

## Preface

One-hundred and thirty-eight years ago, at the time of me writing this little introduction, a chance encounter between the UHS 'Agincourt' and a seven ship patrol flotilla of the Tel'korya Hierarchy occurred. The Tel'Koryans ruthlessly destroyed the hapless Human Frigate, beginning a war that in just seven years brought a superpower that had dominated the galaxy for nearly thirteen-hundred years to its knees. How?

That question has dominated the minds of academic thinkers ever since the war ended, countless hours have been spent pouring over every record of the conflict that exists, every photo, every recording, every scrap of computer data has been meticulously examined again and again by thousands of writers, scholars and reporters for over a century. Many a former General and Admiral made a hefty retirement income writing memoirs about their expert opinion on the matter and who knows how many Professors would stake their tenure on defending their personal thesis. But I've always found that sort of discourse unhelpful personally.

I grew up on Decimi III, a planet that still to this day bears the scars of the Human-Tel'Koryan War; from the invasion, the occupation and indeed even the liberation. As a child I often wondered what it must have felt like to witness those events first hand, often looked at the names on headstones and adorning monuments and wondered what it was like to live out the actions of the individuals those names belonged to.

In search of satisfaction for that curiosity I began to seek out those elders who had lived through those events in question, eventually I started writing down the things they told me and then I began publishing those writings. What started out as a desire to know has over the years morphed into an obsession with preservation. Even with all of the medical technology at our disposal the maximum Human lifespan has never managed to progress much beyond one-hundred and twenty years, so even as a child I was watching before my very eyes the experiences I was so curious about being lost forever.

So I wrote, I interviewed and I wrote and then I published it, in newspapers, on datanet blogs, in recording chips I gave away outside of cafes and to my classmates at school and Uni. Anywhere and anyway I thought I could get people to read, I tried. Around ten years ago, Earth Standard, just after I graduated Uni one of my former professors put me in touch with a publishing company he had worked with in the past and helped me get my first two books published, compiling all my myriad manuscripts, transcripts and scattered nonsense into two cohesive volumes collecting the experiences of survivors of the war on Decimi and putting them out there into the galaxy to be preserved forever. About three years after that I realized that in all my life I had never heard an experience from the opposing point of view, I had never met a Tel’Koryan much less spoken to one. Searching around on the datanet I was unable to find any kind of published work from the Tel’Koryan side of the war and, well, that didn’t sit right with me.

So now, after seven years of work and more than seventy interviews with surviving veterans I am pleased to present to you what is, to the best of my knowledge, the first Tel’Koryan oral history of the Human-Tel’Koryan War. I hope that you find reading these accounts as fascinating as I found hearing them first hand to be, but there are a few things that I must ask you to keep in mind. Firstly is that the events being discussed happened more than one-hundred and thirty years ago, Tel’Koryans may live longer than Humans but these individuals are still of an advanced age and recalling events from their youths, some of the details may be wrong or misremembered.

Secondly is to remember that no one experience is a definitive account, all of these individuals served in different places at different times and bring their own unique perspective to the table. Finally I ask you to remember that all of these accounts are translated from their native language to the best of my abilities, Tel’Koryan communication is both audio and photo-visual in nature so some concepts and phrases simply do not exist in a way that can be accurately translated. Rather than attempt to impose my

own interpretation of such things I have instead opted to try and translate them as literally as possible and allow you the reader to derive meaning from it yourself, I have elected to mark such literal translations through the use of *italics* in the text.

Thank you for your indulgence.

“All we had to do was sweep aside the battered remains of their fleet and take their planet”

Ava'khar Ahoskn

I remember when we first *palpated appendages* with your Human fleet. I was already in the Navy for many years before the war, as my father had been before me and his before his. I was serving on the *Euphoric Aggression* at the time, a *Dagger* class<sup>1</sup>, a very good ship, much faster than anything you Humans were building at the time and heavily armed too. Short range though<sup>2</sup>, which would prove to be her downfall but I'll get to that story.

