father doesn't consider us expendable; like some lords do."

"So where are we going? Where are we fighting!" Tina demanded, eager to prove herself.

Reinhardt raised his hand gently. "Now, now, young ones. Don't get too eager to rush into battle and glory." He traced his scar along his blind eye. "You all remember my tale. The crusaders fought for House Targaryen for centuries," he recalled, "We switched allegiances when we could no longer stomach the Madness. But I, as a man, only switched for the chance for glory. All I thought of was women, gold and medals."

"But you got all those things," said Tina.

"But those things are not what is important," Reinhardt’s jaw was set, "The man who was like a father to me gave his life for me, for our men and for conscripts whom it was his duty to protect. THAT is honor."

Braev nodded grimly as he took a look at Reinhardt's facial scar...a reminder of that grim day...

"As for battle reports..." Alternis came up. "It seems Koopa has their sights set on us..."

Braev grimaced. The main army, the Koopa Troop, was a diverse and vast force, consisting of Goombas, Koopas, Boos, Cheep-Cheeps, Bloopers, Shy Guys, Piranha Plants, and more. In addition, other armies included the bandits and psychos of Pandora, and the Ogres of Mourn.

"The King Paid off Greassus Gold Tooth with both ham and gold," Alternis elaborated, "And with Handsome Jack dead, he'd taken over the Hyperion Corporation and his Koopa champions have won over the fealty of the psychos and mutants."

"How long do we have?" Braev asked.

"Generous estimates give us two days at most," said Alternis. "Maybe half that."
"Then we muster our forces just as fast." Edea said. "We need to send word to all our vassals and worlds."

"Most of the mercenaries can be here in hours," said Alternis. "Ragna and Noel are already on the way here. We can recruit men faster if the dragons will consent to being messengers."

"With any luck, old Paarthurnax will grant me that favor," said Braev.

"And you have the Crusaders ready now, lord," said Reinhardt. "We have already placed cloaked mines around planetary orbit."

And as if to help more, the doors opened, and Kisuke and Momohime showed up, bowing to the King. "Sir, we have arrived, and have brought in the reinforcements." Kisuke said.

"Including..." Eilonwy hazarded.

Momohime nodded as three others came in. Team Hooligan, consisting of Fang the Sniper, Bean the Dynamite, and Bark the Polat Bear.

Fang was a greedy, self-serving wolf-weasel, Bean was a crazy arsonist, and Bark was a strong, silent hitman.

"We've come to fight for you, Lord Braev," said Fanf, saluting the patriarch of Skyrim. "For money and because King K. Rool wants to execute all of us."

"But we'll fight as long as there's coin and you'll get twice your money's worth," boasted Bean.

"And if you let us keep the loot we find, you'll have twice the results from us," Bark finished.

Braev stared them down all silently...He supposed he could go for worse. Still best keep a close eye on them.

"And if it means anything to you my lord," said Momohime, "The Lizardmen are sending Ace fighter squadrons. They're Pilot Skinks but some of the best."

"But not as good as their Saurus pilots," said Braev, "Well, I suppose we'll have to make due."

Windrunner could by mysterious and secretive, but she was a staunch ally. He could use all the help right now, as warfare was a dangerous business.

Besides, he hid his own secrets and such, hidden in books and scrolls across his worlds.

"Get me the Elder Scroll, Reinhardt," Braev said solemnly, "I think today is the day to use it."

"You would not ask this of me if you didn't think we were living in the end times," said the elder Crusader, "Are we in the end times, Braev?"

Braev hesitated, looking at his children. "No, but we should fight as if we were."

Reinhardt nodded. The Elder Scrolls, artifacts of massive power, had been discovered here on Skyrim, and scattered about the Lee planets. Dangerous, they were not to be used lightly.

Exactly what they were was hard to say. They were said by the dragons to be 'Fragments of Creation', and could tell the past, present, and futures in so many ways.

The Scrolls existed both in and out of time, in and out of real time. To read one risked going blind or
One such Scroll had ripped apart time and banished the great dragon Alduin, the World Eater. One Scroll had saved Skyrim during the Oblivion Crisis and the invasion of Chaos.

And they were closely guarded secrets...and Braev planned to gather them, to at least keep them safe.

Part of the way of the warrior he learned from his father was the question "what are we prepared to suffer a defeat for?" And there were some prices to victory that were too high.

"I will not fail you, my lord," said Reinhardt.

Braev nodded as he stepped outside for the moment and looked to the stars. How many of them would know the flames of war in the time to come?

He glanced at the church. War with the Targaryens had been easy. They'd taken the fight to their foes. It never reached Skyrim.

It was the last thing he wanted for his people, especially so soon after the war of succession with Ulfric.

Times were going to be tough here...but he would see them through, for his family and people.

He readied his sword. War was here...

...and he was ready.
The Imperial Guard stared with dread at the walls of the transport vessel. Their goal was to protect Robotropolis, one of the major forge worlds of the Adeptus Mechanicus.

As such, the King had seen fit to send both the Imperial Guard and the Space Marines. The anvil and hammer of the King respectively.

Both aspects consisted of males and females of various species...though the Marines were very augmented for the mission...and everything else.

Robotropolis, headed by the Mechanics Tech-Priest known as Eggman, was a developer of all sorts of mechs and robots. Eggman had once been the first in line to take control of the Adeptus Mechanicus. Though that was before Freedom Fighters on the planet had crippled his personal army and exposed his weaknesses as a leader.

When Samuel Hayden took over, he'd planted a bomb in Eggman's skull and forced him to put his tremendous intellect towards developing better and deadlier robots.

None of that mattered to the Imperial Guard, armed with nothing but crude lasguns, a cheap flak vest and maybe a rusty sword if they were lucky.

Behind the guard, a few Marines of the Blood Ravens kept vigil, muttering battle prayers ahead of time.

Prayers for whatever gods they served, capricious those deities may be. Beings of elements and forces beyond comprehension tended to be like that.

But now, they all stood ready against the Swarm...that was due any time soon, according to reports.

"Scared much?" One of the Guardsmen, Jean Kirstein, jumped turned to face the man talking to him. The voice itself oscillated between sympathy and sneering.

Jean propped up his ill-fitting helmet and eyed the shirtless, bearded man with tattoos. "No, Connor McGregor, I'm not afraid."

"So you're a liar as well as being afraid?" scoffed the bearded man who'd come seemingly out of nowhere.

"...Who are you, actually?" Jean had to asked.

"Yeah, who are ya?" Another solider by the name of Lak Sivrak asked. "Never seen you before."

"Name's Baldur," said the man, adjusting the beads in his beard. "I'm new to these parts. Have you boys said to your prayers to the All-father?"

"The all-what?" Jean laughed.

"The All-father," Baldur looked deadly serious. "Don't you want to ascend when you die in battle?"

Sivark was silent. Baldur...where had he heard that name before?

Alarms sounded all about suddenly. The Tyranids were here.
"The greatest death a warrior can have is on the battlefield," Baldur looked positively dreamy. "Savor your death and say your prayers. And maybe you too can go to Valhalla."

Jean was just weirded out by Baldur's crazy religious stuff and his bulging eyes. The guy looked like the dude in prison you didn't want to share a cell with.

"Prepare for battle!" roared one of the Space Marines.

"And don't even think about running away!" the unit's Commissar cocked his bolter pistol threateningly.

Already, though, they could all hear the oppressive sounds of countless limbs stampeding against the ground, and so much chittering.

The vessel doors opened...

... and the first wave of 'Nids came skittering through.

Jean and Sivark panicked, unleashing their lasguns on the horde. The arcing purple beams cut through the insectile creatures but they kept coming.

They barely paid attention when Baldur charged into the swarm without a weapon or even shoes. He had to be insane!

Until, with nothing more than his fists alone, he began to smash right through the swarm, crushing and scattering all those in his way. He was taking hits, but he didn't seem to notice.

The Tyranids attacked Baldur with teeth, claws, acid and poison gas, but nothing worked. "Can't you bugs evolve a way to make me feel something!" he howled as he ripped a Carnifex in half with his bare hands. He shot himself at hyper velocity and punched through the flanks of an artillery beast, killing it instantly.

On the drop ship, the Imperial Guard were pushing forward. Instantly, the smell hit Jean. The army brass had decided to hold the Tyranids outside the major urban centers. On a planet that was nothing but urban centers this meant holding the 'Nids in the largest garbage dump on the planet.

Possibly to keep away from the main areas. Likely for the best.

He kept on firing, shooting down several small ones that came too close.

As for the Hive Mind....

"Unknown agent...study...observe...adapt..."

The Tyranids pushed forth their Zoanthropes. Beasts with the power to use the Warp. Hopefully they could harm this unknown entity not harmed by conventional means.

Baldur charged with maniacal fury as he ripped through the storm. Reaching deep, he started producing ice magic, which shattered his foes like glass. One of his abilities before even his current curse, the ability to copy attacks used against him.

He then saw the psychic Tyranids approach and laughed as their abilities melted the brains of guardsmen who got too near. They screamed in gurgled agony before collapsing like heaps of useless flesh.
Others screamed horrifically as they were eaten alive by the small, maggot-like Rippers, consuming them right down to the bones and organs.

From the sky, hideous Harridans dive-bombed and ripped apart soldiers in mid-air. Larger versions of the creatures acted as bombers and dropped payloads of bio-plasma. Wiping out whole squadrons.

It was a horrific mess, and it got even worse when Raveners and Mawlocs, Bioforms adapted for digging, burst through the ground, ripping apart anyone dumb enough to be in their way.

The lines were being torn apart. But this was part of the plan. Losing a million men in an hour was losses the Imperial Guard could take.

That was cold comfort to Jean as his weapon melted in a shower of acid. This was the death that Baldur spoke of.

Overhead he could hear the thunder of guns as the artillery opened fire.

This sucked! All these deaths, and for what purpose! Just to hold off the endless swarms of Tyranids for one more day?

They creatures, Hive Mind included, were relentless. They felt no hate, love, pity, mercy, compassion, or anything like that. The Mind was highly intelligent...but it also was run by the primal need to feed...and it would feed.

Feed it did, as recycling swarms of worms began devouring the dead and dying. Biomass had to be recycled.

Jean started crying openly as the ripper swarm came for him.

He was saved accidentally by the Space Marines with flamethrowers. Who sought to burn the bodies and deny the enemy food and fuel.

To most Marines, these units did not matter. Only their battle-borthers/sisters, and the specialty units, like Kremlings, mattered to them in the long run.

But they hated the enemies more.

The Marines were charging forth, using the guardsmen as a shield and Baldur as their point of reference.

“Slay the foul xenos!” screamed Diomedes, “Show no fear or mercy!” He waved his chainsword in the air.

He too had noticed Baldur, and the man's reckless charge, tempered by the inability to die...or even be fazed by the hits.

But his thoughts were interrupted by a rumble...and in the distance...

A Bio-Titan came.

Diomedes ground his teeth. The beast had fallen from orbit and was purposed by the swarm to break the encirclement.

If the Tyranids broke through they could take over the cloning factories and access near limitless biomass.
Not an option.

“Call forth the Leman Russ Tanks!” He ordered.

Named after an ancient war hero, the tanks, simple yet effective in design, rolled forwards, ready to bring the pain. Solid and reliable, they would get the job done nicely.

A Banebalde tank, with its ELEVEN BARRELS OF HELL, would have been nice, but they were reserved for other battles and units.

They would use what they were given.

The tanks opened fire as one. Their shells struck the BioTitan and drew blood.

Yet the colossal monster pressed on, immune to pain or fear. It’s natural AA defenses shot down bombers meant to destroy it.

Tougher measures were needed.

Diomedes had an idea. “Get Baldur here and an antimatter warhead. Let’s test his durability.”

Two Marines with jet packs blasted off, only for their thrusters to blow Jean into a pile of his dead comrades.

Well...nice.

Diomedes had managed to overhear Baldur's name. It made him think...Yes...that was the name of Odin's son...but he always heard the legends state that Baldur was a peaceful and sedate God.

He was supposed to be a God of light and the stars.

The raving, rabid lunatic did not in any way resemble that.

Baldur was a damaged man, with more in common with a bolter than a person. Still, better his side wielded this weapon over the enemy.

And the King would want to know about this.

But enough thought. Back to the intense battle at hand.

The Bio-Titan crashed through mine fields and barricades like they were nothing. Massive electro plasma guns on its back fired at the city and wiped out artillery positions and bunkers.

And Baldur was only too thrilled at the idea of strapping a bomb to his back and suicide bombing the Tyranid Titan. See if that could make him feel anything...

...Oh, how BADLY he wanted to throttle his mother for this.

That was the price Baldur would ask.

He smashed through the horde like it was nothing. He was copying their plasma based attacks, keeping ahead of them.

None of it mattered, without personal risk or feeling these victories were hollow as old skulls.

He had not met the King yet, or his solders, but he planned to speak with him. To help track down
the bitch who ruined his life.

Incoherent screaming pealed out of Baldur’s mouth as he moved at the speed of light to his target.

Howling he pressed the bombs trigger as he penetrated the Titans’ armor like a bullet.

The flash of the bomb blinded Jean instantly. And then there was the shockwave.

The massive blast tore the massive Tyranid apart, the body chunks falling about, smashing into all units in the war area. The shockwave also took out a good number of Tyranids.

In the sky above, the King’s Navy began to push back the hive fleet. On the ground the Kremlings marched with the blood ravens to crush the remaining ground forces.

Jean gasped for breath as a medic dragged him from a burning corpse pile.

The others, including Sivrak, had perished. Now he was traumatized. Likely for life.

The Kremlings, fierce fighters, were respected by the Marines, and were fully aided.

Kremlings had fought the Horde tooth and nail. Even fighting hand to hand when there was no other option. They did so willingly against walking nightmares like these.

A fleet of Servo-Skulls began to float over the battle, announcing that all unclaimed dead would be recycled for official Mechanicus use.

Well, those of the Imperium Guard at least. Kremlings were either burned with honor, or became skulls if willing.

A show of faith.

As the Horde began to be beaten back, the Mind was forced to rethink. Any other being might be fuming with rage, but the Mind was above such emotions...or any emotion.

The grand strategy must be fulfilled. Tactical losses may be taken for long-term gains. Colonization efforts on this planet were in jeopardy

All available biomass in this galaxy must be consumed to counter the great threat.

They were coming...they were coming soon...

For now, the inferior life here must die...but it was difficult...perhaps it would be best to withdraw and evolve more.

The next best option was to withdraw, regroup and acquire more biomass.

The consumption of magically strong life forms was the Swarms next priority

Hopefully it would counter the likes of the humanoid who destroyed a Bio-Titan.

Who seemed to still be alive...

The Tyranids, until the thrall of the Mind, began to withdraw, consuming whatever they could on their way out.

At the very least, the dead bodies floating above the space battle helped ease the losses.
Bio-ships powered up their thrusters to make for less vulnerable targets.

Like a school of fish they moved as one in perfect synchronization.

And they were gone.

The battle was over, and the Marine, Kremlings, and Guards won...kinda.

Half a million men were dead, but that was a good day for the Imperial Guard. What really mattered was the Leman Russ tanks were unscathed.

The still living guardsmen would be shipped off to the next battle in less than an hour. Such was their fate.

As for Baldur...

He shook himself off, irate that not even all THAT could bring a sensation to him...

...then he felt something in his mind.

Odin was calling him, to return. Things needed to be discussed.

Much as Baldur was driven by revenge, the All-Father was not to be denied.

Plans were set in motion, begun long ago.

The time of Ragnarok was coming.

In other words...THEY were coming soon...

He tore open a portal to lead him back to his home realm and leapt through.

Diomedes watched this, recording it all.

The King would know of this indeed.

He turned to a Space Marine who had the temerity to aid an injured civilian caught in the wrong place at the wrong time

“Leave him, Brienne, or I’ll kill you myself!”

Breinne paused, caught off-guard by this statement. "Wha-"

"We are in a war of many fronts. I'm afraid we cannot risk resources on every souls that had the misfortune of being caught in the crossfire." Diomedes explained grimly. “For every one you save, three more will die. For that loss of focus you endanger your battle brothers and sisters.”

She choked back her emotions, “Yes, Captain!”

“This weak pity is your old self,” the veteran Marine said in a softer tone. “Let it perish with your enemies.”

Deep down, Diomedes did not like all this any more than she did...but as a high-ranking Blood Raven, he must focus on the job at hand to protect the Galaxy at home. One must remain firm in the face of horrors and loss.

War was business. It was not like a chess game. The two sides were not identical and the rules
changed with each battle. And that presumed there were only two sides.

To lead and win, a man needed to be cold and level-headed. Even if it hurt him deeply.

Brienne, this aside, was shaping to be an excellent Marine in his eyes. Ash was doing well too.

Grimmjow he kept an eye on. A fierce and skilled fighter, but vicious.

Ramsay worried him.

Diomedes had done bad things before he was recruited. Many of the people he killed didn’t deserve it.

But if men like Ramsay and Grimmjow were the future of the Blood Ravens, then he wondered in the most private part of his mind what they were fighting for.

He looked over the battlefield and sighed. A question or another day.

For now, return and regroup for the future.
The Guild

The Golden Whale, the mothership and homebase of the Guild, flew across the stars in the never-ending quest for spice and profits. Giffs, hippo-like Beastkin, patrolled the halls of the ship while merchants from all over showed off their wares.

Treasure Knight cared about none of it.

To him all the merchants, stockbrokers and bankers were mere parasites living at his leisure and off his success.

But he had business here. “Where is Eretus Profiteur?” He demanded if the high end mercenary guards in the ships financial district

The Giff saluted as he spoke. "Eretus has been seen going to the council room to meet with the others,” He said, nodding.

Likely was meeting with Moneybags and Roodaka, that was for sure.

Treasure knight grunted. Petty games.

Call him here and start early. Then again he’d done worse to others. Much worse

He stormed through the corridors and pushed past the guards into the council chamber.

Indeed, the three of them were there. Bubs was not among them, likely doing his own black market thing.

Same with Tamatoa.

“Grab a seat, or some” said Eretus, “We need to discuss this quickly.”

“We have privacy for now,” Moneybags informed the treasure seeking knight

Treasure Knight, under his helm, glared at the french-accented man and the fat bear, and took a seat. Roodaka, across him, rapped her claw against the table in thought.

Roodaka...a Vortixx hailing from the Industry World Xia. The realm was polluted mess, dedicated to forging weapons. It was also a female dominated society, and were the only ones allowed to leave the planet.

He hated her especially since she was his chief competitor. She had outperformed him in a number of ways and he plotted to take her down one day

“It’s actually better if upper management aren’t here,” she laughed, “They might not like what we have to say

"Oh?” Treasure Knight mused to his frenemy. "We have complaints to make about the crab?"

“Tamatoa is scum, filth,” Roodaka jeered, “just like us. The difference is we know where our bread is buttered”

“The King has given him free reign and now he’s bankrupting whole star governments!” snapped Moneybags. “If this keeps up, he could destroy the system that protects us from the Tyranids!”
Treasure Knight nodded. Sometimes he wondered if Moneybags was even dumber than he looked.

The Spice of various colors was an odd substance. Some of did come from Arrakis Worms, yes. But others also came from geysers on select planets.

Geysers that never ran dry, for reasons unknown.

So Tamatoa was doing a little spending? If they played their cards right, it would be no big deal.

Still, the matter did need looking into.

"This isn't my first Rodeo," he grunted. Testing the waters to see if they were playing him or if they were really worried enough to cooperate. "This isn't the first or even the fifth Tyranid invasion I've had front row seats to. The Guild is a business, first and foremost. National defense is not our priority."

"Then you're clearly not thinking right. Is your helmet too tight?" asked Roodaka. "Tomatoa is working with the King, working too closely for our liking. The King wants to nationalize the Guild. It's the only way he can keep the shipping lanes open after the war. Tamatoa isn't going to go back to pre-war profits after this."

War was profitable, honestly. Officials, Tamatoa backed the King and his allies...but in truth, anyone willing to pay good money and spice was fair game.

But wars DID end sooner or later.

The King was willing to throw out money like it was raining. This, however, would not go on forever.

Once the civil war and the war of the Tyranids were done, K. Rool would crack down. And for the same reason he turned on the Starks, he would turn on the Guild. And more specifically, its independent captains.

"I know Tamatoa steals from my vaults," said Treasure knight, "That comes from my end and it's my business. I'll kill the crab on my own time. So tell me why your plans won't interfere with mine."

"Oh...becuase we all want the same thing." Roodaka assured. "Stability."

"Yes, if ze Galaxy's economy collapses, all we get is anarchy!" Profiteur noted. "And zat is bad for business! We need to make sure everything stays afloat, even in these troubled times.

"In secret, Tamatoa has been hiring out pirates as impromptu mercenaries," Moneybags huffed. "These privateers are raiding stockpiles of spice and loot and delivering it to the crab's own personal stockpiles. He does this in order to avoid sharing loot with the King and avoid paying fees to the Guild's own bank."

Treasure Knight's eyes widened under his helmet. "Now that is new . . . and very, very troubling. I see the greed has finally gotten to his head."

Roodaka was silent as she processed this, then spoke. "We'll keep a watch over him and his cronies...but he is still Head, so we must be discreet in it."

"Tamatoa has made many captains rich," said Profiteur, "There are many Guild captains who owe their careers to him. Taking out Tamatoa will require an amount of discretion you're not known for, TreasureKknight. But I feel you may still help us."
"And who's going to replace him when the crab is gone?" he scoffed. "Moneybags?"

"I would never take on such responsibility," protested the bear.

"That," Roodaka stood tall. "is a bridge we'll cross when we get there. Until then, we should resume our duties. Dismissed."

"The spice must flow." The others responded as a parting set of words.

"The spice must flow." Roodaka nodded as they departed.

Later...Roodaka's private quarters.

The Vortixx stood before a bath of steaming water, perfumed with sweet oils and luxurious salts.

History would judge her by the quality of her enemies. It was the same with all great people in the galaxy. And she would triumph.

Treasure Knight was tough, pragmatic and ruthless, useful. But had no imagination.

None at all...and that was why she would win in the end. She stepped into the bath and rested, before turning on a set of four monitors.

Upon each one came Predacon Tarantulas, Sir Crocodile, Buggy, and Caesar Clown, four pirates she had under private payroll, used to either develop or ship exotic weapons.

"Hail to our queen and savior, the Lady Roodaka!" shouted Caesar Clown, maniacally greeting his mistress with glee and delight.

"It's good to see you too, Clown," she laughed. "I hope you haven't done anything I'll have to give you a beating for?"

He giggled and blushed because it was true. She won his loyalty by beating him within an inch of his life and threatening to do far worse if he didn't bend the knee.

Crocodile simply rolled his eyes and spoke. "Why have you called us, Roodaka? This is risky business, contacting us like this."

"Yes, yes, I know, but updates are always needed," Roodaka replied.

"Well, it's not easy stealing sacred relics from the Space Wolves!" shouted Buggy, "So make this quick before the big, angry men with a fur fetish come back to get their property!"

"I'm pleased you have the goods, try not to lose them," Roodaka purred.

Space Marines always had the best weapons and equipment...which made it valuable to steal and resell to any schmuck willing to pay. Roodaka would received a portion of the resulting profit. And these were willing men to do the job.

The buyers would pay top dollar for those goods.

And if the Space Marines found their stolen goods, they'd usually end up killing the people that Roodaka had sold it to. Perfect scheme to make fast cash without the long drudgery of dungeon crawling.
"Things are moving boys," Roodaka crowed proudly, "The rules are changing. The war is heating up and armies are moving to cover strategic assets. Which means we'll be hitting up Tamatoa's vaults and personal treasure holds."

"Yes, that's nice." Tarantulas noted. "But we do need extra sources of income. Maybe even one that can grant us good favor among the Houses."

"In that case, I do have a bounty you can try." Roodaka pulled up a holo-poster on each of their monitors. It showed a female pink-haired cat Beastkin with a grumpy expression. "Kokonoe Mercury. Former Tech-Priestess of the Adeptus Mechanicus. A brilliant scientist, rivaling that of Ciel, Moira, Relius, Rick, Gaster, and other such great minds. She was, however, marked for death for being too 'heretical' in her research. She fled, receiving her bounty, but her location is currently unknown. The Mechanicus have declared that this bounty is to be brought in dead only," Roodaka smiled, "And the more we hurt her before she dies, the more they'll pay. Get it on camera and the bounty doubles."

"Oh my," laughed Caesar, "I've got just the right chemical weapons for this!"

"Fah, I could do more with a gag and a bucket of water than you can with your inferior products!" scoffed Tarantulas.

"Them's fighting words!" Buggy snarled. "Wanna bet on that?"

"Now, now." Roodaka assured. "First you must find her. Galaxy is a big place, and she had plenty of areas to hide," She looked up. "Oh, and something else. While you're looking to bring back her bloody body parts to the Mechanicus, keep an eye out on the last Targaryen. There's good rumors going around that she's not dead. And keep in mind you won't be the only one looking for her."

"It's like winning the lottery!" Buggy scoffed. "At this point, the last of the Dragon Dynasty has croaked. Only they've probably drowned in a toilet or slipped on a banana peel."

"Oh, really now!" Tarantulas scoffed. "The Last is likely smarter than that to have survived that long. We seek her out and bag her for the spice! Hehehehehe!"

"Indeed, and continue to do your jobs. Over and out." Roodaka shut down the monitors

Roodaka walked into the warm bathwater, breathing in relaxation.

She would be the new Guild head. She would guide the Guild into unprecedented heights of power. In her vision, the Guild would be the only form of interstellar travel. She had the knowledge and the savvy to incorporate slipspace onto the giant guild ships.

Such a position would take years, maybe decades to build, but it would rival the power of the King himself with none of the responsibility.

Sure, she had to rely on rogue pirates like this (notably Tarantulas, rumored to be a worshipper of Tzeentch) but sometimes one had to work with what they had.

She settled into her bath. Time was all she needed to win.
Catelyn remained steely-faced as she watched Rick prepare another batch of pills for Jon. He needed them after his Psycho overdose. Without them, his adrenal glands would shut down and he'd fall asleep and never wake up.

She didn't want to admit it, but Catelyn almost wished for Jon to miss his pills. Her son Robb was in a more precarious position than ever. Same with all her children.

She hated herself for thinking this; Jon had never shown anything but love for his siblings. She hated herself for holding a grudge against this boy. But it was too late now to change.

"Mother," said Sansa, "The representatives of the Comet Miners and the Free Holds have arrived. Bran is requesting to be there with us."

Catelyn sighed. Bran was acting...odd nowadays, seeming to be not always there. A couple days ago, she found him looking though his tablet, musing about emojis and wondering if they had there own world...

...before concluding that was a stupid thought.

He'd always been called the summer child by Old Nan. Now, though, he looked like an old man in a child's body. His skin was cold to touch after the raven spice overdose. And he seemed to stare at spots in the walls for hours, like a cat. At least with a cat she could rationalize that they were probably hearing vermin in the walls.

"Bring Bran along," she instructed, "It will be useful for him to see diplomacy in action."

As she moved to the meeting room, Sansa felt the pearl handled revolver she kept with her at all times. Even when she slept. Life had changed.

And she wondered what Morty was up to. Rick had told her he was still at Silicon Valley, cleaning up the mess...and now had to deal with an infestation of Chromatics.

Really, so many issues at hand, they had to spread out for this...and according to Rick, the Chromatics had infiltrated several planets to rule.

Who could they trust? Mother talked about forging alliances for the long-term war effort. But anyone at the council could be in the pay of Dragons, Spies for the king or agents of Chaos.

She clenched her pistol through her long gown. Sometimes she had nightmares about JackKnife. Where the dream ended with her being thrown nude into the heart of Superjail.

She was torn from her thoughts as her mother took the seat once held by her father. Men and women, all commoners crowded in and took a seat.

"Welcome to what I hope will be the formation of the Northern Industrial Council," began Catelyn.

All looked about, chatting with one another in confusion as Sansa noticed Bran walking in...

...looking actually quite healthy. Must had just been a thing. Thankfully nothing Nurgle could give.

"Get something to eat, boy!" shouted Eugene Krabs, head of the Fast Food Guild. "You're as pale as a ghost and you're giving me the creeps."
"Your daughter is a mid level Psyker and she needs guidance," said Bran, ignoring Mr. Krabs.

"Never mind that shit!" exclaimed Marcus Kincaid, "What are you going to do about the Tyranids! My business went down in flames with Shelbyville Station."

"Yeah, well, that's life." Rooster said from nearby. "We've got more on your plate now."

"More, eh?" Nuclear head, Montgomery Burns, mused with tented fingers as his assistant/lackey/yes-man/sorta best friend/admirer Waylon Smithers stood nearby. "Whatever do you mean?"

"Do not presume innocence, Montgomery," Catelyn snapped, refusing to use the man's formal name. "You have an unofficial spy presence in the King's court. You know about the Chromatic Dragons as well as I do. And you must also doubtlessly know of the impending Grox invasion."

"You think too highly of me, Catelyn," laughed Burns. Only for Smithers to ruin it.

"You're entirely correct, Lady Stark," groveled Mr. Smithers. "Mr. Burns is most likely seeking your aid as King K. Rool wants to dismantle the Nuclear Association and give the pieces to the Adeptus Mechanicus."

"Smithers, that's not how you politic, you buffoon!" Mr. Burns snapped at his lackey.

"Sorry sir. But with the incoming hordes of monsters coming to kill us in nasty, horrible ways, I think we should be open." Smithers explained.

"Doof!"

"All of you are independent, non-aristocratic and not affiliated with the Crown," Catelyn went on. "If the King hadn't extended you to join him years ago, he never will, so give up hope on him showing mercy. Other interests will serve him better. And that's before you count the multiple galaxy ending threats knocking on our weakening front door."

"So what do you want?" demanded Mike Haggar, head of the Comet Miners. "We're not sending our best and brightest to die like cannon fodder!"

"What we're looking for is your combined economic and political clout," Began Catelyn. "Should we survive the Industrial Council will be permanent. It will rule in the North Alongside the House of Lords."

"Big promises," said the former wrestler, "But we Comet Miners value our independence. And so do these other little clowns you've brought with you today."

Grumbling began to file about, and Catelyn had to take breath. She looked around with Sansa and Bran, taking stock on who else showed up.

Bran saw them as they were. Not just piles of meat and sinew, but souls full of light, brains full of electricity, and minds full of hopes.

It was closer to what the Navigator saw who served with Rickon. Bran was seeing their personalities the way a bee sees colors on flowers a human can't. Or the way a snake sees heat.

He observed the mass of greed that was Fat Tony, smuggler, but also head of waste management in half a dozen sectors. How better to keep the Plague God at bay?
He saw the wounded remorse and pride that was Roy Mustang, head of Alchemists and the leader of their militant branch.

Easiest on his third eye was Harley Quinn, reformed criminal and head of the Beast Tamers guild. She was wild and free, like the animals she lived her life with.

He looked about more...

Stan S. Stanman, the head of the Ship Guild, known for selling ships at odd prices...and his plan jacket with a fixed pattern.

Merlin, head of the Magic Guild, mysterious as usual.

Merlin and Harley seemed to stare back at Bran as if they knew what he was doing.

"You got a real shine to ya, kiddo," Harley laughed.

"Call it a shin, so we don't get sued," Merlin chided.

Whatever.

Catelyn stood back up. "I know this is much to take in. But we are facing war of multiple fronts now. The King and his allies are mustering forces fast. The Inquisition is always watching us. We must do what we can to survive, lest the Kindred take us. My mother once asked me what is so important that we would suffer a defeat for it?" Catelyn eyed the group. "In exchange for your loyalty in this war and forever more, I'm offering a sacrifice in my House's overall power. No longer will the Kings of the North rule absolutely as they once did. The Starks will rule with the Council and the House of Lords or Not at all. You will all be the equals of our Bannermen."

"More big promises," scoffed Haggar.

"And what exactly do we have to lose?" Merlin asked with a bit of mirth. "Let us hear your suggestions, Mike."

"And how do we know you won't merge the Alchemists Guild with the Magic guild?" Mustang asked warily.

Already tensions were flaring, and Sansa began to distract herself with her mothers comment about the Kindred.

Of the Old Gods they followed, Kindred was the most mysterious. Actually two beings, the Wolf and the Lamb, they represented Death...and were not directly worshipped.

Coming to this meeting had further frayed her confidence. These were the people her mother hoped to court in order to win the war? Their purses and knowledge would pay for the war?

Her stomach knotted as she thought further about the dual Gods of death.

What was the price of her soul? What defeat was she willing to suffer in order to save something more precious?

Then, she spoke in turn. "Look, I know what we're asking it a lot, but we have much to give you in return. Protection, freedom, rights. Things the King would seek to take. Things Chaos wants to pervert."

"You all value your independence, I understand." Catelyn reasoned. "Most of your guilds have been
self governing since the end of the Valaryans. None of you were ever brought to kneel by the Dragon Kings. We don't ask you to bend the knee, we ask you to stand tall with us as brothers and sisters in the defense of our world, our galaxy, our lives."

"Haggar, would you spend the rest of your days running from the splinter fleets?" she demanded, "Stan, would your ships carry you far enough that the Skaven could never find you? Mustang, could your alchemy ever devise a cure for Chaos when all mining and agro worlds are dead?"

To her shock, Harley slammed her fist down on the table. "Sure, Caty, I'll join ya. My beasties could use a workout and all that junk. Plus, your daughter there is kinda cute, if you get my drift. I'm the galaxy's most eligible bachelorette."

"Harley, don't push me." Catelyn ground out.

"Okay, an angry mom. Even I'm not crazy enough to take that on."

"I'm in as well." Mustang sighed. "I'm still a bit conflicted, but fence-sitting is not what I want to do."

"Aye," Merlin nodded. "Let us work against the menaces who would seek to bring us ruin."

"I'll come along if I can help write the new charter for this new Star Nation," Burns gave an evil grin. "I see much profit in it."

"And we are grateful for you saving our lives," said Smithers.

Burns grit his dentures. "Smithers, don't grovel to anyone but me!"

"Good," Catelyn nodded as many others made their agreements. "Anything else?"

"Ah, yes," Burns nodded. "What have you heard about this Last Targaryen?"

"As far as we know she died with her brother and good riddance," Catelyn scowled. "The King's own assassins have seen to that. You know how thorough K. Rool was in eliminating the old order."

"True, but this not a rumor I would ignore," Burns smiled, "Take it as friendly advice."

"I heard she's hot," said Harley.

"And she has huge boobs," muttered Mustang.

"You haven't changed at all since losing your eyes," muttered Merlin.

Catelyn took a deep sigh, and spoke again. "Never mind. We'll look into when we can. Any other questions?"

"Yeah, what do I get outta this?" It was Stephan Abootman who spoke.

"Noble speaker of the Galactic Canadian Bureau," said Catelyn, "Your people will finally have legalized statehood. Her patience was wearing thin for this holdout. "We will pay well and on time for your exports of raw materials and processed food stuffs."

"I'm with the Canuck on this," snapped Eugene Krabs.

Truth be told, though, nobody really LIKED Abootman, being an arrogant and egotistical dumbass who always tried to make himself look the hero. Rick made no secret of his hatred for the man...part of the reason he was not allowed to attend this.
Abootman might have been more morally bankrupt than old Monty Burns. A real achievement in and of itself, the fact that he represented his star nation, spread out among nebulae and asteroid belts but with no proper planets was an unfortunate fact.

It was, however, an untapped source of Spice and other raw materiel they desperately needed. Just the same, Rick would likely hide a rattlesnake in his underwear drawer, or plant a bomb in his cereal or some such nonsense if he thought he could get away with it.

"Canada demands respect!" he shouted, "And we demand an advanced position among the council, equal to your Stark Lords."

Sansa wanted to reach over the strangle the man for his arrogance, and doubtless Catleyn wanted to do the same. If they were mere soldiers, they might have done it...

...but they were leaders, and had more responsibilities.

Their luck held out when Eugene Krabs seemed shocked. "Advanced position? For you? Buddy, I want profit much as the next man but I'm not bending my knee the likes of you."

"Plankton is working for the Chromatics, he's going to destroy your business in the future and we can help," Bran blurted out of nowhere.

"Is that so?" Said Krabs reluctantly. "Well, I guess . . . Fuck it, you'll have the Fast Food guild working for the Starks, Lady Catelyn."

"You people give me no respect!" Abootman snapped. "For that, we shall go on strike! Until we get more moneh!" With that, he stormed out.

"The Canadians will send him and his followers to perish on an ice flow," Bran supplied again.

"That's too quick fer him," Harley scoffed.

"For once I agree with you, my dear," Merlin agreed.

"Good Riddance to Bad Rubbish," Burns laughed, "I give the Canadians a day before they send a replacement begging to join this council."

"Well, for now, all are dismissed." Catelyn spoke up, and soon all began to file out.

"We've wine, beer and whisky for ya'll hard working people," Rooster said in his most polite tone. Actually it was full of bitterness and sarcasm, but it was better then he usually was.

"Bran," Catelyn hissed. "We need to talk."

Her son nodded, "Yes mother."

Mother and son stepped aside, and Catelyn looked down at her son.

"Are you all right? You've been acting...off of late."

"A lot has changed, mother," he told her evenly, "Not all of it good, but i'm not in any more danger than I already was."

"In the meeting, you said things our spies took months to learn," his mother gave him that look.

"Bran, are you a Psyker?"
"...I don't know." He admitted, before he decided to lay the bombshell to her as Summer came up to him. "I had dreams about...them, the Four Ruinous Powers...but they don't seem to be able to 'touch' me."

Catelyn clapped a hand over her mouth.

And Sansa, Sansa just knew that she needed the help of the Wolf and the Lamb.

If the Chaos Gods had their eyes on her brother for any reason then death was sure to follow. She could not allow that to happen.

But...could she do that now? Doing that would risk a lot!

No...it would have to wait. It was foolish to try now.

"If I had more raven spice, I could expand my powers . . ."

"No!" Catelyn shut that down. "We'll get you protection, from magic and alchemy. Merlin can help and so can Rick. Nothing will harm you."

"I'm not sure they can help me, mother. And in my dreams I saw a girl who was like me."

Catelyn looked up. "Another one?"

"I think...I think it may have been Schala."

Catelyn felt her heart drop. From the sound of it, it seemed that Inquisitor Adrastia was right, at least in part. "The daughter of Zeal? The daughter of that wretched queen?"

