

Integration

Part Four

When the simulation loaded Kira found herself in a typical park in a city along with the humans, guardians, second platoon, and the tank squadron. She didn't recognize the environment as any she knew, but it was of small size with the largest buildings around only going as high as a few stories. This was the ready room: a point on the map that the simulation would take place on. It was really just where the players could meet and greet and where the AI would inform them of what would take place in the simulation before the hazing. Standing right in front of her was Dylan. They looked at each other for a moment until the human muttered, "Damn, Kira."

"What?" she asked as she looked down at herself.

"That armor's awesome." He looked her up and down. They were a very sharp contrast. The wolf was adorned with the standard powered combat armor of the UTO infantry. The heavy suits were layered with thick armor plating that were designed to contain and disperse heat from energy weapons as well as protect against anything that might get flung around in a battle, such as shrapnel. Latched onto her back with magnetic clamps was a heavy shoulder fired plasma cannon which was near unusable without the armor or a very large trooper. She was without the helmet right now. Both halves were clamped to both of her armor's spaulders. They were equipped with this armor typically for one of two reasons: defending, or assaulting a defender that refused to budge. The armor made them fairly slow, but it could certainly take a few hits and the additional strength offered the capability to carry some truly amazing firepower, like the heavy anti-tank cannons. Kira was actually surprised they were equipped with all of this. Maybe this simulation would not be so bad after all.

Dylan on the other hand, as well as the other humans, was practically the exact opposite. If they had armor then it was some kind of light fabric type that was only on their torsos along with rather impressively simple bowl helmets that just plopped onto their round heads. They carried various types of missile launchers. Dylan in particular, for some reason, had three separate launchers. Two were slung on either shoulder and one was held in his hands.

"It's rather impressive, isn't it?" she responded to his comment. In the recreational simulation she was a decent bit bigger than him. The armor added a small amount of height, but it significantly increased her frame and made him look even smaller.

"Can I touch it?"

"Go ahead. I imagine this is nothing like your own gear." She held out her right arm down towards him and couldn't help but smile at his curiosity as he rapped his knuckles on her armored forearm. She looked around herself. It was mostly the same thing all around. The guardians were in their powered armor and their charges were checking it out. She spied Yirshan and Kemeng. The human had an angry look on his face, and he distanced himself from the dragoness. Yir simply shook her head and looked towards the wolfess with a sad look on her muzzle. Her ears folded back in sorrow for her. It looked like Kemeng's animosity only worsened, which meant the dragoness would have to recommend expulsion with Dahashi's account of their exchange as evidence. It was unfortunate – she knew Yirshan was looking forward to having a charge.

She looked back to her own and offered, "Here, let me take it off for you." She had a neural interface to her armor, and through it activated the release of her gauntlet. The arm armor as well as the helmet

were the only parts that could be safely removed completely. If she fully removed the leg sections while standing she would probably fall over without their support to carry the armor. There were a few mechanical ticks before the armor hissed and suddenly her gauntlet broke in two. He caught one half but the other fell to the ground with a thud. Kira flexed her now exposed hand and forearm. As great as power armor was it had a certain stiffness to it that always resulted in a relieved sensation when it was removed.

Dylan curiously inspected the insides of the two halves, appearing to weigh them in his hands for a moment, before he looked up at her. "These have got to be ten pounds each. That's crazy, does the armor slow you down?"

The translation gave her an absurdly minuscule amount of weight, but she got the idea. "A bit, yes. Getting up to speed takes some time. But you can jump well enough in them, and they can take a fall." Reactive power armor was rated for a standard dropship jump, but it potentially could survive a higher drop than that. Truly the only drawback to it was its sluggish nature. Armor functioning with a neural link to the spine was only used with special forces. In battle getting struck with an energy weapon enough times to overwhelm the heat sinks resulted in the plates burning the wearer. When an armor plate had been burned through the suit's systems, unless set otherwise, would automatically jettison it to prevent further injury to the flesh. This left behind the exoskeleton to support the rest of the armor, and a new plate could be attached if available. Neural power armor didn't have the exoskeleton as it sacrificed the removable plates for a fully integrated system that made the armor behave like a second skin rather than a suit.

