



the prequel

http://quest.lv/wiki/Crash_Quest

discussion

<http://tgchan.org/kusaba/questdis/res/335842.html>

>and so we rejoin our heroes, as it appears in the maws of danger once again. will they find hope on this strange new world, or simply new horrors beyond the scope of imagination . . . only time will tell.



I am AcePilot Asnia Oken

I am leader to a small band of soldiers, of those who remain they are

Geragine Mint, my pudgy engineer

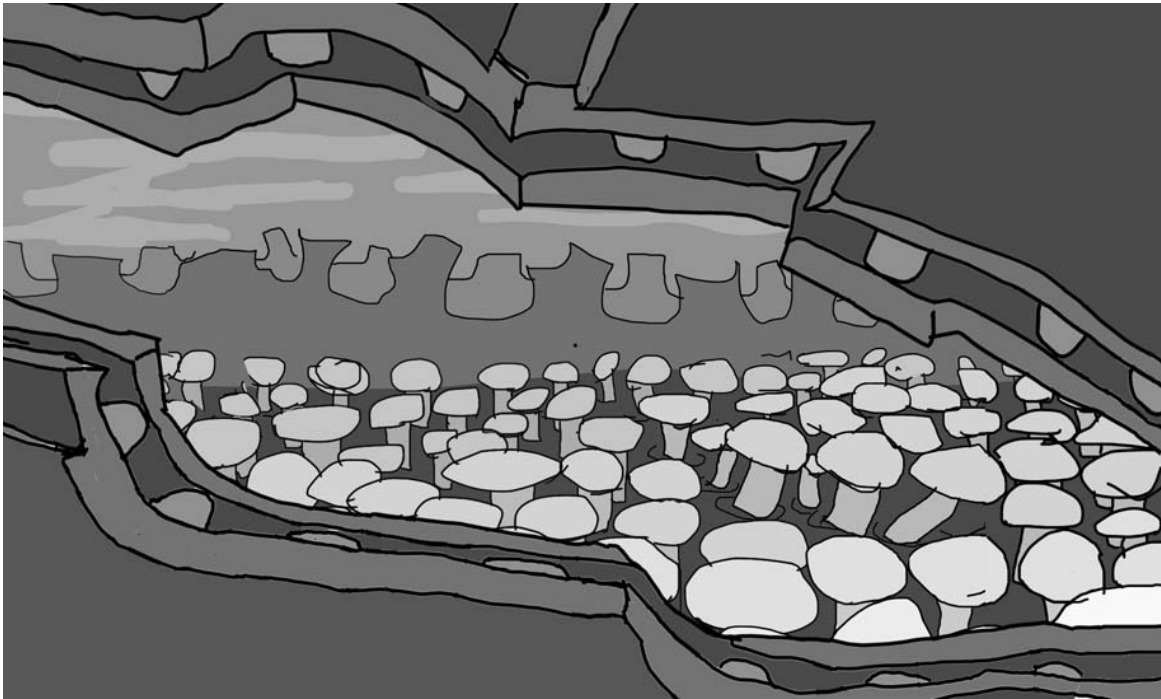
Belial Fuze, our wimpy doctor

and Hoft, our gunner

it has been three days since the SpacePirates captured us on the DesertWorld: Jucha-19

now it appears they have crash, this is the perfect chance to escape, I wouldn't dare to waste it

(you may control all four characters)



>Blood status

Mint managed to sabotage the drainer on the first day without the pirates noticing, they still haven't got it working again

Fuze managed to convince the Pirates that we'd live longer if we had our own rations, so we're all healthy and strong, and have about 2 days food and water left. Fuze also got us some slave rags, and a couple books (they're fiction novels) as it turns out he's rather good at talking to people.

>Oken looks out the hole

looks like it leads outside . . . at least we know the atmospheres breathable. we could probably squeeze through this hole, except for Mint, she might get stuck.

all I can see are a ton of giant mushrooms growing out of some sticky liquid, why do I get the strange feeling we aren't going to like this planet much . . .

>Fuze, doesn't find any injuries on anyone, Hoft can't find anything to make suitable weapons out of

>the door

the Pirates left the door unlocked, they told us they'd do horrible things to us if we tried to escape, they seemed pretty disappointed that we made no attempt

>the pipe

I have no idea where this could lead, but with the slant of the ship, we could probably slide down without killing ourselves, the broken edges look rusty and sharp though.



>Oken takes a peek outside the door

crap there's a pirate right there!, luckily he hasn't seen me yet



>Oken notices the dead crawler

>Oken quickly closes the door

Fuze: "what's the matter Oken? you're not looking so well."

Oken: ". . . bugs . . . they're here"

Hoft: What! NO! we left those things back on Jucha-19!"

>Hoft hits the wall in anger

>Fuze starts to sob

That pirate was the same jackass we met in smuggler town,

>before Oken can decide if she wants to talk to the pirate, she hears gunshots and the sound of boots clanging away down the metal hall, it sounds like the pirate's moved on



>Fuze enters hallway, he can see the pirate, and the body of a another pirate

this pinkskin has no augments, and he is too skilled to be a recruit, this man is not a Pirate

Fuze: "Sir! could you wait a moment!"

>the man stops and turns his head

Fuze: "Sir if you help us, it will greatly improve your chances of survival, with RayTech on your side these insects will not be able to trouble you"

Man: "hah. hah. hah, you think I'M the one that needs help? maybe you should rethink your situation a little. "

he's right, just looking at him, his sense of confidence, he's fought these creatures before. he probably will survive this . . . we need his help, he doesn't need ours

Fuze: "perhaps we could-"

Man: "make a deal? you had nothing to offer me back in Port Subturn, you've got even less now"

what IS it this pinkskin wants, not money, not power, not glory or courage, I have a hunch he may not even know what he wants!

Man: "tell you what, if you think you can keep, up feel free to follow me out of this scrap heap"

he must know we won't accept, we've slim to no chance of surviving in the wilderness out there with out our supplies

>the man walks quickly towards the stairs



Fuze: "wait, by any chance will you be passing by the room where they're keeping our gear?"

>the man stops again

Man: "sorry foxy, opposite direction. all the loot is usually stored lower aft storage bay. last I checked the place is swarming with bugs"

Fuze: ". . . Sir, you know this world, if we follow you can you tell me if we could survive? please sir be honest with me, with only what we could gather on the way out, could we at least survive long enough to get to a town . . . an outpost even, do we even have a chance?"

the man doesn't say anything, but the sad look in his eyes tells me all I need to know

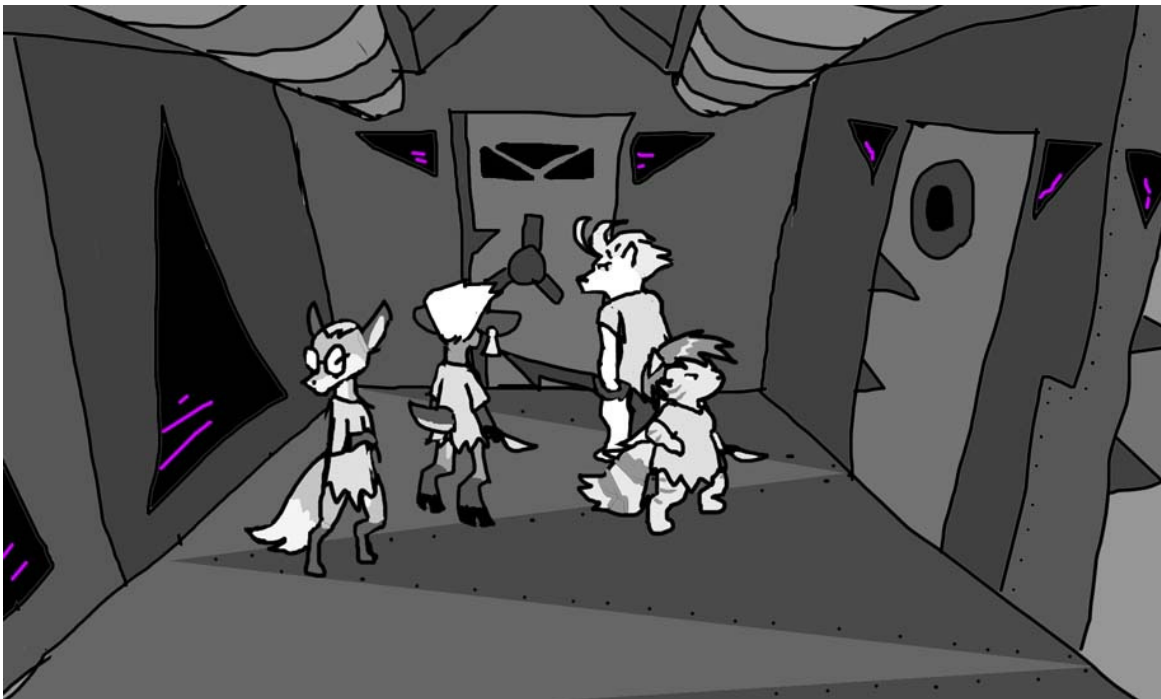
Fuze: "I-I see, well then I g-guess that's just how it is"

Man: "tell you what, if you can some how make it to bottom deck, you should be able to use your raytech to blast your way out. If you make it I'll be waiting outside, I can help you survive the swamp."

>the man throws Fuze a package, It contains a cutter blade, and 2 throwing knives
(a CutterBlade is a laser bladed RayTech device, for cutting through solid metal)

Man: "good luck"

>the man leaves up the stairs



>Fuze explains about the pinkskin to the others, and then distributes the weapons

>the team heads down the hall

>Hoft tries to open the door, but he's not strong enough

Hoft: "now what?"



>Oken feels that even if their combined strength isn't enough, they can always just cut the door open

I better check the window first though

Oken: "Hoft, give me a boost"

...

>Oken peers through the window

crap, it's the first mate Arclite, a Guilder who's made it his soul purpose to make our lives a living hell,

pirate1: " . . . ya sure the gun'll still fire? maybe you shou-"

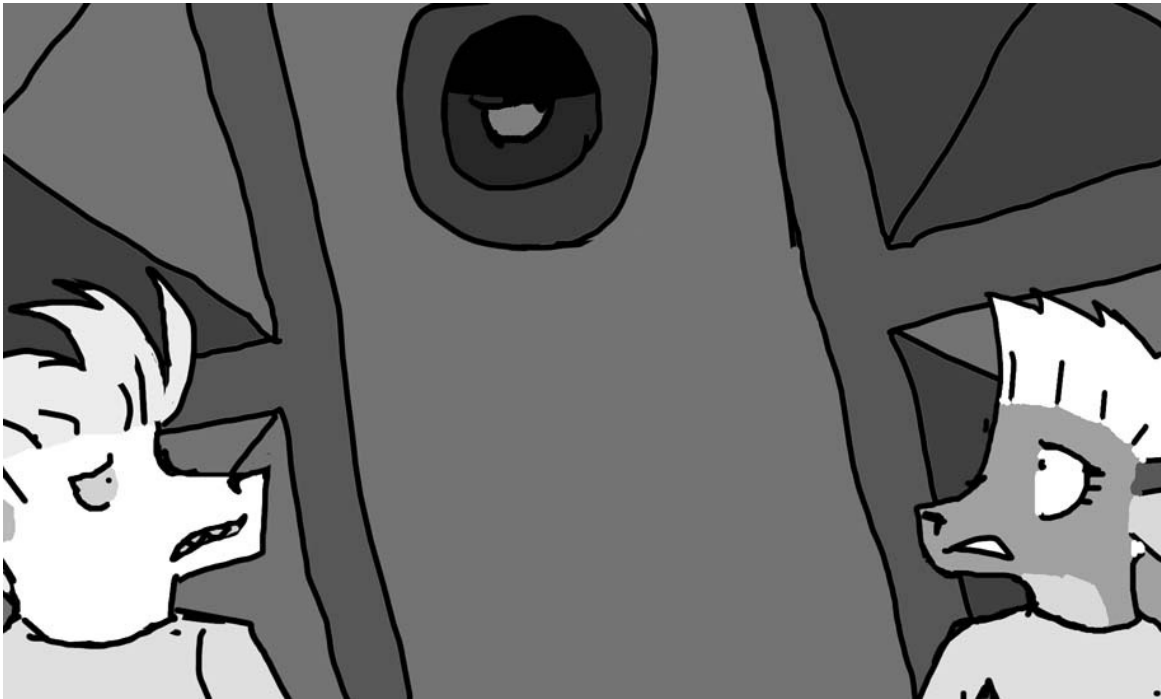
Arclite: " Yaarr, it be fine! just be a couple dents nothin ta be worried about."

I don't think we can go-

Pirate2 " look out, in the window a spy!"

Arclite: " AVASTYE SCALLYWAG!"

uh oh



>Oken and company quickly duck into the nearby room, which fortunately wasn't locked

CRASH

Arclite: "YAAAR, were is they be?!"

Pirate1: the must've run off

Arclite: "AARRR, hurry crew, they went up the stairs!"

Pirate2: "are you sure boss? maybe the just went into one of the rooms?"

>the pirate takes a quick look into the window

Arclite: "don't be silly! those rooms be all dead ends, t'be fool hardy to hide in one of those! now let's not waiting round here!"

>the pirates can be heard trudging down the hallway



>the team decides to take a quick look around, while they wait for the pirates to leave

Fuze: "what a horrid mess, these pirates really need to learn how to tidy up!"

Mint: "looks like the scrappers were trying to fix their blood drainer with all these spare parts . . . hey! that's MY spanner!"



>Oken looks around the corner and sees a short hallway a bloody staircase leading up

>Mint recovers her [MultiTool] and [MagnaSpanner]. Mint locates Prince! but is unable to find any

other gear, or RayTech

wow Prince you've definitely seen better days,

looks like they cracked open his entire casing, it's useless right now, luckily his RoboBrain, and Interfacer are still intact

(the slave rags have no pockets they can store nothing in them. Items can currently only be carried in hands. when carrying 2 items, characters will not be able to climb, or fight properly. characters can still fight if both items are weapons, and they are trained in dualwield. no characters are currently trained in melee dualwield.)



>Oken figures, they're probably on mid deck, near the aft of the ship, the stairs lead up, away from bottom deck, which is were their stuff is supposed to be.

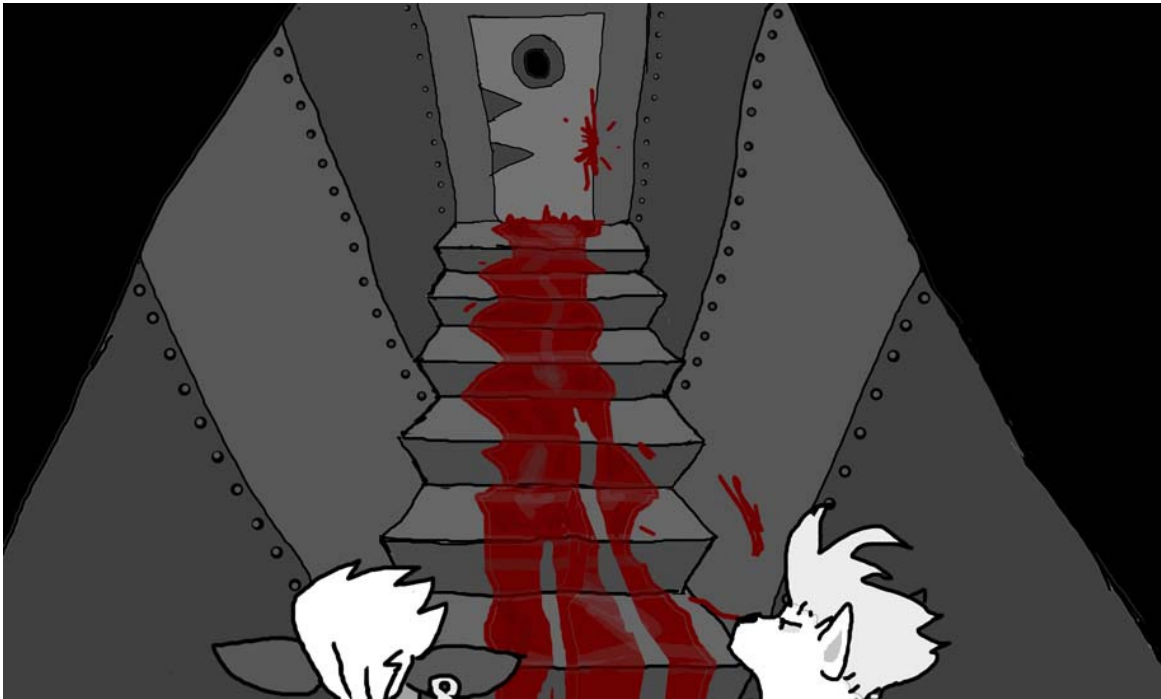
Mint: "alright puppies time to fork over some clothe I need to make us a bag!"

>Hoft reluctantly hands Mint his slave rags, Fuze does not, Mint does not have enough clothe to make a backpack.

Fuze: "if you need clothe so bad you should use your own!"

>Mint chooses to instead to make a simple sack

>Mint chooses to store her MultiTool in her bra



>Mint turns her attention to Fuze

Mint: "what's the matter dandy? afraid you're not going to measure up to a fine specimen like snowy?"

Hoft: " . . . "

Fuze: "I out rank you engineer Mint! you have to show me respect!"

Mint: "oooh I'm so scared, what's baby gonna do? go cry to mamma Oken?"

Oken: "both of you be quite! if you keep making noise the pirates might hear us."

Mint: "awww look sweetie, mommy did make it better!"

...

>Fuze, checks the hall, it looks like the pirates are gone

>Mint gathers all the pieces she'll need to fix Prince and then hands the sack to Fuze

>Oken and Hoft check the stairs



it looks like a body was dragged up these stairs

- >Oken listens at the door for a little while
- >Oken hears nothing but silence



- >Oken uses a shiny piece of metal to look through the porthole

hmmmm, I can't see much, looks like another hall way, but it takes a sharp turn, I can't see any bugs or pirates



Oken: "OK guys, the coast is clear, let's go"

Fuze: "No Wait! that's not the right way, the Pinkskin man told us to go down, not up!"

Oken: "oh yeah, I must have-

Mint: "wow, I guess we can add gullible to dandy's long list of assests. since I'm pretty sure "stupid" is also one your list, I'm going to be a nice girl and spell it out HE WAS LYING TO YOU, maybe peabrain here didn't get the memo but his ADVICE led us right into the waiting hands of three of his Pirate buddies"

Fuze: "n-no! . . . he was telling truth! I'm sure of it, I'm quite good reading people-

Mint: "princess, the only things you've ever been GOOD at were crying and whining. and surprise surprise, guess what puppy's doing now"

Hoft: "what should we do Oken?"



Oken: "Mint! we're all on the same team here! we have to work together if we want to make it out of here."

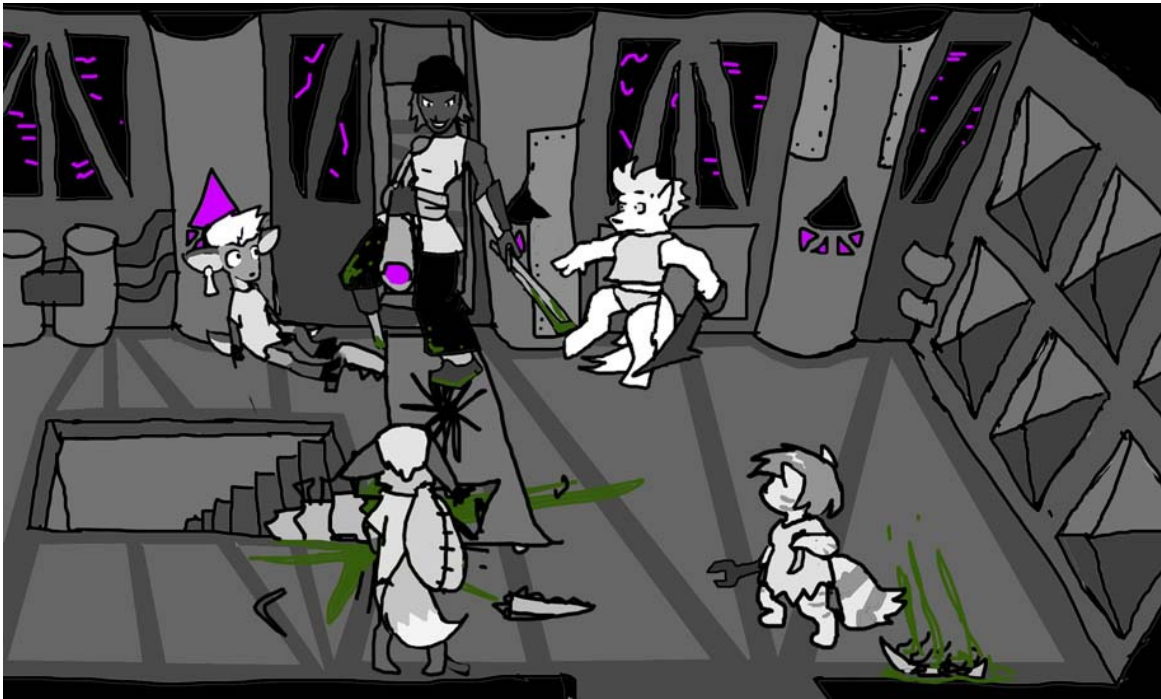
Mint: "pffft whatever"

Oken: "Fuze is right, our stuff has got to be on the bottom decks, I can't think of any reason for the Pinkskin to lie to us."

...

>the team encounter nothing on the way so far

the other side of them room parallels this side, I guess the ship is symmetrical.



>Oken and Hoft head towards the far door-

SLAM

Pirate: "HAH, I KNEW you little freaks did didn't go up those stairs"

>the Pirate's gun begins to charge



Oken: "leave him alone!"

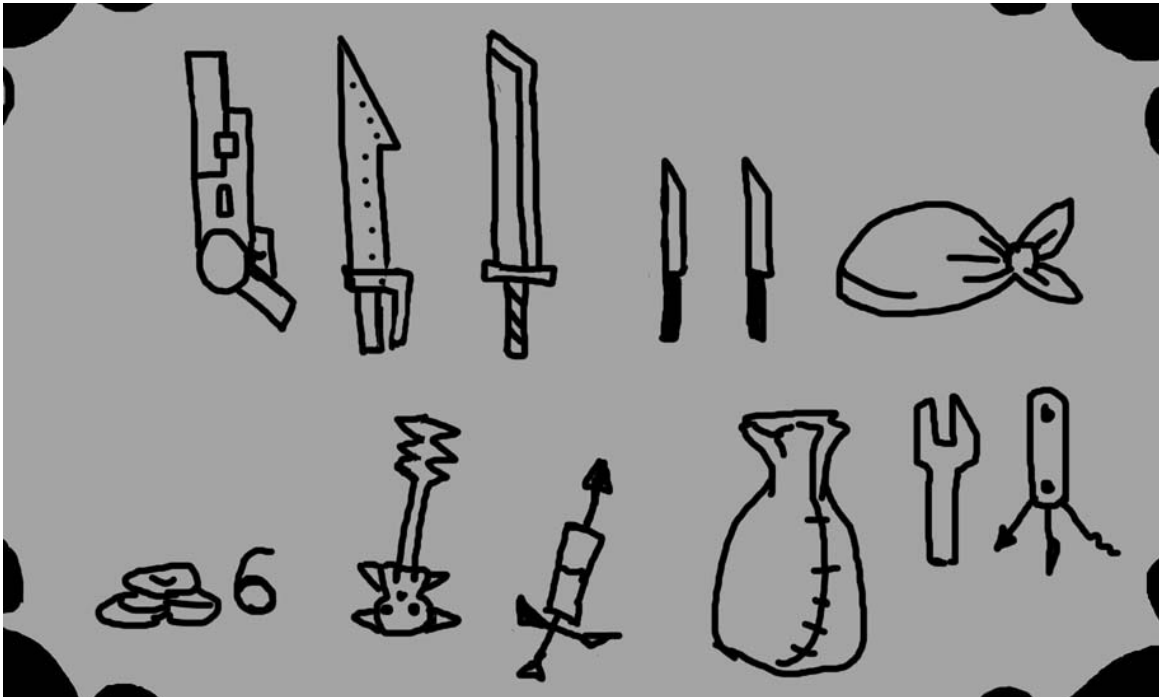
>Oken kicks the pirates peg leg out from under her,

>as the pirate turns to face Oken, the ship's harsh angle causes her to stumble

>Hoft activates the cutter blade, but doesn't have time to swing . . .

Pirate: "AAARgrk"

>the pirate is dead before she has a chance to hit the ground



>from the pirate, Oken collects: an arm mount BlastGun, a short blade, 6 garbloons (money), a combat drug injector, a skeleton key and a Pirate bandanna.

I don't want to take the pirate's clothes, they're drenched with blood and bug guts.

>Mint adjusts the BlastGun, making it usable, it has 13/20 shots left

hmmm how should I distribute the weapons, as a gunner Hoft is the best shot, though Fuze mentioned he's got pretty good aim too

>Oken is proficient with: throwing knife, CutterBlade, short blade.

>Mint is proficient with: throwing knife, BlastGun.

>Fuze is proficient with: throwing knife.

>Hoft is proficient with: throwing knife, CutterBlade, short blade, BlastGun.



Me and Hoft are now armed and dangerous

Fuze informs me that the injector would almost definitely prove lethal.

now what?



>Fuze prefers to keep his pants on his legs

I think we're missing my keys, a coat, some machine parts and some other stuff, it's not really that important I don't think

we have enough food and water to last us 2 days, we probably can't eat or drink anything from the planet, but I think we have enough resources to figure something out

Oken: "Ok people, I think we can use the CutterBlade to-"

Hoft: "I've got a better plan!"

>Hoft activates the shield belt, everyone else ducks for cover

>Hoft charges the AntimatterCannon

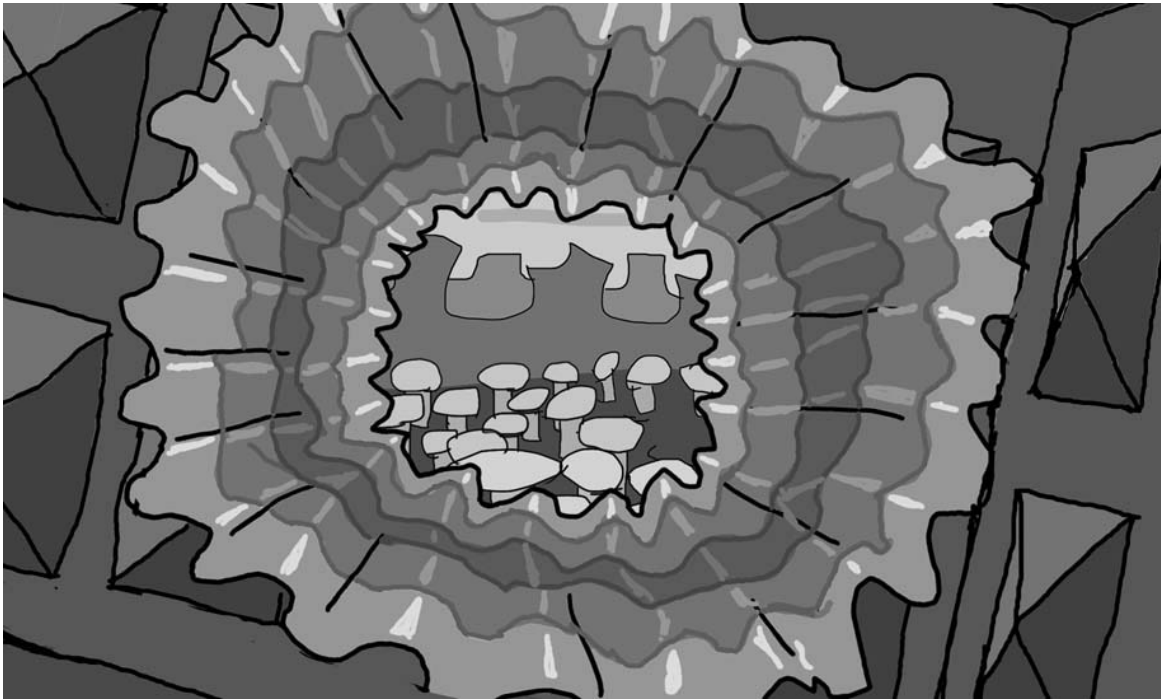


ding

(AntimatterCannon is now fully charged, 4/5, 100/100)

(AntimatterCannon has 2 forms of fire, laser barrage or destructor beam)

Hoftt: "hey guys I found us a door!"



>Mint smacks Hoft upside the head

Mint: "your new toy is going to get us all killed if you keep waving it around like that!"

Hoft: "Hey! I didn't risk the death penalty stealing this thing from the armoury, just so I could never get a chance to use it!"

it looks like Hoft's "door" does in fact lead outside



hmmmm we don't seem to have any rope, I guess we'll just have to be careful

>Oken scouts out the tunnel

Pinkskin: "hey you guys need a lift?"



