

Chapter 1: Forgotten Past

For countless eons there was a beast of burden that evolved from the times of the ancient empire of the Principium all the way through to the Erases and beyond, this is their story.

Wars are raging across the known galaxy, the Principium, the Plastest and many of the ancient empires that ruled for hundreds of thousands of years have annihilated each other and war lords have risen to conquer and ravage the remnants of their empires. Only the Erases and the Qual remain to fight the relentless war lord attacks on thousands of worlds that have developed from the ashes of the old empires that ruled with an iron fist. The Qual is powerful and hold off the attacks with almost Godlike powers, but the Erases were not given such power as the ancient ones died before they could do so. Now the Erases must fight on their own. Resources are running out and the Erases are beaten back to a handful of systems on the outside of the great barriers and have no way to use these barriers themselves, nor do they know what or who is behind them that can help. In desperation they turn to an unlikely source of manpower.

A land skimmer races across a desolate plain on the near baron world amidst a sandstorm that is brewing. The open cockpit leaves the rider, masking in dark cloth and robe, exposed to the blowing sand as he races towards the distant black mountains. Slowing his pace as he approaches a miles long cliff overhang, the rider stops when he spies two others, robes as he, standing at the edge in front of a large control console built into the edge of the overhang. Pauses as he comes to a halt, he sees the two robed men operating some of the controls seemingly oblivious the blowing sand swirling around them. Stepping off his skimmer he pulls a short thin chain, rusted from years of use, from a small hatch on the front of the skimmer and, using a small steak, he presses a switch as he places it on the ground and the anchor shoots into the parched sand blown ground. Giggling the chain, he is testing the stability to ensure his skimmer is not carried off by the gusting wind then he strides towards the two at the terminal. As he steps up, what is below becomes visible.

As far as the storm lets him see, there are hundreds of large beasts, biped, very large, muscular, some with hair on their heads or backs. The beasts have large thick bodies, legs, arms, heads and faces with protruding thick rounded snouts, small eyes on either side of the protruding upper skull

and jaws that brandish large teeth, some outside the thick lips on their large jaws. Tattered leather like cloths cover the central genital parts, on some not very well, as the huge number of the beasts are pulling thick straps.

The straps are attached to harnesses on their shoulders and over their backs as the beasts pull and strain to move huge hoppers of ore. The metallic and poisoned ore is for making metals to fabricate weapons of war, but the large beasts know nothing of purpose, only that this is how they've lived for hundreds of thousands of years under so many masters. As the robed being steps to the control panel, one beast, the one in the front of the nearest line of beasts, pauses for a moment to look back by twisting his whole body to see who has just arrived. He looks for what seems a very long time, is soon disrupted by an electro whip snapping at his back. It is painful but the beast shows no sign of pain, but there is pain. Looking back, the blue haired beast just snarls, huffs and grunts as he turns back to his heavy burden, one that he has repeated through many incarnations. Using the eyes on the side of its head the beast looks to his either side, many of his fellows are feeling the lash of electro whips and hundreds pull the large containers towards the carved entrance leading to the smelters. But names of things, places, and those of the beings above him are not important, only the anger that has festered in him for countless lives he's lived. On each of the large creatures' large snouts are blunted horns, that at one time were large, long and used to fight one another for dominance over the herds, now, like the long talons on their hands, they are sanded and blunted regularly for the safety of their masters.

Stepping up the other two at the console the robed one looks and sees the data rolling through the nearest screen, "They're work has slowed, what is the problem?" he says. The robed one operating the near controls responds, "The military take large numbers of the herds away, we haven't enough to keep up the pace of work." The rider shakes his head, "Dam them! How are we supposed to mine ore and smelt the metals if they keep this up? We'll have to cut the feeding and rest periods, keep them working." The other two nod as the rider steps away to the side and looks down. Below the blue haired one turns slightly to look up, sees the lone rider, grunts something, like he's done many times in his guttural voice, "Ju dok ra." Suddenly he again feels the sting of an electro whip

from another robed and scarfed overseer shouting, "Get moving, faster!" Other beasts watch the overseer as he whips the blue one and grunt a similar sound. "We can't go on his way. Why is the military taking our beasts?" The rider shakes his head and looks over the field of beasts, "They are big and powerful but have nothing to offer."