"You're going to want all of your speed for this, Kira. You don't want to be slow if you can help it." She knew he was talking from experience, but this was the equipment they were assigned for this.

"Maybe, but it makes handling these cannons as easy as a rifle." She cocked her head back towards her plasma cannon before looking at the weapon he placed on the ground while he held her gauntlet. "Why do you have three missile launchers?"

He glanced at it before saying, "They're one shot. I don't have the training for anything fancier." He chuckled before going on, "I barely have any training with these things either. I fired a few at the Rynar. Then we had no more left."

"Three shots then, don't miss." He nodded and she rested her unarmored hand on his shoulder while offering a reassuring smile. She, on the other hand, could fire off twice before exchanging the power core. They were small enough to fit in her palm and thus she could carry many on her person. Allowing the weapon to vent heat would be the only issue. Though in her mind she knew he should be the one reassuring her. She was feeling terrified of what was going to happen in this simulation. She didn't actually detect fear on him. A bit of uneasiness, but he was strangely calm.

"Alright folks!" The voice of Dahashi gathered their attention. Kira turned to see him standing on one of the tanks, the commander of which appeared to be recovering from the surprise appearance. He had adjusted his form to be capable of wearing a human uniform. He was in full human camouflage that was just like Dylan's and even had boots on his now plantigrade paws. "This simulation is going to be a shock for most of you. It's just par for the course for the humans, though. You're going to fight Rynar bigger than these buildings!" There was no gasp of surprise, they knew this was coming, but worried looks were exchanged. "You're going to defend this square from a Rynar assault for as long as possible until you're all taken out. Or in the unlikely event that you manage to kill them all the simulation will

end.” Well that wasn't very encouraging, Kira thought. “Now! Since you humans are new at this, I must explain to you the memory hazing. Basically, it makes it all make sense. And what I mean by that, is it will affect your minds ever so slightly, just to make the situation at hand seem normal. We do this to hide the knowledge that this is a simulation, and thus retain a legitimate fear of death. It is perfectly harmless. Any questions?”

It was Dylan who decided to ask a few, “How well simulated are the injuries? Will I need to administer painkillers? What happens after death?”

“This is as real as reality. The pain is genuine and the emotions will run rampant. All drugs in your kit will have their appropriate effects simulated as well, so do what you would do on a real battlefield. After death you will assume a spectator role. Anything else?” There were no more questions, so the fox smiled and went on, “Squad makeups are preset into the simulation load-up, you will know what to do after the hazing. Let us begin!” The world flashed white again.

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The five hovering tanks hummed down the middle of the road with infantry on either side of them. The humans darted ahead of the power armored soldiers and entered the square to check for contacts down any of the other three roads into the area. They took up defensive positions while Major Ufurin distributed the squads and tanks for each road.

The Rynar were coming. The giant, monstrous lizards had been ravaging everything for weeks now, and they were coming here next. The humans were their most recent victims so they were more than happy to lend some of their troops in support. Kira and her fourteen squad members took the north end of the square along with one tank. With the five humans already there it looked like they could obliterate anything that came down that road. The wolf readied her plasma cannon and took cover behind an abandoned vehicle. There was a human already there and her heads up display had him tagged as Private Maddock, a medic, and someone she had recently taken a liking to. He turned to regard her for a moment before looking ahead again.

The rest of her squad entered buildings on either side of the road or positioned themselves in the square like herself. Then they waited and within moments she already felt herself growing anxious. She had never fought these giants before. “How big are they?” she asked the human next to her.

“Twice the height of these buildings,” he stated simply, and looked at her again. “They die like everything else, keep that in mind.”