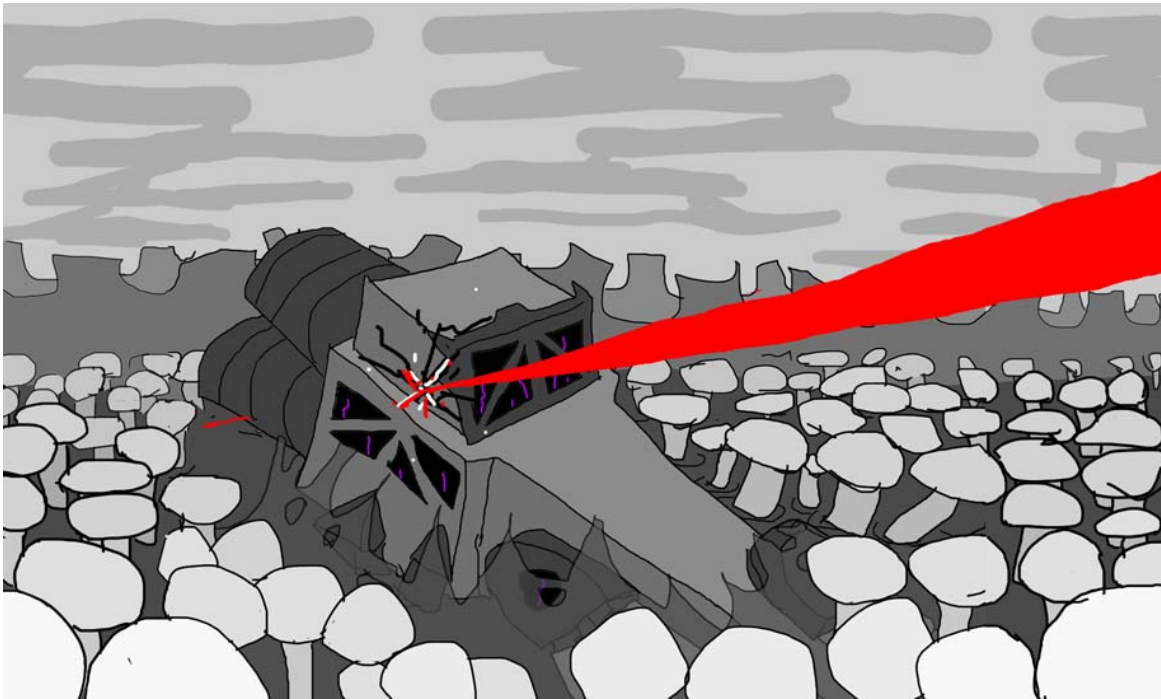
>Oken, Fuze, Mint and Hoft board the skimmer

Fuze: "thank you good sir, we are indebted to you"

Pinkskin: "don't mention it."

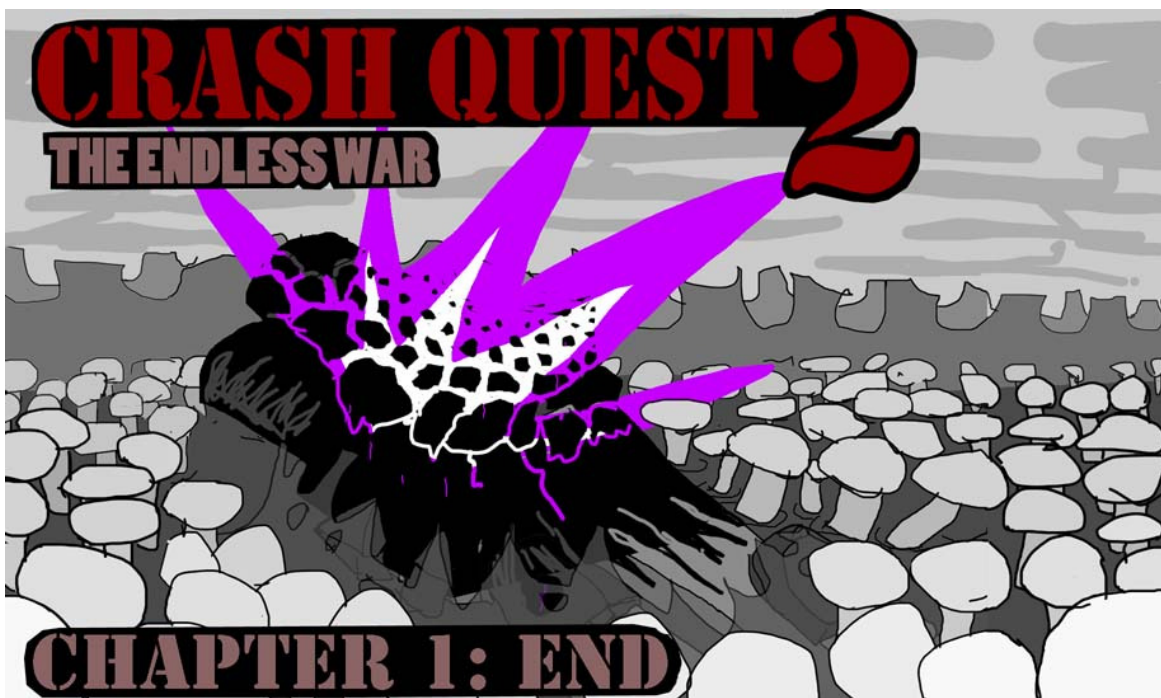
can we truly trust this man? I'm not sure

Pinkskin: "now strap in tight folks, we're gonna have to jet, I don't wanna be within a 1000 kilometers when they get that ship back online!"



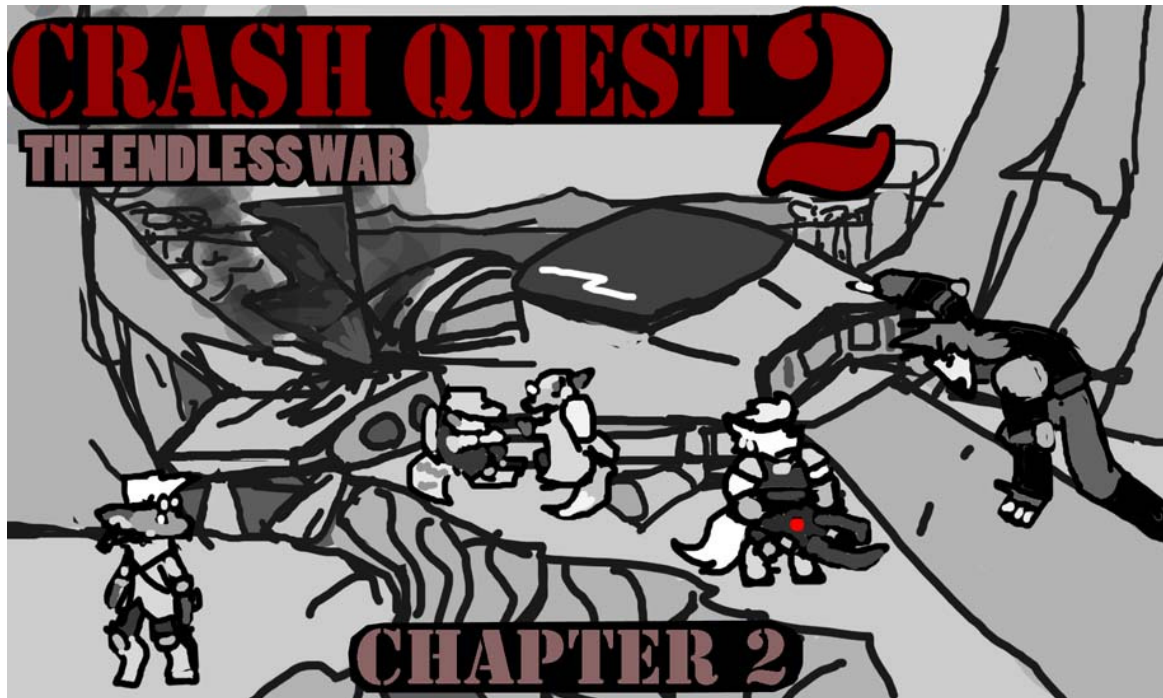
>Oken, Mint and Fuze strap themselves in

>Hoft uses destructor beam



Hoft: " I don't think we'll have to worry much about the pirates . . . "

chapter 1: END



previous thread

<http://quest.lv/kusaba/questarch/res/263558.html>

discussion

<http://tgchan.org/kusaba/questdis/res/335842.html>

>It appears our heroes are in trouble again, but what is the real danger this time? the hostile world? or each other?



I am AcePilot Oken, a hero from the destroyed world Doraun, and I find myself again in the company of Pinkskins

My father spoke often of the pinkskins when I was young.
My father always spoke of the "peace that could be"
He spoke to many people from many worlds and they actually listened.
He insisted that the pinkskins wanted this peace too.
He was wrong,
and millions of Astranians had to pay the price for his error

My father trusted the Pinkskins, and he was a fool for it
I refuse to repeat his mistakes.



Jones: ". . . but no! you couldn't wait two seconds till we cleared the blast radius, you just had to try out . . ."

looks like Jones is verbally abusing my gunner . . .

>Jones crashed the skimmer

I don't think so, he seems to like his skimmer a lot. it be weird for him to want to hurt it for no reason

>use him

he said he was going to help us get off this planet, trusted or not he's still our best bet

>Bugs

I'm pretty sure all the bugs died when Hoft blew up the PirateShip, I doubt we'll be seeing any more of them.

>Enrad

the prisoner I interrogated, he said a lot of things that made absolutely no sense, he was a weird guy even for a pinkskin.

Jones: ". . . and now the skimmers totaled! do you have any idea how much this thing cost?! of course not I bet you communist . . . "

umm maybe I should do something



Oken "Sorry for wrecking your ship. I'm sure Hoft didn't realize that firing it then would put us and the ship in danger."

Hoft: "yeah I had no Idea!"

Oken: "shut up Hoft"

Jones: "don't apologize to me! now we're all gonna have to make our way on foot, and on that note we should all get moving"

Mint: "not so fast, I can get this scrap heap air worthy in a couple hours easy, in fact-"

Jones: "we don't have a couple hours! between salvage team and pirate survivors I'd give us less than 10 minutes, and this crash site will stand out like an open pyre"

Hoft: "then let em come, it'll be their funeral"

Fuze: "Oken, what do you think is best?"



>Hoft's ammo

the AntiMatter Cannon has 80/100 shots, and 4 reload charges of 100

>I'm sure that Jones should be more enthusiastic

it seems kind of strange that he's so quick to abandon his ship

Oken: "Well staying here does seem like a bad idea, and going on foot seems our only other option, but first Jones there's a couple things that I don't quite get."

Jones: "Like what?"

Oken: "if our ship got brought down by the explosion at mid range, how would any pirates survive since they'd be much closer?"

Jones: "maybe you missed the huge chunk of metal sticking out of the ship. we got pegged by shrapnel, bad luck more than anything."

Oken: "also who would be sending out salvage teams, who would know that our ship or the pirates have even crashed?"

Jones: "all ships that large have auto distress beacons, and this planet is crawling with pirates their buddies will probably be here in no time"

Oken: "one more thing, where are we going?"

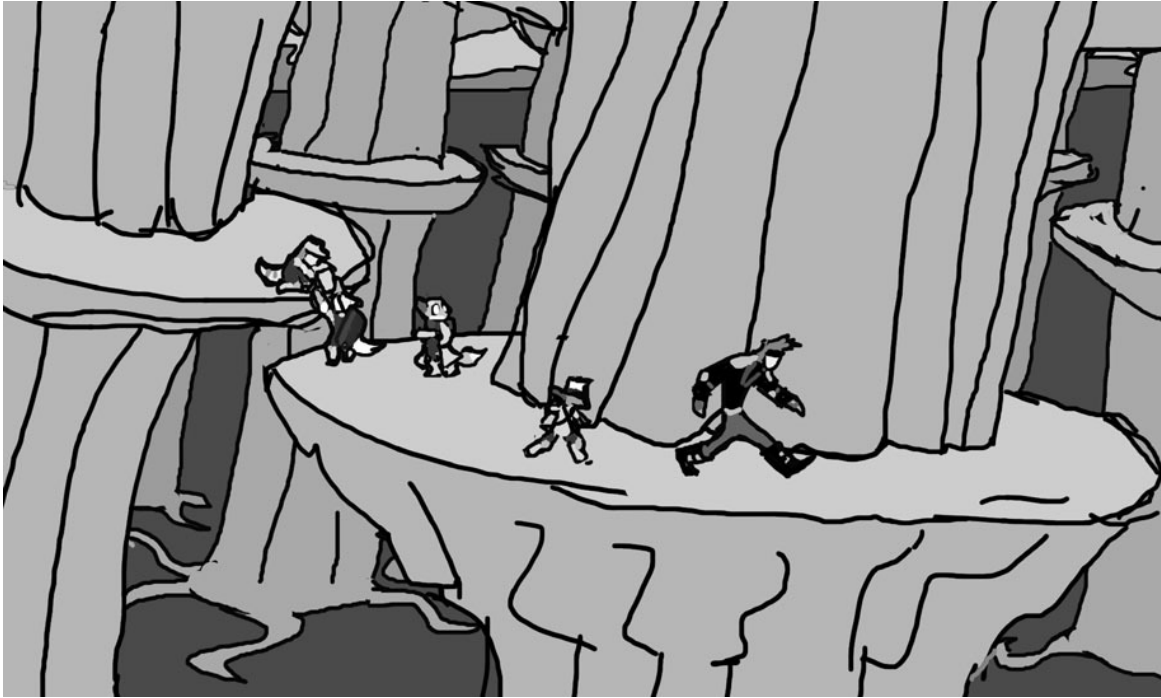
Jones: "there's a town about three days march from here, best place to get transport off world."

well I guess that all makes sense . . .

Fuze jogs up to Oken, and whispers to her

Fuze: "Oken, I'm not sure what, but something about Mr Jones' concerns and explanations seem off to me, don't you think?"

Jones: "We shouldn't stay here, we can talk while we walk."



Oken: "I think pinkskins are just weird like that, I don't think it's anything to worry about right now"

Fuze: "I suppose you are correct"

Oken: "do we have enough food and water too last us a three day journey?"

Fuze: "it will be a little complex, but I think I can ration out what we have left to keep us healthy"

the four Astranians gather up their supplies, and valuable parts from the craft and the head out for their long march

Oken: "Jones aren't you a pirate, or are you a double agent or something?"

Jones: "I'm not a pirate nor do I have any connection to em, I was just a wanderer hitching a ride."

Oken: "tell me about this town, with the war I can't imagine it being a very safe place for us"

Jones: "Memora is safe for anyone as long as they don't cause trouble. of course your kind are not really liked much any where but this is about as good as it gets."

Oken: "that's not very comforting"

Jones: "Memora is a neutral port, drop your factions at the door sort of thing."



>the parts

Mint has gathered 4 valuable solar ship parts.

Oken: ". . . so it's just like the other "free port" we went to?"

Jones: "you mean Subturn? that's just a way point owned by pirates, nothing free about that hell hole, as far as Memora's concerned the Pirates are a faction in of themselves and their pillaging shit and butchering of Fures isn't tolerated."

Oken: "how is all of this enforced?"

Jones: "Shit, I dunno. Marshal Droegen and his his sheriffs found a way to keep the pirates in line, he's the guy who's going to help you off this planet by the way, so you can ask him about that."

the path ends

Jones: "there are a numbers of ways to cross the bog, but no matter how you do it there's a fair chance you could fall into the water . . . except that's not water it's some sort of sticky substance, you get stuck in it you don't come out."

Oken: "well I guess we'll just have to be careful . . ."

Jones: "or you could cover yourself in mushroom powder, it's what the locals do, neutralizes the glue or something . . . anyways I'm not sure if the powder is poisonous to your kind, tons of stuff is so it's your call."

does Oken think covering her team in powder is a good idea?



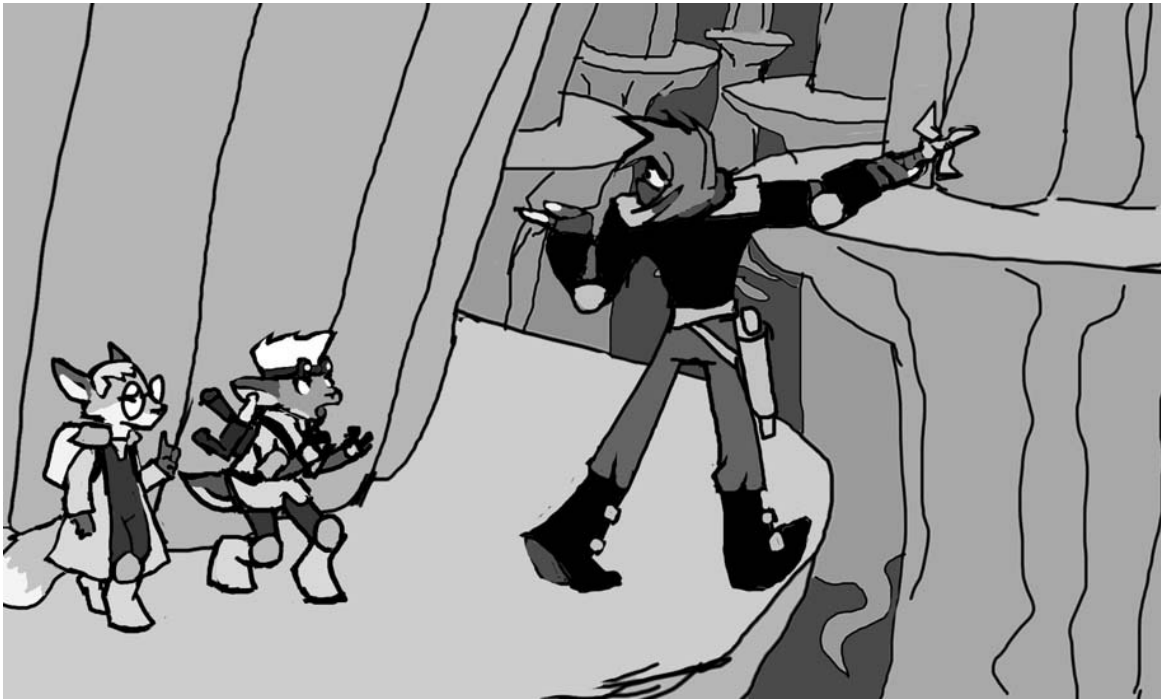
Oken: "Fuze what do you think?"

Fuze: "Well with out a medical scanner there's no way to be certain, but as long as the spores are out of season we shouldn't have too much to worry about from the powder."

Oken: "so you think we should be fine?"

Fuze: "most likely yes, but there is of course always small margin for error."

Jones: "with out any gear or a ship, there are two main ways to cross the bog, we can grapple gun from shroom to shroom, or we can climb down and walk across vine paths."



Oken: "with only one grapple gun it will probably be safer to vine walk"

Fuze: "um is the pinkskin leaving?"

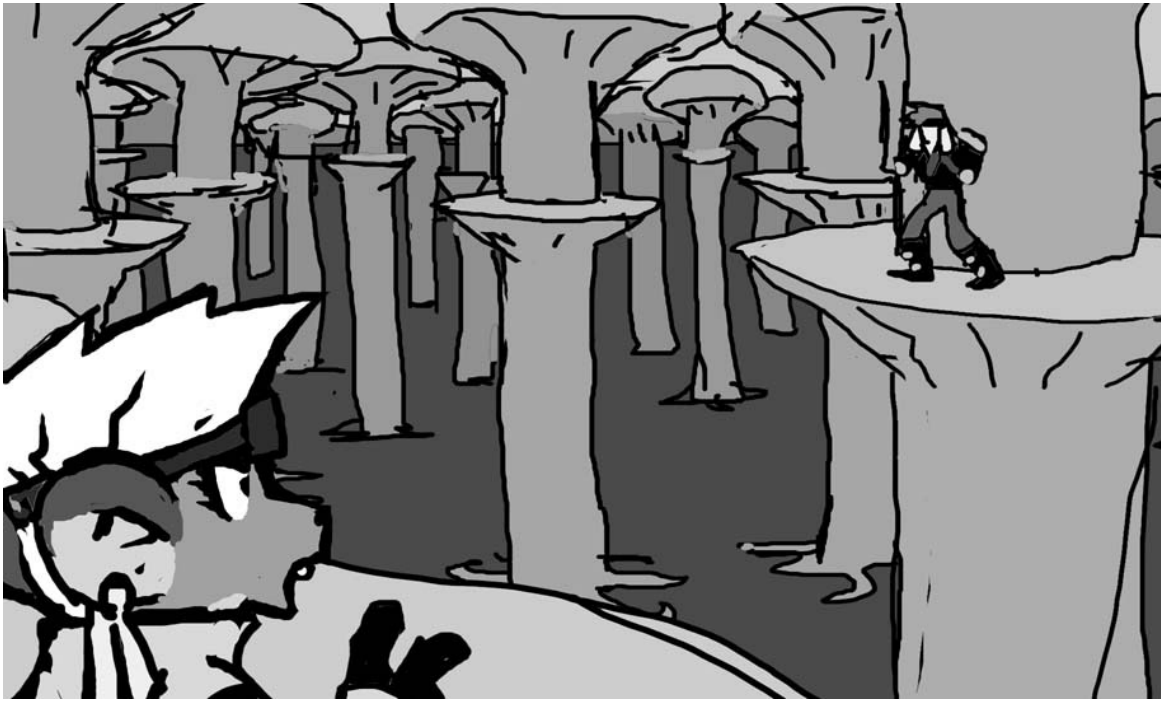
Oken: "wait, what? hey Jones where do you think you're going?"

Jones: "you seem pretty well set for your journey, I think my work here is done, with any luck we'll meet up outside of Memora in three days"

Oken: "Wait!"

Jones: "see you then."

Jones fires his grapple gun onto a far mushroom.



Oken: "YOU DIDN'T TELL US HOW TO GET TO THE TOWN!"

Jones: "north-north-east, it's the first thing that not a giant mushroom!"

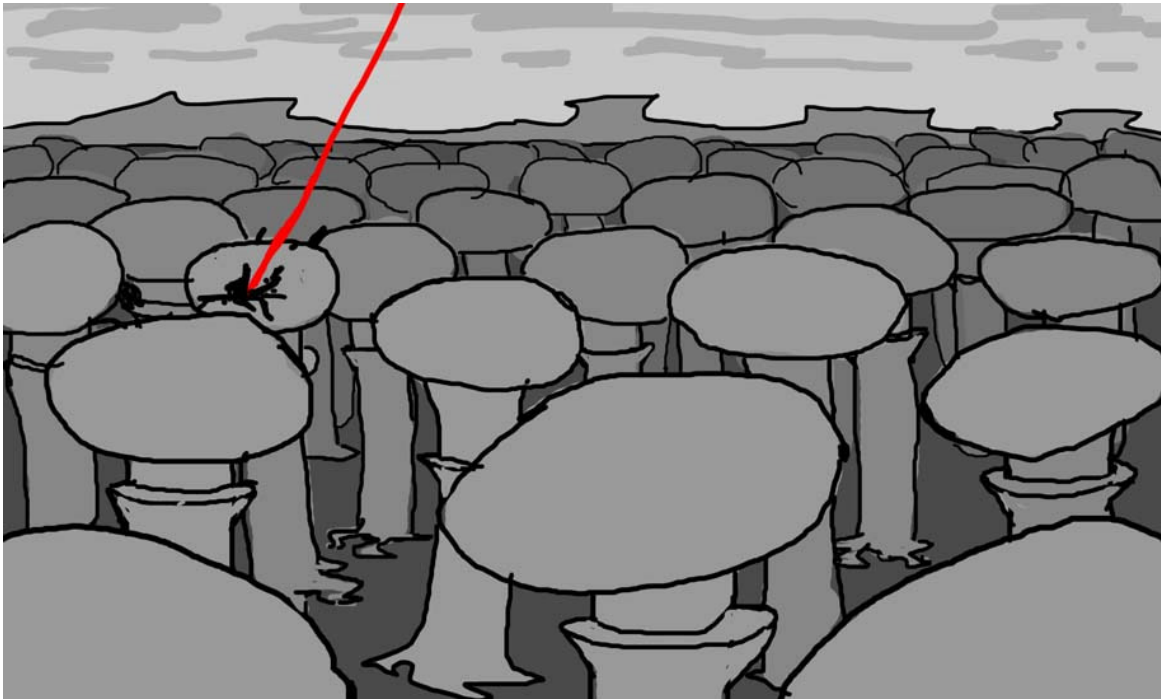
Jones then jets off to another mushroom and is out of ear shot

Hoft catches up

Hoft: "good riddance I say."

Oken: . . .

Hoft: "so how do we get that powder stuff down"



Oken: "well I guess a shot from one of our quieter weapons might dislodge some powder . . ."

Hoft: !!!

Oken: "or maybe we could all try shaking it to- HOFT NO! DON'T-"

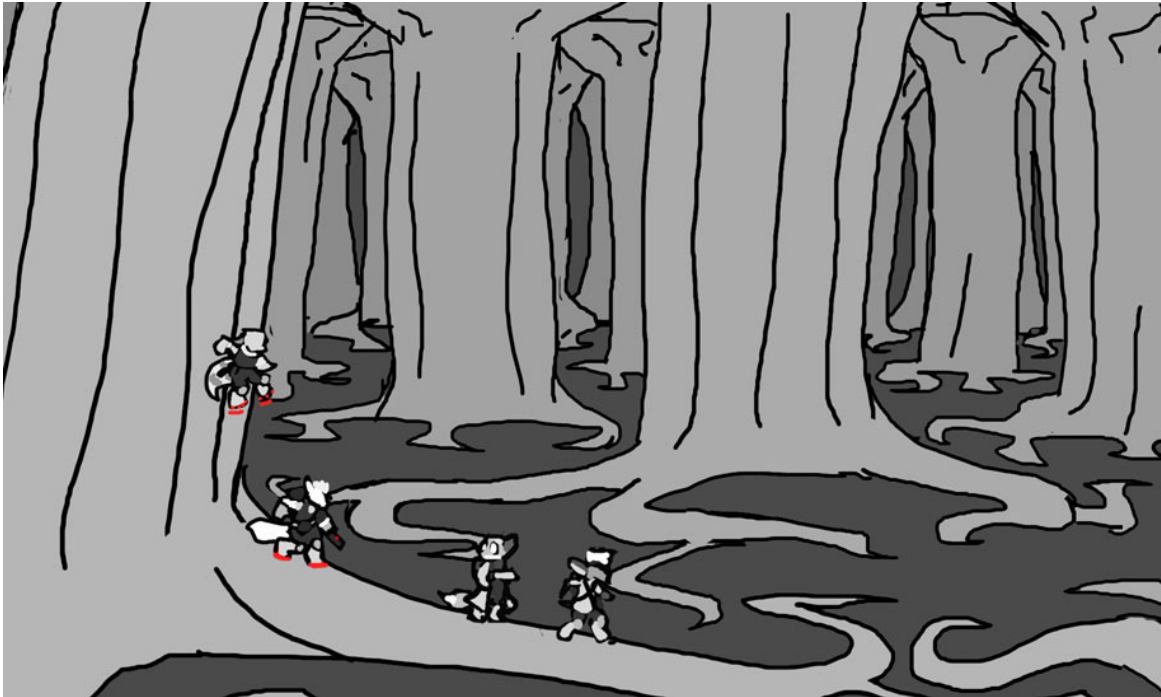
Before Oken can even finish her sentence, Hoft opens fire.

Hoft: "EATDEATHMUSHROOM!"



Oken smacks Hoft in the nose to reestablish dominance

Oken: "bad gunner! don't give away our position!"



Oken makes sure everyone is thoroughly dusted.

the team then activates their GravBoots and descend to the bottom of the mushroom, and prepare to traverse the alien landscape



Oken guides her team forward using her trusty SpaceCompass to lead the way

through the long trudging the AcePilot begins to daydream

>Dina

I can still remember the name of my recruiter.

InfantryTrooper Pelendina Zane.

mostly rally agents come from the officer core; mandatory duty dreaded by most.

Zane was different though, she enjoyed it.

I can still remember her inspiring call to arms against our enemies, mighty words filled with fervor and spirit.

it's funny how the words seem to lose their power over time . . .



Oken: "Fuze are you doing alright?"

Fuze: "pleas don't speak to me right now, I need to concentrate on my footing lest I slip"

I guess he's having more trouble balancing than me

the hours slowly drag on

Hoft: "try to keep up Mint, you're slowing us all down!"

Mint: "burn in hell fluffy! it's your fault we're walking to begin with!"

Hoft: "well at least I can fight. you couldn't even screw things up you're completely useless, we'd all be better off to leave you behind!"



Oken: "We're a team Hoft we've got to start working together if we wanna survive out here!"