The third robed one speaks, "The beasts are exhausted, they must be given rest, or they'll collapse. We've already lost whole lots because of this work schedule." The two turn to the rider who pauses then speaks, "Give them rest and food, two hours then get them back to work." The third one says, "That's not long enough! At this rate they'll..." The rider shouts, "You think that matters! We need the ore refined! We're losing these fights to the war lords! Get it done!" He raises his clawed hand and pulls his hood off showing his large bug like eyes and lizard like face, "They're all we have to do the work, just as it's always been back to the beginning, now get it done unless you want to take their place!" The third one nods, "As you say." The rider strides back towards his skimmer, pulls up the stake, climbs on it, swings around and vanishes quickly into the dust storm.

Not long after, the creatures are herded into a large rest area set aside for them just off the entrances to the smelters. It's a rough rock cavern carved out near the far side of the giant smelters. The floor is covered in feces, the area is filled with the stench, large bowl lie where each eats the grizzly food they are given, the light is low and the weary beasts file in and sit waiting for the food hover to come and dump their meager rations. As the blue hair drags himself, he files past an older one that is nearing his time. Even as the hover is coming to dump rations, the blue one can see the old one is ready for his reawakening. As the hover comes by, he holds up his bowl and then the old ones. The hover dumps the disgusting slop they are forced to eat in each bowl as it does once a day and it moves on. The blue one puts the bowl down in front of the old one who does its best to eat but no longer has the strength to pull itself up to feed out of its bowl. The blue one looks, pauses at what it sees then moves over, lifts the old one up so it can lean its head in to eat. After the old one finishes the small amount of food, the blue one looks at his ration, then to the old one. He puts his bowl down and again lifts the old one and it eats. After eating the old one gives a low grunt

and a low flushing sound from deep in its being. The blue one looks around, the others are eating or leaning against the cold stone mossy walls and resting as he pulls the old one up and slowly carries him back into a deeper part of the large chamber. In the far back there is an outcropping. He takes the old one back behind it, steps back and waits. The old one makes several regurgitated sounds, then there is a squishy sound and the sound of sloshing sound while he waits patiently.

The old one comes out barely able to move and looks up at blue hair. Blue hair gives a slight grunt, the old one bobs his head, since they can't turn their thick necks. Blue hair steps over looks in the old one's eyes, bobs his head then he takes the old one with his massive arms and cracks his neck sideways. The old one falls dead, and blue hair lowers his head, picks him up and drags him back towards the others. As he walks away, he glances back at the large gooey object hidden behind the outcropping snots slightly and moves on. Back up the passage others watch as he takes the old one's body and moves to a large hole that has been Hune out of the rock face, walks inside where other bodies, dozens are piled, many rotting and oozing juices form their orifices, and slowly places it amidst them. He bows his head for a moment, but when he lifts it his eyes are angry, his mouth curled along his long jowls, he again in his almost indiscernible grunting, "Ju dok ra."

It isn't long before the hated ones, the long-time masters enter the stench filled chamber just outside the long cavern where they all sit, exhausted. Speaking in words they don't understand nor care about, these masters are a different sort. They wear different garb; they are tall and are arguing with the two the that stood on the bluff. The two from the bluff are shouting, indiscernible things, but the beasts neither care nor pay attention to except the blue haired one, he is very interested. As they shout back and forth, the newer masters are obviously both angered and getting abusive to the two from the bluff. Finally, the two from the bluff nod and step back out into the waning storm while the taller masters' steps towards the beasts. With more indiscernible speech they banter back and forth, then they point at a few selected beasts, one walks closer and looks while the other claps a thick band on the legs of the chosen. When they are done a dozen are selected, among them is the one with blue hair, a green back hair, one with an extra-large, blunted nose horn and one with a deformed right jaw. There is confusion when the new masters shout and motions, 'come', but

when the dozen do not respond the second new one pulls a device, presses a light and a shock nearly paralyzes their legs. Again, the other new one motions and this time they rise and move where he is pointing.

