

Apocalypse: Phoenix

"Well, where do you want me to start? It's so big that you can't possibly miss it. That means it has to be well protected. But it has so much surface area that to give it decent armor everywhere it can't be protected much better than a man in Power Armor. Now you think that sounds alright, but it's not. Because a man in Power Armor is small and maneuverable. He can stand behind a wall, or he can lie down, or any number of things. The Morituri? It just stands there and gets shot. And all it takes is one guy with an explosive weapon that has reasonable penetration and you can kiss your big robot goodbye. Now factor in the absurd cost of building, fielding, supplying, and transporting one of these things. It is a bad design. A very bad design. The whole idea is stupid. A great weapon system? Sure. If you're going to war with a bunch of twelve-year-olds."

- David Steinman, the lone dissenting member of the original Morituri Design Review Committee, 11.06.2178.

"New Eden, 2188 to 2240: 16 Units Committed; 6 Mechanical Failure, 1 Disabled in Combat, 0 Destroyed, 0 Pilot Fatalities.

"Hryken, 2199-2201: 96 Units Committed; 11 Mechanical Failure, 41 Disabled in Combat, 33 Destroyed, 28 Pilot Fatalities.

"Alpha, 2199-2201: 92 Units Committed; 13 Mechanical Failure, 19 Disabled in Combat, 46 Destroyed, 40 Pilot Fatalities.\

"Cauldron, 2234: 40 Units Committed; 2 Mechanical Failure, 4 Disabled in Combat, 16 Destroyed, 13 Pilot Fatalities.

- Morituri casualty summary, from its inception until the bankruptcy of Mechanical Research Technologies, the Subcon which designed it.

"Starlink will revolutionize interstellar travel. the savings in cost and time will open previously unpromising worlds to both colonization and exploitation, and these worlds will free Humanity. As they become profitable and thriving colonies, our constant wars over the few desirable systems will finally come to an end. United in peace and prosperity, Humanity will stand poised for even greater research, growth, and exploration."

- Excerpt from the Starlink Inauguration speech of Italo Benedict, Director of the Imperial Technical Research and Development Department, 05.11.2279.

"Unbiased, yet compassionate. Acting with a sense of balance born not out of disinterest or complacency, but an awareness of the fundamental unity of the entire Starguild. This is the Imperial House of the Future. not the empty, ceremonial presence that we have known for so long, but a vital, dynamic force for the growth and success of the entire Starguild Imperium. Who will fill this role? That question is one which need not concern us now. Today we need only decide that a real Imperial House will lead us all into the future. And that is a decision which we cannot delay any longer."

- Excerpt from Martin Heisson's "Imperial House" paper, 17.10.2295.

"So I told Ziers about the Morituri's I'd seen when I was with ImpSat. At first he just kind of ignored it, and went on talking, but I finally bashed it into his head. You know, like, 'hey, Anton. Available. Now. Cheap.' Rotten design? Sure. So what? I mean, what do you want for nothing? Puts us months ahead of the competing teams, right? And we can always change the design later, when we have the funding and all. So off he goes to tell Fowler and try and take all the credit himself. I'm just lucky that

Cait was there; she shut him up. Jerk. But Fowler gives me the bonus, and Ziers is going, 'oh, it was just a misunderstanding.' Yeah, uh-hunh. So I bought Cait a picture for her office, you know, one of those wilderness things she likes. And I had one of the guys on the production floor do a little quick work on Ziers' car. What a clown. Want another drink?"

- Stania Borodin to a friend, during early development of the IRS, 16.04.2346.

"Our first battle with Trident was nothing more than a probe to determine the readiness of the enemy. It is obvious that they possess superior numbers, equipment, training, and all other combat essentials. This makes them a perfect target for our fleet, and at last we can avenge the atrocities they committed over a century ago."

- Excerpt from the dramatic "Speech to the faithful" given by the commander of the Neemis Enterprises fleet shortly after their first battle with Trident. It is entirely unclear what atrocities the commander had in mind; Trident is not even a century old. 22.01.2347.

"Our second battle proves dramatically the dangers of opposing a superior force without the benefits of surprise, position or maneuverability. Yet a small, skilled unit can wear down a mightier opponent. We need only examine history, and witness the struggles of Carthage against Rome, of the British at Isanhlwana, or the French at Dien Bien Phu."

- Excerpt from another "Speech to the Faithful", shortly after the second battle with Trident. The commander once again seems to have a problem with the facts. 16.02.2348.