Bran nodded numbly. Catelyn looked concerned. What was going on? Something was coming, something they could not prepare for.

When she was a little girl first learning of gods and magic, she thought nothing could be more special than getting the attention of the gods.

As a grown woman of many years, she knew there could be no worse fate than to attract the eye of the higher powers. Let alone the Ruinous Powers.

She forced a smile onto her face, "Son, everything will be alright, you can trust me."

Was that correct? She had to convince herself right now and-

A communicator call came through. Checking it, Catelyn noticed it was from Sawyer. Good, the documentary update could get her mind off things.

Good war propaganda was essential to the war effort.

And even then, when the war was finally passed, people could see the war in its entirety. It would mean more to the people of the Galaxy than raw statistics and numbers ever could.

She took the call, thanking both science and the arcane for the devices. "Sawyer, how are things?"

"So far, so good." The cat replied. "Rickon's doing well, and so far, we've got good footage of some warfare...grim work, though."

"We got fucked hard by Skaven!" shouted Danny behind Sawyer, "And then we got attacked by
Orks! And then by this crazy bearded guy with tattoos. I mean, hello, Lady Stark."

"I'll forgive it for now, Danny."

But something Danny said caught her attention. This man with the tattoos. She heard scattered reports about this man, with the name of Baldur, a god of light.

Odd. Best think about that later.

More gods.

In the ancient stories, it said that when gods walked among men that the end times were upon them.

She refused to believe myth. But the gods who walked among them were no laughing matter.

"I'm assuming you're on Arrakis now?" Catelyn asked.

"Sandstorms, sand worms and the locals are about as friendly as starving Tyranids," said Sawyer, "It's Arrakis all right. Home of the Galaxy's largest spice reserves."

"We're sending our files to you, Lady Stark," said Danny, "We got lots of good heroism... and other, darker stuff if you're ever ready for it."

"Danny, I'm now Head of House Stark. I need to see these things to make sure I can keep my position." Catelyn said.

"Fair enough."

"And for that reason, you should be aware there might be an invasion of the planet," said Catelyn, "If that happens, you can find shelter and refuge at Seitch Tabr. They're the oldest allies of my family and they were at the forefront of the anti-Targaryen movement on the planet for yeras."

Danny was less than thrilled about the idea of being stuck with insane desert nomads.

But Sawyer was diplomatic, "We're war reporters, my lady. Danger is our business. We'll serve you and our people to the bitter end."

"Right, and now I must go. Over and out." Both sides disconnected.

Catelyn turned to her daughter, "Take your brother to the medical bay. I need to talk to Rick in private."

Sansa nodded as she took her younger brother and led him away, Summer following.

Sansa wasn't confident of the situation, despite her mother's diplomatic victory. The revolver at her hip felt like a tiny, inconsequential weapon.

"I won't let anything happen to you, physically or magically," Bran suddenly spoke as if reading her thoughts.

Summer growled in agreement, and Sansa remained silent as she walked off with him.

Catelyn soon found Rick on the communicator. "Yeah, Morty, just pelt the Husky from a safe spot until it's dead, and take over it's body...yes, I know White Dragons are all over the Arctic Zone, just
be careful. You're tougher than you think, Morty," said Rick with rare kindness, "Don't fuck up."

Rick then turned around and cut the line, "Lady Stark, whatever it is, I swear to fuck I didn't do it!"

"Never mind," said Catelyn coldly, "I need to talk to you about my son, Bran."

"Yeah?"

"He’s been dreaming of...things...” The Lady of Stark said. “Even the Four Dark Gods. Claims they cannot taint him.”

“Eh, sounds like good news.” Rick shrugged.

"The Ruinous Powers have their eyes on my son," she snapped, "That makes him a target."

"Lady Kate, no offense, but that's what Chaos does," Rick tried to explain. "They go after people who don't deserve it. But I think I can whip up something to protect the people around him. Honestly I'm more worried they'll get to him through you or his sister."

Catelyn was silent at that. The Powers were insidious indeed. Always plotting and scheming to gain an upper hand in the Galaxy. Urgash and Hell, by contrast, we're more overwhelming force.

"Well I just so happen to know some guy who can help," Rick smiled, "Technically he's dead, but for a guy who meddled with Godlike forces he was pretty smart."

Catelyn didn't like where this was going. "What in the Old Gods are you talking about?"

"The Forbidden Planet my lady, home of the late Dr. Morbius," Rick crossed his arms. "It's all still there."

The woman frowned. "And last I heard, under Zeal control as well."


Catelyn glared at Rick, "Thank you," she hissed. "But it's my call. Not yours."

And he had a good argument. She had never been a praying woman, so how better to keep away the Gods? "Will Bran meet the same fate as Mobius?"

"What do you mean?" Catelyn asked.

"He didn't die a natural death," Rick explained. "He worked with old but powerful sciences...and made his Id manifest into physical form. To stop it, he had to let it kill him. And if your boy is like I think he is," Rick went on, "I think that damn machine down there from who the fuck knows when could be the key to unlocking his potential."

"Don't treat my son like one of your experiments," Catelyn snapped. "No matter what you've seen, what horrors and Demons, none of them will hold a candle to me if you harm my son."

"Just think of it like letting Jon and Robb do their thing with swords," Rick explained, "But Bran's powers are a fuck of a lot more deadly."

Another moment of silence...things were changing fast. All their enemies were making their
move...faster than one thought.

As if they had sensed something, and were trying to establish footholds.

"My son's safety is paramount," Catelyn repeated. "I would cut down Urgash himself if he threatened my son."

"Don't worry," Rick assured. "I'll have Olaf and maybe Rooster walking ahead of Bran to set off any traps or deadly shit. Oldest trick in the book. Your boy won't get a scratch."

Catelyn thought, then nodded. "Just...careful. Zeal may be arrogant, but she is far from stupid. She'll know when an invasion occurs, even if a small unit comes."

"Well, that bitch took my left nut about ten years back, so I've just been itching for a shot at revenge," Rick Grinned, "If we hit the place during an Angel invasion, we can slip under the radar and fuck off before anyone knows we're there."

Catelyn stepped close, meeting Rick with a Steely glare. For once, the mad scientist actually flinched.

"Do it," she said.

Rick, at this show of force, simply nodded, then turned and walked off. Bran, Summer, Olaf, and Rooster would all be part of this.

Catelyn was silent. This was all overwhelming...she missed her husband at times like this.

But there was no time to break down. She had a war to win.
Realm of the Sabbath

Dany sat upon her command chair on her starship, silent as she observed her loyal crew and friends. Razorbeast, Jack, Ashi, Al, Erza, Calvin and Hobbes. All part of her council in her rebuilding House.

But it wasn't enough o just have a council. She needed an army as well...and they would be arriving to that planet soon.

"So, can we trust the Monster Girls?" Jack asked.

"Yes," said Ashi, seconding her husband, "Can we trust craven sluts like this?"

"I believe they preferred to be known as Wanton women," Al elaborated.

"Funny, I thought they were known as wily women," Razorbeast suggested.

"They have their own practices," Calvin said. "All females, though."

"It's free love," Hobbes explained. "After murder, the highest crime among the Monster Girls is jealousy and non-consent. It's big to them.

"So they want to have their cake and fuck it too," said Ashi skeptically.

"Yeah! And it's great!" Calvin gushed.

"Well our ETA is less than five minutes, so save any cake fucking for after dinner," Razorbeast laughed.

Dany just rolled her eyes.

Truth be told, she was taking a gamble here...but it was all she got, so she had to do it.

For some reason, she found herself thinking on Calvin's 'Old One' comment.

Records held little information on them, only that they were otherworldly beings that appeared in a section of the Galaxy many millennium ago, led by one known as 'Cthulhu', and laid waste to several planets before abruptly vanishing.

That alone wasn't exceptional. There were many great threats in the Galaxy.

What really got her interested was the fact that after Cthulhu struck, everyone who survived just seemed to forget. Of one million survivors from a population of trillions, only ONE had recorded anything.

Even Chaos left its mark, subtle as it could be it wanted to make an impact.

It was like the Galaxy was just trying to forget the trauma.

But right now...right now it was no longer important. He and his kind were gone. Moving on was likely the only thing they could do.

It was then she noticed the planet approaching.
Erza winced as the planet came to view. There were Space Marine Battle Barges stationed in orbit. Either moving to orbital bombardment or to refuel for the next warzone. She could see parts of the once lush planet which were now barren, from either industry or war.

"Sabbath," she muttered. "Their homeworld and the name of their religion."

She winced as Calvin held her hand. "It's alright," he whispered. "You're safe. I won't let anything happen to you."

She could not help but smile at that.

Jack looked over the Marines. "Dark Angels by the looks of it," He mused. "One of the more zealous Chapters. They use the twin hands of secrecy and iron violence as their methods. Harboring some dark secret from an impossibly ancient past; some awful heresy which may yet damn them."

"Lucky for us they don't know we're here," Alphonse smiled. "I'm getting better at building stealth fields on our ship."

The task now was to sneak past the Dark Angels and try to find the 'Overlord', the high queen of the Monsters that Calvin and Hobbes had mentioned, the one who gave the demihumans their powers.

Truly, Dany feared the worst for the Overlord, Queen Mother of the monster girls. "Is our information still good?" she asked Ezra.

"The Overlord should be hidden in the mountains," she bit her lip, "She's still being hunted by the King's men for use as a sex slave. We will take her and unite the monster girl resistance."

Jack readied his sword. Likely the Kremlings doing the main hunting. Dark Angels were not the kind of rape and use sex slaves. Far too dedicated in their own duties. The Dark Angels were brutal, without remorse. They were also without sadism. They did only what they saw as necessary.

What did concern him more was the attention of hostile third parties that could be drawn.

Since the takeover of the planet many years ago, bandits, Beastmen and other creatures had started to move in. Most alarming were the Angels.

The celestial creatures had always hated the monster girls; their lifestyle of free love and freedom from jealousy went against the Angels hierarchical, master-slave view on love and relationships.

Paradiso Angels...in the end, not much different from any Demon.

Dany watched silently as they slipped around the Dark Angel ships, trying to make sure they were not spotted.

Sabbath itself loomed, a multi-biomed planets of rich resources.

Even with deforestation and acidification of the oceans, the planet was still lush. The planet was still fighting for life, beauty and the right to live as did its inhabitants.

The ship entered atmosphere and burned through the clouds, over the high mountains. The height of them was breathtaking; some of the tallest in the galaxy.

And could they heal this place? It was possibly with powerful magic...

...but for now, the mission. Calvin knew of a hidden base some the girls kept in case of emergencies, and this was one such thing.
In a high mountain pass was an old fort. An ancient monastery where the priestesses of the Sabbath would contemplate the meaning of the universe and conduct wild orgies that could last for days.

The ship landed atop the mountain. The cold winds blew, but for some reason Dany felt warm. Some internal heat protected her while the rest of her crew could only resist the biting chill.

"Thar she be!" Calvin bellowed theatrically.

"We can see that," Razorbeast deadpanned.

"Hang on," Al raised his hands, "I've managed to gain access into their vox communicators to listen in. They won't know about it."

A sound of static, then a voice.

"This is High Interrogator-Chaplain Asmodai of the Dark Angels," The Marine spoke deeply. "By Holy orders, we are to purge the scum of the world and claim it for the Kingdom. We are to find the Overlord and destroy her, for doing so will depower our foes and allow us to fight with assured victory. The Overlord is to be terminated with extreme prejudice and her head to be mounted on a spike and her body quartered," bellowed the marine on the vox. "As the King wills it so it shall be."

"This doesn't give us much time," Jack said worriedly, "The Dark Angels must see the Monster Girls as a serious threat. I don't think they'll be leaving any time soon."

"Well, at least they're not doing Exterminatus," Hobbes optioned out.

"Because those aren't warfare weapons, Hobbes," Erza pointed out. "They're cleansing devices."

"Never mind," Dany cut in, "Can you hail the rebels in the fortress?"

"The Monster Girls used seeing mirrors to talk over long distances," Calvin elaborated as they marched through the snow and wind. "Even if they're broken, I know the runes to put them back together."

"Assuming anyone is alive we can hopefully get an answer," said Hobbes, "I feel bad for the girls. But I've never known kings anywhere to tolerate people just living their lives."

Dany looked up at the fortress. Quite large, likely more at the bottom underground. There was a hearth where they could build a fire. Moving a little ahead, there was what clearly used to be a winery if the barrels and distilling equipment were anything to go by.

The racks with dildos and sex toys left nothing to the imagination. Spun from enchanted glass the tools of the sex priestesses were still as good as the day of their first use.

Dany blushed while Razorback got a good chuckle.

This was still the outskirts...and suddenly they felt a lot of eyes on them and arrows knocked at their bodies for-

"Hey, wait, it's us!" Hobbes raised his hands.

"Remember the noodle incident!" Calvin shouted.

Dany had no idea what that was, but it had results.

A soft voice echoed through the shadows of the old fort. "Calvin?" The girl coming out from the
darkness was young and pretty.

Then Dany saw the less human features of her
Along with the fact her lower half was that of a snake.
A Lamia type demihuman.

"Quiet," said a voice full of low strength.

Striding confidently was a girl with the features of a dragon. Her beauty marred by a missing eye, under an eye patch and whip scars on her back.

The dragon girl approached Dany, ignoring her entourage. "I know Calvin and Hobbes, but I don't know you."

Dany paused, thinking. Should she tell the truth now...or just...

Fuck it.

"I am Daenerys Targaryen, the last of the line. Cast out before I was born of my rightful place by K. Rool." She stated.

A flat stare.

"Lady, one thing you should know," the dragon girl leaned in, "I don't fucking like Targaryens. I don't fucking trust you."

"Well neither did I at first," Jack smiled, "But once you get to know her she's very nice."

The dragon girl ignored Jack. "You're alive only because of my two friends. So talk, before you start to annoy me."

Dany swallowed. "I know this a lot, but somehow...I wish to aid you, and be aided in return to help reclaim my birthright. Be my army, and I will give your great lives and worlds."

"That’s nice, but what are you going to do for me?" asked the dragon girl "What are you going to do right now, this very minute for us."

"I know your Overlord is in danger," said Dany, "We can save her."

"Well she's in the hands of Angels," smiled the dragon girl, "Kill the Angels, bring back our queen and maybe I'll let you live while you're on this planet."

"What Angels? Dark Angels or Paradiso Angels?" Calvin had to ask.

"The forces of Paradiso have been stuck on this world like a cancer, old friend," said the lamia girl, "They took our queen and mean to sacrifice her for her sinful ways."

"Killing the innocent is hardly something we can stand for," said Ezra, "The wicked will perish, no matter how they cloak their villainy."

"They have supressed her power, which would allow her to both heal the planet with ease and repel the Marines." The Dragon explained.

"Then her survival is of most importance," Razorbeast noted. "And with the Dark Angels tracking
her, we must move fast. Where would the forces of Paradiso be holding her?"

"If it means anything to you, the Dark Angels don't like the Paradiso rats either," said the dragon girl. "They think the Paradiso vermin are heretical and should be destroyed."

"Meaning they'll fight each other if we lure them on," Dany grinned a bit.

"Risky, but worth a shot." Al nodded.

"And the current Paradiso commander is that shithead, Temperantia," The Dragon noted as she and some others began to gear up as well. "Best be careful."

"I'll bring you their head," promised Dany, "and your Queen alive."

The dragon girl nodded, "There's a magic doorway in the sachristy, it should take you to the mangroves where the Angels open and guard their portals."

Around her, Dany noted her own people were prepping themselves with weapons, like swords, blasters, and clubs. All perfect for smashing Angels.

As a rule, Angels were very disciplined. They were good at formation fighting. But they lacked the individual power and variety of Demons. more than that, their commanders were extremely arrogant and rigid in their thinking. Their need for order was their undoing and many times they'd been undone by undercover, covert or guerilla action.

As such...

Dany, her comrades, and the strike forces (mainly Lizardwomen) began to close in on the location, keeping to the shadows. Eyes were about to see if any foes were nearby.

Unlike the cold of the mountain, the heat of the mangroves was oppressive. The air swarmed with insects but none touched Dany. She felt good, closer to the fight.

The heat within was growing, faster and faster.

Some part of her wanted to strike down the Angels personally, drink their blood.

She held the rifle that was given to her close. Not give into rage now. She must-

In an opening not far from them, a Gor Beastmen was tossed to the ground, with its attacker, a Beloved Angel, following. The Gor snarled and tried to pick itself up, but the Beloved was fast, and smashed it into the ground with its fists.

The Beastmen gurgled and died. Dany raised her rifle, remembering her training. A gun needed focus, calm and a controlled mind to fire properly. Marksmanship was the opposite of blood rage and passion. It needed cold blood.

With the silencer on the barrel, Dany saw the Angel's eyes and pulled the trigger.

The round only made a sound when it popped the Angel's head like a grape.

Strong rifle to bring down an Angel of that size and strength. Lucky shot in fact.

She knew that the lions share of the fighting would be done by her people. But she had to prove to the Monster Girls that they were serious about getting their aid. Not just using them like so many would be pretenders and conquerors.
The Dragon smirked. "Not bad actually...but we must press on for now."

They could hear it...the sound of wings. Angels were nearly.

As was Temperantia, by the rushing winds.

Embodiment of the Virtue of Temperance. The Angel was more than not a patron of repression and oppression.

The creature's pride and greed was matched only by its hypocrisy.

And its destructive power was not to be underestimated.

And there, under a cage of silver and gold was the Overlord.

A Succubus, with great power, currently suppressed.

But she was not one to beg, cry, or plead, especially to some damn Angels.

The Succubus Queen bore her torment well. The worst of it was the way the Angels had forced her into modest, un-revealing clothes.

They hated her sexuality, her freedom and her wild nature. It was anathema to them as much as order was to demons.

They sought to punish and kill her. For she offended their god. And the God of the Angels was a cruel, jealous God.

Jubileus, they called her, right? Eh, whatever.

"So, you going to wrap this up anytime soon?" The Overlord asked. "Or are you just waiting for me to drop dead of boredom?"

"Keep talking and I will tear off your face and throw it to the swamp rats," warned the angellic creature, "I have standing orders to keep you alive until high noon. The orders do not specify against mutilation or breaking your elbows and knees."

It was all spoken in Enochian, so only the Overlord and the hidden Razorbeast (able to translate as a Cybertronian) could understand the talk.

"So your plan is to kill all joy in the universe, how does that make you better than the demons?" the overlord spat.

Temperantia motioned for one of its lower minions to come. A chest was presented full of hooks, knives and shears. "For your insolence, your tongue will be removed. If you keep barking your lips will be next."

Time was in short order and Jack was moving in with the lizard girls.

"Oh, you may try. I had a lot of bite," The Overlord taunted.

An Affinity picked up blade and began to move in for the cutting...

...and as such, did not notice flash of white...until said flash bisected it vertically.

The sword of the Samurai was forged by ancient and powerful gods from the power of human
goodness. The sword of Samurai Jack would never harm the pure of heart, but it would harm the lawful evil without resistance.

The angel cried out as the sharp blade cut through its torture tools and then smashed through a section of armor on its segmented body.

The minor Angel fell to pieces as Temperantia bellowed in rage.

"An intruder! Destroy him!"

Jack had no idea what was said, but he had a good idea on what was going to happen, judging by the multitude of Angels gearing up around him.

In his time, Jack had seen the Angels build concentration camps to kill those they deemed unworthy of life. He'd seen them destroy worlds that would not bend the knee. He was just returning the favor.

"You are unworthy of your name, Angel," he hissed as he slashed a dozen more flying enemies with a single stroke.

Arrows tipped in black iron flew from the trees; cursed by their faith, the arrows struck the minor Angels like pincushions.

Howling, all combatents of Dany and the Monsters came out, ready to shed Angel blood...and get those Halos as well. Could be good on the black market.

Several Beloved began to rampage on the forefront, flanked by several pairs of Fearless and Fairness, dog-like Angels with powers over lightning and fire respectively.

In reply to the flying angels, Hobbes and Calvin charged form the swamps, leading armies of powerful jaguar girls. Unlike other cat or neko kin, these ones were powerful swimmers.

"Taste the salty ballsack of justice, you braindead Angel whores!" Calvin screamed as he waved nunchucks above his head.

Affinities kept flying about, but were being smacked down as well, leading to more tougher Angles to come, such as the serpentine Inspired.

The serpentine angels flew above the mangroves, only for one of them to be dragged into the water by Ashi's chain hammer and slashed to pieces. The blades cracked the monster's marble like armor and exposed the raw, naked muscle underneath.

Erza herself charged through the mess, using her swords and magic. Unlike the others she charged directly for the master angel, the Temperantia. She cried out as she drove her sword through the stone face of the beast, exposing a drooling, animalistic mouth.

Needless to say, his true face being shown made him angry...and he decided to fight fierce.

A storm began to kick up, with rubble being picked up as a windstorm and lighting began to form.

Erza fought back, drawing three different swords and throwing them at the angel. She screamed as the beast lashed out with teeth, fingers and lightning. Her anger burned brighter than the wrath of Jubileus as she used her magic to swap into a specifically anti-magic suit of armor. Not good against guns or knives, but perfect for fighting and killing Angels.

The Audito's fingers stiffened, forming into a gatling-gun, firing off rounds of magic missiles to blow
Erza was a damaged woman. She would never get over the loss of her friends. But she had lost none of her combat effectiveness.

A magic shield of vibranium was summoned and blocked the gunfire, as her swords slashed deep rends into the angel's raw red, oozing flesh.

The gatling gun stalled as Razorbeast struck it with a built in rocket launcher.

"Taste it, asshole!" He snarled, before transforming into his boar form and gored several lesser Angels to death.

But just when things were looking good...

"HALT, HERETICS!"

The bolter guns of the Dark Angels cocked. Their weapons raised. The brother captain raised a vast chain axe high in hand.

"In the name of the king and of the Seven, you will be purged."

In the underbrush, Dany cursed. The Dark Angels were smarter than she'd hoped, but there was still time to steal away the Overlord and run.

Asmodai was at the forefront, his stern mask hiding his face, but not his dark stare. "So, the faithless fight amongst each other. It matters now, for in the end, it is all the same."

There was a thunderous explosion in the distance. "Canon fire!" cried Ashi as she charged at Dany.

A medium sized mortar shell hit the ground where she had been standing. The dragon princess gawked at what would have turned her into hamburger.

The Marines charged, as their heavy-duty armor would shrug off the medium and light mortars, but the Angels would have no such luck. The trap had been laid well.

None of that mattered as Hobbes broke the Overlord away from her chains.

A pulse of power formed, invigorating the Monster Girls about the area, giving them the energy they needed to face the Marines head on.

Al was still busy with the Angels, using alchemy to create spikes to impale them. He panted as he worked...until he noticed Asmodai rushing him.

Alphonse put up a defensive ring of atomic fire . . . and it didn't even slow down the Space Marine Master of Repentance. With a growl of savage power the Marine grabbed Alphonse's head in one hand and tore it right off.

Dany felt herself scream but could not hear anything.

She felt herself burn and felt flames, a blast or dragonfire threw back the marine.

Yet as Alphonse's head flew through the air, it was caught in a magic stasis field. "One of my talents," said the Overlord in telepathy, "I can save a severed head if I catch it soon enough. And he'll need a new body. We can give it to him, princess."
Already some centaurs had taken the body, hauling it away to safety.

Asmodai had picked himself up, but before he could do or say anything, Ashi, furious beyond belief, was upon him.

He knew of her and the so-called Daughters of Aku. "Let me send you to join your sisters!" He bellowed. "Since the Samurai is too much of a coward to finish the job himself."

"You made a mistake," she hissed, as her blade hammer flew at the marine . . . and pulled the pin on a fusion grenade at his belt.

Asmodai noticed it a bit too late...right before it detonated.

The force of the fusion bomb threw him back, as the weapon in particular was designed to crack open heavy tanks and super massive monsters.

Ashi knew that the Space Marine wasn't dead, but he was going to need some serious prosthetics if he wanted to get back into battle.

Ashi sniffed and cut down an erstwhile angel. "Mistress, we must order a retreat!" she shouted at Dany.

Dany looked about as the Overlord stood tall suddenly...and unleashed a wave of energy, ramming though Angels, and blowing them all to pieces.

"Or maybe that could happen."

Chunks of Angel fell from the sky like gooey salsa. The swamp was littered. The ensuing explosion ripped apart the head Angel Temperantia, which had the effect of flattening the swamp and detonating the Space Marines hidden mortar battery.

The rift the Angels entered through was intact, so reinforcements would come. But the crew could leave the Dark Angels to shut that rift, let either side bleed one another out.

Temperantia himself released his essence to recover in Paradiso.

The two Angels would likely kill each others while the others escaped. Dany and her team made their fall back with the Overlord.

The Monster Girls moved through the swamp like ghosts, no root or hole or quicksand stoppped them in the slightest. The princess herself was carried by Samurai Jack atop the back of a Centaur girl.

"Will Alphonse be alright?" she wanted desperately to know

The Overlord laughed, "We can do with the head whatever we want. It's your choice, really."

"Er..."

"He'll be fine, we just reach my hidden fortress, and I'll take care of everything, including the planet. But now, let me reward you," said the Overlord raising an eyebrow in a suggestive way. "I've been tortured for ages, but I'm willing to host a simple party at the mountaintop. It would be rude of you to turn me down after saving me, now that I’m your Banner Woman."

"You mean it?" Dany looked up.
"But of course, after what you did!" The Overlord laughed. "But first, I will both heal Al here and the planet once back at home. And when the enemy is driven out, then we celebrate! I ask much from the woman I'm swearing," purred the Overlord, "But I'll give much in return."

"I'd take it," chortled Razorbeast in his animal form, "We've had fuck all to celebrate right until now. And a queen needs to learn how to throw a party and be the life of it."

Much later...at the true castle...

Al's head was submerged in liquid, slowly growing back his body from the axolotl DNA. The Overlord was in a circle, preparing a spell to heal the planet.

The spell itself would reverse the deforestation, the toxic waste pollution, and so much more. It would also shut off the planet to portals from Paradiso and doorways to the Warp. The forces of Hell would be blocked as well.

Spiritually, the planet was a safe place and Alphonse would walk again.

The magic pulse spread rapidly throughout the entire planet, healing the damage done and restoring the life on it. All others, including the inhabitants, celebrated the victory.

And then, the regenerative capsule drained and opened, and Al, naked, tumbled out, sore but alive.

The boy alchemist gasped and held his arms out, he started to fall as his new legs trembled, but a neko girl in nurse's uniform caught him, and even provided him with a blanket.

The boy coughed, his teeth chattering. He slowly began to register the room and his queen. Steadyng himself, he gave a small bow to his Queen.

"Well, I'm alive." He said.

"And we're glad for it." Dany smiled as Jack bowed as well.

"Am I a bad person for wishing I had never had that happen to me?" Alphonse whispered.

Jack hugged the boy, "You're the bravest person I know, Alphonse. There's nothing wrong with what you felt."

"Someone get the Red Bull!" shouted the Overlord, "And bring out the Buckfast for the Queen of Dragons!"

"The Red Bull?" Dany asked as monsters girls from all over the world gathered about.

"Just a code name for a little elixir. It's a simple caffeine elixir," the Overlord assured as musicians and drummers began to strike up a heart pounding tune. "The Buckfast is what we call wreck the hoose juice. Or sex milk, as my mother called it."

"Please never use the words sex and milk together again," Dany asked as a dog girl pushed a flagon into her hands.

And not just her. The rest of her cabinet got some as well. Ashi took a sniff, and spoke. "Well, smells good enough..."

"You sure about this?" Al had to ask.

"Well...what could be the worse thing to happen?" Dany had to ask as the Monsters watched
eagerly. "Bottoms up."

With that, the team drained their drinks...

...

...

Nothing seemed to happen.

"Hmmm, what do you think?" Dany asked Erza.

"Well, it's kinda sweet," Erza began. "With a hint of-

She stopped short as she and the others froze up, with wide eyes and shrunken irises...and Hobbes thought process spoke for them all.

"Oh, we are through the fucking rabbit hole now, ladies and girls!" said the tiger.

Dany suddenly threw her head back and began breathing fire as the Hamster Dance blasted through her ears.

"BEHOLD!!!!" Ashi screamed at the top of her lungs. "THE FUTURE OF TOMORROW IS TODAY!!! AND WE ARE GONNA FUCK IT LIKE A NEST OF SNAKES!!!!!"

"WOOOOOOOOOOO!!!" Razorbeast shouted as everyone got pumped and ready.

And the next few hours were a bit of blur, to be honest...and when focus came back...

"Ooohhhhh..." Al groaned, lying on the floor, covered in food and semen. "My fanny hurts. Who am I? Where am I?"

Ashi suddenly woke on a broken couch, "Oh, something's poking me."

She felt the figure shift next to her, and the snake girl grinned, "Wanna go again? I polished a fresh dildo for you?"

"Where's Jack!" Ashi screeched, pushing the snake girl off her.

"Oh, over there, with the harpy." The Lamia causally explained.

"WHAT?! WHAT THE FUCK HAPPENED?" Ashi looked around, noting her lack of clothes.

All around were scattered girl of the monsters.

Jack cried out, "Mother! Wait, you're not my mother!"

"I can be," laughed the harpy.

Where was Dany?! Where was she?!

She was just stirring on a large bed.

The Princess woke up, feeling sore all over. Her hair was flying like the crest of a song bird and she was sticky and wet down south.
She groaned and rolled to her side...

...and a nude Erza was laying right next to her, staring dumbfounded at all this.

"Oh my goodness, this is awful!" Dany blurted out, like a teenage girl playing doctor for the first time.

"My lady, I've failed you," Bawled Erza, starting to cry.

"There there," Dany tried to comfort, while ignoring the nipple clamps Ezra wore, "Nothing to worry about."

Erza shuddered, then hugged back, both trying to ignore the blush forming.

Razorbeast, in boar form, staggered from another room. "The battle is over...are there any survivors?" With that, he collapsed.

"And that's the thing about buckfast," laughed the Overlord, dancing in while wearing a sheer nightgown and a butt plug, "It gets you fucked fast. I like you Dany, I've not had dragon sex in some time."

Dany sighed as she got out of bed. "I'm assuming you have ships, right?"

"But of course!" The Overlord nodded. "Oh, and that reminds me...something came up for you in the shuttle bay somehow. A personal ship to replace that old one. Styled like a dragon head. A letter said it was for your from...some guy named Lubba?"

"Lubba?" Dany was confused as she tried to cover her chest. Erza meanwhile slunk off in shame. "I saved his life years ago when I helped him survive a bee sting. Is he alright?"

"He's fine according to the letter," scoffed the Overlord, "I read your mail by the way. I just wanted to be honest with you. Give it a look."

She recalled that star-being, who had called himself an engineer of the stars.

"My people have starships stolen from the old Targaryen fleet," said the Overlord, "Your family never much liked my kind because we refused to bend the knee to sister fucking reprobates who don't even know how to lick pussy properly. We could use your alchemist to upgrade our fleet."

Dany nodded, ignoring the insult to her family. "You'll have Alphonse when he is ready." She glanced over the note from Lubba. Evidently he had managed to acquire magical items called Power Stars, helping him build a brand new starship just for her.

Upon arriving, she noticed it was not MASSIVE, but nice-sized, shaped like a dragon's head. It was covered in greens and comforts, and generated its own mini atmosphere.

Inside were a workshop, library of codexes, a kitchen, and several bed-rooms. Her ship for her council.

"Oh my," she giggled to herself, "Alphonse is going to love this."

"It's an amazing piece of work," laughed Razorbeast, "I nearly busted a nut when I saw the guns on this boat."

"No need," said Dany, "You're my soldier, not a diplomat. Leave the pretty words for others."
Good. Her old ship was falling pat anyways. They had it scrapped for parts.

As the base was set up and several monsters girls warrior prepared to launch off as a fleet, the Overlord had something to else to propose to Dany.

"Bed warmers?"

"I know how you feel about sex, Princess," said the Overlord, "But take my best dragon girls. They'll suck and fuck all night and between the five of them they've got tens of thousands of confirmed kills. And they're also good with assassination and espionage."

"That last bit is useful," Dany conceded, "Can I trust them?"

"Do you trust me?" laughed the Overseer, "No, but I think there's something more in you that'll at least get them to follow you. Maybe you've been feeling a resistance to heat lately."

"I would take it." Calvin noted as he passed nearby.

"Queens do need companions." Hobbes added.

"And Gertrude the dragon girl makes the best macaroni and cheese in the Galaxy," Calvin salivated, "I know, I've done the research over a thousand years."

"That's a plus," Razorbeast added.

Dany nodded as the others boarded the new ship, the Great Drake, they would call it.

And soon...off into the stars with a new fleet.

"We are the spark that starts a burning inferno," she whispered to the planet below them. The Dark Angels were gone and the kings forces who returned would be crushed.

"And you are the first, the one true dragon," whispered a dragon girl in awe.

Dany looked forward. The dragon girl was right, but the once princess of Targaryen had no idea what that meant for her or the galaxy at large.

For now...time to grow her empire.
Battle of Arrakis

Jon Snow winced as he dry swallowed the pills Rick had concocted for him. It was hard here on Arrakis, as the dry winds made it hard to swallow anything and even for royalty, water was at a premium.

More dour than usual, Jon felt the weight of his sword in its scabbard and felt the handle of the gun in its holster. Those things felt good. More than anything he wanted to be fighting and never stop fighting. Nothing else would make sense.

He scowled as the Fremen woman approached him, her blue within blue eyes inscrutable. "Your brother wants you," she blurted before leaving.

Jon sniffed.

He and Robb had yet to prove themselves to the brutal desert people who lived as Stark allies. But they would.

He sighed as he followed the woman out, taking note of Rickon outside helping the ragtag recruits he brought in to get organized as Shaggydog stood nearby.

Behind him, his own Direwolf, Ghost, followed closely.

Seitch Tabr was vast, with large caverns excavated from thousands of years ago. According to the Fremen who lived here, the Knights of Greyskull had once lived in these hallowed halls. Jon had never heard of them and there wasn't a single book or computer document that could back up their claims.

Down in the dusty cairn lit by glow strips, the documentary film crew was getting rare footage of a Fremen stronghold.

"Oh man," Danny gushed, hyperventilating, "I used to read about these places when I was a kid, but I never thought I'd stand in one!"

"Yeah...it's something else," Pudge looked about in awe. "So this how they survive."

"Likely the ONLY way," Francis muttered, lounging in her bowl as usual.

"Water is tight on Arrakis," croaked Cranston in the dry air. "Sandworm larvae suck up most water. Most people have to rely on ice mining in the far north, or kill and dehydrate their enemies like the Fremen do."

"Yeah, like they would," Laughed Pudge.

"Do I look like I'm joking?" the old goat groused.

Jon kept on walking. Now was not the time to think about this. Robb needed him, and he would come for his brother.

Robb stood with the Sietch elders, planning the attack. For now, he was listening. The Wild Matron, blind but gifted with the power of sight touched the map. "Our armies will be struck by the forces of Chaos; a dark Chapter. Specifically Chaos Marines."

Robb looked grim, "When will they strike us."
"In the next hour," the crone coughed, "They are seeking the fabled black spice and will start by launching an army of slave soldiers, then corrupted guardsmen and then their Chaos Marines."

Jon pursed his lips. Chaos Space Marines. One of the most feared types of foe in the Galaxy. Bad enough when typical people fell to Chaos, but a Space Marine? That was just a nightmare right there. Mostly he'd seen pictures of what they left in their aftermath. Blows that could turn men into a fleshy paste; smashing through the toughest armor. Regeneration and reflexes borderingly on the godly; with the gifts of their patron Gods.

They were not unbeatable.

Their main weakness was their strong individualism and lack of battle cohesion.

"Let's give it to them," said Robb, "We hid the black spice in the worst of the deep desert; somewhere where we can lay land mines, bombs, booby traps, ambushes. Everything and anything we can throw at them. Far away from the population centers."

Jon nodded, knowing this would be the best thing to do.

"All of them ready to die for the glory of their Gods," He noted grimly.

"Not sure about that," Robb smirked. "Heard Chaos Space Marines are afraid of death. Technically, they all think they want to die," he muttered, "They just want to die spectacularly. None of them wants to get blown apart by a bomb or crushed in a rockslide. Let's give them a death that'll displease their Gods and send them back to whatever hell shat them out."

"The abandoned Seitch Mordhaus," said one of the Fremen Elders, "Their tribe was wiped out for their cannibalism. The Seitch itself is set in a mountain range in the deep desert with one path in or out."

Jon nodded grimly. So many evils in the Galaxy, all willing to do what it took to get the malevolent Gods to notice them and ascend them into high ranks.

“And there is more news,” said a courier, a man from the Mojave in New Vegas. “Your mother secured a new alliance and the comet miners are delivering a stolen Baneblade tank.”

Jon broke an increasingly rare smile. “Tell me I’m not dreaming, Robb,”

"Eleven barrels of hell," Robb nodded. "We could use that."

“No one weapon alone can win a war,” the old woman cautioned “be wise where and when you use this ancient machine.”

“I’ve got just the spot in mind. Start moving the troops.” Robb ordered, “get the ornithopters to air lift the Baneblade. We’ve got space marines to crack.”

“Those guns will crack their power armor like eggs,” Jon smiles grimly.

At least, they hoped so.

Rickon had noted the Titans nearby, and spoke to Robin. "How's the arm, solider?"

Robins eyes were cold and unfeeling. “Top of form, General Stark, sir!”

Rob nodded. “As you were, soldier.”
Robin saluted but kept tense. The pills the medic gave him kept the shakes away. He needed to be perfect come the next fight.

Chaos...he and his friends had done a lot of reading about it. None of it was very pleasant...and now, a first real taste was coming.

The Skaven were mindless and brutal. Robin hadn’t slept since that first attack. Drugs kept him functional without any sleep. Sleep was for the weak.

To fight Chaos would demand hearts as deadly and focused as the guns they carried.

...He hoped he wasn't losing his mind. He did not want to make his friends worry.

Least of all Starfire.

He didn’t actually remember when he last saw Starfire smile. They had made love like wild animals, but there were no smiles, no hugs or love.

She watched him and he watched her. And Robin would sooner cut his own legs off than let anyone lay a scratch on her

“Don’t give me that thousand yard stare,” said Cyborg, “or I’ll be stealing your booze ration.”

Robin sighed. "Sorry, just...lost in thought."

