

The Destruction of the YSS Ongaku

The following is a compilation of six transcripts from role-playing sessions in the Star Army Role-Play, which has been edited for spelling and grammar.

The plot has a horror theme, to coincide with Halloween, and although short, it turned out very exciting and very successful. It ran October 17-30, 2004.

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Anthony got on the YSS Ongaku, thanks to a transport ship. He was nervous about his first assignment, but tried not to show it. When the airlock closed, Anthony jumped a little. Anthony thinks to himself, "Calm down... This might be your only first impression..." Anthony didn't see any crewmembers. Anthony thinks to himself, "Huh... Nobody's around... How am I supposed to find out where the captain's quarters are?" That's when it hit him. He noticed the computer, and he asked, "Do you...erm...know where the captain is?" He felt like an idiot, talking to a computer... He thinks to himself, "I guess that's what happens when you don't talk to a human in years, much less a computer..."

"Yep!" The ship chimed cheerfully. "She's in bed."

Anthony, a little annoyed, said, "Where is her quarters?" Anthony thought to himself, "I hope my assignment is someplace I can be alone..."

"From your position," Rave said, putting up a map on a nearby wall panel, her quarters are around this corner to the right, and through monitor room."

Anthony, relieved that the computer was not going to give him a hard time, said, "Thanks..." Anthony went around the corner, towards the monitor room, where he stopped outside the door. He thinks to himself, "Wait a minute.... The captain is... sleeping? Am I allowed to disturb? Maybe I should go back and ask the computer..."

The armored door to the monitor room looked to be sealed shut. A small display panel confirmed this. "LOCKING SYSTEM ENGAGED," it glowed in pink letters.

Anthony noticed the glowing pink letters. He shook his head and grumbled, "Well, that solves that problem...and with my luck, opens up a new one." Anthony turned back and shuffled slowly back to where the computer had talked to him before, and then inquired, "The doors are sealed. You can help with that cant you? And another thing: If the captain is sleeping, am I allowed to go into her quarters?" Anthony thought to himself, "maybe living in the woods was better. I haven't spoken to a living person in years, until I got recruited and sent here; I can only hope this will be brief and not embarrassing."

The ship was quick to respond, "All doors and blast shutters on the ship are controlled from the monitor room. I can open and shut doors and blast shutters; one such blast shutter currently covers the door to the Monitor Room, as it is a secured area. You do not have authorization to open this blast shutter and I will not open it for you because the situation does not call for it."

Anthony realized that he was not going to be seeing the captain tonight. He looked around, and realized that despite the nightclub-like theme that the ship has been decorated in, it was more like a hotel; at night, it was very quiet with hardly any activity. Anthony, deciding to wait until morning to speak with the captain, said quietly, "Computer, which room will I be sleeping in?"

Rave's cheer returned to her voice, and she told him, "third room on the port side of the ship," while flashing a picture of it's location on a map.

Anthony simply nodded his head in thanks. He looked at the map; seeing where he needed to go, he then started walking in the direction his room was. As he was coming down the hall to his room, he stopped. He decided to wash up first; on the transport ship over here, he had been so nervous he got sick. Walking in and examining himself in a mirror, he found he looked terrible.

Tyriel had sat in his darkened room next to what would be Anthony's, when he was finished letting out the emotion he'd pent up for so long he decided that he probably needed to go wash up. The elysian fluttered his wings a bit to steady himself as he got to his feet and walked out of the room bracing with an arm against the wall; still in a half-awake state. Soon enough he'd found his way to the toilet room to wash the blood off his hands and face, heedless of how he looked, figuring the others were asleep already. Tyr yawned and blinked the sleepiness out of his eyes and looked over at the guy looking at himself in the mirror. "Hey, you all right?" he asked, walking over.

Anthony realized he was not alone. One eye stared at the Elysian, as the other focused on the mirror. Anthony started the water, as he said, "Just peachy, but I don't think I'm the guy you should be concerned about... You look like you just went to hell and came back." Anthony turned his attention back on the mirror, as he splashed water on his face several times.

Tyriel shrugged and went over to the sink next to Anthony and turned the water on and splashed his own face twice and washed his hands, the red fluid coming off easily. "It was a nightmare, that's all," he said, pausing to splash his face again. "You must be new to the ship, haven't seen you around."

The whole ship shook violently and ship's interior lights went out. What sounded like a deep muffled scream rumbled through the halls of the Ongaku, followed by a sick laughing that ended as abruptly as it had begun. Rave's voice said, "A minor anomaly in the continuum distortion was detected. Although the ship has taken no damage, the ship's emergency shutters were sealed as a precautionary measure." Shortly thereafter, the lighting returned to normal.

Anthony turned off the water as the ship began shaking violently. He grabbed steady onto the sink, and then, as quickly as it had come, the shaking stopped. Anthony grabbed a towel, drying his hands and face as the computer's voice came on, and the only thing he understood was that they had taken no damage. He turned to the Elysian, quizzically asking, "I'm guessing everything is all right then?"

Tyriel grabbed a hold of the sink he was near as well, bracing himself until it stopped, then dried his face and hands, remaining calm. "I don't know, something may be wrong still." He said, and then addressed the computer. "Rave, are all the personnel onboard

accounted for?" He asked and started for the door then addressed Anthony again. "What a welcome, huh? You armed?"

"Yes, everyone is here and well," Rave replied. "We will arrive in Mishhuvurthyar space in one minute."

Anthony said, " Rave, huh? I never knew the computer had a name..." Anthony then gave a nervous glance at the Elysian, then continued, " No, I am not armed... Why?"

Tyriel sighed, and rolled his eyes; "Yeah Captain Kessaku named the AI 'Rave'. And you should get armed, can't be too careful." He said and listened at the wall near the door, suspicious that something might be around. This was a regression to his old training as a spy and assassin at work.

"We are now in Mishhuvurthyar-controlled space," Rave announced, sounding excited for some reason. "I am automatically disengaging the Continuum Distortion Drive. Scanning for hostiles..." the computer told them. Despite the ship's carefree attitude, the fact that they were in enemy territory and something unexplained just happened couldn't be a good thing. "Scanning for hostiles..." Rave repeated, reminding everyone that the enemy could be close.

Anthony shook his head in disbelief that Rave could be so carefree about being in enemy territory. Anthony noticed the Elysian pressing his ear to the wall near the door, and immediately knew what he was doing. Anthony, realizing that he needed a weapon, asked, " I am guessing there is an equipment storage room around here somewhere, so unless you have another weapon on you that you would willing give to a stranger, I am going to go find it."

"I have a bad feeling about this, we should try and get to Juni Yuuko ASAP. I've got a couple weapons in my room we can use, but I want to be sure there's nothing outside this door." Tyriel said. "Yeah there is an equipment storage nearby I'd assume. Let's wait to see what the results of the computer's scans are first though."

The toilet room door swished open, only to reveal that on either side of the hallway, steel-gray blast shutters were in the way, trapping them in a comparatively tiny section of the ship. The panels on both doors said "LOCKING SYSTEM ENGAGED." One was on the ship's centerline, to their left; the other blocked the ladder that went to the passageway under the shuttlebay. It looked like the only place to go without opening the doors was to the sleep areas or through the small hatch between the toilets and the baths, of course, the shutter would be closed on that side too. Rave continued, "Scanning for hostiles..."

Anthony shook his head in disbelief and said, " Just peachy... Let's head to the sleep quarters and get ourselves armed. It won't do us any good if there ARE enemies around and we are unarmed. You can come with me or not, but I am not going to wait any longer!"