"Progress has been particularly good on the Brain Scanning and Personality Programming research. Field testing results are excellent. And the design of the Cities is moving pretty quickly. The Robotics thing is just going out for a test now, so we'll know in a couple of months. Well, I'd rather not tell you where we're testing it. Let it be a surprise. Yeah, well, let's just say it is an interesting choice for a test."

- One side of a conversation between top-level manager of Imperial Research and Development and a counterpart at the Imperial Secret Service, 24.01.2349

"When Benedict turned the reins over to me, I was so grateful, so excited...so young. All I saw were the opportunities. I was going to lead a scientific revolution, and more importantly I had the chance to begin the social changes I had dreamed of since childhood. I knew that Benedict supported me, and that was a tremendous help. He seemed so certain of everything, and that gave me the certainty that we would win. "But it has been more than thirty years, and now I am as old as he was then. And in between I have had to watch the Spectrals devastate humanity, while we worked to build a weapon to stop them. To watch the Imperials come to Rhand, drawn by those very researches. To watch the hate generated by the idea that Bondsmen should be treated like humans. To watch the building of tensions, and to know that a war which would destroy all we worked for was one mistake away. And there have been no certainties, ever. "I suppose that Benedict was not as certain as he seemed. the peace he thought Starlink would bring never came; the prosperity he foresaw was consumed by the greed of the Starcaste, and the rest of Humanity is poorer than ever. Knowing the blind faith that so many have in me, I guess the biggest difference between us is that he fought against a system he had come to despise, while I am fighting to create one in which I believe."

- Personal Log entry of Petra Riesen, Director of RMBK division of Trident, 26.01.2349.

"Free Speech? That's just the sort of humanist nonsense I expect from you radical. Freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and freedom of religion were never 'rights'; they were nothing more

that short-lived social fads. They only existed within the nation-states because the nations were too weak and ineffectual to stop them, and because the nations couldn't provide what really matters: prosperity, efficiency, and the greatest freedom of all, freedom from uncertainty."

- Tiber Barnett, Chairman of the Imperial Auditing Committee, in a widely broadcast debate between representatives of the Imperium and Trident/RMBK, 02.02.2349.

"Tensions between Trident/RMBK and Imperial authorities reached a new high today with the destruction of the Imperium's Rhand Deep Space Tracking Center by unknown persons. Sources say that the Imperium suspects RMBK involvement in the bombing, although there is currently no hard evidence to support that conclusion. A major investigation is now underway. "The Imperium has been increasingly critical of RMBK's activities throughout the last year, both for RMBK's provocative social platform, which minimizes caste differences and promotes a degree of social equality, and their equally controversial research projects, which they still refuse to let the Imperium audit. Those secret research projects include the RMBK facility itself, of course, as well as three research centers, called RA1, RA2, and RA3, which belong to Scan Technologies, Inc."

- News item, Rhand Starcaste Cable Network, aired 24.02.2349

"In light of the sabotage of the Tracking Center and the inevitable movement regulation difficulties this has caused, all Starfleet vessels are hereby ordered to immediately report to Central Station to receive approved docking stations. All vessels which are not in their docking stations by 2200 hours will be deemed guilty of criminal negligence, tracked down, and taken into custody immediately. Force will be used to enforce this order if necessary."

- General Order from Captain Tyrell, Commander Imperial Starfleet, to all Starfleet vessels in the Rhand system, 24.02.2349.

"Trident's 1st and 2nd Mechanized Regiments are extremely loyal to RMBK, rather than to corporate Trident. There is clear evidence to indicate that these Regiments have been seeded by RMBK with special recruits and malcontents over the course of the last twenty-five years. "Any attack on RMBK will be met with extreme resistance. Suggest surgical strike on RMBK at a later date."

- Intelligence report, initially intended for Colonel Cambronne of the Imperial Guard. The report was intercepted and suppressed by Colonel Graf of the Imperial Secret Service.

"RMBK is a part of Trident, a Senior member of the Starguild. Its premises shall therefore not be subject to Imperial entry without the verified consent of the Trident Board of Directors. As you have not been able to comply with this requirement, I must refuse to allow you or your troops to enter. "Any movement of Imperial forces against this installation will be met with immediate force."

- Response of Colonel O'Reilly, Commander of 1st Trident Mechanized Regiment, to the Imperial Guard's demand for entry into the RMBK facility, 27.02.2349.