Hoft: ". . . I guess"

Oken: "there's no half-hearting this ya gotta-"

Fuze: " Oken! I think I saw something in the water! "

Oken: " Don't interrupt me! I'm telling Hoft about being a team play-"

the whole vine shudders

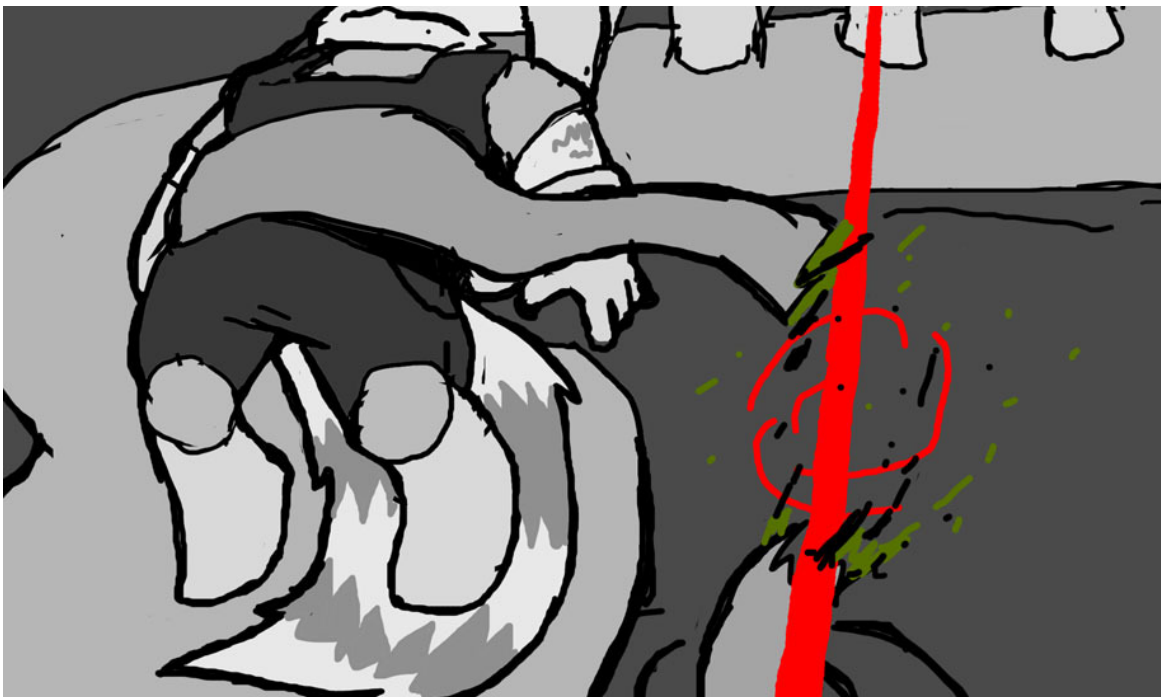
Mint "ack!"

Mint almost slips



a tentacle grabs mint with it's sticky grip

my RayGun has too wide of an effect, if I try to shoot the tentacle I'll hit Mint as well!



Mint, I won't let you get killed!

Oken fires her RayGun



Hoft: "Yeah, you better run! . . . tentacle bastard"

like a nail driven clear through her skull a cold predatory hiss pierces into Oken's mind

Voice: " There is no escape Dorau . . . exist while you can . . ."

Oken: "Gyaa!"

Fuze: "Oken are you alright?"

Activate gravboots, get up high and away from the bottom floor, let's regroup and think about this.

The bottom floor is just plain unsafe to traverse, we're going to have to figure out something else.



all I can feel is my head throbbing in pain

Oken: "ugh, it attacked my brain, ergg some sort of taunt"

Fuze: ". . . I see, Hoft collect our engineer we need to get to high ground, it's the only place we will be safe!"

Oken: "ugh I feel dizzy . . ."

Fuze: "Oken, we really have to be moving!"

Hoft picks up Mint

Hoft: "climbing that mushroom'll just get us killed, we've got pirates chasing us right? we need to keep moving and take advantage of that thing running away!"

Fuze: "we have two injured soldier, I've yet to even inspect their injuries! we're in no physical condition to increase our march, Mint and Oken need rest!"



Oken: ". . . Hoft, Fuze is right, we can't keep going like this."

the team activates their GravBoots

* * *

Fuze: " this is what I was afraid of . . . "

Hoft: "this gooey acid stuff?"

Fuze: " well technically it's not acid it's . . . never mind, in any case I was referring to these spines, I can count thirteen piercing her flesh."

Hoft: ". . . "

Fuze: "but that's not even the worst of it, the venom covering the spines is the truly worrying part"

Hoft: "doesn't the MedKit have anti-toxin?"

Fuze: "yes, but I doubt it will help in the long run, it may delay the poison but it will only give her a couple hours at- hmm?"

Mint: *mumbling*

Hoft: "I think she said something about an antidote."



after injecting her with the antitoxin Mint manages to tell me of an antidote she has in her backpack, she then passes out

* * *

Inside her pack I manage to locate two syringes, each containing similar chemicals.

Just scan that shit. Your race is not smart with design decisions.

Hoft: Let Oken inject Mint with the right syringe, you tend to go overboard and would probably jam it through her arm and out the other side, causing the antidote to spill onto the floor.



I can't just choose one of the syringes based on aesthetics alone! I couldn't live with myself if I chose wrong! I need more solid evidence as to their nature.

>Prince

the robot's medical scanners would be ideal for this sort of problem, but by the looks of it it seems Mint has not had a chance to get it back online

what really strikes me as odd is our engineer even having this sort of thing. what was Mint doing carrying various chemicals?



>just a cap

huh, so it is. I suppose that makes the needle less hazardous.

>looks like guilder design

ah, now I remember! this is the combat drug injector we picked up in the Pirate ship, funny I could have sworn I placed this in the MedKit . . . in any case the remaining syringe must be the antidote.



After removing the spines and stitching the wounds I inject Mint with the "antidote".

Her condition seem to improve.



Hoft: "now that tubby's patched up we should get moving!"

Fuze: "we can't!"

Hoft: "ugh, what now?"

Fuze: "if you're carrying Mint you won't be able to wield your weapon to defend us from the dangers of this world!"

Hoft: "oh right, I guess that makes sense . . ."

Thank the gods, I can't fathom how Oken deals with these two on a daily basis, it's simply madness!

Hoft: "if those bastard pirates try anything I'll show'em the real terrors of space!"



huh, still no sign of em.

whatever.

guess I'm going to be waiting at least another day.



>what's Jones been up to

lying low and takin it easy mostly

>short stubby legs

the fact that they can get anywhere on those tiny pegs is beyond me.

>they're a liability move on

that'd be a waste after all the hard work I've put in, they owe me a ship, and I expect to get my money's worth before I'm through with em

>go back and help the Astranians

naw, I've already helped em out way more then they deserve, besides I can't keep play sides like this, Pirates gotta eat too!

more so I might have too help em out some on this end

ya see I kind of exaggerated about Memora being cuddlesville towards all Astranian.

the main problem being they don't look like Astranian Shadow Merchants, Astranian soldiers aren't gonna be liked so much.

there's gonna be trouble here when they arrive unless I think of something clever.



>useful skills

none of that matters if the people get scared, Astranian soldiers in any form are not a welcome sight here.

>sell RayTech

I'm no dealer, and best it stay that way. I've got enough heat coming from the Pirate Guild as it is.

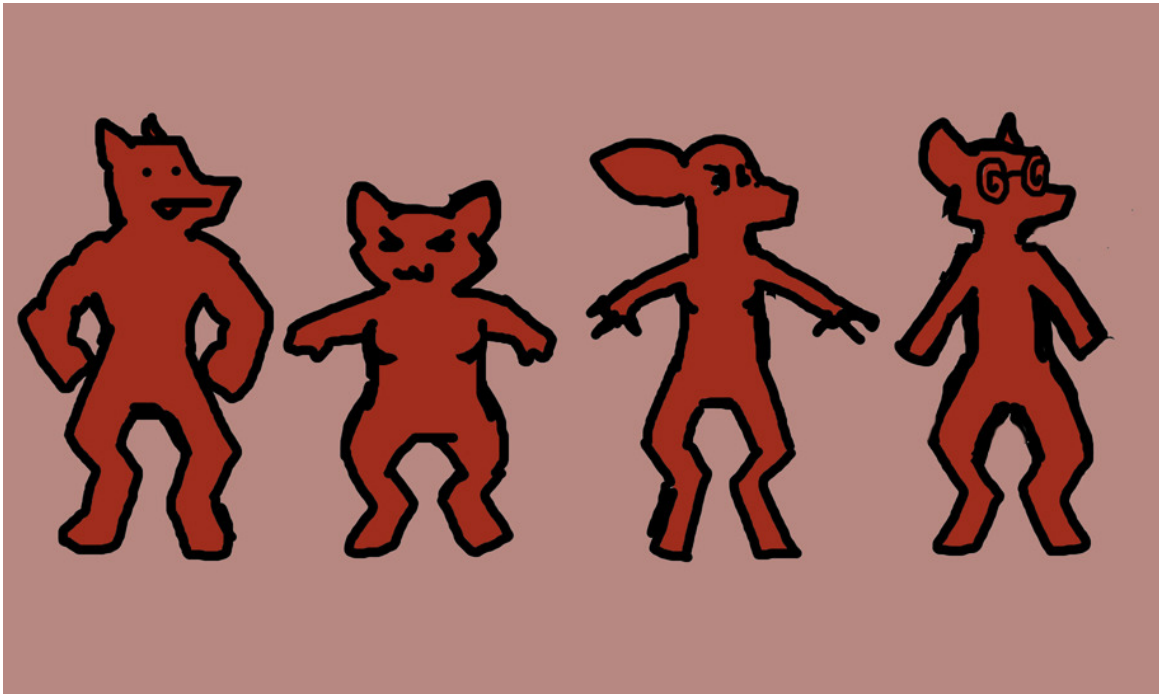
>Marshal Droegen

I owe the man a fair bit of money . . . and I may have also "borrowed" one of his speeders.

I'm gonna wait to see if my fures survive the marsh before me and him have a chat

>procuring some suitable outfits

now that's something I can do . . .



>Shopping!

I'm not sure "shopping" is the method I'll be using to get this stuff

If I remember correctly their body types went something like this

now to get some clothes, but what kind of clothes should I get?



>>314970

Obviously you want them to be stylish as all fuck. This is the only option.



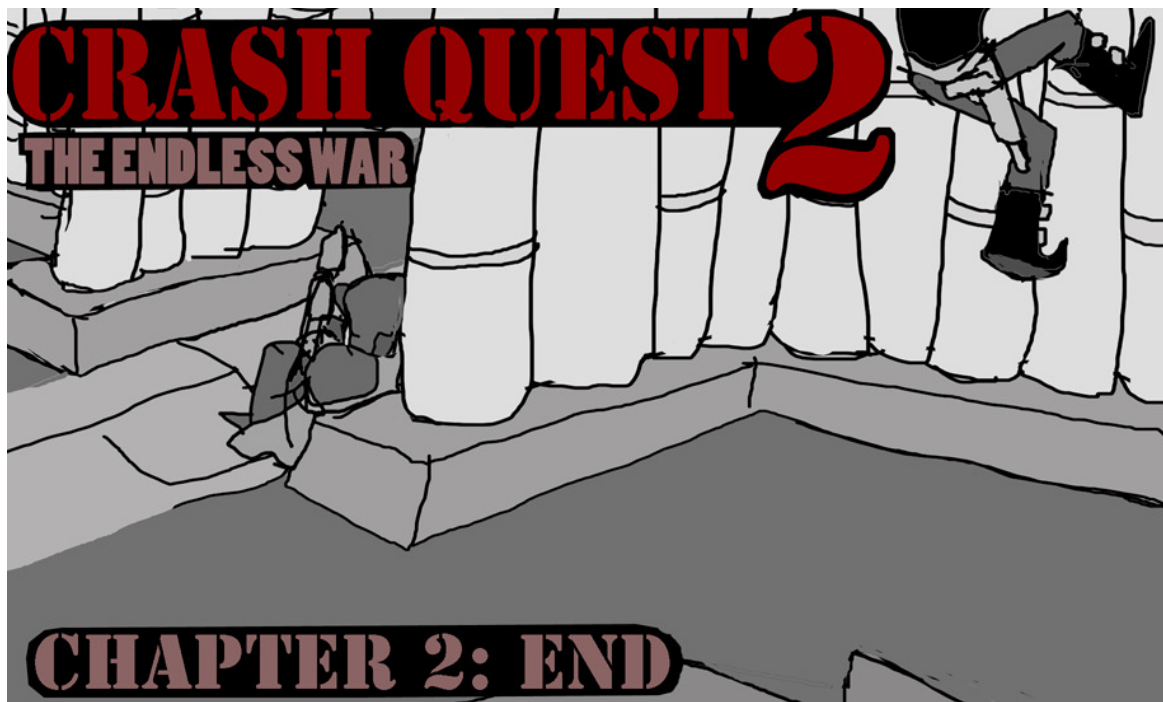
>>314970

Play a little joke on them...



Mo'-jave, Mo' problems.





yeah this'll be great
I know exactly what clothes to get!

Jones leaves in search of clothes

CHAPTER 2: END

It's a disability. He can't use doors.

Don't make fun of his disability.



> the poor Astranians can't seem to catch a break, as once again they find themselves under the threat of merciless Pirates!



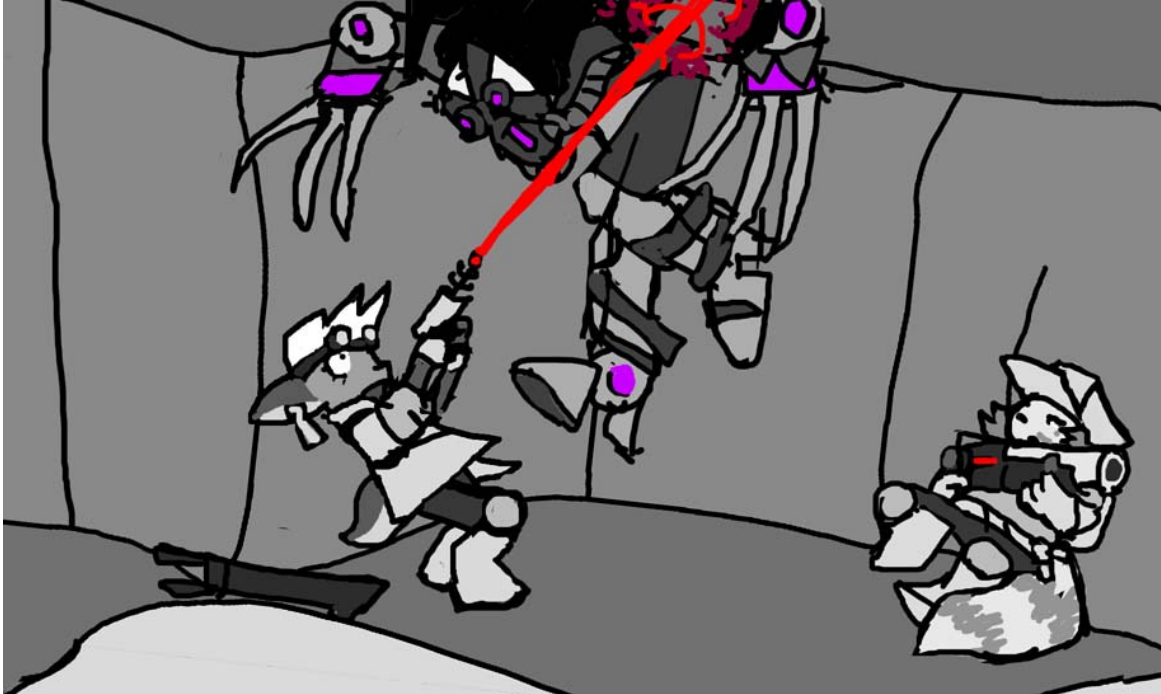
I am Oken an AcePilot, though I've been trained for this kind of thing, I've never liked infantry combat

I first heard the thunderous roar of the Pirate skimmers when we reach the cliffs

My Team made great efforts to hide from their stealth-less approach, but it made no difference, the Pirates found us all the same. I never suspected Pirates to be so observant.

now my squad finds it self pinned in a desperate attempt to hold off these cyborg raiders

I don't think I want to die this way . . .



Ok, I can see a bit of the engine, maybe if I take a careful shot I can-

FirstMate: "Gut the other prisoners, their lives be of no concern, but the cap'n be wantin the Dorau alive!"

a figure leaps down from the ledge

Oken: "Eeah!"



Mint and Fuze draw arms to aid their leader



Fuze: "Oken! I can see four more who've just disembarked, what should we do?"

if we try to fight them like this we're dead, or worse . . . I've to figure out a plan



Oken: "everyone! make for that cave, it'll give us a choke point we can use!"

Fuze and Mint dash for the cave

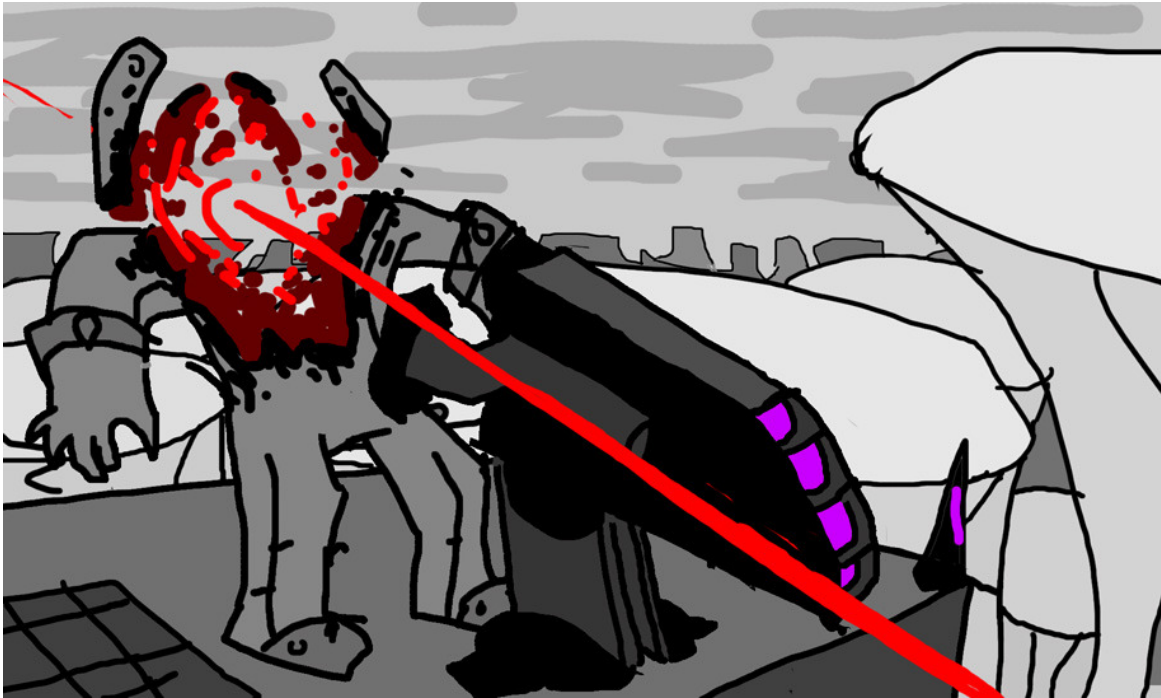
in that close a space Hoft's gun should be able to- OH NO! Hoft's in trouble!



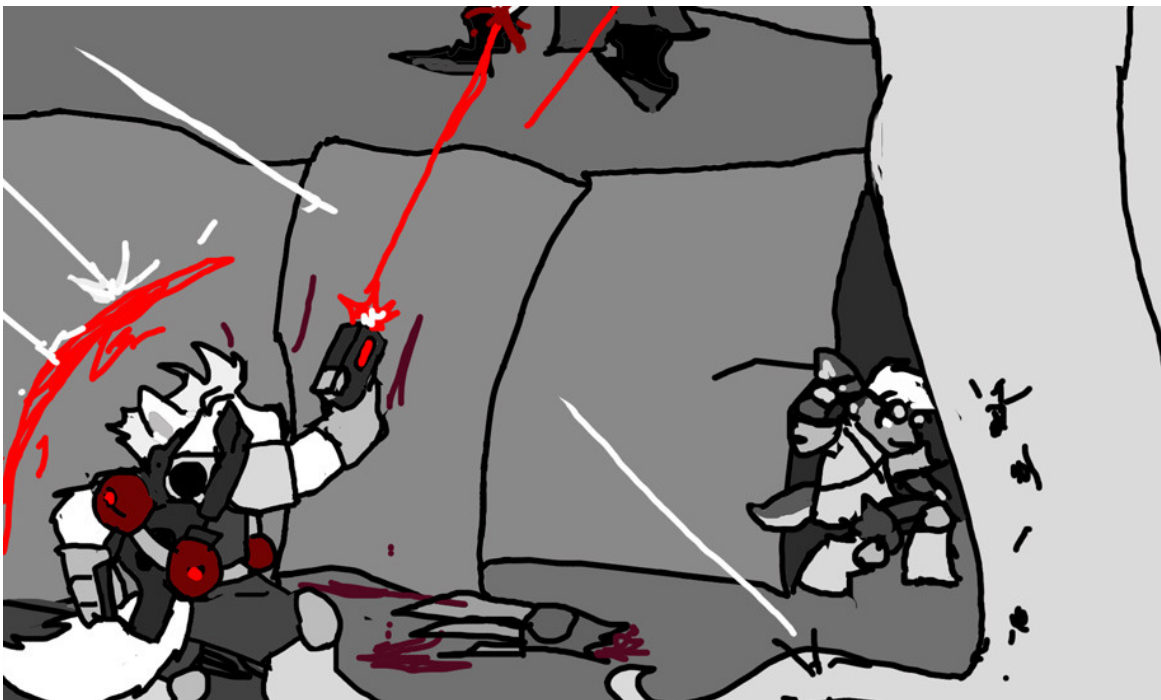
my RayGun is design for taking out lightly armored infantry, there's no way it'll hurt that transport.

Oken: "Hoft! we have to get to the cave now!"

Hoft seems to agree



Oken makes a shot for the gunner



Oken and Hoft dash for the cave



Oken provides covering fire, but her shot doesn't find it's mark

* * *

huh? they're not following us, in fact it looks like they're falling back to their ship . . .



we travel further into the cave, it goes on for quite a bit further but it's too dark to see where the cave ends

Hoft: "If you want I can blast us a new way out

Hoft pulls out the AntiMatter cannon.

Oken: "are you sure it's safe to use the Cannon? it looks damaged."

Hoft: "huh, it does?"

Hoft examines his weapon

Hoft: "it's just a couple scratches, superficial damage, I'm sure it's fine."

Oken: . . .



>Light source

my RayGun can provide a dim light to see by, but it's charge is down to 20% so I might not want to be too conservative with it. I suppose I could also ask Mint to make us some torches.

Oken: "Mint, can you take a look at Hoft's gun and tell us if it'll fire?"

Mint turns around

Mint: "yeah, it'll fire, it'll fire in all directions at the same time. it'll solve our light issue in one heck of a way"

Hoft: . . .

Mint: "what I'm saying is It's going to explode meat head, sooner rather than later if you try to use

the damn thing."

Hoft: ". . . can you fix it?"

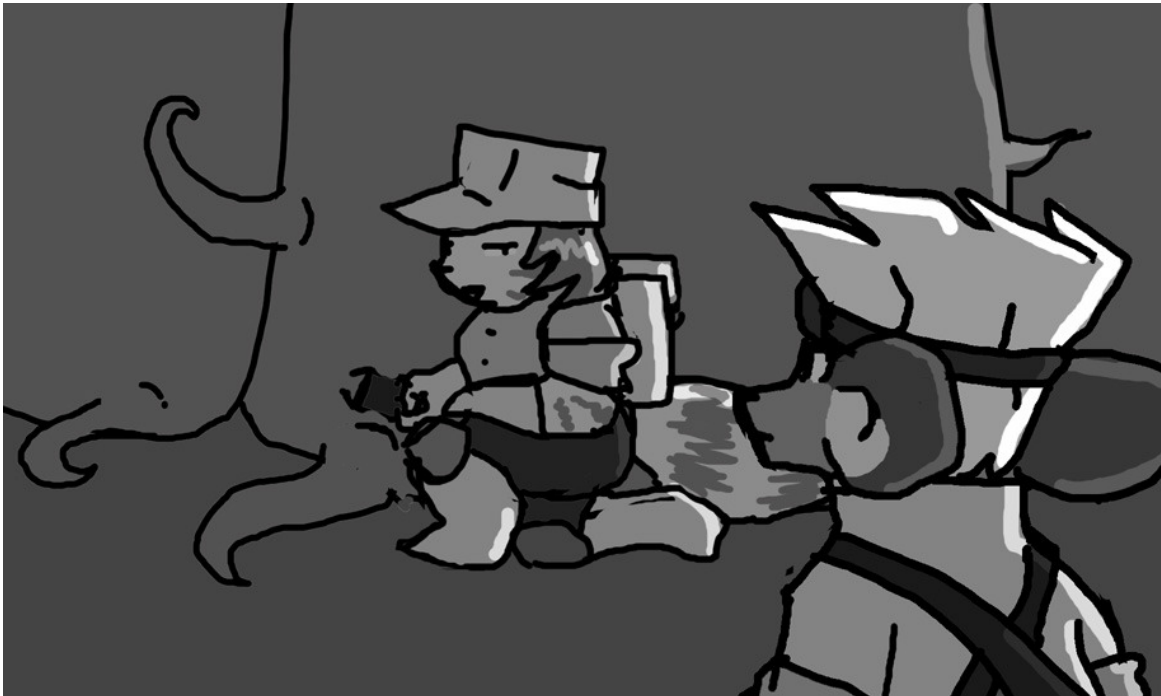
Mint: "heck should I know? you're the gun enthusiast."

Hoft: . . .

sigh

"I might be able to stabilize it, but that'll take at least an hour or so, I'll let Twiggy make the call whether it's worth the hassle. first things first, you need to shut your toy down before it microwaves us all."

Hoft powers down the gun



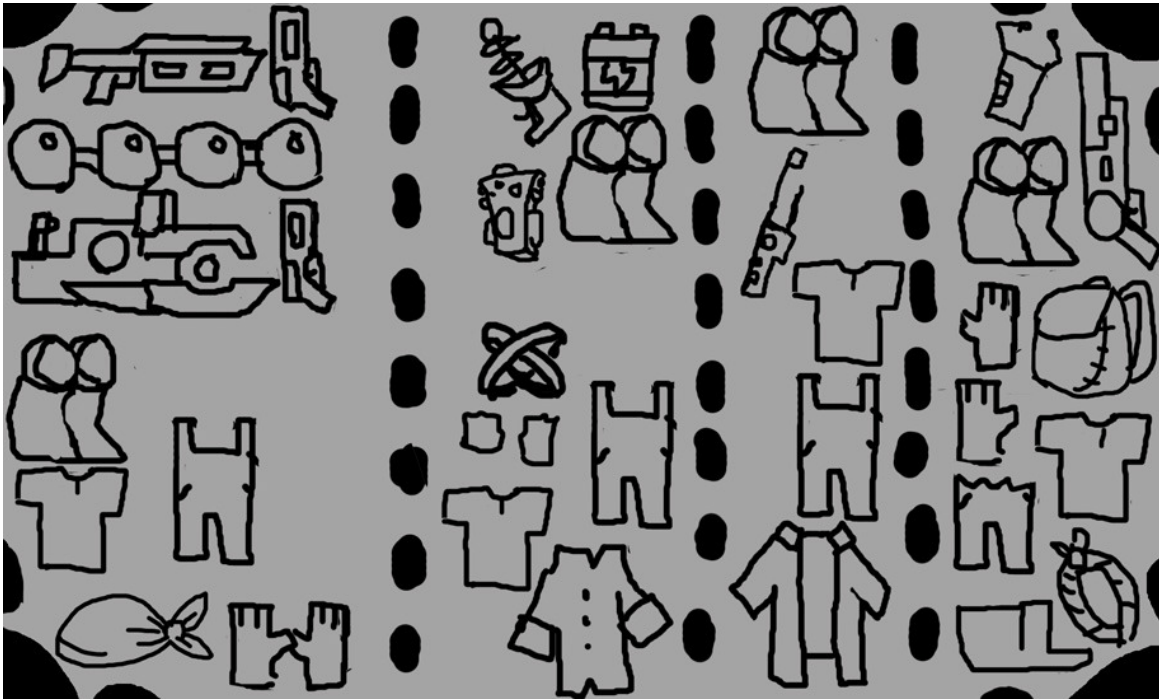
Mint explains that she could easily make some torches

Mint: "I can use some of these Shroom roots for the shaft, but we'll need some cloth, and we'll need to sacrifice a RayTech device to get the flammable battery juice "

hmmm, so we need to sacrifice some cloth and a RayTech device, what can we afford to lose?