I was a gunner on Battery Three, on the lower port side of the ship. To be honest I rarely had to do much, the computer does all the aiming and calculations for you, the loading is all done by machinery, I basically just pushed a button for the most part. Anyway we weren't present when your Agincourt arrived, we were on the other side of the system and she was destroyed before we arrived, I believe the Captain of the *Splendid Compulsion* was awarded the honor for her destruction. We were still picking through the rubble trying to figure out what your kind was and where you had come from when your fleet arrived four days later. We had no idea you Humans had even existed before that point and all of the sudden here's not one mere scout Frigate but backed up by an entire attack squadron! We were shocked! But it was also so... So exciting! We were to be the vanguards of a new war, the first to do battle with a new enemy to conquer! Such an event hadn't happened in generations. We were giddy with excitement, alarms were blaring, I had to run all the way to my station from my quarters. Our Captain, Captain Xhakadon, was on the intercom extolling us to bring glory and honor to the fleet and to the Hierarchy by doing our tasks competently, and to prepare ourselves for the next great war to add to our people's storied history. Heh, if only he had known.

We are a warrior people you see, war is what we have known for

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1 A Class of Tel'Koryan Frigate, armed primarily with multiple banks of Plasma Accelerators.

2 In the context of Space Combat

generation upon generation, war across the stars. Every species in the known galaxy knew to fear the sight of Tel'Koryan warships, every planet in charted space has felt the tramp of our marching armies. We had met them just the same as we met you and we had crushed them all and forced them to kneel before the Hierarchy's might. We had suffered losses of course, we knew the sting of losing battles, but never a war. Not since the Tel'Koryan first took to the stars as conquerors had we ever lost a war before we met you Humans. Every crewman aboard the *Euphoric Aggression* knew that we were about to be part of history, I was already thinking of what I would say to my Mother when I next got the chance to call her, to tell her about what had transpired that day. But I'm getting sidetracked.

So we raced to meet your fleet, there were six of our vessels in addition to the *Euphoric Aggression*, led by the *Unreasonable Diktat* against five of your ships. Your command vessel was called the Santiago I believe. We knew from fighting the Agincourt that your railguns outranged our plasma accelerators so we advanced at full burn alongside the other *Dagger* Frigates to close the gap while the *Unreasonable Diktat* covered our advance with her microwave arrays. Our ships were faster and better armed, we outnumbered your fleet too but still your ships rose to meet our challenge. We knew then that we had found worthy foes to face, bravery is the highest virtue after all.

Your ships peppered us with railgun fire as we closed the distance, your turret designs were very smart and could cover much wider firing arcs than our plasma accelerators. We had to pull alongside your vessels to fire effectively so you were able to inflict a shocking amount of damage upon our Frigates before we reached our positions. We pulled alongside one of your vessels, I can't remember if I've forgotten the name of her or if I just never learned her in the first place, and opened fire with our accelerators. Within forty seconds she was burning from our barrage and losing power across her main decks. Still she kept firing, hammering into us and causing deck thirty-seven to depressurize. So we fired back again and again, melting away her

structure until we burned through her spine and severed her in half<sup>3</sup>. I watched it happen from my gunnery screen, you should have heard us cheering when the bridge announced the death of the Human ship. But the battle was still ongoing so we couldn't celebrate for long.

The helm swung hard to port and brought us around behind another of your ships, a Cruiser you called the Kent, and we opened fire on her engines. Imagine our surprise when she swung her railguns all the way around to fire on us while we were behind her! But it was too little too late, we had done our damage and she was drifting and unable to alter her course. We carried on around to her flank and kept up the fire but this brought us into range of her other weapons. In an instant my gunnery screen was filled by hundreds of missiles, missiles! I would never have dreamed of facing such primitive armaments in my life! They worked though, the *Euphoric Aggression* and the *Splendid Compulsion* on the other side of her both took heavy damage from the attack. My entire console was shaking with each explosion, I was certain that any minute the wall in front of me was going to blow out and I was going to be spaced. I never underestimated a 'primitive' weapon again in my life, we survived though.

And that was how the battle ended for us. Your fleet had been annihilated completely but we'd lost one of our Frigates and two more plus a Cruiser needed to be taken to shipyards for repairs. Our fleet hadn't suffered damage like that in generations, we were shocked, what wonderful opponents we had found to test ourselves against. I didn't see action again for several months after that, it took us nearly a month to reach the closest shipyard that could repair us and then nearly six weeks of repairs and reconstruction. It was a long and boring time, we had a lot of cleaning duties, played a lot of cards and dice, such is life for a soldier away from the front. We paid close attention to the news though, we knew the invasion was underway and heard of the battles on Cetarius, Vegara and New Alphons. We were itching to

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3 Based on this description I believe the vessel in question was the UHS redan, an Austerlitz class Frigate.

get back into the fight, many of us were afraid the war would be over before our ship was put back into service but at the time we didn't really know how big the UHS was, certainly you were fall smaller than we were but as far as we knew those three systems could have been the extent of your empire. One of my fellow gunners, a fellow by the name of Gkahsis, actually wound up doing a stint in the brig for complaining to an officer about how we were missing the war.