"Mission compromised. Request immediate evac Grid 1LL, Station 3. Agents Moore and Burrard have been picked up, and I'm sure the enemy is on to me. Anybody else you have in here better get out. There are enemy operatives within this Regiment. Don't count on any of the information I passed to date; I'm sure now they were on to us from the start. End transmission."

- Coded transmission from Imperial agent within Trident 1st Mechanized Regiment to Colonel Graf, Imperial Secret Service. Dated 01.03.2349.

"There have been numerous rumors about secret projects which are allegedly underway in our three

Research Facilities here on Rhand, and about some sort of collusion between our corporation and the RMBK division of Trident. We wish to formally declare that the Board of Directors of Scan Medical Technologies, Inc., Rhand Division, have no knowledge of any misdealings or illegalities which may have been perpetrated at these facilities by Scan personnel, and that any improprieties which may have occurred were the results of individual and unauthorized action. "Moreover, all three of these facilities were seized a short time ago by Trident forces, and our Medical and Research staffs have been evicted. All these personnel are being gathered by our security forces, and will soon be in custody. Particular efforts are being made to discover the whereabouts of the former Directors of Operations for the three facilities. "Scan, Inc. releases all rights and privileges in Rhand Research Facilities RA1, RA2, and RA3 for the duration of the current crisis, and hereby requests Imperial intervention and arbitration. Scan, Inc. further pledged full and complete support of any Imperial investigation of the allegations involving the three Research Facilities."

- Scan, Inc. Board of Directors to Colonel Cambronne of the Imperial Guard, 07.03.2349.

"With all respect, sir, you must listen to me. There is an intruding vessel in this system, and it is closing rapidly. We have to direct our arrays into its sector." Ensign T. Tanaka, Tracking and Communications Section, ISS Heimdall, 08.03.2349. "Ensign, you cannot expect me to move our tracking sensors away from a potentially hostile fleet just because you think a minor statistical anomaly on your readout is actually an approaching ship. We are very nearly at war with Trident/RMBK, and it is the Trident fleet that concerns me. "That will be all, Ensign. Trident's fleet is fully accounted for. So even if your ghost ship exists, it is of no concern to us. Return to your station immediately. I have no further time for this nonsense."

- Lieutenant Commander Anthony, Tracking and Communications Section, ISS Heimdall, 08.03.2349.

Sensors: Captain Tyrell, ISS Heimdall is being fired upon. Damage appears serious. Command: Go to Red Alert and open fire on the Trident Explorer. Message to all vessels: Red Alert. Open Fire. Proceed with TacSpec A62B. Pursue any Trident craft which attempt to flee. End of Message. I can't believe this, has trident gone mad? Fire Control: Commencing fire, Captain. Communications: Message transmitted, sir. Sensors: Incoming fire, Captain. Vessels from both fleets engaging. Damage Control: Damage reports coming in, sir. Command: This is crazy. Insane. Nobody can win this kind of fight.

- Excerpt, Bridge log of the ISS Redoubtable, 08.03.2349. Recovered from the Redoubtable's Emergency Log Capsule, which automatically homed in on the beacon of the Imperial Guard Landing Zone.

"What is Tyrell doing? We are at short range, and both fleets are immobile; no one can win this kind of fight. He must have gone crazy."

- Excerpt, Bridge log of the TSS Explorer, 08.03.2349. Recovered from the Explorer's Emergency Log Capsule, which was found in the ruins of the RMBK facility.

"Duncan, RA2: "The space fleets are destroying each other. Either someone has gone mad, or Spectrals have come as we expected. Regardless, we must prepare for evacuation, space bombardment, and full range of air and ground conflict. Begin Operation Roncesvalles. Repeat, begin Roncesvalles. "-Vladimir, OSS HQ"

- 08.03.2349: The Invasion Begins.

"Bondsmen Community 22 is now under martial law. All Bondsmen are hereby ordered to remain in

their present locations until the emergency has passed. All citizens are instructed to remain calm; there is no cause for alarm. Continue watching this station for further instructions. Message repeats. Bondsmen Community is now under martial law...."

- Automated broadcast on Public Service Cable in Bondsmen Community 22. It began 08.03.2349, and was aired continuously for 16 days until the Landcaste Management Center was destroyed by Vissers.

"Duncan, RA2: "Confirmed Spectral Presence. Bombardment will begin shortly, landings expected within hours. Proceed with Austerlitz on schedule. Repeat, Austerlitz. " -Vladimir, OSS HQ"

- 09.03.2349: The Apocalypse.