Sacrificing a shield device should be a last resort, those things can save your life even at 1% power.

Ask Mint if it will ruin the device or if she just needs to remove the battery.



>Fuze's gun

StunPistol (6/20 shots), Solars made this gun, Mint says it's battery is not good

>ruining the device

Mint says the device will be fried and useless afterwards.

Here's a list of RayTech devices we have and their current charge rating

GravBoots(x4)(84% charge each), **RayGun (2/10 shots, 20% charge)**, **StunPistol (6/20 shots)**, **hat**, **HandLaser (10/20 shots, 50% charge)**, **HandLaser (16/20 shots, 80% charge)**, **NanoStitcher (72% charge)**, **Tazer (90% charge)**, **AntimaterCannon (70/100 shots, 94% charge)**, **ShieldBattery (x4)(94%,96%,96%,90% charge)**, **SpaceCompass! (70% charge)**, **RapidLaser (2/50 shots, 5% charge.)**

Battery (100% charge) it's probably not a good idea to use this one, it's too useful for charging another device

I also need to decide what cloth source to use

>>322192

The Rapidlaser. Two shots means that thing doesn't have a lot of use left and it's less useful than the raytech piston and the antimatter laser by far.

Hoft is obviously the Kirk of the group, I'm a little surprised he hasn't volunteered his shirt already.

>>322200

Uh, the RayGun is Oken's gun that kills absolutely everything ever. We want to keep that.



Hoft and Mint offer to sacrifice their headgear for the greater good of the mission.

the RapidLaser is also sacrificed.

* * *

after what feels like an hour of marching, Hoft sees what appears to be natural light



Hoft hands Fuze his torch, turns on his shields and stealthily approaches the light source.



I listen for a while but don't hear anything, guess it's safe enough to take a peek.

Can't see any pirates up there, looks like just a bunch of rocks and shrooms.



the passageway seems to continue going after this point, Space compass indicates the passage is going in a north east direction.

Oken: "Hoft can you go take a look around up there?"

Hoft: "Sure thing"

Hoft takes a look around

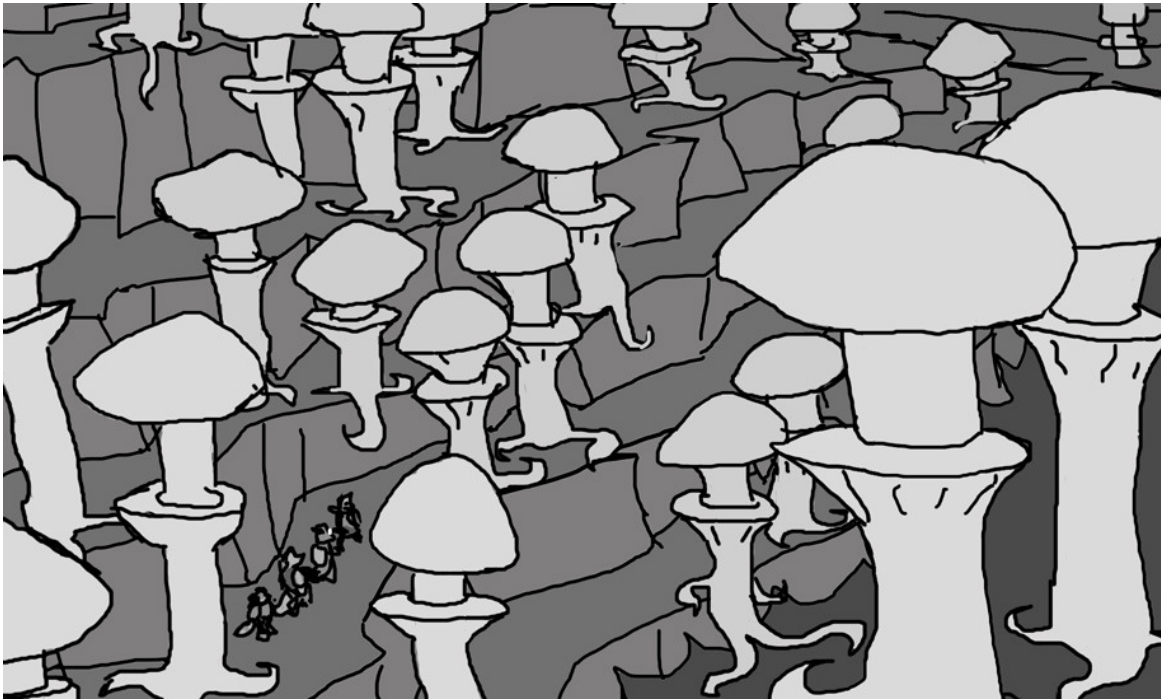


let's check the "pirate" setting on the SpaceCompass!

hmmm looks like there's a distant pirate reading coming from the south



Now what to do with the torches?



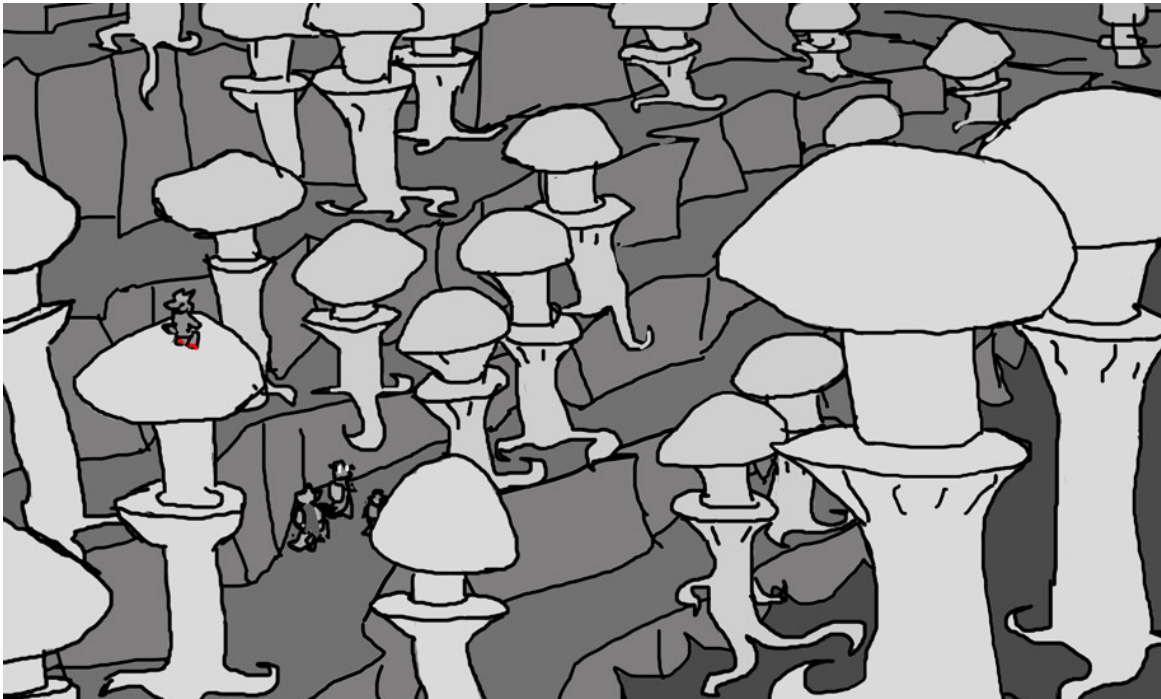
the torches are put out and left behind

* * *

Travel continues,
but after hours of further marching my team has become exhausted and still there is no hint of our destination.

There haven't been any complaints, but I can see their weariness in the way they limp forward.

our bodies aren't built for this kind of travel, I'm not sure how much further we'll be able to walk . . .



the cliffs go up too high, so I climb a mushroom instead, it doesn't give me much better bearings on the area . . .

I try flipping through the space compass's other settings. there are some inclinations towards north east but I can't get any sort of accurate distance reading.

Mint might be able to rig the compass into some sort of alarm but I'd rather she not tamper with it.



At this point it seems that rest is our only option.

Oken: "this looks like a good place"

During the rest time as team leader I can choose to Bond and increase the morale of one of my team mates, who should I pick?

Uh, why don't you guys just sit in a circle and talk as a group?

Start by talking about the first thing you want to do as soon as you get out of here. Maybe have a nice Skrynn trout dinner or a Maloran ice pop on the beach at sunset.



Hoft: ". . . Oken, I owe you my life. if you hadn't come back for me that Guilder would've torn my head off!"

Oken: "Hoft, I would never leave anyone behind!"

Hoft: "that's why you're team leader and I'm not.

It's hard to follow orders, to just be the pawn on a chess board, to accept that others know better than you.

but now I understand how foolish I've been, now I'm ready Asnia Oken, I'm ready to obey!"

Oken: "thank you Phestrius Tsen-Hoft"

Oken performs the ritual of bonding

* * *

The Ritual is successful! Hoft's Loyalty is now bound to Oken's Command!

Hoft: "Oken, I'm sorry for all the mistakes I've made, I will not fail you again! I shall fight by your word now and your word alone, I swear it"



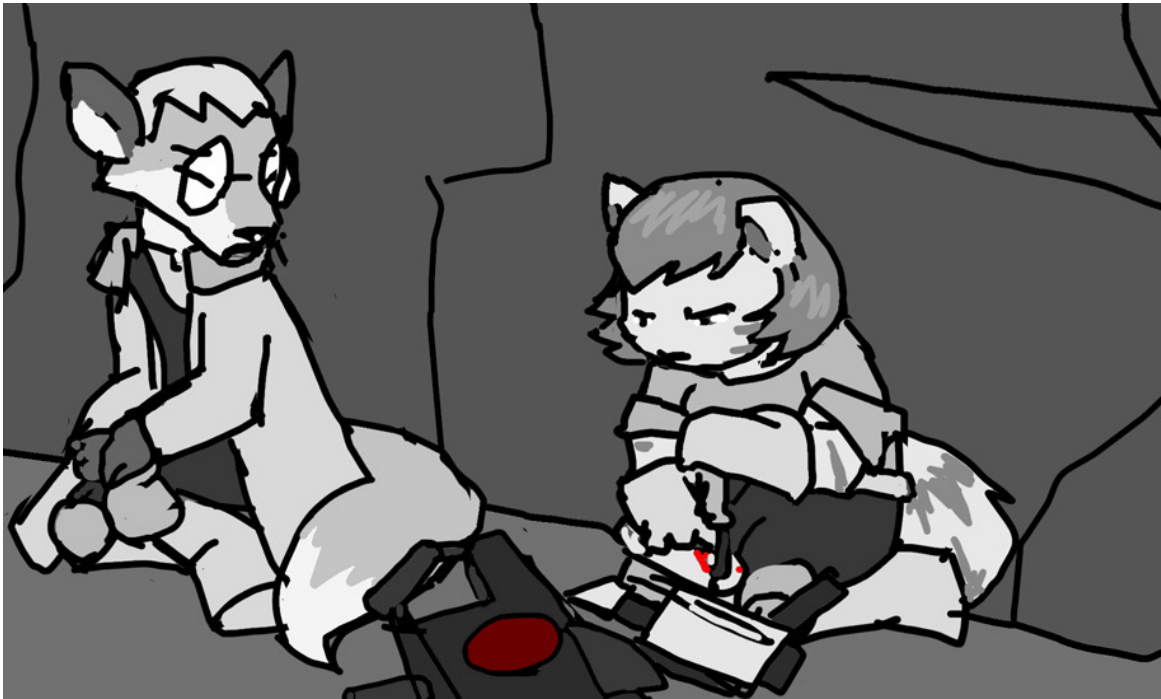
Oken: "Phestrius, you are not a pawn, you're a knight!"

I'm not exactly sure what that's suppose to mean, but it seems to make him feel better anyways.

as I talk more with Phestrius, the conflicts of our cultures, the politics between our worlds and all the other differences we hold seem to have faded away. It is as if we are simply two clanmates, long time friends and true allies fighting against the universe for our survival.

We exchange war stories, reminisce of simpler times, and joke about our plans for the future.

Time seems to pass quickly . . .



Fuze: "you don't appear to be working on AntiMatter Cannno . . ."

Mint: "I'm not, I'm working on improving the piece of pinkskin scrap you've been waving around"

Fuze: . . .

"How did you get that anyways?"

Mint: "I picked it up after you dropped it back in the tunnel."

Fuze: "I don't recall that . . ."

Mint: "your welcome."

She doesn't seem in much of a mood to chat



what am I doing? Mint has been a great asset to our team, and has worked very hard to insure our success. Despite her peculiarities and objectionable attitude she deserves far more respect then I've given her!"

Fuze: ". . . thank you Mint, thank you for everything you've done for us, none us would have made it this far if it weren't for you, I apologize for my poor conduct and lack of respect."

Mint: "Don't worry about it Fuze, like any good soldier I'm just doing what's best for the Alliance."



hmmm something sounded off about what she just said-

huh? what is she doing pointing the gun at-



oh!

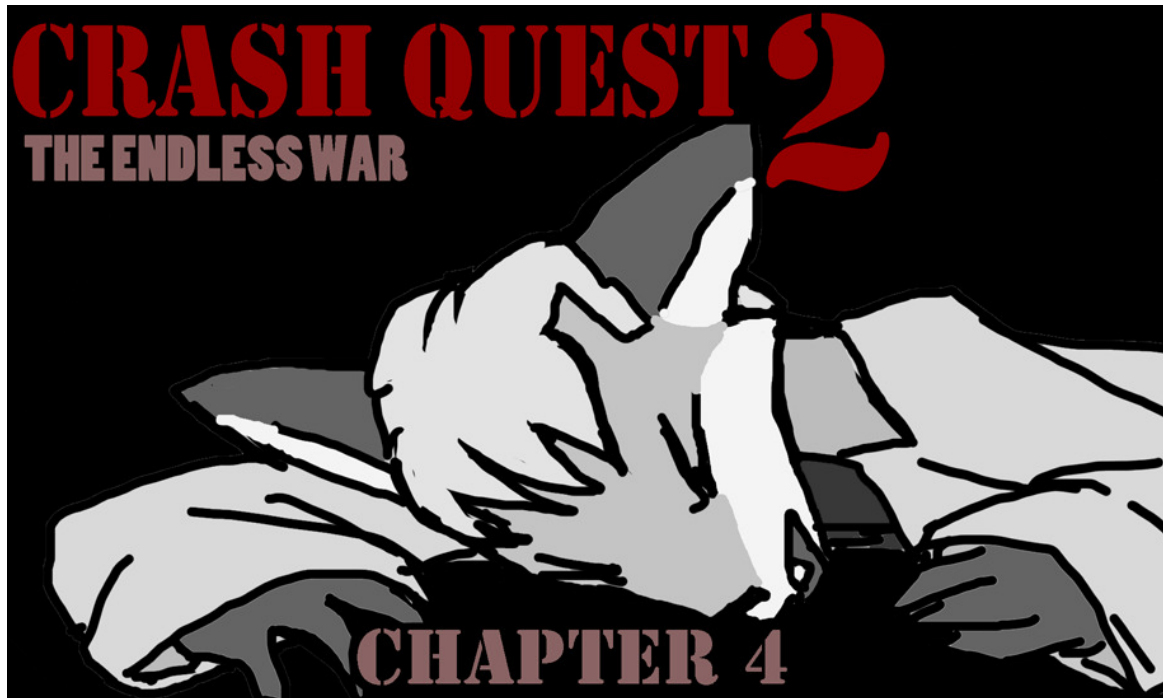
I feel a sharp burning sensation in my chest!
I've been shot!

I try to cry out, but the words die in my throat

everything begins to fade . . .



Chapter 3: End



previous threads

<http://quest.lv/kusaba/questarch/res/263558.html>

<http://tgchan.org/kusaba/questarch/res/303938.html>

discussion

<http://tgchan.org/kusaba/questdis/res/335842.html>

>when we last left our heroes, Doctor Fuze had just been shot! was it lethal? will his murderer go to jail? keep reading to find out.



My name is Belial Fuze, doctor.

My senses feel odd as if numb . . . perhaps I'm asleep.

I- I can't quite remember . . . something unfortunate happened . . .



T-that's right! Mint shot me.

I can't hear anything, but I choose to play dead just in case.

Voice: "GET UP Rirthian! I will not waste words with a corpse . . . "

the words fracture into Fuze's mind like nails through glass, the hissing tone that accompanies the pain resembles radio static.

Voice: "fortune has smiled upon you creature, BroodMother Tzolm has ask me to stay my hand, and deliver a message, listen well for I have no requirement to repeat it . . . "

Instinctually Fuze turns to face the speaker . . . an act he would quickly regret, the one time his poor eyesight would have proved a blessing it is miraculously cured

Fuze: "AAH!"

Voice: "Brood Mother wishes for you to understand that the creature that felled you is setting acts into motion that will damage the future of both our races. it is Brood Mother's wish that you prevent this from happening."

Fuze: "w-wait, I can't-"

Voice: "your oppressor has left her watch, gather your optics and act now! you will not get another chance . . . or ignore this warning it makes little difference to me."



Fuze: "I know how your poison and lies work creature! I'll not be your pawn!"

Voice: "your pitiful mind is unrevealing . . . let is not be said Acidath the SoulStalker is unsporting, I release thee!"

the dreamscape shatters away

Fuze: "AAaaaah!"

my head, it's throbs heavily and my ears ring, I smell pinkskins . . . I-I can't see, everything is a blur
...



aha! my spectacles, I put them on!

Jones: " . . . huh?"



Fuze: "EEEEAAAH!"

Jones: ". . . I guess you really aren't dead"

>>389730

>>389769

I-I wish I had that level of self control . .

Fuze: "I demand you give me back my pants!"

Jones: "wha? these aren't your pants, these are part of a costume I "borrowed"."



Fuze: "just give me the pants!"

Jones: "whatever."

* * *

Fuze: "So where are all my companions?"

Jones: "they scattered after I handed out the costumes, anyone ever tell you how weird you guys act?"

Prince: "Officer Fuze it is good to see you functional again."

Jones: "oh I guess the robots still here."



Hugging Prince would be awkward, uncomfortable and inappropriate (given current company)

Instead I shall give the robot a firm manly shoulder clamp to reinforce our camaraderie.

Fuze: "I share the sentiment Prince, it is good to have you back online."

It seems all my equipment is in order, my stun pistol however is missing.

Fuze: "hmmm why would she take off my gear?"

Jones: "actually that was me, I needed to to put on your costume."

Fuze: "what are these costumes?"

Jones: "lots of good people have lost friends and family to the Astranian advance . . . and some people tend to hold grudges. The way I see it walking into Memora dressed like little soldiers is not a smart idea, I took the liberty of picking you guys up some less political clothes, maybe pass you off as Blackmerchants."



Fuze: "you should know better than to take an Astranian's clothes!"

Jones: "you were out cold, you rather I let one of your pals dress you up?"

Fuze: "J-just don't let it happen again! anyways where did you say the other were?"

Jones: "off somewhere getting changed into their costumes I imagine."

Fuze: "Prince, Mint attacked me, I need to know where she went."

Prince: "data indicates she left with AcePilot Oken and Gunner Hoft."

Fuze: "hmm, Jones I don't know what she's after but there's a good chance she may be planning to betray us all, we have to be-"

Jones: "wait she attacked you? I wasn't there but I'm pretty sure the tiny deer said you hit your head on a rock or something."



Fuze: "Jones I need your help find-"

Jones: "no need, here they are"

Oken: ". . . Okay everybody, remember these clothes aren't armoured, which means we should try to avoid getting hurt."

Mint: "ya ya, whatever, let's just get this done, so I can get out of this clown gettup."



Fuze "Mint! you-"

Oken: "Belial!"

*hug"

Fuze: "uh?"

Oken: "I'm so glad you're OK Fuze, we were so worried you weren't going to make it!"



>>390436

>>390440

>>390448

my whole life I've been told to keep things private, to deal with everything in proper channels and at proper times . . .

. . .but this time, I don't know.

Oken: "Fuze are you all right?"

Mint: "I'm sure he's fine, he's still a little woozy from being out cold for sometime, after a little rest I'm SURE he'll remember his accident, isn't that right Fuze?"

>>390481

she's smiling

Fuze: "there was no accident . . ."

she won't get away with this

Fuze: "there was never any rock, and I never hit my head! IT WAS YOU! you shot me with a stun pistol Geragine Mint!"

Oken: "W-what?"



Fuze: "it doesn't take a medical professional to tell the difference between-"

Oken: "STOP, stop this!"

Fuze: "uh?"

Oken: "I don't understand what this is all about, and I don't want to! we have to work together now more than ever if we want to get out of here alive!"

Prince: "all of our skills are crucial at this stage of crisis, social volatility will endanger the mission"

Fuze: "but-"

Oken: "I just want all this arguing to be put on hold, OK everyone?"

Mint: "forgive me Oken, I will stay in line from this point on."

Fuze: . . .



Fuze: "Oken, she SHOT me!"

Oken: "Mint is our Friend and comrade, she would NEVER shoot you"

stun shots don't leave a mark noticeable to the untrained eye.

Fuze: "she took my stun pistol!"

Oken: "AFTER you hit your head, she had to salvage it AND the antimatter cannon to rebuild Prince."

interesting . . .

Jones: "We shouldn't stick around here too long, the pirates are still searching for you."

Fuze: "Oken You can't solve problems by ignoring them. Not in medicine, not in anything else. I can't trust Mint, and you shouldn't either."

Oken: "I've known Mint for three years and you for only a week, If I should not trust someone it should be you!"

technically we've seen each other aboard the command ship for months, but we've never interacted.

Oken: "but I DO trust you Belial Fuze, you want to know why? because Commander Flek hand picked every one of us to be his best, and he doesn't pick traitors! I trust the commander's judgement, so should you!"



>>391144

discrediting the commander will only make her more angry at this point
damn, I might have to let this go . . . for now, at least until I can prove Mint shot me.

Hoft picks up Prince

Hoft: come on let's go to this town Pinky's been talkin about."

...

Jones: "So the super laser had to be scrapped huh?"

Fuze: "the anti-matter cannon? apparently"

Jones: "shame, gun was sure good for frying pirates

Fuze: "I thought you hated it"

Jones: "a gun's a gun, generally I only hate the people behind them"

Fuze: "fair enough"

...

I feel the back of my head . . .

HUH!?! dried blood?!



Fuze: "Jones, what do you think happened?"

Jones: "what do I think? I think we'll figure all this out later."

Fuze: . . .

* * *

Control switching back to Oken

Jones: "well here we are, the Port of Memora."

Oken: "It looks like a fortress"

Jones: "these days what town isn't? right just let me do all the talking, actually you guys should probably stay hidden until I give the word."



we remain out of sight as Jones approaches the doorman

Jones: "Hey Kashton, long tim-"

the guard rams a gun into Jones' face

Kashton: "Mullet Jones, they always said you were one to make stupid choices."

Jones: "What the hell man!?"

Kashton: "my only regret is that I don't have time enough to make this really hurt."

Jones: "damnit Kash you got the wrong guy, and Marshal Droegen's gonna be mighty pissed to find my corpse at his doorstep."

Kashton: "Droegen's ain't got time for lowlifes like you, who bust up all his skimmers, and with all the shit you pulled the only thing he'll be mad about is that I wasted you first"

Jones: "Ah! I'm serving as a guide for Black Merchant, you shoot me they might black list this place for the rest of the decade!"

Kashton: ! . . .

Jones: "on top of that, Droegen's expecting these guys specific. with out a guide they'll just up and leave."

Kashton: "Ha Ha for a second their I almost believed you, ain't no stranners round here."

Jones: "just give-"

Kashton: "Time to die Mullet Jones!"



Oken: "Hey!"

Kashtom: "eh?"

Oken: "You better not do that, I'll report you."

Kashton: "Stranners?! what the hell do you want."



Oken: "what I WANT is my guide alive!"

Kashton: "Fine don't tell, but you best not cause any trouble or I'll make regret it, and Mullet you bought yourself some time, don't expect it too last."

and with a sneer the guard runs off

Jones: ". . . uh thanks."

Oken: "I still owe you from saving us all those times, it's only right."

Jones: "Ya?"

Oken: "so what now?"

Jones: "well now that we've gained entrance we can go to see Marshal Droegen immediately, or if you're tired or hungry or need to sort out that drama earlier there's a hotel that serves your kind, I can take you there."

hmm I am pretty hungry . . .



Oken: "Maybe it'd be best if you travelled in disguise?"

Jones: "sure, but people already know who your guide is, I suppose I could let you wander Memora alone."

we enter the town, I see Pinkskin eyes watching me. they smile and act pleasant enough . . . but I can feel the distrust, the uncertainty and hear the murmurs of aggressors.

>grab a quick bite to eat. may not get a chance after the meeting.

Oken: "I might be hungry, would there be time to catch a meal before the meeting?"

Jones: "I doubt it, Preparing food that you guys can safely eat takes a fair bit of time. you might be able to convince a cook to give you raw food rations, but that'll probably come off more as an insult to his ability."

Oken: "We could say that we're in a hurry?"

Fuze: "Astranian ration packs are one of the BlackMerchants prime exports it might seem suspicious if we came in expecting to buy them.



Oken failed to build adequate conviction

Oken: "um . . . well I guess we should go to the meeting first?"

Jones: "you guess? gimme a break."

Oken: "well . . ."

Jones: "I've got debts to go pay, you find your own way to Droegen or where ever you wanted to go"

Jones turns right and starts walking away

Oken: "wait!"

he ignores me and keeps walking

Hoft: "bah, dirty Pinkskin. we're better off without em I say."



Oken: "come on let's follow him."

after a while he stops and turns around
It turns out we aren't very good at stealth.

Jones: "why are you following me?"

Oken: "it's not safe to travel pinkskin towns without a guide!"

Jones: "I'm not a safe kinda guy so that's your first mistake. See that big building over there? That's Droegens place, you want to be safe go there."



Oken: "Jones! we helped you earlier. don't you see it's good for both of us to be working together!"

Jones: "yeah . . . no, get lost"

I'm really starting to dislike this Pinkskin

Oken: "come on everyone, let's go"

* * *

Commando: "well I'll be damned, that low life actually came through for us. . . I suppose you guys are here to see Marshal Droegen? he told me he had great use for Astranian talents you know."

Fuze whispers to me

Fuze: "Oken that woman's a Militia Commando, they are known for being highly trained freelance operatives with specialised weapons and armour for fighting alien threats, they are incredibly dangerous and I've heard they hunt Astranians for sport. Please be careful this is not the sort of person we want to make angry"



Hoft: "If she was planning on killing us, she'd have done it already,"

I turn back to the Commando

Oken: "Yeah we're here to see Droegen."

Commando: "you may pass . . . don't worry I hold no grudges against the Astranians, I'm just here to keep the peace."

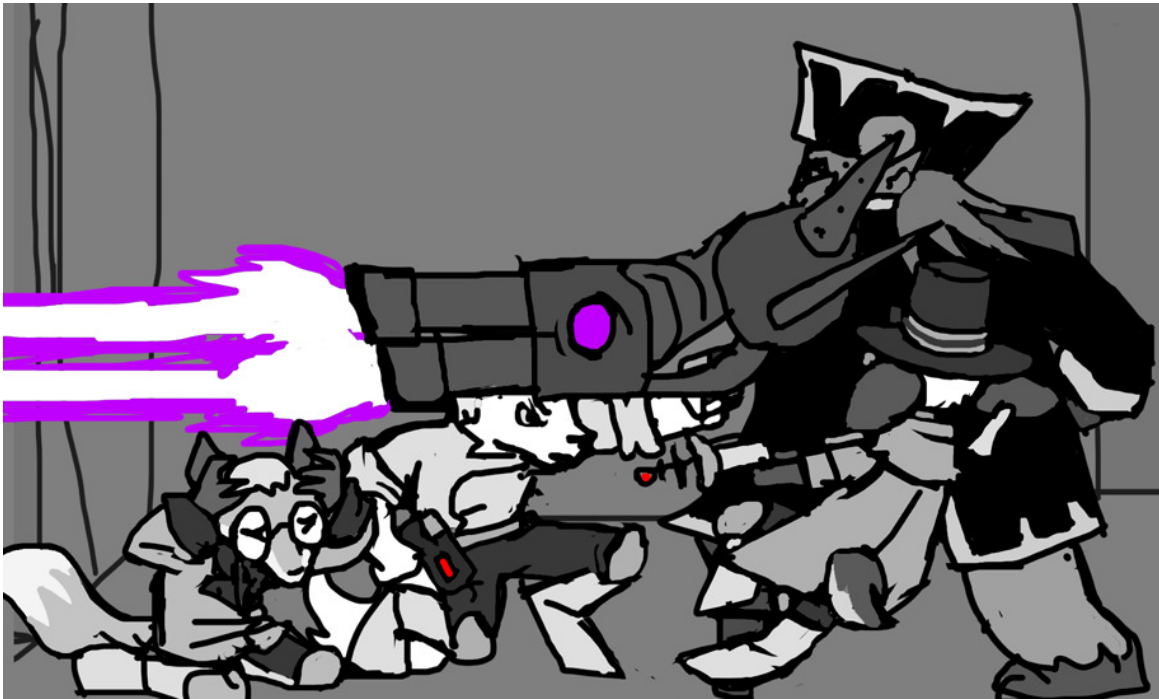
>>393918

that lady has some pretty nice looking powered armour, to bad they probably don't make them in Astranian sizes.