"Look, I know this is all far out," Cyborg went on, "But as long as we stick together and face our foes, we can get through this alive."

“We believe in you,” said Beast Boy, “and I believe in us.”

“Titans forever,” said Starfire, squeezing his hand

“And I’ll personally kill and eat anyone who messes with us,” Raven added.

Charming as usual. Why Beast Boy liked her.

But now, it was time to prepare the battle stations and weapons, and whatever war beasts they had.

Chaos would not wait for them.

The Chaos marines would take time.

But they weren’t the vanguard.

Portals opened up everywhere on Arrakis. From the empty desert to Arrakeen city.

They were cloned suicide bomber zombies. Created in vats on a demon world.

The first one let out a piercing shriek and charged at Robb.

Well, that was fast. But Robb was armed and ready, as were many others.

One by one, the bombers were shot down at safe distances within the city, trying to keep casualties of their own low.

The old woman had foreseen this. Fremen snipers gunned down the monsters with inhuman accuracy.
One such bomber lunged at Raven, who encased it in a force field. The monster detonated inside, its body briefly swelling like a tumor before blowing up.

Well...that was nice. And looks like the forces of Chaos lost the element of suprise.

"To the Outer Walls!" Jon ordered everyone. "We'll pick off the incoming form there."

Danny, holding his rifle, grimaced. He was a journalist, but he too would be involved in the fight for lives.

“Oh crap,” he moaned, “I thought we could at least get into a bunker first.”

Sawyer cocked her combat shotgun, “Just get behind me. Sweetie!”

“Move the black spice!” Robb shouted over the gunfire and madness, “We stick to use plan!”

Some of the Fremen were moving the stuff in the more secured areas as the Starks, the Teen Titans, the film crew, and many other fighter reached the outer walls, the twilight sky gleaming...

...and many bombers attempting to rush from the ground far below. Easy pickings.

Crews lay down fire with guns bombs and in some cases psychic powers or magic.

The suicide bombers died by the thousands. Some blew up in mine fields or were shredded by razor wire.

Others got lost and perished in the brutal desert heat.

The Fremen ornithopters powered up, as did the Stark aircraft.

The bombers were just a distraction, a taste for things to come. But still best to slaughter them lest they damage the walls, which would allow tougher foes to come.

That was the way of Chaos. They didn’t avoid casualties. They embraced them.

For now. The main thrust of the Chaos force knew where rob stark was and the spice.

As the aircraft took off, more portals opened up and strange fighters that were equal parts flesh and machine spewed out.

Were those...Dark Mechanics? Could be.

The Dark Mechanicus was known and feared widely. Their hunt for knowledge leading them to follow the dark Gods.

For them to work with Chaos Marines meant they were desperate for the spice or the Chaos Marines had a new leader unseen who bullied and bought them for their blasphemous machines.

Dark and depraved, they would do anything for knowledge...and some prime material was here to carve and examine.

Like that was going to happen.

“Show them the special Fremen warheads,” Robb commanded.

The Stark men fired missiles that did not explode but gave off deep vibrations through air and sand.
The Dark Mechanicus we’re unprepared for the sand worm that shot through the sands like a whale breaching.

The titanic beast swallowed a hundred hybrid flyers and smashed a hundred more.

Still a great number remained, and held back this time to avoid the leviathan decimating their troops.

Time to bring out some artillery of their own. Mainly massive lasers.

The hell canons were bastardizations of more ancient and elegant weapons.

Each gun was a living creature and they were fed souls of the innocent. Or they were fed slaves if those were in short supply.

The first of the Hell cannons misfired, but blew an entire mountain into dust.

Beast Boy stared dumbfounded. "Well...let's not get hit by those."

"Take them out!" Rickon ordered the troops.

The Hell cannons were not alone. The Dark Mechanicus had teleported in anti-aircraft guns and machine gun nests. The lives and twisted souls of the suicide bombers had been the sacrifice necessary to pull the rest of the hardware into the real world.

The Chaos forces returned fire and men and aircraft alike fell.

A thousand kinds of ordinance fell from plasma to acid guns to guns that fired dogs that spewed killer bees.

The Starks had to lead Chaos to the chosen sight, because the Chaos Marines would be the backbone of the invasion. Break that and the rest of Chaos would scatter like rabbits.

Hopefully they could do that soon...or else they could be overrun.

Yet what no one knew...something deep in the sands of the desert began to stir...

Fremen used mechanical vibration devices called thumpers to attract and move sandworms. There were no sandworms here.

It was a being of the ancient times that had remained hidden...until it smelled Chaos.

But for now, it lay in wait.

Robb and his army fought on, dodging and blocking boiling blood.

Seitch Mordhaus was coming up for the army on the run. Robb and his men were no strangers to fighting retreats. But they were definitely strangers to the things which shrugged off the pre-spice explosion like it was nothing.

The detonation took out a number of Stark forces and blew sand into the air.

That was nothing compared to the Kaiju stepping out of the sands

All eyes turned to see this massive...beast shaking off sand and debris of machines it had emerged from underneath. A large four-legged beast, covered with spikes, a long tail, and mighty horns.
With a great cry, Anguirus began to rampage over the Chaos forces.

"...Well, that's something you don't see every day." Jon noted.

"He’s been there for a thousand years," the old Fremen wise woman groused. "If you were only receptive to what he was dreaming about you would notice."

On the ground, even Raven's jaw dropped. "Oh shit," she gasped. As the titanic beast stomped towards the Chaos forces, the Stark armies were on the verge of breaking in panic.

Robb had grabbed a loudspeaker and shouted. "Keep strong, men and women!" He barked. "He may not be a friend, but he hates Chaos more, that is for sure! Keep to our tactical retreat!" He shouted, "Withdraw to the hold point! Do that and you will make it through!" His voice raised to a thundering shout. sometimes you didn’t need pretty words to get your point across.

Anguirus shrugged off the Hell cannons. They made him bleed, but given that those same canons had turned a mountain into dust, it showed the Kaiju's power.

Coming up was the foreboding black stone of Seitch Mordhause. The place where the Chaos Marines would strike.

Right now, the Chaos Marines and their commander would probably laugh at the losses the rest of their forces, slaves and allies had taken. But then they hadn't seen the Baneblade yet.

Chaos Marine of the Black Legion had come, serving all the Chaos Gods, and were one of the most dangerous threats the Galaxy would know.

Their was the oldest and most horrific of all the Chaos Marine Chapters. Their founding went back to the Dawn of Heroes when a mighty leader and demigod turned his back on good and went over to the darkness.

Serving Chaos Undivided, the Marines teleported outside the rock of Seitch Mordhause, just outside the spiritual and technological wards that were meant to keep their kind out. They ignored the vast Kaiju who killed their erstwhile allies. They only cared for the black spice and the lives they would end.

All for the glory of their Gods! They began to shout in praise.

"BLOOD FOR THE BLOOD GOD!!! SKULLS FOR THE SKULL THRONE!!"

"NURGLE LOVES ALL!!"

"ALL ARE PAWNS OF THE GREAT DECEIVER!!"

"LONG SHALL BE YOUR SUFFERING! JOYOUS SHALL BE YOUR PAIN!!!"

Beyond their black carapaces, the Legion were all unique. An army of a million and an army of one. Each Marine a reflection of their dark master and the misery and bloodshed they wrought upon the world.

Slaves they could lose, even the Hell Canons were nothing next to the price of the dreaded black spice.

This was the first time men and women like the Teen Titans had Seen a space Marine, let alone a Chaos Space Marine. They weren't ready when a Marine's bolter shot through Raven's shield and
blew her legs off. They weren't ready when a Chaos Sorcerer gave Starfire a stroke through her magical defenses.

Robin froze as Cyborg and Beast Boy responded with barbarous rage towards the armored monsters who were marching their way.

Beast Boy felt his feral rage increase at the sight of Raven's previous injury. While yes, it could be healed with axolotl DNA, that was not on his mind right now. All that mattered was ripping these fuckers to PIECES! He came a massive rhino, and charge though the ranks of the Marines.

Robin, meanwhile, after his moment, saw nothing but...red.

Beastboy was suddenly lifted off the ground by Cyborg, "They'll kill you!" He screamed, "Don't break ranks!"

Robin's hands trembled and he made to charge at the Chaos Marines, only for him to be pulled back by other Stark soldiers. He couldn't even form the words for it, until Sawyer grabbed him by the face and shouted. "They will both be fine! The Doctor have them! Don't get killed!"

Robin could barely speak as he was dragged back to the fallback point.

More and more the Marines came, all ready to die for their fickle Gods. All hoping for the chance for the reward of Demon Prince/Princess.

Most would likely die, their souls mere playthings for the uncaring Gods.

To the Chaos Space Marines, victory was worth any price. There was no amount of death and pain that wasn't worth the price of victory. They had no camaraderie, no concern for each other. Power was all they could think about, like an addict in the deepest throes of addiction but a million times worse.

They marched without resistance. Not much caring how or why the Starks and Fremen had withdrawn. They walked over landmines with ease and laughed at booby traps and explosives left for them.

That changed when they heard the sound of the Baneblade power up its engines and take aim.

Well...that was not the plan.

Rickon, who had managed to get it, spoke though the radio. "All right, ya bastards! Prepare for ELEVEN BARRELS OF HELL!" With that, he opened fire.

Rickon actually let out a squeal of panic when the supermassive tank let loose the first barrage. He looked around at his bodyguards, "Did anyone hear that from me?"

All his guards shook their heads.

Grandpa Simpson in his old Imperial Guard Uniform went on another tangent. "I remember when I first heard a Baneblade Fire off! Old Vance Stubbs was at the head of it. A brown note they call the sound of those guns on account of they make you shit her britches."

"That's nice, dad." Homer muttered as he watched some Marines get pasted.

"And we were damn lucky to get such tanks. In my day, all we got were revolvers that could hold six bullets at a time. And our ships ran off tiny corn oil. We had to make sure everything we did
counted. These days you can just fire and forget."

"We've heard this twelve times!" snapped Rickon as the upper body of a Chaos Marine went flying and crashed on top of a nearby command table. "Shut up, Abraham!"

"Bah-wah!" Abe yelped and saluted, "Yes sir, Lord Stark, sir!"

Another Marine suddenly had his head explode, followed by another.

Krystal scowled as she projected her mental powers over the battle field as Star Fox and Star Wolf backed her up with laser fire.

Their role was to keep the Marines from escaping. Some of them would. At least they tried.

Wolf blew open a Charging marine with a chainsword using a proton torpedo launcher.

"Where'd you get the toy, Wolf?" Fox asked.

"I had to kill a dozen people with my bare hands to get a weapon strong enough to kill Space Marines," Wolf scoffed, "I'd have to kill you if you knew where I got it."

"Cold, but I guess that's fair."

"Man, this sucks!" Falco griped. "Much prefer fighting from the air."

"Our ships are wrecked and we need money to make full repairs," Krystal reminded Falco. "The money is good, you just need to be able to put yourself at risk."

"Do you think my job is all sunshine and fucking rainbows?" Falco asked sarcastically.

Panther just growled as he focused on his own task: Gunning down some Marine touched by Nurgle. Disgusting and vile things that were an sin of existence in his eyes.

The Marine would normally be untouchable save for the fact that the outer carapace had been cracked by residual blasts from the Baneblade.

Those cracks were starting to heal over like the shell of a sea creature.

An armor piercing explosive shell between the healing cracks took care of the Nurgle monster.

Beside him, Panther heard Leon laugh as he ruthlessly gunned down the enemy. He really got a kick out of this.

Leon never pretended to be a good or moral person. But killing Chaos Marines was a good deed even he would get behind.

With a stolen plasma cannon made by the Adeptus Mechanicus, he was turning Samuel Hayden's own tech to his own advantage.

And now he was taking on a contract rich enough to pay for use and abuse of the plasma canon. Life was good.

One by one, the Black Legion unit began to fall apart, and it was tuning into a rout for them.

Any back-up was being crushed by the raging Anguirus, who, at one point, leapt into the air and rained down energy spikes upon the army.
These were the units that Chaos could not easily replace. The crushed Marines were sent packing with no spice and no glory.

It was a defeat, but an acceptable defeat in the eyes of their commander.

Another time WOULD come...and the Gods would be satisfied by the souls they DID get in the end.

As the Black Legion left, Anguirus went quiet as Rob, Job, Rickon, the film crew, and others observed him. The massive Kaiju seemed to gaze upon them...before digging back into the sand and tunneling away.

Robb let out a gasp as the Kaiju vanished. He’d been holding his breath while the thing had stared at him. Meanwhile Jon popped another heart pill; he was already starting to see black around the edges of his vision.

"What are our losses?" Robb asked Jon.

"Not more than we could afford to lose," Jon said in a cold tone Robb had never heard before from his brother.

War was already getting to him, it seemed.

Not to mention the loss of their father, with the added insult of the body being destroyed beyond repair.

Robb had seen Jon eating those pills like candy. He'd seen his face and fingers turn blue when he was late taking them by even one minute. Not to mention that the Psycho overdose might affect Jon’s chance of having a kid.

Robb put a hand on Jon's shoulder, "Come, brother," he deliberately said, "Let's take care of our men and then grab a pint for ourselves."

Jon seemed...happy at that. He nodded and followed his brother.

Their mother's alliance had begun to deliver. The Baneblade was just the start.

Rickon would be leaving soon. His cargo ship would be moving on. With the new Industrial Council in play, the Starks could now move men, machines and raw materials like never before in greater volumes than imaginable.

Robb and Jon noticed the Teen Titans. Rickon said of all of the recruits, they had attracted him the most. They could see why. A lot of fight in them, despite the injuries they received.

He could see the way they looked at him. Like he was some kind of long lost hero, standing there with the likes of Bran the Builder; a man so legendary it was said even the Kaiju followed his command.

Robb put on the look, he was well practiced with it. He was as good at hiding his feelings as any poker player or politician.

Unlike Jon, he couldn't just be cold to the world, act like these deaths were nothing but numbers in a spreadsheet. He didn't want to be that kind of man.

No, he had to inspire everyone under his command, and he had to act like a good man to do so. War
was taxing enough as it was. People needed someone to look up to avoid going mad...or worse.

"Take care of the injured, give the troops an extra ration of rum," he commanded his generals. "Mother got us more money and weapons than we could ever have hoped for, let's use it. Swap these men our for fresh troops."

"As it will be done," nodded the Fremen Wise woman, "Our tribe stands with House Stark always. And may the Honor of Greyskull be upon you."

...Still wished he knew more about that.

Peppy came up to him. "Well, we did good. Better than other such battles against those types of monsters," He noted.

Robb could only nod.

"You did good, Robb," congratulated the older hare, "Your old man would be proud. There's no reports of civilian casualties on the line. This is about as good as it gets."

"We believe in you, Robb!" shouted Slippy Toad, giving Robb a hug.

Robb stiffened, "Okay, as your commander, I order you never to hug me again. But thanks, Slippy."

The toad chuckled nervously as he backed away.

Robb took note to the film crew looking over the footage they gathered.

Danny was pale and silent. Cranston and Woolie were trying to comfort Pudge. "It's alright kid, we wouldn't let anything happen to you." said the old goat. "You got your life ahead of you, I've only got arthritis and retirement ahead of me if I'm lucky."

Tillie looked stunned by it all, while T.W. snapped open several fortune cookies, muttering about getting a good one, yet kept on failing.

"A masturbator will sodomize the town?" T.W. was disgusted. He read another fortune cookie, "J.J. Jameson fires everyone? Screw this, this sucks."

"Don't be relying on those." Wolf grunted from nearby. "Those are cheap toys designed to give people a false feeling of control."

"No offense Wolf," said Woolie, "But you're an asshole and me and my friends really didn't ask for your opinion."

Wolf shrugged, "Keep wasting your money on those things. I'll spend my hard earned cash on better weapons."

"Well, on the bright side," Sawyer noted. "A Kaiju in action...that's neat."

"Yes," Robb noted. "And I still wonder how it got here."

"Kaiju go where they want," Cranston pointed out. "They don't age. They don't take orders from either Kings or Gods. Just count yourself lucky this was one of the good ones."

"Maybe we should charge Anguirus rent for living on our world," Robb smirked.

"And who's going to tell him, you?" Jon laughed, cracking his first smile since New Vegas.
Both could only laugh at the joke, trying to keep in good spirits from the battle.

They would need it in the future.
In the earliest days of the Civil War, the planet Koredai had pledged itself and its resources to the King. They were loyal to him. Part of that was due to this planet being Unofficially a "Cathedral Planet."

It didn't fit neatly into any one class of planet. It had a mixed number of exports and a modest population but there was nothing much to distinguish it from most habitable planets, save for the vast Cathedrals on this world that had been built by the Aegon the Conqueror thousands of years ago.

Right now, the planet was defended by the Imperial Guard, as well as Clubmen Militias. If they'd know about the shipment of spice passing through the spaceport, they would have been worried. And even more worried about secret shipment of Warpstone.

And they would have been even more worried if they knew that spies were among the ranks who DID know of the valuable materials. Warpstone, notably, was a mutative and powerful substance, and could be used to buy star systems...

...and Skaven were known users of them.

The Planet's ruling council was ready to fend off pirates and raiders and the Tyranids and Grox were far away. Their world should have remained safe.

However, in the King's Quest to get valuable and dangerous materials to his war effort, he had inadvertently doomed this planet.

The Skaven fleet remained cloaked around Koridai. Their ramshackle ships staying out of scanner detection. Leading the assault was none other then Queek Headtaker; killer, assassin, monster and the only Skaven to be totally fearless. The hunched rodent beast with the heads of his enemies on his armor lived for the thrill of the kill like his lesser brethren lived for the high of citric acid.

"Attack-Attack!" Queek shrieked as he stabbed a Tek Rat just because.

They were more than ready to strike. And with them were not only tradition weapons and Rat-Ogres...but several breeds of Xenomorphs as well.

Skaven were among the few in the Galaxy who knew how to properly control and breed these creatures. Slaves made great incubators.

The Xenomorphs were ferocious, an ancient species who were more than capable of standing toe to toe with the dreaded Tyranids. The Gray Seers, the Moulders of Clan Moulder and the Tek Rats of Clan Skryre had all contributed their knowledge to taming the beasts.

Snarling and slavering, captive Xenomorphs in telepathic control harnesses were barely in control. But that was enough.

Many eager slave rats were looking forward to eating anything that the Xenomorphs killed.

And soon, once within range, they would drop to the capital in swarms, laying waste to all in their path, and taking what they desired, and then some.

All for the Horned Rat!
The second that the King's cargo ship docked, was the second that the Skaven attacked.

Their seers blocked off the navigators, the black hole projectors threw off computer-based navigation so help could not arrive and ships on the planet could not leave.

A mini-Warp storm was generated from a tear in the fabric of reality, dealing with and destroying a number of fighters and ships in orbit. Leaving only luxury yachts modified with guns dating back from the Targaryen war.

Before anyone knew it, they were swarming the city...but after the shock, the counterattack came, as soldiers were always on guard for attacks.

The Imperial Guard were joined by Clubmen Militia; men and women armed with clubs, guns and farm tools who were ready to fight off pirates and raiders as well as marauding soldiers from either side of the war.

Many of them were old enough to have fought in the last civil war and a large number of the Guardsmen Generals were veterans of that and the Tyranid wars.

Though their guns and tech were old, their soldiers and officers were tough veterans.

No dumb rats and their pets would take them out today, that was for sure.

All eyes turned to the defense leader.

Planetary Governor Zangief put his arms across his massive chest. He was getting on in his years and his beard and mohawk were starting to go grey. But the ferocity and power hadn't left him.

"Citizens of Koredai!" he shouted into the microphone in his office. "I fought with House Targaryen in the Civil War and I handed Robert Baratheon his only defeat before I broke his neck like a dry noodle! These rat-fucks will not have our homeworld!"

With that, he threw the microphone into the hands of his secretary. "Where are they hitting?" He demanded of Imperial Guard General Chun-Li.

"They're at Space Port 1-D," she replied, "But their forces are attacking everywhere."

"So to Port 1-D we go!"

Best cut them at the origin point to starve the rest out, it would make them for easy pickings.

Some Skaven had reached them and leapt at them with daggers...only for Zangief to crush them like bugs with his massive muscles.

"HA HA! You are no match for the RED CYCLONE!!"

The Rat Men were swarming everywhere. From out of the walls, a Rat Ogre exploded . . . and got utterly wrecked by Zangief.

The huge former wrestler and soldier laughed as he punched out the giant rat monster. Leaping on top of it, he started punching its pointy face in. Before throwing it to the ground and ripping out the fusion engine that kept it alive.

Another rat slave had his head kicked off by Chun-Li, followed by another...and another.

Chun-Li was no helpless damsel. At all.
The Xenomorph was fast. It was faster than anything Zangief had ever seen. It was faster than Gutter Runner Skaven, faster than Space Marines.

It lunged for Chun-Li. He reacted on instinct.

Zangief screamed as the Xenomorph bit down on his arm. His eyes bulged as the vicious creature tried to rip his arm off.

Only for Chun-Li to kick it off and save his arm in the process.

His thick muscles managed to keep most of the damage at bay. Good. Always took pride on those.

They began to advance, battling past the monsters.

Zangief noticed the heavy metal collar around the beast's neck. Grabbing the tail, he smashed the Xenomorph into the concrete floor of the ship hangar.

It did not kill the monster, only break off the psychic control collar.

The newly freed Xeno smelled fear and attacked the thing with the greatest source of it. The handler that once held it.

Xenomorphs were predictable creatures. They would always attack an armed over an unarmed target, a fearful target over a steady target and would die for their hive.

All for the purpose of getting the toughest to implant eggs. Such was their ways of life.

None of that mattered because Queek and his team were moving in on the King's ship.

The paint and serial numbers marked it as nothing more than another generic freighter owned through a guild shell company. However, the crew were armed with state of the art power weapons, power armor and even a Squadron of the Brotherhood of Steel were there to act as extra muscle.

K. Rool did not trust the cargo to the Guild.

Too greedy for his liking. No, best use regular yet trained fighters for this kind of transport.

He trusted the Guild to haul ore, grain or slaves. This was too valuable.

Aboard the transport vessel, The Brotherhood Paladins fought with laser rifles and flamethrowers for close quarter combat. The laser rifles were largely ineffective on the Xenomorphs but the flamethrowers were another story; either burning the creatures to death or melting their handler collars.

Either way, the Xenos were greatly multiplying the force of the Skaven ranks and that was all Queek needed.

Jumping atop one suit of power armor, he drove his daggers into the sockets of the power armor helmet and silenced the women inside.

Unlike most Skaven, Queek was a far more bloodthirsty and crazed rat. He lived for the battle, for the slaughter, and would happily jump into the fray to take heads.

Another soldier went down to his blades.

Queek followed the objective pointer in his helmet's head up display. In his experience, something
simple like an arrow was easier to follow than complex written instructions. Especially when time was of the essence. He was here for glory and plunder and the last thing he needed was to waste time killing disloyal mercenary commanders.

Well, killing more than he needed to.

"There-There!" he shrieked as a Rat Ogre smashed opened a steel door, "Yes-yes! Grab-snatch the god stone and god-spice!"

"Not today, rat!" Both rays turned to see Zangief standing proud, Chun-Li at his side.

"That is not yours to misuse!" Chun-Li snarled.

Queek howled at his foes and hurled dozens of throwing knives. Zangief charged through it, creating a sonic boom that threw away the knives.

His foot came down to crush the rat, only for the infernal creature to side step it.

"Man-things! Die!" Queek snarled as he jumped about, in an effort to confuse them. "Horned Rat demands blood!"

Chun-Li kicked Queek across the ship's cargo bay, causing him to bounce off of a cargo crate. Green light filled the hold as the Warpstone shards fell out.

Queek righted himself, furious that this breeder had landed a hit.

Zangief was furious. "What in The Lord of Light's balls is this!" He shouted. "Why is devil stone on my planet!" as he picked up a forklift to throw at Queek.

Chun-Li herself was shocked, but no time to think about that now. First they had to make sure the Skaven did not claim it for their own twisted ends.

Queek was on the move, managing to dodge the machine. The Ogre was not as lucky, being crushed into a pulp.

Queek reacted with screaming rage, throwing a poison gas bomb.

The warp stone laced poison billowed out and killed a dozen of Queek's fellow rats. Chun-Li and Zangief moved ahead of the deadly cloud to kill the Skaven commander.

The rat was furiously trying to plant teleporter tags onto the crates.

Only for the entire continent to shake, like something massive had just taken a thundering step.

It was then all fighters, Guard, Skaven, and Xenomorph, stopped and looked about.

What they had not realized that the fighting among the planet was quite fierce...and it had attracted the attention of two rather...savage individuals, traveling across the void of space, passing by the planet at the moment.

These creatures nominally fell under the label of Kaiju. However, they were not like Anguirus, as they did not fight to oppose Chaos. Some say that they were Chaos, or born of something from Urgash's realm of Hell.

Whatever the case, they would make this world their feasting ground.
A storm had kicked up, obscuring the two that had come, still on the outskirts of the city...but it would clear up, and two monstrosities would show themselves.

The first was a dragon of gold, with three long heads, each cackling with high-pitched, unsettling laughter.

King Ghidorah was well known among the Skaven. A splinter group of their society had even taken to worshipping the evil beast, the world eater. They were branded heretics by the Council of Thirteen, but they still existed.

Queek was under no such delusions. He knew the monster would eat everything.

But there was more to come.

A partner of Ghidorah, a techno-organic abomination with an avian head, a narrow red eye, two hooks for hands, and buzzsaw on its chest.

Gigan, a particularly nasty and vile Kaiju, who seemed to take extreme pleasure in causing death and destruction for no reason.

Zangief could see the Kaiju on his eyepiece, hear them over the coms. He was howling with rage. "You brought these things to my doorstep!"

Queek let out a barking laugh as the first crates of Warpstone teleported out. The man-thing's pain brought him much joy.

Truth was, Queek had no idea they were even nearby...

...but this would be interesting to watch...and use as cover to escape with the goods.

Queek's laughter rang out as Zangief charged him one last time.

This time the rat's blade struck true. A poison dagger slashing him across the eye and three controlled Xenomorphs attacking him at once.

Chun-Li charged the Xenomorphs, kicking them off of her fallen master and friend; hoping she could save him before the poison wore off.

Leaving Queek to teleport away with spice and Warpstone. And allow him to watch the Kaiju fuck this world like a two-dollar breeder.

With inhuman laughs, the Kaiju began their assault.

Ghidorah's electric beams and Gigan's laser carved through the city, with all sides being caught the attacks. All who were caught were instantly killed, blown to pieces or vaporized.

The Great Cathedral built by Aegon the Conqueror was reduced to rubble in an instant by Gigan. King Ghidorah itself targeted lightning around the burning building and wiped out half the city's population in an instant.

People began panicking and heading for emergency shelters, only to be crushed to death by seismic activity; being buried alive where they fled.

Cities were reduced to rubble and fields burned. The wings of Ghidorah formed hurricanes and cyclones, ravaging the wildlands and farms.
Gigan wandered into the city proper, crushing and smashing ages-old building casually. The weak little mortals meant nothing to him but to amuse him.

The Cathedrals were very much fun to smash. Gigan could feel the goodness, the spiritual purity coming off of them. It had to be destroyed. Had to be desecrated.

Indeed, there were not just mindless beasts, but intelligent and highly cruel beings who existed to destroy and despoil.

They served no Chaos Gods, and were said by some other sages to be the darker side of Nature: The cruel and destructive aspect.

They answered to no Gods. They were apart from the Gods, some would say above them.

They were the natural extension of the real world, which itself was no less violent and turbulent than the Warp itself and the sectors of Hell.

The tiny beings who pretended to own this Galaxy needed this lesson in fear.

Ghidorah took to the skies, and began to fly, blasting down all that offended his eyes...which, to be honest, was everything he saw.

All forms of life below died, and he laughed, his psychotic giggles chilling all to the bones.

Chun-Li could hear that broken laughter in her mind. She hauled Zangief's corpse with her. He had breathed his last, thought she could not bring herself to abandon him. He deserved a proper burial when this was all over. Assuming anything on the planet survived when the Kaiju were done.

In orbit, the Skaven were fleeing, though the Kaiju's massive disruption was wiping out the elements they'd left behind.

All around, the city, once full of life and prosperity, was now only fire, death, and decay. Debris and clouds of ash covered the skies and would block sunlight for years to come. The planet's food chain would collapse and besides wiping out almost all the people, as the Kaiju would trigger the third great mass extinction in this planet's history.

And all Chun-Li could do was watch...

...then one of them took note of her, and Ghidorah's heads came down low to look at her.

She braced herself, ready for the end...

Then he spoke, in her tongue.

"Tell the ones who come for you, we are the masters of the Galaxy!"

She wept at the message.

But that was nothing compared to what happened next.

The glowing Kaiju dragon unleashed a bolt of lightning that turned Zangief into ashes.

Now she had nothing to bury of the man she'd devoted herself to.

Satisfied, Gigan and Ghidorah left to the stars, to terrorize more planets.
The Skaven had taken the Warpstone. Queek had slain Zangief. The Kaiju had caused a major
extinction and wiped out thousands of years of history and millions of lives.

Chun-Li stood amongst the ashes of her former home.

The last of her tears hit the ground as the air grew cold. It would be forty below in five minutes and
she had better get underground or find something warm to war.

She turned and walked off, preparing for the future.

She would now know only war...

Temperatures plunged, hurricanes and cyclones formed.

Today was day one of Chun-Li’s private war.

For now, she would survive.
Through the Gates of Wander

Port Wander was the last bit of civilization on the Kronus Expanse.

It was the only stable space in an area rife with Warp Storms. Guild ships refueled here. Pilgrims, merchants and spies travelled through every single day. Military fleets rearmed and reloaded. Euron himself had pushed for the Space Station—code-named Port Wander to be refurbished and its defenses shored up.

Yet the defining feature of the port was its treachery and its ever-changing nature.

While technically neutral ground, it was rife with people always looking to take the biggest slice of the pie. And it was all done by gambling, smuggling, black markets, and even straight-up killing.

But it also had information.

The place had law and order. Tempered by corruption and blackmail, but law just the same.

The Arbites who ran the place were ruthless, but they created a kind of grey market without meaning to. A place where spies and thieves could go to fence off their goods and knowledge without getting caught and reputable folk could get an unfair advantage for a price.

And Spyro's goal, his advantage was the location of a princess.

He walked through the crowded streets with Elora, Sparx, Hunter, and Bianca, trying to ignore the merchants hawking their wares. They were not here for that. Mata Nui had given them a mission, and they would do it.

The party moved through the main causeway of the Space Station. None of the Arbites paid them any attention. None of the private security forces or hired mercenaries paid them any attention. As far as anyone was concerned they were just another wandering party. Loads of them came every day to Port Wander in search of rare relics or lost treasures.

"A bar is a good place to start," suggested Spyro. "Let's start somewhere less seedy. I could use a drink that doesn't have dirt in it."

"And where would could we find somewhere like that?" Bianca asked. "This place is huge, crowded, and full of weirdos."

"The person we're looking for needs food and shelter," said the flying dragonfly, Sparx, "If she didn't turn pirate or bandit to feed herself and her people, she would have had to stop in a place like this for information and tech."

"So what's in Port Wander that our lady friend couldn't get anywhere else?" Elora asked.

A long pause.

"Er, anywhere?" Hunter guessed.

"Right, that's not getting any good information." Elora sighed.

So they just picked one.

The tavern in question looked decent. For starters, the bouncer was confiscating weapons of all who
entered. Not that many would try to argue with the eight hundred pound Ogre mercenary who would eat any who didn't comply.

Mostly traders and merchants comprised the bar's clientele.

And the seekers of magical artifacts.

The team looked about, wondering who they could begin with. Full of people and traders...and some who may not like the Targaryen kind.

Catachan Jungle Fighters kept to themselves. More than once, old Aerys had used atomic weapons and virus bombs against them. Much as he tried he failed to wipe out the Catachans, but the hatred was alive and well among their people.

And above the bar, a cloaked drone observed the new party, a drone bearing serial numbers from the Inquisition's armory.

Mata Nui members...odd of them to be all the way out here, at this bar.

A signal was sent out to the nearest representatives...

The first people to spot the Nui crowd were the first line of defense, a few vagrants and low-level maintenance staff who were everywhere. The first priority would be to track their location before the more serious elements could arrive.

"What's the nature of this venture you're going on about?" asked the Bartender, Mr. Joshamee Gibbs, former first mate of Captain Jack Sparrow as he poured drinks for Spyro and crew.

“Oh, just doing jobs for the Lord Nui,” Spyro replied, hoping Gibbs would not press further. Not the kind of thing he needed.

“Aye, he has his ways!” Gibbs nodded. “Well the servants of Lord Nui are blessed in this bar always,” Gibbs smiled as he saw the size of the tip that Bianca paid him for the drink.

"Our Lord had some goods stolen from him," said Spyro, "We could use map information of the Kronus Expanse. We need to know where the thieves could potentially hide."

A partial lie. Yes, they were looking for someone, but not thieves. Gibbs seemed to go with this.

“Well, most are somewhat incomplete, but let’s see what I got,” Gibbs stood and went into the back room.

He was back in a few moments.

"Well, I got a ye a time table for Warp storms," said Gibbs, "They block a lot of the space lanes, but they move with semi predictable patterns."

"Like when the weatherman gets the report wrong always," said Sparx.

Gibbs grimaced, "It's all we've got to go on. But most of the major routes are open for the next two weeks," He smiled as he produced a holographic star chart. "There's plenty of free passage where the Dark Angels Space Marines have been. Where they go, they wipe out all the local thieves and riffraff; so you get a small window to travel free."

Bianca looked over the maps. Full of worlds relatively unknown, many populated by sting and hostile animals and plants...and environments.
Not to mention space was a huge thing. If someone wanted to be hidden, they would STAY hidden.

There were many, many old Valaryan outposts in the region. Before the Doom of Valarya, this area of space had been one of the safest and most stable in the galaxy. There was so much leftover tech and infrastructure just waiting to be found. Not to mention that the Valaryans had terraformed so many inhospitable worlds here before their fall.

There were many places for an outlaw to lay low and keep fed and armed.

So the rabbit simply looked over the map...until the doors to the tavern opened...and all went silent as Gibbs went pale.

"The Inquisiton..." He muttered.

Spyro and his team turned to see two had come: Axonn and Brutaka, two biomechanical warriors of great skill and power, having served the Kingdom for many ages by crushing all those who would threaten the stability. But for all their ferocity, they WERE some of the more (relatively) reasonable members of the organization.

That wasn't saying much. It was like saying a lion was more reasonable than a rabid lion.

They were dangerous, fearless and ruthless. More than that they were being backed up by a platoon of the local Arbites armed to the teeth.

Mr. Gibbs lowered his eyes as if the mere sight of them would strike him down. "We've nothing to hide, Inquisitors, my bar is always open to you."

They simply nodded, and strode in. Spyro noted they were coming at them. Best try to play it safe and see what they wanted.

Brutaka turned and pointed a sword at a fresh-faced youth drinking at a table. "You! ID, now!"

The boy, nearly shitting himself with panic turned over his papers.

The biomechanical creature sniffed, "It's good to see there's no underage drinking in this bar. We of the Inquisition forgive no sins; no matter how small."

The sword was massive, and double ended. Not something one wanted to face.

Axonn was silent, his Kanohi Rode at ready to tell liars from truth-tellers.

At this time, Spyro was forking over money to Mr. Gibbs. The barkeep was so distraught he barely noticed the payment coming his way.

The Arbites stood stony faced, armed with riot shields and automatic bolters.

And then, they came. Hunter looked up nervously as the massive warriors stood tall over them.

"Uh...anything we can do for you?" He asked meekly.

"Agents of Nui, huh?" Brutaka mused. "What business do you have here?"

"Officially we do mercenary work for Lord Nui," said Bianca, "We have a five year contract with our lord and we're on our way to track people for him."

"Who are you tracking? What business does your lord have with them?" demanded the warrior.
"They're thieves, Sir Inquisitor," said Sparx fearfully.

Axonn narrowed his eyes. He knew them to be part of the council, not mere mercs. "Why do you lie?" He asked, his mask glowing.

"Because Lord Nui doesn't exactly like people going around and revealing his personal business," Spyro insisted. "Do you go around announcing yourselves as part of the Ordo Heriticus?"

"Keep it up and your head will roll," warned the Inquisitor.

"Enough," Brutaka said firmly. "What are you doing? Truth this time."

It was Elora who answered. "We are, perhaps, searching for a way to bring peace to the Galaxy. And I know that is the priority of your kind, correct?"

Brutaka stared, then turned to Axonn.

"She's not lying," Axonn confirmed.

"We are looking for a dangerous outlaw," Elora elaborated. "Under the King's own laws, we are entitled to search for this outlaw under our own terms and methods. If you have time, I can even pull up the legal documents to back me up."

"And who . . . is this dangerous outlaw?" Axonn asked slowly.

And it was there they looked at each other, knowing they could not bluff or lie out of this one...could they?

"The plan is to kill the Last Targaryen princess," said Spyro. "Especially if she refuses to come quietly." Their exact orders were to find the princess, but they had authority to use deadly force if they had to. So it wasn't specifically a lie.

Then, without warning, Axonn burst out laughing. "That's it? Seeking another fool's errand? Hunting for a ghost?"

Brutaka just sighed. "Well, no concern of ours if you waste time going about. Just keep away from Demons."

"Duh," Hunter said.

With that, Brutaka activated his mask, Olmak, opening a portal to a base. He and his partner, satisfied, stepped though, and the portal vanished.

It was then that Mr. Gibbs and everyone in the bar let out a collective sigh.

Fearing Gibbs would kick them out, Elora shouted, "The next round is on me!"

There was almost cheering, almost.

Last time the Inquisition went into a bar like this, they had to clean the patrons out with buckets and shovels.

It was good to have a drink. Forget about life for a while.

But soon they had left with the maps, but still no direction.

Their ship was being restocked and refueled. That gave them a bit of time to pour over maps and see
which direction the princess might be.

"Do you think the Dark Angels are a good lead?" asked Sparx. "That she might have stayed in their shadow like a remora behind a shark?"

"Or stay away from them as far as possible," Elora noted, "She's on the run, you know."

"I have to agree," Hunter nodded. "We have a lot of ground cover if we...say...was that bar always there?"