"They are all dead. Williams and Lennox knew they could not escape, so they.... The fighting has stopped. I can see a little through the vision slits, and I can see the robots that have us surrounded. Robots. I.... It's just a matter of time before they come for me. Karstin purged all the data storage devices, and I am about to destroy all the printed materials. Karstin and her team were the only ones who really knew how all this worked and now they are all gone. It is such a waste. And I...."

- Final moments of a personal log found in one of the Avatar vehicles. Transferred to ISS Primary Data Storage for future reference. 09.03.2349.

"Vladimir, OSS HQ: "Contact has been lost with the Avatar Caravan. Viktor, Sol, and Darantz did not report; the encounter must have been brief. There is of course a high likelihood that they are casualties, and we must accept that Avatar has been lost or damaged. My only units in the area report heavy Imperial activity, and no possibility of useful recon. My force is dispersed and occupied with safeguarding the remaining non-combatants and equipment, so I cannot launch the necessary offensive. I suggest we initiate an S-4 investigation, especially if the agents on sight report in, and hope to recoup the loss at a later date. "-Duncan, Austerlitz HQ"

- 10.03.2349: Day One.

"Colonel, please listen to me. You don't seem to fully appreciate the value of the scientific expertise which my team can provide the ISS, regarding the Avatar Project, as well as any number of future research situations.... What? Hello? Melville, I've been cut off. Get ISS Headquarters again." "Right. Hello. This is...oh. Yes, I see. I'll tell him. Doctor Fowler, Colonel Graf is in a meeting."

- In the office of Executive Scientist Edmund Fowler of the Imperial Robotics Service, Day 1.

"Four of us were guarding the vehicle park when the attack came. We heard Grav vehicles, explosions, gunfire... but we stayed at our post. Then we heard a noise on the roof, and this thing dropped right in front of us. It was lean and broad-shouldered, with big emotionless eyes. I'd seen pictures of them, so I knew it immediately; Slozek, the things the Spectrals use for light infantry. It looked at us for a split second, those dead eyes staring out from under the thick brow ridge, and I remember thinking that it didn't seem interested in us. But then it fired two quick bursts, and Strad and I were the only ones left. I broke for the door and ran for it. Strad never came out."

- Morben Skinner, Landcaste Law Enforcement, Belden, 10.03.2349.

"I remember thinking, 'Help will come'. I expected a paramedic to materialize at my side at any moment, in a clean uniform and filled with confidence and kindness, the way they always are. But minutes passed, and I kept pressing the Emergency button on my Encoder. By the time I realized no help was coming, and tried to stop the bleeding myself, Kristof was dead."

- Steven Malcom, Regional Sales Manager, Startech Fuels Division, 10.03.2349.

"The Starcaste had all the money, all the guns, and all the power. So now they got all the bombs dropped in on them by all those alien guys. Seems fair. 'Round here they just dropped us a whole bunch of guns. Anybody who gives me a gun is a friend until I say otherwise. I guess they probably gave them to us so we could kill some Starcaste, but so far we just seem to be shooting each other. And, hey, that seems fair, too. I haven't had this good a time since... well, since ever, I guess. I wish we had been invaded years ago. I just hope nobody has shot my old supervisor, yet. I'd still like to meet him again."

- Darrell "Butcher" Barnes, Visser and Former Maintenance Tech in the Food Processing Section for Bondsmen Community 40. 11.03.2349.

"It has been three days since the Weapon Pod landed, and the town is descending rapidly into madness. Most of my peers seem to think that it is the lack of authority and the stress of the invasion which has caused all of the violence, but I suspect something more is involved. Looting during a crisis is one thing; it is not sufficient to explain the irrational fury which has erupted throughout the city...."

- The Journal of Dr. Henry Finston, 12.03.2349.

"Day 4: Since the attack, I have remained in contact with some of my patients. Patient L was the latest, and he left just a few minutes ago. His condition has deteriorated badly. He was irrational, prone to spontaneous outbursts of anger, and very moody. None of these things fit his profile; He had been coming to me for help with a few minor stress-related neuroses. I have no adequate explanation for the change which has come over him, and over the entire city. Mass psychosis seems unlikely, but I have no known precedent for this sort of situation. Perhaps a biological agent is at work here...."

- The Journal of Dr. Henry Finston, 13.03.2349.