She nodded and looked forward again. They were all silent as they waited. They knew they were coming. It was just a question of when and from which direction. “Contacts, western corridor!” someone shouted over comms. In response the five humans here, the most mobile of the infantry, moved to reinforce the western section. Dylan patted Kira on her shoulder before sprinting off. She heard the reports of the human rockets firing out and the heavy thumps of plasma cannons. It lasted all of half a minute before it stopped. “Contacts eliminated,” the same voice informed the rest, and she let out a relieved breath.

The humans came back, and she noted Dylan was short one launcher. He took up his position again

next to her. He didn't say anything as he rested his next missile on the vehicle and aimed down the sight. "Contacts, north!" Someone cried just as she saw them rounding the corner of her sector.

They were giant, horrible monsters, five of them. They were impossible to exist, yet here they were. The bipedal lizards were simply massive and covered in armor. In their clutches were rifles so big they belonged on a tank, not the hands of a soldier. She fired her weapon on the lead target. A thick bolt of blue plasma streaked out and struck it in the chest. It fell to its knees, but then it did the impossible. It started to get back up! Several others bolts tore into it in response, and it came crashing down, unmoving.

"Contacts, south!" Another cry over the radio.

"East, east!"

It looked like they weren't going to get human reinforcements, she thought bitterly and fired another shot. Each plasma blast seemed to have a similar effect of just not causing enough bodily damage. But the Rynar response didn't have this problem. They raked the line with their rifles, sending defenders scurrying to escape. The UTO armor was heavy, it was thick, and it was very resistant to heat. But this was just like being struck by vehicle mounted weapons. Power armored troops were consumed by plasma, their power packs detonated, and when it cleared all that was left was a smoldering mess where the armor flash melted onto them before it could even jettison. A human caught in a blast practically ceased to exist as the plasma detonated his missiles and obliterated anything that could have remained.

The human weapons seemed more reliable. As she replaced the power core of her weapon she watched a missile strike a giant in the chest where it burrowed in and exploded; blowing open a massive wound and sending the beast crashing down instantly. The tank bellowed its own cry as it sent out an explosive plasma charge that was even more devastating than the human rockets. Another Rynar went down with flames licking its body and a massive, cauterized hole through its stomach. That left only two more. They really did die like anything else. It almost looked good.

That was until five more of them turned the corner, and then they rushed. Kira very rapidly felt her heart rate go wild as the giants came charging towards her. Something so big should not move so quick! They closed the distance in seconds as they fired from the hip; suppressing both the buildings to either side and the troops on the ground. The defensive line shattered instantly as it scattered from the fire as well as the armored boots barreling down on them. The tank managed one shot that sent one tumbling onto the road with enough force to shake the ground, but directly behind it was another. They skipped right over the infantry and totally overwhelmed the tank before it could move. One placed its hand under the vehicle and with an absurdly casual lift flipped the thing right over and upside down. The Rynar were practically on top of them when she saw Dylan about to fire at the one threatening the tank. Thinking quickly, Kira wrapped him in an armored embrace as the projectile exploded into the side of the monster; showering her back with shrapnel and gore. In one swift motion she stood back up with her weapon ready.

The impact of the disemboweled giant falling down knocked Dylan off of his feet. But Kira's armor stabilized her and she fired both of her charges into the other's torso. It collapsed onto the tank where it thrashed about. She scrambled to reload the power pack while the lizard gathered its senses. It sat up and drew its massive sidearm and almost had it aimed at her when Dylan fired his last missile into the chest of the beast and sent it slamming back down, dead. "I'm out!" he reported to her and tossed the smoking launcher to the ground. "I'm going to tend wounded!" The now unarmed soldier pointed to a

writhing form in the middle of the street. One of the humans caught a near impact where the heat left him significantly burned, but alive.

The rest of the Rynar began to rake the buildings. The impacts blew them apart and all those inside. "Fall back to the center! Fall back!" Major Ufurin cried out over their comms. The medic used the Rynar distraction to grab the fallen soldier. The surviving troops leapt from the windows of the buildings to the ground and used the stabilization of their armor and their combined power to tear into the Rynar while backpedaling away. Kira added her own shots into the bombardment, and in a fantastic display of firepower and falling giant bodies they managed to bring down three of them. One was left standing, looking confused for a moment, before two rockets came screaming out to finish the job. One missed, but the other laid it out flat on the road in a single hit. She wished she had those human launchers.