Moving slowly, uncertain as to what awaits them, they are filed out into the slowing storm but instead of harnesses they are pointed in the direction of a large craft where they are motioned to board. If any could speak, they would ask, “Where are you taking us?” but they don’t, they’ve heard this language for millennia but never even tried to learn it, so they move onto the craft, sit, are shackled to the loops of the deck and wait. The large heavy door in the back closes and they can feel the motion as the craft lifts off the parched ground they’ve grown use to over so many lives, then the motion of it moving forward makes the craft lurch, but they are oblivious to it as they’ve been oblivious to the millennia of pain under the task masters whips. Time passes but they are unconcerned as time for them is not measured by hours, days or years but in how long they are allowed to rest before again being harnessed for another day of the unending toil. The blue one closes his eyes and remembers from long ago, long before the old masters came, a time when the beasts had their own place far away, where they had herds, they had places to hunt and fought for leaderships with each other in tests of skill and strength.

It seems only a short time before the craft bumps and the sound of the engines starts to wind down and the large door opens, but instead of parched ground outside there is an arched entrance made of metal, metal from the ore they spent lifetimes grinding out of the earth and hauling to the smelters. This is new, unknown, and the lights are blinding as the new masters release the shackles and they are motioned to exit the craft. Moving slowly, urged on by the new ones, the twelve move into the archway and down a long metal walkway and into a large round area where there are very big bowls of food, heaping mounds of it, but despite their obvious hunger from the meager portions they received back at the smelters, they are cautious about rushing to devour it. The new ones motion for them to do so, but they are unsure why? Why are they now being given such large amounts of sustenance? The green one turns, looks at the blue one who looks back and forth by turning his massive body, compared to the green one, then he flicks his head up slightly and the

twelve move and eat the food, but slowly as not to appear voracious. The new ones seem surprised, even letting out low chuckles, as they point while the beasts eat at a comparatively slow pace to them.

After eating the blue one, for the first time in memory of his time in servitude, feels full, satisfied but still wary, even as the others lay down to rest, still exhausted from the days toil still fresh in their minds. As he too slowly lies down on the cool metal floor he looks around as best he can to see what the new ones are doing, wary of what they have in store for them. Again, his mind drifts back to one of his other lives so long ago. The time when the old masters appeared, a time when they used light streaks to kill many who did not submit to shackles and the sting of electro whips as those still living are herded into large space shuttles, uprooted from their homes, taken for forced labor on far away worlds they've never seen before, forced into servitude for all their lives where the idea of any freedom has been all but forgotten. With this thought running through his mind the blue one has a tear fall from his eye as he drifts deeper into slumber.

A stinging pain arouses the blue one, but he finds he can't move, his arms, legs, body, head! Straps are holding him down and although his neck muscles won't let him twist his head, he can see out of the corner of his eyes he is not alone, the other eleven are strapped down too. The new masters are hovering over them pushing needles into their arms, legs, necks and devices attached to their heads. There's dull pain all over him and he can see the others are feeling it too. He tries to grunt or let out a scream of defiance, but his mouth has a large strap on it too tying his mouth shut. Fluids of different colors are being pumped into him, there are strange feelings running through him, cold, painful and in some cases excruciating. It seems forever before they are put under and wake back in the large metal enclosure. When he wakes, the blue one looks around, but he sees only nine not twelve of those who were brought here with him. He also sees that their horns are growing, their talons, their bodies look different, stronger, bigger if only by a little bit. As he stands, he feels wobbly, but it passes as the others also rise and look around. Again, there are large bowls of food to consume but they are all weary of them after the last ones knocked them out. The new masters enter with their long robes and gangly arms as they point to the bowls and motion for

them to eat. The group looks at each other, the green one, the deformed jaw and the one whose horn is already much larger all hesitate, but the other five go eat. Suddenly an electro whip stings his back and one of the new masters' shouts something in his indiscernible language, but it sounds angry. The four move forward and consume knowing it could mean more time being strapped down.