Sparx looked across the cosway, "I don't think that place was here the last time we were here. It's definitely new. Does anyone want to go in for leads?"

Bianca looked at the sign. "Gates of Hell...I dunno. Urgash worshippers don't sound like good sources to me."

"Well a guy like Gibbs is way too clean, by comparison," suggested Elora, "We might need to have a talk with scummier elements. Friends in low places and all that."

"So what are we going to offer them?" asked Sparx.

"We can figure it out once we see what's on the menu," Spyro asserted.

Bianca sighed, but nodded. And now that she thought about, she doubted something like this would be out in the open for all to see if it was a Demon place.

Upon entering, they noticed how quiet it was...only a few souls...and the bartender, a large black man in red with his back turned at the moment.

The man was less of a festering human shit-streak than they expected. So the party went to greet him.

The bartender turned opened his arms wide, "Welcome, friends, to my humble establishment. I'm Rodin, and I'll be your server tonight."

His eyes were hidden by his sunglasses, but other than that, his imposing form, and deep voice...he seemed ok.

The five blinked as they took their seats at the bar as the other patrons suddenly left, to do other things.

The place didn't smell nearly as bad as they thought it might. There were no bugs that they could see. This was already surpassing their expectations.

"So, any chance we can get maps and charts from you, big man?" asked Spyro.

"Do I have charts? Yes, but that depends what you're buying and what you're looking for," said the enigmatic man.

"Eh?" Spyro looked up.

"After all," Rodin turned to them, "Bayonetta and Mata Nui have been filling me in on current events."

"I know Bayonetta," said Elora a bit louder than she should. "Aside form working with us, we fought together in the campaigns against the Dark Eldar."
Rodin nodded, "That's why she trusts you, why she said I could trust you."

"But can we trust you back?" said Sparx suspiciously.

"Why would our hired merc be here?" Hunter had to ask suddenly.

"Me and Bayo, we goes way back," Rodin explained. "Have a little business deal involving Angel halos and weapons. There's been times where the Angels try to drag their gold ballsacks all over the galaxy," He elaborated, "They're hardly better than the Forces of Chaos and twice as ugly when you get the masks off. But you can trust me because I'm a man of business. I've a few of my customers but I never rip them off."

"Well, that's some small comfort," said Hunter, "We're going to need charts of the hidden places. We're looking for someone who doesn't want to be found."

"Like I said, Bayo and Mata Nui have been filling me in recently. Sorry for the sudden drop, but secrets have to kept until ready. Never know who's listening."

"Hmmm, can't argue with that," Spyro admitted.

"So...the last Targaryen, huh?" Rodin asked. "Well if you go by the rumbles in Paradiso, the Last Princess has been making quite a stir," Rodin chuckled. "Word in the dark parts is that she and her people have personally fucked with one of the Audito no less."

Spyro was impressed, "So add that to the list of people who still want her head on a spike. She's got an uphill battle ahead of her."

"And...know where she went?" Bianca asked.

"Last word was that she was managed to gain the trust of the people of Sabbath. Horny folk there, but good at battle as well," Rodin noted. "But now she's out and about to parts unknown."

"Well...that's something at least," Hunter noted.

"That's the last place that the Audito Temperantia was banished," Rodin supplied. "But don't just take my word for it. Ask any good mage or Psyker and they'll tell there's a shift in the planet's biosphere and in the magic sphere."

"That's awfully helpful," aid Sparx, "But what do you want in return?"

"Heh, not much really," Rodin admitted. "Just sounds good to have someone aside from the fat croc on the throne...though it could be a gamble, knowing the family line. Tendencies tend to show."

"The Targaryen Madness..." Elora muttered, speaking of the result of interbreeding over generations. Some say that when a Targaryen was born, the Gods would flip a coin to see if the child was stable...or not.

"We're under orders to find her, but I don't think our Master Nui is prepared to install her on the throne yet," said Hunter.

"Besides," said Spyro, "Wars have been fought over who gets to be king, but we can fight for how the king or queen rules."

"Well, good luck...that's all I can say," Rodin then tossed something to Spyro. "Also can give you this. Coordinates around the expanse. Use it well."
"These are the Warp routes going through the expanse past Sabbath," said Hunter.

"It's not much, but it's the best lead we've gotten in some time," said Sparx.

"Then Sabbath is where we need to go," said Spyro.

Maybe they could get some leads from there.

"Thanks for all the help," Elora said, to which Rodin nodded and went back to his work as the five left.

Nobody noticed several figures outside, listening in.

One on corner was a young woman, with long and black hair, spiking out, and a dragon tattoo along her back.

Akali, master ninja, spy, and handmaiden of Sylvanas Windrunner.

"All these years spent hunting the princess and her family," muttered Akali, "And now in the middle of the greatest war of our times, we find her. The Gods have a sense of humor."

"Is it even worth it to kill the princess after all that's happened, is happening?" asked her companion.

She trend to Foxy Roxy, a fox Beastkin and another handmaiden of Windrunner, sent along to back her up.

"Not yet, to be honest. The Lady would want to hear about this first," Akali replied. "Let us return at once."

What they did not know that in the shadows, Drifter had also heard everything...and he had his own ideas.

Namely, he was having trouble finding someone making a contract to.

Perhaps this last Targaryen...

The girl would be lost and desperate for sure. She would be hounded and outnumbered.

But maybe this would be the turning point for her. This was the time when all her enemies would have their energy and resources turned elsewhere.

Maybe he could hitch himself to her rising star.

He noted Spyro and his team were flying away to join up as well.

Time to go back to his own ship then, and fight for the future.
Altair IV, the Forbidden Planet, was an ancient world, once home to a highly advanced race known as the Krell...who, according to records, disappeared in a single night many millennium back.

At a time, a man named Edward Morbius has occupied one of the last structures on the planet to enhance his own studies.

He died years later due to dark circumstances. Now, the planet was under Zeal control.

The man who now held most of Dr. Morbius's journals and research findings was none other than Rick Sanchez. Though nobody could say if Rick had ever used those findings in any practical way. Not that he was a very cautious man or even a practical one, but he had never dared to tap into the forces of the unconscious mind the way that Dr. Morbius had.

Rick sat at the controls of a vessel called a chiropetran, an experimental stealth craft he'd been working on at the late Ned Stark's orders.

Bran was next to him, with Olaf and Rooster in back. Volibear and Anivia were left at Winterfell to keep watch over the other Stark members still at station. A small unit would work better for this anyways.

For Schala and Janus were said to be on the planet's lab, along with a platoon of soldiers.

Rooster gave Rick the side eye, seemingly unconcerned with the clandestine nature of their mission. "I can smell you from here. A super genius like you doesn't know how to use soap? Or wipe that green shit around your mouth?"

"One more fucking smart remark and you're going out the airlock, Billy Bob nut-scratcher," Rick ground his yellowed teeth as he adjusted the stealth settings.

"They can't see us," said Bran, somewhat dreamily.

"Good," Rick said causally, not the slightest put off by the demeanor. "Means its working. Until we get too close. Those Zeal know how to sense."

"And likely have some beasties about to guard the areas," Olaf crossed his arms.

"They have Taztlwrums down here," Bran added, "Those are the only ones I can feel so far."

"Yeah what he said," Rick muttered as he produced a lit cigarette for himself. "We're going to hit atmosphere in t-minus two minutes and start a controlled descent in the northern mountain ranges. Doc Morbius built a passage way into the planetway before his brain melted like tasty, tasty chocolate."

"Nice to know," Rooster muttered.

"And whatever you do, DON'T tamper with the tech!" Rick warned. "It's what caused this whole mess in the first place, unleashing mind monsters and shit. Queen Zeal managed to put the genie back into the bottle," He explained, "But that old cunt doesn't truly understand all the machinery that's buried down there, so she sits on it like a cunt-bird. I, however, fully understand what goes down there."
"That fills me with absolutely no confidence whatsoever," said Olaf, "But I'll do my best to pretend that I think you know what you're doing."

Bran was silent as they closed in. They could not risk landing to close to the lab. They had to be miles off and walk from there.

"There's a landing site, with the wreckage of an ancient expedition that's never been discovered," Bran said, "Go there, Rick. It's our best bet to have a safe ride inside."

"About time you spoke up, psychic boy, just because you're high born doesn't mean you don't have to earn your pay," Rick snapped.

"Yes, I know," Bran sighed as they approached their destination, keeping out of sight of scanners, Tomb Soldiers, Visorak, High Elves, and Arakkoa patrolling the landscape.

Dust and desert scrub marked most of the planet's surface. From orbit it didn't look remarkable at all. Radiation levels were very low and the atmosphere had a bit higher nitrogen than the human preference. That was all.

From the surface anyways.

The party stepped forward into a small city of rusted machinery, a broken down flying saucer and skeletons half buried in the dust.

Good. No patrols around here. No point in doing so.

Cloaking their parked ship, the party of five, which included Summer, began to move out for their task.

Rooster sniffed the air, as a matter of habit. You could tell a lot before even pulling out a scanner if you just used your senses.

There was no scent of decay. There was no sound of animals. There was no pollen or organic matter to give the dust any stickiness. The plants just seemed to exist without producing any pods or seeds of any type.

"There!" said Bran, pointing to a solid rock face. "There's an illusion covering that, move past it and we'll hit a mountain path. At the top of the mountain we will find an elevator to the planet's core."

"And likely hordes of soldiers," Rick noted. "Best be on guard."

Weapons, like guns, axes, and lasers were primed. Best be ready, just in case, then to be caught off-guard. Visorak, notably, were savage and silent creatures.

One moment the wall was there and the next it wasn't. What got to everyone was how perfectly carved and maintained the stairs were.

Going up stairs at all was more than anyone had expected from a planet without any permanent habitation for tens of thousands of years.

Then the first taztlwurm struck, a beast of feline and reptilian nature. It burrowed at high speeds through the sands and swung its barbed tail at Bran.

But Olaf was faster, using his massive hands and arms to grab the beast by the tail and swing it against the walls, dashing its brains out all over the place.
"And something tells me these types are just scouting beasts," Olaf noted. "No doubt Wyveria beasts are kept closer to their base."

"That bitch Zeal loved to scatter animals all over the place," Rooster gazed at the dead beast. "They're trained to identify her own people and attack all others."

A leaping Visorak sailed for the gunslinger, only to be blasted into oblivion by Rooster's fast reflexes. "Let's keep moving."

The Visorak were sentient beings, and were planners. One scout meant more were hiding about, waiting for the right moment.

Rick reached into his coat and pulled out what looked like a jar of mustard. He tossed the jar ahead of the team, only for it to explode into red dust. Invisible Visorak began to twitch and scream, clawing at their faces.

The team made short work of them.

"That wasn't quiet," said Rooster, "Others will have heard that."

Eliminating witness was not easy, and would always attract other patrols with their dying screams.

Time to move fast.

Speed was of the essence. Though the steps were well carved, it was still a steep climb and rapidly the weather grew cold. Rick threw a cloaking device behind them, covering their tracks hopefully.

It was then that the reached an obstacle they were not expecting.

"The Black Breath," said Bran.

Rick nodded, "It's a real bitch of a magic curse."

"That's fucking ominous," said Olaf, as he pointed at the solid wall of black . . . something that spewed from the mouth of a massive statue carved into the mountain.

Zeal work all right. Only they could cast something so strong with so little effort.

Best not get into a direct confrontation with one, lest one gets melted into goo.

Rick grinned, "Well, this magic wall would stop anyone who isn't me, but I'm me so fuck Zeal and fuck her greasy twat!" He began to produce a device that looked like a miniature harp.

"The LIght of Alfheim," said Bran, "Found only on Ulthuan."

"How exactly did you get that?" Olaf asked, in awe of Rick.

"I fucked some Elves back in the day," Rick muttered as the thing began to glow, "I'm sorry it had to end, but when I did I took as much shit as I could carry."

This earned him a lot of dirty looks which he happily ignored. He began to play the instrument...somewhat badly.

Still, it worked, and the shadows began to dispel.

Unfortunately that opened the door to something else as a rotten, undead hand shot up from the earth
and grabbed Rick by the ankle. As he was dragged to the ground, a second hand clawed at his leg and came perilously close to his breadbasket.

"No! No!" screamed Rick, "You are not getting my fucking gonads, you draugr bastard!"

Around the adventuring band, undead warriors with rusted weapons charged with mindless fury. These were not Zeal soldiers, but fighters that had dwelled in the planet's crust in years gone by. The Zeal soldiers were always on guard of them, killing any that got close. A tough job, but needed. Magic spells like the Black Breath were needed to keep Draugr dormant, as the undead soldiers would otherwise attack anything that moved.

Summer lunged at one of the beasts as it raised its twin axes to brand. The wolf grabbed the thing's head in its jaws and crushed the skull like an egg. 'Rooster gunned them down by shooting at the heads, which would incapacitate any undead. Olaf was going wild with his massive power, axe and fist flying about, blood staining the area. The Draugr were fearless but not terribly bright. Their movements were ferocious but lacking any kind of skill and they moved with no semblance of strategy.

The last of them lunged at Rick, only for its head to explode with seemingly no external force operating.

Rick gasped and spat as Draugr brains splattered into his mouth, and also noticed the slight glow from Bran's eyes. "Thanks," he gasped as he tried to get the awful taste out of his mouth.

Bran nodded. It was weird, tapping into the Warp, yet feeling nothing trying to probe into his soul and mind. Well...that was a good thing...

Right?

Rick knew that this wasn't going to go away. No matter how much Catelyn leaned on him for a cure. He could offer control and give Bran a healthy outlet for his freaky powers.

Or he could blow up everything like what happened to him half the time.

But what was science without risk?

In this Galaxy, one had to take risks, or die.

Well, time to move on for now, to find a secret entrance.

The steps led them up to the giant carved stone face and up to a rope ladder that looked like it had been left there quite recently.

Going up it revealed both a new, well-maintained path and fresh snowfall with footprints.

Looks like they were not the only ones who knew of this place. Time to be extra careful. One wrong move...and instant death could occur.

Rick took charge, making sure the door was not warded with anything.

The huge wooden door creaked, but the hinges showed signs of regular maintenance. He smiled
when he saw the darkness within. "Good! We found the old mines! Now from here we just need to
head downwards into the core of the planet and plug ol' Brandon into ancient death psychic
machines."

"This is why no one trusts, you Rick," said Rooster.

"I trust him," said Bran casually.

Rooster just shook his head.

Olaf was silent, but his glare spoke loudly.

The massive tunnels showed the works of a once mighty race, with advancements the Mechanicus
would do ANYTHING to have. Stupid stiffs...

The hallways and corridors looked as strong and sturdy as the day they'd been built. The
workmanship was amazing, but Olaf had a nagging feeling the walls were this way because they
remembered themselves; or some vast outside force remembered this place as it was on the day it was
completed.

It did not comfort him...and he would keep Bran safe through it all.

Soon, they began to reach to more used areas...and with it, sighting of more Zeal minions. Here
stealth was the best options, last thing needed was to trigger an alarm.

Zeal regulars were marching the corridors. Though for the most part they'd cordoned off vast
sections of the facility, as the hidden and psychic defenses were more than a match for all but the
most powerful magic users.

Zeal's own personal guard were assigned to this place, which gave Rick an idea just how important it
was. The bitch Zeal might not understand the power of this place, but she craved that power and the
idea of using it as a weapon.

Too bad the whore herself was not here. No, she gave the job to Schala, Janus, Plague Knight,
Mona, Rayman, and Globox for now. Well, still deadly in their own right, that was for sure.

"Hey Bran," Rick whispered to the boy, "First, can you muffle our presence? We're going to need to
sneak onto that lift past the solid adamantium doors. Second, tell your dog to stop sniffing my
crotch."

"Tell him yourself," Bran said evenly, "He can hear you." As he raised his hands and the glow
returned to his eyes.

"...Quit sniffing me there..." Rick sighed to Summer, who did so.

"Ya know, I've only seen Schala every now and then," Rooster noted. "But the stories of her beauty
are quite true."

"I've... never heard," said Bran as he maintained his concentration." That was a lie. He had seen
someone, in his dreams. Though even in his altered state, he knew that you couldn't just tell a girl
you'd dreamed of her. She'd think you were a pervert at best.

"I like older women," Rick admitted to Rooster, "Older ladies don't mind the dirtiness, and when
their time of month comes we play in the dirt road," he laughed.
"If it's not one thing, it's another," groaned Olaf as the group approached the vast door.

--

In the whole facility of two thousand Zeal guards, only Schala herself felt anything was off.

Schala was in the main lab with her brother and friends, looking through some old notes and research...and had warned others that under NO CIRCUMSTANCES that anyone was to touch the plastic educator. She read...things about it.

Mother in particular had warned her about the machine and how it was important to use it only when the time was right. To use it wrong would be like badly tempering steel; the quality metal would only shatter instead of forming a perfect sword.

Still, she couldn't deny the pull somewhere in the facility. And she couldn't deny the dreams of the raven she'd been having almost constantly.

One of a humanoid build, and three eyes...

"Ah, at last, the perfect potion!" Plague Knight's glee jolted her back to attention. "One that will spawn hundreds of Bnahabra eggs in the victims body to hatch, killing our foes in agony!"

"Why do this?" she asked, "What tactical purpose does it serve?"

"It will be highly effective against fleshy targets," said Plague Knight, "And have a very profound effect on enemies who can feel fear in any capacity. Fear of disease is an old, old and primal fear."

"Well, I'll leave you to this," she admitted, "I need a walk," she moved out, grabbing a bottle of raven spice pills for reasons she couldn't articulate.

Like a Salmonid to spawning, she was drawn beyond logic.

"I'll stay here and help make things are run smoothly," Janus said. Schala nodded to her younger brother as she moved out and began walking down the corridors of the vast Krell complex.

How did such a race die out in an instant?

Mother told her almost nothing about this place, only that it was useful.

She could solve puzzle pieces, but the whole puzzle eluded her. As much as she tried to feel with her magic, this planet felt shockingly empty. Beyond the local Draugr there was no proof a soul had lived on this world.

The pull became stronger as her feet took her to a cordon, which she had the clearance to bypass.

A few High Elves gave her salutes, to which she gave a nod, still distracted by her own thoughts as Visorak worked on transporting materials about.

What was calling her?

Logically she knew of a few things.

She was drawn to the raven figure, who or whatever they were.

She was also being drawn to raven spice, a drug that she had never wanted to try before in her life for any reason.
She usually tried to keep herself clean from such things.

But times were changing, especially after Ned's death. Things had grown worse, with her mother now overseeing warfare against Windrunner.

The spice was proven to help improve magic and psychic powers. The problem was the symptoms and side effects of addiction were as varied as the spices themselves. Raven spice's side effects were some of the most erratic and least understood.

Meanwhile in the shadows, one of the guards eyes her with a hellfire glint in their eye. Kairos Fateweaver watched the Zeal girl go to meet her little boy toy.

When they were in one spot, that would be the time to turn on the plastic educator and tweak the settings. A few monsters of the ID should rid the pair forever from his master's plans; as well as kill everyone on the planet.

All it took for one Arakkoa to become dissatisfied and bitter with the Zeal's progress to allow the Demon to move into his mind. Now, the visions were muddy, but soon would be clear.

Kairos had a better idea than Rick did of just how dangerous this place could be. Rick wasn't a fool, but this place had the potential to be more lethal than it had shown itself already.

The advanced mind and heightened desires of something like an elf or a powerful magic user could produce a monster exponentially more powerful than what had been seen before.

Potentially such a Monster of the ID could make a useful if ersatz ally, but that was jumping ahead a bit.

No, best play it safe. He wasn't as nimble and sly as he used to be, and it would take time for him to plan this out.

Schala kept on walking, oblivious to the Chaos Agent within.

Unlike the other servants of Chaos, Kairos knew the meaning of subtlety. To make sure this worked, he made sure a few guards took alternate routs and missed the princess.

And something else…

Schala saw Bran through the shield of protection as Rick hacked open the adamantium door.

Their eyes locked just as they were about to call the guards.

And as if something...clicked within them, as if a connection drew them close for reasons they could not understand.

There was a flash as both of them shared the dreams they had. Unintentionally. Involuntarily. Like electricity jumping from two points, it was just instantaneous.

What they both heard was the voice in both their heads with a strange accent, "The Machine is coming on!"

Rick spun around with his portal gun, "And now we got ourselves a hostage! Don't move princess, your mammy is going to pay for your safe release or I'll be tossing your ass into the sea!"

Why was water execution so popular among people? Especially females? Regardless, Schala held her ground. "Let's not go looking for a fight."
"What my partner means is that you are a hostage," said Rooster, "We have little time and if you know my reputation, you'll know you're safer not resisting."

She scanned Bran's eyes, then looked back to Rick as she spoke to her.

"I can show you how to turn on the plastic educator," she announced.

Rick was taken aback, "Say what?"

"And that's all I can do," Schala admitted. "If your mind if not up to it...reports indicate death."

Rick paused in thought about this. Could he trust her? She was an enemy now...

"So we'll test it on you, and if you live, young baby Bran will go in and we'll take you hostage."

Rick quickly maneuvered.

Schala was at a bit of a loss.

But like the raven spice, the machine called to her.

"Have hope," Bran said in a tone that crossed time and space and eons.

She bit her lip, but then nodded. Wartime was a complex thing.

As for Kairos, he was closing in on his goal...

...unaware that in the complex...an old 'friend' of Rick was exploring the area as well...and knew how to take out Chaos Demons.

Keiros touched the strings of fate, only to find his will opposed by another.

The gate slammed behind the infiltrators and took them to the machine.

But the guard Kairos had possessed suddenly broke free of control.

He was fool to doubt the great Zeal and her children. To go into Chaos? That was Madness!

Kairos, the multitude of possible visions overwhelming, had no choice but to eject.

Bran and Schala felt it when the elevator began to descend.

"There's something here, something chaotic," she said.

Brand nodded, as he heard a voice in his head.

"Better hurry, brother, get to the plastic educator as fast as you can. I'll meet you at the bottom!"

"Someone is expecting us, Rick," said Bran, "I've had a vision of a goat horned man."

Rick felt his eye twitch. Not HIM...not now.

At the same time, they could REALLY his help, like it or not.

"Damn it, fine," He sighed. "Gods, this whole things just went pear-shaped."

"Is there anything you want to tell me, Rick?" Rooster asked,
"Only that I used to be in a relationship with this guy," Rick snapped. Knowing it would shut Rooster up, bringing up his love life.

"Too much information, but what did I expect," the bounty hunter groused.

The lift stopped and the adamantium doors slid open.

Standing there before the advanced machinery was an old man, covered in tattoos from his neck to his fingernails, long beard trailing and eyes glowing gold.

"I am Mimir," the old man smirked.

Schala blinked. Mimir? THE Mimir? The smartest man in the entire Galaxy? Here? That was just...odd...

...as was the dazed Arakkoa at his feet.

"Demon tried to get in via his head," Mimir explained casually.

The next thing out of Mimir's throat was a grunt of pain as Rick kicked him right in the dick.

The goat man toppled over. Schala was mortified. "Are you mad!? Do you know who he is?"

Rick stomped on Mimir's head for good measure. "Yeah I do, better than most. Any other stupid things you want to ask me?"

"I deserved that," grunted Mimir as he picked himself up.

Bran blinked. "You said a Demon was here?"


"There's always a Demon or some shit somewhere," Rick snapped, "Now get the fuck out before I erase you, you goat mother fucker!"

"Good to see you too, Richard," Mimir replied sarcastically, "I know you rightly blame me for the first time you destroyed a universe, your home universe, but I'm here to help Bran and young Schala."

Schala decided not to press about the universe thing. It was time to make sure things were going smoothly.

The goat man smiled to the rest of the team, who were ready to attack with the exception of Bran. "Allow me to introduce myself. Once more, I am Mimir, smartest man alive! I know every deal struck, every war waged, I know the origins of every meme and the story behind every Creepypasta! And I'm here to aid you against the Great Old Ones!"

"I don't need your help!" Rick snapped, "After all the trouble you caused. You accidentally helped the Old Ones in our last Universe Together!"

"And I spent time as a severed head on a belt to make up for it," said Mimir, "But Richard, I honestly come to help; I can't do this without you."

Schala looked up, "Wait...what do you mean the Great Old Ones? I thought-"
"Well lass, even for me it's hard to say how it happens, or even their origins. Honestly, it'll be still quite some time before they themselves arrive..."

Bran blinked. "But..."

"Their vanguard is closing in. There's a reason the Tyranids are fleeing," Mimir said gravely. "Richard must have suspected for some time. The both of us have seen them across multiple parallel universes, but this is the first time that he and I have encountered people like yourselves."

"I've a hard time thinking anything could make the Tyranids run," said Olaf.

"But we must not tell the Galaxy yet," Mimir stated. "It will send them into panic. No, we must focus on the current enemies..."

"And you need to blow your brains out or go back to the guy who cut your head off!" Rick snapped, "I can help the boy and even the girl if I have to do it alone."

"It's happened faster than expected, Richard," Mimir continued, "They're coming faster than we expected. And you and I never counted on these scions of hope."

"How long, really?" Schala asked.

"Well, still a few years or more out," Mimir admitted. "Maybe even longer, depends..."

"People are dying now," said Schala to the God of wisdom. "There's a war going now. What I want from you is to help end it now!" There was a tremor of power from her that rattled the old goat man and even seemed to shock Rick.

"I want the same," said Bran,

"Well, you little fuckers can't get it!" Rick sneered, "I'm here to help you control your powers. We can do that here, but the answer to galactic peace won't just drop out of my freaking ass."

A rare bust of anger hit Schala, but instead of screaming, she kept outwardly cool...

...even as one of her arms transformed into a massive lobster claw and grabbed Rick by the neck.

"I bet you think you're a mean poodle-fucker," she said coldly, "They say you've killed Gods and outsmarted the Devil; well if you don't help me you're going to have to take your chances naked against a swarm of hormigaunts; because that's how few fucks I have to give, Doctor Sanchez."

Bran put a hand, transformed into a raven's claw on Schala's shoulder. "Rick means well, he's struggling with depression, but he loves his grandson; that love will help him help us. And I think your claw is very sexy."

"Oh, thank you," said Schala embarrassed.

Bran blinked as he realized just WHAT he said. Wasn't she a Zeal? Someone who let his father die? And he was...

He then noticed Rooster gave his hand a deadpan look, looked at it himself, yelped, and changed it back.

"...Mind...letting...go...?" Rick wheezed "We're on a timer, Bran. You can stick your bird dick in her mouth later for all I care. Just move,"
Schala looked back at her now normal hand, "Sorry," she muttered.

And Bran was kind of cute . . . for a boy whose father was a traitor and whose bull headed notions of freedom threatened the whole kingdom

At least, the traitor part was the story, but she wasn't sure.

But while she knew the value of honor, too much of it could blind one to the reality of things...notably, how many enemies, like Demons, Skaven, Orks, Beastmen, and Grox had NO honor, only the wish to kill and corrupt.

"Now we might have minutes or less," said Mimir, drawing a small dagger from his belt. "There's also a good chance we might have to fight a monster of the ID, something I'd rather not do."

"Those monsters will be real intimidated when they see how you can butter bread with that," Rooster drawled.

Mimir blinked, "This is why nobody likes you."

"For once we agree," Rick belched in agreement.

Schala scowled. She didn't reach much of the machine yet...but enough to now how to shut it down for a bit to reboot the systems. She closed her eyes and focused...and a magic pulse flowed out, causing machines to power down...

"That's it, girl, like a duck to water," Mimir praised her as a single red light blinked on the machine console. "You two lad. This will work best if the both of you work."

Bran reached out with his mind. Something he'd been doing almost constantly since his father's death. But now he was doing it with someone who had a similar mind's eye. He blushed as he almost felt naked before the girl; exposing is psychic . . . manhood?

He was spending too much time around Rick.

It was then the sound of footsteps occurred. Zeal soldiers were on their way.

Bran and Schala touched minds, and both almost froze shut from the shock and the intimacy.

But then they reached out.

They both touched a single, unmarked lever that would activate the whole mechanism.

And change them forever.

Janus had arrived, with some men and women with him. He glared hotly at the Stark men gathered. "Get away from my sister!" His small form held a lot of power.

Mimir tried to play the voice of reason, "Young man, I mean your sister no harm and I am not affiliated with these men."

He got no further as Janus struck the old Norse god with lightning, blasting him across the room.

"Down on the floor, now!" Janus shouted, as after killing a dragon of his own, his patience with insolence had dwindled.

And for someone in his single-digits, he seemed to command a lot of respect around here, as the
Visorak had their spinners ready and the others held swords and spears at point.

His mother had wanted to turn him into a soldier, in that she had succeeded, no matter how much Schala wanted to protect him.

Time slowed down as Both Bran and Schala felt the connection to each other and the machine.

They felt the memories of this place, those that built it and those who had come after. Even memories before this place were built was laid bare to them.

They flipped the switch.

And the ID Beast, just about to form, faded from existence.

Fateweaver's essence, hidden, cursed as he was pulled back into the Warp.

It had been so close, Fateweaver had been so close.

But for the same reason his masters directly could not corrupt these two, the ID monsters would not form.

What was it that a long dead order of witches defined a human as; one with the will to bear the pain of the trap for long term action.

Choice, the choice to ignore animal instinct.

Kairos hoped they would choose wrong

And he wondered...was this all part of his master's plan as well? Impossible to say, the future of his head was still foggy.

Kairos would not be surprised if this was a setup. It's what he'd done to dozens and even millions of lesser Demons over the years. His master could only confirm his suspicions, not betray him.

But what his master wanted was change.

And maybe, just maybe these two could be catalyst to the biggest change of all.

That was went though his mind as he went home...

Meanwhile, Rick stared the brat, Janus, down. "Looking for a fight, kid?"

A blast of ice flew from Janus' hands at Rick, only to fly sideways.

Rick grinned, "I killed tougher wizards than you in my sleep, asshole," as he produced an elaborate looking ray run tool.

Janus raised an eyebrow, unimpressed. "I've read your physics papers."

"Hey, those are my papers!" Rick snapped as he aimed his gun...

...only for it to be magically dismantled.

"Magic and science are two sides of the coin," said Janus, "One feeds the other; you just need to stop being so closed minded."

With a clench of his hand, a green portal opened below Rick. "Shit!" Rick screamed, as the boy had
somehow replicated the effects of his portal gun.

Lucky for him, Olaf caught his hand and pulled him to safety before Janus could close it to sever Rick in half.

Bran saw the soldiers getting ready to attack. They had to leave, now!

Still connected to the machine, he could feel their minds, their hearts and their wills.

And he felt that of Schala.

She urged him not to kill them.

He had no need to.

"Sleep," he whispered.

And like that, all except Janus and Schala collapsed in a snooze.

Rooster tried to seize on the moment by shooting and killing the downed guards, only for Bran to stop the hammer of his revolver with his mind.

Schala dealt with Janus.

"Please," she begged him, "Just pretend you never saw this."

But this wasn't the innocent boy she used to care for, and she was seeing it now.

And yet...Janus felt himself hesitate. Could he really do this?

He was shaken the day he had killed the dragon. That had been an eye opener to him.

Almost as much as when his mother took him aside to kill prisoners of war together as mother and son. The action blackened his soul and tore at his morals.

But this was his sister, the last pure person in this universe.

And suddenly, Rick had taken a teleporter device and took himself, Bran, Rooster, and Olaf to safety.

The gang were back outside of the stealth ship, Rick let out a whoop, only to realize that Mimir had come with them. "Oh fuck, it's you."

Mimir scoffed, "The boy is powerful, but try taking a beating from Odin when he's in a foul mood. Wait, where are the young ones?"

Rick spun around, Bran was nowhere in sight. "Oh fuck!"

Meanwhile, on the moon, Bran looked at Schala. "I think everyone is freaked out for us and want to know where we are."

"You're probably right," she admitted shyly.

They stared at each other, knowing time was short, and soon they would have to part ways.

"I can't betray my mother," Schala said to him.
Bran nodded, "I wouldn't ask you to, but I'd like to keep in touch."

"We're going to have to take sides," she said sadly, "But I also want to keep in touch."

He simply nodded, before he himself vanished.

Schala vanished afterwards, to somewhere within her normal range of teleportation.

Janus hadn't hurt her.

But their bond had been shaken, perhaps permanently.

Rayman and Globox were next to where she appeared.

"My lady?" Rayman looked up. "What-"

Schala suddenly hugged him, sobbing.

For once, Rayman was at a loss. Zeal would skin him if she saw him touching her daughter, but for now he just hugged her back.

Globox looked at her with . . . veiled suspicion. But he said nothing.

He would still notify the Queen when he had the chance.

Well, most of it, though this would be secret. These were his friends. All he would say that a break-in occurred, but nothing was lost or compromised.

This wasn't the first time that unknown phenomena or strange creatures had made life hell or cut life short on this base.

But now...it was time to think and continue with research.

Meanwhile, Rick was staring down both Bran and Mimir aboard the Stealth ship. "So what do you have to say, fuckers?"

"I regret nothing," said Bran,

"Do you have coffee or tea on board this ship?" Mimir asked.

Rick wanted to scream, rage, and just shoot all over the place...

...But with the knowledge and everything that had happened, he just sighed. "Right, Old Ones. Keep that in mind, right now, other issues."

"Mother will be happy with your performance," said Bran, "I won't tell her all the weird stuff."

"You'd better not, you little fucker," Rick snapped.

"Morty and Sansa will make a great couple," Bran added off hand.

"Yes they will," Rick nodded, drawing an eye roll from Olaf. That little runt? With Lady Sansa? Hardly fathomable...

Mimir spoke. "Now remember, we keep this Old One thing to ourselves for now. Other immediate problems to think about, and no use adding fuel to a raging fire at the moment."
"So what exactly do I tell my boss about you?" Rick grunted,

Mimir thought on it, "Well, tell her my name is Puck and that I'm a wind spirit who works as a king's advisor for hire."

Olaf gave him the side eye.

"What? It's all true," said Mimir.

"Fine, let's go with it," Rick groused as they all sailed off into the stars.

Bran focused his mind, "I'll guide us. Take us to where we need to."

The ships sailed off into parts unknown...
No Kings or Gods

Arya Stark awoke from the bed of straw on the transport ship, and she sniffed at the air and detected cooking meat. "Is that chicken?"

"It's always chicken," Grunted Sandor, "I've got a side of beef so bloody it's still kicking. You can have that."

Getting up, Arya yawned in a very wolfish way and adjusted the weapons straps on her body. "You know it."

Arya looked about, seeing the rest of her unit: Nymeria, Gendry, Bullet, Ellie, Chomp, Berix, Tarduk, TK, and Kari.

Pops, as he was called by Ellie, after making sure his surrogate child was in good hands, had left to help track down Terumi, the beast who had destroyed their home.

Ellie was still unsure of herself. This ship was meant to load and carry animals, but it had been repurposed to carry troops. The warrior girl stroked her floating monster as Nymeria woke up. "So what's this planet like?"

"It's called Rapture," said Arya, taking a bite from the bleeding beef, "It's one huge mega city under water on a planet of the same name. It's full of mutants and they farm axolotl mostly."

"And the story?"

It was Bullet who responded. "Say some guy name Andrew Ryan wanted to cut himself off from the 'parasites' or whatever, so he used his vast wealth to build a city at the very bottom of the ocean. Rumor has it old Andrew was nuts," She laughed, "as he thought that the Targaryens would eventually blow up the whole galaxy and all that would be left was his city. It took just five years for everything to go to shit."

"It's underwater," said Clegane, "Drowned rats and all that," as he threw a chicken bone to Nymeria.

"So, what are we doing here again?" TK had to ask.

"Lady Windrunner stated some of the King's men went down there to make it a possible base of operations," Tarduk explained. "Our job is to sabotage some of the operations, and bring back whatever tech and research we can find for her to use."

"ATTENTION ALL PERSONNELL!" boomed a voice on the intercom. "ALL FORCES REPORT TO LOADING PAY FOR DEPARTURE! ORDERS WILL BE DISPERSED BY YOUR NEAREST COMMANDING OFFICER!"

Arya winced, "My fucking ears."

"You never get used to it," lamented Berix.

Said officer/dispatcher was a Windrunner Council member, Mordekaiser. A revenant inside a large suit of armor, he was a ruthless enforcer of the Windrunner law, and top military leader.

Mordekaiser grunted and threw a film envelope into Arya's hands. "That's your instructions. Get in your drop pod! Next!" he bellowed.
"Cunt," The Hound muttered under his breath.

Arya looked down at the note. "We're going to blow up an axolotl farm, and steal some coordinates."

"Blow up something in an underwater city," said Ellie, turning pale. "I don't have to tell you how dangerous that is."

"Dark Lady's order, newcomer," Mordekaiser growled. "Her world is the law here."

"Yes, yes, we know," TK sighed as they all got into the drop pod.

Ruthless indeed, but a talented person. Why else would he be on the council?

Mordekaiser's voice boomed over the drop pods speakers. "You'll be looking at an initial wave of Splicers; nasty freaks with mutant powers and improvised weapons. Follow the Big Daddy units to find the axolotl farms; blow it to hell. All other instructions are in your squad leaders dossier!"

Arya grinned, "Let's hope we don't drown, girl," she whispered to her wolf.

Down the pod went, screaming through the air and atmosphere...and then it landed in the ocean, bobbing on the surface. A large lighthouse was nearby.

"It's like we're back on Ark!" shouted Berix,

"Then get ready to use what we learned there!" shouted Arya. "Elie, get your monster scouting ahead. Let's see that we're not going to row into any sea mines!"

Chomp was already flying about, trying to find anything...but soon he flew back, shaking his head. No mines...in fact, it was quite empty about the lighthouse.

Reaching the stairs leading up to the place, the unit began to ascend the area, reaching the massive double doors.

The room was vast, but there seemed to be no real defenses. Only statues were there to guard the place. Including a giant statue of a man in a suit with a banner above him. "No Gods, No Kings, only Men."

"And no women, the pig," sniffed Bullet, "It's like this guy forgot all the little people who let him be successful."

"And now it's in the hands of a crazy sociopathic witch woman," Arya sniffed. "Run a scan on the bathysphere and let's hop in."

Going down another set of stairs, Arya could not help but not how oddly quiet the place was...like the calm before the storm.

A rather large submersible was there, allowing for all, including the large Nymeria, to fit within. TK scanned it with a device, then nodded. "All systems good."