"We were coming down to support the caravan when we got hit. Jeffers tried to keep us in the air, but there was no chance. When I came t after the crash, I couldn't move my legs and I was pinned in my flight harness under equipment crates and Emil's body. He'd been out of his harness helping Eric and Rosario when we hit. He died right there, and I couldn't help him. I spent the whole night fading in and out, waiting to die like the rest of them. "Early the next day a group of Starguild tourists found me; it was their Ranger who pulled me out. They buried the others, and left the suits right there on the ground. They still have no clear picture of what has happened, and why no paramedics respond to their ORCA Emergency call, but they are hoping to get back to civilization. Nice thought. They say that if no help comes in a couple of days, they will head west, and that they will take me with them. It will be weeks before my injuries heal; when they do, I will slip back to the crash and dispose of the equipment. I hate to wait so long, but I see no alternative."

- Personal Log entry of Corporal Martin Travis, member of the elite Special Air Cavalry Platoon of the 1st Trident Mechanized Regiment, Day 4.

"The community they have decided to head for is a Subcon, and it is over two hundred miles away. I have urged them to leave me behind; I pointed out that carrying my litter that distance will be grueling for them but they don't care, which is more than just inconvenient for me. I had expected a bunch of Starcaste to be happy to get rid of me (and yes, there were one or two who were quick to agree), but most of them have been remarkably generous. Casey, the lead Ranger, is particularly kind. getting away from this group will be more difficult than I had expected."

- Personal Log entry of Corporal Martin Travis, Day 6.

"The initial crisis has passed, and a type of society is emerging from the ruins of Starguild civilization. It is a markedly primitive society, but it will have to do. I am now convinced that the Weapon Pod carried some form of bacteriological weapon, one which affects the minds of its victims. Sociopathic behavior is now common and accepted in the city, and even I have felt certain irrational urges. It seems likely that I was infected during my session with L on Day 4. If that is true, then I will kill him when he returns next week for his appointment."

- The Journal of Dr. Henry Finston, Day 9.

"They say we have to give them 200 pounds of food, or ten pounds of medical supplies, or 2 weapons with 2 clips each. Every month. And if we don't, they will turn off the power." "We can't afford any of that." "I know, but that's what they asked for." "You still say attacking them is out?" "Absolutely. They have a full Squad of Landcaste Military in there, and a lot of weapons. So they are well armed and well trained, and what are we? A bunch of former construction workers, with no military training and only a few guns." "That's it." "What?" "They may know how to shoot people, but they don't know how to build things. Think they would like to have the gaps in their Retaining Wall repaired?"

- Conversation between two Refugees at their Construction Warehouse, Day 17.

"They came out of nowhere, in this Grav APC with weird pictures on it, and the words 'TECHNO-PUNK' written on the side, and landed right in the middle of the compound. We fired a few shots, but a Slivergun can't touch an APC. So then the doors opened, and they piled out, and everyone started to run away. They were Starguild Power Armor, but their suits looked really strange. Spikes. Fur. Skulls painted all over the place. One of them wasn't even carrying a Battlepack-she had this big chain wrapped around one hand, and was swinging it over her head. It didn't take any more than that for me. I jumped the wall and cleared out, and a bunch of guys followed me. So that's how we lost the Armory, and all the Refugees we had working for us. Which is too bad, but it's not worth fighting Vissers in Power Armor."

- Garret Simpson, Ex-New Lord, Ex-Bondsman Machinist, Day 22.

"With each day I am more impressed by their behavior. They have made a decision to work together, and to get everyone to safety, and they are going to do it. Casey in particular is driven to lead them out of this mess. they are adapting to life without civilization; each day they try to contact the ORCA, each day they fail, and each day the fact that something terrible has happened sinks in a little deeper. I have told them what I know, about the fleets and the battles, but none of us really knows what to think. A couple are showing signs of strain, but so far Casey is holding them together."

- Personal Log entry of Corporal Martin Travis, Day 23.

"Mission Update: Pursuing a band of enemy agents. Uncertain of their intentions or origins, but their behavior marks them clearly. They were brought here as part of a sporting event, and broke out of their training camp at the beginning of the Apocalypse. I have no idea yet if they are under any orders, or are now operating as mavericks. The ones I have apprehended have been unable to answer questions. "They are quite capable; they detected my pursuit early, and have attempted 3 ambushes. At every encounter I have been impressed by their skill. If you discover some trace of who they might be, please inform me at my next contact. It is, however, more a point of curiosity now. I have attended to 7 of them; only 2 remain. One of these two is quite talented, a small man with several facial scars. The other is a huge, muscular man with part of his right index finger missing; he is, however, little more than an efficient killing machine. I will continue with this operation, and contact Base again within 20 days."