Kira reloaded her weapon on the move. It looked like the wave was defeated. She checked her combat information system on her HUD for the status of their unit. Her heart sank at the numbers. There were over a hundred soldiers when the fighting started. Now there were only twenty three of them left along with only two tanks. All of those losses in a few short minutes and yet they knew more Rynar were coming. She was going to die in the most stupidly one sided fight she had ever seen.

She approached the human medic who had lifted his comrade onto his shoulders and was trying to make his way to the center. She bent down and used her left arm to wrap around his torso and carried them both along as she jogged towards the fallback position.

She let him down and took cover behind one of the tanks and readied her weapon again. A glance back showed a rather grisly mess of severely wounded and burned troops dragged back there. Dylan, the only medic left standing, started feverishly trying to sort them out and treat the ones that had a chance.

When she looked forward again she immediately cried out "North!" as she spotted more Rynar troops turning the corner. She was shortly followed by the reports of the other three corridors filling up with the enemy.

"Southeast!" someone cried, and she was not sure she heard them right. That was until she saw the Rynar in heavier armor actually plowing through buildings straight towards the center.

"Oh Gurash, we're surrounded!" Another trooper cried out as plasma and rockets streaked out in every direction. It was a devastating amount of firepower that sorely lost its show of force when it collided with the giant bodies of the Rynar.

"Fan-fucking-tastic!" She heard one of the humans roar enthusiastically over the fire. That human stepped out next to her totally exposed and holding a rather massive missile launcher. Her HUD tagged him as Master Sergeant Mitchell. "This simplifies things! Pick a target and take it down HARD!" To emphasize his point, he had his launcher aimed at one of the heavy troops crashing through the buildings. A large missile practically dropped out of the weapon before igniting and flying straight into the air. It arced up with remarkable speed and came right back down on top of the armored lizard who decided to disregard it as it streaked into the air. The big missile seemed to ignore the armor as it exploded and nearly blew half of its torso apart in a massive, fiery explosion. "Wooo!" the human exclaimed and dropped the launcher to the ground and ducked behind the tank with Kira.

That appeared to be the last of the human munitions as he didn't go scrambling for another. But the

large explosion and his cry over their radio yielded a brief resurgence in their fire. Kira herself managed to score a headshot, and the tank fired and dropped the monster directly behind the one with the smoldering helmet. As she ducked back down to reload she found the human with some kind of paper rolled drug in his mouth that he was smoking. Her nostrils flared at the acrid smell filtering through her helmet as she reloaded. She just slammed the power pack home when she heard the tank's engines wind up to move before it was abruptly flipped over like the one before. She looked up to see one of the heavy Rynar troops looming over her.

She failed to bring her weapon to bear before it lashed out, easily smacking her aside and sending her cannon hurtling off out of reach. The impact was mostly absorbed by her armor so she quickly sat up only to see the beast raising a foot over the smoking human. The man had his middle finger pointed at it right up until he was stomped out of existence. The monster then turned to her and she flipped over onto her knees and tried to scurry away. It brought its foot down on her lower body, but the armor held. She looked over her shoulder to see it pulling its sidearm free. She cried out and desperately tried to crawl out from under its foot, but it merely brought its weapon down to her and used the barrel to push her head into the ground, and then it fired.

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Kira abruptly found herself clear headed and with a bird's eye view of the battlefield. She looked down at the square; it was totally overrun by the Rynar. She opened the player roster to check who was left. Only two remained. One was badly wounded and it was Corporal Larish Ni'ik and the other was actually Dylan. She panned down to look at him. He appeared to be huddled over Larish, so she switched to the medic's perspective.

She found him on his rump with Larish's head resting in his lap with most of his armor plates jettisoned, leaving the horse with essentially just the exoskeleton. The human was whispering to the equine soldier with a burned hand covering the eye that could see. "It'll be over quick," he cooed, "you'll feel nothing. I'm here..." Even as Dylan shook with fear, he kept his attention on his comrade. The resignation was almost heartbreaking.

