

The Last of Mankind

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Words cannot describe the what I felt when they appeared again. In the three languages I speak, I cannot find the voice to describe the experience of that bleak morning. But I can still remember...

The lights. The bright crimson lights of the portals as the ships entered our universe yet another time. As we gazed upon the portals, the ships entered, appearing as angels of death, brought to us once again upon the wings of an angry god, whose brightness spiraled through all the trails of subspace. The immortal warriors looked different than before, though. The insect-like figures were all but gone, replaced by a new stream-lined evil, but still cloaked in garments of blood red and death black. As before, we were not prepared for the technological advances they had made. Rays of light sliced through our ships, each lonely in a crowd of thousands.

The fire. Not a ship in the fleet was spared from it. They were all taken by it in one form or another. Fiery balls of flak punched holes through our largest of carriers, and completely disintegrated whole fighters upon any chance contact. Teams of the immortals invaded planetary colonies, leaving any ground troops to burn to death from the torturous holes in their body, the trademark of the Shivan's built-in weapon. Flames of red and gold and blue ate our ships from the inside out, leaving us motionless in space, waiting for the destroyers to finish us off.

The smoke, for what follows fire but smoke? Clouds of it enveloped what ships were left, leaving us blind, grasping in the dark for our escape. Through miles of the black smog, we crawled to the pods. Tell me, if you can, what is worse than the smell of a burning man? The answer is: the stench of a burning ship horridly stirred in with the putrid odor of a burning crew. I passed three of my best friends on the way to freedom, unrecognizable but by their tags, not yet melted by the heat. I still wear a mark of my survival on my face, where a burst of steam chisled away at cheek.

The fear. The fear of dying on our ships. The fear of not reaching the escape pods. But worse, the fear we had once in the pods, waiting to be picked off by our godlike enemies. Thirty of us packed into a pod meant for ten. No room to breathe, no room to move, no room to run. Nowhere to run even if there was room. Only enough room to wait, and pray that the Shivans didn't find you next. And we all prayed, each man silently mouthing the words to his own supplication, each moving his lips in his own mother tongue. That day, every officer became a saint above men.

The light. The transparent blue luster of our own portals bringing us both appeasement and fear, but not hope. Upon reaching the other side, we would be safe. We would be with our friends once again. But we could not hope for it to get better. We knew it was just the beginning. We feared that we could not stop them this time, and we knew our fears would be brought to life... And they were. As before, the angels of death followed us. Farther this time than ever before. They followed us all the way to Sol, where they destroyed everything they found, everything that we held sacred. And still, desecrating our holy land was not enough. We were to pay for our transgressions against the angry gods. They continued to follow us. They hunted us down through Delta Serpentis and Beta Aquilae, when so little was left that they felt the result would not be worth their efforts...

Yes, I can remember every moment. And I know of what's to come. Our future is no longer uncertain. Our punishment has been decreed. We are to die. Whether we remain so small and scattered that we simply evolve into dust, or our colonies become large enough to once again warrant attention, our fate remains the same. Yes, death is all that awaits us now. But our legacy will not be forgotten. I leave these journals and histories as a warning to those who would follow in our place, to those who would have the universe as their own: the destroyers will come on swift wings

against those who anger the great preservers, and angering the gods of preservation can only bring about your destruction.

- the last of our kind -