- Gregor, Black Sword Dragon, on standby assignment, Day 26.

The Spectral Major Warrior moved through the ruins of the Subcon in complete silence. There were 37 remaining Sentients within its basic operating range, and none were likely to offer organized resistance. None of the Sentients were Primaries or Secondaries, and only 4 were Tertiaries. All Sentients were to be gathered or killed, however, and so 6 Minor Workers immediately departed the Lair. The Warrior set about driving the Sentients together; to increase the number who would be captured.

- Day 27

"Casey and Stauffer have gone ahead to get help. The group is low on food and is tiring. We are holed up near a lake and will rest here, at least until they get back. My legs are much better, and I should be able to walk unassisted very soon. I will need to get my strength back quickly, because I suspect that there won't be any help out there, and Casey and the other two Rangers are wearing out fast. I just hope nothing happens to her and Stauffer while they are out there; they are good at what they do, but I don't think that's enough anymore."

- Personal Log entry of Corporal Martin Travis, Day 32.

"That was the last day I was a part of Scan's Security forces. It was two days before the invasion, and we knew RMBK was up to something. But we were in RA2, and we outnumbered RMBK's troops pretty badly. So when their negotiator came up to try to talk us into surrendering, I thought that was pretty funny. "He was unarmed, and he said his name was Duncan. There was something about him, something...clean. He started talking, and it seemed that I had waited my whole life for someone to say what he said, for someone to make sense that way. All he did was tell us that the Starguild was corrupt and destructive, and that it was only interested in preserving its own power. Well, that was nothing new, we all knew that. Somehow when he said it, though, it started to bother me. And then he said the Humanity deserved better, and it was like getting hit with a hammer. He only talked for a minute or two, but by the time he finished none of us believed in Scan anymore, or in the whole Starguild. So we turned over RA2 to RMBK, and most of us have been working for Duncan for the last 5 weeks. Now he says there is trouble in the south, and he is taking us down there. Which is good enough for me."

- Lieutenant Merris Capperson, formerly with Baker Company, 3rd Battalion, Scan's Rhand Mechanized Regiment, Day 36.

"Have reached Vartac; Avatar is not here, of course. It is apparently headed west, indicating possibility of sea transportation. Request data on likely port of destination, as well as common maritime activities and sea-going vessels on this planet. Also, we encountered a Squad of the 27th, so we are now suitably armed and equipped. Will report again within fortnight."

- Report from Sol, Blue Sword Targa, to Operation Headquarters, Day 36.

"You will control yourself immediately, Lieutenant, and that will be the last time I hear you speak of surrender. We are the Imperial Guard. I do not care who it is that is attacking us, or what the odds are. All of you, follow me. I will show you how a Colonel of the Guard dies."

- Colonel Cambronne of the Imperial Guard during the destruction of the 7th Imperial Guard Strike Battalion, Day 42.

"Casey and Stauffer returned today; Stauffer's been hurt badly, and Casey is exhausted from carrying

him. They didn't make it to the Subcon. They turned back when they ran into two bands of madmen fighting each other, and that's when Stauffer took the cut to the head. Casey managed to find a radio somewhere, and it is obvious that Trident and the Imperium are at war. there is hardly any radio traffic, and what there is is mostly in code. What little info we have picked up makes it sound like everything has fallen apart. "I'm not sure what is going to happen now. Everyone is tense, some of them are giving me looks like it is my fault because I'm with Trident, and the supplies are dangerously low. The only good thing is that I have most of my strength back. I was even planning to leave them this week, and just hoping help would come first. "With Stauffer hurt, it looks like I will have to stay. Someone has to get them to safety, and until Casey gets some rest, I am their only hope."

- Personal Log entry of Corporal Martin Travis, Day 43.

"Wake up out there, Vissertown! Radio station KViSR is on the air and on your nerves. Don't check your scheduling guide, and don't adjust your picture - we ain't scheduled and there ain't no picture. My name is Brandy Charlatan, the Station Manager of KViSR. That's K-Visser - yell it, don't spell it! We are the official unofficial voice of the real people here in town, and we will be on the air every day, every night, whenever we feel like it. And no one is going to stop us. So here's some music. It's Number 1 on the KViSR Top .44, and it's OrcBoy and the Ogres with 'God Save El Puerco'...on KViSR Radio!"

