

This is a piece of unsolicited fan fiction based on the work of lorddominic specifically 3 of his characters Emissary of the Gaazalaan, Portrait 001 and a “vague reptomammalian creature” it continues from my previous Emissary, if LDs patience holds they may one day become short story

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Tellor

Barum Tellor hidden in brush cowered in terror, fifteen yards away one of the raiders from the party he had been following for the last three days casually butchered his younger brother while chatting with the rest of the group in a language Barum understood nothing of. The job was completed with the quick easy efficiency of one used to the work in minutes Sullus was transformed from the timid curious boy who worshipped his big twelve year old brother to a selection of joints of meat rapped in his own hide tied for transport.

The raiding party prepared to move on, the butcher wiping his knife on the broad leaf of a taro before coiling the leash Sullus had been lead by while the others kicked dirt over their camp fire and hoisted packs and water skins leaving the clearing at a trot. For several minutes Barum crouched frozen in shock, his mothers anguish, picked up by his spring horns barely two inches out of the bud slowly penetrating his consciousness. He stood his legs stiff and damp and moved away from the patch of urine soaked ground. Something yellow caught his attention, it was Sullus' jacket. It had been the boys favourite garment much patched and let out beyond its proper limit their mother getting as much use from it as could be had. The front of the jacket had three big blue buttons the top one “Cracked button” which Sull had treated with such care now smashed. Barum cut the two remaining free discarding the blood soaked wool, he would keep one and give the other to his mother.

Three days earlier the raid had taken their heard by complete surprise, Taras had been on lookout while the rest browsed the dew soaked toola bushes tender spring leaves, it was far too early in the season for the threat of raids to be considered serious and the group were widely spread when the first shot threw Taras squealing and kicking down the slope towards the small stream they had camped beside the previous night on what was to have been their last day on the Great Plain before returning to the Shadows. Everybody had scattered in panic, Barum running away from the direction the shot had come from found himself falling for a classic ambush as he leapt the stream four of the wolves had risen from the grass in front of him firing a volley into a group of his cousins who had looked like they might offer some resistance. His speed carried him through their group, glancing back he saw the tallest wolf raising his rifle the shot never came, the grinning woof crumpled the back of his head exploding, Taras had not been as dead as they thought.

Tellor woke his shoulder rocked by Kells gentle hand; the blankets of his cot were kicked into a sweaty tangle round his feet. “Rough night Sarge?” he didn't answer, they both knew. Both had memories they'd rather leave unspoken, many of the Gaazalaan old enough to have fought in the Woolf wars felt the same. His whole crew were awake, the raw emotion of his nightmare would have made sleep impossible for any of them, they stayed silent in their cots turned to the walls giving him space. “I'm going for a walk”, Kell nodded.

The cruiser was on down shift lights dimmed air cool, it wasn't a big ship and a walk could only take him so far, he found himself where he knew he'd end up leaning on the railing looking down into forward cargo. The biggest compartment in the ship it extended three floors below him and one above, the height and looking down to the decks below made him feel safe. A crane on auto passed overhead its long-travel wheels rumbling as they passed. Probably fetching the days ration for early

shift cooks. Kell stepped up beside him with two mugs of tea, she was a good Corporal would make Sargent if he retired, "Ta" they fell into an easy silence. "Got to be a big bonus coming your way", Kell glanced across at him hoping he'd answer, when he didn't she added "You could buy that farm". "I'd bloody hate it". He lapsed back into silence, she tried again "So why do we always talk about it". Turning his back to the rail and cupping the warm mug of still untouched tea in his hands he looked her in the eye "It's what you do, talk, you quite the Kate, you buy a farm". The silence stretched, only the rumble of the returning crane heavier with its load obviously more substantial than a day's rations. "Do you know anyone who has? Bought a farm that is", he looked back at her "My old Sargent"... "How'd it go for him?"... "Shot himself", momentarily she was shocked but seeing the joke in his eyes punched him lightly on the shoulder. "Would you like it better if we farmed together?" The directness of her question took him off guard. "You tempting me into a chargeable offence?". "It's only an offence if you kiss me", she stepped forward and kissed him lightly on the cheek "So charge me, why don't you". She stepped back looking him up and down. "Seriously the Emissary says you're in for a big pay out, she's crediting you with facilitating the trade deal, the company pay big you could get ten percent of the bonus" he whistled "that's more than I've made in ten years, five with combat uplift". "Who'd be dumb enough to soldier ay" she used the stock phrase all the pros used. "I'm serious we could, there's options, not just a farm. Teal said you'd get the pay out, she knows how these things work". "Teal is it... Friends in 'igh places, why'd you bother with the likes of me?" Kell ignored his comment "She's impressed by you, said so, you're in her report, she let me read it". Tellor looked shocked, "How's she know about us?". "Everybody knows about us! Seriously she's impressed "Value as their creators valued them?", she asked me how you worked it out". He turned back to the rail "I know what my button means to me, it's why I fought, what I fight for, more than the squad... not you, but the squad, I've seen Fell with his hologram, that's his button all he has left to keep the memory raw" he squeezed tears from his eyes "It has to stay raw, it's all you've got". His hand slipped over hers on the rail "Let's do it, the farm, or a guest house, or a little Inn somewhere in the shade of trees".