

OLIVER STRONG

A soldier in full tactical gear, including a helmet with a night vision device and goggles, is shown from the chest up. The soldier is holding a rifle and is positioned in a dark, chaotic environment with orange and yellow flames or smoke in the background. The overall color palette is dark with teal and orange highlights.

NECRON PART 6:
BROKEN ARROW

Necron (part 6)
Broken Arrow

By Oliver Strong

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Other books in this series:

Part 1-Necron: Beyond Einstein's Barrier

Part 2-Necron: Fortunate Son

Part 3-Necron: Pretend That We're Dead

Part 4-Necron: Making Amends

Part 5-Necron: Culture Clash

Contents

[Chapter One](#)

[Chapter Two](#)

[Chapter Three](#)

[Chapter Four](#)

[Chapter Five](#)

[Chapter Six](#)

[Chapter Seven](#)

[Chapter Eight](#)

[Chapter Nine](#)

[Chapter Ten](#)

Chapter One

It is said that life is a series of compromises and even great men must accept them or suffer destiny's wrath, for she makes none. Today was no different as Commodore Ranulph Patterson received orders from Mars.

A murky silhouette obscured an old man's eyes as cloud dims stars in the night sky, a tiny twinkle perceived here and there only to disappear behind a somber veil.

'You are to head toward these co-ordinates and wait,' croaked a gloomy façade.

Patterson scanned his desktop as information downloaded.

'You will be met by a task force led by Admiral Clarke, do you have any questions?'

Patterson looked up from his desk, 'Ia Drax?'

'Yes?'

'I apologise but I'd not heard of such a place until now.'

'That is immaterial, prepare your crew for arrival, I gave the President my word he'd receive nothing but the best ... do not mould my pledge into a deception,' spoke an ominous British tone.

'One request.'

'Yes?'

'Reinforcements.'

'According to my reports you're fully reinforced Commodore,' those twinkling eyes searched Patterson's soul for truth. The Commodore felt akin to a criminal hooked up to a polygraph under FBI inquisition, 'So be it, the Charon shall rendezvous at the same location. Will that be all?' snapped a distinct voice beneath a blanket of murk.

'Yes, thank you Mr Chairman.'

The wall monitor dimmed while Patterson let go a sigh of relief. Each time he communicated with the Chairman of Necron Intergalactic the Commodore felt a knot inside his stomach, it creaked under pressure like a thick piece of hemp on an old sailing ship, bound by duty. Perhaps it was being prepared to hang him, a ludicrous notion yet each time he communicated with Mars it dawned upon him as a storm cloud blotting

out sun on a bright day, just as if he'd spoken to the mighty harbinger of destruction himself.

Patterson re-examined his instructions, 'la Drax? What could be so important the Americans are sending an entire task force?'

Patterson typed something up, after finishing he tapped the back of his left hand, 'Petty Officer Brown?'

'Aye sir?'

'I'm sending you a document please convey it to the Charon immediately.'

'By carrier pigeon, sir?'

'No, this is important, please utilise quantum communications.'

Quantum communications being a system of instant transmission by sub atomic particles employing the laws of quantum entanglement to transmit a binary code translated into a digital message at the other end.

'Aye sir.'

'Is Colonel Rockey present?'

'No sir.'

'Where might he be found?'

'He's with Mr Connely, in the armoury sir.'

'Thank you I'll inform him of our rendezvous.'

'Rendezvous sir?'

Patterson closed his eyes for a moment, it'd slipped his mind, requesting a favour of his boss had left an impression upon his thoughts as a seal of wax closing a document on his life. Brown reminded him of what had only just been mandated, 'Sorry Brown, I'm sending them now, change course immediately will you?'

'Aye sir, are you alright sir?'

'I'm quite well, carry on Petty Officer.'

'Aye sir.'

Patterson tapped the back of his hand severing his link to the Bridge yet his mind maintained its troubled connections as a man tethered to a rock while tide flows in submerging his head in a sea of worry. That knotted stomach undone only to be replaced in equal measure by a sinking feeling.

Why were they travelling to a remote station on the edge of the Drax Empire? What did the Americans want with him and his crew? Questions lingering without answers caused Patterson discomfort, he was a military

man raised in the British tradition of a stiff upper lip and practical solutions, at the very least he'd maintain a stiff upper lip, for the crew.

Down in the armoury two men discussed the latest shipment of weaponry brought aboard the Necron. One tall dressed in a dark uniform with crimson stripe following the outer line of his trouser leg from waist to hem. On his shoulders rested a gold skull above two stars denoting rank. His head shone beneath the armoury's light, sides covered in short grey hair. The second fellow his polar opposite, at five and a half feet dressed in a beige Versace suit he stood six inches short of his military counterpart, sporting shiny brown leather shoes at one end and a head of hair lovingly crafted by the ship's barber at the other.

The pair stood beside several large crates constructed of a light yet tough fibre resembling hardened plastic. This section of the armoury was large enough to park five cars side by side and ten deep, its ceiling twice the height of a man, in this cavern covert weaponry was stored.