- First broadcast of KViSR Radio in Bondsman Community 40, also called Vissertown, Day 45.

"Their behavior is intolerable! Day after day I must listen to their nonsense about the Aiming System, and the effects the Apocalypse will have on us, and how I should take a rest. they don't even understand that the attitude is just what will destroy us. They are already victims of the Apocalypse and don't even know it. Our only chance is a strong defense handled by the morally pure, defense which cannot be breached by any number of attacking madmen or bandits. We must build Mantises, Mantises, Mantises; only then will we be safe."

- Personal Log entry, Research Assistant Dmitri Prescott, Day 48.

"When Horvin was injured descending the cliffs, I almost left him to die. I thought about it for some time. I stood there, looking down at him, thinking about how badly injured he was, and how I had never liked the Starcaste anyway. We had heard of the invasion on the radio, of course, so I was pretty sure that the old cast rules were gone. That meant that I wasn't just a hired Bondsman guide anymore, and that I didn't have to be afraid of the Starcaste police. I was free, and he was dying, and no one would ever know. "But then I realized that if I wasn't a Bondsman anymore, that meant that he wasn't Starcaste anymore. Suddenly we were both just Humans. And with aliens around, that started to mean something to me. So I stopped the bleeding and set his leg, and carried him down off that mountain on my back. "He has saved my live twice since then."

- Victor Rasman, former Bondsman Resort Guide at Lake Wanderer, Day 49.

"I can't imagine how you are all going to react to this. I don't know, maybe you're all expecting it. Anyway, there's no point in my continuing to work on the Fire Control System. I can't fix it. I can't even find what's wrong with it. And if I can't fix the Mantis, then I'm really not much use here. Even if I could fix it,, I guess it wouldn't matter anyway. "So I'm leaving. Don't worry-I haven't taken anything with me. I wouldn't want to drag you down any further than I already have. I'm sorry. Goodbye. AZ."

- Final message left by Anton Ziers, before he left the IRS and wandered into the wilderness. Day 49.

"Look what she gave me. Just look. Three binders filled with her notes, her printouts, and her designs,

and absolutely no index. I've looked on the computer, and her files have no organization, just one big directory with a bunch of system-assigned file numbers. She won't interpret it; she just says, 'it's all in the binders.' So it'll take weeks just to figure out what she is trying to do, and from what I've seen, once we sort it out it won't do us any good. Half of this second binder seems to be about ways to make the Leg Drives more efficient. And what does that have to do with the problem in the Aiming System? Nothing. Nothing! "So you just go on saying, 'Teresa Ruvin is a genius.' Go ahead. Fine with me. But I'll tell you the truth. Teresa Ruvin is a lunatic. You don't agree? You work with her."

- Chief Scientist Gross to Executive Scientist Fowler, Day 52.

"As you know, RMBK forces attempted to escape from the Scan Research Facilities and from RMBK itself shortly before the bombardment. It has come to my attention that more of these troops may have survived than was first thought. Moreover, it appears that certain of their recent technological studies may have been successful, and that there are RMBK units in the field utilizing these technologies. You will therefore suspend your current operations and immediately deploy your entire Section in pursuit of RMBK elements. Data follows..."

- Coded transmission from Colonel Graf of the Imperial Secret Service to one of his Section Heads, Day 54.

"Turbulence within entire Section. Obvious suspicions that there are one or more moles within unit. Significant security changes. Am naturally concerned, but no unusual attention has been paid to me so far. Am still assigned to Avatar study team, and we are still en route to its location. Security regarding location tightened, but will continue to update you on my position."

- Report from and S-4 agent, code name Xenophon, placed within the ISS, Day 57.

"Attached is the schedule of (changes) (charges) on Ruvin's Leg Drive modifications. Best (illegible) possible. Very urgent. Performance (illegible) but should be (certain) (curtailed) (detailed) (retained). Look forward to next (stage) (state) (start) and suggest that all personnel be informed of the full details soonest."

- Bryant Melville's best effort at transcribing a memo written by Research Assistant Willis Schwebberhaffenwurf, Day 58.

"Expedition has arrived on site, and Base Camp has been established. Initial reconnaissance and security measures underway. Area is tranquil and consists primarily of easy terrain; should present no serious obstacles to quick and efficient search. I believe we can anticipate a speedy conclusion to the operation."

