


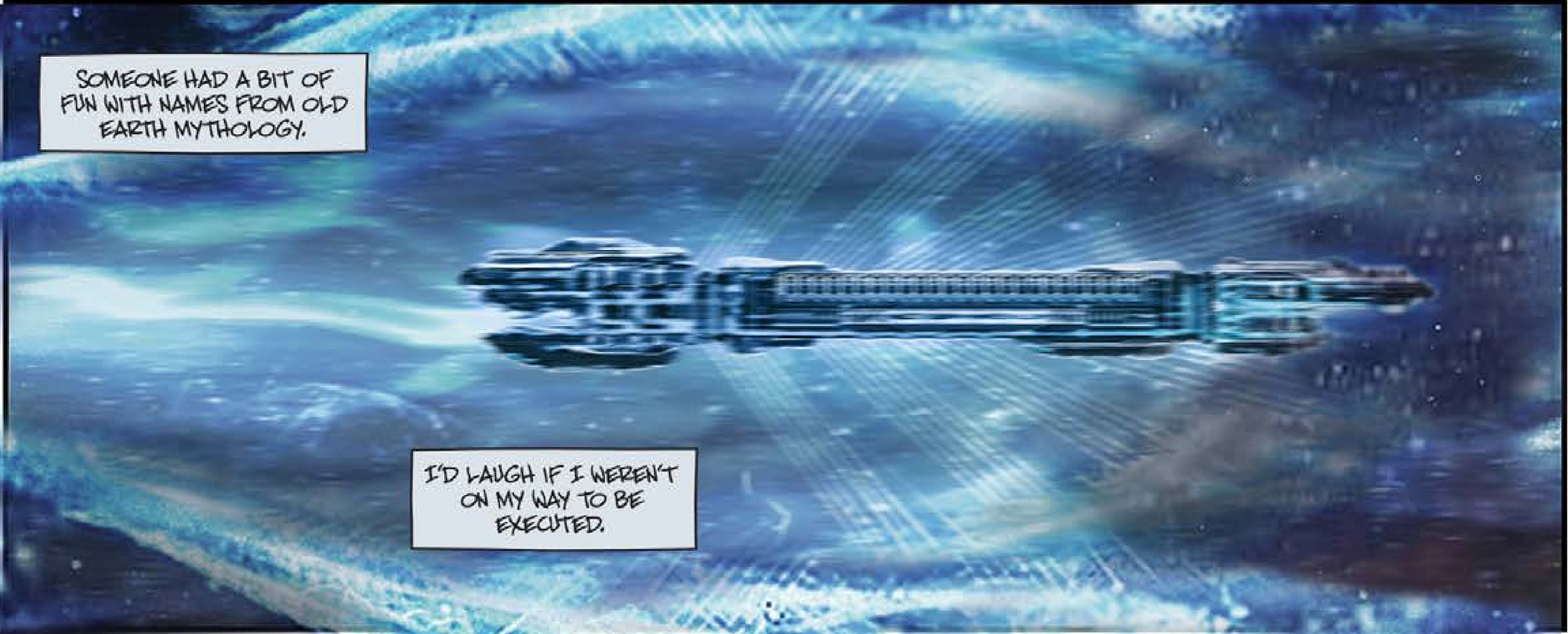
MY FATHER, DOCTOR ALFRED HARRINGTON, WAS A SPECIAL FORCES MARINE FOR THE KINGDOM OF MANTICORE BEFORE MARRYING MY MOTHER. THEY SUBSEQUENTLY DEDICATED THEIR LIVES TO HELPING AND HEALING OTHERS.

AS A MARINE, HE DISCOVERED HIS OWN EXCEPTIONAL ABILITY TO KILL AND DESTROY, BUT REJECTED THAT LIFE BEFORE IT DEFINED HIM.




I AM MY FATHER'S DAUGHTER, BUT MY MILITARY CAREER WON'T END AS PEACEFULLY.

MY OFFICERS AND I ARE PRISONERS OF WAR ABOARD THE HAVENITE BATTLECRUISER *TEPES*, APPROACHING THE *CERBURUS* SYSTEM, BOUND FOR A PRISON PLANET CALLED *HADES*.



SOMEONE HAD A BIT OF FUN WITH NAMES FROM OLD EARTH MYTHOLOGY.

I'D LAUGH IF I WEREN'T ON MY WAY TO BE EXECUTED.



I JOINED THE ROYAL MANTICORAN NAVY YEARS AGO OUT OF A SENSE OF DUTY AND FOREKNOWLEDGE THAT WE WOULD SOON BE AT WAR WITH THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF HAVEN.

A WAR THAT HAS DEFINED THE LAST SIX YEARS OF MY LIFE.

CALL IT ALTRUISM OR THE BRAVADO OF YOUTH, BUT I WANTED TO DO MY PART. I STILL DO...WITH WHAT LITTLE TIME I MAY HAVE LEFT.