The part boarded, and Bullet activated the mechanism. Down they went...

At first the view was beautiful. There were fish, squid and other beasts. Things that glowed with light and even fish that size of whales as well as pods of scaly tetrapod amphibians come to the depths to hunt before returning to the planet's few islands.
It was not long before they could hear the sound of underwater fighting and bombs going off. Aquatic troops were already skirmishing and point defense cannons were lighting up to blow up non-friendly submersibles.

Andrew Ryan (or whoever was now in charge) was not one to give up 'his' city...but before they could get close, a screen came down in front of them and movie began to play.

They were first greeted by an ad for something called Psyk-Away. Something that would give you "Warp powers at your fingertips!" It looked terrible.

Suddenly a voice broke through, like a man trying too hard to be friendly. "I am Andrew Ryan, and I ask you, is a man not entitled to the sweat of his brow?"

"Or woman?" Bullet sniffed derisively.

"No, says the Targaryen King, it belongs to the crown," scoffed Andrew on the narration, "No, says the Church of the Seven, it belongs to the Gods! No, says the revolutionary rabble, it belongs to the people! I rejected those answers!"

"And your sanity," laughed Clegane.

Kari rolled her eyes. Selfish bastard already, and this was before seeing him.

"Instead, I chose something different," Ryan went on. "I chose the impossible...I chose..." The screen pulled back. "Rapture!"

The city was...huge...bigger than any of them could imagine in a place like this.

The scale was mind-boggling. Nearly half of the group had seen hive cities somewhere in the galaxy. But even your average Mechanicus hive city or Mega City looked like a tiny outhouse next to Rapture. Even the aquatic warfare around it looked like more flowing fish fighting over scraps than proper war.

"Where the Artist would not fear the censor!" pontificated Andrew, "Where the scientist would not be bound by petty morality! Where the Great would not be constrained by the small!"

Arya sniffed, grinning wolfishly, "My father believed great men worked forth the small, you selfish cunt."

"And by the sweat of your brow, Rapture could be your city as well."

This went ignored, as the team took in the subs of Iron Snakes, an aquatic-based Chapter of Marines.

"Another shithole," snarled Clegane, "Filled with shit people."

"Let's send them to Hell," Arya barked, sounding more like her wolf every day.

The gang cocked their weapons as they prepared to evade the Space Marines and wipe the floor with everything else.

They ship took them to remote corner of the city, where they could slip in easier and start messing things up.

The Welcome Center, in fact, which has not seen use for years.

Judging by the skeletons lying around and the piles of refuse, it had been a very fucking long time
since Rapture had a voluntary visitor.

Arya sniffed the air as Kari began to run scans. "There should be a casino level this way, with an access elevator straight to the Axolotl Farm. It'll be in some place called Fontaine Futuristics!"

"Let's go," Arya snarled.

But...carefully. They would kill if needed, but it was also a stealth mission. No sense rushing about and getting killed.

They were all told to get some tech and research if they could...and steal some of the salamanders if they were able.

Berix looked about. "What happened here?"

There were fresh bodies at the entrance of the casino, wearing some sort of masquerade masks. On first glance they looked human. That changed the deeper the inspection went.

"Mutants of some sort," said Ellie.

"Their DNA is off the charts," said Kari, running scans, "On the molecular level, they've been ripped apart and rebuilt so much they're in a constant state of cellular meltdown. Like these things have been spliced to hell and back and back again."

Almost on cue, a masked Splicer woman with meat hooks jumped through the Casino's front window, howling like a witch.

"Aw crud!" Tarduk yelped. But as the woman charged, Gnedry was there to meet her...with his hammer.

A direct blow to the face shattered her skull, killing her practically instantly.

"Seems to make them violent as well," Ellie noted.

Arya then took note of something. An audio recording device. She wondered...

She looked around a bit first. "Is that a flying camera?" she asked, "Gendry do you think you can hack it? Maybe get it up and running?"

Gendry nodded as he crept over to the device to work it as Arya picked up the audio diary. Maybe this could shed some light on the city. She pressed play.

A rough, heavily accented voice ran over the tape and it just gave Arya chills. "These mugs all think they're gonna be captains of Industry. But even in Rapture, somebody's gotta scrub the toilets. Right now that crazy broad, Zeal, is offering me big moolah to turn on old Andy Ryan; I'll take the bitch's money, but I don't trust her no more than she trusts me. Well, who needs an army when you got Fontaine's Home for the Poor?"

The recording ended with a dirty laugh. Arya winced. "Fontaine, like the man that Futuristics is named after. The owner of the Axolotl farm."

"And sound like he was in contact with the Zeal family," Tarduk noted.

"They betrayed my family by sliding with K. Rool," Arya noted. "I will show them no mercy."

"I'm good at breaking bones and skinning people," said Clegane, "I'll stick around for your
revenge."

"Got it," said Gendry as the drone took flight, moving into the casino, "If there's anything in there we can find out through Kari's screen."

Kari rubbed her head. The brunette already saw this place as the hellhole as it was. This really sucked.

And now they had to worry about other things. Marines were here as well.

Something huge and armoured moved in the casino level, and at first she thought it was a Space Marine. She tensed, but then realized she didn't recognize the diving suit and Marines didn't carry a giant drill like that.

"Big Daddy," said Arya, "We can move around it if we don't attack it. It might even kill a few Splicers for us."

Kari and TK were the first to notice someone else as well. A young girl, with glowing eyes.

"Lady Windrunner mentioned those..." Kari noted. "Little Sisters she called them."

"They're mentioned in our files, but other than Big Daddies protect them, there's nothing about them," said Arya, "So ignore them, our job is to destroy the axolotl or capture them."

the thundering steps of the Big Daddy grew louder and the Little Sister popped out of her hole. Giggling, she ran up to the corpses on the ground and jabbed a massive needle into them.

Something was being drawn out of the body.

"Ah, the angels are full today, Mr. Bubbles," The Sister smiled...her voice a disturbing mix of young child and deep demonic guttural tone.

"I don't want to know what the Little Sisters are or how they came to be," said Ellie, as Chomp nuzzled her.

Arya watched the Big Daddy grab the Little Sister and carry her like its own offspring. "Let's follow them, see if they can get us access to the farm."

A loud explosion ripped through the foyer from where they'd come. "And with any luck, those people will focus on killing each other," Arya said hopefully

Indeed...

Adrastia growled as she shot down more and more Splicers coming at her and her unit consisting of the still-controlled Jackknife, Kremlings, and Iron Snakes. In between shots, she took time to quote from the ancient book, '1984' a remnant of the lost Terra. The Inquisition saw this book as guide to how the galaxy should be run.

Written kinda funny, more like a novel than a guidebook.

"Thought Crime does not lead to death! Thought Crime is death!" she shouted, as her bolter blasted a Splicer into goo. The book itself seemed to be of an ancient state run under one religion, which transcended religion, and all thought was controlled. In a way it was everything she worked for.

Jackknife lunged at the Splicers, even in his controlled state he was crazier than they were. His savagery and cruelty made them pause; and the aquatic Space Marines blasted them to bits,
countering their speed and sheer numbers with firepower.

Kremlings served as a balance. They had free will, and went in with weapons slashing and blazing, and sometimes even for the throat with claws and fangs.

Relius of the King's Council had charged her with recovery of the technology here, and she would do it...with the aid of another Council member.

Fireballs rained upon the Splicers, courtesy of Mr. Dark. The mutated people screamed in agony as flesh charred and crisped.

"Fontaine's going to burn for this," shouted Mr. Dark, "I don't care how productive he's been, that heathen has let these animals infest this city for too long!"

Adrastia cut down another splicer with her chainsword, "Kremlings, clear the way!" As the reptilian warriors rallied to her.

Mr. Dark was an odd one. He was somewhat loyal to the King, though as long as it worked, and not obnoxiously so. He was not one for petty cruelties and sadism, only doing what was needed done.

And now, he was doing his duty perfectly.

If evil was a forest, then he was a lumberjack with infinite stamina. He would fell as many trees as he needed until he'd left Chaos and heresy with no place to hide. This shit hole was crawling with it.

At that moment, a flying drone zoomed near him and a cruel, slow voice played through the speakers, "How ya doing, Darky? You're having fun right?"

"Fontaine, you'd better start running if you can't explain why your people are attacking the King's forces!"

Fontaine laughed, "I can't tell these mugs what to do? They attack intruders and I keep up my end of the bargain with Lady Zeal. Sides, they're good eating when rations are low in rapture."

So, Zeal had a hand in this, eh? Well, no sense killing her, she was a valuable ally at the same time. Everyone had their own motives to do.

"Lab's down the past the Casino," laughed Fontaine, "Take a look and see how good an operation I run. Oh, and I think a couple of screwy folks are trying to break in, Windrunner people if you get my drift."

In response, Mr. Dark blasted the flying drone into a million pieces. "Thanks," he scoffed. "Adrastia, we're heading for the Casino!"

She nodded...and still thought on how the prisoner was doing.

With any luck, their erstwhile ally Fontaine had kept the prisoner alive and mostly intact. Her knowledge was necessary.

The Inquisition would not torture her for information. A skilled Psyker would rip the information from her brain and then the so-called Mononoke Princess would be tortured to make a point.

Found her on some wilderness planet, and took her for questioning about the way the spirits worked.

It was...tricky. Stubborn as a mule.
The Inquisition was always looking for new weapons against Chaos. In many cases and on her homeworld in particular, spirits were as hostile to Chaos Demons as they were to humans. Such creatures embodied a natural order. Brutal, but still tooth and claw order.

She growled as she dodged another shot from the Splicers and returned fire as Dark kept up his own assault. Right now, focus on this, and search for that damn Windrunner unit.

This shithole of a city still produced vital materiels for the King's war effort, beyond housing their important prisoner. The Inquisitor and her forces were pushing forward past the ferocious but undisciplined Splicers who were now starting to back off, especially at the brutality of the Space Marines.

One Splicer, larger and more muscular than the others tried its luck, only for a Marine to grab it, throw it on the ground and stomp on the Brute Splicer's head like a melon.

Ah, so this was the power of ADAM? No wonder Relius and Black Mesa wished to have it. It would do wonders for their research...properly modified, at least.

Meanwhile...Arya's unit.

It turns out that a giant, rusted cargo elevator wasn't very safe. The place was leaking, there were flying drones shooting at them and some kind of giant Big Daddy that used a rivet gun like a large bore rifle.

Gendry hissed as shrapnel from a riven struck him across the face; his goggles preventing him from losing an eye. "Shit!" he cried out.

"Save it, we'll patch you when we can!" Shouted Bullet as she returned fire.

"What's wrong with this one?" TK asked. "It doesn't even have a Little Sister!"

"Some kind of prototype?" Berix guess, taking cover from another shot.

"Who fucking cares why, just fucking kill it!" Clegane shouted as he loaded his long pistol with armour piercing rounds. Taking shots, the long barreled revolver struck the riveter's joints and drew blood.

Following up, Berix hurled a grenade at the monster.

It let out some mournful yet raging wails, like a whale, as it was blasted and shot at...before a round of energy blasts from Ellie sent in flying of a ledge and tumbling to the ground.

The riveter crashed into a rusted, leaking wall and tumbled off the edge of the elevator platform, falling into who knows what depths, leaving behind a mournful whale song behind it.

The drones were still there, but fast shots from Arya's light rifle were picking them off, trading power for rate of fire and shifting the balance of power.

More Splicers began to emerge from the vents, chasing after the elevator; one of them extended an arm and fired a bee swarm at Arya.

Well, that was fun there. Arya snarled as she swung all about, slicing up the damn insects as she did. Tarduk had used his own crawling abilities to clamber and gouge out eyes of splicers.
All of them had faced deadly insects on Ark, much worse than these Splicer bees. One of the monsters unleashed a fireball, but Tarduk ripped the thing's throat out before it could get an accurate shot.

On the sides of the elevator, gears sparked and groaned from neglect and misuse. It was over this noise and din that they could see rappelling lines being lowered down the shaft.

"How close are we!" shouted Bullet!

"Two minutes until we hit bottom!" shouted Arya back.

"Hopefully we can find something else of value in this shithole!" Kari noted as the Splicers fell back.

There was a thunderous crash as the elevator hit bottom. From the squealing of gears and servos, it was not likely it would work again.

Arya looked at the sealed door which opened before them, "Ellie, Hound, take point, me and Bullet are going to blow a hole in the elevator shaft and flood it."

"What?" demanded Gendry,

"You're a blacksmith," said Arya, "Seal these doors so we don't drown, but it will slow down our pursuit."

"Fair enough," Gndrey nodded as he looked about. "Damn place, full of leaks. Cleary outdated technology used to build this place."

"You don't say," Bullet droned.

As Gendry began to get together his welding kit, Arya and Bullet started putting together explosive charges to collapse the tunnel. They needed to work fast in order to get out before their pursuers arrived. Last thing they wanted to do was fight Space Marines.

Looking around, Tardak saw a glowing light down the hall. "I think there's the goods, the axolotl farm!"

A nod was the answer he got, which he accepted.

Little did they know they would get more out of this than they thought.

Arya and Bullet sprinted through the door as Gendry began to weld it shut.

Ellie and her monster formed a vanguard with Tarduk.

As they moved, the source of the glow became apparent, giant illuminated tubes with small-gilled salamander creatures. The Axolotl.

From these tubes flowed pipes that led to a central condenser and a giant, glowing blue figure, which seemed not to notice them.

And below the sleeping blue giant, a woman in white furs.

Locked in a cage, hogtied, and with a massive layer cloth gag keeping her quiet...as she raged and snarled.

Whipmarks decorated her back and Ellie felt a profound need to help the captive girl. But Tarduk put
a hand on her shoulder.

"Wait," he hissed, "you could wake the sleeping giant. We should plant our bombs and then take her when we can set the timer off."

"Just be careful about it," Kari noted as she took some of the salamanders and placed them in a water-bag she had. To keep them moist.

The girl was giving them all glares.

Even a single one of these little creatures could help the war effort tremendously. Ellie looked around, grabbing a few of the creatures for herself in specialized life supported bags. As she did, she watched the girl. "I'm Ellie, Mercenary for House Windrunner. I think I'm a mercenary because I don't know if I'll still have a job after the war."

Her joke fell flat with the girl, who growled like a wolf. Actual growled, if Ellie didn't know better she'd say she was facing down a dire wolf.

And who was she kidding. A merc? Just some kid caught up in circumstances beyond control. Damn Terumi.

Above her, Berix began to set up the charges to blow this place sky high. One may concern about damage to the structure...but the place was falling part enough already. More would not matter.

"Look, I don't know who you are," said Ellie, "And it doesn't matter, we'll free you."

"Move," said Arya, standing in front of the girl.

To Ellie's surprise, Arya growled back at the bound wolf girl, and the bound girl lowered her eyes. Like a wolf who found her alpha.

And with one swipe of the paw, Nymeria had opened the cage door. The man above did not stir. Deep sleeper.

Time to get the girl loose.

Ellie expected Arya to say something. Anything. But there was nothing between them except some animal growling.

Then to her shock, the wolf girl rubbed her face across Arya's cheek after ripping off the gag on her mouth.

It was freaky how they were getting more and more wolfy by the day. Arya even licked the new girl.

"Bomb's set," said Bullet, "Let's clean out this shithole!"

The group began to run for the extraction point, where an automated submersible would pick them up from a functional dock, when part of the ceiling came down and blocked their way.

"You's mugs taking my wolf girl?" came a dirty voice as the man in blue clenched his fists.

And soon, he came slamming down as well, energy of fire, ice, and lightning flowing about him.

"Name's Frank Fontaine!" He growled. "And this ADAM...amazing!! Fucking amazing!!"

Frank's hands started crackling with Warp energy, pure power of the Warp without the need for any
spells or Gods. "This shit'll revolutionize the markets," he laughed, "Right after I revolutionize that A德拉圣ia bitch."

Arya swapped out her light rifle for a more powerful jezzail type weapon based off Skaven models. "I get it, you can't fucking can't get it up. Now run and I'll let you live."

Frank grinned and summoned powerful energy, "Come 'ere, little goil, give ol' Frank a kiss!"

"Go suck on an egg."

Fontaine screamed and charged...and was suddenly blindsided by a blast of magic. All eyes turned.

Ailish held her staff outwards, with Tal, Buki, and Elco. "Arya Stark..." Ailish smirked in a friendly manner. "Causing a ruckus as usual."

"Eh? Dreemurr agents?" Sandor raised an eyebrow.

"I thought you were dead Sandor," Ailish smirked, "I'm almost happy to see you alive,"

"Go suck a tailpipe," Sandor snapped as Fontaine launched a blast of Warp lightning that turned the floor it touched into swords

Bullet began punching them back as Arya joined with he newcomer. "So...name?"

"San," came the reply. "Now help me fight. This place is far from my liking."

San was upon Fontaine like the animal she emulated. She jumped on the giant blue man and drove a scalpel into his eye.

The huge master of Rapture screamed and threw her aside, where she landed on her feet gracefully. Like an animal, all right. A lithe grace and power combined for a deadly weapon.

And the Dreemurr's had not come alone...for with them were small sect of Fairies of Ferngully and Wood Elves of Athel Loren...beings of nature.

These soldiers began to attack Fontaine with elemental attacks, beams of magic that struck him. None of them killing, but all of them harassing and distracting him, like a great boar being laid low by a swarm of stinging flies.

Not helped with vines of power began to wrap about him, pinning his limbs about his body as several Elves filled him with arrows.

"Ah, you stupid cunts!" He screamed as he snapped the vines. "Is that all ya got?! I'll skull fuck ya until ya bleed semen!" he threatened, as he snapped the vines, only to miss Arya, slashing behind his leg and cutting the Achilles tendon.

He raised his hand when suddenly he felt a pinprick from the side, as a Little Sister stabbed him in a major artery with her needle.

All sides stopped and stared. They didn't even see her come in...and then they saw it.

The ADAM being drained out.

"Careful, little one!" A voice called from above. "The others will aid you!"
Fontaine made to crush the Little Sister like a bug when he took an arrow in the other eye from one of the Elves.

Ripping it out, it soon began to regenerate, only for Clegane to drive his vibro-sword right into Fontaine’s gut.

TK looked up. A woman was above them on a balcony, staring down as other Little Sisters, armed as well, came down to jab at the badly wounded Fontaine.

She looked...sane.

"Please don't kill us," TK shouted, "And maybe tell us your name, nice lady!"

She looked at him. "I am Brigid Tenenbaum! Caretaker of the Little Ones.

TK looked back down, noticing Fontaine had wound up on the ground, being stabbed over and over.

"Give us passage out of this city," the doctor said,

"Or else what, ya dumb twat!" shouted Clegane.

Dr. Tannenbaum looked at him, "Or I detonate the explosive charges in this city, wash everything away." she held up a remote detonator. "You can have the ADAM, just help me save the girls."

"Deal!" shouted Arya as the sound of Space Marines grew closer. "We have seconds at best, so move your ass!"

Kari nodded as Elco stepped forwards. "ADAM, eh? Lord Asgore has sent us for that reason. Wants it to be studied."

"We call all share it later!" Bullet cried. "All of us, little ones as well, back to the damn sub before we get wasted!"

Bolter fire ripped through the lab, igniting everything.

"Let's go!" shouted the doctor as Arya's team set their charges to blow.

It was a race against the clock as huge blast doors sealed their escape, protecting from water, but would only hold so long against Space Marines.

Tal and his unit, meanwhile, were given some of the ADAM. He looked over it in the glass tube, then nodded. "Farewell for now, Arya Stark. May we cross again!" With that, he and his allies were off.

Arya ran with her team, and San. The pair held hands like old lovers. Truth be told, Arya wasn't looking for romance. She felt more wolfish, more predatory, and she loved this in the new woman.

She felt San yank her arm, causing Arya to stumble and narrowly avoid a bolter shot to the head on the way to the evac sub.

All turned.

Adrastia was there, as was Mr. Dark. "Well," the Inquisitor began. "You've all caused a lot of trouble for me and the crown...thus I see fit to judge you here and now."
"Should have expected one of you here..." TK muttered, then smirked. "But then again, nobody ex-"

"We've all heard the joke before," Adrastia growled. "And it wasn't funny the first time. I'm going to
give you all a quick death," began the Inquisitor, She turned to the nearest Space Marine. "Rip their
limbs off with your bare hands. Leave the girl alive, we have use for a Stark."

The Marine captain nodded as his men trained their weapons. "In the name of the King!"

Well...this was not great. They had to fight their way out of this. But to take on a Marine? Madness!

Arya was confident she could kill a Marine... if she had either a Titan mech or a whole army to
back her up.

She started to slow down her mind. Dust particles froze in the air. She’d learned to meditate, slow
down her perception of time.

She felt the animal within her. Felt the world, the water. She felt part of the natural world.

And the felt the Kaiju that was sleeping in these waters.

Why...why did she feel such a connection to the ancient, primordial creatures? What it her?
Something else?

Bah, no time, time to call, and see if it would answer.

Arya let out a wolf howl, crying out in a language that none here could understand. It was a
language that spoke to the very bones of this planet and all creatures within it.

The Space Marine turned, just in time to see Ebirah the crayfish Kaiju moving towards the City of
Rapture.

"No," snarled Adrastia with pure rage.

Ebirah smashed through the side of Rapture, crushing the outer shell and releasing the sea into the
enclosed underwater city.

As the giant crustacean rampaged through the city, San grabbed Arya and dragged her into the
escape sub.

Adrastia ran to the sub, foaming with rage, firing a bolter shot inside before the blast door closed.

She cursed and was about to give chase, despite the pointlessness, but Dark grabbed her.

"Don't bother, we got what we came for..." He stated.

"I will remember them," she ground out as she activated a breathing helmet for underwater work on
her suit. "When I find the Stark girl, I will rape and crucify her."

"Well, don't get your panties wet just now," said Dark, "We serve the Crown before our own needs.
Your time will come."

Adrastia breathed, calmed herself, and nodded as she allowed Dark to teleport them away.

Arya and her team, meanwhile, watched as the massive crayfish tore the city into bits. What of the
Little Ones and their guardian?
Arya could see a bathysphere rising to the surface. Her throat went dry and she wasn't sure if the giant crayfish would destroy it with the rest of the city.

She pressed her face to the window, "Please, be safe." she begged who or whatever was listening.

She couldn't remember how she'd summoned the Kaiju, and getting it to spare lives would be much harder than getting it to kill.

This was, she could tell, a far more feral and angry creature, focused more on wrecking whatever it saw as offensive.

But it ignored all the subs, and went to work on the city, leveling the once great dream.

Arya let out a breath she didn't know what she was holding.

She hoped that the little sisters and Dr. Tennenbaum could get to safety. Her hands were trembling as their rescue sub rose to the surface.

"You did good," grunted Clegane, "I never would have given a shit about those fucking kids. You got a good heart."

Arya was silent as she turned to the newcomer. "San, you said?"

The woman grunted, "And you're Arya, it's nice to meet you," and she sniffed Arya like a wolf.

In response, Arya sniffed her back.

"Er, a point to this?" Bullet had to ask as they ascended to the top for retrieval.

"She comes with us," said Arya, "That's final."

"Ugh, we don't even know her," said Bullet.

"And I didn't know you when I landed on Ark," said Arya, "Or Ellie for that matter."

'I still don't know you guys very well, even though I've fought with you," Ellie brought up.

"Well, it's all been a rush, so we never got the chance," Tarduk noted.

"And I've never even been off my home world until this," San noted.

"We're a fighting team," said Arya, "I'm sure you've got experience with fighting and killing."

"More than you know," said San, "when I last saw it, bombs were being dropped on my home. Jungle law demands revenge."

"I know...they killed my father," Arya growled. "And they all declared war on us."

"Lady Windrunner will guide you," Kari noted. "She will guide all of us."

To Arya's surprise, San put a hand on her shoulder, a very human gesture. "I've lost family, a man I loved. Wolves who raised me and were my mother and father."

"Sounds like you already know me," said Arya sarcastically

But still, there was a smile...and the team of allies and friends soon reached the surface, to return to the Undercity for their next mission...
Such was war.
When Pirates Clash

Terumi glanced at the pocket watch in his hand. It was a lovely thing, made of gold and precision engineered. Taken from the hands of a dead noblewomen as he raped and strangled her daughter. Such a thing was a fine trophy.

And it reflected how he planned his raids. So much of what he did depended on discipline and timing.

He watched as his cruiser, separate from his main ship, flew towards the massive space hulk, hidden and full of goods.

On their cruiser, aside from himself, was Jinmen and several handpicked cremates of several species.

He knew time was of the essence. This was deep in Space Marine territory. Specifically the World Eaters Chapter. The Uncorrupted part of that tribe of warrior monks.

Most pirates wouldn't dare cross the World Eaters, but Terumi was not most pirates.

He had a plan and the manpower to pull it off.

Right now, everything looked quiet...but that could change in an instant. One must always be on guard.

People thought of him as a storm, something unstoppable and unpredictable.

That wasn't quite true. Storms could be ignored, weathered or predicted. He was much worse.

He turned to his demon lieutenant, "Get the cannon fodder ready, and let’s draw out the first defenses of this shithole."

Jinmen nodded with a cruel smile as the Gnolls were sent force in small scouting ships to test if anything was still alive in this hulk.

Better safe than sorry.

The Gnolls were confident in themselves. Mostly because they were stupid. Jinmen told them there would be girls aboard the hulk.

There could be girls. It wasn’t strictly a lie.

The first wave of boarding pods shot forth, as well as remote sensor drones on the lookout for Space Marines.

And soon they were on. No sign of Marines.

Plenty of Necromorphs, though. The radio sounded with slashes, gunfire, and snarls.

Terumi nodded over the sound on the radio. "This is better than we'd hoped. Send in the Dark Eldar Raiders and the heavy hitters."

Jinmen laughed, "Let's have some fucking fun!!"

All to the chorus of the wailing heads on the turtle demons shell.
Necromorphs...once you knew how to deal with them, easy as pie. Simply dice them up.

The Dark Eldar packed weapons ideal for slicing and dicing, and Terumi himself prepared to board, eager to practice his new telekinesis spells.

Upon arrival, he was greeted by a wall of dead flesh and bone charging at him, and from the Necromorph Gnolls lunging for his throat, there was probably a Marker here. Even a Black Marker maybe.

There was a lot that Terumi could do with a Marker.

His knives were ready, and with blinding speed, he began his pruning...slicing limbs and heads off, scattering flesh about in his madness.

Jinmen crushed his foes in pulp, burning flesh with his hands. One big one approached him...and Jinmen extended his neck and coiled around the undead.

The creature had no soul, no mind and no fear. Jinmen was disgusted. There was no pleasure torturing that which could not suffer.

He crushed the Necromorph to paste. Yet more waves came.

“Scans show large deposits of gold, silver and adamantium ore!” Shouted a Dark Eldar captain.

Adamantium, that could fetch a king’s ransom for the right buyer.

"Track those down, along with the Marker!" Terumi shouted as several of his Skakdi barreled forwards, merciless as always.

Maybe they could even find his true body here.

The Marker was the real treasure here.

As a power source, it could outshine nearly anything. Even Samuel Hayden’s precious argent energy.

And that was only the beginning. A black marker could in theory build him a new better body.

He would obtain what was his.

The Necromorphs began to die down, allowing him and his unit to keep moving.

He smiled, having Jinmen and a few allied Demons take the lead.

Ahead of them was a dark room. Opening it, dozens of glowing mechanical eyes lit up.

A legion of Terminators with miniguns opened fire, preserved in time from an ancient war long forgotten and left here as accidental guardians of the space hulk.

The Hell Demons took the brunt of the force, but moved on to take down their foes. It was not long before the old tin cans were down.

These Terminators were an obsolete design. Nothing Terumi and his people couldn’t handle.

He could hear the Marker, he could feel it attack the minds of his crew. It didn’t matter
"Well, looks like the prize is ours," Jinmen smirked as the soldiers began to loot the place for other things.

"Yes..." Terumi grinned. "And before long, many more in the Galaxy will all tremble in the name of-

"BROOMHEAD!"

Terumi looked up at where the voice had come from. A woman landed on top of him, on him. This was the first time in over a decade anyone had surprised him.

Juri Han landed on his shoulders, wrapping her legs around his head. Laughing with glee, she grabbed both his eyelids and pulled, "Give me your eyes, broomhead! I want to see what you see!"

The ambush was sprung, Juri's pirates opened fire on the Hell Demons.

Both of her soldiers and her slaves. Dawn and May, decked out in full armor gear, were there as well, masks keeping their mouths shut.

Terumi managed to kick Juri off him with a snarl. A misogynous fellow, Terumi HATED women, and saw them crushed under his heel.

Juri likewise hated women, but certain kinds of women. She hated the weak. But even more she hated the idea that piracy was man's work.

"Wanna lick my muff, stud?" she asked him as she powered up her eye. "You like pegging, you look kind of gay to me?"

She dodged his knives with a hair's breadth to spare.

"Oh ho, so the whore wants her tongue cut out, eh?" Terumi jeered. "Fine by me!"

The two snarled and began their fearsome clash.

"I like you," said Juri, as Terumi slashed across her chest, leaving thin cuts on her tits. "I could make you my woman."

"I'll be my name you scream as you have your last orgasm," Terumi promised.

As the battle raged on, May and Dawn were lost to pleasure and pain; the suits were designed to make them effective killers . . . by giving them an orgasm with each kill.

Once, they may have tried to use the chaos to kill both pirates...but it was too late for that. They NEEDED Juri. Her love, her lust...

Blasting down enemies was now their job, and many lesser pirates fell.

Jinmen, though...

"I'LL ADD YOUR FACES TO MY SHELL!"

May raised a stolen Eldar shuriken cannon, shredding Jinmen's eyes and cutting into his exposed flesh, what little there was.

Dawn lunged with a collapsible combi-staff, taken from the cold dead hands of a dead Yautja elder.
But Jinmen was nothing if tough, being both a Demon AND a turtle. He laughed. "Ah, that's all you got? How sad...so sad!" He lunged with his burning hands.

His hands burned Dawn, but by this point she had tasted far worse from Juri. She thrust her combi staff into Jinmen's open mouth, causing him to gurgle blood.

She yanked out the spear and pulled his tongue with it.

"GHHAAGGHH!" Damn! He would need to go to the healing chamber for THAT!

Swinging the axe section, May chopped off one of Jinmen's arms. The demon turtle screamed.

This wasn't fun anymore. This wasn't right. Looking around, while Juri was matching Terumi, the fight was turning against them. He could see Juri's slaves and soldiers cutting down the demons.

It was slow but soon the collapse would follow. He knew the writing on the wall.

Fuck Terumi and his stupid Marker.

Juri lashed out with her feet, kicking Terumi in the chest, knocking him backwards several meters. He quickly regained himself and unleashed his chains, the snake heads wide open.

Juri grabbed one of the snake heads in her bare hand and crushed it. Twisting around them, she avoided the poison bites from the snake heads.

Violence and murder was a pastime for her when she was a child, this was a continuation of that.

The weapons, Nox Nyctores Ouroboros, could reform, but Terumi just kept them in knife form for now and charged forwards, dark energy leaking from him.

Terumi went for the instant kill, it was his way, it was how he viewed the world.

But she ducked because she expected it.

And her artificial eye flashed...boosting her power and speed.

Terumi was kicked in the face, and he sneered at this "Feh, thought you Chaos people were afraid of death!"

Juri smirked. "Oh, a lot of them are...because they’re dumb! Me? I knew the risks when I made the contract with Slaanesh. If I die, then so be it! I'm here for the good times, not the long times," she laughed, "So let's get this good, jackass!"

Terumi kicked her across the room, as his Demons were retreating. He knew the risks, and it was worth it. He needed that Marker. Urgash was his patron God, not that anyone cared. The old Dragon was too caught up in his own ravings to pay attention to worshippers. Terumi made his own luck, made his own fortune. And if the old dragon helped, then he would be pleasantly surprised.

"Right, no more bullshit!" He roared, flaring up with dark energy, enchanting his own dark attacks, forming them into snake heads.

Then something hit him, a knife in the gut.

The logic engine in her head allowed her an amazing ability to improvise, and Juri exploited it for all she could.
Yet Terumi was no mere man. He was a God once, and still had immense power and durability to an extent. A knife was nothing to him.

But it was a distraction, and a distraction was all that Juri needed.

"Later sucker!" she laughed as she began running down an empty corridor.

Terumi’s eyes widened. She as going for the Marker!

"LIKE HELL YOU ARE!!" He shouted and took pursuit...

Only for May to blast him in the back.

He stumbled, but ignored her, only to get stabbed in the back by Dawn's combi-staff.

He growled and pushed forward, the Marker was his. He needed it,

And the thought of this braindead woman child fucking with it drove him into a rage beyond anything he'd felt for years.

But some Skakdi and Dark Elder suddenly showed up to aid him.

"My Lord, take out the whore, we'll deal with these two," One Dark Elder said as Juri’s pirate backed up Dawn and May.

The Dark Eldar commander was not doing it entirely out of altruism. He wanted to rape and eat the girls. And he was very hungry.

But it was not going to be easy, as Jinmen had to fall back to the main ship to recover his wounds.

Terumi ran as the call of the Black Marker called to him.

The power of the marker was amazing, beautiful even. He needed it. He wanted it.

And that slut was going to try and take it from him! Over his rotten corpse! His knives flicked darkly as he moved to where he needed to be.

Juri left little gifts for him, like a dog shitting on a rug.

A load of hand grenades went flying behind her like a child leaving behind toys.

Terumi pushed himself forward, through fire and flames and concussive force.

"So...the little rat wants to play, eh?" He hissed. "Well then, I'm happy to oblige..."

He charged through the smoke and flames and laid eyes on it.

The Black Marker.

A thing older than humanity, older than space flight itself.

A thing which raped reality like a fresh maiden.

It was beautiful, and Juri Ham was getting her filthy paws on it.

She needed to die.
His knives flicked out and he lunged...but she was ready for him, and kicked at him, the two attacks clashing, unleashing a shockwave of power.

Terumi ground his teeth, the power blast blowing back his hair. He lunged in with his blades, only for Juri to counter with knives of her own, weapons taken from a dead Dark Eldar Princess and from a dead Inquisitor.

Usually best with kicks, she knew how to play dirty at times.

"Ah, little boy wet his diapers?" She mocked.

He kicked his foot, throwing dust in her eyes.

Easy trick but still a good one.

He lunged for the dagger kill while she cried out.

She somehow backed off, his dagger slicing off her eye lashes. So close.

"Oh, so rough!" Juri sneered. "But how about this!" Her eye flashed, and she kicked Terumi upwards, jumping up and kicking him back down...and rushing down to kick him again...

The rusted deck of the space hulk caved in under the impact. Terumi felt something in him break.

He would not allow this bitch to destroy his destiny.

"I can feel it," she gushed, "It makes my teeth rattle, makes me eye feel like it's going to orgasm. I love it."

"You dare," he snarled, throwing a dozen knives at her.

All which she dodged thanks to her reflexes. She felt...good!

The Black Marker was designed to destroy organic minds, drive them insane. Joke was on it, though.

Juri was already insane, her logic engine eye did not depend on petty morality and she had a little friend in the form of a god of pleasure.

Terumi was more than human, and he was already cruel and evil beyond reproach. It had no effect on his mind.

He knew that the Black Marker was not self-aware. But on some level it was playing them against each other. Not self-aware, but it was intelligent.

And now...it was coming to the end of the fight. Both sides willing to get their hands on it.

Naturally, Juri had no intentions of playing fair.

"Look what I got, Broomhead!" she laughed as she procured a piece of parchment from her cleavage.

Touching the rune in the center, six Demonettes of Slaanesh erupted into being, fed by the slaughter, the proximity into the Warp, and the corrupting influence of the Marker.

Sure, the Warp beings would have to go back before long...but it was enough for what Juri needed.
The bitch grabbed the marker as the Demons swarmed Terumi. "Later, assface!"

Her zero point module lighting up, she laughed as she hauled the huge device behind her.

Terumi screamed as her personal teleporter fired up, and took her with it.

Taking away his prize.

A strike with his blades, and he banished the damn demons back where they belonged.

Across the ship, Juri's crew were also being pulled out.

Terumi tried his best, keeping her crew there to kill them. Rip their guts out and suck their brains from their skulls.

Chains flew from his hands and tore them limb from limb.

It was nothing, just a trickle of blood to quench the raging fire within him

Dawn and May were among the many to escape, and soon, once all were gone, Winry, still enslaved, but sane, activated Juri's engines.

Juri laughed at the Marker. "This thing looks amazing! It's like Slaanesh’s dildo! Imagine what we can do with it!"

Winry mumbled through her gag, hoping for the release of death.

Juri had not tortured her yet (badly) but still, this sucked!

Terumi’s men were returning to the ship, hauling whatever they could carry.

They took crates of fuel, rare metals and even some archeotech, they’d make a pretty penny.

But Terumi had lost his prize.

And now the proximity alert had a Space Marine battle barge approaching.

Not what he needed right now. Much as he loved a good fight, he was wounded, Jinmen was in a regeneration tube, and his men were disarray.

He had to fall back.

This raid was a tactical success. He struggled to reign in his emotions as he and his crew prepared for emergency fold space jump

He would get his chance, at godhood and revenge.

All he needed was that Band...and his old body.

Juri, meanwhile, was lapping in success.

“Look at it! Look!” She crowed at the Marker, “It's glorious!!”

Winry looked upon it with despair. It was telling her to kill her self and that death would bring no relief

“It’s evil in a bottle!” Juri Shouted, “the genie who won’t be put back in the bottle “
Dawn and May were at her side, naked and flushed with pleasure and madness.

They were choking one another.

Juri was having fun seeing who would go down first.

She loved seeing her little girls hurting each other.

A good way to unwind after a successful hunt.

She leaned back in her chair and let the ship take off into the stars...
Bowser remembered his first brush with death. He was on planet Venom when the supply ship carrying air filters against the planets poison atmosphere ran late.

"Pay attention!" He snapped at his son, "I'm not telling you this because it's a nice story! You'll need these lessons!"

Junior sighed, but nodded as he listened to the Venom story. He wasn't sure about this, but he knew, deep down, he had to learn about the ways of the Galaxy. Dragons, Angels, Dark Xenos, Demons...so many enemies wanted them dead...

The thing was his pop wasn't telling him about the battles or amazing fights. He was learning about star charts and shipping lanes.