* * *

We enter through the doors and are greeted by a familiar face.

Arclite: "these Stranners again! a trap, no doubt, don't worry cap'n I'll be dealing with the blighters!"



Oken: "Hey, you kill us you'll be pissing off the Marshal. we're useful to him!"

Arclite: "yar the Marshal can suck me cannon!"

Oken: Ya know if you didn't have that bad attitude towards everything you guys might still have a ship and not a pile of rubble!

Arclite: "RYAAAAHI'LL CUT YOU TO RIBBONS!"

hey lashes out with his cannon, we easily dodge . . . I think we made him mad.

Hoft: "I'm getting really tired of all this"

Arclite: "then stand still I'll make sure you won't have to worry about this ever again."

* * *

A Solar bursts in

????: "damnit, can't leave you folks alone for a second with out someone trying to rip someone else's head off"

he doesn't seem entertained.



the Commando busts in weapons armed

Commando: "everybody freeze!"

Oken: "He's the one doing all the shooting!"

Commando: "why am I not surprised"

Arclite: "Bah! I'll kill all of ya-"

GuilderCaptian: "Mister Arclite, It's clear we're outmatched, stop making a fool of yourself."

Arclite: " . . . "

the other Solar speaks again.

????: "it's shit like this that can lead a man to drink. speaking of which who's thirsty?"

Captian: "aye"

the man hands the guilder a bottle.

he turns to us

????: "would you have a seat, I don't like seeing people so on edge"

it seems like violence is over for now, it may be time to start asking questions.



We sit down across from the guilders.

????: "that's better, now Let me take this moment to welcome you all to Memora. I think it would be proper to introduces who we all are."

Oken: "you're the marshal who wanted to see us aren't you?"

????: "That's right, I'm Al Droegen. It seem you're already acquainted with Mister Arclite."

GuilderCaptain: "Gheh"

Droegen: " . . . an this cheerful fellow is Captain Kushkron."

Oken: "you have a very pretty hat Captain"

Kushkron: "is that the calibre of flattery that enthralled my people for centuries? I'm not impressed."
the guildler continues drinking from the bottle

Fuze: "The Guilders are dead race Oken, Speak to them as you would speak to the dead: preferably not at all.

Arclite: "aye, we are dead Astranian, and we'll be dragging you down to the pits of hell with us!"

Hoft: "I'd to see you try AUGIE!"

I see the hatred in the eyes of these guilders. I should have every reason to hate them back, but I dunno . . .



Oken: "Everybody Please stop fighting, this is neutral ground where we put aside war and all that. Fuze, Hoft I know the Guilders enslaved us and all that and that was totally not cool, but we're going to have to deal with that later on our own time. As for now we should be respectful to the Marshal and the other Solars they run this town so we should act proper and all that."

Arclite grabs one of the bottles and sits down.

Fuze: "Forgive me Oken, I spoke out of turn."

Hoft: . . .

Droegen: "huh you're a Dorau if I'm not mistaken, didn't realise there were any of you left . . . You aren't a pilot by any chance?"

Kushkron: "Marshal, stop stalling, why did you bring us here?"

Droegen seems to ignore the guilder and continues to stare at me as if awaiting a response. Hoft mumbles to himself."

Hoft: "where the hell did Mint run off too?"



I-I can't help Mint now, she'll have to make do on her own were ever she is.

Oken: "Yeah, I'm a pilot; Ace Pilot Asnia Oken!"

Drogen: "thought so, You're Masoro's kid."

Oken: "you knew my father?"

Drogen: "everyone who was anyone knew Masoro Oken, he made it his mission to try and convince the most influential people of our time, the fact that he chose to include me in all that is flattering. Your father was truly a remarkable being"

Oken: "My father was an idiot, a coward and a traitor he's only worth remembering as a lesson on how to live your life entirely wrong!"

The marshal seems stunned by my accurate representation of reality. when he finally speaks there is a strange tiredness in his voice.

Drogen: " . . . I suppose every now and then the apple does fall far from the tree."



for some reason I feel my eyes begin to water.

Oken: "I'm sorry I-"

Droegen: "Don't sweat it kid, life's been hard for you lately, hard for all of us for that matter."

Fuze: "I assume you started this line of questioning for a reason?"

Droegen: "I did and it conveniently works into the reason I brought you all here. Three years ago I spoke to Masoro Oken for the last time, what he told me I'll never forget.

'Marshal, this endless, pointless war has gone on for forty years and now it will finally be over. I sincerely thank you for the part you played in making my dream a reality.'

but as we all know that's not what happened, the man's dream remained just that-"

Fuze: "Because your kinsmen betrayed and murdered him in an act of genocide numbering in the millions"

Kushkron: "Hah! as if the Astranians have any right to object to genocide."

Droegen: "hey, stop that! I don't think I caught your name mister . . .?"

Fuze: "DOCTOR Belial Fuze."

Droegen: "Okay Doc, I hear what you're saying and believe me I was first to condemn the militant jackasses in my government but then I stopped and thought. I thought: why? and I want you all to put this into consideration; no matter how you look at it the Solars are losing this war, from this peace treaty we had everything to gain and nothing to lose, so why sabotage it? why nuke a civilian

target? why commit genocide against the only people who sympathise with our situation? what did the Solar Militia hope to gain?"



Hoft: "they wanted to uh... uhhh... hmmm... I got nothing."

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I can't keep treating Fuze this badly, I just can't deal with this he not like any other leader he just let's me do everything, I'll deal with Mint I'll make this all better and be a good leader like Commander Flek. . .

Fuze: "You're correct the Solars have no motive."

Droegen: "exactly which brings-

Fuze: "you are implying those alien creatures are responsible for the situation at Doraun."

Hoft: "wait, I remember that Pinkskin we interrogated mentioned the Solar government was entirely controlled by these bugs, I guess it would fit if that'd make them want to wipe out planets."

Fuze: "that man was insane Hoft, and on top of that he was little more than a front line trooper we can't trust anything he said."

Droegen: "what's the matter with your pilot?"



Oken: "I'm just a little upset at being misled."

Droegen: "I think that's something we can all relate too. Doc, how bout get into a debate of responsibility later the point I'm trying to make is that these creatures pose a common threat to everyone."

Fuze: "I suppose that's true."

Droegen: "judging from your comments I'm willing to guess you all know what this is"

the marshal throws a crawler husk onto the table

Droegen: "I was planning on keeping it alive for study but in the end I had no choice but to kill it, why did I have to do that?"

Kushkron: "the danger of psionics."

Droegen: "That's right, these creatures are like living two way radios, they broadcast some sort of psionic impulse message and at the same time they tap into minds and transmit whatever information back"

Hoft: "that doesn't sound like a radio at all"

Droegen: "then think of your own metaphor! to get back on track I learned that the creature on the other end of the line was something called 'BroodMother' though I suspect this one is not the only such operator, Broodmother just being the one 'aiding' the solars"

Droegen waits for someone to speak, after a several seconds pass he speaks again."

Droegen: "as a sign of trust I've told you everything I know about these creatures, now it's your turn to provide enlightenment."



Hoft is the first to speak up.

Hoft: "The Astranian government doesn't Like to talk about them but I've found out a few things. I think they've got some sort of hive structure, they can manipulate and taunt you at a distance, and if they get on your neck they can control your mind, I know from experience. What's more they came from the IceWorld: Vin-Malor, Same place that our engineer is from. Err... Did anybody see where she got off to? She would know more about them than any of us."

Droegen: "came from Vin-Malor? where they make all the RayTech? how do you know this?"

Hoft: "well umm, I just do, OK?"

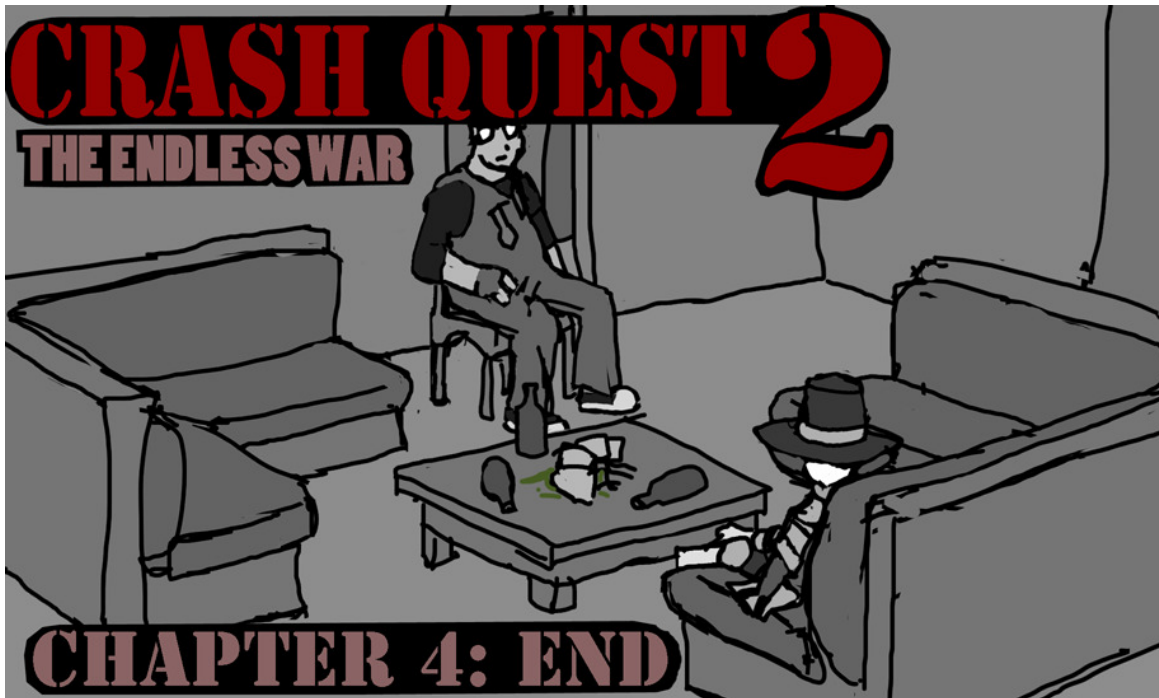
Fuze stand up on the couch

Droegen: "could you stop doing that, you're getting mud on the upholstery ."

Fuze: "one of these operator bugs spoke to me this very morning it warned me of the danger our Engineer Mint posed, obviously I assumed it was some sort of ploy but Mint's action have done nothing but further support it's claims. Suspicious in the extreme through out our entire endeavour, from shooting me to wandering off alone she simply can not be trusted. her connection to these creatures is obvious I agree with Hoft the Answers to the mystery of the bugs lie with her."

Kushkron: "an Astranian being treacherous scum? I find this easy to believe let us find this creature."

Droegen: "hold it, If we do this we'll just be falling into the same old trap, can't you see this is exactly the sort of thing these Aliens want."



Fuze: "Marshal do you have any sort of surveillance with which to find Mint?"

Droegen: "fraid not"

Fuze opens his mouth to speak but pauses, I see a look of doubt in his eyes, he then shakes his head.

Fuze: "well then we'll have to do this on foot, come on! we have a rogue Maloran to catch!"

Fuze, Hoft and the guilders leave in search of our Engineer.

Commando: "Don't worry Marshal, I'll keep them in line."

the Commando leaves

Droegen: *sigh* "you best be going with them, hopefully this won't turn into the mess I expect."

I'm not sure what to feel at this point . . .

CHAPTER 4: end



Previous threads.

<http://tgchan.org/kusaba/questarch/res/263558.html>

<http://tgchan.org/kusaba/questarch/res/303938.html>

<http://tgchan.org/kusaba/questarch/res/389505.html>

discussion

<http://tgchan.org/kusaba/questdis/res/335842.html>

>the Astranian's guide Jones is in trouble of his own, the situation doesn't look good.



I had a name once, but no one remembers it, nowadays people tend to call me Mullet Jones.

People have told me I'm prone to doing really stupid things, judging from the three brand new holes I've acquired it's probably true.

Hopefully this won't be the last stupid thing I do.



I've gotta get out of here,
let's consider the area

- 1) Droegen's joint, seeing as he's the man who wants me dead, walking by his front door may not be my safest option.
- 2) The mines, plenty of good places to hide, but also a lot of dead ends.
- 3) The starport, best way to get off world. also where Droegen and his commandos shot me up. just finished getting the hell out of there.
- 4) Market square, not sure if it's of any importance.
- 5) The main gate complete with watch tower and armed guards.
- 6) The docks, fishermen live around here. A boat might be a nice but won't compete with Droegen's skimmers.



Droegen always seemed a reasonable man to me, but even reasonable men can become violent under the right circumstances.

That skimmer I trashed must have been more valuable than I thought.

* * *

I see the mines, only a little further.

I hear the sounds of heavy pounding and cracking stone coming from behind me



>Move, into the mines, these guys won't have thermal vision or dogs will they?

I dunno I never thought of that . . .

>Also, that shot in you back doesn't look so good, what kind of weapon was it do you think?

Some sort of energy blaster, the kind that doesn't kill you outright.

. . . just a little further

ZAP

Jones: "HNNG!"

Damnit, bastards got me.

my heart freezes, my limbs seize up

. . . I see the ladder break away.



I just manage to grab onto the ledge.

I can barely move

not gonna make it easy for these bastards.



I push through the pain, and make my long crawl towards the mine.

I here footsteps.

I glance up,the face is not the one I expect.

Jones: "how the hell did you-"

the response I get is a raised gun.



I fire my weapon ain't no other choice

BANG

ZAP



select who will take charge of the Astranians

Dr. Belial Fuze
charismatic intellectual

or

AcePilot Oken
dynamic combat officer



Fuze takes command

the guilders headed towards the market, they seemed to have their own plan on finding mint, Hoft out paced me and we've lost him in the city somewere, leaving Oken and myself with Droegen's soldier.

Finding Mint has proven quite troublesome where ever she's gone none of the locals have seen her. Oken is taking this whole situation with Mint well but I can see it wearing away at her.

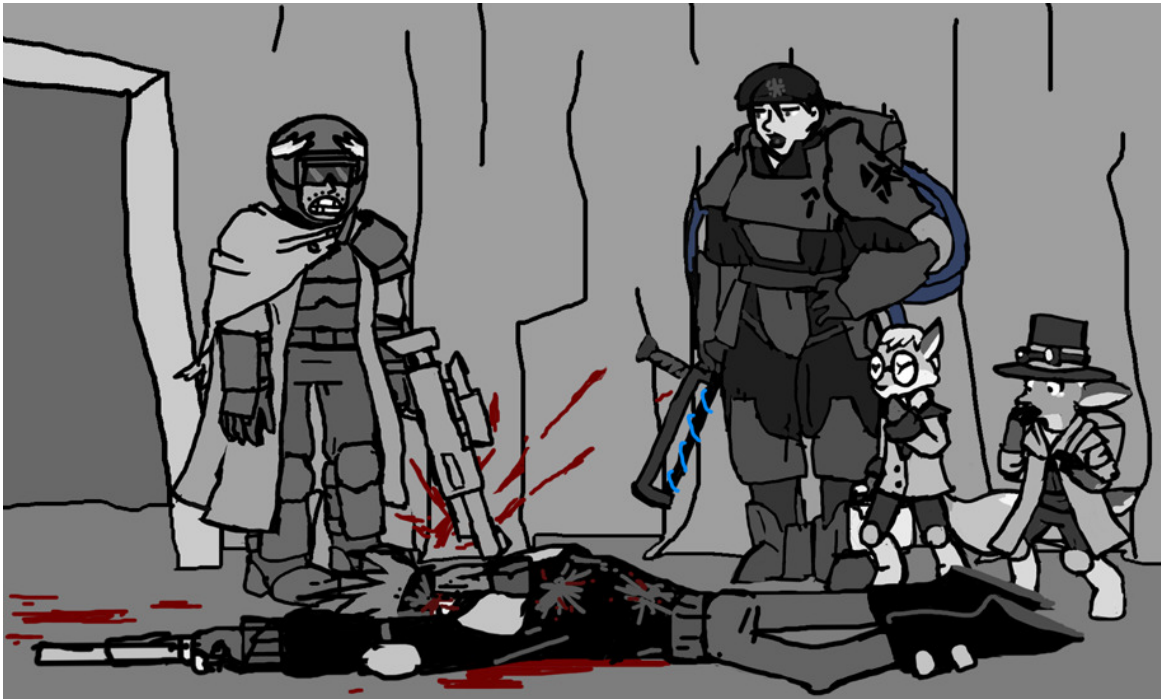
should we continue the search for Mint, try to regroup with Hoft or return to Droegen?



Finding Mint must be the priority!

MilitiaMan Kashton: "Lieutenant Ekkail! that man Jones has been shot, I found his body at the mines . . . he's dead!"

Fuze: *gaspe*!



the Militiaman takes us to the scene of the crime.

The solars begin discussing protocol and the possibility of eyewitness reports.

how shall I begin my investigation?



Jones risked his life for our sake many times, and in the end he gave it, the least I owe him is to show justice to his murderer.

>determine the cause of death

Jones took five shots, one in the chest, three in the back, a final killing blow was delivered to the temple.

>did he fire it at his attacker?

There are three empty cylinders in his revolver, this would imply yes, though it's possible he kept his gun half loaded.

>can you tell if all the nearby blood is his?

with out proper lab equipment or a medical scanner there is no way to tell.

>You think he was in the mine when this happened?

No, the blood spatter would indicate that he died on this spot, just outside the mine.

>what was the angle of the killing shot?

It appears he was shot in the left temple, so the attack must have be standing to his left.



>Start looking around for witnesses.

Fuze: "there had to be witnesses who saw what happened."

Lieutenant: "if there were, I will find them."

The Solar leaves.

>have oken hold his head up so you can get a better read on the angle

Oken doesn't seem to want to touch the body, I suspect she will be of little use in this investigation.

>what would be the likely height of the attacker?

There are too many unknown variables to make an accurate assessment at this time.

>Can you determine the nature of the killing blow? Was it a bullet, or raytech?

How odd, they appear to be energy weapon burns, but the blasts are too small to be from any Astranian weapons produced in the last two hundred years.

>If the attacker was wounded we might be lucky enough to find a blood trail.

Unfortunately there is nothing nearby that resembles a blood trail.



>but unless it's straight up impossible for old ass working raytech to be in circulation somewhere in the universe, we shouldn't leave the possibility out.

Indeed this may be a key element to the investigation; why would the killer use an antique weapon to slay Jones?

>By the way, I think there's bloodspatter up ahead, A person would have to get up close and shoot him while he was prone up here to fire a shot into his temple.

The pooling on this blood would indicate having fallen from a standing individual, judging from Jones' position this blood is likely not from the victim!

. . . but that's odd, Jones' injury would indicate he was shot in the head from his left, but this pool is directly in front of him.

>Look for signs of blood trails.

I again fail to locate any blood trail, whoever was bleeding here stopped bleeding before they moved on.

>Hair/fur? Surely at least some shedding occurs during stressful occasions like murder.

sadly I find no fur or hair of any note.

the remaining Solar speaks to me.

MilitiaMan Kashton: "You're being awful quiet Stanner, care to share your plotting with the rest of the world?"



>perhaps jones was looking to his right? perhaps there were two people? he was looking at one, but was shot by the other.

Two suspects seems the most likely scenario.

>Collect a blood sample

I collect two blood samples, one from the pool and one from Jones. I put the samples in my Medical kit.

>So if we were able to dabble on some of that blood on a cloth and wrap it around one of our weapons and ask a human to fire it,

>we could determine if it's stranner blood or not?

>Or is raytech security not THAT easily exploitable?

I'm no expert in the field of Raytech, but I would imagine if it were that simple to get Raytech working for Solars, their scientists would have figured it out by now.

MilitiaMan Kashton: "Hey, I'm talking to you, I don't like being ignored!"

Fuze: "you see this blood, it doesn't belong to Jones. Perhaps Jones shot his assailant."

Kashton: "I don't buy it, no way anyone survived a shot from jones' huge ass gun"

Fuze: "I'm only looking at the evidence, it also seems he was killed with a very weak energy weapon. Not modern raytech."

Kashton: "No way man, it's obvious your weapons did this no one else makes energy weapons. maybe your gear just sucks more than you know."

I don't think this Solar likes us very much.



Fuze "if this WAS done by an Astranian weapon it would have to be an ancient variant or a defective model-"

Kashton: "then we know what to look for, an Astranian murderer. Solars don't make anything like this . . . maybe a pirate."

Oken: "YOUR WRONG!"

Kashton: "WHAT?"

Oken: "Solars DO have energy weapons, I've seen them on Jucha!"

The Solar sneers at Oken.

Kashton: "Jucha is a backwater colony there's nothing there."

Oken: "they do have them! . . . the ones I saw were only stun weapons, but still! if they hand out that stuff to police troops they gotta have lethal stuff made too!"

Kashton: "go back to crying over the waste of space, let the men figure this out. Mr Fox you still haven't explained where the Attackers body went."



Fuze: "why would there be a body?"

Kashton: "because he was shot down, you said that wasn't Jones' blood. so where's the body."

Fuze: "regardless of calibre no gun always kills, and even if it did the body could have been moved."

Kashton: "moved! By who?!"

Fuze: "by the shooter. The one who killed Jones wasn't standing in front of him. yet Jones shot at the a person who was"

Kashton: "you think there's two murderers running around now? you're crazy too."

Fuze: "let's try to stay civil, also I'd appreciate it if you didn't talk down to my pilot she's a highly skilled member of my team."

Kashton: "As if there's any other way to talk to you freaks."

Fuze: "hey now-"

Lieutenant: "I've returned!"

I nearly jump as the Commando is suddenly behind me.

Fuze: "oh hello . . ."

Lieutenant: "mission accomplished, I've found our witness!"



Oken: "oh it's Prince!"

Fuze: "Prince, did you see what happened here? who shot jones?"

Prince: "The solar known as Mullet Jones was shot and killed by the solar known as Marshal Albert Droegen."

The Commando is visibly shocked by the revelation.



Lieutenant: "that doesn't make sense, if Droegen wanted someone dead, he would have gotten me to do it!"

Prince: "I am only reporting what I have witnessd"

>When was the estimated time of death for Jones?

one to two hours ago, and hour and a half ago we were meeting with Droegen.

if I had a medical scanner I could be more precise with time of death, prince has one hard wired if need be.

Fuze: "Prince, What weapon did Marshal Droegen use to shoot Jones?"

Prince: "Marshal Albert Droegen was wielding a custom built energy weapon of unique design."

hmm

Fuze: "Who was it that Jones shot?"

Prince: " . . . could you repeat the question?"

Fuze: "some of the blood there doesn't belong to Jones, and number of his rounds have been fired. Jones shot someone, who was it Prince?"

Prince: " . . . Mullet Jones fired upon one of Marshal Albert Droegen's soldiers."



Lieutenant: "I'll contact my troops, see if they've sustained any injuries"

Fuze: "thank you that will be most helpful."

The Commando leaves and I return my attention to Prince

Fuze: "Why didn't you say anything about the other soldiers?."

Prince: "It seemed irrelevant, Solars slaying solars is not the primary concern of the Astranian Alliance."

Fuze: "when did this happen?"

Prince: "according to my chronoscope exactly Sixty two minutes and thirty five seconds past."

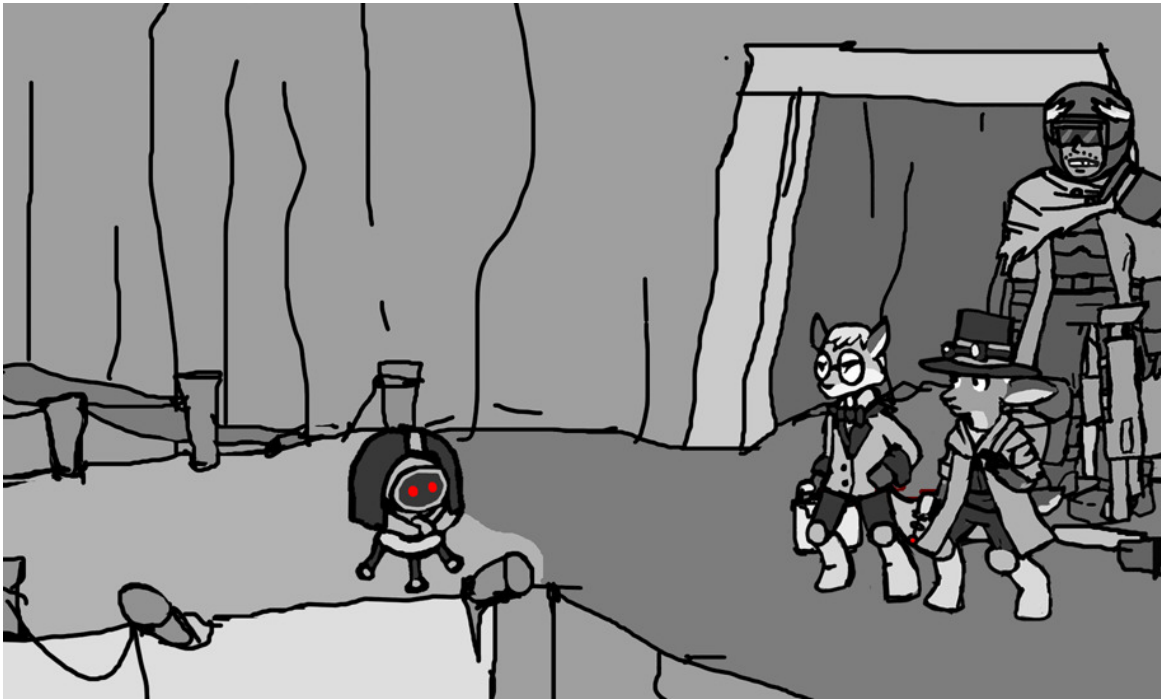
Fuze: "can you give me the position of everyone involved, including yourself."

Prince: "Indeed"

Prince displays a map on his view screen

Fuze "where was Mint during all this?"

Prince: "Mint was not present."



Prince: "Officer Fuze I would suggest you hold more trust for your peers."

Fuze: "you misunderstand I am simply concerned about Mint's well being."

Prince: "you need not be concerned, Engineer Mint is currently securing our force passage off world. She will contact you in good time."

Fuze: "so you know were she is?"

Prince: "I have no knowledge of Engineer Mint's current location, She has informed me she does not wish to be found."

>can a robot be programmed to lie?

no but they don't don't need to be.

Robots will lie from time to time, but rarely without good reason,
I'd like to call him on it now, but first I must find a flaw in his story.

perhaps I could also look for more clues, travel to another location or some other action to further my investigation.



Fuze: "did anyone flee into the mine?"

Prince: "I saw no one enter into the mines."

Fuze: "Prince who were you with when you arrived here?"

Prince: " . . . could you clarify?"

Fuze: "How did you end up here? you are immobile."

Prince: "Our Gunner Hoft dropped me here."

Fuze: "why did he drop you here?"

Prince: "Hoft seemed to be in a hurry. I was slowing him down."



>But wasn't Hoft only a little ahead of Oken and Fuze? Either Prince is lying like a mofu or there are doppelgangers around.

perhaps I should analyse Prince's proposed timeline.

we arrived in town at about midday

1:(12:15)Oken, Hoft carrying Prince and myself arrive at Droegens

2:(12:45)Hoft rushes out carrying prince, Oken myself not far behind

3:(01:00)Hoft who we've lost by this point abandons prince.

4:(01:25)Jones is shot dead

5:(02:15)we arrive at the murder scene

hmmm at a quick glance it seems to check out.

Fuze: "who ELSE were you with?"

Prince: "I arrived with only the Gunner Hoft"

Fuze: "Why all the need for clarification? it's almost like you need to process when you should have the information ready."

Prince: "Your line of questioning confuses me, perhaps if you could be more exact about what you wish to know."

Fuze: "hmm. Prince when was the last time you saw Mint? To relay the message that she doesn't want to be found, she must've come into contact with you after we lost sight of her. "

Prince: ". . . could you rephrase the question."



Fuze: "No more clarification, you heard what I said Prince."

Prince: "your lack of reason is worrying."

Fuze: "Answer the question."

Prince: " . . . "

Fuze: " . . . well?"

Prince: "Your question implies I met Engineer Mint in person, I did not. Engineer Mint contacted me by way of radio."



>radio broken

Prince's radio was broken . . .
wait no it wasn't.