"Yeah," Tyr replied and exited the room and headed for his room, next to Anthony's so they were going the same way. Once the door to his room swished open the Elysian immediately armed himself with his GP-12 assassin and GP-13 sidearm he had in his chest then went to meet the new guy.

"Scanning for hostiles," Rave repeated once more as she continued to add to the rising tally she had going.

Anthony went into his room, and saw a single bunk with a chest at the foot of it. He went over to the chest and opened it up. There was nothing in it, obviously there for him to store his belongings. He had none, so he walked out of his room and caught sight of the Elysian. Anthony said, "I have nothing... You have a spare?"

"Here, this is all I have at the moment." The Elysian replied and handed him the GP-13. "Make good use of it...and your own." he said in a firm tone and pointed to the sidearm on the soldier's belt then went to a console. "Rave can you put a map of the interior of the ship through to here with markers for all the life forms on the ship?" He asked the AI hoping it'd work

There was a chiming noise from the ship, and the shutter display panels changed to, "LOCKING SYSTEM DISENGAGING," in flashing white for a second, then "LOCKING SYSTEM DISENGAGED," in sky blue. Rave's voice finally stopped repeating, too. There was a short breeze as the environmental systems started to circulate air again. Rave, as always, was ready to respond as soon as he finished asking the question, and did do. There was nothing out of the ordinary. Yuuko was in the monitor room, and Oshi was on the bridge.

Anthony felt like an idiot, not realizing the uniform had a standard gun. He took out both guns, and made sure no one was coming down the other-side of the hallway. Suddenly, Rave's voice re-assured everything. Relieved, Anthony put his gun back and handed the other back to the Elysian. Anthony said, "By the way, I'm Anthony." Anthony slowly realized that for the first time actually talking to another person, he did a lot better then he thought.

Tyriel accepted it back and put it in the holster on his own belt and slung the GP-12 assassin over his back with it's shoulder straps hanging off his shoulders between his wings. "I'm Tyriel." he replied offhandedly. "Let's go find out what happened." he said briskly and headed in the direction of the monitor room.

Yuuko's disembodied voice resounded throughout the ship, "They're definitely still in this star system," she announced. "I'm picking up a lot of Mishhu ships, including some I don't recognize." Once the monitor room had unlocked the shutters, all it took was the tap of a finger to get them to slide back into the slots they'd come from. It was a short crawl through the passage under the shuttlebay and then through another shutter (passing the armory) to the monitor room.

Anthony grumbled, "That can't be good." as he started back to where he first met Rave. He did not even stop to ask for permission; he walked on towards the monitor room.

The monitor room's blast shutter was still down, but the display panel told him that the door shutter wasn't sealed. Before he could open it, it opened, revealing the busty purple-haired captain of the ship. She was wearing a tight, shiny blue suit of some sort that covered her whole body without really hiding any of it. She looked up at him; Yuuko was one of the shortest NH-17 nekos he'd ever seen.

Anthony stared straight into Yuuko's eyes. Something told him this was the captain. He wasn't sure how to greet her, so he simply said, "Captain, Anthony DiCicco reporting for duties."

Yuuko nodded, moving around him. As soon as she was out of the doorway, the door to the monitor room shut, moving fast enough to probably cut someone in half. That was one dangerous door. The Juni started towards the bridge, "Do you need something?" she asked while she walked.

Anthony felt a little anger... He was the one told to report here. He caught up with Yuuko and, trying to keep his voice steady, said, "Yea, I would like to know what my assignment is..."

The whole ship again seemed to shake and wobble violently and ship's interior lights went out once more; this time the lights on the ceiling exploded in a shower of sparks. A long, high-pitched wail echoed through the hall, and the air suddenly smelt like rotting meat. This time, the lights didn't come back on automatically. Yuuko seemed to disappear.

Anthony pulled out his gun, now part of his instincts, but dropped it as he fell to the ground. Sparks covered him from the exploded lights, as a putrid smell seemed to find a home in his nose. He picked up his gun, and searched all around for Yuuko.

There was another shake and then a hissing as the ship's emergency shutters closed again. Rave's voice said, "A minor anomaly in the combined distortion field was detected. Although the ship has taken no damage, the ship's emergency shutters were sealed as a precautionary measure." Red emergency lights came on in the hallway, and he could see what looked like a slimy, skinless creature standing over Yuuko's body for a fraction of a second. There was a flicker, and it was gone, leaving Yuuko on the floor, a bit of drool coming out of her mouth as she stared up at the ceiling.

Anthony shook his head when Rave's voice came on, glad to hear that there was no damage to the ship, until he noticed some slimy beast hanging over Yuuko. As he started moving his gun to aim, the lights flickered and the beast was gone. He ran over to Yuuko and started to pick her up off the floor as he said, "Captain? Captain?!?"

"Unnnnh," Yuuko moaned, shaking her head as she drifted back into consciousness. "I must have...hit my head pretty hard, she groaned, slowly standing up. She looked up at the lightning systems. "I've never seen this happen before," she said, sounding confused. She looked at Anthony's face in the red light as she called for the ship. "Rave?"

"What's up, Yuuko?" Rave giggled.

Anthony shook his head and said, " That's not the only weird thing... I could have sworn there was some kind of beast looming over you..." Anthony thought to himself, "That wasn't my imagination or because I hit my head... That thing was there. If she thinks it was just because I fell, then I will have to look into it myself... Maybe I can get a promotion out of finding out who's doing this and who sent that thing."

"Creepy," Yuuko cooed, a disturbed look on her face. Replying to Rave, she asked, "Is the ship okay? What happened?"

"An unidentified force was detected in contact with the combined field for a short period of time. During this time, the ship's nodal system became unstable," Rave explained. "The system has returned to normal operation and the lighting will be restored in a moment, Yuuko."

Anthony just shook his head and said, " This is twice this has happened on the ship... I am starting to think something wrong, especially if one was the first time it had happened." Anthony shook his head, trying to clear his mind of all the little bits of information that his mind was trying to add up into some case that needed a detective's solving.

"Please override the monitor room's locking system momentarily and unlock all the blast shutters, Rave." Yuuko asked the ship, "Let's get to the bridge."

Anthony only nodded to Yuuko, and followed her to the bridge. He couldn't clear his mind. His thoughts continued drifting to adding up clues and trying to solve something that was just part of his imagination.

Tyr was behind them, having gone through the shuttlebay to make sure nothing had gotten in; and was on his way to the monitoring room when he caught sight of Anthony and Yuuko and picked up the pace to quickly catch up. "Hey, I miss anything?" He asked, once he'd caught up.

Yuuko quietly muttered, "Something isn't right," taking a seat in the captain's chair. "We need to figure out what's causing these disturbances."

Anthony didn't even turn to Tyriel, as he said, " Just the same ship shaking, nothing serious..." His mind still drifted, and he had a feeling something just wasn't right. He tried to shake the feeling, and waited for Yuuko to find out what was going on.

"Yeah, right. A ship like this does not shake unless something hit it or interacted with it somehow." The Elysian growled, half annoyed. And filed into the bridge behind Anthony and looked at Yuuko; "You feeling ok? You don't look well." he asked, concerned.

"I just hit my head...or something," Yuuko said. "Tyriel's right. The shaking is certainly out of the ordinary." She ran her hand through her fluffy purple hair, looking over the quiet bridge and the crew gathered within it.