"So you know Andross wanted to declare himself king," Bowser continued "but when the kings bannermen finally got together Andross had weeks to get his act together. When we arrived, it wasn't until 6 weeks later we got supplies. 3 weeks in we were using up our reserve air and filters. Do you know why?"

"Too many people?" Junior asked.

"...Well, maybe, yeah. But I was going for is that they were starving us out with their poison. Oh and it doesn't help that the Star maps we used in the campaign were fifty years out of date," Bowser growled, "Two supply ships fold space jumped into a star before the third got wise."

Nasty death, flying right into a massive ball of fire and plasma.

"See, back then, the Guild had their own private cartography service," Bowser elaborated, "but the king refused to pay for up to date charts. See, the old kings ran their kingdom like barbarians; their job was to beat up people for taxes and not much else."

"Sounds like our current king," joked Junior.

"Ah, but that was the ONLY thing the old king would do. That and burn people," Bowser elaborated. "Little wonder people turned on him. Did I ever tell you about Aerys Crusade against the Grox?" He asked, "The old man called it a holy war, said the Gods were on our side and had the church back him up. He promised the peasants eternal salvation in heaven and promised us nobles plunder."

"Yeah, you wiped the Grox good," gushed Bowser Junior, "I read all about it!"

"So you must know that we fought the Grox on their home turf with next to no planning or intel, we lost a quarter of our forces just getting to their space," Bowser said spitefully, "Oh, and the real punchline was how Aerys promised that plundered spice would pay for the campaign, forgetting that the Grox burned all their stockpiles rather than let it fall into our hands."

The bitter feeling stung to this very day. All that fighting with a limitless foe for no real gain...

"The King broke even, our house took on a mountain of debt that we only just repayed," Bowser spat on the floor. "So fuck the Guild Bank while we're on the topic. See son, what I'm getting at is the old order of Houses and Lords is dying a slow death; K. Rool is just putting it out of its misery. And for our family to stay relevant, we need to adapt to a world of national bureaus, racial purity and..."
"...You...do know our House and Kingdom is a mix of species, right?" Junior replied.

"Well, as long as it's nothing demonic, it's cool," Bowser replied. "Or heretics..."

"Like Lee," Junior nodded. "Heard the Koopalings are about to lead an assault on their planet of Australia."

"They'd better bring back Kangaroo meat," Bowser growled, "It's been too long since I've had that grilled. We're hitting the planet up for the element Australium, to give us an edge over the Adeptus Mechanicus and their puppeteer, Samuel Hayden."

An odd material to have for a planet of Beastkin, usually peaceful, yet still ready with mechs and vehicles if needs be. Thylacines were said to be the best fighters there.

The world had to fall, for the sake of the Kingdom, the needs of one little pissant planet mattered nothing against the needs of the Kingdom as a whole.

...But he was thinking too much. Back to his point.

"I brought you here, because I want to test you out, and you've failed the first test," Bowser crossed his arms.

"That's not fair!" protested Junior, "I didn't know there was a test!"

"That's not how life works," Bowser growled, "If you'd checked the daily reports you'd know there's a fleet of Grox heading to this world right now. So if you want to avenge our family's dishonor, go and lead our people to victory."

...Oh. So that's how it was.

Warwick and the Koopalings were gone on the raid, leaving Doomguy, Nefarious, Reaper, Doomfist, Moira, Sombra...and the mysterious Widowmaker.

"Y-yeah!" shouted Junior, a lot less confident than he wanted to appear, "I'll tear those Grox a new asshole!"

Bowser raised an eyebrow, "Say it like you mean it, you're shivering like a Skaven. What's the matter? Widowmaker scare you?" Of all the council members, little could be said of her. An assassin, modified to be silent and cold, only living for the kill. Provided great support in battles.

"You're going to be dealing with scary people, son," said Bowser, "Scum, filth, killers and assassins; and that's just the people on your side. Leadership is a bitch beast that's always trying to throw you off, but you stay on or else someone else will take the beast for their own and turn it against you."

"I'm not afraid!" Junior snarled, anger blooming in him.

Bowser grinned. "That's better! Now let's show those bastards they can't come to our territory and take it!"

Sirens went off, and soldiers began to rush about to arm themselves for the coming attack.

Bowser let out a sigh as his son grabbed a chainsaw and ran to command his men. For all the bravado he put on, he was worried. He would never let a soul know. Ever. He would die before admitting he felt fear at any time for any reason.
Instead he would turn his fear into hate, the same way he did when he'd lost consciousness on a poison Grox homeworld and survived by pure luck.

Picking up a ball-and-chain, he began to head out to lead his own unit to back up his boy.

Reaper looked up at the sky, a platoon of Koopa's and Psychos at his back.

"Get ready," Reaper instructed his men, "Show no mercy, eat the dead if you want."

"So uncivilized," said a purring voice, "I prefer non-animal protein when I kill," Widowmaker laughed.

A cold, low laugh at that, fitting her style. Her long rifle was in hand, ready to pick off foes at a distance.

Reaper would have like the Ogres here, but they were elsewhere with others soldiers right now...

A cold, low laugh at that, fitting her style. Her long rifle was in hand, ready to pick off foes at a distance.

Reaper would have like the Ogres here, but they were elsewhere with other Koopa soldiers right now...

The Ogres bellowed and shouted, mercenaries from the Morn System. Loaned out from Greasus Goldtooth at great expense. But they were worth it.

The Ogres carried giant cannons usually mounted on tanks and rode giant Rhinox that ate flesh when they were denied grass.

Doomfist was leading them in his area, making sure all were ready. The Grox were without mercy...and he would give the same.

Sombra was elsewhere, ready to hack into systems to bring down more ships.

"Heads up, hermanas and hermanos!" she shouted over the coms, "We've got thirty seconds before they hit planetside!"

Doomfist cracked his weapon of choice, "Good, let them come."

"Wait," said Sombra over the coms, "Their ships aren't slowing down, they're going kamikaze on the planetary shields!"

Well...that was unexpected from such logic-driven creatures. What were they planning?

"Well, men and women," Junior called over the coms. "As your commander, I advise you to stand your ground and ready yourselves! Never know what they can do the days!"

Sombra was going over the telemetry, "The ships are empty! There's no life signs aboard! And... oh Madre, they're powering up faster than light systems."

"All the get rid of their obsolete ships in a useful way," said Reaper, "I respect that."

"And we get to pay for it," said Doomfist, looking to the sky

Hopefully Moira's and Nefarious' tech would help them win this battle.
Bowser Junior had suited up in his mini Koopa Clown Car, armed to the teeth with weapons.

Junior looked up at the skies and saw the Grox ship crash into the planet. And shatter the shield like glass.

His stomach fell, only for his father to smack him in the shoulder. "Did you think your enemies would take it easy on you?"

Junior perked himself backed, and grabbed the microphone. "Anti-air guns, when they come in range, OPEN FIRE!!"

"Like the sound of that," Reaper chuckled.

King K. Rool had tripled the number of AA batteries on this planet. He'd virtually threatened Samuel Hayden and his Tek priests.

The Grox were logical. They anticipated that they would find more defenses than they planned for, so they decided to use the obsolete ships as suicide bombers.

It worked, and now the fighter corps were coming in.

Tough ships, with lots of firepower...at the trade-off of being rather slow in firefights, which meant dodging, would be tough for the array of gunfire now coming at them.

Compared to most fighters, Grox ships were built like a brick shithouse. They were armored and tough. Worse yet, they'd devised a new training program that made it easier for veteran star fighters to pass on their knowledge to rookies. Increasing the combat effectiveness of the newest Grox fighter pilots.

The flack and AA fire went up, but the fighters were escorting bombers who began to cut through the AA defenses.

Junior shook as he heard men scream right before they were melted to goo by plasma.

But he quickly growled. He did some nasty stuff in his fights as well, with beasts and Skaven! Why should he worry now!?

"Right, gonna need some good men to back me up!" He stated boldly.

"They'll be striking at the head of our government," said Widowmaker, making herself know, "Their aim is to kill the political and military leadership of this world, and then kill every living person on this world after the fact."

"So what's new?" Reaper asked in a deadpan tone.

"Good point."

Reaper readied his shotguns. Sooner or later some land units would arrive...and he was ready for them.

Dropships were next,

Well armored, well armed but still slow

They stood well against the AA guns, but not perfectly. Many were lost, but enough made it.
Out came vehicles of massive firepower, each manned by several Grox.

"Pitiful organic lifeforms!" A Grox bellowed. "Your deaths will pave the way for another addition to our empire!"

Doomfist raised his signature weapon, "Try me, asshole! I've stepped on tougher cockroaches!"

As the anti-tank batteries opened up, Bowser's back up forces arrived on the scene. His own brand of Servitor skulls, designed to work as suicide bombers.

They began to pepper the Grox vehicles with explosives, leaving them vulnerable to extra firepower.

Doomguy was in the fray was well, blasting down ships with his weapons.

It wasn't like Doomguy had any real beef against the Grox. He was simply keeping his skills sharp for when the demons came. And when you got right down to it, the Grox were kind of assholes.

So he grabbed a Grox Warrior near him, threw it to the ground, and stomped on its head like a rotting melon.

At least he knew that his brand new boots fit him just fine.

A mix of organic and mechanical parts, it was...not a nice sight. But he was used to it

Bowser's own tanks were rolling in, artillery fired from hidden positions.

The Grox, however, had prepared for losses, had prepared for their intelligence to be incomplete.

They were thinking logistics. Could they keep their war machine fueled more efficiently than House Koopa?

For all their ruthless and cruel nature, they were logical beings as well. Always be ready for anything, and counterattack in the correct ways.

Airships were also flying up at the Grox feet, cannons firing. Bullet Bills, in rage as usual, flew at their foes.

Basic infantry, the Shyguys, formed the frontline, soaking the gunfire up with their bodies and returning it with magic projectiles and more mundane attacks; like lobbing dynamite at the Grox.

Truth be told, Bowser had learned much from the Grox, about how they thought and used their best ideas for himself.

Industrialization was his weapon against their limitless numbers and iron will.

But even then...beasts were also nice, as they could not be shut down by EMP. And correct ones, like the creatures of Mourn, could rip though tanks.

The Rhinox and Mammoths the Ogres rode were as tough as their masters. They needed to be in order to avoid being eaten by the ravenous Ogres.

The column smashed through the Grox light armored vehicles and tanks. Under the cover of air support, they rode through missiles and makeshift forcefields to sow discord among the enemy lines.

The fields were designed to stop machines, not animals.
Worse for the Grox, Boos began to infiltrate the vehicles and sabotage the systems...even going for the life support, causing to Grox to be exposed to air.

Bowser took great joy in seeing these things choke. As he'd once choked on their world once before, he took great pleasure in seeing it.

The Boo, spiritual beings, went around the Grox's defenses and started disabling the cyber defenses of their large capital ships, which held their reinforcements, vehicles and supplies.

The Grox grew angry. Things were already turning against them

Bowser's fleet were turning the tide and the Grox were starting to recalculate the math. They were crunching numbers from their ships about how much they could gain and how much they might lose.

And they were preparing for the fail scenario.

Their main capital ship was powering up reverse engineered virus bombs, the same used to commit Exterminatus by the Inquisition.

They had hope to get supplies via basic warfare, but if bombing the planet here meant they would get the plant dead and ready...then so be it.

The Grox had never once surrendered in their history. When Maegor the Cruel had burned their capital to ashes, they'd spited the mad Targaryen King by nuking a series of agricultural worlds. Places with no defenses and their loss led to a rash of peasant rebellions across the Kingdom as peasants had nothing to eat.

Destroying Bowser's homeworld would not give them more resources, but it would deny resources and comfort to their enemies.

And again, they would get aplenty to colonize afterwards.

But Moira had detected the weapon. "So...that is how it's going to be, eh? If we shoot it down point three seconds before launching, it can destroy the mother ship and half their fleet," she grinned, "But we're going to need to teleport onboard and manually plant explosives."

Bowser, hearing this, grimaced...The Koopalings were the best for this, but again, they were off planet, fighting the Lee's. Sombra had her hands full manning the defense matrix...

The Spanish hacker grit her teeth. The Grox were getting better at cyber warfare. Not as good as her but this was no time to fall asleep or pat herself on her back.

Then the Grox kill squad teleported into her room. No accident.

“Happy Halloween, motherfuckers,” she smirked.

A pistol attack later...and all were down on the ground, smoking through holes in their heads.

“You come for the queen and you better not miss,” Sombra laughed.

Bowser had his own claws full...and he greeted his attacks with fire.

The Grox had something new, something that vaguely resembled a Space Marine.

It made sense this race would copy that group.
But copying a Space Marine didn’t make it so.

“Bring it!” Bowser howled as the armored, generically enhanced monstrosity charged, “I’ll end your whole race!”

With his weapon and fire, he began to smash his foes...one-by-one, gleefully ripping them apart.

Let the bastards die!

The Grox were vicious and gave no pity, and deserved none.

King K. Rool fought them as a matter of routine.

But for Bowser this was deeply personal and a matter of family honor.

Protect his people, his kingdom...his son.

None should suffer as he had.

This was THEIR home!

Bowser howled as he tore the limbs off a Grox soldier and breathed flames at the Space Marine knock-off.

House Koopa would survive at all costs.

Still, a question remained...who would teleport to the ship to cause the backlash?

Reaper grabbed Bowser Junior by the shoulder.

“Get to the teleportation room,” he hissed.

“Why!?” Demanded Junior, smeared with the blood of his enemies.

"Time to see if you're REALLY worthy of being a leader."

At that, Junior scowled. It was a scary thought to go up there...but that stung his pride right there. Time to show Mr. Reyes here how it was done.

So, activating his life-support system, Junior readied himself.

"Take my boy with you," Bowser snarled, "If anything happens to him you'll have to run to another galaxy to escape my wrath."

"You don't trust your boy?" Reaper asked slyly.

"Teleporting in three . . . two . . . one!" began Sombra.

As it did happen, Reaper DID know to take Bowser seriously. If this went sour...nothing could sure him but his own skill, and who knew how that would hold up. So...

On board the Grox ship, Junior and Reaper appeared.

The mask was covering Junior's face and a wave of claustrophobia went over him.

He'd done space walks before, but this was is first time in a combat harness; built for hardness and survivability. The cost was oppression, heat, and humidity.
Junior almost wanted to gag.

But there was no time: Already troops of Grox were heading right at them, armed with blaster, their ugly faces set in sneers.

Junior felt brave, until a Grox Marine exploded through a bulkhead and chomped onto his arm with sharp metal teeth.

He screamed as the teeth crushed his arm under his suit and began to work through the airtight seal, when Widowmaker pulled his bacon out of the fire, stabbing the thing in the eye and knocking it back.

When did she get here? Ah, never mind, her help was needed. The assassin soon clambered to high ground and began to pick off foes, the weaker grunts falling like flies.

Widowmaker went where she was needed, especially since she knew her life depended on Junior staying alive.

"Men! Clear the way!" Junior shouted as he powered up his chainsaword, a gift from the King himself.

The smaller Grox were torn to pieces by the weapon, as Reaper began to get up close and personal. His shotgun rang loud as he worked.

Junior stood shoulder to shoulder with his men, resisting the urge to charge ahead and gain personal glory. The fighting unit was bigger than the man, as his father had taught him.

And going right ahead would likely kill him. Not what he wanted. He kept in his Clown Car as he monitored the situation. Now...where was that bomb?

“Sombra!” Junior shouted, “don’t keep me in the dark!”

“Si, Senior Junior!” She affirmed, “our target is through ... that solid steel wall with no entrance except one on the outside of the ships hull. Damn.”

Junior stiffened...then steeled himself for what he must do...

"I must not fear,” He muttered. "Fear is the mind killer, fear is the little death that brings total obliteration..."

Fear set them apart from their enemies. To transcend fear was to transcend their animal origins.

“Find a way to the hull, remembered your zero gravity combat training!” He barked, “I will lead, we rig the bomb to explode from the outside and use our mask as impromptu space gear!”

A crazy plan...but the only one that had before they all died.

They found a way out through a coolant pipe. Molten salt burned them but the injuries were minor.

Junior felt his guts try to leave him as they hit zero g.

“How are you doing?” Reaper asked

“Not well,” Junior muttered, “Now get to work. The bomb is the one with a skull on it.”

Naturally. Even the Grox liked some forms of deadly art. Reaper nodded as he used his powers to
turn into mist, flowing upwards to the bomb. Time to make them all pay.

At this point, Julisons blood froze.

He was useless here. He couldn’t hack or do anything to help with the bomb.

Outside his visor, he could see the raging space battle but not hear it.

He chanted the litany of fear again.

Tried to psyche himself up...and felt his natural fire within begin to heat him up, giving him the drive he needed.

Needed to make papa proud.

Something hit him. He thought it was a weapon.

The space dust around him hinted at a micro meteoroid.

And his oxygen was falling. “I’m at fifty percent, 25, I’m dropping fast!”

Of all people, it was Reaper who reassured him. “Your not decompressing, so only your filter is damaged. If you breathe slowly and lower your pulse, you’ll have roughly two minutes of breathable air in your suit”

Junior nodded, and focused. He didn’t have much time anyways before the bomb was launched. But some back-up would be nice against the other ships and-

A fold-space tunnel opened, and ships with Kraken imagery appeared.

Everything changed as Junior and the team were teleported to Euron Greyjoy’s personal flagship.

Euron clapped as Junior ripped his mask off, deathly pale and clammy.

“Thank you for marking the virus bomb,” Euron smiled. “We can use it for ourselves now.”

“You stole my glory!” Junior coughed and nearly fell.

“Well, that's life,” Euron shrugged. "But you did good in the end, and I don't like missing the party."

Reaper scowled under his mask. This guy really pissed him off at times, but he was an ally, and good at what he did, so he was tolerant...for now.

“We’re not savages beating each other with sticks,” Euron said as he plugged a cord into a cybernetic port in his head “We’re fighting for the Galaxy itself. And as it stands, the money and infrastructure of House Koopa is indispensable”

“You’ll pay for this later!” Junior threatened. “But for now... thanks.”

Outside the viewer, Euron’s fighter corps descended upon the Grox, followed his bomber divisions.

Time to take out the bomb, and win some glory for himself. His army of mutes were ready to die for him.

Euron felt himself connect with the ship and his fleet, and he welcomed the new implants in his brain. A modified version of the infamous Butchers Nails.
His scanners located the bomb and so did his fighters.

He was already crazy, so the Nails did nothing bad to him.

Well, time to open fire. And they did, causing backlash to the massive Grox ship, also wiping out several escort ships.

You had to be there to appreciate it.

Grox blasted into space, blowing open from decompression.

The guns of Euron’s fleet fired with perfection.

The rest of the Grox, seeing the battle was lost, began to pull out. Time to rethink their fights.

Euron watched as the Grox beat an orderly retreat.

Their fighters had formed a vanguard to allow the capital ships to escape.

Many Grox fighters suicide attacked his frigates and bombers, landing more casualties than Euron would like.

And so he would not permit them to escape. He mentally activated the virus bomb.

Good thing he had that implant done.

It let him experience ship combat in a more visceral way.

Now it was more than watching lights on a monitor.

Now it was as real as hand to hand combat.

The virus bomb quickly decimated more ships, leaving the Grox a splintered fleet as they made their way to their empire to lick their wounds.

Some ships would take dormant virus on their hulls, which would ravage the Grox ports they landed at. It was a real victory.

In orbit, the remaining Grox ships would be stripped for parts and melted down.

A victory for House Koopa and Greyjoy!

And a victory for the kings new model fleet, doing away at last with the ancient hereditary admiralty of the Targaryen dynasty.

Bowser, though, had heard rumors of a sole member still out there...but what harm could one lonely little brat do?

None! HA!

In short order Bowser would eat soup from the skulls of Robb Stark and his brothers.

And more importantly, Junior had fought not just bravely but strategically.

Proud to call him his son, and soon the line of Koppa would remain strong and long-lasting.
One of Morty’s greatest fears was abandonment
This fear caused him to roll over for a lot of toxic people in his life. From his father Jerry to Rick.
It still terrified him, but at least here he could fight his way out, when he had the tools.
Namely, a tortoise tank he was now possessing.

Yes, he was still a chip, still in Silicon Valley, now in the Jungle sector. Rick was offline for now, doing his own thing in some other star systems...and Green Chromatics dwelled the area.

The Dragons wanted Morty dead. Both for his relationship to Rick and for his current efforts to fight them.

He fired a tank shell at a mass of dogs with no skin. The Chromatics had done a little necromancy and they were trying to flush Morty out with undead killer cyber animals.

Sure, dogs did not belong here in the Jungle sector...but who cared? Anything to kill Morty and take full control of the station.

Much more dangerous to his health was the cyber hippo coming out of a nearby lake.

A big, slow, but tough creature, able to spit a glob of...something, and shit mines. Dumb as hell, but aggressive.

The thing was gigantic and somewhere inside of it, a steam engine chugged,

Snorting from its large nostrils, it shot out sticky bombs.

Morty had now only on thing in mind. Run.

So he bolted.

Slowly.

On his tracks.

"Aw, man."

The hippo snorted and fired another sticky bomb. And two more.

Morty detached his chip body just in time.

The tortoise tank he possessed was blown to bits.

He had to find another body, before he shorted out. But where?

Ah, a dead parrot!

The parrot was lightweight and poorly armored, but it got him away.

As lethal as the hippo was, it lacked anti air guns.
And soon Morty had flown safely into the trees, perching himself to think on his next move.

“Okay, I need to get through the jungle, past mister hippo,” he muttered darkly. “Shouldn’t be too hard. Unless he has friends who can shoot me down.”

As he muttered to himself, a brightly coloured wild boar rooted under the tree. Strangely, it had no cybernetics.

One that looked fully organic? Could make a good body. Morty flapped into the air, and dive-bombed it, drawing...

...blood? It WAS organic!

The boar took off like a shot.

Morty instantly felt bad, he’d just wounded an innocent animal!

Rick would mock him, but he had to somehow help the creature.

And he was also curious...how did an organic animal get here?

Morty chased the boar by the trail of blood it left behind.

He hadn't meant to hurt it so bad.

He was just paranoid of being attacked in a hostile environment.

Maybe Rick was like this when he was young and more innocent.

Who knew? Maybe he was going crazy?

Morty flapped...and took note of his sudden surroundings. Everything seemed to...shimmer.

There were flowers all around, actually organic ones.

Everything around him seemed to glow.

“Maybe something is folding time and space?” Morty asked himself, keeping his guard up.

Before him was a giant oak tree with a well-tended garden in front of it.

Was this a small 'pocket zone'? Hard to say...yet why did he have a sense of familiarity about this place...?

A voice, one who he knew, spoke up, "Is someone there?"

Morty landed in his parrot form and saw…

An older longhaired woman in a sexy cat outfit.

“I can feel you!” She called, “I mean no harm.” Then she waved her hand and her sexy bondage outfit was replaced with furs and necklaces.

“Aww,” Morty groaned.

"That voice..." She looked about. "Is that you, Morty?"
...Wait, this woman... it was...

"Freya?"

She smiled, “I knew your grandfather” and smiled, “Rick is a good friend and I think the world of him.”

Morty was hesitant, she was hot, but people really didn’t “like” his grandpa.

“So, what is all this?” He asked.

She giggled, “Only if you tell me why you’re a bird.”

It had been a while since they last met...much had changed since.

"Long story. Basically, helping Rick clean up his mess here."

“I always admired how your grandfather was willing to try anything “ Freya smiled.

Okay, that was really alarming.

“So, what are you doing here?” Morty asked.

“My husband stole my ability to wage war,” she said coldly “I’m defenseless, so the beasts are my protectors.”

"And...here of all places?”

"This station is a good hiding place,” Freya admitted. "Despite the perversion of nature...and the hordes of Dragons. The presence of Dragons, chromatics is unfortunate, but until very recently the cyber beasts were loyal to me.”

“But they were killing people, like forever “ Morty protested.

“I was once a warrior “ Freya left hanging.

Well...that was disturbing. Yet understandable...

"And now...I hear rumors...My son has been traveling the Galaxy, fighting and searching." "Your son?” Morty asked. This was where he wished he'd listened to Rick when talking about the Norse gods.

"Baldr," said Freya, her eyes growing misty. "God of light. My boy was so sweet . . . before Odin got his hands on him. Filled him with his toxic masculinity," her rough hands clenched with rage.

Somehow there was more to the story than she was letting on...yet Morty knew better than to press.

"I was cursed not to raise arms by magic or by blade," said Freya, "But if you want my help killing dragons, there's nothing in my curse that stops me from giving advice," she forced out. "I'm at your disposal."

"Like for free?” Morty asked, knowing such an offer was too good to come without strings.

"Just...spend the day with me, I could use company. Besides," she smirked, " I might give you sex if you prove to be a mighty warrior."
Morty just gasped and tried to say something smooth but he failed.

"I'm quite the skilled cougar, they say," Freya smirked, "And the blood of my enemies makes me frisky."

This was getting awkward...not to mention Rick did not like her, due to her...suggestions of help in the past.

"I'll help you out," said Morty, "I think clearing this station of dragons will help us both."

While he still loved the foxy older ladies, Morty had never given up on his dream of marrying Sansa Stark. He was a stupid romantic that way.

"Then you'll want to take out the head Dragon," said Freya, her voice turning utterly ruthless and cold as the arctic winds. "These creatures fight like Orks in a cage, take out the strongest one and you'll start a power struggle."

"And this one?"

"A Red."

Figured. Reds were the strongest of the Chromatics, as well of the greediest, most arrogant of their kind. They did not take slights well.

"Standard rules of war say that if your enemy is short tempered, provoke them," a darkness took over Freya's manner and look, "Piss in their eye, insult them, the angrier they get the less strategic they'll be thinking. Especially for a Dragon."

"How do I do that?" Morty was honestly worried.

"Find the biggest, strongest creature you can find," said Freya, "One that can breathe fire, I'll walk you through it."

Well...he was a tiny parrot going against a giant, red, fiery beast.

He needed something else for this.

"You're a boy in a chip," said Freya, "I understand the science Rick uses, it's quite fascinating," she smiled. "The elephant is a good body to use. I can modify it to shoot fire, not just water. Though water is a valuable asset against fire breath."

It was also slow and ponderous, but had a solid body, able to take the heat...for a time being.

It turned out...a deactivated one was nearby.

"Well, that could-"

The radio on Morty turned on for all to hear. "Morty, sorry for taking so long to check up on you, what's the status?" Rick asked.

Morty grit his teeth, "Uh, Rick, it's been a week but I'm fine, really. Actually two weeks, but I'm fine."

"Okay Morty-urp!-what the fuck is going on?"

"Well I met Freya and she—-"
"Freya! Morty, stay the fuck away from that bitch!"

"You still mad about what happened?" Morty whined.

"Fucking right, I am, Morty, and you know what-

"Actually Rick, fuck you," said Morty, "Go jerk off, go drink, I don't care. I got this."

"Morty you little bastard!" Rick snarled, "Don't trust that fucking--

Morty cut him off, he was sick of Rick's shit. "So Freya, what do we do next?"

Ignoring the whining of Rick, Freya spoke. "Dragons are arrogant, but also intelligent. We cannot be careless in fighting them. As for the location...he has taken up holding in one of the magma caverns around the jungle."

"So I'm fighting in its element?" Morty asked.

"Indeed," said Freya, "Which is why it's critical to take abundant water in the elephant form. It's going to counter the fire breath to a degree."

Well...not like he had much else to do...well, except to get at the core of the station and kill the Brain.

"Let's do it."

"You're my sword, Morty," said Freya, "My wing of light. You remind me of my brother, Freyr, before Odin banned him from this realm."

"I have no idea who that is, but I'm here to prove I can kick ass," Morty flexed his wings.

"Than that is enough," Freya smiled.

And so, he spent the night over with her, as agreed...well, as night as they could get here.

She lived in a house that was an oak tree, on top of a giant magical turtle named Chaurli.

Morty liked it. It wasn't the most crazy thing he'd seen in ages, but it was... nice for lack of a better word.

And from it, he could spy on the Jungle, seeing all the robots prowl the area.

Jeez, how much did it take for Rick to make this with Professor Cheese (who's body Morty MAY have found in the bottom of the Arctic waterways).

Morty had learned a lot about bending the law. Not breaking it like Rick did.

The key was to avoid direct accusations.

Well, for now, he had to rest, and think on how to best take down this Dragon mob leader...

...and also figure out why there usually antisocial creatures were working together.

Rick was definitely not telling him something, which was not unusual. But the last time he'd been this worried, Rick had pissed off Santa Claus. Which Morty couldn't be more terrified of.

The day passed...and the beasts were restless. Howls and roar echoed though the night.
Freya admittedly had much to teach Morty. She was in many ways a better teacher than Rick. Not smarter, just she knew emotions and she understood Morty's strengths and weaknesses better.

That last bit really got him worried. he wasn't sure what she was capable of.

He never really understood her, honestly. She was one of the Divine, beings of great power and immortality. However, Divines, while worshipped, were often seen as capricious beings, often acting on whims whenever they could.

Freya tended to her boar friend as she advised Morty. "The head dragon in these parts keeps a horde of gold and treasure guarded by a mechanical hippopotamus. Take this amulet, it will burn the gold to nothing."

"Shouldn't we steal it?" Morty asked.

Freya narrowed her eyes at him, "If your enemy is ill-tempered, provoke him. This dragon is ill tempered and destroying the treasure will be a bigger poke in the eye than just stealing it."

Well...she had a point there...

...But he needed a better body. More than that elephant, even.

"Could I take over a Dragon's body?" Morty asked.

"I could not harm a Dragon," said Freya, "But I could brew a potion strong enough to put it to sleep. You could easily harm the Dragon with a few modifications to your body chip and even take over its body. The downside is it would have to be a lesser Dragon."

"But better than what I have now," Morty pressed.

But did they even HAVE Lesser Dragons here? Damn, he was not sure.

"Can we bait a Lesser Dragon with treasure?" he asked.

"Such an illusion skill I could do in my sleep," Freya boasted, "Thank you, Morty, I haven't had anything to brag about in a very long time."

...Arrogant Divines could be at times.

"Do you ever feel like bragging, Morty?" Freya asked, sadness underpinning her voice.

"Sure, I brag a lot, always, lots," Morty tried to puff himself up.

Truth be told he hadn't much to be proud of.

He was a loser son of a loser family, dragged along in various escapades across the Galaxy, and brushing with death almost every day.

Truth was Morty didn't have a lot to show for his troubles. Maybe an education with the Stark family, which was put on hold for this stupid war.

"Don't put yourself down," Freya told him, "The universe is prepared to shit all over you, and you don't need to join the party to put yourself down. I see steel in you, Morty."

"So are you ready to begin, sexy lady?" Morty asked her, he was ready.
Too bad things were not going the way he had hoped...per usual.

A Dragon was soaring the skies above, a Black Chromatic. Freya's illusion spell had worked too well, even before they'd set it off.

"This is your time to shine, Morty," she patted him on the head. "Go and make history, warrior; you have the heart of a lion."

Oh...before he had a Lesser Dragon body as well. Well, maybe he could pester it a bit.

Morty thought about the times that Rick insulted him.

More than that, he remembered the times that Jerry called him a fag for doing things that were unmanly. He ground his teeth.

"Hey ugly, your mom is a whore's handbag!" he screamed at the Dragon.

The Black did seem to hear him, and snarled. Usually, he shouldn't care about such a thing, but he DID NOT like his pride to be insulted.

Swinging about, he dived toward the damn parrot.

Morty opened his wings and fired the thrusters that Freya had helped him build.

He kept just ahead of the Dragons’ nasty breath, though he could feel the heat on his ass.

Oh, wait, that was just acid he felt.

"Fuck!" shouted Morty as he started to lose flight control.

This was bad... but manageable.

He dive-bombed into the dense forest below, where a robo elephant was placed in stasis by Freya's magic.

The acid still came down on him, and he ejected the body just as it was eaten away.

He landed into the elephant and burrowed in.

The water was meant for a fire Dragon, but it was Freya who suggested mixing basic chemicals in the water to neutralize possible acid attacks.

Morty cried mentally as the lye in the water burned his trunk, striking the dive-bombing Black Dragon in the face.

It was a distraction, but a potent one.

The beast staggered before crashing into the ground, kicking up grass and metal as he slid across the area.

Morty managed to get to the fell Dragon and began to scream. "Where's the boss?!!"

The Black Dragon hissed, foaming at the mouth, only for a strong, cybernetic trunk to smack it across the mouth.

The Dragon spat, this time blood and teeth instead of acid.
"Boss is going to eat your guts!" the black reptile hissed.

"Way wrong fucking answer," Morty shouted, channeling all the things over the years that pissed him off.

The Black snickered. "Oh, Morty, think you're going to be a hero, eh? You have no idea..."

"You shut your cave!" Morty shouted, as he brought down the trunk, stunning the Dragon.

He detached his chip and flew to the dazed Dragon, burrowing into the spot behind the head plates.

Aw, jeez, to work his magic on something organic. This was going to be unpleasant.

And sure enough, he felt the Dragon's mind ram into his own.

The Dragon was just . . . extremely unpleasant. Like if the YouTube comments section became self aware, this is what the chromatic mind was like. It was just filled with hate and fuck and greed.

Morty needed to steel himself. He had things to fight for, like Sansa, or even his own worthless pride.

Slowly, he began to move the new limbs to his own will, staggering on, as he managed to get the info he needed to find the leader here...and find out what their plan was, and why these usually antisocial creatures were banding together.

The memories were a tormented tangle, worse than Jerry's Christmas lights in the attic.

If Christmas lights experienced a desire for rape and murder.

He started with small stuff, blink, breathe, and stretch the wings.

Still stiff compared to the robotic shells, but he managed...but it would last long before he was forced out. He would need to track down the commander fast.

It was like riding a bucking bronco. Not a trained bred show horse. A wild horse who could bite like a wolf and kick down a house.

The Dragon body flew into the sky like a rocket. It was like cold starting a racecar, Morty was nearly blown away by the power

But with the memories, he managed to track down the cave...

...but he noticed a certain set of knowledge was sealed off, with dark power...why?

This was not part of the Dragon's native mind, the roiling storm of animal desires and crude incestuous intelligence.

It was cold, singular and utterly external to the Dragon's mind. It was doubtful even the dragon knew it had this information or this mental parasite.

Was it a parasite, or something so vital that it was given, then sealed until the time was right?

Morty had an idea that things were bigger than he imagined.

He wasn't smart like Rick was. He didn't even do very well with Lord Stark's tutors.
But he knew there was something going on.

But head a dragon to fight, that was something he understood.

"Hey Red! I'm here to steal all your shit and sell it at the shit store! So come and get me!" he screamed.

Silence...then the tremble of footsteps as the Red stepped out from his cavern lair.

"Greetings, Morty."

“Yeah you know my name... so that’s my name!” Morty tried to talk tough.

“I should have known your grandpa would send a meat shield,” the Red laughed.

"OK, buddy, I want some answers! Why are you all working together?!" Morty barked.

"...Wouldn't you like to know? The Galaxy is burning, but we’ve been here before,” the Dragon flexed his wings “on and on they come, and we are here like jackals to help ourselves to the scraps of the dying kingdom”

“That’s really poetic but I’ll fuck your face!” Morty retorted

"You may try!" The Red reared up, his eyes blazing with rage. "Show me what you have to prepare for the storm!!"

Morty spread his own wings, which felt pitifully small next to the huge Red, covered in scars and half healed wounds

But for Morty, being the underdog was all he’d ever known. He wouldn’t know what to do if he was top dog.

All he had to do was look for some sort of weakness in the defense of his larger foe.

The Dragon embodied power. Part of his trick was to lull enemies to challenge that power head on out if a misguided sense of machismo.

Morty couldn’t outrun him, but he could outmaneuver him, in the narrower confines of the station.

The Red grinned, his eyes glowing. "So...anything you have to say?"

"You're treasure is nothing but piles of shit!"

“My treasure is built on human misery and skulls,” the beast hissed, as his internal fire powered up “we’ve committed planetary genocide to build my fortune!” And he opened his mouth to breath...

...and Morty, with all his will power, spat acid right down the throat.

The Red had not taken a fatal wound. But it would be debilitating.

Like a cut above the eyes, which makes a boxer have to constantly wipe it from his eyes. It slowed him down.

How...raging. He began to thrash and howl, his tail whipping around.

The Red was enraged, which was exactly what Morty wanted.
“Freya!” Morty called over the mental link, “can I get some team healing from you!”

He could hear a falcon above, and knew she had come for his aid, and the Red looked about, startled.

"Now what?!"

The Vanir goddess soared on the wings of an eagle. A bean of golden light shot from her eyes, connecting with Morty and boosting his chip self.

And with that, he charged forwards, ready to ram his curved horns into the underbelly of the Red.

Morty felt like he’d a brick wall.

His horns had struck the sternum.

He was stuck!

The pair fell to the earth, plummeting like stones.

The impact, though, drove his horns further in, rupturing vital organs.

Morty, now having no choice, ejected the organic body, happening to land on a deactivated robotic chameleon.

The eagle landed next to Morty, turning into the familiar witch of the woods.

Both dragons, badly wounded, groaned, dying. So this was how it would end, eh?

“Should we put them out of their misery?” Morty asked.

“No,” said Freya “let me watch a little.”

The Red simply laughed weakly. "Oh, watch us suffer? How droll...won't be long now...but know this...we are the fortunate...for...we...won't suffer from...theemmm..." He trailed off as both dragons expired.

Freya looked at the dead beast before spitting on it. Then she smiled. “I felt helpless for so long. You made me feel otherwise. Thank you, Morty.”

“You’re okay, Freya,” he said hesitantly.

She nodded as she turned. "Now, let us rest up before you continue your mission and take down the station. The desert will be next, and it's harsh."

Morty nodded in his lizard body and began to walk. Still, something troubled him...what did the Red mean?

The thoughts haunted him as he walked on.
Australia was a Lee-owned planet, said to be named after a landmass of the fallen planet Terra. Somewhat arid, it also contained other biomes, like snowy mountains, lush rainforests, billabongs, and the like. It was populate day various Beastkin, who, though skilled in machines, also enjoyed a simple life...though today, they sensed a battle was coming.

As such, in the capital town of Burramudgee, some soldiers were resting up to prepare for the fight. Among them were the three daughters of Braev.