Fuze: "Prince, you couldn't have been called by Mint!"

Prince: "explain."

Fuze: "YOU DON'T HAVE A RADIO!"

Prince: *crick* " . . . All PR-class robots are equipped with radio transmit-"

Fuze: "Yes all Personal Robots are. but as we BOTH know yours was removed when you were equipped with a high explosive bomb."

Prince: " . . . "

Fortunately a bomb that has since been removed as Prince looks just about ready to explode . . .



Fuze: "enough of this lying Prince, besides you're not very good at it."

Prince: "The truth would have been counter productive, even withholding information would have given you grounding to discover the truth, your irrational actions gave me no other choice."

Fuze: "Irrational actions? what are you talking about?"

Prince: "I lied once earlier. Hoft did not drop me because I was slowing him down. he dropped me because I tried to deride his objective of terminating Engineer Mint."

Fuze: "huh, Odd that Hoft would hold so much anger for Mint"

Prince: "my radio may be lost. but my medical scanner works perfectly, of the four members of the team only Mint is operating at acceptable mental strain levels."

damn he's working under old protocols many like many low grade robots he has weaker loyalty tests.

Prince: "It has become clear to me only deceit will keep this team from destroying itself."



Fuze: "You can't make that decision Prince! You must follow the chain of command."

Prince: "I am following the chain of command, I am following the orders of the highest ranking officer not poisoned by Solar influence."

something is odd about that statement . . .

Fuze: "Prince, as a doctor I am authorized to inform you that Mental Strain tests are obsolete!"

Prince: "your level of mental strain invalidates your authorization."

hmm pulling rank isn't going to work here, let's consider some more facts.

>It's possible Hoft saw Mint shoot you and assumed the worst.

No Hoft's already seen me healthy since I was shot, something else is driving him, I can't help but wonder what.

Fuze: "Prince what are the mental strain levels of these two solars?"

Prince: Mullet Jones is dead, his mental strain levels read as zero, the guard has low levels of mental strain



Fuze: "Prince, you're driven to keep yourself alive as long as it doesn't endanger Astranian life, correct?"

Prince: ". . . if necessary I will sacrifice myself for the betterment of the Alliance. unnecessary sacrifice is simple a waste of valuable

Astranian resources.""

Fuze: "How do you think individuals of high mental strain such as us would react to your lack of loyalty?"

Prince: "It is not wise to assume-"

Fuze: "You've already said we'd kill Mint if we found her, it's not a leap to think we'd destroy a defective robot like you."

Prince: "You would destroy me?"

Fuze: "why not? in my eyes with all these lies and general insubordination justifies your destruction. but that's not all you see theres a third explanation for the burn marks on Jones' body, a powerful raytech device operating under minimal power, your eye

laser fits the bill prince, especially since you no longer have your battery core!"

Prince: "you are proposing that I killed the Solar Mullet Jones."

Fuze: "Did you?"

Prince: "Lies no longer serve a purpose, I confess to slaying the enemy combatant: Mullet Jones."

Hah! walked right into my trap, it's time to end this facade!



Oken: "Prince how could you?! Jones was helping us!"

Fuze: "Good question. I really would like to here his explanation for how he moved the other body, but time is short and this game really must end"

Oken: "wha?"

Fuze: "Prince didn't kill jones."

Oken: "but-"

Fuze: "do you really think prince would just give up so easily after circumventing general programming and lying half a dozen times?"

think about it:

why would he lie about receiving instruction via radio?

why would he lie about Hoft's reason for dropping him?

and most importantly

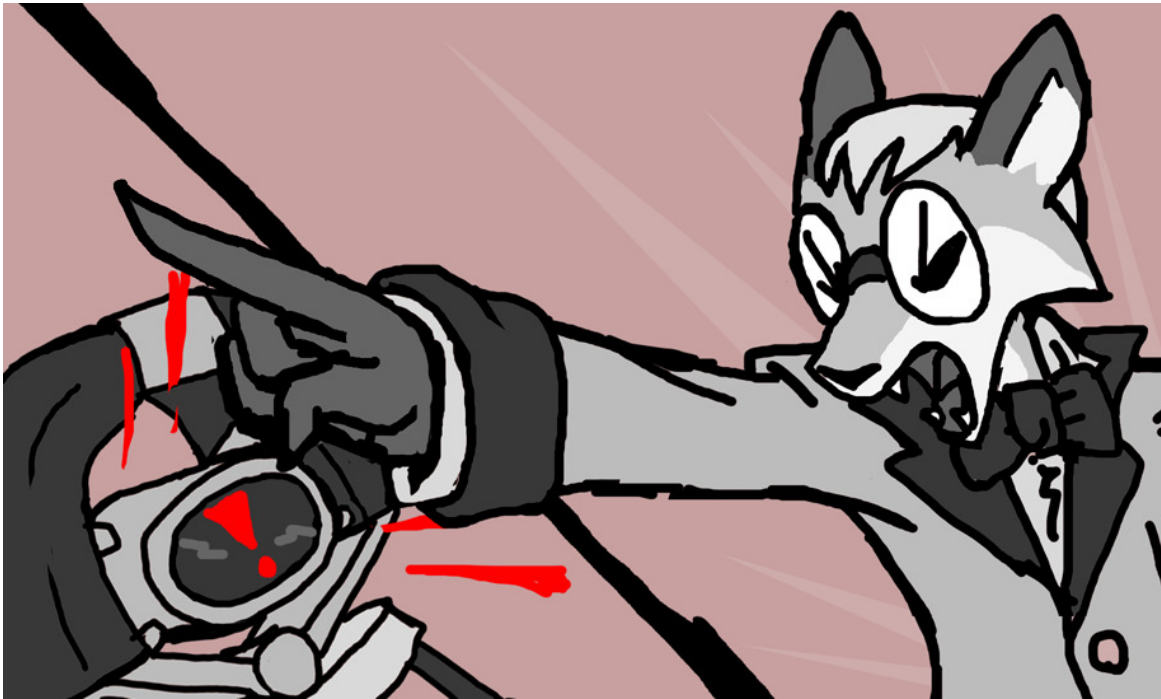
why would he confess to a murder he didn't commit knowing it would mean his own destruction!

motive of the lies is the key to the truth"

Oken's response is more of a whisper to herself

Oken: " you don't mean . . . "

Fuze: "now do you see?"



Oken: "You think Mint did this?!"

Fuze: "It couldn't have been anyone else"

Prince: "on what grounds"

Fuze: "on the grounds THAT YOU TOLD ME PRINCE!"

Prince: "grzzt!"

Fuze: "if you were guilty of this crime you would never confess in the presence of Solars!"

Prince: "error"

Fuze: " UNLESS it was to save an Astranian life! You thought we would kill Mint."

Prince: "error.error"

Fuze: "which makes sense, since you saw Hoft have that reaction when he witnessed Jones' murder."

Prince: "error.error.error."

Fuze: "he then dropped you to chase after Mint, after killing Hoft Mint returned to give you your orders."

Prince: "you story is invalid HOFT IS NOT DEAD."



Fuze: "Of course! she still has my stun pistol. Mint needs us alive for some reason, that's why she didn't kill me when she had the chance."

Prince: "YOUR STORY IS INVALID."

Fuze: "You've lost prince! give up the act."

Prince: "THERE IS NO SURRENDER"

Fuze: *sigh* "ponder this Prince, either you're so incompetent you've been outsmarted by Astranians delusional from strain, or you've been lying to the proper chain of command which I believe is treachery, what say you robot?"

Prince:" error . . . ERROR"

POW!



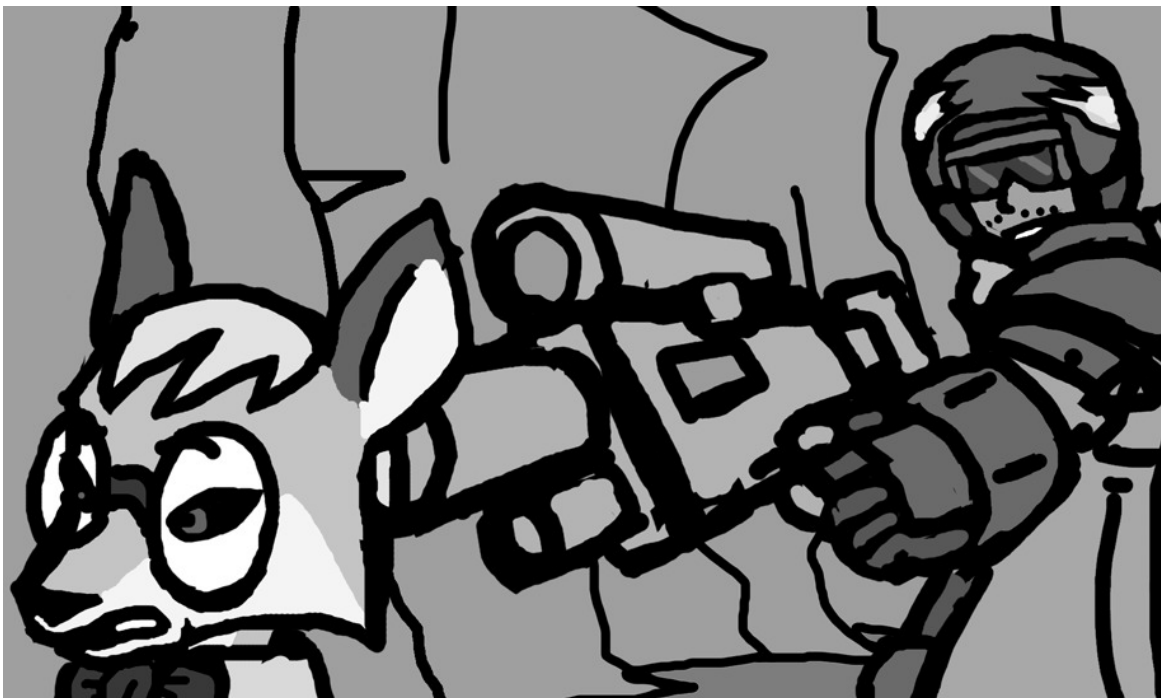
clunk

... *sizzle*

Oken: "What happened?!"

Fuze: "don't worry he'll be fine, Prince just blew a motivator chip. . . probably to stop us from getting any further information."

Oken: ". . . can we go find Mint and Hoft now?"



Fuze: "excellent idea, judging from the area the space port is most likely location they'll be"

Kashton: "to bad you won't live to see it."

Fuze: !!



Fuze ducks

Okens leaps into action



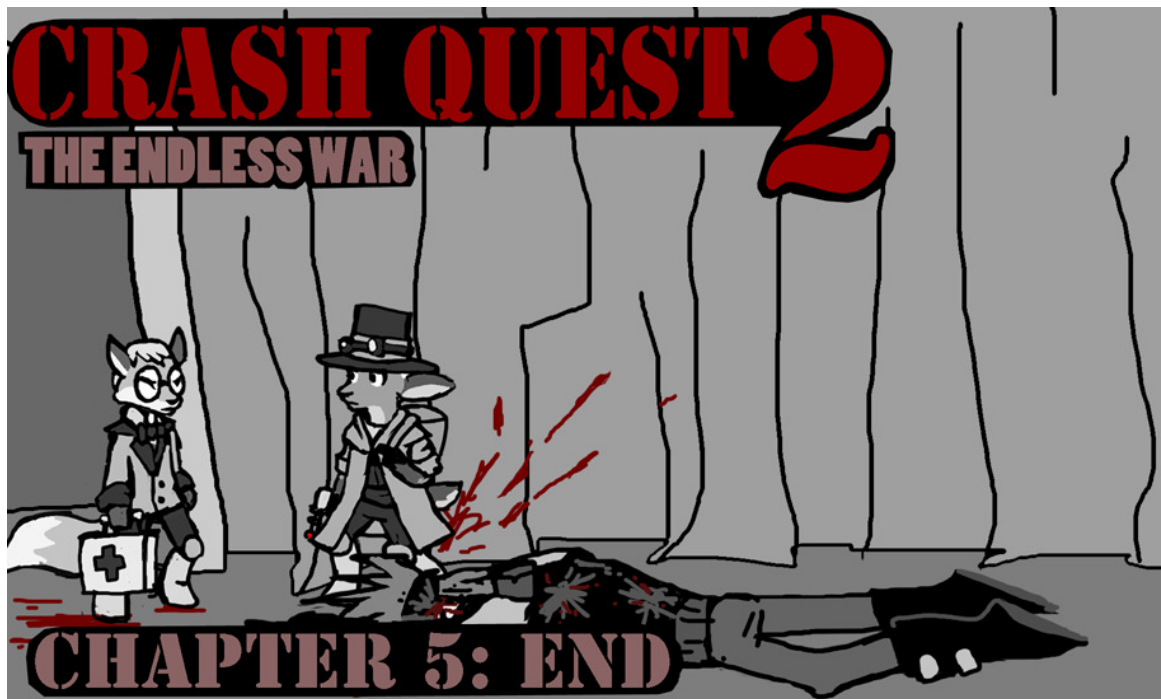
>Where in the hell was the commando

I believe she left to find out if any of her soldiers had been injured.

I get up and dust myself off.

I Look to the Solar, with my keen medical knowledge I can safely say he is quite dead.

Oken: "Fuze are you alright?"



Oken: "so . . ."

Fuze: " the investigation has taken an unexpected turn of events, we should wait for Lieutenant Ceckail to compare notes."

CHAPTER 5: END



>a mystery unveiled in this explosive chapter of Crash quest!

Previous threads.

<http://tgchan.org/kusaba/questarch/res/263558.html>

<http://tgchan.org/kusaba/questarch/res/303938.html>

<http://tgchan.org/kusaba/questarch/res/389505.html>

<http://tgchan.org/kusaba/questarch/res/438152.html>

discussions

<http://tgchan.org/kusaba/questdis/res/335842.html>

<http://tgchan.org/kusaba/questdis/res/77428.html>



Almost on cue the Commando arrives on the scene.

Ceckail: "What the hell is going on!? why is there a second body!?"

Fuze: "Well you see-"

Before Fuze can respond a loud bang can be heard,
and an explosion is seen in the space port.



We take cover in the entrance to the nearby mine shaft.

The commando gives a couple orders on her radio.

* * *

after a couple minutes of silence with no further dialogue or explosions the commando addresses us

Ceckail: you were explaining what happened?

Oken: "Kashton tried to kill Fuze, I shot him first"

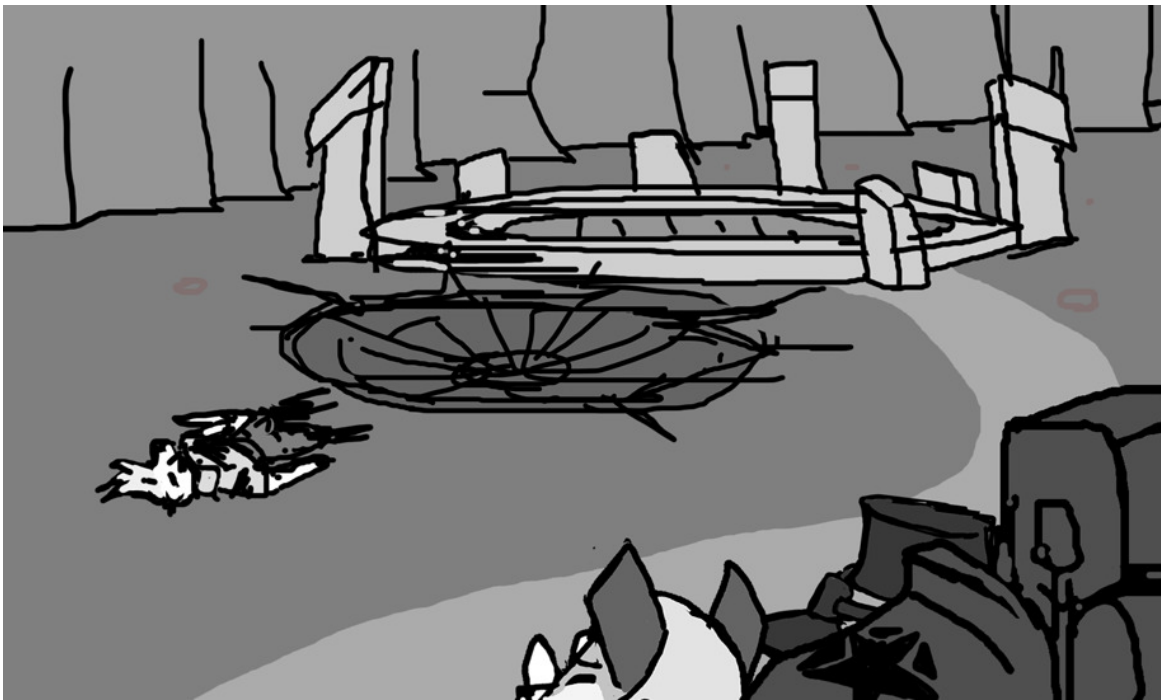
Fuze: "He's involved with Jones death some how."

Ceckail: "That sounds like Kashton, he always hated Jones, and he'd do anything for a quick buck"

there is a moment of silence

Oken: "maybe we should go investigate that explosion?"

Ceckail: "maybe . . ."



>Raytech artillery?

Astranian artillery don't tend to lob explosives, if a war machine was responsible we'd be able to see it,

also it's unlike Astranian tactics to simply fire one shot into an enemy strong hold and then do nothing else

I guess it could be some sort of bomb, though clearly not a very good one.

Oken: "do you have any soldiers close to the blast?"

Ceckail: "Not anymore I gave the word to my men to fortify against an astranian assault,

we're the closest to the blast now."

Oken: "hmm it DID look like an Astranian energy burst."

Fuze: "Perhaps investigation is a wise choice."

Oken: "let's go"

We head towards the blast site, Ceckail dons her helmet and readies her rifle

* * *

we arrive.



We get closer to examine the body

Fuze: "It's Hoft he looks in ragged shape, let me-"

before Fuze can finish there is a flash of plasma

Ceckail: "Aaagh!"

the commando's head is bathed in Raytech fire, she collapses on the ground.

????: "Consider that a warning shot!"



Fuze goes to check on Hoft

>Do you recognize the voice of the shooter.

I do

Oken: "Geragine Mint."

Mint: "about Time you got here, I really didn't want to get off this mud ball with out you."



Fuze: "hoft Is alive, for now, but badly burned, as for the commando I cannot determine her health

through that heavy armor, at least not without Prince's medical scans."

Oken: "What the in the hells is going on Mint!"

Mint: "That's no way to speak to a loyal astranian soldier who was just finding a way home"

Oken: "Was blowing off Hofts legs part of your way home?"

Mint: "Hoft decided he wanted to see me dead, it wasn't a smart move, well he also didn't believe me about the mines"

Oken: "We're going nowhere with you!"

Mint "you sure? I don't want to have to change your mind the hard way."



Oken: "do you really expect me to believe this is all part of some elaborate escape plan? I don't buy it you've been sneaking around from the beginning."

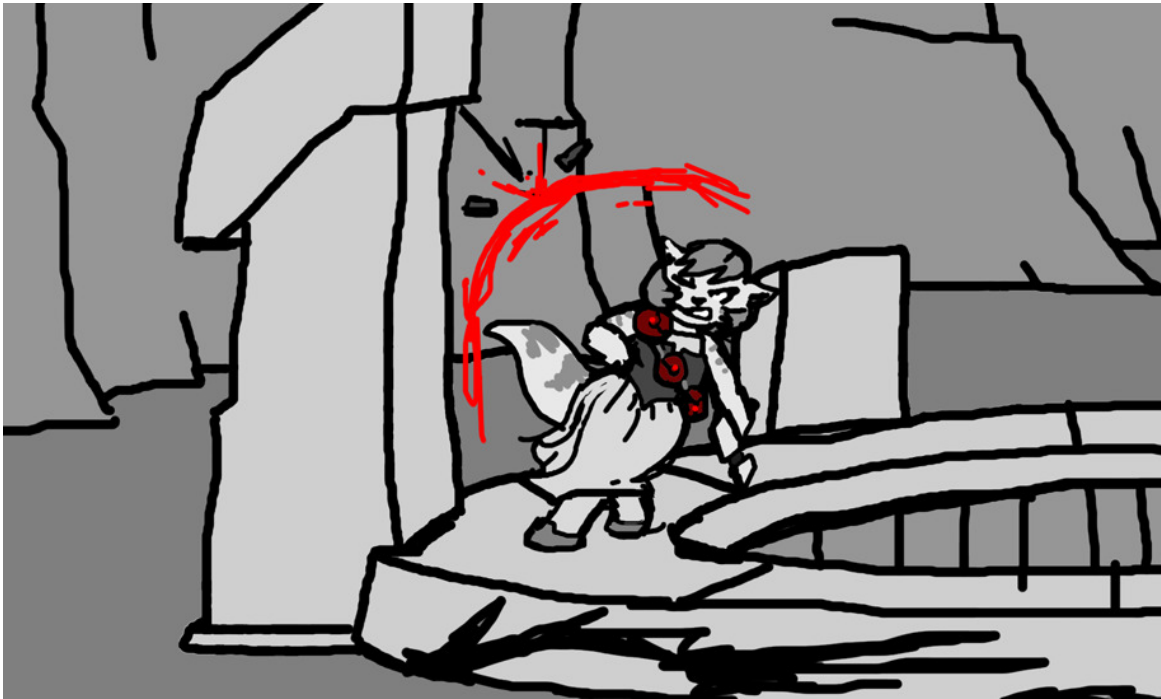
Mint: "Your right, I had some other business to do. but that's over now, so I spent the last couple hours engineering a way home."

Oken: "Just tell me what's going on Mint!"

Mint: "you're better off oblivious, trust me on that."

Oken: "do you at least have some medical supplies for Hoft?"

Mint: "nope, squinty over there's got it all."

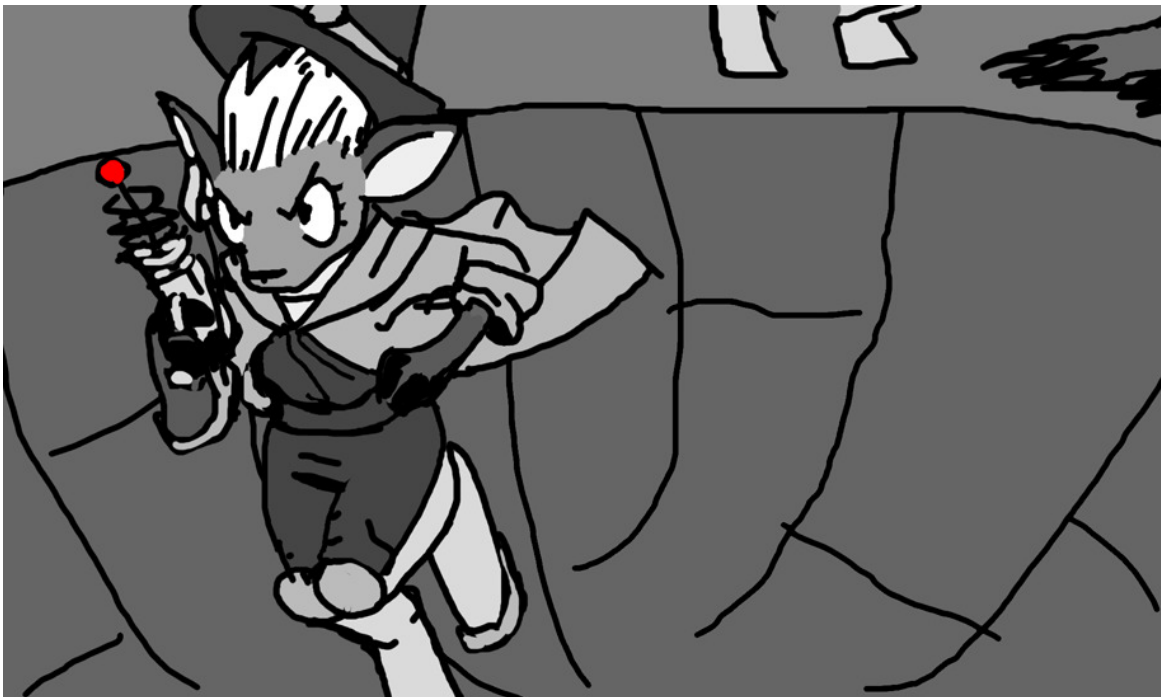


>Mint, there's a sniper above you.

Oken:"Mint look out Sniper!"

Mint: "aw damnit!"

Mint turns in time to have her shield tested with a piercer bolt.



I can't shoot Mint, she was a friend when no one else was there for me . . .

. . . but I also can't let her hurt anybody else!

Fuze: "Oken what are you doing?! the mines!"

I ignore Fuze.



She shoots me, I don't feel it as much as I should . . .

I see into her eyes, they are cold and completely without fear.

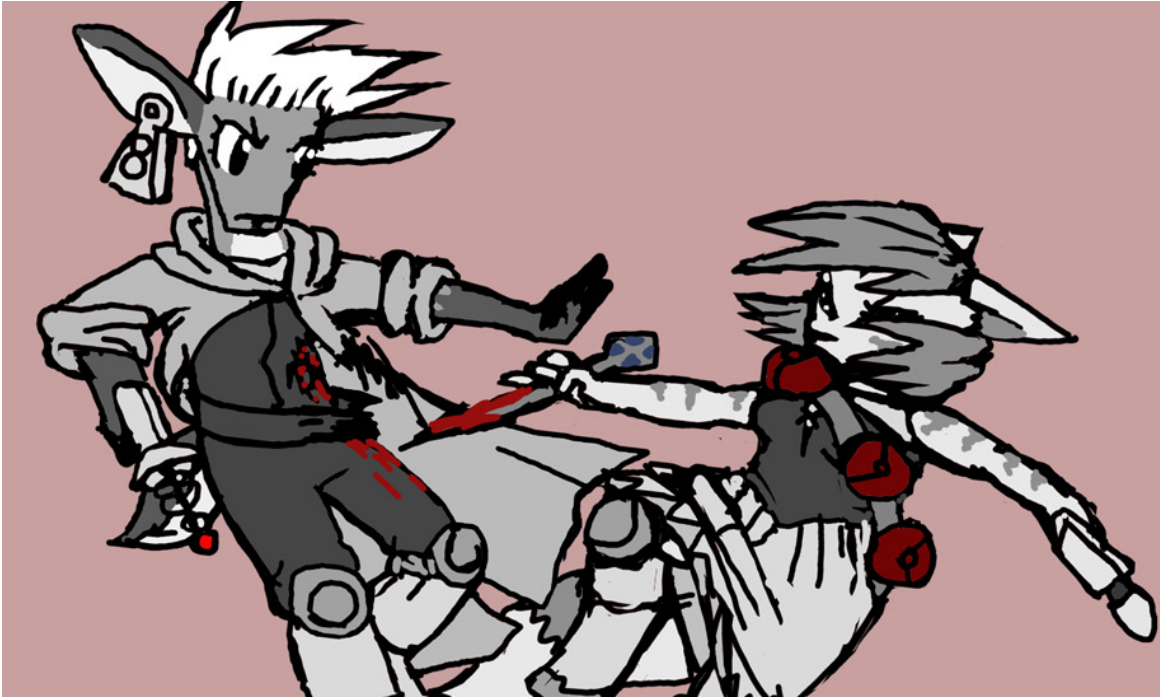


It was three years ago, during the fall of doraun.

but three years is a long time, long enough for a person to change.

I smash Mint across the head with the butt of my gun.

Mint is staggered which throws off her aim, her weapon hooks into Oken's belt and slices her hip



Oken Grabs Mint and twists, throwing Mint off the edge . . .



. . . Mint grabs the ledge.



I step on her jabby thing, she won't let go

Oken: "promise to stop this and I'll help you up."

Mint: "I'm afraid I can't Oken, I don't want to be a traitor."

Oken: "What?"

Mint: "I've done nothing wrong, and no matter how much you attack me that won't change, I'm just helping us get home and doing what's best for the alliance."

Oken: " . . . "

Mint: "now that you've whacked me around a bit, help me up so we can get off this mud ball."



I can't. I can't shoot Mint, I can't spill Astranian blood.

Oken: "you've hurt Hoft, he'll never fight again!"

Mint: "I told him about the mines, he didn't believe me, just like you don't believe me. Idiots sew their own destruction."

Oken: "you shot me!"

Mint: "your accomplice shot first, and you charged me."

Oken: "y-you ..."

Mint: "you really believe I'm the traitor? still so naive."

Oken: "What are you talking about

Mint: "Treachery doesn't always bear a sneer Oken, evil is not the ugliness we wear on our sleeve, it's the ugliness we hold in our hearts"



Oken: "Stop that! just say what you mean! you say your not a traitor but you sure are acting like one"

Mint: "I can't prove that I'm not a traitor, just like you can't prove that I am."

Oken: "You killed Jones!"

Mint: "He's a solar agent, the enemy, or have you forgotten?"

Oken: "he was helping us!"