Eventually the ship was repaired and we got back underway , we wanted to rejoin our old flotilla but instead we were assigned to a new formation in the 6th Invasion Fleet, I found out some time later that this was because our old formation had been wiped out at Vegara but at the time we didn't know that. We joined up with two other *Dagger* class Frigates under the *Blooming Hostility*, an old *Saber* class Cruiser, she was a venerable ship, we were proud to be deployed with her. She was well suited to be paired with us too, those *Sabers* are fast for their size, very fast, and she had microwave arrays on top of her plasma accelerators so she could cover our approach and still get stuck in the knife-fight. We were told the 6th Invasion Fleet was going to strike deep all the way to the heart of enemy territory, that it was going to fall to us to take the Human capital, a plant called Sakhalin. That was wrong of course, we know that now, but at the time we had taken to calling Humans "Sakhals" and thought that was your homeworld. We only figured out after we invaded it that it was just a regional hub but such is war sometimes. We were so excited at that news, the idea that such an important glory would fall to us, we were all on our best behavior and working harder than we'd ever worked in our lives to prepare while the fleet was formed up. I cried the day we finally set out from the muster point, by that time we'd heard about a Human deep raid into our territory, your Athens was on her famous long range raid and had struck a couple of planets by then, but we weren't worried. Why would we be? It was one ship and we were poised to seize your capital? So we just carried on with our work as the Fleet began its transit to bring the glory of the Hierarchy to Sakhalin.

We were told to expect a big battle, but we had a big fleet behind us so we weren't worried, and Admiral Kheledor was one of the greatest officers in our entire Navy, we were all but certain we would have a great and decisive victory. Certainly there was nothing the "Sakhals" could muster to match our fleet after their losses in the past five months, all we had to do was sweep aside the battered remains of their fleet and take their planet and we'd have won another glorious victory.

The *Euphoric Aggression* was lucky when we jumped into the system, we missed the mines your Navy had placed around the jump point. Many other ships were not so lucky however and much damage was done across our fleet. Then the strike fighters were atop us, hammering us with torpedoes and missiles before our carriers could deploy our own fighters to screen us. We must have lost five or six ships to critical damage before we'd even identified your battlefleet and drawn ourselves into formation. We were thrown into total disarray. The *Blooming Hostility* surged forward at full burn and so we did too, we needed to close to range to attack and we needed to take pressure off the fleet before any more damage was done. We were all incensed regardless by the damage we'd suffered from being ambushed like that as well.

I didn't really have any idea how the rest of the battle was going, there wasn't anything on my gunnery screen at the time except for the *Blooming Hostility* and some projectiles from your railguns. And then the ship turned sharply and there was a pair of Frigates, the *Blooming Hostility's* microwave arrays had already damaged the lead ship pretty badly so a burst from our plasma accelerators finished her off, but not before her railguns got a few hits in. We still hadn't taken any really severe damage but alarms were going off. The second Frigate dived in between us and the *Blooming Hostility* firing off a barrage of missiles just as we engulfed her in plasma from both sides. The storm of plasma fire reduced her to slag but her missiles tore into both of our ships with heavy damage.

I remember sitting there in my seat, swearing at you "Sakhals" and

“your *unpalatable* missiles”. There was a low atmosphere warning screaming over our heads and we all had to scramble to mask up. At the time it wasn’t normal practice to have your support mask on at all times, an oversight I see now. Perhaps it was a sign of our hubris?

Half my guns were disabled, we were in bad shape and the battle had scarcely began. My *clutchmate* VEDIHAR was praying, our superior officer was screaming commands but we could hardly hear him. The ship shook violently, we were under fire again but there was nothing on my screen except for the *Blooming Hostility*, she was aflame and drifting badly with electrical malfunctions. We lurched forward again despite the damage we had sustained, what else could we do? The battle was still raging and to sit drifting was certain death.