Anthony only shook his head and said, "Since I've been on here, it's happened frequently..." He became uneasy as his mind continued to go back to the thing he saw, and trying to think back to when he was in school, if he had seen it in one of his textbooks or something.

Concerned, Tyriel gently touched Yuuko's head, running his fingertips in her hair, feeling for bruises or slightly-warmer-than usual spots to indicate head injury. He knew nekos healed quickly but there should still be a little centered warmth were it healed. He blushed passingly as he did, and couldn't help thinking out soft her hair was. He looked at Anthony out of the corner of his eyes. "Did something happen you're hiding from me per se?" he asked. "We have to know everything that happened."

Yuuko shook her head, "No, I don't know what it might be," she started, but then stopped suddenly. Tyriel's fingers ran straight into a small crowd of slime-covered creatures that looked like obese caterpillars squirming around and biting into Yuuko's scalp. They hadn't been there a second ago! Yuuko started screaming her head off, clawing and swatting at them until they were littering the floor. There was about a dozen of them, and they were absolutely disgusting.

Anthony's train of thought was stopped by Tyriel's question. He was about to respond when Yuuko was clawing at her hair. Anthony raised an eyebrow and didn't say anything. He walked over to one of the slimy creatures and picked it up. Anthony said, "I think we might want to examine these things a little more closely. They are just as slimy as the thing-" He didn't finish the sentence, as he started thinking again.

The creature bit a small chunk of meat off of Anthony's index finger.

Tyriel quickly withdrew his hand and jumped back a step and had his pistol out in one motion and fired a couple well-aimed shots at the things. "Rave!" he said to the computer, hit with an idea. "Can you establish a force field around these things?" he asked, being careful to avoid touching them. Rave said, "no."

Yuuko had her NSP out in a flash, and began firing on the things too. Without warning an invisible force struck the Ongaku again, throwing everyone onto the floor, and causing the overhead lights to explode in small bursts of white flame. Screaming and laughing noises echoed in the dark and a thick odor of mucus and pus suddenly began to fill the air.

Rave's voice said, "A minor anomaly in the combined field system was detected. Although the ship has taken no damage, the ship's emergency shutters were sealed as a precautionary measure. Additionally, malfunctions have occurred the ships' Hemosynthetic Conduit System."

Anthony shook his finger as the bug came off, with a small portion of his finger to. Anthony examined the finger, about to get something to wrap it in, when the ship shook again. Anthony was sent sprawling on the floor, and the lights blew into small flames. Rave's voice came on again, and Anthony just ignored it. He got on one knee and took out his gun, staying still as he closed his eyes and strained his ears to hear something peculiar.

In a smooth motion, to avoid being thrown to the floor, Tyriel pulled into a tight roll and sprung back up onto his feet, listening carefully. His gun at the ready; "Rave. What was that noise, and what's the source of this odor?" He demanded to know of the computer. "Something is very wrong here," he muttered. "Is there a backlighting system?"

"The odor seems to be coming," Rave answered, "from the environmental system. I'm having some difficulty. The HSCS is not responding properly to my commands and thus filtering is currently impossible. I did not hear any noise." Meanwhile, the ship's red emergency lights came on. The soft glow from the control panels, it was enough for them to see that the walls of the ship were dripping with something clear and wet. Rave went on, "There is an unidentified life-form in the kitchen."

Yuuko frowned, "The HSCS has a large outlet in the kitchen."

Anthony gave up. He wouldn't be able to hear anything with all the noise. He stood up, his eyes noticing the clear stuff on the walls. He looked at his finger again as he applied pressure. While he did this he said, "Great...just what we need. Some kind of an intruder."

Tyriel's expression went dead serious as he moved tactically closer to Yuuko and Anthony. "You two ok?" he asked. "Rave, can you contain it in there and shut off the HSCS system to the kitchen?" he asked her. "Whatever it is, it may be in that system and using it to move around the ship without being detected." He said, his whole body tense and ready for anything.

"I have disabled the HSCS system," Rave replied. The computer obviously agreed the system was doing more harm than good at the moment. "I myself am experiencing some errors, however. I'm currently working on self-repair."

"That's not enough," Yuuko said, wrinkling her nose at the stench. "I think we need to get in spacesuits."

Anthony continued to apply pressure to his wound, as he said, "I feel fine, but I don't like getting bitten by creatures I know nothing about." He thought to himself, "Great... Even

the computer is having problems..." His eyes suddenly darted to the floor, looking for those creatures. They might be an important clue.

By now, it seemed like the entire floor was moving in the red light. He could see more and more falling out of the ventilation ducts.

"Rave, can you somehow capture a couple of these things?" Tyriel asked, blasting a couple more of them with well-placed shots. "I agree Yuuko, let's get a spacesuit on each," he said, "and quickly," the Elysian said, popping a couple near her.

Yuuko kicked and shook more of the death-caterpillars off of her boots. They were covering the entire bridge floor; Tyriel couldn't miss. "We've got to get out of here!" she yelled, her voice sounding panicked. She ran across them and toward the door.

Anthony noticed the ground filled with the things. Anthony shook some off and ran after Yuuko, the bugs crushing underfoot.

Tyriel nodded and ran after the two. He caught up to Yuuko, "Yuuko-Juni, you must calm down." He said.

Yuuko slammed into the door, causing her lip to bleed. The little slimy things started trying to crawl up her legs. Yuuko was Hysterical. "RAVE! OPEN THE FUCKING DOOR!!!" she screamed. The door unlocked but Yuuko had to use her Nekoalkyrja strength to pull both side open. On the other side, the flat face of a blast shutter waited. "UNLOCK THE SHUTTERS!!!" Yuuko had tears in her eyes and she reached for the control panel and opened it, stumbling out into the hallway.

Anthony ran after Yuuko, and said, "Calm down, everything will be fine... Take a deep breath and pull yourself together. We need your leadership, and we need you to be strong right now."

Tyriel growled and rapidly shot a few shots at the 'pillars and exited the room and prayed the door and shutter would seal the bridge for now. He kicked his legs one at a time flinging the things back into the room, and then rushed to catch up to the others. "He's right Yuuko, our lives depend on you right now. Please, calm down, we're still here for you."

Yuuko shut the emergency shutter as soon as Tyriel was through. It slammed down lethally fast behind him. Immediately, Yuuko brushed the things off and shot them one by one, until there was none left except on the other side of the door to the bridge. They were on the left side of the ship, in the passageway. For some reason, it was full of mist and fog, and was very cold. They couldn't see anything more than 3 meters away. Her legs were covered in bloody bite marks.

Anthony squinted, trying to see through the fog. Anthony said, "I don't know which was worse, the bugs or this." Anthony strained his whole body, as he slowly moved closer to Yuuko. He thought of a million different ambushes that could occur in the fog.

Tyriel was ready for anything, having been in similar situations before; he kept a sharp look out for anything moving in the mist after brushing off a caterpillar or two off his pants and shooting them, finishing that quickly. "Just stay cool. The mist or fog can provide hints to movement too," he said to Anthony. "Yuuko, please lead the way, we should first find a room that's clean of those things and secure it as a place to gather our wits." Tyr said, still being watchful.

Anthony began to feel a stinging where he'd been bit, and a dizziness in his head. It seemed like the ship was rocking forward and back. His sense of balance didn't seem to be working very well. Yuuko, too, had been bitten (but many more times) and was starting to look out of it. She was grabbing at something that they couldn't see and started laughing uncontrollably, stumbling around the hall towards the front of the ship.