The Rynar that killed her aimed its pistol... and then shot the ground in front of the human. The extreme heat burned his face and sent him on his back. He screamed in agony and clutched his face. Kira hopped out of Dylan's now damaged view to see Larish being picked up by his leg. The giant held him suspended in the air while he pressed the release latch on his helmet. Both halves went crashing to the ground, revealing a brown-green scaled lizard with slitted amber eyes. Spikes angled backwards lined the beast from the middle of its muzzle all the way to the back of its head. More white spikes were formed on its eye ridges, giving it a very angry look.

It flicked out a long serpentine tongue and licked the scorched muzzle of the little equine. Dylan was on the ground trying to gather his wits. When he looked up a panicked look crossed his burnt face and he shouted, "No! Don't you do it you goddamn monster!" The Rynar briefly regarded him with a look of contempt before returning his attention to Larish. He raised his other hand to grab the other leg, to which Dylan cried out even louder in response. Quickly deciding that yelling would get him nothing the injured man crawled on his hands and knees towards a missile launcher discarded on the ground.

The Rynar began to pull Larish's legs apart, to which the equine responded with a horrible cry of pain.

She very quickly realized what was about to happen, and chatter among the spectators went wild as it dawned on all of them. Was this really about to happen? This Rynar could not possibly be going through with this, right? Dylan hefted the launcher to his shoulder, stood on shaky legs and took aim. Larish cried even louder and the monster's hands began to spread apart further. The human pulled the trigger on the launcher... and nothing happened. It was spent.

With an agonizing slowness, the equine came apart and began to split right down the middle. He was screaming up until the split reached his upper torso, then it just turned to gurgling, and then finally nothing as he came apart completely. Dylan let the launcher slip from his grip and he fell to his knees as organs and gore spilled out onto the ground in front of him. He had an absent look on his face as he looked at it, and it did not change as the giant casually raised its armored boot and with a sickening squelch, the medic was no more.

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The pod opened up and Kira immediately leapt out and jogged across the catwalk past the rest who were getting out with wide eyes. She saw Larish already getting comforted by his platoonmates so she carried on, intent to find Dylan. What happened was exactly the kind of madness that scarred him in the zone. When she reached the human sector she found him already at the edge of the pad, hunched over the railing, and apparently lost in thought. Behind him was Mitchell yelling at the avatar of Dahashi. "What the fuck was that?!" He screamed at the AI.

"It was something I found in Maddock's mind." The projection nodded towards the medic, but he didn't show any kind of response.

"Jesus Christ. And you thought it would be a good idea to put that into the simulation?!" The sergeant saw Kira coming and decided to stop what he was about to unleash on the AI. "We need to talk about this later, Dahashi." He said behind him as he walked back to the rest to the pods and the blue fox flashed away.

She slowly approached the human and bent over to put her head on his level. He was back to being adorable again. He was like a little pup she just wanted to hold and protect – just not quite as receptive as one just yet. Back in the simulations the difference size made was rather jarring. He ceased to be a cute little thing and became the alien he was: as exotic as his language. A muzzleless, tailless alien with soft skin bare to the world. It was fascinating, and she surely wouldn't mind seeing him like that more often. But right now she had a shaken up medic to tend to. "You okay?" she whispered to him.

He looked at her and sighed. "Yeah, I'm fine. It was just a sim, but... that really struck a nerve with me."

"You seemed to know what was going to happen beforehand. I actually thought he was going to eat him." Eating would have been much more preferable than what actually happened. But in hindsight, the exoskeleton would probably not be very chewable.

"Yeah..." A very sad look entered his eyes. "We called that wishboning back in the zone. It happened way too much." Kira squealed lightly in response. They actually had a name for it. "I still could not stop it. I had a rocket launcher, and I was still helpless! There was no one there that could stop it, to help. I was alone and helpless. Yet again." He groaned. "I told him it would be over quick. I would

have killed him myself if I knew that was coming.”