I'M PAST THE POINT OF CARING WHAT THEY DO TO ME. MY REAL CONCERN IS FOR MY CREW AND MY TREECAT NIMITZ, ALSO IMPRISONED ON BOARD THIS SHIP.

SO THE GREAT COMMODORE HONOR HARRINGTON...I EXPECTED MORE.



THIS WOMAN, **CORDELIA RANSOM**, IS THE HAVENITE SECRETARY OF PUBLIC INFORMATION; ONE OF THE THREE MOST POWERFUL PEOPLE IN THEIR POST-COUP GOVERNMENT.

DISAPPOINTING, REALLY.

IT'S ALWAYS AMAZED ME HOW MANY IN OUR FLEET ARE TERRIFIED OF YOU, LIKE YOU'RE SOME DEMIGOD ALWAYS OVERCOMING INSURMOUNTABLE ODDS AND DEFFYING DEATH.



SPINNING LIES INTO TRUTHS, SHE'S A PROPAGANDIST OF THE WORST KIND. HER ZEALOTRY IS ALL THE MORE FRIGHTENING BECAUSE SHE REALLY BELIEVES IN IT.

WHEN YOUR NECK SNAPS IN THE GALLONS, THEY'LL SEE YOU'RE MERELY HUMAN AFTER ALL.

STILL NOTHING TO SAY?



THIS CELL WAS DESIGNED TO BREAK PEOPLE WITH ITS NEVER-CHANGING ENVIRONMENT. HOW LONG I'VE HUNG HERE, I REALLY DON'T KNOW.

MY SOLACE HAS BEEN SILENCE. REVEALING NOTHING TO ANY OF THEM, DESPITE THEIR MOCKING TORMENTS AND HUMILIATIONS, GIVES ME A SMALL FEELING OF CONTROL.

IN A FEW DAYS, YOU'LL BE BEGGING FOR YOUR LIFE IN FRONT OF A CAMERA. TRILLIONS OF PEOPLE ON HUNDREDS OF WORLDS WILL SEE IT...A SPECTACLE TO BEHOLD.

YOUR DESPICABLE ACTIONS AT BASILISK SIX YEARS AGO AREN'T IN DISPUTE. YOU VIOLATED INTERSTELLAR LAW WHEN YOU PURSUED THE LEGALLY DEPARTING FREIGHTER SIRIUS AND FIRED ON IT UNTIL IT WAS UTTERLY DESTROYED.

THOUSANDS ABOARD THAT UNARMED MERCHANT SHIP WERE MURDERED BY YOUR WARMONGERING.

NEITHER YOU, NOR YOUR GOVERNMENT PROVIDED A DEFENSE AT YOUR TRIAL. YOUR GUILT IS UNCONTESTED AND LEGALLY RECOGNIZED UNDER INTERSTELLAR LAW.



SERGEANT BERGREN, SEE TO THE PRISONER. MAKE SURE SHE SURVIVES LONG ENOUGH TO BE EXECUTED PROPERLY.



THE CONSTANT PAIN AND ISOLATION HAVE MADE IT DIFFICULT TO FOCUS.



THOUGHTS, MEMORIES...IT'S INTERESTING WHAT FLASHES THROUGH YOUR MIND WHEN YOU'RE ABOUT TO DIE.



BASILISK STATION SEEMS SO LONG AGO.

IT WAS MY FIRST LIGHT CRUISER COMMAND.

**HMS FEARLESS
BASILISK SYSTEM**



COMMANDING A SHIP IN THE ROYAL MANTICORAN NAVY MEANS MAKING DECISIONS THAT END PEOPLES' LIVES.



WRITERS, POLITICIANS, AND HISTORIANS OFTEN EULOGIZE OUR BATTLES...



...BUT INCINERATION OR EXPLOSIVE DECOMPRESSION IN THE INFINITE VASTNESS OF SPACE DOES NOT RESEMBLE THE ROMANTICIZED FICTION PORTRAYED.



MISSILES TIPPED WITH CONTACT FUSION, OR BOMB-PUMPED LASER WARHEADS, ROCKETED HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF KILOMETERS AT EACH OTHER ACROSS A LONELY, VACUOUS DIVIDE.

I NEVER QUESTION MYSELF IN THE CHAOTIC FRENZY OF BATTLE.

YOU CAN'T. NOT WHEN YOU HAVE SPLIT-SECONDS TO MAKE THE DECISIONS YOU HAVE TO MAKE.



REFLECTING ON THOSE DECISIONS YEARS LATER, AND REMEMBERING THOSE WHO DIED AS A RESULT... THAT BLURS THE CLARITY.



DID I MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICES?

SO MANY BRAVE MEN AND WOMEN HAVE DIED UNDER MY COMMAND.



MEN LIKE CHIEF PETTY OFFICER BRAUN. GOD... WHAT WAS HIS FIRST NAME? I CAN'T REMEMBER.



BASILISK STATION WAS A TRIUMPH AND A DISASTER, BUT I'M GETTING AHEAD OF MYSELF.



I SHOULD START AT THE BEGINNING...