They were wrong about being strapped down but they did fall unconscious again, but this time when they wake, they find themselves with a large group of others, dozens, but they're in the middle of nowhere, a scrubby place of low mounds with hills nearby. The group is confused but the blue one looks around and sees some green in the distance towards the hills he turns, sees the green one, and the others and gives a grunt, they all look at him and follow as he walks in the green direction. Others in the large group see this and begin to follow but one very large one in the group gives a snort but follows too. As they move the deformed jaw, the green one and the one with the longer horn all catch up to him and bob their heads, seemingly to agree with what he's doing, as they walk.

The walk takes a long time as the whole group is spread out in a long trail. As they top a rise, the blue one stops and looks back at the trail of his like then looks forward at the green not far ahead. Suddenly as a breeze blows towards them, he gets a whiff of something familiar, something he hasn't smelled in so many lives, and he begins to trot on his now slightly longer legs. Now many of the others are following suite, trotting with him towards the growing green that is growing bigger with each step. Coming around a small mound they see it, an oasis, water, trees laden with some sort of fruit. Tired, hungry and thirsty, they break into a run as fast as their still stubby legs will carry them followed by the large group as each rounds the mound. Soon, all the large group guzzling water some wading into it and splashing around like children in a wading pool, it's then that the blue one catches something out of the corner of his eye. A large shape he didn't notice before, then another, with small, ridged backs, small eyes and long tails sliding silently into the water to his left. Turning he watches as only the smallest part of each of the three strange things move silently through the water towards them. The hair on his head and back stands up, he slaps

the green one greedily gulping water and points. The green one looks too as the things slide through the water. They turn for a moment and look at each other, then the blue one lets out a bellow and runs back to the shore, bellowing as he runs and even after when he's up on the rocky sand. He points as he bellows, many of the group see what he's pointing at and runs to the shore as well, but several either ignore him or run at the things in the water letting out bellows of their own. The large one from before is on the shore to the right watching, looking at the blue one and his companions and back to the ones rushing the things in the water. Too late, even as he bellows the warning, the seven rushing the things in the water find out they are out matched as the three things in the water rear up their semi-webbed forearms slamming and grabbing.

These things make short work of the seven, their large mass, three times the size of any of them, large jaws, huge, gnarled teeth, long reptilian bodies, dark thick hides, long back legs, huge talons and green eyes looking with cold remorseless hunger. Blood spreads on the water as they finish eating the seven foolish ones as they turn their attention to the large group on the shore and move towards them. The blue one feels rage, but he knows instinctively this is not a battle just strength alone can win. Turning side to side he sees a smaller tree and trots to it as one of the things snarls and growls towards him and the others with him. It grabs one nearest it and begins eating him as the other two things split up to chase others up on the shore. As it eats the blue one pulls the tree up out of the ground, runs back and slams the thing in the leg at the knee making it growl loudly as it topples onto its side. With another blow he slams the tree root end down on its head once then twice as the other three with him run up and use their still short but sharp talons to rip at its exposed throat. Bluish blood flows as they rip at it. As his three companions tear at the thing the blue sees the other two things grabbing and eating those in the group, and still the real big one is just watching, moving behind trees to hide himself from view. The blue one charges joined by the deformed jaw and then the green one, running at the second of the things and again the blue one slams it with the tree root end in the back. As it turns to grab at them, he slams the tree into its arm and hears a crack, then he slams the chest and it falls back screeching in agony.