Then, Anthony stumbled backwards; everything seemed a lot more hazy, and not because of the mist. Anthony took a deep breath and said, "Something isn't right..." He ignored Yuuko's laughing, as it seemed a part of his imagination. He collapsed to one knee, breathing heavily and shaking his head.

"Keep yourself together." Tyriel snapped at him. "Rave, what's wrong with Yuuko?" he asked the ship, hoping for an answer. Mentally he bit his lip and wished they hadn't come out here alone; he knew it was a death sentence. "Yuuko!" he shouted at her. He knew it was a fool's move, but he couldn't let her come to harm and rushed to Yuuko and tried to take a hold of her arm and pull her back to where Anthony was. "Rave, are there any friendly ships within close range?" he asked as he did.

Yuuko threw Tyriel off of her, and carelessly leaned against the wall as she opened the blast shutter, her pistol in hand. "Unnnnngh," she moaned, falling onto her side by the entrance to the shuttlebay. "Ehehehehehehe!" she giggled insanely.

Anthony put his pistol away as he stood up on shaky knees. Anthony breathed, "We overlooked something..." He shook his head trying to think. His eyes fell on his finger, but couldn't think clearly enough to put anything together.

Tyriel didn't want to give up on Yuuko and tried again, "Hey! Yuuko, snap out of it! Please." He said and turned to Anthony. "How are you holding up?" he asked urgently. "If you're up to it GIMME A HAND...wait, overlooked something? What do you think it is?"

Yuuko, thinking he was some sort of alien monster, tried to shoot Tyriel. The badly aimed NSP put a 5-inch-wide smoking hole in one of Tyriel's wings. "Stay back!" she laughed, tears running down her cheeks. The air began to get that nasty odor in this

section of the ship, too, now. Deep in the fog, Yuuko then crawled along the ground, into the shuttlebay.

Anthony snapped back from his hazy phase, and said with urgency, "The bites... The damned bites..." Anthony noticed the hole in his wings, and tried to stop Yuuko, stumbling after her and trying to drag her back to Tyriel.

Tyriel grunted. "Yuuko! It's me Chui Tyriel!" he said and took a risk and grabbed her by the leg to drag her back into the hallway. At least the wound was automatically cauterized by the shot; "deep inside I know the sweet cute Yuuko is still inside you," he said to Yuuko, dragging the lightweight neko back toward the hall. "Can't you smell that nasty smell?"

"What...the...hell?" Yuuko said, in her dreamy haze, taking two more shots at the blurry thing grabbing her through the fog. It was hard for her to remember where exactly she was going now. What was she doing? It didn't occur to her that she'd just shot Tyriel again. This time, she'd blown his grabbing arm entirely off, and burnt off the front of his left knee. The smell of burning flesh contributed to the horrible stench again. Some of the larva-like creatures were starting to hang from the ventilation system.

Anthony stumbled back from the shooting, and took his own gun out. He took a deep breath as he was starting to get sweaty. Anthony doubted if this would help, but, trying to lure her out of her haze, said, "Yuuko who do you work for? The Star Army of Yamatai? Are you not the captain of this ship? Why do you fire upon your own crew?"

"AAEEIIH!" Tyriel cried in pain. "Yuuko... you have to snap out of it! You're the captain of this ship and you're hurting your own officer!" he shouted at her, using his other hand to shoot the larva-like creatures. "Please...snap out of it," he said, starting to tear up in pain. It was hard for him to stand, excruciatingly painful but he would defend his captain until he died if need be. "Yuuko, please..."

Yuuko grunted animalistically and crawled towards the back of one of the shuttles. In the back of her mind she was fighting the insanity, holding on to one thought alone: she had to get to the medical kit inside the shuttle.

Anthony now realized the creatures now were coming in this room to, and blasted the ones he saw near him. Anthony stated, "She is delusional and armed... We might need to knock her out if need be, and carry her to safety. We need to be in a secure area and work from there..."

Tyriel tried to stay close to her as she went for the shuttle. "Yuuko fight it! You can do it. I believe in you, since the beginning." he said, popping a few more maggots. "Hey," He said to Anthony. "Keep talking, I know she can hear you and knows us both," he said running on adrenaline.

Crawling inside the door to the shuttle, Yuuko ungracefully rummaged through the emergency supplies under the side seats, and pulled out a white square box with a red cross on it. It fell open on the floor, and she rummaged through it looking for something, stopping for a moment to vomit up blood on the floor nearby.

Anthony jumped back from the blood-vomit and said, "Yuuko... Yuuko, we need you. The ship is going down... You know what ship we are on? The one you're the captain of? Can you hear me?"

Tyriel fired at more of the maggots, nearly out of shots; thankfully he had one extra battery for the GP-13, not wanting to use his GP-12 in such tight quarters. His body was quickly growing weak from the wounds; and was starting to have trouble standing and stumbled back and leaned on the side of the shuttle.

Yuuko took one of the pills from a purple box and swallowed it. Within seconds, she looked better. "Unngh," she said, "The...poison...is a combination..." she started, but was unable to finish. "Shuttle safe."

Anthony walked around the vomit, taking a pill and examining it before swallowing. He felt instantly relieved, his thoughts unclouded. Now that he was out of the haze, he spun around quickly, straining to see any movement in the fog.

Something in the fog out there growled like a dog.

"Let's get into the shuttle then," Tyriel said and took one, it would take more time for his wounds to heal as her shots had burnt them. He pointed his GP-13 in the direction of the sound and turned to Anthony and Yuuko. And went into the shuttle and sat in a seat. "Ungh!" he grunted at the pain in his leg.

"That's bad stuff," Yuuko said, looking at the marks in her legs. "Doesn't this ship have the nodal system, like Yamatai?" she asked. The aftereffects of the creature's poison made her sound exhausted. "These things have to have been made to kill even Nekovalkyrja...something must be controlling the system...from outside."

Anthony has his gun ready, following Tyriel. Anthony said, "I am not thinking that far yet... There's got to be a way to keep them off the ship, then we wouldn't have to worry about reinforcements."

Tyriel sighed as the rear door shut securely, keeping them safe inside. "What could engineer such a thing? PNUgen? WickedArms? The government themselves?" he asked her curiously. "And don't worry about my wounds, but I need to talk to you in private after this is over alright?"

Yuuko gave him an odd look, but nodded. "We need to get in spacesuits and decompress the ship to get the nodal system out of here. It's making these things and with the HSCS disabled, it won't be able to regenerate."

Anthony nodded in agreement. He wasn't focused on the conversation. His mind wandered to everything that had happened. He didn't believe this was just a random attack, and he'd be a fool to do so. The things would be easier to handle if they were just dumb brutes, but they seemed to have a strategy, forcing them to run. He was trying to work out a way to eliminate them all that wouldn't cause damage to the ship.

"If that's all can do, let's do it," he said, as his burns started to slowly heal. "After we do that, will we be able to escape back to friendly space?" he asked Yuuko.

"I suppose," Yuuko said. "Hmm...this shuttle can be our safe place. We'll have to open all the blast shutters and doors."

Anthony, tuning back into the conversation, nodded. He checked his gun, and waited.

"Is there any way to do that quickly?" Tyriel asked. "Going through the ship opening all the doors could be dangerous and would take time we don't really have," he said clearly in a thoughtful tone.

Yuuko let out a sigh, "It's what we have to do, unless you just want to abandon the ship."

Anthony quickly said, "No... No, we are in enemy territory. I'd rather take my chances with time here." Anthony loosened up his muscles and got ready to move out.