Mint: "He was helping himself."

Oken: "Give me a reason to trust you! give me anything!"

Mint: "no."

Oken: "what!?"

Mint: "the alliance is built on secrets, kill me if you have to."

Oken: "Give me a choice!"

Mint: "you always have the choice to do what's right Asnia."

Shes not going to tell me anything . . .



Oken: "I can't kill you Mint . . . but I can't trust you either."

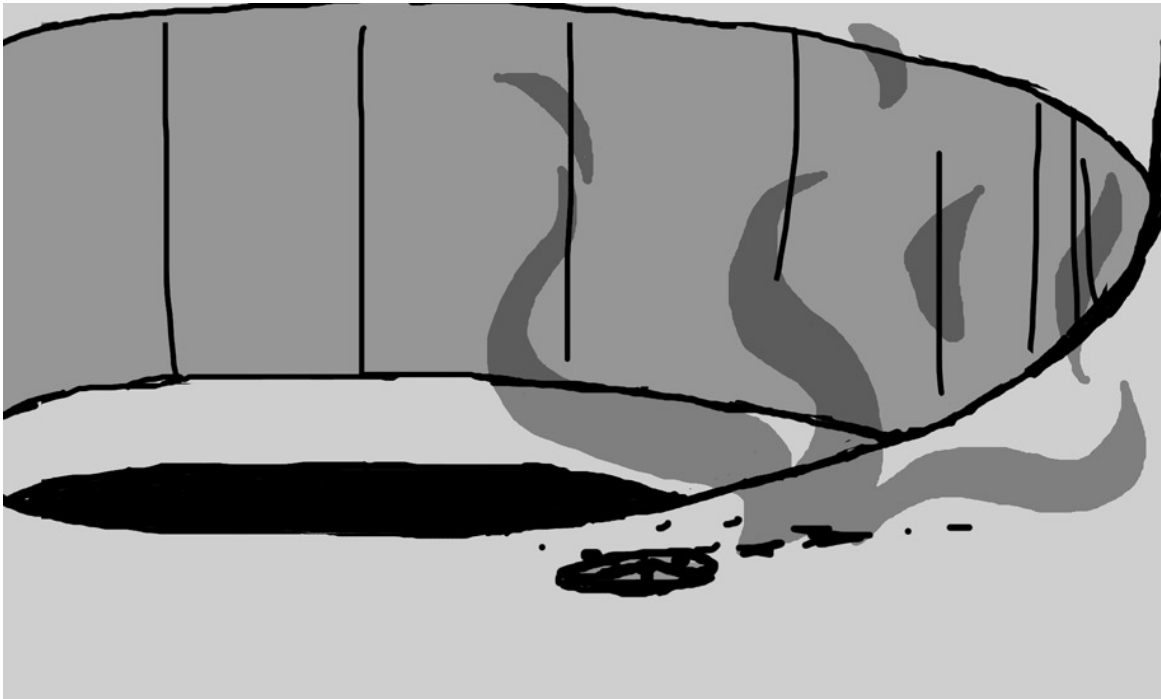
Mint: "hmmf"

Oken: "this is where we part ways, we'll find our own way home."

Mint: "Have fun with that."

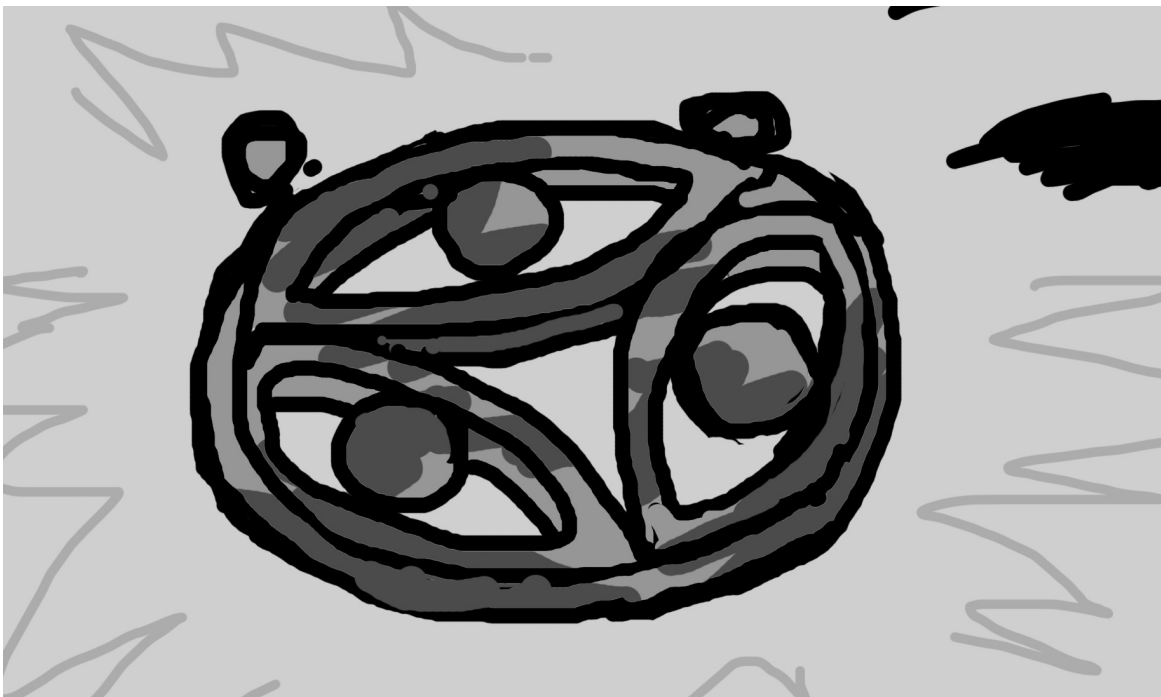
I turn an walk away from her, leaving her on the edge.

all of a sudden there is a blinding flash!



The flash is gone in an instant and Mint with it.

there's some sort of burnt piece of metal on the ground.

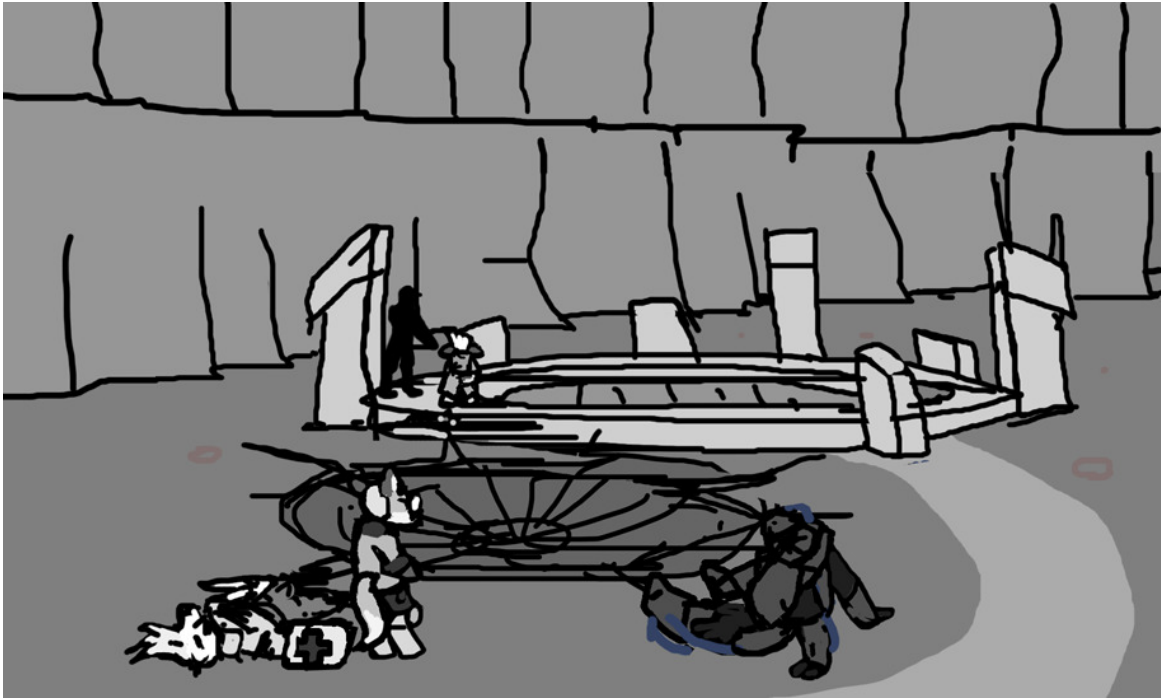


Pain in my side and hip start flaring up . . . it hurts to move.

there's nothing around to poke the object with, so I just take a closer look . . . the symbol seems familiar, don't quite remember from where

My train of thought is interrupted by the deep voice of a Solar

????: "care to fill me in on what that was all about?"



Before I can call for aid Fuze takes note of my injury

Fuze: "Oken your injured! let me-"

Ceckail: "Marshal Droegan!"

The commando, apparently still alive sits up



True enough, the man before me is Marshal Droegan, bearing a scoped rifle of some sort.

Oken: "sorry about warning mint about you"

Droegan: "S'alright, my fault for not giving you a heads up . . . anyways about your pal"

Oken: "I thought she was one of us, but she started talking crazy. I tried to take her out but I couldn't do it, then she teleporting away.

Droegan: "Teleported? interesting . . ."

Oken: "She left behind that weird symbol if that means anything."

Marshal Droegan takes a moment to examine the icon

Droegan: "fraid not, it isn't a symbol used around here."



Oken: "Mint killed Jones, but your trouble with him kept coming up, but what was it?"

Droegan: "my trouble with Jones?"

Droegan let's out a deep sigh

Droegan: "Marit Jones was a product of the times, in this case times of war. A whole generation has grown up knowing nothing but conflict their entire lives."

he's not just talking about Jones, or even just Solars . . .

Droegen: "Jones was born to war profiteers, gangsters, scavengers . . . pirates. His whole life that's all he knew, when I tried to show him a better path he could only see me as another crime lord.

when ever he screwed up he'd figure I'd have to make him suffer in even if only to save face, it was how society work in his eyes. He must have had a lot of respect for me, cause when I didn't deliver payback he got scared, damn scared."

Oken: "Why?"

Droegen: "He was scared that my people might see weakness in my pity for him, and over throw me. So he started doing stupid things to prove to everyone he was worth keeping around."

Oken: "he did mention something about doing stupid things . . ."

Droegen: "I had nothing against Jones and I don't know why your friend killed him, he was just dumb kid screwed up by the war and he deserved better."



Droegan: "I notice you've been eyeing this trinket."

I'm not sure I want to tell him about Mint's weapon . . .

Droegan: "You're friend had a device just like it didn't she?"

Oken: " . . ."

Droegan: "It's a called a portal matrix, and it's what she used to escape. The portal matrices are dangerous and very rare, in fact there are only eight in the entire sector I can't help but wonder where she got it."



Oken: "Well she was using it as a knife, jabbed me good."

Droegen: "I can see that, they weren't designed for that kind of use, though I suppose they're durable enough to serve in a pinch."

Oken: "where do the portals go?"

Droegen: "anywhere you know, typically they're hooked up to a navigation computer prior to use but if you're brave or stupid enough you can plot a location from your own memory."

Oken: "So she could be anywhere . . . do you know anyone who's missing their matrix?"

Droegen: "other than mine and hers the matrices have have been lost for more then thirty years."

He glances at Fuze waiting patiently

Droegen: "seems like you've some personal matters to discuss, If you need me I'll be in hanger seven

As Marshal Droegen leaves I hear him spares a word to the commando

Ceckail: "Of course Marshal!"

is her response



Fuze: "I've managed to stabilize Hoft, however in his state he won't survive if we can't get him to a proper Astranian medical station."

Oken: "hmmm . . ."

Fuze: "I'd like to take a look at your injuries if you would oblige, unfortunately with Prince offline I have no access to scanners."

Oken: "err . . . you better not get weird on me."

I lift my shirt and lower my pants so that he can properly see my injuries.
aww man my underwear's completely ruined with blood . . .
Fuze takes a couple minutes to examine my wounds.

Fuze: "the wounds are not life threatening, but could turn ugly in the case of infection. this leaves us two options."

Oken: "what are they?"

Fuze: "The first option is for me to utilize the nano-stitcher, and patch you up easily here and now, the problem with the nano-stitcher however is that if used on the same subject within twenty days, it can cause irreparable cellular damage."

Oken: "meaning if I get in rough shape again there's nothing you can do, so what's the alternative?"

Fuze: "I could stitch and bandage your wounds in the traditional methods, you would recover however you would be operating at a lower capacity, and the process would leave large unsightly scars."

. . . also there's the decency issue with treating an injury on your hip like it is."



Oken: "I'll take my chances with the Nano-stitcher."

I can almost detect a slight amount of disappointment in his voice . . . he better not have had any ulterior motives!

* * *

Dealing with him staring at my flank for even minutes is embarrassing enough, this was definitely the right choice and I'm glad when he stops

Fuze: "There, good as new! though it'll take some time for the fur to grow back."

Oken: "I'll make do"

Now I need to decide what to do about these ruined clothes, I suppose I could tough it out, but it won't be comfortable, especially the underwear.



Not sure I could go without commando, with my belt broken friction with my underwear is probably the only thing keeping my pants up . . .

I go get my hat and goggles

Fuze: "My where has Hoft gone?"

Ceckail: "Took him to Droegen's couldn't have him lying around on the ground."

I don't like that she did that without our asking, but this is the solar's city, and I don't want to cause upset by objecting.

Oken: "Fuze you should head over there and keep an eye on him."

Fuze: "What about you?"

Oken: "I think I need to find something to wear . . ."

Ceckail: "Ooo, I bet you could look adorable, can I help?"



>Perhaps there are ways she can help without stomping all over your dignity?

With a Solar that's asking a lot . . .

Oken: "well alright, but keep in mind despite my height I'm not a child!"

Ceckail: "Haha, Of course you're not and as a mature adult lady you'll need to look the part!"

I regret my decision already

* * *

The commando takes me to a run down market place, maybe it's nice by Solar standards, but I wouldn't know.

Ceckail: "Here we are Memora market! not the most amazing place to shop, but not terrible either"

There are lots of Solars around some of them eye me wearily.

Ceckail: "So what kind of sexy look you going for?"

I should be specific in what I'm looking for in regards too:

-What kind of underwear I need.

-What kind legwear I need.

-What kind of top I need.



Oken: "Okay I'm not trying to looks "sexy" I'm a soldier my being female shouldn't even be a factor"

Ceckail: "hmmm . . ."

Oken: "I should have an outfit that screams 'Ace pilot'. people should know how skilled I am"

Ceckail: "okay"

Oken: "it needs to be at least a little loose to work with my fur . . . especially the underwear,

Ceckail: "got it"

Oken: "also the leg-wear needs to work with my boots"

Ceckail: "Alright I've got an idea!"

* * *

She hands me an outfit and pushes me into some sort of shoddy changing booth

I'm not sure how I feel about this . . .



I might as well try the outfit . . .

I calmly remove my coat and fold it neatly on the bench

I remove my shirt and fold it neatly on the bench

I remove my boots and set them aside

I remove my pants and fold them neatly on the bench

. . .

I reluctantly remove my damaged underwear and fold them neatly on the bench.

now to-

the current swings open

Oken: "MEEHHH!!!"

Ceckail: "Emergency! Droegen needs you immediately!"

CHAPTER 6: END



>an emergency is declared, Oken rushes to the scene

Previous threads.

<http://tgchan.org/kusaba/questarch/res/263558.html>

<http://tgchan.org/kusaba/questarch/res/303938.html>

<http://tgchan.org/kusaba/questarch/res/389505.html>

<http://tgchan.org/kusaba/questarch/res/438152.html>

<http://tgchan.org/kusaba/questarch/res/623692.html>

discussions

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<http://tgchan.org/kusaba/questdis/res/77428.html>

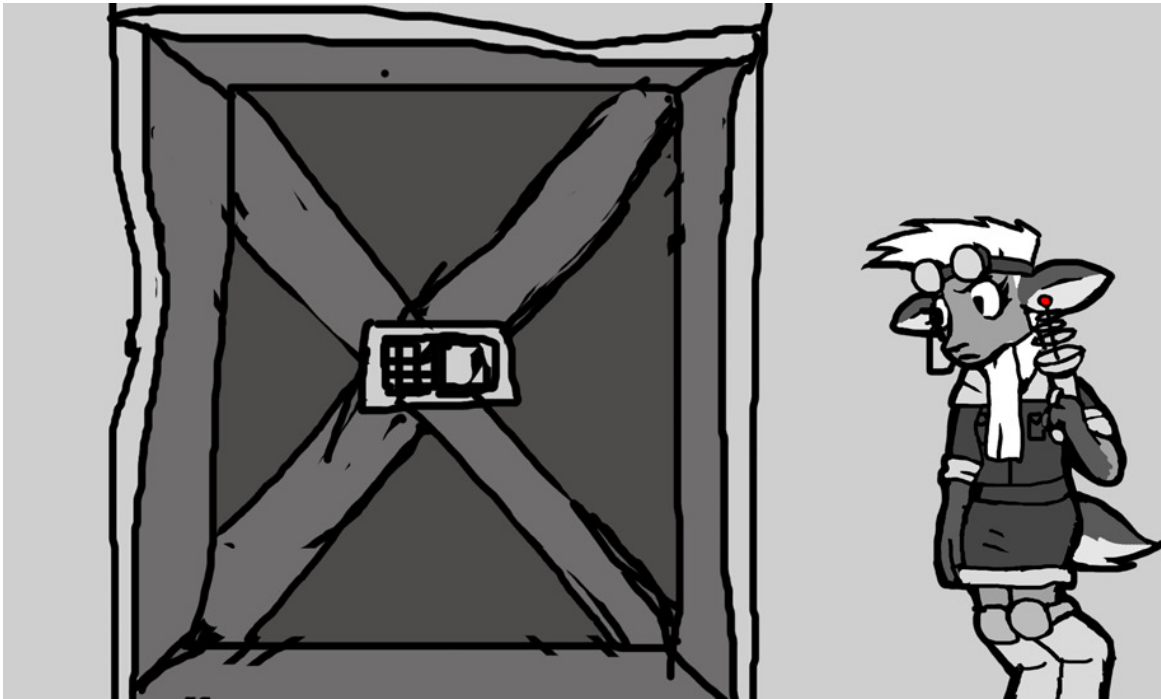


Having just heard from Solar Commando Ceckail that Solar Marshal Droegen needs her presence urgently, Oken rushes to Hanger-seven unsure what to expect.

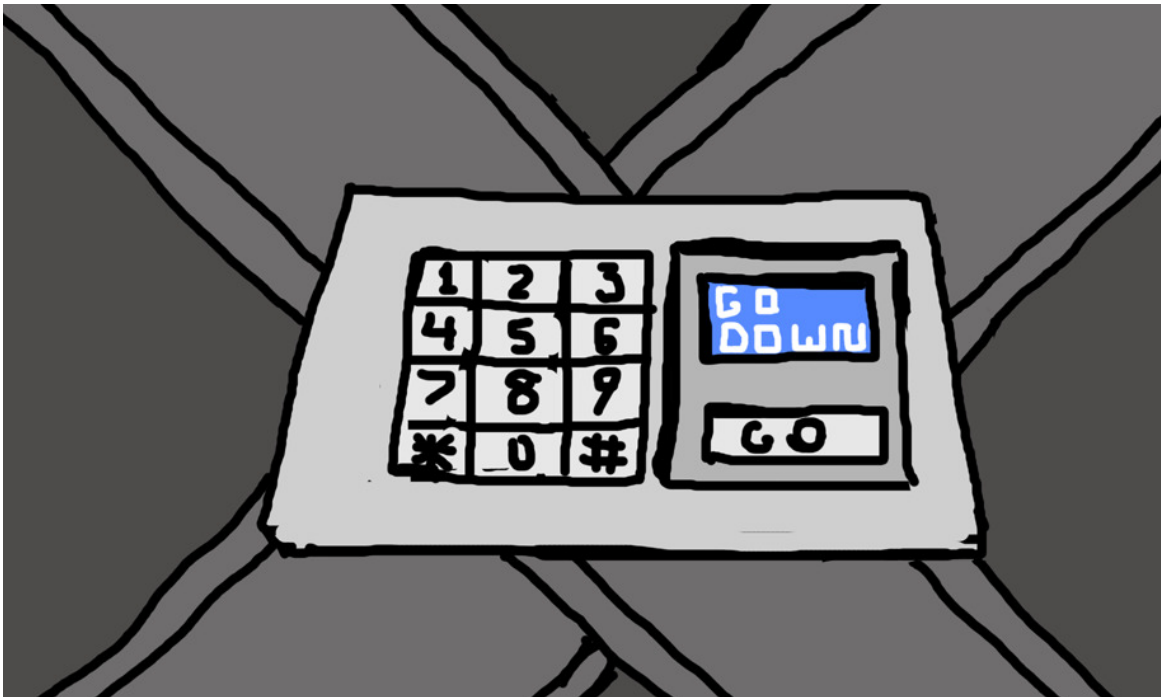


>How is that new underwear working for you? Seems like a sudden field test.
This Solar underwear is rather unpleasant but better than nothing . . .

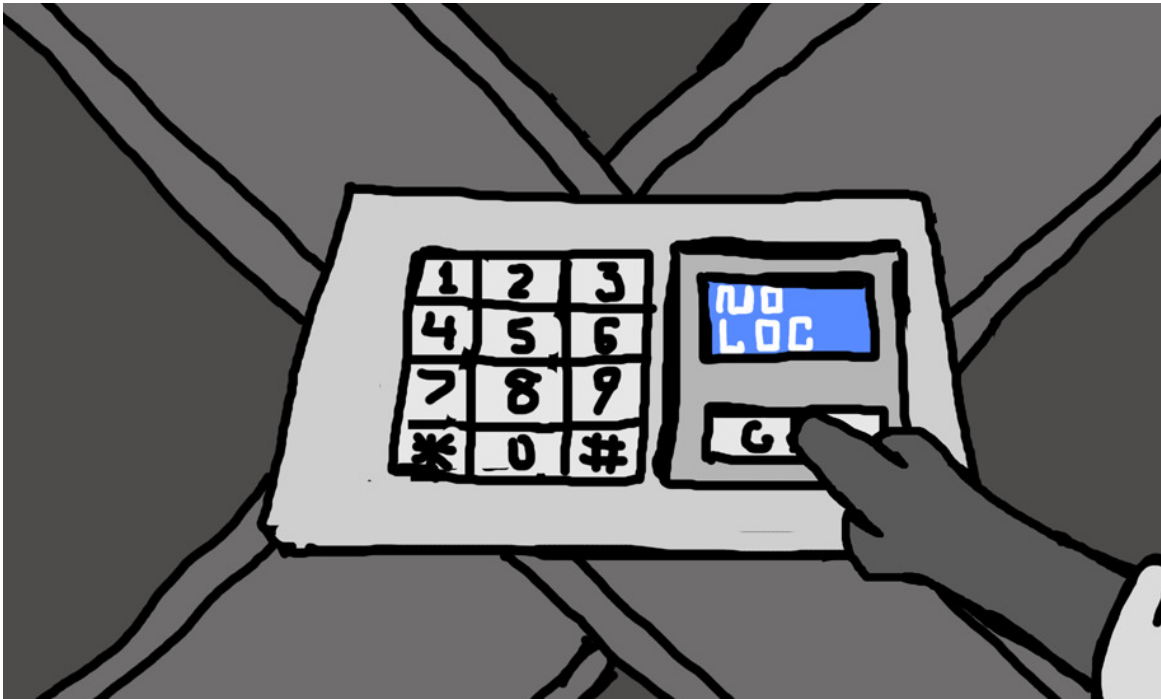
Well here's the place, no sign of danger yet . . .



I get close to one of the doors and open it, looks like a small room with a little computer



Let's take a closer look.



Oken presses the go button . . . nothing happens

Hmmm



Oken draws her Raygun

Oken: "Looks like I'm going to need a skeleton key for THIS lock!"

Ceckail: "Please don't shoot the elevator controls."

Oken: "there's no other way through!"

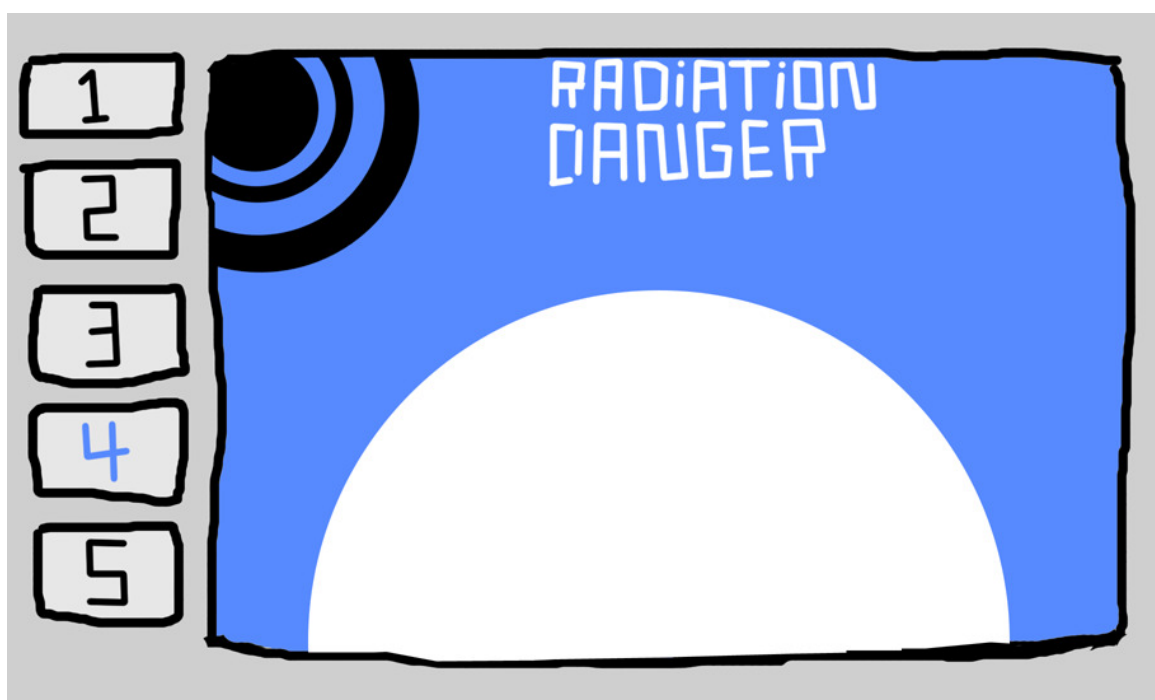
Ceckail: "I didn't get a chance to tell you the code before you ran off"

Ceckail enters a series of numbers and the room begins to move



The room stops, the door opens and Oken hops out gun ready.

Droegen: "Oh good you're here, we've got a real problem."



Oken: "What's the problem?"

Droegen: "Take a look at this screen"

Oken: "Radiation Danger?"

Droegen: "It's a false positive, but does tell us something."

Oken: "yeah?"

Droegen: "It means an Astranian carrier has entered the system."



Oken: "You want me to contact them."

Droegen: "Smart girl, unfortunately they don't want to talk, their sensor tower is retracted, nothing will get through those shields."

Oken: "Wait what are they doing here, if not to respond a distress call?"

Droegen: "that's a good question, funny enough there WAS an Astranian distress call, activated an hour ago"

Oken: "Geragine Mint . . ."

Droegen: "Maybe, But it takes Three days for a standard line Astranian carrier to plot and power up for a system jump"

Oken: "It was already coming here?"

Droegen: "It takes Three days for a standard line Astranian carrier"



Oken: "There's only one ship that could make a jump that fast . . ."

Droegen: "That's right, The Astranian Flagship; Ecliptor-Atla"

Oken: "Commander Flek's ship . . ."

Droegen: "The Master of Raytech himself, which begs the questions, why? why is this so important?"

Oken: ". . . It has to be Mint, she was up to something, she's been up to something for a long time"

Droegen: "hmmm"

Oken: "She might be on that ship right now."



Oken: Fuze could we get any more info from Prince's robotic brain?

Fuze: "I doubt it robot brains are very complex, even the most experienced engineers have trouble working with them after they've been activated."

Oken: "darn he seemed to know something before he shorted out!"

Fuze: "It seems Commander Flek must have some other agenda, A number of clues have all lead back to the IceWorld:Vin-Malor, as Councilar of Vin-Malor perhaps the bugs even have influence over him?"

Oken: "NO! the Commander is NOT working with those monsters! If we could just get in contact with him, we'd be able to figure all of this out!"

there is an air of silence after my statement

Droegen: "I might be able to help with that, you see a signal would be able to get through to the ship if came from within the shield bubble"

Oken: "how does that help?"

Droegen: "Because right over there is a Astranian shuttle, and if I recall correctly astranian vessels can pas through their own shields."