Not waiting to see if it's dead he rushes again after the third just rounding the mound. Running up the mound, he see it's grabbed two more and is eating one when he leaps and brings the tree down on its head. He lands on its back and smashes its head over and over until it stops moving. Pausing, he looks around and move down its back towards the water. Across the way he sees several more things moving from the distance towards them, coming over a small grassy hill on the other side of the small lake. He bellows again, steps up on the mound and bellows a few more times. Several of the group are already tearing pieces of meat from the fallen things but the blue one bellows louder and points, the others see and come running as they head back out into the waste they came from. With some meat in hand the remainder of the one large group trot away from the water. The longer horn, the green one and the deformed jaw catch up with meat. It take a long time before the things stop chasing the group, but they finally do and head back to the green area. Nearing the hills the blue one motions for them all to head to them. The group eats as they move but the blue one sees that the large one that hid during the fight is grabbing meat from others, batting them aside and devouring it. The blue one looks at his meat the he's been eating, turns and move back handing it to one the big one has knocked down and robbed of his meal.

The one takes the meat and starts to rise but the big one steps over, steps on him and grabs the meat, this angers the blue one who bellows an objection. The big one swings his larger arm but the blue one ducks and slams his fist into the big one's chest and bellows again. The big one and the blue one square off as the big one takes a bite of meat and throws it aside. The one that was knocked down scrambles around them and greedily eats the meat as the big one and the blue one size each other up circling each other looking for a weakness. The big one puffs himself up and charges slamming into the blue one, but the blue one takes the blow and instead of just grappling he grabs the big one around the lower chest, digs his talons into him and throws him to the side his talons digging deep into his flesh. Without waiting he pounces the big one and slashes at him across the arms he's raised and slams his fist into the big one's face. In a short time, he backs off and bellows puffing himself up showing he's ready for more, but the big one doesn't get up and rush again he only rises and falls to one knee and whimpers. The blue one looks quickly around at the others; they are stunned but make no moves towards him. The blue one makes a low grunt, waves his arm and the group moves on, following him. The big one struggles to rise on his feet and follows but

at a distance. The green, the deformed and the long horn catch up to the blue and walk beside him. The green holds out a portion of meat and the blue snorts slightly and eats it.

It takes many days for the group, now down by almost half because injured have fallen behind or died, to get through the hills to the plains and rivers on the other side. As they move small creatures of many types are seen and eaten. Some a small, crustation like that scurry as they approach, some are larger, more mammal like and even a few fly with curved wings and brightly colored feathers, but all are eatable and so they eat them. It's when they move over some hills they see smoke in the distance, from what they don't know, but the group move towards it anyway. As they approach, they see two legged four-armed beings doing strange things, carrying baskets, gathering stalks of reddish growth, cutting it with curved blades, bundling it and carrying it towards rounded grass covered places with holes in them they move in and out of. The blue one motions for the group to follow, and they move towards these strange small things with large eyes and long curly hair. The things see them and many stop to look, seemingly curious but many scurry into the holes of the rounded grass coverings. As the group moves into the area of several rounded places, they see fires going, sticks over them with bubbling liquid. They sniff and smell food in them but when one of the group grabs the rounded things full of bubbling liquid it burns him, and he drops it letting out a small screech.

As they walk through the place the big one. Still trailing behind, looks down at one of the small four-armed things, grabs it and it screams, a scream of seeming fear as it struggles to escape the big one's grasp. Just as the big one move to bite it the blue one slams him with the back of his hand in the face, and he drops the small four-armed thing. The blue one gives him a look and he backs up. The blue one snots and motions for him to move one ahead of him. The big one is angered but obeys. As they reach the far side of the place, they see large walls of sticks surrounding groups of beasts with four legs, some with horns, four eyes on their elongated heads and big bushy tails. They approach, curious but cautious. The blue one, apparently now the leader move up the stick fence and looks. He reaches in and grabs one of the beasts with his large hand, sniffs it, picks it up, cracks its neck and drops it. The others look for a moment, the green one steps up, licks it

and then takes a bite, then another. In a short time, the group has killed and are eating several of the beasts. The big one comes over, looks at the blue one and back down growling. The blue one rips a large piece of the beast meat off and throws it to him. The big one looks up then back to the meat. The blue one doesn't seem angry, he just snots and the big one eats the meat.