“The future won't be like that. When you get your mech you will be the one tearing limbs from anyone that threatens your wounded.” He smiled slightly at the thought. “And if you don't have a mech when something bad happens, you'll have me, and even the others. Nobody messes with a unit's medics except the unit.” His smile widened further and her tail started to wag at the sight of his improving mood. “Are you sure you will be okay?” she asked, very worried for him.

“Yeah, I'm fine. It's really just like another nightmare. A bit nerve wracking like one though a bit... painful... but like I said, I saw the actual thing. It's relieving to figure out it wasn't real.” He stood straighter, looking much better. “It means a lot to me, your concern.”

“Well, it's my job.” She offered him a toothless smile, happy that this was not affecting him as much as she worried.

“What about you? Are you okay?”

She had to think about that. That fight had to be the most... she wanted to say horrible, but it wasn't really, other than the end. It was just so hopeless. Those were just standard Rynar troops, even the ones in the heavier armor were just slightly better cannon fodder. A power armored UTO soldier was worth half a squad of them. But their armor had meant nothing. Their weapons actually seemed to be inferior compared to the smaller human ones. And their tanks were crushed by hand! Hopeless and helpless was right. The knot in her gut only tightened as she thought about it. It almost made her ill, and the humans had to deal with being that size for their entire lives. It truly took a brave soul to sign on to something like this when they were so small. “I... will be okay, yes,” she responded, remembering the question he asked. “Goddess, it was so futile. The best equipment in the UTO and they wiped us out in minutes with a few grunts.”

“Yep...” he muttered and nodded slowly. “Got a few though. It felt good.”

“Those launchers of yours really pack a punch. You humans know your ordnance.” There was a lot of power in what was quite the small package, and apparently plenty of penetration. She assumed it came with their technology, where it was a matter of piercing armor and detonating inside. Modern weapons technology revolved around energy weapons. So armor was designed to absorb and vent heat, and weapons were designed to try to overwhelm the armor and just melt through vital components or crew inside. It wasn't particularly explosive unless a power core was detonated or explosive charges were used.

“We like it when things go boom.” There was humor in his voice, but it might have been more true than he imagined.

“Indeed.” From her understanding of their small arms they even perfected the art of explosively propelled projectiles. They certainly did have a pyromaniac streak as a species. Maybe it was their rather abysmal hearing that didn't mind an overabundance of explosions? “Well, back to your pod then, we have to review and see how badly we screwed up.” He nodded and she turned to leave, only to find Larish standing a bit away with his eyes downcast.

He looked up when he saw her turned around. He appeared to be very upset and he swallowed before asking, “May I speak with him?”

“That's up to him, Larish.” She turned to call Dylan back, but he was still leaned up against the railing looking at the horse. He nodded and beckoned him over, although he stood up from the railing, as if he were ready to dart at a moment's notice.

“Hello, I'm Corporal Larish Ni'ik.” He introduced himself with an uneasy smile.

“PFC Dylan Maddock. You were my patient.”

“Yes.” One of his ears flicked and his tail started to snap about. “I... wanted to thank you. With the hazing everything we do in there is what we would do if it were real. You... stayed with me and didn't panic. I was practically crying in your arms while those monsters were bearing down us. You just... stayed, spoke to me. That means a lot to me.”

“Well, we were dead anyway. May as well make the best of it.”

“Comforting someone else before you died yourself is how you make the best of it?” Dylan only shrugged in response. “What you did isn't something I will forget.” His eyes met the floor again. “And nor what happened after, either. I... I can't believe that happened enough to your people to warrant a name.”

“You heard that did you?” the human grumbled and looked off to the side.

“I did. It had to be the most terrified I had ever been in the sims. The thought that it happened for real...” His speech tapered off and he just had a sad look on his face.

“I'm sorry I couldn't save you.” Dylan's voice quieted as he said that.

“Sorry?” The horse looked surprised and confused. “There was nothing you could do, and you tried anyway. If you want forgiveness for failing to do the impossible, then I forgive you.”