Edea sniffed the air. “I smell the smell of hot tea, cool beer and eucalyptus,” and she smiled, “Damn, it’s good to be back.”

"Yep, nothing like this ol' place," Tina leaned against a chair as various koala mechanics walked about, making sure things were prepared, scanners in place.

“They really fixed this place up after the Quinkan attacks,” Edea smiled.

Eilonwy grimaced. Little bastards, Quinkan. Shadowy creatures from the 'Dreamtime', a holy place of Australia, home of the Bunyips and Rainbow Serpent. Exact origins were unknown, but were said to be a kind of 'Demon'. Luckily, thanks to the 'Bush Rescue' unit, they had been defeated.

“And got a hug for Ty!” Announced the jovial beast in who was this planets premier warrior.

Ty the Tasmanian Tiger, both a expert at boomerangs and Battle Bunyips, the mechs used for lifting and combat.

With him where his brother, Sly, and his lover, Shazza the dingo.

“It’s been too long, Ty,” Edea smiled, embracing her friend.

“Let me have a boomerang!” Tina begged.

"Eh, when you're ready," Sly shrugged. "Don't go knocking yourself senseless now."

"True to that," Maurie, an old cockatoo and missions control spoke up. "We'd be in a right bloody mess if that happened."

“Normally we would prepare a feast for your honor,” said Ty, “but know that my door is always open to you.”

“I wish I could be here under better circumstances,” Edea lamented.

A Koopa fleet had been detected to be en route to this planet, likely as a raid for resources in the war effort. Well, they were not getting any.

“They’re coming for the war beasts, for the Opal deposits, and possibly to destroy the sacred places on this world,” Edea related the intelligence shed been given.

“Nothing but sunshine and rainbows,” groused Sly.

Tina looked on who else they managed to bring along...Gaston was there, as were the mercs Fang, Bark, and Bean.
“I needed more Koopa heads for my collection,” Gaston smirked.

“I swear I’m having you investigated as a serial killer,” Fang warned the vain man. Not that HE was any better, a trigger-happy wolf-weasel with a penchant for guns and robbery.

“I just love the look of a Koopa skin belt or boots,” Bark laughed.

“You get it,” Gaston laughed “and I just happen to know a black market trader who’ll pay top dollar for Koopa shells.”

“Focus on the task at hand,” Edea snapped at the mercs.

Sometimes she wondered how her father did it, put up with louts like these. Gaston was a sexist, for one. That asshole still had a problem with women reading, like he was some sort of Bronze Age primitive.

And he never gave attitude to her father, just to her.

And the mercenaries were just obnoxious and greedy. Kisuke and Momohime would have been preferred, but they had other planets to cover.

Eilonwy, meanwhile, was overlooking a case of Australium.

“So this is the transformative element that enhances magic and alchemy,” Eilonwy was breathless

“And it also makes women grow chest hair and wrestle crocodiles,” Tina laughed, “I could use the muscle, but the body hair is no Bueno.“

This earned her a deadpan look, while the Bush Rescue researcher, Julius the Koala, nodded.

"It's simply smashing!” He gushed. "With this, our technology had managed to advance at a tremendous pace!” Julius was aglow with joy. “With Australium catalysts we can build smaller, more mobile planetary shield generators that can avoid bombing raids or be moved from commando saboteurs!"

War effort was moving along well. Needed to be to survive the onslaught of multiple enemies ready to rip them to shreds.

Speaking of which...

A Koala rushed in. "They're here! A platoon of Koopa soldiers a mile off the gate and coming in fast!"

"How did they get here?" Ty demanded, "The planetary shields are up! Did they teleport to the surface?"

"Not sure, my lord, but the Adeptus Mechanicus are digging in with combat engineers; they're throwing up mine fields and artillery," the Koala panted.

Edea growled, "They'll use that position as a springboard, spread to the whole world."

"Right!" Eilonwy cried out as she stood up. "Then we'll meet them full force on the battlefield! Deploy what mechs and cannons we can!"
Koopa and Mechanicus forces had opened a portal in the middle of the outback. Miles and miles of desert stretched in every direction and the midday heat was almost as deadly as a bullet.

The first scouts, billbies, little blue marsupials, could see the first wave of Tek Priests setting up force field generators and mine fields.

Suddenly one of the Tek Priests’ head exploded. The bilby scout jumped as Gaston cocked his sniper rifle, "One more for me."

"This is a recon mission, idiot," hissed the scout, "Now they know we're onto them!"

Koopa's, Goomba's, Shy Guys, Boos, Bandits, Psychos, Ogres, and more had stormed the area, all lead by the Koopalings and Warwick, in the name of Lord Bowser.

Ogres charged in first, lured by the promise of wealth and the idea of eating strange and exotic animals of Australia. The Orges were not especially smart, but the weakest of them was built like a brick shithouse and carried guns normally mounted on small vehicles.

"We got Orge mercenaries," the bilby announced over the radio.

"Then good hunting to all," said Ty over the coms, "Let Operation Queensland begin; may the Force be with you."

Meanwhile, Larry, commander of the Koopalings, began to bark orders over a megaphone.

"Right! Boss says to wipe out this little town and the mangy rats that live in it and steal their technology...and take Lee's little brats with us for bargaining! No killing those three, but raping them is allowed!" To make sure his point got across, Larry fired his bolter pistol in the air "And if you think these are just suggestions from me, I'll turn your brains into wall art!"

"MORTON SMASH RATS!" Morton Jr. snarled, the dumbest of the seven Koopalings. He bashed his fist together in a show of force.

"The rats we don't care about," said Larry, "Leave the tech and make sure the shiny stuff, Australium, is intact in its cases or it'll be useless."

"Fight, fight, fight!" Lemmy laughed, bouncing on his ball.

"Yes, it will speed up weapons for us," Iggy noted.

"Teleportation pods to eighty five percent optimal strength," droned the nearest Tek Priest, "Recommend tapping into the municipality's power grid to further optimize the teleporter."

"You heard this pile of scrap!" shouted Larry, "Take the town power grid so we can teleport more troops and vehicles!"

But as this was said, blasts were fired from turrets, taking out some Koopa troops.

"Damn..." Larry muttered. "Time to bring the fight to them all the way," He reached into his shell and pulled out a chainsword. "Koopa's, clear the way! Get the Skitarii!"

The mechanical soldiers of the Mechanicus marched in line with the Koopas.

Ludwig, the most...verbose, was also speaking on megaphone...

"March forth, comrades! The Blood of the Colossus and Vault Beasts run within you all! Take on
their strength to smite the enemies, and bring forth glorious victory!"

One of Gaston's sniper's bullet cut through the air and took off Ludwig's ear.

At basecamp, Gaston cursed, "Damn badly tailored scope!"

"Only a poor craftsman blames his tools," Edea laughed at him as a rain of mortars fell over head.

Ludwig cursed. Nothing a little injection could heal, but still...

Edea had her sword ready as Tina mounted a Battle Bunyip mech suit.

Charging at Tina was an Ogre Tyrant on top of a War Mammoth.

The mammoth was foaming red, having been given wine and raw meat to drive it mad before battle.

But Tina simply smirked and bashed the mechanical fists together. Time for some fun action.

She waited until it got too close, then swung, knocking the Ogre over to the ground.

Free of its rider, the ten tons of rabid mammoth turned around and charged at its own side.

Tina yelled as suddenly an axe chopped off one of the mechs arms. The Ogre Tyrant wasn’t down yet.

But an arrow, courtesy of Eilonwy, found itself between the brutes eyes. It staggered, before falling.

"Watch yourself!" Her sister cried out.

The Ogre twitched, somehow still alive, until Edea landed on its chest and drive a sword through the mouth and out the back if the head.

Brain stalk was cut. The beast was dead.

Sisters worked together quite well, it seemed.

Team Hooligan were also making progress, with Fang at the front gunning down foes.

“Suck on my furry nutsack, you ugly buttfuckers!” He bellowed. He was kind of screwed up from years ago when House Koopa imprisoned him for a year.

Bean laughed like the nutcase he was as he tossed out bombs at the enemy, while Bark stoically crushed them under his fists.

Meanwhile, Duke, the Kiwi pilot of Bush Rescue, flew above the skies in his Gunyip, providing needed air support.

One thing he was grateful for were the nuclear batteries generously given by Monty Burns and the Nuclear and Fusion association.

Dive-bombing, his squadron unleashed a payload of napalm on the breach. The enemy forces went up in flames, but there was bad news on the radio.

“We have unknown aircraft on your vector! Eta thirty seconds!”

Xenos? Or something else? He readied himself in the Gunyip.
They’d passed through the planetary shield thanks to their biological nature.

High Elf dragon riders were charging into battle for King and country… and Schala was at the front, riding a Rathian. Her face was hidden under her viper helm. Her staff was at her hand. Ly and Ahri were at her sides.

Schala had a heart full of confusion. She loved Bran, but Bran wasn’t here and she was needed by her men.

It was why she destroyed the nearest Gunyip with an amber spear spell. Duke plunged to the ground, struggling to activate a parachute.

He was a Kiwi, his wings would not help him. He just-

Ah good, there it was. He felt his descent slow to safety.

Then an Elf on a smaller dragon cut him in half with a scimitar.

His lower half fell as his lifeblood drained.

Ty saw it, and swore vengeance.

Duke was one of the best pilots and allies he knew…and he was gone in an instant.

But things would only get worse…

"Right, send out the Sigma Beasts!" Roy barked.

They emerged from underground. Part ant and part bombardier beetle, they were the first wave of attack.

Their bodies were easily brought down by small arms, but they were only meant to be meat shields.

But terror was going through the Lee ranks.

"The hell are these things?" Edea growled as she slashed another hybrid.

"Some kind of twisted experiment!" Fang growled.

The ant hybrids set off the land mines as a legion of tiger turtle tanks followed.

The sight of these gruesome, white-eyed monsters caused many of the koala's the panic and break rank. The Goliath Bandits took charge and began to march forwards, firing off guns.

"Where the hell are those armored vehicles!" Edea shouted out over the comms.

Tina was firing rocket pods into the Sigma beasts and Eilonwy brought down lightning strikes.

Mixtures of crocodiles and skags came forwards, chomping up any foe slow enough to be in their way…until Shazza began shooting them down with her laser.

High speed emu skirmishes made their way into the scene.

Flightless, they could keep up with most light vehicles and began to lay down light machine guns as cover fire.

Ty and Sly used their boomerangs to knock down any foe that got too close.
"A bloody mess this whole things becoming!" Sly snarled, also taking note of the Zeal's in the sky.

The dragon fleet was devastating and it was drawing off any starships that could be used to hold off the fleet.

"I want their commander dead!" Edea shouted, "a noble title and a planet of your own to anyone who brings me the head of Princess Schala!"

Wow, she was...intense. But things would get more harsh when Samus arrived on her ship to aid the Zeal's...along with her co-pilot, a Pikachu.

Samus eyed the controls of her craft.

"The second portal is undetected and Mechanicus forces are on their way to disabling planetary shields! I’m aiding the princess! All units stick to the plan!"

"Pika! PIKA!" Her ally squeaked. She smiled and nodded.

Meanwhile, Ly and Ahri had jumped off the wyverns and directly engaged Eilonwy and Tina.

"Surrender and no harm will come you," Ly bellowed over the battle.

"You may even enjoy it," Ahri laughed.

Tina was having none of it, "Suck on my bald snatch, you dog dick!"

Ahri grinned darkly as she stared down Tina, "Maybe I will..."

Ly was on all fours like a cat as she stared down the defiant Eilonwy, the blonde holding a bow and arrow.

"One last chance," Ly offered. "Come with us, and we will stand the forces down...a lot more pleasant than what Koopa has planned for you. The Koopas will kill you and cut you up if they feel merciful," she stared down the kids "we know the value of a hostage."

"Call me mommy and I’ll take it easy on you," Ahri licked her lips.

"Go die in a fire," Eilonwy channeled her magic.

Ahri smirked once more, foxfire flaring about her. Ly sighed, and summoned the power of the green...namely, vines shooting out from the ground.

Eilonwy went red as the vines wrapped around her neck.

Tina aimed the guns of her mech, only for Ahri to knock her down. She screamed as a vine forced itself down her throat.

Ly could be actually fearsome when pushed! She planned to knock them out, bind and gag them, then take them to Zeal to help...work things out.

Edea gasped, and turned to help her sisters...leaving her wide open for the dive-bombing Rathian, Schala still upon it.

Edea was thrown to the ground, her sword falling to the side. Schala looked to the skies and back to the sisters
Everything was going wrong after the battle started so well.

The wyvern stood tall above Edea. Schala, helm closed, stared down at her.

“Bend the knee and no harm will come to you!” Schala announced.

In the distance Gaston zoomed in on her head with a fifty caliber anti tank rifle. There would be no head, but he’d still get his prize.

The gun went off, and the super armor piercing shell stopped only feet from Schala’s head.

An magical aura, magnetizing the bullet in the place.

Gaston cursed and went for an anti-magic round...but before he could, Warwick, along with some Chain Chomps, spotted him.

“Bring me his ponytail!” shouted Warwick.

One of the Chomps charged at Gaston, but set off a grenade bouquet he’d set up.

He smirked as he wondered if he should run or claim the princess head.

But he was under pressure right now. Had to fight.

While the Chomps were slowed down by his traps, he went for his automatic musket.

A rain of seventy five caliber shot rained on his enemies, even landing a gut shot to Warwick.

The wolf was tough, though, and charged with his massive claws, knocking Gaston off his feet.

Ty, Sly, Shazza, and others members of Bush Rescue were pinned down by the Koopalings firepower and magic.

Ty saw one of the Koopalings running on fire from an incendiary trap Gaston set up.

The creature ran through its injuries before thrusting a pitchfork in Gaston’s chest.

Roy sneered past the flames as he pinned the arrogant hunter down.

"Damn!" Sly cursed as she made to toss a boomerang...but was quickly charged by Lemmy, bounding on his ball.

“Where’s that explosion?!” shouted Ty, “We need to shut the portal now!”

They needed backup!

Meanwhile, Schala had discarded the bullet and stared back down at Edea. “You won’t win this fight and I have the leverage,” ON cue, Ahri jumped on her wyvern with Tina’s battered but living body in her arms.

Edea gritted her teeth. This was getting too much to handle and looks like she failed this one.

"Now, then," Ly stood and addressed one High Elves nearby. "Take them and-"

An alarm sounded off, and all eyes turned to see turtle-like ships descend. More Koopa's?

No...Pandariens.

The Pandariens dropped and charged in with more than usual fury.
Bowser had tried to make their home an atomic wasteland years ago. They were keen to return the favor.

And when Lee offered them a place to fight their enemies...they were more than happy to help.

"What is-" Schala lost her focus...giving Edea the chance she needed.

Edea charged, going with twin pistols and opening fire at the women holding her sisters captive.

Ly was forced to withdraw the vines, as Ahri dropped Tina.

Someone else landed in the area with a staff. Chen Stormstout, legendary brewer and monk.

The Pandarien held his staff in battle position. With a smirk, he held out his hand and motioned for the two women to come closer. Personally he loved dominant women. But this was war.

Edea landed next to him, as her one priority was to save her sisters

Schala watched as her army was reinforced by dragon riders equipped with powerful recurve bows.

Her helm hid all emotions, only showing the cold gaze of the serpent. She was ready to fight...or at least, get the Australium, having sent Samus to get some.

That was the plan. As long as the portals were open, Samus could plant teleport beacons on the Australium stockpiles.

Even a few kilos would make this slaughter worth it.

She’d done the horrible math.

For now, fire lit up her staff as she dismounted.

“So...shall we dance?” She stated.

“We shall,” Edea hissed. “You belly-crawling worm.”

Schala looked peaceful. “May the odds ever be in your favor.”

Time was a weapon and she would wield it. Edea was thinking in the moment, Schala was thinking strategy.

Edea charged forwards...almost getting impaled on ice spikes spouting from the ground.

But this left Schala distracted, and she took a pole to the helmed face.

The impact was shocking, but it was a reminder to stay focused.

Schala probed Edea, testing for weakness and assessing her skills.

Her own staff swung, fire lighting the area as she approached her foes. Ahri and Ly kept close, ready to strike.

Edea gritted her teeth. She needed to think outside the box for this. This girl was good, she was strong and the aura of magic surrounded her. Charging her again would get her killed.

Edea activated something she’d found on Demonzu.
Schala cried out as a hail of fireworks blasted from Edea’s belt. Such things were used by several assassins on that world to disorientate enemies.

A bit showy, but it worked.

Edea took a chance and kicked Schala in the chest, causing her to stumble, and jumped back to avoid a tail whip from Ahri.

Edea had no intention of taking Schala prisoner. She was worth more dead. The honor of her family demanded it.

But Schala had tricks of her own; from her belt she drew an ancient device known as a batarang. Designed ages ago by a long dead vigilante.

It flew like a boomerang, but was self guided, it flew under Edea’s sword and knocked the pistol from her hand.

Edea cursed as the weapon cut her hand, and Chen leapt to her defense, swing his staff.

"Enough! We are routing your armies! To fight further in pointless!"

Schala blasted him back with a burst of wind and lightning. She could see Tina and Eilonwy being taken away.

That was fine.

The explosion wasn’t from the nuclear station. It was something Schala had set up herself. Samus had taken the Australium. And detonated the rest/

Above them, a section of the planetary shield fell. “You should run before the bombing campaign starts in full,” She retorted.

"Wha-"

Schala spoke into the communicator. "All units, we're done here! Prepare for withdrawal!"

"Pika! Pika!" Samus' Pikachu cheered.

Schala's helm translated this. "All your base...are belong to us?" The princess repeated, confused.

Edea looked around as the dragons flew away. The bombers were soaring in, dropping their deadly payload.

Ty shook her out of it “We have to get to the bomb shelter!”

Panic took over the scene as Kingdom forces rushed to their portals and the Lee armies rushed to shelters that didn’t have enough room for everyone.

Edea could only watch as the Zeal's took her sisters away, and the Koopa's retreat. Gaston was still wounded, Warwick not bothering to kill him there.

The wounded sniper struggled to hold to his gun, get one final shot off. He loaded the chamber with an explosive shot. Anything to kill Schala and seal his reputation.

Only for Edea to kick the gun away. “You’ll kill my sisters with that!”
"Anything to take down that snake bitch!" He hissed.

"They are your lords children!" Chen snapped. "We cannot help them now! We must regroup and plan!"

Already, Zeal and Koopa troops were vanishing one by one, falling back after the short but savage battle.

“They’re already dead” Gaston rasped “Zeal will send them back in pieces. So let me give them a quick Ddath!”

“Missiles incoming!” shouted Ty.

Chen picked up Gaston and ran with Edea and her allies as they fled, several Koalas not making it to the sheltered base.

The blast doors were shutting as Edea got a final look of a nuclear blast.

She fell back screaming as the flash blinded her. Chen screamed as he caught her.

The shelter also shielded the town itself, making sure the citizens were safe.

"Crikey! What a blast!" Maurie howled.

Edea wept blood as Ty called for a medic.

The townspeople were safe. That much was true. Outside the automatic AA guns inflicted losses on the slow moving bombers.

But the damage was done.

Duke was gone, as were many other gunners. Her sisters were taken to use as leverage. Australium had been stolen...

She had disgraced the very name of Lee.

“Someone get me new eyes now!” She sobbed, almost ready to rip her dead ones out. “I need to go after them now!”

“Princess,” Ty cautioned, “Doing that could jeopardize this theatre of war.”

“Damn you!” She hissed.

“We’ve all lost someone,” Maurie said solemnly, “we can honor them by finishing this war.”

Someone called for an axolotl vat to dip Edea in to heal her wounds, and she growled, she heard Fang sum up the issue.

"This sucks."

Edea laughed, she laughed so she wouldn’t cry.

“I’m not good with family,” she heard Gaston’s voice. “But I was with your father when the High Sparrow took your mother hostage. We face fucked that old vulture. I know you can do the same.”

For once, the old fool had some good advice...and she felt herself being hauled up and submerged in
some liquid.

The axolotl tank couldn’t take away her worry and pain.

But this wasn’t personal. None of this was. She had no reason to hate Princess Schala personally.

She would be the big girl, the leader, the big cheese until her sisters were back.

She opened her healed eyes, still resting in the tank.

The King, Zeal, Koopa...all of them would pay...pay...
Sora strode though the halls of the Dreemurr station, lost in thoughts. War was underway, and at a worst time. Already they had to fight xenos, now came the three of other houses, Dragons, and more...like the reports of some bearded man who could feel no pain.

Nobody had seen him directly. There was only grainy camera footage; out of focus like he was some cryptid.

But the dead bodies he left behind were no myth.

Looking around he witnessed the new posters, extolling loyal citizens to buy war bonds.

Great...that was nice to know...

Still, they were making progress: Tal, Ailish, Buki, and Elco had returned form Rapture (which Ailish had stated it had the 'class of a Beastmen's dick) and the ADAM were being studied by the since team.

Orion of the Wood Elves and Crysta of the Fairies had also arrived to meet with Asgore and Toriel to discuss things further.

Orion had a personal grudge against the High Elves. It influenced his decision to back the North in the civil war.

He and Crysta had been rivals for years, fighting over the precious Amber their people depended upon. She was here because she knew that the Tyranids would consume all trees.

She lived on the planet Ferngulley, but still...

As for the Land Before Time, a Feral Planet populated by sentient dinosaurs, they were being...stubborn, though not dismissive. Kairi and Mipha had been sent there to work some sort of deal out.

The North didn’t have the huge industrial block the loyalists had. But with luck, the dinosaurs could pitch in their resources to keep agricultural production going.

The King had already tried to sabotage Dreemur’s harvests. They would not survive if he succeeded.

Thankfully, much of the wildlife was none too keen on foreign ships and tended to wreck anything that seemed overly destructive...

Samuel Hayden had a personal stake in this. Dreemurr and their allies had sabotaged a number of his secret research labs. Most recently the one at Castle Wolfenstein.

And it was his ships and assassins who lay dead by the wildlife.

Sora braced himself. He was childishy excited to meet dinosaurs.

But for now, his friends were doing it...

Kairi...his one who would share his heart. A Keyblader like him, specializing in the art of magic.
It had been far too long since he had seen lovely Kairi. He promised himself that when this war was over, he would propose to her and buy a plot of farmland to live on.

He had such dreams.

Ah, but he was getting ahead of himself...first, they needed to get through all this.

And right now, he was followed by Dream Eater Spirits, animal-like beings that served as the bulk of the Dreemur army.

Such creatures were summoned from the land of sleep, where they consumed bad dreams.

A more malevolent variety served Chaos and planted nightmares.

But these were helpful, and made sure all evil threats were repelled from the Galaxy...

Sora found himself approaching the thrones room, where Asgore and Toriel were meeting with Crysta and Orion.

“What we need is to deny our enemies aid and recruits,” Orion stamped a hoofed leg. “Terrorize worlds where they recruit the imperial guard and assassinate their generals.”

“In time, but for now we gain more by avoiding battle,” Crysta countered, “We don’t have the men to win a war of attrition. And a hunter’s greatest virtue is patience.”

Sora, knowing right now this would not be the place to interfere, stood aside, watching as his liege lords tried to smooth things over.

"I know that would be the preferred options, but right now we’re under pressure from the Kremling troops," Asgore said. "Makes it hard to send out units to strike."

“So use a smaller army,” Orion pointed out, “It can move faster and needs less resources. My people have experience in guerrilla fighting and privateering.”

“The question is will the Kremlings chase you or press their advantage in conventional warfare,” Crysta proposed.

Yes, spreading out forces would leave them open for any attacks. They could not rely on Nocturne either, since the Salamanders served the King in the end...but thankfully, still fought mostly Hostile Xenos and Demons than other Houses.

“We are not an industrialized house,” Toriel lamented, “We depend on the Starks for their shipyards and the Lees for advanced magic aid. It is my hope our newest allies of the Land before Time can help us secure the ingredients and potions we need for high end war magic.”

Yeah...Kairi and Mipha should have been back...things must be tougher than they thought.

He truly missed them.

And hoped they were still alive.

Hope was in short supply these days.

Demons in particular seemed to revel in crushing such a concept. But so did any other enemy. Recently, they received a dark message from Lee: Two of the daughters had been kidnapped.
Crysta, so composed and thoughtful, exploded with rage, “If those children are harmed, I will rain every kind of torment on Zeal’s head and parade her corpse across the galaxy!”

“Better hold the funeral now,” Orion said without humour

Who knew what Zeal planned and-

"My lord and lady!" Zelda was at the door, "Mipha and Kairi have returned."

Sora let out a gasp. His heart was racing with excitement.

When those doors opened, he charged to hug his friends.

But then...he noticed something. They were not alone.

His jaw dropped as he saw that they were in fact walking with dinosaurs.

Five young ones, in fact...well, four and a pterosaur if one wanted to get technical.

“You guts are so cute!” Sora gushed.

“You talking to me, dirtbag ?” The ceratopsian growled.

Ooorrr...maybe not.

"Er, what's this all about?" Revali asked in a deadpan tone, walking in from another room.

“Ducky set fire to the furniture downstairs, Ducky is sorry,” the small hadrosaur pleaded.

“So that’s where the three alarm fire came from,” Revali deadpanned.

“Well, anyways,” Kairi began. “The dinosaurs did agree to help...on the condition the leaders kids come onto the station to keep them safe.”

“WHAT?!” Revali yelped. "Do you think this is a daycare? Dreemurr station is at war!” he shouted, "We don't have time to play babysitter to oversized lizards!"

"That's out of line, Revali," snapped Toriel, "We must always honor the laws of hospitality."

"And we must do this, for their safety," Mipha replied. "They are here BECAUSE we are at war. This is the safest place for them right now."

"We cannot abandon the hospitality laws," said Asgore. "They are the basis of our house, the basis of who we are since before we even had laws and government. If we abandon the helpless and vulnerable, then we're no better than King K. Rool."

Revali, much as he hated to admit, knew they had a point. Still, he wasn't going to get too involved. With a snort, he flew off to the training room to hone his skills.

"Jackass," Sora muttered under his breath. He theb put a smile on his face, aware of the triceratops glaring at him “I will volunteer as your guide. I’ll show you the run of the station,”

"And we can trust you?"

"Sure thing!" Sora smelled again, mentally telling himself to keep out of restricted areas.

“I don’t trust the shaved ape!” Shouted the triceratops.
“At least pretend to be nice, Cera,” said the exasperated longneck.

Sora rubbed the back of his head, "Let's start with introductions. Name's Sora."

“I’m Littlefoot,” said the longneck, smiling brightly.

The heavier stegosaur stared. So the duckbill spoke for him. “I’m Ducky and this is Spike!”

"...Cera..." The three horn grumbled, clearly not happy about this.

“My name Petri,” said the flyer in Sora’s hair.

Sora panicked like there were bats in his hair.

"Oh, little nervous, Sora?” Kairi teased from nearby. "Remember I was on that planet for some time. The flyer is quite friendly,” she laughed as she scooped up Petri like a song bird “unlike the sharptooth who tried to take chunks out of me.”

Yes, the time there was quite...harrowing at certain moments. It was feral world, and some inhabitants were mindless, raging beasts.

“It’s a place of great beauty,” Kairi smiled, There’s a spot in the great valley we could build a home at. Grapes grow wild, we could start a winery.”

“Keyblade Brewing sound like a good label?” Sora blushed.

“That name sucks and you should feel bad,” snapped Sarah.

“Cera...” Littlefoot cautioned. “Be nice, we’re guests here.”

Cera bit her lip “well, I know your girl can come up with a good name.“

“Thank you,” Sora narrowed his eyes.

“What’s day we check out the stations main garden?” Kairi suggested.

Ah, that was good. A distraction from the arguments trying to form already. Mipha smiled as well, ready to follow.

“It mostly grows food now and you can’t get raw honey anymore,” Mipha lamented, “but it’s still the most beautiful garden in the galaxy.”

“Are there tree stars?” asked Ducky.

Mipha blinked “Tree stars? Oh, sure, I think, maybe.”

Sora remembered, doing his research, that the Dinosaurs, being less tech savvy, had their own words for things in nature.

“I’ll point out which tree stars are safe to eat and which ones are off limits,” Sora attempted to look educated and knowledgeable. “Just try not to eat people’s victory gardens,” he added.

Cera was about to say something smart, but held it back for now.

And so they were on their way through the vast, beautiful station of Home.

The station was gorgeous, but there was no escaping the war.
The streets were lined with emergency medical stations. Soldiers guarded every street corner.

Littlefoot saw the underlying pain “Is there anything we can do to help?”

“Just keep calm and chin up,” Kairi replied. “Sometimes that’s all we can do.”

“How did this war even start?” Cera muttered. “Heard from some rumors it began when a wolf got its head chopped off.”

Sora wasn’t sure how to break it, “It was a man, he used the wolf as his symbol. His life was worth less than ambition for the king.”

“Well, that’s what set it off,” Kairi added. “But the actual reason was many...namely different ideologies. People will probably tell children that the war had one cause,” she elaborated, “but this has been years in the making.”

“My mother used to say that there are no true beginnings,” Littlefoot stated, “that it’s all the turning of a wheel.”

"One big wheel..." Mipha said. "And despite what one may think, The Kingdom is not one entity, but numerous factions vying over control."

"So, in other words," Petrie noted. "Bound to happen sooner or later?"

"Exactly," Mipha noted. "All it needed was a 'spark'."

“All different people butting heads,” Cera grunted, “if I was older I could kick some butt. Send a message.”

“A comforting thought,” said Mipha, “but it’s been this way since the numerous kingdoms were beaten into one. For so long, fear of Dragons was all that kept it going.”

"What about these 'Demons' I hear about?" Littlefoot asked. "What are they exactly?"

Sora and the others paused, wondering how to discuss this sensitive subject.

Mipha was as honest as she could be. “Really, nobody knows where they come from or why. They like hurting people and they can be stopped with psychic power or magic.”

“So say your prayers to the Old Gods and twice at night,” Kairi quipped.

Sure, Demon knowledge was meant to be public...but only once one was old enough for it.

“They’re the opposite of love, they’re icons of Sin,” cam a new voice “It you understand that you can beat them.”

“Nice to see you, Urbosa,” Sora grinned.

The Gerudo stood tall and proud, having just come back from a recon mission on her own from the Gourmet World. That, and also getting good food. Puffer Whales hung from her side.

“I missed good honest laughter,” she smiled “and I love little dinosaurs,” she tittere.

“Not little, growing dinosaurs to you,” Cera bit out. She was still hot tempered; she was just getting to be more diplomatic about it
Urbosa just chuckled as Sora eyed the small Whales. Ah, Urbosa did well in removing the dumb poison sacs out of the bodies.

“Fish fry tonight is on me,” she promised, “and all you can eat tree stars for our honoured guests.”

“Now you’re speaking my language!” Cera bellowed.

Yes, cooking for all species...Dreemurr specialty.

Just had to make sure to keep them away from buttercup flowers. Nice name, terrible effects when eaten.

Urbosa kept her smile, even when asking about the news of the outside. “Lee’s kids were taken hostage?”

Mipha whispered back, “They’re alive for now, as our spies have confirmed.”

Zeal was arrogant, but no means stupid. She knew the value of Tina and Eilonwy, and would use them as leverage to get Lee to back off while she focused on Windrunner.

“They’re also in good health,” Mipha added, “and cared for.”

“They always are,” Urbosa hid her feelings, “until the kidnapper loses patience.”

Awkward silence...

"Sooo..." Sora piped up, "Garden?"

Every day it just felt harder and harder to smile.

The sight of the garden helped, kept Urbosa from shouting at the injustice.

It was a huge place, with Dream Eaters working to keep it tilled and blooming, helped by spice.

Flowers and planets from all over Dreemurr territory were grown here, for the love of life.

The Dino’s charged into it, chasing after butterflies and romping through the tall grass.

The Land before Time had no grass, so this was new for them.

Sora and Kairi watched with smiles as the youngsters had fun. Times like this they knew, for all the horrors the Galaxy held, innocence would shine bright.

Bee hives buzzed as busy worker bees pollinated the variety of crops.

Flowers had also yet to evolve in the Land before Time.

It was something amazing all right. Life among a Galaxy of death.

Sora breathed deep, and took note of something in the corner of his eyes. "Ah, Sans, lazing about?"

"eh, a bit," the skeleton shrugged casually. "not a whole lot for me to do right now."

“So how long have you been there?” Sora asked.

“since the start of the chapter,” Sans laughed.
"What?"

"eh, it's nothing," Sans shrugged. "just messing around. sometimes you gotta take your foot off the accelerator and taste the tree stars."

In response, Spike began licking his bony hand.

A bit dim, but nice. Sans just smiled. He was a good guy, liked kids. In general, Sans liked the innocent and did his level best to protect them. Even if he had to give his foes a 'bad time'...

"you kids are a breath of fresh air," Sans told the Dino's. "i love your attitude, Cera."

"Finally," she shouted, "someone who gets me."

Littlefoot turned back to Sora. "So...I heard the House we all work for is the main food provider, right?"

"A bit more complicated, but yeah," Sora nodded. "Basic idea."

"Dreemurr have always been a house of farmers," Kairi explained, "Even in the glory days of the Targaryens, this was the breadbasket of the Galaxy."

"Weren't those guys like the original leaders?" Cera asked.

"Well...yes, but things got a little messy due to frequent...interbreeding," Kairi went on, "They say every time a Targaryen was born, the Gods would flip a coin to see their state of mind."

A common joke, which Kairi kept to herself, was that the Gods who flipped the coin where the Gods of Chaos.

That would explain some things.

"In layman's terms the Targaryens were Gaga googoo," Sora joked.

"hey, daemon blackfyre wasn’t a bad guy," Sans pointed out, "he also had a great singing voice."

"Like I said, some did ok," Kairi added.

"dreemurr goes back long before my old buddy blackfyre," Sans went on. "under old valarya this was a safe haven for monsters across the galaxy,"

"And you are a 'monster'?'" Ducky asked.

"our kind of 'monsters'," Sans smiled, "are those more into...peace and love than war."

"Do you use protection?" Cera blurted out, making Sora blush.

"i always wrap my bone before tapping it," Sans said solemnly.

"That's enough," said Mipha.

How did the kids even know such things?"

"Er, let's move on," Sora suggested, "See some wild animals we have."

"I like animals!" Ducky gushed "I like cute animals!"
“Wait till you see the local Pokémon,” Sora beamed.

Nui was happy to supply some for his allies, notably during the war time.

And for now, the kids would not see the creatures fo Gourmet World. Those things were...dangerous, to put it VERY lightly.

They were honored guests.

And even in war, children deserve to have a childhood.

Sans had moved on elsewhere, doing his own thing as usual.

And as they moved...a door opened from the side and Princess Frisk herself stepped out.

The princess was dressed in black for mourning. While next to her, Chara sobbed into her shoulder.

“Welcome,” she greeted the Dino’s.

“Hug me,” Chara pleaded.

Sora blinked. "Um...who died? Did I miss a memo?"

Of all people, Cera stood up on her hind legs and embraced the prince.

“Frisk was going to propose to Tiny Tina,” Chara shook his head “We hoped, but...”

"Wait...I thought YOU wanted Tina," Sora pointed out.

"Not to mention, you're jumping the gun a bit, they are not dead," Kairi added.

"Zeal is arrogant, but not stupid," Mipha went on. "She would not kill them so causally, when they are far more use alive."

“I think you need a walk,” said Urbosa, “If you constantly think about everything that could go wrong, you’re going to break down.”

"So...Tina's not dead?" Chara asked.

"...Nooooo..." Kairi deadpanned.

“They’re alive,” confirmed Urbosa, “Zeal needs a live bargaining chip. And we will steal them back when the time comes.”

“Cheer up, kid,” Cera licked Frisk’s face.

"And just so we're clear," Sora asked. "Both of you want her?"

The royal children shrugged “It’s legal,” said Chara “The Baratheon family would share wives for years.”

“Yes, and we love each other,” said Frisk.

"Just asking," Sora nodded. "Now, come with us and enjoy life for a bit."

That seemed like a good idea. Get mind of things for a bit.
The central garden was wild, being the most ancient part of this station.

And the wild Arcanine were a sight. The large fire-types, graceful and proud, walk along the area and Yanma darted about playfully. The dino kids watched wide-eyed as creatures of majesty and might roamed around.

They were held back respectfully as a direwolf mother suckled her pups.

Nearly the size of a horse, she was a creature who was fiercely independent but served House Dreemurr in her own way.

"That creature there was a gift from Lord Ned's father, Rickon Stark." said Urbosa.

"Direwolves..." Mipha mused. "An intelligent breed of wolf. Loyal, yet still fearsome...each of the Stark children are bonded with one of their own."

"My favorite thing about them are the legends," said Sora, "They say there are people called Wargs. And they can mind bond with an animal, usually a direwolf but sometimes a dragon. And when the person dies, they live on in their animal."

"Can you warg with a chicken?" asked Ducky.

Sora was at a loss. "I . . .have no idea."

"Some magic comes naturally to people, others learn," Kairi explained. "It is the way of things..."

"The way of things?" Littlefoot asked.

"Well if you ever read of the Jedi, the way of the force is that it's there where it needs to be," said Kairi, "There's a rhythm and rhyme to it, but it's felt in your heart, not your mind."

A long pause.

"Er, moving on," Kairi quickly said. "Let us examine the library."

"The real mark of greatness of any civilization is how it treats knowledge," said Mipha, "From books to scrolls to stone tablets, we have it all here. The Dreemurr library is the oldest of its kind anywhere in the galaxy. Founded with the aid of Sadric Targaryen."

Kids, knowing their planet, likely could not read...but they would help show them info.

Of course they wanted to know about the Land before Time. Mipha showed them the picture books, the children's books. Detailing the history of their world.

Nothing more recent, like the insane Crusade that Aerys declared on the dinosaurs or the efforts by the Mechanicus to turn their world into a Forge World.

But some books were open as well, and Ducky, hopping about...

"Hey, these things!" She pointed to an illustration. "We see them from time to time."

Urbosa looked down at the image. A rendering of a Yautja.

She was fascinated by the dreadlocked creature with mandibled face and fierce claws. "Those are a rough bunch," said Mipha "Fierce, cruel, but not good or evil."
"See them killing the Sharptooth's, but not really going after our kind," Cera noted.

"Because, my friend," Riku suddenly appeared around the corner of a shelf. "They like to hunt very dangerous, deadly creatures. Young ones or herbivores are not much sport."