Tyr nodded. "I understand," he said. "Let's stick together when we go out, and bring some of those pills too," he suggested. "But I need to let my arm regrow and my burns to heal." Tyriel said, shivering a bit as the bone, muscle and other things healed.

The captain took a scalpel out of the MedKit and cut into her arm, letting the blood run out. She started smearing it on his arm while cutting away the burned parts with the scalpel. "There's some pain medication in the kit, too," she commented, so Anthony could give Tyr a shot of it.

Anthony took the hint, as he took out the pain medication and started to apply it to the body, and said, "So, can we get better equipped somewhere?"

Tyriel winced in pain then mellowed at the painkiller. "Thank you guys...." He said. "And good to see you're back to your sweet self again Yuuko." he smiled; the injection had made him lightheaded for a moment.

"We could try to get back to the Armory, but we'll have to go through that foggy section again." Yuuko said. "I think we should try to do this as quickly as possible."

Anthony shook his head no, and said, "No... I don't think that's a good idea... I was just hoping it would be somewhere that we are heading to. I agree, lets move out..."

Once Tyr's arm was regrown and the wounds healed, he stretched the new arm and flexed it a couple times. He took the moment to drop the used up battery out of his gun and replaced it with his single fresh one. "Yuuko, what did that poison do to you? I'd like to know incase it happens again, but hopefully was can get full body flak armor in the armory." He said.

"I couldn't seem to think straight," Yuuko answered.

Anthony said, "The more times they bite you, the more serious the effect... I was only dizzy... Let's try to avoid that again, shall we?"

"Yeah..." The dark angel said and moved up to sit in the pilot's seat and attempted to see if he could pull up a ship map of the Ongaku for reference. "I'll say you didn't. Well if we can get a hold of some armor or something we can keep the buggers out. But we should try and keep one or two for study." He said.

The shuttle's onboard computer failed to connect with Rave and so the shuttle displayed a generic map of the Type 6A variant of the Type 27 Nekovalkyrja Scout on the screen. It was accurate. Yuuko nodded, "Yeah, if I had my Mindy I could open the doors, no problem."

Anthony nodded and said, "Yea... But if we are going to catch the maggots we are going to need gloves." Anthony then turned to Yuuko and said, "Then we need to get your Mindy... But how?"

Tyriel called their attention the map for a bird's eye view of the ship. "Alright we're about here," he pointed to the shuttle bay. "The quickest route is through this hallway to the Mindy Bay." He traced a finger along the hall on the map to the bay. "Is that where your Mindy is Yuuko?" Tyr asked.

"Yes, but..." Yuuko cast her eyes downward, "I'd rather avoid that hallway. I imagine the creatures have covered it by now."

Anthony in deep thought responded, "I'd rather take the safest route possible. Do we know if any other way there has creatures in them?"

Tyriel looked back at Yuuko after studying the map and got up and sat next to her, putting a hand on her shoulder comfortingly. "Don't be so discouraged Yuuko. There is always a way to solve a problem, you just have to look for it. And I have a revelation. Aren't both the shuttle bay and the Mindy bay open to space?" he asked her, squeezing her shoulder lightly, "Couldn't we use this very shuttle and spacesuits and transport ourselves or you are least over there?" He smiled to her.

"The other hallway passes by the kitchen," Yuuko remarked. "We probably should use the shuttle. My only concern is that the computer is having trouble and I wouldn't want the shuttle to be attacked out of reflex. So, who's going to go on the shuttle, then? Besides

me, of course." She gave them both a smile and climbed forward into the pilot seat of the craft and started bringing it to life.

Anthony contemplated what Yuuko had said for a few seconds, then said with a smile of his own, "I'll go with you. What kind of a soldier would I be if I didn't?"

Tyriel stood beside Yuuko and took the co-pilot's seat. "I can pilot us over there, Yuuko; we need you to jump out the back into the bay and get into your armor, we'll get back here and meet you at the Mindy bay or we can get the suits on and jump with you." He smiled at her warmly. For the first time in years, he genuinely wanted to help someone other than himself for non-selfish reason and it felt good despite the danger.

"Now, Tyriel...remember that's jumping through space. You could get in a spacesuit and try it, but it's quite dangerous. I was thinking you could return the shuttle to the bay after I make the jump, and then I'd meet you two there," the Juni explained, leaning back in the pilot's seat and running her hands through her hair. She would be so glad to have her armor; more than anything she felt the need for its protection at this point.

Anthony nodded and said, "Fine... Are we all ready then?" He couldn't stop himself from thinking what had created those things in the first place.

Yuuko nodded and got out of the pilot's seat, moving to the rear of the shuttle, "Do you think I should put on a spacesuit?" she asked, shutting the rear hatch. If she put one on, it would be easier for her, but would take longer for her to get out of the suit and then into the armor. If not, she would go through space and then get immediately to work undoing the straps that held the Mindy to the bay wall.

Tyriel waited until Yuuko was in position near the rear door. "Are we ready?" he asked them one strapped in. "and Yuuko, it's your choice." He said ready to go at anytime.

Anthony said, "Like he said, that's up to you... I'd think taking the suit would be better choice."

Tyr thought he was feeling rushed and had to calm down or they'd lose something. "Yuuko, use the suit...please. It's slower but it's safer for you." He said.

"I'm ready. Fly the thing already," Yuuko said impatiently. She was still undecided about the suit, but when the both suggested it she grabbed one and started putting it on. The standard Star Army spacesuit was a white garment that was made of artificial fibers and had a plastic ring around the neck for attaching a helmet. The gloves on the suit's hands were a little big for her, since she was a shorter Nekovalkyrja than most.

Anthony, in deep thought, said, "What about the other crew members?" It seemed to him that everyone had forgotten about the others. His mind was occupied with too many thoughts. Something seemed to be missing.

"Well we'd better hurry then." Tyriel said and pulled them out of the ship and flew them over to the Mindy Launch Bay, staying as close to the ship as possible along with the stealth function of the shuttle and pulled into position. He got as close as he could to the bay without hitting the ship itself.

As Tyriel moved the shuttle through space and backed it towards Ongaku, he could see the giant blue planet the ship was orbiting hanging above them, and had a clear view of the twinkling stars that dotted the black sky, including Nepleslia. Suddenly, a flash of white light sparked nearby; something had just come out of faster-than-light travel. "I'll see if I can find them once I get my Mindy on. We'll have to visit every part of the ship to open the blast shutters anyway," Yuuko told Anthony.

Anthony sighed with relief and said, "Good... Hopefully they are ok..." He seemed to stun to speak. He didn't know what he just saw, but it looked like a spark in space. His jaw just seemed to drop by itself, as he stood there.

"Hopefully they're ok." Tyr said. "Alright Yuuko. We're as close as we can get." He said, reading the sensors on the panel. "Once you jump over, we'll get back as quick as we can and make our way over." He said.

"You two get into the front section of the shuttle and shut the door," Yuuko ordered, then put her helmet on and picked up her NSP.

Kado sighed as he sat on the shuttle's bench, tired of being delayed and not on the ship yet. "How far are we Rave? Are we close enough to the ship yet?" He started to fumble through his stuff, even though it was all there, it was beginning to be a habit.

The YSS Rave's computer responded through her shuttle (that Kado was on), "You should be in landing range now. YSS Ongaku is not responding, however."

Anthony nodded to Yuuko, blinking his eyes and pretending not to see anything. He walked towards the front section of the shuttle, so when Yuuko jumped he would be ready to shut the door.