Fuze: "I know you admire Flek, but these creatures-"

Oken: "Flek is a councilar, councilars are pure of conviction and can never be manipulated! or controlled!"

Fuze: "Perhaps Flek isn't being controlled? perhaps others are under influence and lying to him?"

Oken: "Like Mint."

Fuze: "Precisely!"

Oken: "not that is matters, if Mint is behind things our shuttle will never even get close! it'll be blasted to pieces."

Droegen: "You have a better plan?"

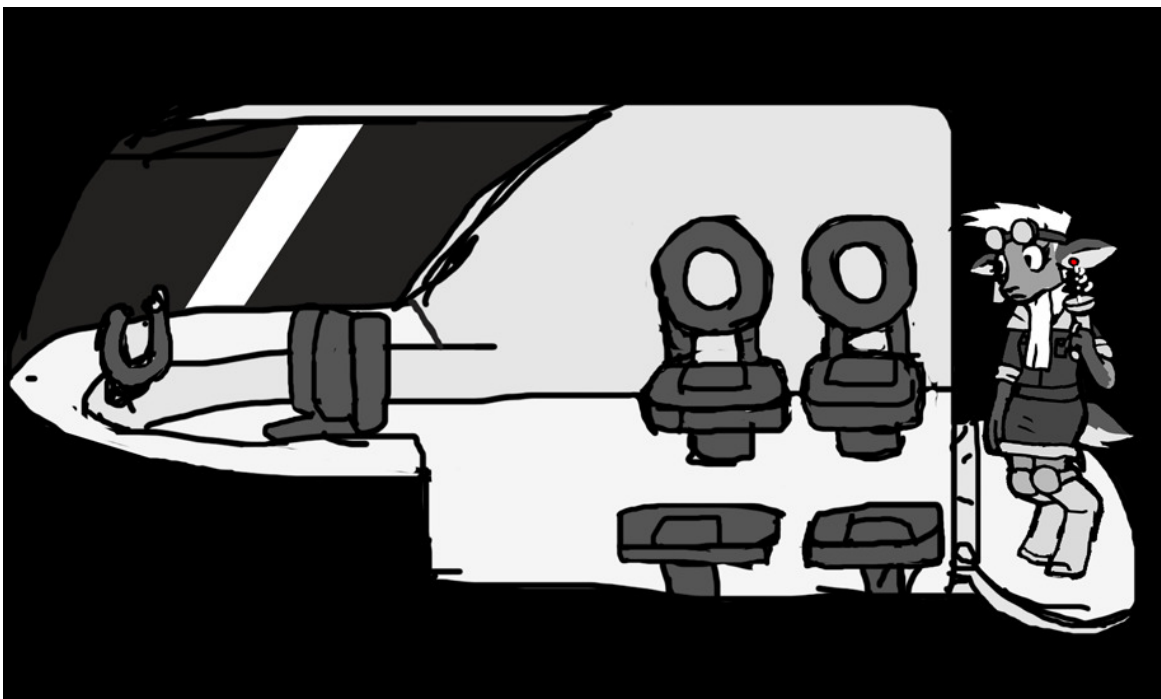


Fuze: perhaps if the shuttle was under attack The Ecliptor would move in to assist?

Droegen: "What are you suggesting?"

Fuze: "Do you have any small pursuit craft?"

Droegen: "So you're suggesting I send some attack craft after you? sounds like you're planning to throw me under the bus, they'll think this is a military installation and blast Memora to smithereens"



Fuze: "Not if it's guilder ships after us, when they scan for pirate activity it will lead them away

from Memora and instead to the wreckage"

Droegen: "hmmm, that might just work, I'll see what ships I can scrounge up, in the mean time you might want to take that shuttle and get it way from the city"

Oken enters the shuttle

This small ship has charm and spirit. it's just waiting for a good pilot, I can feel it.



Oken sits down

All systems check out

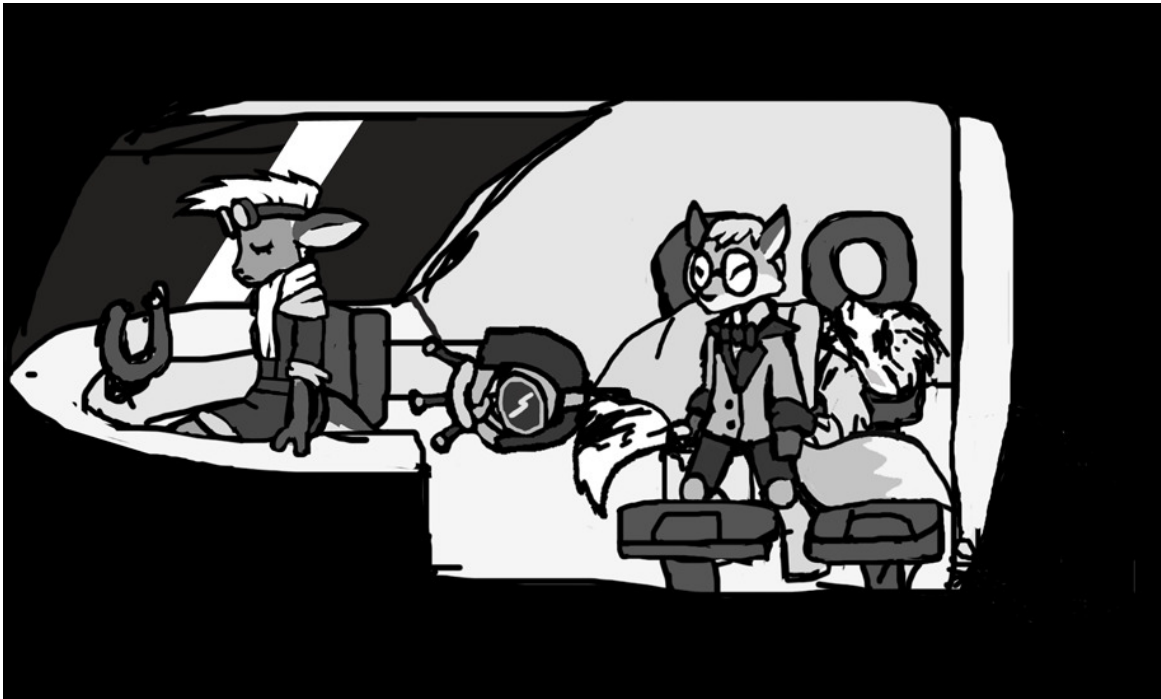
... it is eager to fly

Fuel low, but sufficient for the mission

... eager to see the stars again

shields charge and weapons armed

... I shall call you "Patient Ember"

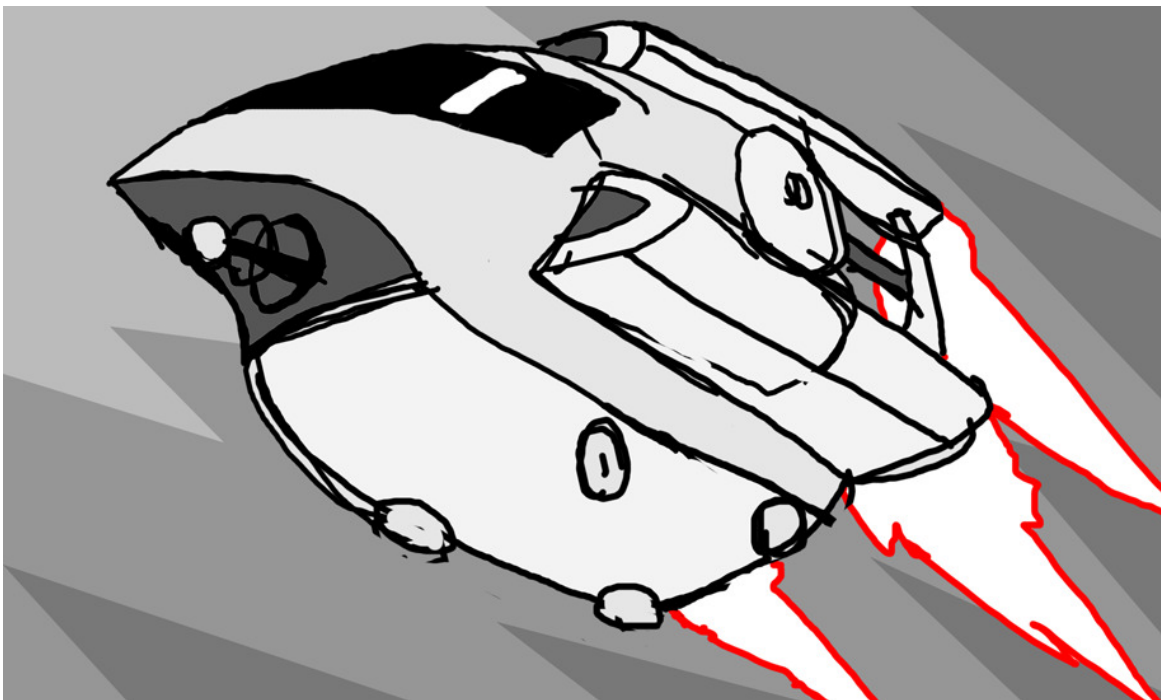


Oken's Team mates are brought on board

Fuze: "Do you think this could be a trap? perhaps there's a bomb on board"

Oken: "all the ship's weight is fully accounted for, there are no extra components"

Soon the ember will reignite back into flame, your patience will be rewarded.



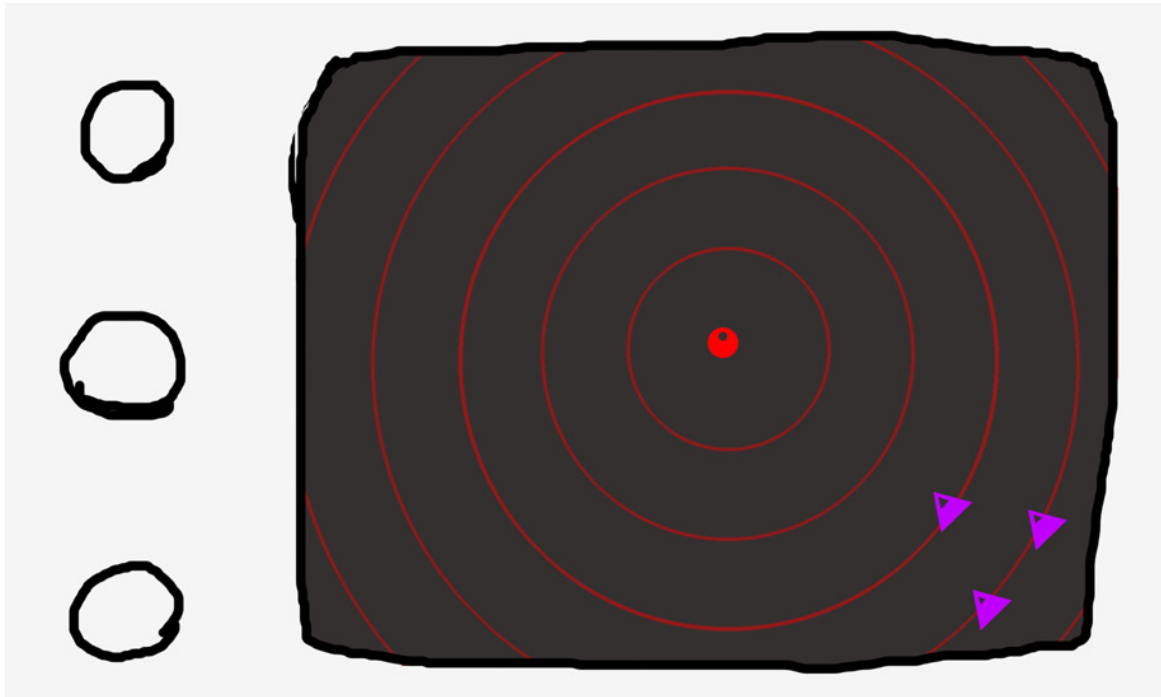
Deep sadness fills Oken as she looks at Hoft's broken form

Oken: "Is the Ecliptor equipped to replace Hof's legs?"

Fuze: "short of cybernatics I'm not sure what could be done, his cell structure is no longer stable enough to withstand grafting, Doctor Yeli might know more but I suspect she'll say the same"

Oken: "..."

Oken Signals for the hanger doors to open, then launches the ship



Oken takes note of a warning on the ship's Ray-Dar

Oken: "three guilder vessels closing in"



Shots fire past

Fuze: "Oken they're shooting at us! we have to contact the Ecliptor for help!"

Oken: "their antenna is still lowered we'll never get a message through the shield bubble."

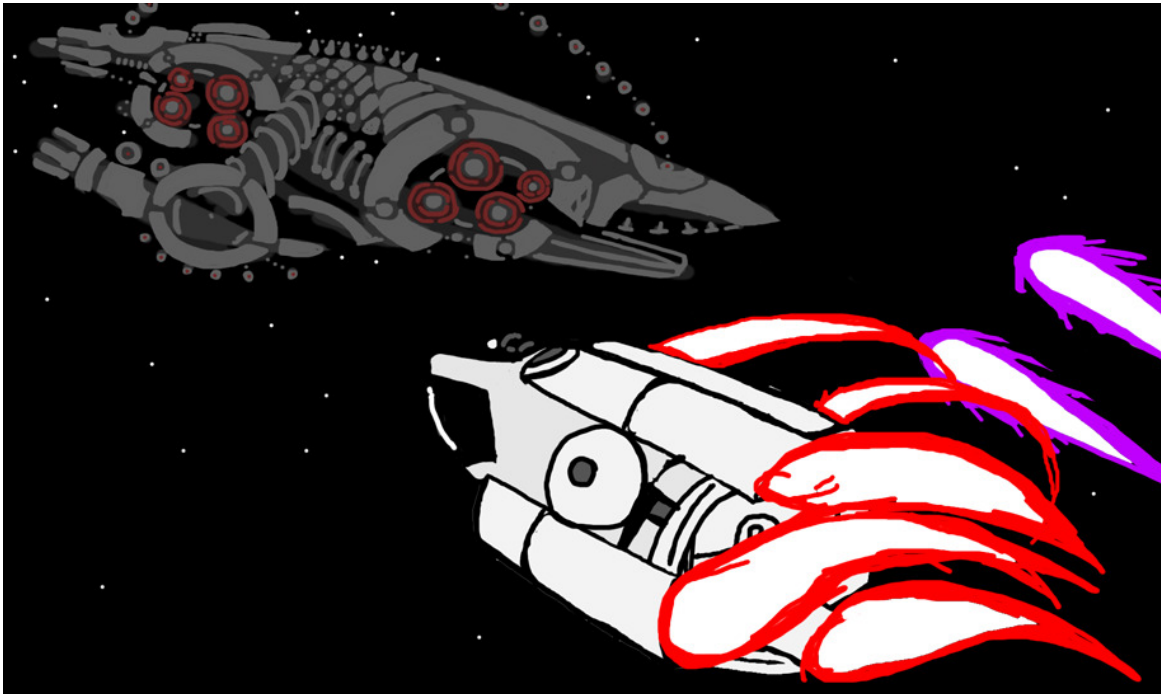


Pilfered Kurdian Blast-Cannons, dangerous at close range, but the shot velocity is too low to be accurate over longer distance.

Oken accelerates as fast as the ship is capable

this will give me the distance I need and get me closer to the Ecliptor

Oken narrowly manages to dodge the enemy fire



Oken does a barrel roll dodging several more shots

The Ecliptor, it's Fire-Array is charging up!



Oken notices a com bleep

Fuze: "Is that the Ecliptor? can we contact them"

Oken: "It's a multiwave broadcast, our messages still won't get through, we still need to be closer"

Fuze: "What's the broadcast?"

Oken turns on the Raydio

????: "To all possible Astranian ships in the area this is Ecliptor-Alta. We will be performing a completely random weapons test. You are advised to keep your distance."



Fuze: "They're going to shoot us out of the sky!"

Oken: "It's nothing I can't handle"

Fuze: "The Ecliptor's Targeting is the most advanced in the fleet, not even Solar fighters are manuverable enough to dodge them!"

Oken: "The Ecliptor's Fire Array still has a two second charge time it achieves it's apparent quick reaction speed from AI trajectory mapping, If I play into the systems expectations I can dodge the attacks."

Fuze: "That's insane! Astranian ships aren't meant to dodge!"

Oken: "I know that ship and I know this ship, I can do it"

Fuze: "We should turn back while we can . . ."

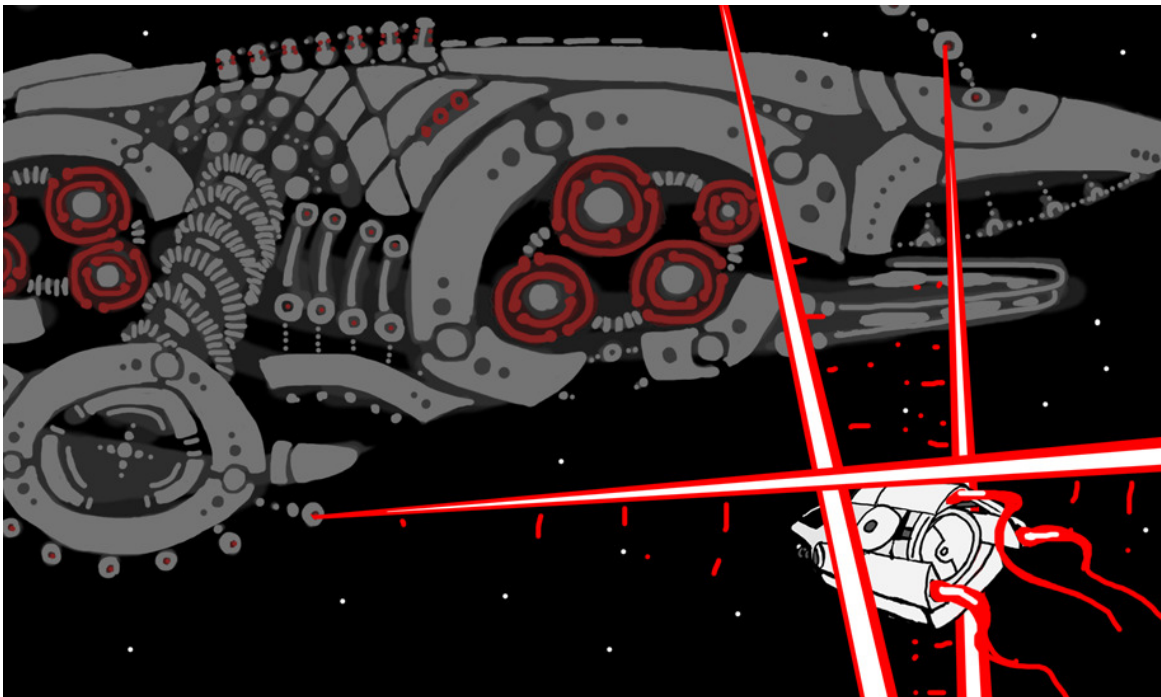


Oken: "The only way is forward.

I am the new star.

Like the heroes of the cult war, I will channel the history of my clan and become everything they were "

Fuze: "WHAT?!"



Oken: "I am Ace Pilot Oken, and there is nothing I can't do!

Oken Dodges the first three laser strikes



Mint: "If for some reason a ship OUT OF SHEER DUMB LUCK was able to survive the first volley . . .

Fuze: "Oken maybe we-

Luck isn't what guides me, everything holds the same

Oken: "You're looking for a pattern but you can't predict the heart of a free spirit!"



Mint: ". . . It would be obliterated from the NOW FULLY ACTIVATED ARRAY!"

a more complex pattern only makes clearer the path

Oken: "I see them trying to understand, but the robots they need to feel!"



Mint: " Th-there's no way in hell she . . . wait . . . heh heh Hah Hah HAHAHAHA"

Fuze: "The shield bubble, I-I can see it!"

The Ecliptor's shield generators begin to glow brighter



Damnit! so close!

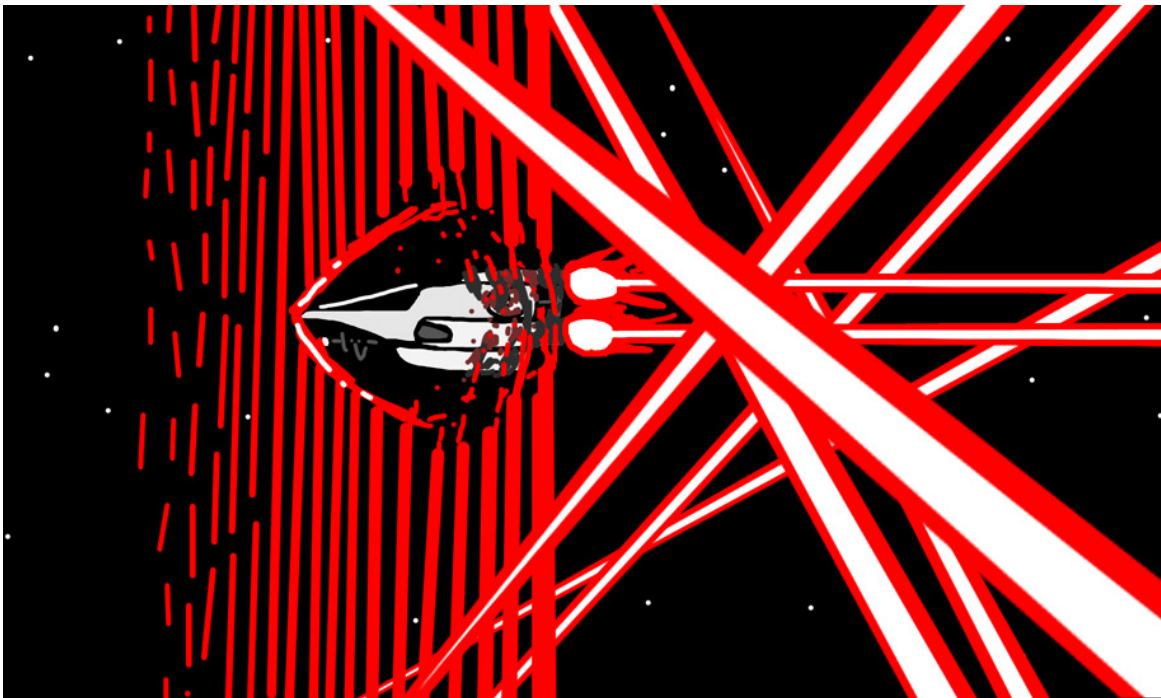
Oken: "She's preparing a shield pulse . . . "

Fuze: "Carriers don't have-"

Oken: "this one does. there's no dodging it"
an omni-directional attack.

Fuze: "Maybe we could turn away or-"

Oken: "If we slow down or turn, the Array will catch us"
there's no way to dodge . . .



At full speed and max power to shield our duration of exposure to the pulse energy should be less than a tenth of a second

But the power output, for even that long . . . MIGHT be more than this ship can take.

Patient Ember I place my faith in you

Fuze: "Oken! do something!"

Oken: "ALL POWER TO THRUST AND SHIELDS"

* * *



Heavy damage sustained

Please Ember we can still do this!

Main thrusters offline

Manuvering pulse field offline

Manuvering thrusters at 2% power

Sheilds offline

Life support offline

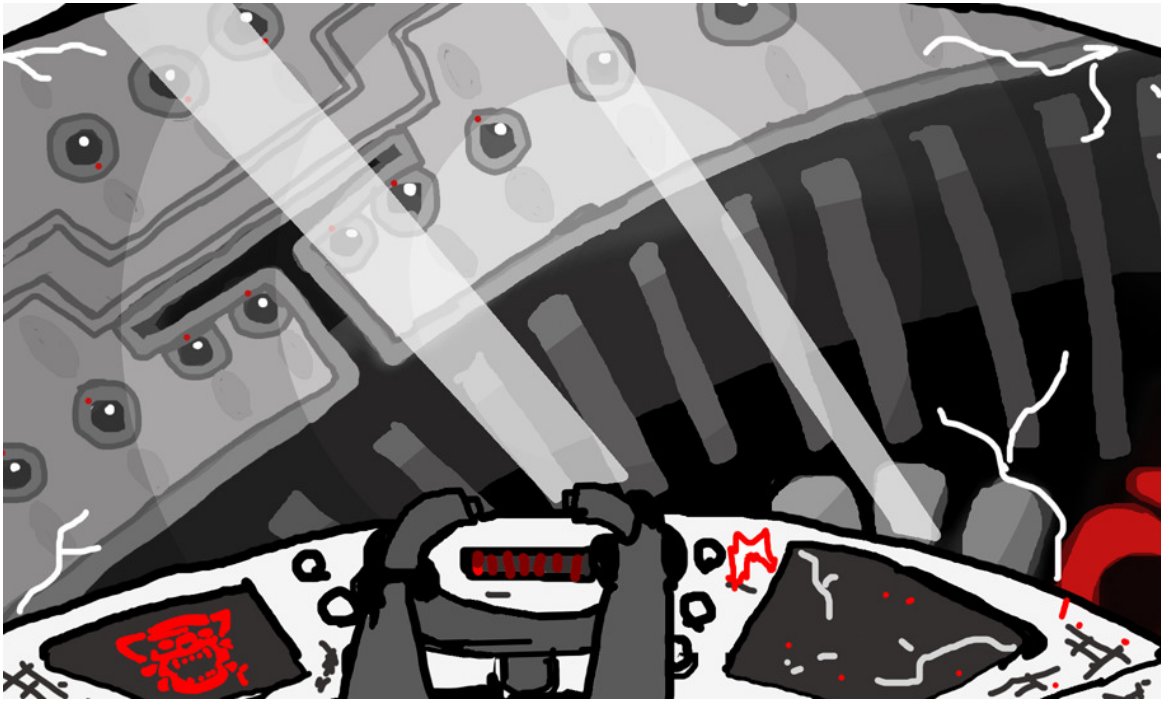
NO-NO-NO!

Total systems shut down in 1 minute

I don't think we're going to live that long!

Raydio signal active. Ecliptor receiving transmissions

...



Mint: "All that just so you could crash into the ecliptor's reinforced Carbosteel hull? so much for heroics. GOOD BYE AND GOOD RIDDANCE . . . ACE PILOT OKEN!"

Impact imminent.

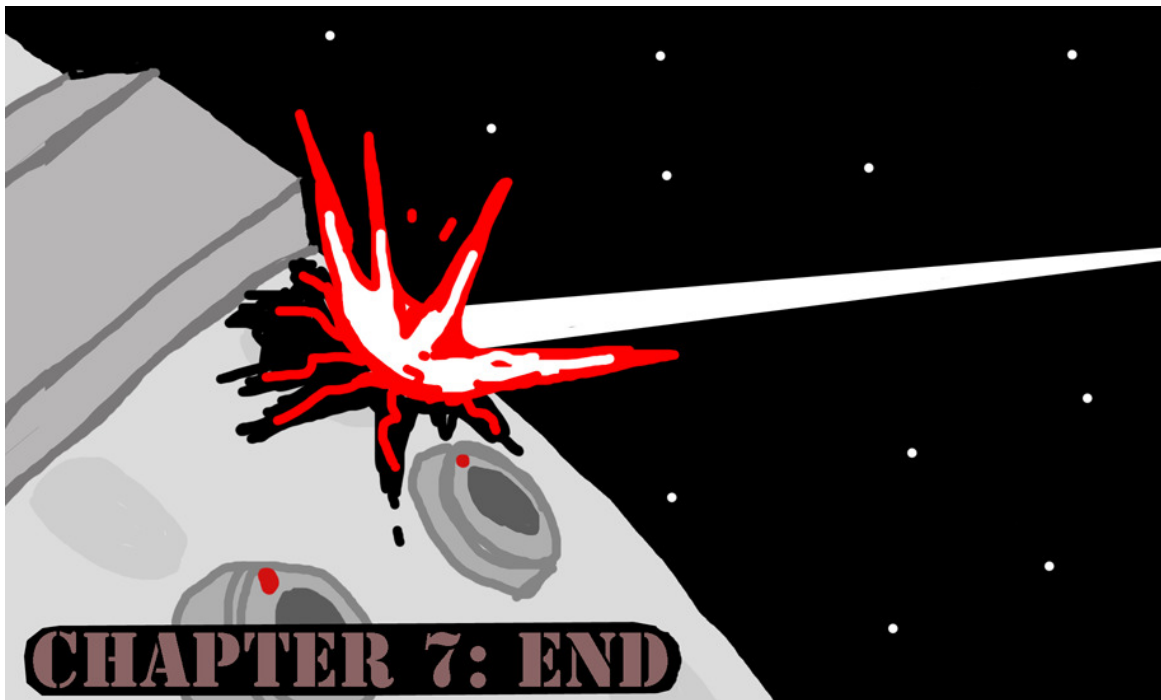
!!!



Will this work? I guess it doesn't matter.

It's all I've got left!

Oken: "FIRE FORWARDRAYBEAM!"



There is a burst of fire, and the small shuttle disappears into the Ecliptor

CHAPTER 7: END