Not long after leaving the place of grass huts, the group walks out onto large expansive grassy plains. They move as one now, huddling behind the blue one as they go. When night falls, they find a large depression between hills, a hollow surrounded by them. The group, tired and yet satisfied for the moment with the meat, lay down to rest. Later that night the blue one is roused by the deformed one with a nudge and he points out into the darkness. There they see red and yellow eyes, a few, then more, moving slowly as if circling the group from up the low slopes of the hollow. He snorts and gets up slowly, moves around the group and nudges others as snarls and low growls are heard from the yellow and red eyes that are moving around them, slowly. Peering with his now very accustomed eyes to the dark he sees overlapping plates on the backs of what is circling them. They have larger back legs than front but they move on all fours as they circle. BY now the whole group is awake and looking but they are scattered around the hollow singles and small groups of two or three. The blue one lets out a few grunts and motions for them to come closer to him. But as the ones farthest out, begin moving several of the things circling attack with short sharp and deadly fangs leaping on the stragglers and sinking their teeth in, tearing and ripping, pulling chunks of flesh off until several of the stragglers are lying dead. The things then scamper away darting back into the dark.

The eyes grow closer, the outlines become larger, nearly half their size the groups is now a large huddle around the back of the blue one. One charges then another and another, teeth and claws rip at the blue one and the others, but this time the prey is not so easy to kill. Massive hands, sharper talons and some with longer sharpened horns, return the ferocity of the attacks. This goes on for hours until the sun begins to rise and both sides has suffered many losses, the things with yellow and red eyes more, slowly move off back over the rise of the hollow. The blue one torn and bloodied turns, looks at the morning light and back as the yellow/red eyes move off heading for

some low bluffs not far in the distance. Turning and looking, their numbers are fewer again, they are down many who lie bloodied and torn on the ground, but there is nothing that can be done. The large one is laying with his teeth still buried in one of the things that circled them, dead but he died for them all. The blue one bows slightly to him, turns and motions for the others to follow. Moving across the plains they come to a narrow pass between hills and move through it, hungry and thirsty, they walk following the blue one. All are bloodied.

It's long into the day when from above, when they reach a flat area of reddish grass, lights appear and the large landers that once took them from the smelters come again and land a short distance away. Several new masters exit and crack electro whips and motion for them to enter. Not feeling defiant, but very angry, they all board the landers, and they lift off. It isn't long before they're back at the large metal room where again there are large bowls of food and water. Again, they are wary, but they are too hungry to dispute this time, so they all devour the meals and as before they fall into a deep sleep. The blue one wonders, what is next, how many will die this time, what will the new masters do to us and for how long. As he falls to sleep, the blue one again grunts the same growingly distinct words that are etched deeply in his mind, "Ju dok ra."

The next day, they were all awake but there are now twenty of them. The new masters enter and quickly motion and snap the electro whips for them to go through another heavy metal door. As they move the blue one and some others look side to side through large windows where many of their kind are forced to regurgitate new ones of themselves. The blue one is very disgruntled as his species doesn't do this unless they are on death's door, but the new masters are forcing it. As they approach another large door it opens to a long black room with low lighting, on a long counter there are rows of large weapons fit for them to hold and in the back of the long chamber are large blocks of white rock. They are lined up in front of the weapons and a new master steps in front of them while the other two are on the sides. He holds a smaller version of the weapons and shows them how to hold them. The two master's to either side call out in their strange clackety tongue and motion, so they all pick up the weapons while the one in front shows them how to charge the weapons, aim them and fire.