"Shut the damn door so we can depressurize the rear part of the shuttle," Yuuko frowned at Anthony, her voice sounding distorted by the spacesuit's speaker system. She paced the small passenger section anxiously.

"Not responding? What's going on there?" Kado leapt from his seat and tried to make out anything in the view port. "Nothing out there, except the ship..." He thumbed his pistol at his side. "Can you patch me through to any one?" he asked as he sat back down.

"Hurry and do it and stop gawking at the stars Anthony!" Tyriel almost snarled at him. He wanted to get whatever was in their ship out soon.

Anthony shut the door, shaking his head. He wasn't thinking quite clearly. His thoughts drifted back to that thing looming over Yuuko. He had tried to convince himself it was never there, but he knew it was. The creatures had to be affiliated with that thing.

Yuuko hit a few buttons on a control panel and the airlock system in the shuttle started to cycle, lowering the air pressure inside the rear of the shuttle. She continued to pace in the passenger section as the air in it was drained away. The process took about thirty seconds. When she was done, deactivated the shuttle's interior gravity system, opened the rear door of the shuttle, and got up against the rear door of the shuttle, preparing to jump for the Mindy bay.

"Uh, Rave, I think we should slow down some...we haven't asked for them to open the doors." He gripped the sides of the bench out of his tension. "I really think we need to slow down some." Kado never liked space travel in the first place, he would have to get used to it at some point.

"Please be careful Yuuko..." Tyriel thought, he didn't know what he'd do if she got killed, probably respawn her if he could.

"Those are not doors," YSS Rave responded to Kado. "The Type 27 Nekovalkyrja Scout Ship uses rapid launch bays, in which the pressurization is sustained through a forcefield system. I can land you on the ship, as there is one open spot. I can see a shuttle near the rear of the ship, too. I will put you in contact with that shuttle. Shall I land your shuttle in the bay?" YSS Rave opened a channel between the two shuttles. Meanwhile, Yuuko jumped and floated across the void for a moment, rolling and falling against the floor of the Mindy bay as the YSS Ongaku's artificial gravity caught her.

Kado, now feeling very stupid of not realizing this, replied back, "Take us in Rave, I'll go check on the other shuttle." He felt more relieved as he saw the shuttle come into view. "This is...Kado Jomei, is any one there?" Again he felt stupid, because he barely knew what to say at the moment.

"Kado, hold off, we have to return to the shuttle bay." Tyriel replied. "Our ship is under internal attack by an unknown force. Please do not transport personnel over via the shuttle bay. Use the docking port on the other side of the ship, but beware, there is an unknown force aboard, if you are coming aboard be armored and armed." He said and piloted them back toward the shuttle bay after he closed the rear door and repressurized the shuttle.

Anthony, thinking hard about something, said, "When I meet with Yuuko and the lights went out, I saw something. It stood above Yuuko's body... As far as I knew it didn't do anything harmful, and it seemed to disappear... Then Yuuko had those things in her hair, and I am starting to think that thing caused it."

Yuuko stood up as quick as she could, struggling with her bulky suit and looking around, pistol in hand. The first thing that caught her eye was that one of the blast shutters that

covered the door to the ship's interior was already open. No signs of life could be seen however. She backed towards the mostly-empty wall where the Mindy Power Armors were strapped in, and then put her pistol on her armor's shoulder and started removing the restraining harness.

Kado cursed at himself and shook his head. "Roger that, I'll meet up in the bay If I get a chance." He turned around and cursed again. He had the weapons, but not the armor. "Rave, where is the armory on the ship? I'm planning on borrowing some things." He picked up his rifle and checked it to make sure it worked.

"The Ongaku's Armory is located near the shuttlebay on the port side of the ship's main deck," YSS Rave answered.

Tyriel landed in the shuttle bay in a few moments and unstrapped himself and stood up quickly. "Come on, let's go. Grab the medkit just in case." He instructed firmly. "Oh and tuck your pants into your boot and tie your sleeves around your wrists to prevent them from crawling under them." he said, showing his secured sleeves and grabbed his weapons up.

Anthony nodded, as he tucked in his pants and tied his sleeves. He grabbed the medkit and took out his pistol with his other hand. Anthony, double-checking he was good, said, "Ready..."

"You have got to be kidding me!" He started to head out the door, and stopped. "Rave, close the door when I get out, we don't need them getting into the shuttles now." He stepped out of the shuttle checking the area. Nothing moved around him, or in front of him.

Yuuko could hear her own breathing inside the helmet as she loosened the straps of the Mindy, which held itself up against the wall by its hands and leaned forward, ready to open at her mental command; its movement cause her pistol to fall off its shoulder and onto the floor by Yuuko's feet. She ignored the weapon, since she knew the guns were very tough, and reached her fingers up to the seal that held her helmet on, fumbling with it trying to get it loose. It wasn't easy with the gloves of the spacesuit on.

Tyriel opened the rear door leading the way with his pistol at the ready, he stayed on high alert mode and looked around and slowly made his way to the door to the hall. "Time for action." He said. It could possibly be a race against time here to reunite with Yuuko and he wanted to waste none.

Anthony followed Tyriel, covering Tyriel to make sure nothing lurked up from behind.

Tyriel and Anthony found themselves in the foggy hallway again. The caterpillars were gone, but the sickening odor and fog remained. They could feel some sort of force pushing them down towards the slime-covered carpet that was reminiscent of the urge to sleep, but very unnatural.

All alone and unheard by her crewmates, Yuuko let sudden out a shriek of pain that quickly turned into a bloody gurgle as her space suit and body were penetrated by a fast jab by something behind her. The space suit covered her skin she so couldn't see what it was, only the thick, meter-long knife-like red spike sticking out of her chest as the thing lifted her off of the floor entirely, leaving the floor like a blank canvas that her blood began to paint with its drops and splatters.

Kado started to slink along the wall. He looked back at the door he entered. "No turning back now..." He came to a corner and peeked around. Nothing was there, just more silence. "I have a very bad feeling..." He proceeded down the corridor not looking back.

Tyriel felt heavy as the sleep compulsion hit he and Anthony, his arms drooped for a moment before he used his thumb to slice a stinging surface wound into his finger. He knew that the pain of the stinging would keep his mind alert and resist the sleep. His arms came back up leading the way with his pistol as they headed into the hallway toward the Mindy bay quickly.

A large gray blast shutter blocked the hallway. The control panel on it read in softly glowing sky blue text, "LOCKING SYSTEM DISENGAGED." Around their feet, cold, wet fog swirled, hiding the ground and anything that might be on it.

Anthony watched Tyriel cut his finger to keep himself awake, and suddenly became aware of how tired he was. He poked jammed his hurt thumb into his leg to reawaken some pain on the sore thumb. Just then fog swirled around them, and Anthony pressed his back against Tyriel's and said, "Great... Just what we need. We better move fast."

Kado again saw another bend in the corridor. "Man, does it ever end?" He peeked around, again nothing. Kado was starting to get fed up with this maze of halls.

Tyriel nodded and went to the blast shutter and opened it quickly and moved through with Anthony at his back, for the plan to work, he'd have to leave the shutter open and continued toward the bay in a cautious but still brisk pace his weapon at the ready.

Kado could see the door to the ship's bridge in front of him, or at least what would have been the door if a blast shutter hadn't been covering it. The lock appeared to be disengaged. Meanwhile, on the other side of the small ship, Tyriel entered the stretch of passageway that included the hall to the monitor room, the Mindy bay, and the escape pods. A blast shutter didn't cover the door to the Mindy bay.