- Radio message from Operations Officer Lieutenant Benson Gibbs at Search Base Camp to ISS Control in Vartac, Day 58.

"Vladimir, OSS HQ: "Outposts have picked up heavy Imperial radio traffic in the vicinity of the Avatar ambush. The odds are very good that they did not realize the importance of the APC during the battle, and are attempting to recover it. I am well away from the area at present, and still occupied with my responsibilities. Knowing how slim the reserve is ever since the attack on the Guard, perhaps we will have to rely on one of the Operation Teams. I have no better suggestion at present, although I hope you have something at your disposal. "-Duncan, Austerlitz HQ"

- Day 58: The Search Begins.

"We have so much more to lose now than we did in the old days. If even one of us falls, the entire Operation Team could be lost. And there is another very special risk as well. The Power Armor is irreplaceable now, and the Swords are just beginning to face the possibility of life without it. "To fully understand this I think you would have to be one of them, but I saw it on Alpha and I do not look forward to it here. To a Sword, Having the suit destroyed without hope of replacement is like losing a part of his or her body. I remember them making daily trips to the Repair Shops, like they were visiting a friend in Sick Bay, and I remember how they looked when we couldn't repair the suit..."

- Sandy Jorden, Senior Technician, Day 66.

"Briceton and Fowler are still trying to use the solutions that worked when the world was civilized; they cannot see that now it is a wilderness out there, a wilderness of madmen and danger and starvation. I've spent enough time in the wild to know that it doesn't matter how powerful they were before; the rules have all changed now, and you cannot stop a snowstorm with a memo, or make wheat grow by waving a gun. Right now the wilderness looks like hundreds of Refugees, of all castes, all of them hungry, many of them insane. Fowler would pretend that this wilderness does not exist; close the gates and they will go away, tell them I am in a meeting. Briceton thinks that a bullet is the answer, and would stack bodies up to form barricades and roadblocks. Neither solution will answer the wilderness, however. Because it will keep coming back, as often as it takes, until it breaks in. And the real answer is to tame it as it comes, and use the parts you have tamed to tame still more of it."

- Personal Log entry, Caitlin Haverlein, Day 67.

"I am alive under a new sun, and in a new time. Over 150 years separate me from the pain and glory that was our home, and that should protect me from the sorrow of our defeat. In my heart, though, Alpha fell yesterday, and you died only a few years ago. Both are fresh wounds. Still, the Phoenix offers me healing. There is real hope here, of a lasting victory for all we have worked for. And you would love this world, as well, in the same way that I am coming to."

- From Trent's Journal to his son Michael, who was killed in the bombardment of Alpha in 2185. Day 70.

"Duncan, Austerlitz HQ: "Have just issued orders activating OSS 108. Best information is that they are unprepared, and will likely be overmatched by Imperial forces. If there is anything you can spare, have it ready to pick up their casualties in the event of a disaster. Everything in the last report from Sol and Darantz indicates continued presence of sizable detachment of the 27th Stormtrooper, as well as ISS Security and original force which destroyed Caravan. "If OSS 108 fails to recover DRGN equipment, your units will face ISS Agents equipped with it. Prepare plans for withdrawal from the area in that event, as casualties to non-combatants would be high. "And pray that OSS 108 surprises us. "-Vladimir, OSS HQ"

- Day 71: Activation.

"They won't let us in. We don't have any skills, and the only people they are even considering are Rangers. But I've been asking questions. It looks like we were right, and the Imperium is at war with Trident. They want information about Trident personnel, anyway. so all we have to do is trade the Trident prisoner we picked up for entrance and sanctuary with the Imperium, and we're set." "Since when is Martin a prisoner?" "Shut up. He's the enemy, and he always has been. We just didn't know it."

- Conversation between two Starcave tourists near Vartac, Day 72.

"I suppose I should have left them as soon as my legs mended, but I owe them my life, and some of

them have become my friends. By staying with them so long, I may have jeopardized my real duty, especially because the ISS is here and is apparently looking for the ship. I have to trust that their search will go slowly; it is a big wilderness. "So, I will leave as soon as the camp quiets down. Getting the Nav Unit will be only a minor problem, and then I will have to get as far away as possible before dawn, in case there is pursuit by either friend or foe. I just hope HQ knows the ISS is out here."

- Personal Log entry, Corporal Martin Travis, Day 72.

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