For the first time the blue one understands something they are expected to do, and he is the first to shoot. He misses but he goes again and again until he starts hitting the white rocks. The others follow suit. When energy is depleted, they are shown how to put the weapons down and are moved through a door to the right where there is another long counter, but on this one there are blades in scabbards with slings attached. Another new master motions is for them to pick them up and over the next few minutes, how to sling them around their backs, pull them out and put them back. The blue one watches very intensely as they go through the motions. After a short while the master's motion for them to enter another larger chamber that is like desert floor with rocks and sand. Inside they motion for them to spread out and move towards the far side of the chamber. As they move the blue one and green one sniff, they smell something, something they don't like. From the far side doors slide open and hideous large creatures with large talons and fangs come out. They are bristling with scales, dripping saliva over their large fangs and teeth, they walk on six legs, two the work smaller arms and they are coming at them. The blue one shouts a low growl and pulls his blade; some follow him, some are still confused, wonder what to do, but not for long.

The large beasts move forward, snapping jaws and speeding up, but so is the blue one, green one, deformed and one with a long horn, all with blades out, they know what to do. As the beasts run at them the blue one swigs his blade hard, remembering the water beasts and slams it into the armor of the beast in front of his crushing it. The beast screams in agony, but the blue one doesn't stop hammering it. The others follow his lead as more of the beasts emerge from the doors. The fight lasts a long time and by the end only the blue one, green one and long horn are standing but deformed one is badly injured along with several others. The new masters usher them out the other door they came thorough even as the blue one tries to retrieve the deformed one. Back in the original large chamber, they are licking their injuries, latterly when new masters enter and remarkably tend the injured, but they don't fool the blue one, he knows there is more to come, and he is angered.

Over the next few weeks, they are put through more tests both inside and outside the large building complex using weapons and blades and more and more they are becoming accustomed to losses that are replaced by new versions of each of them. The deformed one is fitted with a metal version of his jaw that fills in the missing jaw line and teeth, so he looks more like the others but is far more menacing. One morning they are fitted with clothes that cover over their lower midsection and arm bands that are like a copper band and loaded on a transport much larger than they've been on before and this time there are dozens of them with several of the transports lined up. In all there are well over two or three hundred of them as the transports lift makes them all very anxious. It seems like a very long time, they are in the large cargo holds for they are fed at least five times as they travel, but they have no idea where they are going or why. With a jolt the large craft stop and hit the ground even as the large back doors open and the new masters rush in with electro whips and snap them motioning for them to all get out of the back. The sun is bright, almost blinding as they are moved out into a large grassy area where weapons and blades are waiting. With no instructions needed, now they all pick up a weapon, sling a blade and are motioned in the direction of a large green area ahead with high perceptible dirt mounds are on the horizon.

The masters are far behind watching and working controls on small floating plates as they all, two hundred or so, trudge along. After walking for a while the blue one sees movement behind a line of rocks and large weapons pointed at them. It dawns on him too late as the weapons open fire and many are brought down, now he knows what they've been training for. He shouts a loud grunt, the remainder charge firing weapons. As their massive bodies, larger and faster than they were, lumber forward, their weapons fire is having an effect. The beings behind the makeshift wall wearing space suites of red and green with designs on them and small air packs on their backs, have two arms and legs. The remainder of his group, now maybe fifty, reach the wall, smash through it and pull blades. They engage more of the beings and use their blades to hack and slash through them. The blue one doesn't know how long they fought but they beat the space suited beings back the dirt hills behind them. Looking back the blue one, green one, steel jam and long horn, who has reddish blood on it, they see the trail of their fallen, but they are given no time to lament as the masters motion for them to move forward. The blue one bellows in anger at their

losses but one of the new masters presses a light on his wrist and the bands on his arms jolt him with intense pain. He grimaces but obeys.