“Thank you,” Dylan murmured quietly, but just loud enough for Larish to hear. He had a blank look on his face as he said it, but there was something else there Kira couldn't identify.

The equine sensed that should be the end of the conversation and quietly dismissed himself. The wolf nodded to him as he left, but her ears perked and she looked back to the human when she heard him saying something.

“That's like being forgiven by the dead.” A slight smile crossed his face.

She decided to not press for him to go on, but instead to allow him to enjoy whatever it was he was thinking. However, she got the feeling that he had a problem with accepting that he was unable to save someone despite it being absolutely impossible to do so. That was not a very good aspect for a medic – such a problem could be emotionally crippling. She would need to work on this with him. Regardless, she was happy that Larish decided to speak with him as it truly did seem to brighten him up. “I'll see you in the next sim, Dylan. It's going to be a lot better than that last one.” They bid their short farewells for real this time, and both turned to leave.

Kira was padding back to her pod when she heard a peculiar conversation coming from one level above

her. Her ears turned to hear it better. "...thought it was more frightening than anything else."

"Of course! But the power they had! Can you imagine being able to do that, just because you're so big?" Whoever said that had reverence in his voice.

"Trikil, you're a guardian, you shouldn't talk like this."

"I know! I would never do anything like that, but just imagine..." He seemed to do just that as he trailed off and the conversation apparently came to an end. The one he was speaking to muttered something unintelligible and walked off.

Trikil was the vulpine that grabbed the human soldier earlier. He didn't say anything particularly unsettling, however. The power imbalance between guardian and charge was a common topic, and there was no way he could have gotten accepted as a guardian if he showed any signs of abusing that power. Still, she made a mental note to keep an eye on him and for Dylan to watch his charge for any signs of abuse.

Kira hopped back into her pod in a much better mood than when she left. Larish looked fine as well, he was just shaken up like Dylan, but after that talk the medic might have just made a friend in a rather large and mellow equine. Then beyond that he may have just won a great opinion from the rest of the platoon. Such compassion for another and levelheadedness even in the face of certain death was a fantastic trait for a medic. It was an amazing contrast to his timidity outside of combat. She herself would be proud to have him in her squad- after she worked out his emotional problems and rid him of his inherent fear of anyone many times larger than himself. She sorely hoped she could.

She leaned back and the pod closed her in again and she waited for everyone else to connect. She was in there for a minute when finally Dahashi's voice spoke to her and the others. "Good news, everyone! That was actually a very impressive fight. You lasted longer than many, and there were some rather fantastic scenes!" She rolled her eyes at that, the AI loved saving the best moments in the simulations and showing them off. They did make for excellent videos on the extranet, though, she had to admit.

Dahashi continued, "As for messing up, you actually did fairly well. Your only blunder was occupying buildings. You're better off in the open, even with the crossfire the structures allowed. The humans on the other hand didn't screw up at all, you guys were fantastic, as usual. You fellows fought a whole war like that so I didn't expect anything less."

He then went on to show the highlights of the fighting. Kira didn't pay it that much mind, she was there for most of it. Sergeant Mitchell won the 'award' for most amazing quote and fantastic kill. 'This simplifies things!' She snorted in amusement. Someone on the west side scored the most headshots. Lieutenant Kulshah and her commando charge, Major Russel Dolby, got a mention for being strangely in synchronization with each other. The clip showed them cycling between one another as one fired and the other reloaded right up until they got incinerated.

Her mind wandered to thinking about the next simulation. It was meant to be a relief after the slaughter that was the first. It would be a normal scenario with UTO troops fighting it out with normal Rynar. However, the humans would be brought up to their scale and it was apparently going to be linked with human military back on Earth that were sorting out their new simulation hive. She suspected the little aliens would love this session. She knew she would.

“Alright!” The AI chirped. “Who's ready to meet the British Army? Major Dolby, maybe you'll know someone!” She felt the link to the pod connect, and then everything went white once more as the new simulation loaded.