Commodore Patterson approached the armoury to be greeted by a salute from Chief Sutton, guardian of Necron's ordnance and ammunition. He looked behind Sutton searching out the source of raised voices before returning the Chief's salute then moving inside without a word. Usually a man required permission to enter yet the Chief wasn't going to stop Patterson just as he'd allowed Colonel Rockey and Dwight Connley to pass without question.

'I'm opening this crate whether you like it or not!'

'I'm afraid that's not possible Colonel.'

'Don't tell me what's possible or not you little bean counting turd!'

'The handling of this ordnance is to be supervised by me and me alone, if I were to allow you access I could be harvested.'

Rockey let go an evil grin, 'Is that so?'

Patterson entered the room, 'Gentlemen, what on Earth is going on?'

Both parties spun around to see Patterson's navy tunic its cuff displayed a single gold band measuring $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch. Colonel Rockey saluted, 'Sir.'

Patterson waved his hand down, 'Yes, yes, now what are you two arguing over?'

'The Colonel was insisting I open this shipment from headquarters, I was trying to explain that even I can't do that.'

In Patterson's mind this was merely another of their squabbles, two birds pecking and squawking over ownership of a single perch. Ignoring their dispute he carried on, 'Instructions have been received, we are to rendezvous with the third fleet, you are both to prepare the crew, is that understood?'

'The third?' inquired Rockey.

'That is what I said Colonel need I elaborate?'

'What are they doing? I mean we doing?'

'It's all in the report I've sent you, please read it when you're finished bickering like teenage girls over a hair curler.'

Rockey's eyes widened only to meet a stern glare from his commanding officer, 'Yes, right on it sir.'

As Rockey left the room Patterson turned on Connley, 'You are the ship's purser Mr Connley not chief provocateur.'

Dwight let slip a smarmy grin in the belief he'd won this battle, 'I'm many things Commodore.'

'That you are Mr Connley, that you most certainly are. Once you've finished securing your precious cargo I want you to assess our next engagement, I expect a report on my desk within the hour, understood?'

'Understood.'

Rockey gleaned his orders for an invasion of Ia Drax ... a short occupation and withdrawal. An enemy installation on the edge of known Drax space (though drax consider human space theirs) was to be assaulted and captured by a task force. It was a simple proposition for this communications outpost remained all but unguarded on a tropical planet, the enemy's preferred environment when they emerged from below ground. WHY was the part Rockey searched yet failed to discover, it held no strategic value (that he could fathom), this installation was so worthless even drax cared only to maintain it with minimal personnel and parts. Nevertheless a Necron platoon alongside an American and Russian platoon were to capture and occupy it.

Rockey absorbed his instructions, they left room for but one company, Bravo Company, they above all others fought beneath the earth and that is where whomever he sent would have to go. A senior officer was to

volunteer for command, it was open to all Necron's occupants, Rockey considered it for a moment until his gut advised his head, 'Forget it boy.'

He'd spent many years commanding men on the front lines of Alpha B when humanity first encountered the drax hammer of diplomacy. Rockey didn't fancy drawing from that cruel cup again, besides, this adventure suited a younger man and Necron had plenty of officers with a thirst for glory, as Napoleon once said, "A soldier will fight long and hard for a piece of coloured ribbon."

Hah, a piece of fucking ribbon wasn't worth risking his life over that's why young men go to war and old men stay home, not because old men are afraid but because they'd wised up. Still, good luck to the son of a bitch that was willing to put his skin on the line for an award, if he claimed glory on the battlefield he might even survive to claim it on the homecoming or as the ancient Greeks referred to them kleos and nostos. In the ancient world a man risked his life so he may earn glory in battle and have songs sung of his exploits, if he survived he'd return home and claim nostos the roots for nostalgia in modern English. The allure of kleos and nostos had not been diluted by the millennia, one might argue they are invigorated when war especially a righteous one befalls a population. For mothers it's a bane, for sons a boon. That piece of coloured ribbon is more than mere fabric dyed in the blood of your people's foe it represents kleos AND nostos and that is why a man will risk his life and suffer all hardships the Devil might throw in his path in order to claim it. Shakespeare said it best when Henry V addressed his men before the battle of Agincourt, "Any gentleman in England now abed shall think themselves cursed they were not here and hold their manhoods' cheap while any speaks that fought with us on St Crispin's day."

Well that wasn't quite true, for Rockey anyway, in his opinion there's little to no glory on the battlefield, ask any soldier who's been dug into a fox hole at night while enemy mortars explode mere feet from his head. Glory on the homecoming was just as sparse, he felt akin to a survivor more so than a glorious all conquering warrior, the survivor not of a great historic war but a desperate cluster fuck of human bodies, ammunition and wicked plans yet he was compelled to defend that ribbon whenever some cynical old man or young yahoo brought it into question, for right or wrong it represented his fallen brethren, their sacrifice, their honour, their bravery,

their integrity and by extension that of their families of whom he and every veteran considered themselves a member.