My console began screaming at me, a huge energy signature had been detected. I’d never seen anything like it. It scythed through the *Blooming Hostility* like her armor wasn’t even there, I watched her explode on my screen, there was nothing left of her but dust and slag. Our microwave arrays couldn’t do that kind of damage in a single shot, even the particle cannons of our Battleships didn’t compare to that device<sup>4</sup>. I remember thinking in that moment that that was going to be the day I died.

More railgun shots impacted our ship and gravity began to fail, Captain Xhakadon gave the order to abandon ship and we all ran for the rescue pods. Your ships kept hitting us though, I realize in hindsight that they were just trying to confirm they took us out of the fight but it sure felt awfully personal at the time as we were running for our lives.

A fire erupted and blocked our path so we had to divert to the next deck down via an emergency hatch before we were able to reach a rescue pod. We sat out the rest of the battle huddled in that little metal tube, watching distant explosions from the viewport.

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4 This description is consistent with the performance of superheavy laser weapons used on some UHS Battleships and Heavy Cruisers. I have been unable to accurately identify what vessel he may have been fighting however.

It must have been thirty hours or something before we were picked up by the *Vicarious Demise*. That's when we found out just how badly you Humans had mauled us; We lost over thirty ships that day, including three Battleships and one of our Fleet Carriers. Those kinds of losses were unheard of in our era, we were stunned. We'd won the battle that day, but the 6th Invasion Fleet was for all intents and purposes gone.

After all the dust had settled I was sent home, my spiracles were damaged during the oxygen leak before I could get my mask on. So they drummed me out of the service and I sat out the rest of the war working in a manufactory on my homeworld of Tschak II. But I have never forgotten what I saw in those early days of the war. Our leaders swore up and down until the very end that we would defeat our "upstart" foes, and for still a while after the Battle of Sakhalin we continued to push into your territory, but I think deep down inside I knew that we had lost. To *bioluminesce* those thoughts would have been treason at the time of course, some would say they're treason now even. But the Battle of Sakhalin changed things, for me, for the Hierarchy, for the whole of the galaxy.

Some people were just too blind to realize it.

## Chapter 2

### Valgnt Defrsy

When the war broke out between my people and yours I was in my final year of schooling at the Sivdrn Academy of Military Astronautics. I was studying to be a fighter pilot. I had dreamed about being a pilot for the Navy since I was a child and had enlisted right after I got out of school. I did two years at the Navy Technical School in Uosrkb while a junior enlisted, then another two years at the Naval Officer's Candidate Academy on Jbrsk V before finally going to the flight school.

My class petitioned for an early graduation when the war began but our officers dismissed the possibility, they told us waiting another six months to get deployed wouldn't kill us but being sent out before we were ready would. So we threw ourselves at our studies and practiced as hard as we possibly could, nobody wanted to flunk out on their final exam and miss the war after all. We still followed the news of the war with an almost religious fervor though, every datanet report, every official announcement, every rumor from someone's *clutchmate* or friend was obsessed over and analyzed to death. We were very disappointed when we heard that the Human capital had been found and an invasion fleet was being sent to conquer it, we actually celebrated when we heard of the devastation we'd suffered at the Battle of Sakhalin because that meant we would still be needed to fight.

One month after the Battle of Sakhalin we graduated and received our assignments, our traditional graduation ceremony was actually canceled and we were sent directly to our new ships. I was posted on the *Marvelous Jealousy*, an aged Light Carrier in the 84th Escort Flotilla. We were using old *Wasp* fighters, they weren't glamorous but they were the same models I'd trained on so that was nice I suppose.

I was pretty disappointed with that deployment, I had wanted to go to the front lines and take part in the invasion. Instead I got put on boring escort duties in the reserve, patrolling back and forth between systems behind the border to prevent your Navy from

replicating the success of the Athens Raid. We'd jump into one system, do some scans and some flight patrols, then we'd jump to another system and do the same thing. We did that for weeks all the while big battles were raging at Third Detroit, New Hyberna, Montevidea and Sari Tepe. Most everyone on the crew was unhappy to be sitting the war out but I was especially mad about it, a consequence of being young and fresh I think.

After that we got reassigned to escorting transports, ferrying infantry from our staging grounds to different occupied planets to reinforce the garrisons there. This would be around the time Neo-Huddersfield had bogged down into a stalemate so we were pulling units from the other occupations and feeding them into that meat grinder and then replacing the units that had been stripped off with fresh ones from the Hierarchy.