That night they are lying against the dirt hills, some sleeping some watching, looking around when explosions suddenly cause them to rouse quickly. The new masters are again far behind watching as the explosions bust around them. The blue one, green one, long horn and steel jaw are almost frantic so the green one starts digging with his claws into the dirt, digging a hole to duck into and all those still living do the same. But the blue one goes farther, he keeps digging and digging. As he does the others, growing accustomed to the dark, follow him and then join him in digging. The explosions stop after a while, but they keep digging. The new masters strangely do not stop them; in fact they follow them into the tunnel they are digging and follow behind. The blue one doesn't know how long they dig through the firm earth, but they finally come to the other side of the hill. As the last of the dirt falls away the blue one holds his hand up for them to stop, he hears noises. He motions for the green one to follow and they cautiously move out into the darkness with blades drawn.

They move around large stones and push through high brush and find many the space suited beings in a camp of rounded huts they are moving in and out of. Off to the side they see large weapons on wheels, piles of supplies and ammunition neatly stacked around the weapons. The blue one is very angry, but the green one takes his arm and bobs his head motioning for them to return to the others. Back at the tunnel the others are waiting, a few dozen left, the blue one motions with his blade and snarls. He makes a motion like an explosion and points behind him. The others get the idea, and they follow him back to the space suited beings. Moving quietly and silently, despite their large size, they sneak up on the space suited ones surprisingly close before rushing out of the tall grass and attacking. The surprise is not only complete the space suited ones are shocked and in disarray when they attack. It doesn't take long for the few dozen of them have killed over sixty or more of the space suited beings. Afterwords they've only lost a few and the new masters emerge from the tall grass and look around. They pause, call on their devices and motion for the blue one and the others to sit and wait. Soon a transport comes, and they are disarmed and pushed on board. As a new master grabs his weapon the blue one turns and snarls

but the master presses the light, and the pain from the bracelet makes him release the weapon. Turning back, he sits on the cold deck and mutters to himself. One of the new masters steps up to him and shows the electro whip to him and as he walks back, the blue one snarls, his anger obvious but still contained, “Ju dok ra.”

The scene of them being loaded, going to fight some species they don't know, being loaded back again, each time with many of their number lost, repeats over. Years pass, then decades, and each time they lose many. The blue one loses himself only a few times, but he grows more resentful with each new life, and he watches with his close others as they watch more and more how the transports are used, operated and flown as the new masters grow more confident in their complacency. They are learning more and more and with each new replacement their knowledge grows until one day they learn how the bracelets work and eventually they know how to get around the pain long enough to kill the one inflicting it. It starts small but grows until one day there is no more pain, there is only killing and more killing, fire, destruction and the new masters are no more, just the ruin of what they once were. On the last day, when the new masters are all gone, the blue one stops as he heads for a transport and on a large piece of what was a new master building, he uses his talons, now very long and sharp, to scratch the phrase he's repeated countless times, “Ju dok ra”, in the small amount of the new master's language he has learned.

It is many centuries later that a Talpok explorer ship, part of a small group exploring a new part of the galaxy spiral arm, lands on a barren world devoid of life but covered in very old and decayed ruins. The group of Talpok move slowly looking at everything, checking every crevice, going into old, dilapidated building ruins searching for clues as to who lived there. For many days they look through all the remains, gather clues of all kinds as to the civilization that so suddenly collapsed and the question that eats at them is how such powerful beings all died in such a short time. Then one day they find the ruins of a large metal citadel that looks like it was attacked and shattered from the inside and on the wall of one of the destroyed structures they discover the first clue as to the language of this ancient civilization and who they were etched deeply into one of the remains of a collapsed wall, it's the word, “Ju dok ra.” After much study and searching they find more pieces of the language, and they are able to translate some of the very complex alphabet. It

is decided to label the planet and the inhabitants “Judari”. It isn’t long before they find out the reason for this ancient civilizations vanishing, they meet the ones they believe did it, and call them “Voxx”, (Beasts of old), after the grunting noise they make when they are angered.