This operation was for a younger man than he, ribbons may be available if a small force were to defend that complex beneath the earth. It was doubtful yet possible and Necron carried officers yet to taste combat, their chests devoid of kleos. It was hard for a young man in a military organization such as theirs to walk its halls, drill his troops, eat in the mess then hang out at the officers bar while kleos adorned other's chests, even lower orders displayed hard earned glory and it burnt a man's soul. It was difficult to give orders to warriors such as Captain Gibson when he exhibited the Victory Cross, so there would be volunteers, young men hungry for kleos, as it always has been, as it is always will be.

Metallic coffin lids slid away releasing Bravo Company as a king might exercise hounds, vicious and brutal animals when required, at other times they engage in carefree activities no different to any other creature yet when their king requires an intruder to be torn limb from limb in the most horrific manner, entrails ripped asunder flailing in their jaws, they do so. Anger, hatred and violence compartmentalised, to be released only on their master's command, so when it emerges from the depths of a Necron Marine's psyche it does so in the manner of a mushroom cloud exploding in the Nevada desert, vaporising everything in range. In this sense they resemble drax for to fight the beast one must become the beast; the most base aspects of human behaviour hidden away to be discharged in a furore upon a race of cruel, vile, savage creatures summoned from the depths of hell to enslave mankind.

Dressed in cotton regulation underwear Marines arose from misty graves of suspended animation unaware of their present co-ordinates, destination or orders, they didn't need to know, every man (and Bravo Company's single woman) prepared for roll call by adorning themselves in mess uniform as routine dictates.

Ting exited a cold misty chamber into the light of Bravo's locker room to greet hysterical laughter, he peered at his comrades, followed their eyes until he looked down at a pair of frilly red lace knickers someone had slipped onto him for he'd never worn such attire and certainly hadn't entered his regeneration pod wearing them.

‘Nice colour Ting!’ screamed Corporal Mercer between deep barks of laughter.

‘Did you do this?’ demanded Ting only to increase the level of hysteria.

‘I ain’t into dudes!’

Ting quickly removed them to expose his genitalia, forcing eyes to water, toughened Marines doubled over like sheets of paper before being slipped inside an envelope of elation. Ting ran to his locker and jumped inside some underwear, ‘I’ll get you guys for this.’

Mercer squeezed out speech amidst contractions of laughter, ‘I’ll send you the bill for the panties if ya wanna keep ‘em!’

‘Fuck you,’ shouted Ting as he got dressed, when finished he stomped out of the locker room into a large hall used for training exercises and roll call.

Three officers awoke in separate cabins, Captain Mathew Gibson, 1st Lieutenant Victor Zellmann and 1st Lieutenant Eric Clarke. Gibson and Zellmann the commanding officers of Bravo Company, Clarke a flyboy attached to their Company after nobody else wanted him yet Clarke proved his worth on more than one occasion to such a point Zellmann and Gibson came to rely on him despite his eccentricities.

Zellmann buttoned a plain cotton military shirt, his communications terminal squawked as a budgerigar, ‘Alright, alright, I’m coming!’

He slapped the wall by his console, ‘Zellmann.’

An image of a dark skinned man of African descent appeared from the gloom, ‘That’s Zellmann sir,’ smiled Gibson.

Victor gave a sardonic salute, ‘Sir yes sir!’

‘I’m sending you our mission brief, looks like we’re poking the Drax.’

‘Why?’

‘I’m told what and when ... if I’m lucky, you think the Brass ever tell me why?’

‘I was just being curious.’

‘Just read that report and give me your thoughts, the men don’t need to know squat until I say so and that includes Specialist Zeng, you got that Lieutenant?’

Victor’s back stiffened at Gibson’s thinly veiled accusation, insinuating he’d impart information to his fiancé Specialist Zeng ... against standing

orders.

'Yeh, I ain't stupid Zellmann I know what goes on when a man's in bed with his girl he's prone to let stuff slip, so don't or I'll be seriously pissed off, got it?'

'Got it.'

'See you for roll call in twenty minutes Lieutenant.'

'Yes sir.'

The screen dimmed until Gibson was no longer present in his cabin. The Captain was correct, Communications Specialist Diana Zeng often badgered him for information usually restricted to officers. More often than not he shared morsels of intelligence for no other reason than to prove his love and devotion. She would smile, because she had her information or he provided evidence of the love and trust she craved? Hopefully the latter.

In assembly ninety men stood at ease, upon their names being called by Sergeant Broc Michaels they'd stand to attention and shout 'Yes sir!' before returning to their former state. After roll call was over and each man and one woman had been counted Mathew Gibson informed his marines of a coming operation, a single platoon (thirty men) were to spend the next six months beyond Einstein's barrier, travelling faster than light where time was measured in a different book, upon entering normal space it would seem they'd departed and arrived almost instantaneously while six months of hard training for this next mission had taken place aboard Necron.

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