It was boring work but we were pretty on edge despite that. For all we knew next time we jumped into a system there would be a raiding squadron waiting to ambush our convoy, you Humans were doing that a lot in those days. Never happened to our convoys though, we didn't see or hear a *squelch* from your navy that entire time. So that was another.... I forget, a few months at least, we spent doing that.

That's war for you though, for the most part it's very boring. We spent a lot of time doing physical training to stay in shape, studying reports on your vessels to learn about different classes and how to engage them. Some folks liked to gamble but I never enjoyed it, others had little hobbies they would do to stay busy like reading or writing or painting. I practiced my Vibckk<sup>5</sup> whenever I had time. Other than that it was a lot of cleaning and regular instrument checks on the *Wasps*, we'd do a little patrol whenever we jumped into a system just to check and see if there were any Humans hiding around.

Eventually we got told to escort a convoy directly to Neo-Huddersfield and that's where I finally saw action for the first time. You Humans were being clever there, your fleet had dispersed

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5 A Tel'Koryan five stringed instrument.

through the system and was hiding a few ships here and there, running on low power and lying in wait behind different moons and asteroids or hidden in debris fields. The entire system was a mess at that point from all the ships on both sides that had been lost and from what I hear the ground war was just as much of a *secretion puddle*.

We knew you Humans would try to hit the convoy before we could start landing transports so it was all tentacles on deck. Every fighter from the *Marvelous Jealousy* was armed and deployed and we were joined by fighters from the *Fearsome Possessor* as well, though she only had around half her complement left after previous battles they were at least newer models, *Spitting Vipers* much more capable than our *Wasps*. Plus our Frigates and a couple of Cruisers from the forces that were already in the system. Everything that could be spared was assigned to protect that convoy.

The first threat came from a pair of your Frigates, Antietam classes with all the missiles, they were pretty torn up already when they came out from behind a planetoid and came at the convoy at full burn. We swarmed over them and strafed them with our particle beams but they kept pushing forward, a few of our fighters got hit by your point defense guns but not too many. That was my first experience with your kind, I was shocked that they just kept burning in no matter how much fire they took. It was a suicide run, all they cared about was getting range to fire off their missile volleys. Microwave arrays from the Cruisers killed one of them before they could get into range but the other was able to open fire before we finally put her down.

That's when we realized it was a distraction, Strike Fighters from your Carrier Gramsci drifted into position on low power while your Frigates had been on the attack and struck while our forces were out of position. It was a brilliant maneuver, to so ruthlessly sacrifice your own to attain victory, I remember sitting stunned in my cockpit wondering just what the hell kind of creatures you Humans were.

Still there was work to do, our fighters were faster than yours and

better armed, we took off after your fighters determined to run them down and make them pay for the damage they'd inflicted to our transport ships. Our officers were screaming at us over the comms. Your Lightning fighters relied on missiles back then to hit bigger ships so all they had to fight us with were their backup railguns. It was a slaughter more than a battle at that point, we didn't even remember to leave some alive to follow back to their Carrier.

Still, the damage was done. More than half our convoy's transports had been critically damaged, our ground forces onboard had taken heavy losses. You Humans had paid for it in your *vital fluids* but you'd succeeded in crippling our reinforcements. It was a harsh lesson for us fighter pilots, for the ship crews as well I'd think but we pilots at the time liked to imagine that we were the pride of the Navy. We expected nothing but perfection from ourselves.

Our officers expected perfection from us too, we all got chewed out pretty bad when we made it back to the *Marvelous Jealousy* for letting ourselves get tricked like that. Not to mention failing to find your Carrier, that Gramsci would continue to be a thorn in our side for months. I have no idea how you all kept getting more fighters to her.

We spent the next few weeks stuck in the Neo-Huddersfield system, beating our fleet against your fleet in a seemingly endless back and forth, racing to get transport ships into orbit and unloaded before they could be destroyed. Hunting down hiding and damaged ships from every nook and cranny of the system. Retreating back for resupply because your Navy jumped a fresh batch of reinforcements into the system and we didn't have the numbers to take you on. It was exhausting and unrelenting. I went from being a fresh pilot who'd never seen battle before to a Flight Leader in seventeen days, that was a record at the time though it was broken a few years later during your counter invasion. It sounds kind of cool talking about it in retrospect but in reality I was scared out of mind and exhausted. We'd lost so many pilots,

we'd lost so many ships. The ground war on Neo-Huddersfield was just dragging on and on and going nowhere. It was a brutal time.