"My daddy has scars from them," said Cera with pride. "Crushed them underfoot like grapes. We don't take things like that lying down. And one day, I'll have my own scars to show."

"Eh, don't get too cocky," Riku said. "People who do tend to be easy marks."

"My friends will back me up," huffed Cera, "And If I go, I want to go down defending my friends. Even Littlefoot."

"Thanks, Cera," said Littlefoot with a mix of sarcasm and love.

Riku could help but chuckle. Kids these days, and-

"Chara, Frisk, why are you dressed like that?" He asked suddenly.

"Remember when we said we took inspiration from the Baratheons?" said Chara, "Well this is how William "Billy" and Barbara "Bunny" Baratheon dressed before they married the same woman."

"We're not dressed for a funeral," said Frisk, "We're dressing for an orgy of remembrance."

"An 'orgy'?'" Petrie asked. "What's that?"

"...You'll learn when you're older," Urbosa sighed.

"Can you at least put on a bathrobe over those . . . swimsuits," Kairi winced.

"Yeah, and Billy and Bunny Baratheon were at least sixteen when they first visited a whorehouse," said Sora. "There's a time and age for everything."

Mipha did blink, wondering how the kids changed so fast from dark clothes to these...

Most likely it was Sans teaching them some magic.

More troubling, was the kids rushing to grow up.

Though it made sense, in this galaxy...

"Ah, dinner will be ready soon!"

"We've prepared quality tree stars and rare herbs for our guests," Mipha announced gleefully.

And soon, all were gathered, the King, Queen, their children, the royal court, and the new guests.

As they waited for the food to arrive, Toriel turned to Zelda. "So...how was the study of the acquired ADAM?"

"They're been using it to speed up the production of Space Marine Organs," said Zelda, "They're also using it to speed up the production of lesser super soldiers. They're already finished test trials on the production of superhumans and were working on a cure for the Wolfen Curse of the Space Wolves."

"Are you sure you got all that?'" Asgore asked.
“I’m afraid so.”

Toriel put her hands together, "Possibly, we can turn some of the chapters over to our side," she suggested. "Such as the World Eaters or the Space Sharks. Curing their gene seed disorders could be a powerful bargaining chip."

"That’s not enough," said Asgore.

Littlefoot was silent. Space Marines...he heard the older folk speak of them at times. Powerful 'Angels' loyal only to the King and the 'Masters'.

His mother had told him long ago when she was freshly hatched how the Blue Armored Angels had put a stop to pink armored demons who killed only for pleasure.

Eventually...he would know more.

In time he would know the truth. And know why the great herds left the old grounds after the desolation of Chaos.

But soon, the food came, meat, fish, and plants from all across the territory.

Looked so good! Even Propeller Knight look pleased.

All came together as one at the dinner table. In House Dreemurr, their priests were literally cooks, because nothing was more sacred than sharing a meal.

And so...

"Let us feast," Asgore declared. "For the future, and the hope we can bring."

"For the future!"

“For the future!” chorused the Dino kids.

Because there could be no future if they lost hope.

And the youth were the hope of the future!
When Highlanders Strike

The Highlands of Scotland were a cluster of asteroids and planetoids in a north corner of the Galaxy. Remote and difficult to traverse, it stayed independent from the greater north. Rebel’s like William Wallace and Robert the Bruce defeated even the dragons of the Targaryens. The Highlands were taken into the kingdom by marriage.

And in a small Corner of the highlands, a man with a flame red beard drove his tractor at a blonde priest with wild green eyes.

These were fighters, vying for a title very few could obtain.

Some would say, only one.

They were known as Immortals. Hailing from the Highlands. Their legend stretched to the age of heroes.

They fought to be “The One”.

They could not fight in holy ground and could only be put down by removing their heads.

The priest ducked as Willie swung a shiny new lawn weasel at his neck.

Huh, actually pretty good for a drunk. Still, as a member of the Inquisition, the priest held himself to high standards.

The tractor threw debris everywhere as it drove through what had been a happy farmers market.

People ran for their lives as Willie called out his enemy, “I’ll take yer head and fill it like a pint glass, ya pious talking kiddie diddle!”

Ah, angry as well. No matter.

“Names Anderson,” the priest smiled, “Alexander Anderson. And you’ll show humility before the Seven.”

From under his great coat, Anderson hurled a bayonet. It shot out like a bullet and lodged in the engine block of Willy’s tractor

It sputtered and hacked, but Willie was fast, and he vaulted off his machine to take the fight directly to Anderson.

This was the first time someone tried to behead Anderson with a garden tool. He blocked it with his bayonets.

Behind him, the tractor exploded and threw shrapnel everywhere. Both fighters got hit, but neither noticed as their wounds immediately regenerated.

Anderson gave a smirk.

Among Inquisitors, Anderson as quiet...affable. He was mostly patient with many people, and was not quite the fanatic with laws as others were. Underage drinking? A stern but fatherly lecture from him.
No, he saved his rage for the unholy monsters of Hell and the Warp.

Willie, though, had earned his wrath. The vengeful drunk had fired a loaded bolter in a crowded market where school children were taking their afternoon break.

Normally, Anderson could let another immortal walk if they accepted the Seven.

But for endangering kids he’d have to ask their forgiveness in person.

And he would send the man right to them!

"Now, then, sinner!" Anderson sneered. "Shall we get serious now?"

Willie roared, pulling back and ripping off his shirt. Revealing a hairy muscular chest like nobody’s business.

And for a moment, he almost looked pot-bellied.

But Anderson was ready, letting the wild side within come forth! He grinned like a wild beast and grew his cross-shaped guns.

“Angel Dust” Anderson had a shady history, but he was determined to right his wrongs

Willie drew a sawn off shotgun and blasted Anderson in the guts.

Alex reacted by firing a blast of gold bullets into Willie’s junk.

"GAH! Oh, ya bastard, I’ll gut ya for that!” Willie snarled.

“Beg forgiveness while you still can,” Anderson leered as he drew from his overcoat a chain of bayonets. The silver edges bit into Willy before sparking, explosive compounds igniting.

But Willie was a tough nut to crack, and swung out with a solid right hook, knocking Anderson several feet away.

The bombs would have vaporized a normal man, but Willie charged forward, huge patches of his flesh melting.

He impaled Anderson through the gut with his lawn weasel and kept running.

The two of them exploded into an abandoned coffee shop.

Anderson grounded himself, lifting Willie over his shoulder and vaulting him onto a sturdy oak table.

These two men were something else entirely.

Anderson would have quite the tale to tell back at the base of Superjail.

Willie jumped up, before being kicked back down again. Landing on a fire axe, Willie screamed in pain before ripping it from his back and swinging like a madman with it.

Anderson smirked. "In the name of the King, I herby judge you guilt here and now! Death will be your judgment!"

"BRING IT, YA WEASEL!"

Anderson had been at this for almost 400 years. Since the last king of Scotland married his daughter
Mérida into the kingdom.

His first head came from a Chaos worshipping immortal called the Kurgan. It took 37 swings from a blunt hatchet to claim it.

After that, nothing scared him.

Demons of all kinds wanted his head. He took theirs instead.

All of them just fodder to his might! Even the Greater Demons were no match for him.

Willie was tough like dragon testicles. But he was barely smarter than the tractor he rode in on.

Too much to drink in his life. And beatings to the head...

...and the fact the last time he and his father really talked was right when he was born, with said father saying he was born trash, and would be lucky to become garbage.

Of course, Willie strangled his own father and threw him in a bog. Where he came back as a zombie when a local school boy borrowed an dark book for a school report.

Anderson clenched the cross around his neck, which flashed with a light brighter than the sun.

Wille was blinded, and fell on his ax a second time. “You’re bad at this, ya blouse wearing poodle walker!” He snarled.

But then a blast...and Willie was sent flying back, a hole in his chest.

"Only one can remain..."

Anderson cut off Willie’s head with his own garden weasel.

There was a crackle of lightning from the body and Anderson screamed in pain as the volts entered his body.

But soon...

"THERE CAN BE ONLY ONE!!" He shouted in triumph.

"My, my...getting a little excited, eh?"

Anderson casually turned to see a large hybrid of lizard and dragonfly fly down...before it shifted into a more humanoid form.

Sky Shadow, Predacon and another member of the Inquisition.

Anderson scoffed, “Oh, finally decide to join? Well, the Seven bless you for thinking of me.”

"The battle was between you two...Highlander," Sky Shadow shrugged. "My job is to make sure the Dark Xenos don't kill us all."

“You could have helped me evacuate the children,” Anderson’s voice was cold behind his smile. “The Orks were distracted."

“But the little brats got away just fine,” the Predacon laughed, “No harm came to them.”

Anderson sized the Predacon up...but after the fight, knew it would be better not to provoke him...
So the two walked together. "The war effort goes well?" Anderson asked.

"It’s terrible!" shouted the Predacon “The northern front has turned into a giant game of hide and seek with the rebel navy. Our fleet is spread thin guarding asteroids and dust."

“And the Eastern front?” Anderson raised an eyebrow.

"Plagued with its own issues," Sky Shadow hissed. "Worse, all over the place are reports of Chromatics inflating our systems..."

“I never liked Dragons,” Anderson admitted, dusting him self off. “I watched Smaug terrorize the Stars before a righteous man brought him down. They’re all the same. And the home front?”

“The Imperial Capital is now the most fortified location in the galaxy,” the Predacon didn’t sound confident “But there’s no telling if general defenses will hold when the Tyranids come knocking.”

Hmmm, it was troublesome all right, but that was what they were for. To repel threats of the Kingdom.

“So do we have a plan?” Anderson asked, “The Seven help those who help themselves.”

“Our new plan is confidential,” said his compatriot. “But we will have words with Lady Catelyn Stark. If we capture her alive, we can end the war with the North.”

"Hmmm, tricky, as she is likely holed up in the Winterfell station at all times," Anderson noted.

“It’s almost as fortified as the capital,” Sky Shadow informed him. “Which is why the intel stolen by Agent 47 is so valuable. Adrastia herself is pushing this plan.”

“It feels like only yesterday when I raised her at the orphanage,” Anderson ignored the Predacon, “I’m not surprised by her audacity or her rage."

A moment of silence passed.

"The King’s plans must succeed if the Galaxy is to survive..." Sky Shadow noted, also withholding some...info he was not ready to share...about what else would be coming...

Anderson was used to being lied to. He even expected it

“And if lady Stark will not come quietly, what our orders?"

A cold look.

"Terminate with no quarter given."

Anderson smirked wickedly, “I never liked the heathen ways of the Northerners. For the Lady Stark, I promise a painless end.”

A nod as they moved out. Life was short and tough for their kind.

Only the Seven were truly immortal. Everything else was just slightly above average durability.

A shuttle awaited them, in the ruins of this market town

Bodies of dead raiders littered the streets, and dead Orks burned to stop a spore infection.
Death...it was everywhere, and they dealt it with bloody hands.

Such was existence...
Dany's personal dragon-like ship flew through the void, the nature like vehicle going at impressive speeds. A small fleet of Monster Girl ships followed.

The magical atmosphere of the ship allowed one to be on top of it and watch the stars go by. Erza and Dany were doing that now.

“I never get tired of the stars,” it was the first time in a while Erza expressed any happiness. “The stars are always beautiful.”

“I wanted to be an astronomer when I was small,” Dany confessed, “My brother, Rhaegar, even got me a telescope and star charts.”

"Your brother..."

"Yes," Dany nodded. "He was not the best brother, in fact distant at times..." She looked down. "But he was the one who raised and watched over me...in a odd sense, I miss him still... he was more a father than my real one,” her face grew sad. “He was assassinated after he won the Battle of the Trident. Father refused to have a funeral for him.”

"And your other brother?" Erza asked.

"Also dead, at Samus' hand."

“What was he like?” Erza asked.

“I wish Samus had killed him sooner.” Dany's voice took a hard turn.

Despite that, though...she still found she ached for his loss.

“We make our own justice, my lady,” Erza comforted her queen ;“and this injustice will be repaid with fire and blood!”

The motto of her house...yes.

But soon, the vox-speaker came on, and Razorbeast's voice spoke up.

“We are ETA ten minutes to Sangheilios... get the hell out of the cockpit, Calvin!”

“Ha! You said cock!”

“NOW!”

Against her wishes, Dany giggled at the antics of her new party member.

So far, all was going well. Still looking for signs of other members she could create a council with...but one step at a time.

Vadam was the man they were looking for. A warrior who’d been fighting on land and space for nearly sixty years.

As a Sangheili, he was a long-lived species...and a skilled warrior, like the rest of his kind.
It was time to play their card right and try to bring them in.

The first sight that something was wrong with the system were the Mechanicus recycling ships stripping down space born statues for raw materials: built to honor past heroes and impress visiting ships.

Well...that was not encouraging. And if they were spotted...bad things could happen.

But the Monster Girl ships were about them, and began to cloak everyone's presence.

The capital city was under blockade and so was the orbital station. But the armed presence was minimal. Just the Mechanicus and a few Brute privateers.

The Brutes...did not like the Sangheili. At all. Eager to get them down to nothing.

But Dany and her small force slipped into the jungles...

This area was once farmland, traditionally tended by Sangheili females. They’d all been rounded up and the farms were left to be reclaimed by the jungles.

Once landed, Dany and her council, along with a squad of Girls, stepped out and looked around.

"Huh, must have been some time since this all happened," Hobbes mused.

“This looks like planet Nan,” said Calvin, “Where old Colonel Kurtz snapped. And there was that guy who liked napalm.”

“The military and civilian leadership is being held in Vadam keep,” said Jack, “The venerable fortress is now a prison.”

Well...terrific,” Ashi muttered.

Al was silent. He found himself wishing for Winry, who's mechanic skills would be useful for this job...but she had vanished in a pirate raid one day. Reports say it was Juri's work.

“Most of The Keeps security systems are working but only just,” Al pulled up a schematic on his armor, “When the King branded the Arbiter a traitor, they made their last stand in Vadam Keep.”

“Is there a back way?” Asked Ashi.

"Hmm...they may have animals watching it...but it's worth a shot, as the Vadam family built secret tunnels going through the mountains,” said Al “this was after Maegor the cCuel assassinated their current patriarch”

Dany flinched, another reminder of her families sordid past...but now, time to move out.

Weapons were at ready, as they moved out into the green.

Cargo vehicles moved up and down a dirt road, carrying loads and loads of swords. Declared illegal, the King decided such cultural heirlooms were a sign of treason.

The armed presence was minimal, but the woods could hide trained attack animals or drones

Hyenas of Jumanji were a big problem...as far from being cowardly scavengers, they were powerful hunters...and easily trained to hunt.
Calvin grinned as Hobbes shifted into his feral form.

Calvin stood up as a towering Tarzan-like hulk.

The power of imagination...and none too soon, as a rifle shot nearly hit the team.

A Spider-Girl looked up. "Skitarii!"

Cybernetic soldiers of the Mechanicus moved in formal column. Their ability to shut off emotion was unnerving to less disciplined allies.

Less so to the Dragon princess.

The commanding Skitarii stopped the column and activated a thermal eye piece.

It spotted Erza... just in time to take a sniper shot through its other eye.

Support? Well, no matter, the distraction needed, as some Arachne shot out webs to entangle cyber soldiers.

Erza jumped into the fray with her swords while Al jammed their communication.

The unseen sniper took out a rocket unit as Calvin charged with Dragon girls at his back.

Dany held back as Razorbeast stood by her, blasting Skitarii as they got close.

Calvin ripped into the guts of a heavy weapons Skitarii, laughing like a fiend. “You’re stupid! Now you’re stupid and dead!”

As Jack cut down one of the cyborg soldiers, he saw the Brutes approaching. “They are outcast! More ferocious but less disciplined!”

“And I will provoke my ill tempered foe,” Ashi smiled.

Still, the sniper fired off, aiding the newfound allies as Ashi beat the face in of a Brute.

Figures jumped out of the jungle wearing crude gilly suits. Their shapes were indistinct right until they were on top of their foes.

The Sangheili let out a cry of rage and revenge.

They had waited for moments like these, and went for them for all it was worth.

The Mechanicus must fall!

Their weapons were old and rusted, barely kept in working order. Instead of swords, they attacked with farm tools.

Their plan was to hit and run, but the presence of the Neo-Targaryen force changed the plan.

And Dany fully intended to aid them. It was why she was here after all.

Time to talk later. Just fight.

A towering Brute chief went for her, it’s fur infested with insects and worms dripping from its nostrils.
It looked less a bandit and more a diseased, insane animal.

Erza’s sword diverted its energy hammer as Dany went for the fire grenade at her belt.

As it bellowed, she tossed the prime bomb into the gullet and Erza shoved it back several meters.

Seeing it catch fire was not a pretty sight. Eye melting, flesh charring...

Brutes rolled over as the burning napalm stuck to their fur and melted their skin off. Skitarri began making noise like radio static as their circuits melted.

Erza looked upon the dragon princess and saw nothing but hate and death.

And she wanted to see more!

Although Al felt...worried. It was not a nice look for the Queen. He too heard the tales of the 'Madness', and would make dead sure his queen did not go there...

Daenerys stood in the fire, this time welcoming it. She could feel something.

The rage as the world burned around her felt good, right even!

The she felt Calvin and Hobbes looking through her…

"You...OK?" Hobbes asked.

Dany blinked, her head focusing. Was she? Getting a little...worked up there.

“No, I’m not,” She admitted as her loyal guards surrounded her.

“Thank you for your honesty,” Hobbes said solemnly.

"HEADS UP!” Razorbeast caught their attention by blasting the head off of one last Brute.

The battlefield went quiet as stray hyenas defied their training and began to feast on the dead.

One could not deny their instincts. Dany turned to the Sangheili in that case.

It was time to talk.

“Who’s in charge? I want to talk to your commander.” She tried to sound confident and strong but the Sangheili warriors remained silent.

Finally, one, with only half a set of jaws stood forth, cradling his sniper rifle. “By the rings,” he stood surprised.

He did not expect to see a Targaryen here. Reports said they had been wiped out to the last person.

“I remember you,” he said evenly “I’m Commander R’Tas Vadum. Your father sent me and Stefan Baratheon many years ago to find a bride for your eldest brother.”

"Uh..."

"Yes, it has...been some time," R’Tas admitted. "And things have changed since."

“We have come to aid you and drive the Mechanicus and the Brutes from your home,” Dany told him.
“And at what price?” He asked cynically “We have lost our swords, our leader and our freedom. We thank you, but will not be pawns to you. Not after your father took half my face on a whim.”

“Not every daughter is like her father,” Alphonse stepped to the tall warrior. “We can help you gain all what you lost. Just ask the Monster Girls. We liberate the galaxy one world at a time”

The warrior looked at the gathering of Girls. So...that race had been liberated by her...

But could she be worthy of leading HIS race?

“Can they fight?” He asked, pointing to the Monster Girls, “Will they run when we are ambushed and hide when we are under fire?”

One of the Dragon girls hissed at him “I got Brute meat in my teeth. Why don’t you step closer and look?”

A moment of silence. Then R'Tas smirked. "Heh, well, let's get back to the hideout and talk further..."

Trekking through the jungles was not part of their plan, but it was critical Dany and her people eat, drink and sit with their new allies. Not just send out proclamations and royal decrees she could not enforce.

And right now, the jungle here helped to prove cover from any enemy forces...and wild things as well.

"Keep ready, comrades," R'Tas stated. "And don't fall behind."

“Secret jungle hideouts and mad battles,” Calvin grinned from ear to ear, “This is what I paid for.”

“I hope it’s like that secret base of Gundams we visited ages ago,” Hobbes reminisced.

"A word of advice," R'Tas noted. "Do not approach the Dark Lake unless we allow it,..

"Er, what's there?" Al asked.

R'Tas knew better than to hide it. "Varan, one of the Kaiju, slumbers there.”

“Can we say hello to him at least?” Calvin asked. Only to get elbowed in the ribs by his buddy.

“Behave, Calvin.” Daenerys said from atop Razorbeast’s beast form “even a non hostile kaiju can wreak havoc”

“Can we say hello to him at least?” Calvin asked. Only to get elbowed in the ribs by his buddy

“Behave, Calvin.” Daenerys said from atop razorbacks beast form, “as even a non hostile Kaiju can wreak havoc.”

"And these days, he had remained in his lake...with the invasion grating on him...attacking all those who tread near without proper ways," R'Tas said. “In the old days our priests offered animal and fruit sacrifice to the beast...and that was the pretense for invasion. K. Rool claimed his invasion of our world was to cordon off the Kaiju. And then he arrested the leaders of our nation.”

“I’m guessing the creatures presence keeps away air patrols,” Jack guessed.

"The invaders keep clear of the area as well...but no telling how much longer before he goes berserk."
"What happens when he goes berserk?" Dany asked.

"At that point, our last living priest says he will indiscriminately rampage across this world and destroy all settlements," R’tas said grimly “if you want to help us then we must act quickly.”

Hoping getting rid of the Mechanicus forces would calm Varan down.

"How long do we have?" Ashi asked.

A rumble...

"A few days now, at most."

“We had a plan to enter through a hidden passage,” explained Al, “I’ve been in the system long enough to crack their security codes.”

“Then you probably know the passage is infested with Arachnids,” R’tas countered.

Damn it.

"We must revise our plans anyways," R'Tas said. "And now, we're here."

The structure looked crystalline, vaguely pyramidal. “I don’t recognize this style,” Dany was awed.

“We call it Forerunner,” said R’tas, stepping to the dark crystal surface “for the honor of Greyskull!” He shouted as the surface lit up.

The interior was vast.

And heart-breaking.

Daenerys could see Sangheili roasting rodents to survive. Forging their own ammo in presses that were older than she was.

A once mighty race reduced to this...

Just like her family name...

The commanding staff of the resistance wasn’t much to look at.

There were a few tattered clan crests, but they looked as weary and tired as the rest of their people.

Hmmm, Dany decided to simply play it safe before making a big speech about something and causing a lot of issues.

“I see you are in need,” she began plainly, “I am prepared to give you protein synthesizers as well as spare parts for medical tanks.”

“And where are the strings attached?” Demanded an older female who stood next to Half Jaw.

“I wish your support in deposing King K. Rool and restoring my dynasty,” Dany said just as simply.

A pause. On one hand, getting rid of the fat fuck was a promising idea.

On the other hand, the Targaryen line was...questionable.

“Show, don’t tell,” V’tas rumbled, “That’s what my poetry teacher taught me. You claim to have
liberated the Monster Girls, but we are not convinced of your ability to see this fight through the end."

Dany was not surprised by that. Figured it would be another fight to show her stuff.

“Right, do you have a plan?”

R’tas smiled as best his mutilated face could, “There us a teleport system build around the lake which reaches into Vadam keep. We would need a starship to power it. A small group could get into the keep and shut down the security systems.”

“That is fair enough,” she conceded.

“And there is an old Valaryan force field system locking off Arachnid tunnels. If you shut that down the invaders will have to fight us as well as the Bugs.”

Hmm, Bugs were still an issue, eh? Even after being mostly wiped out by the Tyranids.

“The Arachnids are tenacious,” said the female, who Dany presumed was R’tas wife, “But unlike the Tyranids, their Brain Bugs can be reasoned with. As a last demand we want you to reason with their last Brain Bug and foster a truce.”

Hopefully get them off their backs. That was good.

One last thing...

“The one called the Arbiter...where is he?” Dany asked.

“My brother is locked in the lowest dungeon of the keep,” the female bitterly uttered. “He is kept hostage.”

“Right, suppose we’ll be getting him out,” Ashi muttered dryly.

“Bring him back alive or all deals are off,” the female hissed.

“Well, we’ll do our best,” Al tried to make light of it.

It was not long before some soldiers were selected. Needed the masters of stealth for this.

Jack and Ashi took point. They were Dany’s best stealth units and they were the obvious choice.

A separate team would serve as gatecrashers when the security was down.

Certain silent Monster Girls included some Kunoichi, a subspecies of Succubus known for silence and assassination. Perfect for the job.

“We’re being teleported into the toxic waste refinery,” Jack told his team. “Move fast if you don’t want your children to glow.”

Joyful thing to hear. Real joyful.

As for Calvin and Hobbes...

“So when you go in, we’ll go on distraction detail in the cafeteria!” Calvin was overjoyed.

“We’ll pee on their sandwich’s, set fire to the furniture, and throw cherry bombs down the toilets,”
Hobbes elaborated.

"They're SKITARIII, you two," Erza deadpanned. "I doubt that will even faze them."

"Robots respond to heat and light, right?" Hobbes was confident.

Erza felt her temple pulse, "They're cyborgs."

"So come with us and give them the business," Calvin cheerfully invited her.

Well...she DID want to smash up some foes. Get her blood rushing.

"Fine, you win."

"And just in case, I've got this!" Calvin pulled a small gun from his pocket.

"...A squirt gun?"

"Nope, my transmogrify gun!"

"Is this going to turn me into fetish fuel?" She eyed it warily.

"Only in the bedroom or sometimes cheap hotels," Calvin explained, "but if you need some transformation to boost your deadly game, I got you covered."

"...How does it...work?"

"Telepathy," Calvin replied. "I just think and shoot."

Erza let out a sign "I just want to be someone who won't feel pain or guilt. Even for a little while."

"Good by me, but don't get stuck in it," Calvin took aim, "It's like staying underwater too long."

"Eh?"

"Er, lemme just see what can happen later."

"Teleport now!" Shouted Jack.

Alphonse hit the switch.

Erza blinked and found herself with Calvin and Hobbes in a storeroom. And she was also a large naga.

"Hey, it worked after all this time!" Calvin grinned.

"WHAT!? You had NO idea?!"

"Look, I'm not saying a Slaneshii Demon shoved this up their butt," protested Calvin, "I'm just saying it was a bastard to fix this."

"I will peel your skin off," she hissed, her forked tongue flickering out.

"I like your golden eyes," said Hobbes.

Erza blushed through her scales. "Thank you."
The assorted Monster Girls with them stared blankly, but suddenly went into position for anything.

Calvin stood up wearing a leopard print speedo and a top hat, “Okay! Let’s fucking rock and roll!” And fired a napalm launcher into a fire safety panel.

They were here to distract the guards, and they would. Red Oni’s laughed as they swung their clubs about, smashing up machines. Slime Girls used their bodies to gunk up gears and cogs.

Red lights began flashing all over the room.

In the control center, a Tek Priest dispassionately summoned a Hunt Kill Qquad over the Vox.

For Jack and his team, the time was now.

Ashi was moving in fast, disabling any guards she found with surgical skill.

Monsters Girls with powers over darkness slinked about, also killing any dumb guards.

By remote control, Alphonse was shutting down cameras and turrets.

There, in what was once the main feast hall, was the adapted Argent energy generator.

It had to go down.

Argent energy... why use it? Both from Hell AND caused body problems. Look at Hayden!

It was a compact power source to be sure.

A small box the size of a juice box was supplying a whole fortress.

It had to be neutralized, not just destroyed. Lest it open a wormhole and unleash a demonic invasion.

Last thing they needed right now was a bunch of hulked-up monsters trying to smash their faces in.

“I’m going to psychically interface with the reactor,” Jack said, “Guard me while I’m incapacitated.”

“You’re the bravest man I ever met,” said a slime girl, “Let’s smash when you get back.”

Jack sat down with closed eyes and crossed legs, letting himself flow into the machine....

He was practiced at letting his body and mind separate/

It was as natural as making love.

A Hell breach needed to be healed with love, not hate or zealotry.

He was ready for anything, except the ghost of Rhaegar Targaryen.

...He THOUGHT he saw said ghost, but it was gone before he could focus. Ah well...

He felt the hole and willed it to heal.

Around him he could feel Demons of all stripes.

Fighting to get at him, but as distant as yesterday’s dreams.

He could feel them and something warm, even caring.
His body, meanwhile, was defended by Ashi and the Monster Girls as the lights in the fort went out and the power went out.

A few Skitarii had found them, but were quickly beaten back, weapons looted as well.

"Right," Ashi noted. "So far, so good."

“We have contact,” grinned an Arachne girl, “They know we're on their side.”

They were here to speak arthropod to arthropod to the arachnids, who were no longer trapped by force fields.

The first of their warriors exploded into the control room as the Skitarii commanders were preparing to retreat.

Contact...or maybe it just worked out because the Bugs hated the Mechanicus more? Eh, whatever.

It was a fragile alliance.

What was more important was Ashi being confronted by a Harpy girl, “We found the Arbiter!”

"Right," Ashi nodded. "We-

"Attention," A huge horde of Skitarii appeared. "Submit or be terminated."

Ashi gritted her teeth, ready to fight and-

A blur rushed past her, quickly cutting down a huge chunk of her foes, before using a gun to shoot down the rest. Almost in the blink of an eye.

"Drifter, at your service."

“Who!?” Ashi stopped herself as she turned her attention to the last band of Skitarii, robotically sacrificing themselves for their orders.

“Look at that guys package!” Gasped one of the Arachne.

“It’s all good breeding,” he laughed as he threw a grenade at his foes. He had managed to track down Dany’s forces before Spyro could, via his own skills. Now, time to see if they were worth a contract.

“You want the Arbiter, right?” He asked, “I know how to find him.”

“Did you move him?” Ashi raised her weapon.

“Mechanicus protocol has them implant a bomb in the brain of hostages,” Drifter noted, “and I know how to disarm the bomb before they calculate he’s worth more dead.”

"Uh," Ashi blinked. "Aren't you a-

"Merc? Yes...but I'm lacking a contract now, and you may be the best fit...let us see. I'm paid to help you,” Drifter elaborated, “and don’t mind me squeezing you for a little more money. But it is for a good cause and I'll be worth every penny.”

Jack leaned in, “Give us the Arbiter alive and my master will see you get a fair rewards.”
"Done and done," And with that, all rushed off, slicing through their foes.

Thel ‘Vadam could hear the din of battle.

He couldn’t see because his eyes had been burned out with a laser on his first day of imprisonment.

A metallic clang rang through the cell as the door opened.

"Oh...well, we can get those eyes back of yours once we get you to safety," A female voice said.

“I don’t want them back,” Thel hissed. “I want my scars visible and obvious. Given that you haven’t tried to castrate me yet, I’ll assume you’re not one of the Inquisition.“

"True...and you're going to need your eyes back for the battles to come," Ashi stated flatly.

“Give my cybernetic eyes that never blink,” Thel heaved his chest as he felt his shackles come off “they’ll do fine for when I need to take lives”

“You can get eyes with racing stripes once I get this,” said Drifter as he placed a flat plate to the Arbiter’s head “this is going to hurt worse than childbirth.”

"Wait...what's going to-GYEEARGGHHHHHHH!!!" The pain felt like his skull was being ripped out with the spine still attached to it.

The use of electrokinesis to disarm a bomb on his brain stem was painful. Drifter knew that he had roughly thirty seconds to save the Arbiter.

Because the local chatter had given the order to terminate all hostages.

Ah, man...but he was nothing if not cool and collected at all times. Part of his work.

Hell, maybe after this, he would help the others go his home world...a place not really part of the Kingdom...a lost land...

Thel was shuddering, shaking on the ground.

“He’ll live,” said Drifter, “and now I think we both need something from your leader.”

Just then, Calvin zoomed down the hallway on a pink tricycle waving a flaming sword.

"Come, my fellows! Let us go to the Queen and report our mission successful!" He said dramatically.

"Yeah, sure," Ashi muttered.

“Suck on my striped ballsack, you brain dead biker shores!” Hobbes shouted while in a feral tiger form.

Overhead, the last of the occupation fleet was struggling to take off, Alphonse having corrupted their takeoff data.

Samuel Hayden, when he heard about this later, would not be pleased by this turn of events.

He’d lost a political prisoner. But more importantly, he’d learned about the weaknesses in the cyber security his best and brightest had designed.
More than that, the destruction of the Argent generator would anger him tremendously.

Woe to the agent who would deliver this news to him.

All around, the base began to fall apart, Erza using her snake-like body to crush foes.

The more foes she killed, the better she felt.

The snake inside of her was cold to everything. Every action was razor sharp, but there was no cortisol anger reaction like a mammal. Her interior was cold as her coils turned the guts of Brutes into jelly.

Alarms blared, and she knew...time to go. Already the others were coming with Thel, still dazed.

The base sparked and came apart in all places. Not much longer...

The base had multiple failsafe features. Alphonse had disabled the lot.

The teleport function kicked in seconds before everything went critical.

The remaining Mechanicus ships in orbit were taken out by automated suicide bomber vessels; mostly scrap yard hulks with a fusion engine welded on.

And soon, in short order, the Mechanicus that remained had to fall back.

The day was won.

Dany waited for the feeling of victory.

It never came.

The Monster Girls bowed to her, as did the broken wreck that was The Arbiter.

Drifter smiled at her, “You really are the person my master thinks you are.”

"Your master?" Dany blinked.

"And an old friend of mine...only known as the Guardian,” Drifter went on. "Back on my planet, told me about you."

“What, did this Guardian say to avoid me?” She mentally prepares herself for jeers and insults.

“I was told you’re an idealist,” he said coyly. “I was told the monster girls call you mother.”

"...Ah..."

"And by the way," Drifter said. "Some Houses may want to all with you. Nui sent some of his guys to find and aid you...if you’re careful.”

“It was the Northern Houses who served as the front line of the current King,” Dany could barely hide her anger.

“But they’re your citizens too,” Drifter countered, “At least that’s one thing that should set you apart from K. Rool.”

Dany sighed. She would have to meet these Nui people when she saw them. Right now, time to regroup. “I have a war to plan, with many enemies,” she told Drifter, “Right now I have a new
general and I have foot soldiers. If you want to offer help, I can pay.”

"Aye...and maybe I am interested in the new empire myself..." Drifter replied. "Contract established."

"Excellent," Erza noted as Calvin changed her back to her default form.

“War is good for mercenaries,” Drifter smiled. “But a war of extinction benefits nobody. Never lose sight of the Tyranid hordes. They don’t care who’s skeleton sits on the throne.”

“Mind your tongue,” Erza hissed.

“You honor me, Erza,” Dany defused the situation, “Come with me to meet our new allies and solidify our new alliance.”

A nod. "And to lose the heat, we go to my homeward. Not on any official maps, mind you,”

Al, meanwhile, was trying to get Thel to regrow his organic eyes.

“Make them scarred, don’t make them pretty,” he demanded.

“Medical necessity before pride,” Alphonse replied cheerfully.

Well...yeah. And he might need his real eyes for the job he was about to do.

“I might also add I don’t have any cyber eyes on hand,” Al added, “Unless I stripped some off a dead Tek priest but I’m not sure that’s sanitary.“

"So...you do have axolotl genes on you, correct?"

"Yep," Al nodded.

“We were lucky enough to have some left over from when my brother and I grew them together,” Alphonse’s voice was twinged with sadness

Those days were gone...and he knew it. Ed, unlike the fabled Hyrule Champions, had nothing to tether his soul to the world, and moved on.

The loss never got easier. All that kept him going was the family and friends he gained.

“Mr. Arbiter I’m asking for the hardest thing a warrior can do, trust me.” Alphonse was even and spoke with strength.

Thel was humbled, “As you command.”

And with that, some liquid was splashed on this face...then came odd pulling sensation of his eyes regrowing.

Arbiter felt tears fall down his face as his sight returned.

“Thank you, Alphonse,” Putting aside his pride was even harder, but worth it.

And soon, Dany stood before that masses of Sangheili, ready to inspire her new troops.

“Ask not what the realm can do for you, ask what you can do for the realm,” she opened, “We stand here to fight the King, but I want us to stand as a people, as a nation.”
“I am less interested in what you can do for me than what you can do for the Kingdom,” Dany went on, “My time in this world is finite and I want the kingdom to outlast me, to be better and brighter.”

“I am asking much of you and I am prepared to give much,” her tone rose, “But before you bend the knee to me, I want you to bow before the realm and all it’s peoples”

Her current allies stood at her side, taking note. She knew her stuff. Lay the foundations for the dream at least, in case she might not see the end of it all.

“This has to be more than a one woman show, more than a cult of personality,” she raised a hand as a ceremonial case was brought up, “I can’t grant you your sacred swords, but I will ask you raise them for our country.”

Inside the case were the sacred swords that the Kings forces would have melted down.

As leader of his people, Arbiter had to take it for himself.

And it was time to make the vows of loyalty.

Thel knelt before Daenerys Targaryen, and the new flag of the kingdom to be =

“I, Thel Vaadam, do swear to be faithful and bear allegiance to the United Kingdom and it’s leadership, peoples and successor. So help me, by the Gods!”

And soon, all the others followed suit, and Dany nodded.

“As of now we are sending messengers to the scattered Sangheili tribes,” She went on, “Your world will not be undefended, Arbiter.”

The Arbiter bowed, “What would you have your loyal general do?”

Dany smiled. Good, she had someone for a military genius...

A roar sound through the air...and large reptile with membranes between the limbs landed not too far off.

Varan had come...but he did not look hostile.

The Kaiju commanded respect and awe. He did not resonate with hostility.

Like a force of nature it took no sides.

But Dany and her people hadn’t been the ones polluting his lake or disrupting his sacrifices.

He looked right at Dany...and spoke...something. No one could understand the mighty tongue he spoke in. A deep rumble and drawn out syllables...before he took off into the air and into space.

Dany felt the words rather than heard them.

‘You are not perfect.’

He said somewhere in her soul.

He called her dragon child, dragon mother.

But she had no time to ask before he was gone.
"Where is he going?" Ashi asked.

"Kaiju are natural enemies to Chaos," Hobbes spoke up, "And with recent events, they are stirring up the hive. Like a storm, he’s neither good nor bad," Hobbes went on. "What matters is how you react"

"Is nobody else terrified?" Alphonse asked “I nearly screamed.”

"There is no shame in that, Alphonse," Jack reassured him.

After the shock passed, though, many began to begin to head out into space and across planets, with Dany planning to take Drifter on his offer to set up a small base on his homeward.

Said mercenary was standing by himself, away from others, lost in thought...and then he began coughing slightly, and looked at his hand.

Blood.

He looked about. No one noticed. Good, he liked to keep his illness to himself for now.

Drifter was not an idealistic man. But he wished to add a bit of grace to the universe before he met his end.

And he hoped to die fighting, not die in a hospital.

And so, after that small episode, he rejoined his new crew, and soon all were off into space, flying to the future.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!