Anthony kept up with Tyriel the whole time, it felt like he was leaning on Tyriel while they moved towards the bay. Anthony gripped his gun as they entered the passageway to the bay. The door was opened. Anthony looked over his shoulder at Tyriel and said, "There it is... Yuuko must be waiting for us."

Kado checked his sectors as he headed towards the bridge. Nothing above or below. "So far so good..." He made a dash for the bridge. His mind raced with images of failure, which drove him to move more.

Tyriel stopped for a moment seeing the shutter open. They hadn't opened it, and Yuuko wasn't in sight; he was sure she'd wait for them there if she were in the Mindy. Feeling that bad feeling that is associated with trouble; he unslung the GP-12 off his back and hurried for the door and let it hang off his shoulder loosely still in safety mode and tried to pry it open, knowing the computer was kind of messed up right now.

The blast shutter opened for Kado when he reached it and touched it, revealing the double doors that lead to the bridge. They didn't open automatically, however. The ship's lights were out except for a spooky red backup lighting system. Surprisingly enough the door that Tyriel was in front of did open automatically. Unfortunately the blast shutter was down on the other side and he practically ran straight into it in his hurry. The panel said the shutter's locks were disengaged.

Anthony focused on the hallway; only glancing behind him to see the blast shutter was down, despite the fact its locks were disengaged. Anthony didn't say anything, his focus on the hallway. Something was wrong, and he'd be damned if he let something sneak up on them.

"I seeeee yoooouu...." a deep, grainy voice whispered, as the ship rumbled beneath their feet.

Kado started to head into the area, trying to make out what is what in the dim red light. He checked around, and there was still nothing he could see..."Again...I don't like this..." Tyriel held the weapon pointing through the shutter using the strap to steady it as he opened the door to the bay and lead the way in both hands on the rifle ready for action. The whisper only served to steel his resolve to put whatever was on the ship down for good.

Anthony gritted his teeth when he heard the whisper. His eyes darted across the hallway as he backed up into the room behind Tyriel.

"I cannn...seeee...your...souls..." the voice called out to the crew; it then started to laugh at them. The most sick, horrible, demented, and deep laugh they'd ever heard, so loud in their minds that it made it almost impossible to think. When Tyriel opened the door, he got a glimpse of a giant black and red writhing mass of slimy tentacles. Before he could fire, it was gone. Yuuko's Mindy hung from the wall, its straps undone, and her pistol lay on the ground in an enormous pool of blood that extended in a smear that led to the forcefield that held in the air in the bay. He could see small three-fingered handprints in the blood; there'd been a struggle.

Kado ended up getting into the bridge and emerged on the other side near Anthony. "Shit, who the hell was that?" Kado jerked around to find Anthony and Tyriel entering the room

where the puddle of blood was. "Hey, friend or foe?" You can never be too careful, he thought to himself. He held his weapon at the ready, already beading his targets.

Tyriel froze and looked down with his eyes for a moment his weapon trembling as his sorrow, rage, and anger swelled within him. "How.... how could this happen?" He asked himself as he looked at the blood. Ignoring Kado, he went over to it and began to search for any other clues. ~Yuuko...please...don't be dead.....please.....~He thought as he reached down and retrieved her pistol. This was going too far for his taste; he wanted this monkey's ass game over and soon. He could never forgive himself if he failed the one person he cared about again. "We're friends." He answered Kado. He stood up and looked around the room, figuring whatever hurt Yuuko would have her blood on it and that's what he kept an eye out for.

And what should appear outside the opening to space but a jet-black Mindy M2 power armor. The armor raised its rifle at Tyriel!

Tyriel snapped to attention when he saw it. "Lower your weapon." He said. "And state your business." he said trying to remain cool.

Anthony shook, not knowing what emotion caused it, but wasn't blinded by his sorrow. He felt a need to just hit something, when he saw a Mindy appear, raising it's rifle at Tyriel. Anthony would let Tyriel handle it, as he kept an eye on the hallway.

The assassin vaporized Tyriel and anything in a straight line behind him as it fired its aether beam rifle...or she would have, but the black Mindy accidentally bumped into something invisible that was hanging outside the bay. The white beam shot into the ship's interior, cutting a line in the walls and starting fires. The Mindy turned and fired a second shot at whatever it was hiding outside the bay.

"Fuck it, sir! I don't think it's going to want to talk!" From behind, Kado opened fire upon the black Mindy, aiming at its less vital points in hope of neutralizing it, and keeping it alive.

The Mindy was seemly impervious to Kado's shots, and it turned very quickly to aim at him and fire a rough shot that was so close that Kado's hair burst into flames as the beam melted right through the ceiling overhead, causing the bay to start to lose air into space. "I'm in the kitch..." Yuuko's voice called out telepathically, desperately, before it was silenced.

Tyriel heard that and immediately ran for it leading with his weapon. "To the kitchen NOW men!" He ordered as he rushed out the door yanking Anthony with him and ran for the kitchen.

Anthony was yanked out of the door, and stumbled as he regained his footing. He grabbed Kado by the arm and tossed him out, and shut the blast shutter. He then took off after Tyriel

"AH! Crap!" Kado regained what was left and tried to remember what just happened. "Son of a bitch..." since he didn't realize the blast shutter wasn't locked, Kado started to head in the other direction. "Damn it..." He reloaded a fresh battery and dashed down the corridor.

The black Mindy backed away and darted into the second Mindy bay, opening the blast shutter with a finger tap and easily sliced through the door with its rifle. They could hear the hissing and popping of metal in the ship as the beam cut into it. The armor nearly reached the kitchen first, but when Tyriel got to the kitchen, he could see a giant mass of black and red tentacles fighting off the Mindy and winning. It seemed distracted enough to get by.

Tyriel quickly assessed the situation, and figured to fight would be stupid and thought for a moment and realized he and the others could slip in without getting noticed hopefully. He had no doubts and went for it.

Anthony followed Tyriel, making sure he wouldn't attract the attention of the black mass or the Mindy. His eyes looked around, trying to find Yuuko.

Yuuko was secured to the wall with some sort of mucus. She looked very pale and out of it, probably due to all the blood loss. "It's...Mishhu..." she tried to warn him, not knowing they'd already seen it briefly. Anthony, meanwhile, was so successful in slipping by that he went completely unnoticed. The Mishhuvurthyar and the Mindy continued to wrestle one another, the creature's tentacles holding fast onto the armor's arm with the rifle.

Kado kept on running through the corridors, not knowing which way to go. Trying to do something, he didn't know what to do. He slumped against a wall. "It's hopeless for me to keep going." With that set in his mind, he looked to his left and right and shook his head. "Now what..."

Tyriel quickly went over and touched the mucus and re-slung his rifle, putting the safety and pulled out his boot knife and cut Yuuko down and let her slump over his shoulder and held onto her with one arm while the other put the knife away and got out his GP-13. He searched quickly for a possible alternative way out and noticed the emergency hatch and opened it. He set Yuuko into the passage head first and pushed her through some and crawled behind her using his shoulders to push her forward until they got to the other side then scooped her back up into his arms, standing in the shuttlebay. "Guys, there's a hatch go through it," he thought to them

Anthony turned around and noticed Kado wasn't there. Anthony looked down there and whispered, "The new guy's gone... If I'm not back in a reasonable time, you two go on." Anthony turned back around, and snuck past again, very cautiously, until he was out of the kitchen. He took off towards the Mindy bay, and opened up the blast shutters, Kado nowhere in site.

Unable to best the black Mindy, the Mishhuvurthyar collapsed into a pile of caterpillars and scattered in every direction as the Mindy shot and sliced at it. Several of them tried to bite Anthony's legs and for a second or two he found himself outrunning a beam that was slicing through the ship, following him. Yuuko was shivering and trying to remove the remains of her spacesuit inside the shuttlebay, "I...need my armor," she whispered.

Kado heard the shutters open in the distance. "So they weren't locked," he said, thinking, "Damn it!" to himself. He started to head down towards the shutters, weapon at ready for the unexpected.

"We have to hurry Yuuko, there's a black Mindy here trying to kill us." He said and set her feet down. He grabbed the last purple pill he had in a pocket and put it into Yuuko's mouth and got her to swallow it. He helped her to the shuttle and opened the rear door and sat her in a chair (or bench) and closed the door and got upfront and brought the shuttle back to life. He sent a transmission to the YSS Rave. "Rave, we are evacuating the Ongaku, please prepare for the arrival of a shuttle." He sent as the shuttle came to life. Soon he pulled it out and headed for the Rave.

Anthony's hand reached down, brushing off the bugs. He continued to run, despite almost getting vaporized by the Mindy. He was safely in the room and took out his gun. Kado probably took off, but Anthony didn't know the ship well enough to try and find him, so he decided to wait for a few minutes.

There was no response from the YSS Rave. The black Mindy tore through the Ongaku, planting explosives...

Kado dashed down the corridor and found Anthony. "Uh, yeah...Sorry about that." He noticed the bugs and stomped on a couple that was around the two. "Let's just get the hell outta here."

Activating the stealth systems on the aeroshuttle, Tyriel set the coordinates to return to friendly space and activated the CDD to escape. "Yuuko, I'm so sorry about the Ongaku and your Mindy." He said as they headed into CDD back to YSA space. "I think SAINT is after me...I don't want to die...not after finding a friend." He admitted.

The black Mindy speedily floated down the corridor and came to stand in front of Anthony and Kado. "Where's Tyriel?" it demanded.

Anthony said, "That's alright... I bet-" Anthony saw the Mindy. Anthony whispered, "Take cover, but don't run... He'll kill you if you do." Anthony then turned to the Mindy, and said, "You would expect me to know? He ditched me when you showed up... Though I might know where he is heading, but you have got to let the new recruit leave... Then we can talk."

The black Mindy got a transmission from the Irim-class Gunship that had destroyed the Rave and was about to destroy the Ongaku, too. After listening to what her commander

had to say, the power armor offered, "Your existence is a liability to the empire. You understand we can't have witnesses to this event, correct?"

"No offense SIR but shove it up your ass. I've got nothing so far, why don't you find a way?" Kado didn't move; he just stared at the black Mindy. "Either way, we're gonna die, you don't have to today." Again Kado stood his ground and stared at the Black Mindy.

Anthony stepped forward, and said, "No, I can't understand... But I guess it doesn't matter if I don't, you'll kill us anyway, regardless. Well then, if I am going to die, I will die loyal. You won't find Tyriel. You never will. He'll find you, and get revenge..." Anthony shoved Kado towards the corridor he came from, and then rushed at the Mindy, hoping to buy Kado enough time to run.

"You piece of shit! I'll see you in fucking hell!" Kado yelled at the Black Mindy, and unloaded his weapon on it.

"Well, your other option is becoming a spook, like me," the black armor informed them, the shots bouncing harmlessly off of it.

Kado flicked off the black Mindy, "Fire away ya poor bastard!"

The Mindy's rifle lit up bright white and it stepped forward and rammed the tip of its rifle into Kado's chest. The heat killed him almost instantly and there wasn't much pain, though it looked and smelled absolutely awful with his impaled body burning into nothingness on the rifle.

Anthony stopped short of his rush. It was useless. The new recruit was blinded by pride and refused to run. Anthony watched in horror as Kado died quickly. Anthony dropped his pistol, and kicked it off to the side. Anthony said, "So, Yamatai cares more about its reputation than it's soldiers." Fire burned in Anthony's eyes, as if the Mindy would melt from his gaze. Anthony walked around, ignoring the Mindy, and just kept walking towards the shuttles.

The armor followed him. "So, you're giving up on life?" the pilot asked, her voice sounding a little surprised and disturbed.

Anthony kept walking and said, "You could call it that... I am giving it up for a greater purpose. If my dieing keeps someone else living, then it's worth it. I am more afraid of selfishness than death... I lived my whole life with no one, and I'd rather die with friends than live with no one again."

"Crazy humans," she said. "He will die, regardless. You don't have to. Please consider this second chance," the armor started to plead.

Anthony had tears in his eyes as he shouted, "Why? He showed me friendship! He showed me WHAT it was like to be in a family! What have you showed me? Remorse?"

Death? Intimidation? Or is it the truth? I held the government in high regard when they gave me this job! And look how wrong I was!"

"Tyriel is responsible for the deaths of thousands of innocent people!" the Mindy shouted back at him. "He must be punished!"

Anthony shook with rage and turned around, facing the Mindy and said, "What are you talking about!? You're accusing him of killing innocent people??? He would NEVER do that!!"

"He did!" the armor insisted. "He...he fired an aether beam into a Nepleslian skyscraper! It wasn't the terrorists, it was him...and since the public can't know, the Star Army itself has to seek justice through...though me," the armor revealed, lowered its rifle and leaning back against a damaged wall.

Anthony shouted, "OH? JUSTICE?! IS KILLING AN ENTIRE INNOCENT CREW JUSTICE? IS IT? BECAUSE IF IT IS, AND TYRIEL DID JUST WHAT YOU SAID, WELL THEN ALL HE WAS DOING WAS SERVING JUSTICE!" That's when it hit him. Anthony said, "No. You're lying! He wouldn't do something like that!"

"Compared to the thousands of dead, what is your life?" the armor demanded. "Besides that Mishhuvurthyar was probably going to eat you or whatever those things do to their victims...look, I'm..." she paused, "I'm...going to let you go take a shuttle."

Anthony glared at the Mindy, "Your right... My life is nothing compared to thousands dead. But those innocent people wouldn't be on your conscious when I would be. I guess I should be saying thanks, but I cant after what you've done. Tyriel isn't bad. It doesn't matter what he's done. The Tyriel I know was loyal enough to die for his captain." Anthony then turned, and rushed for the available shuttle.

Anthony hastily got into his shuttle, his fingers going over the buttons until he got the autopilot on. He wasn't sure where it was going, but luckily for him it was heading to friendly space. He sat in the seat and strapped himself in as it took off.

"You're such a weakling," the armor's pilot heard in her helmet as the crew of her ship fired the main gun, annihilating the Ongaku and the black Mindy on it just a fraction of a second after the shuttle had sped out of the area. As the world around her was swallowed into nothingness, the neko sent a last transmission, "Forgive me!" And then, Ongaku was no more. The Irim gunship was going to chase and destroy the two shuttles, but it was having trouble with its CDD system. The ship shook and the blast shutters closed. Its computer said, "A minor anomaly was detected..." and then the terrible laughing came...

Anthony, Tyriel, and Yuuko, the sole survivors of the Ongaku, were finally free of the evil. Or were they?

We'd like to hear what you thought about this story. Please send any questions, comments, suggestions, or flames to wes@stararmy.com or use our contact form at <http://stararmy.com/misc/contact.html> -- Although we have been running since 2000, we are still constantly evolving and improving based on player input. Your suggestions matter!

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