



Techtonic
chaote9

Published: 2009

Categorie(s):

Tag(s): "science fiction" pulp anarchy pinoy apocalypse "short story"

The Path To Serenity moved along at forty miles an hour. It was a monolith of a machine, hued with splashes of black, brown and olive green, a centipede of metal and bulletproof polymers. She was the first to be produced of the new generation Ground Carrier fleet. This was her virgin voyage to battle.

Admiral Armando Castillos was in command of the carrier and her twenty-three crew members. The captain of The Path To Serenity took the battlefield position of x-o and his second positioned herself at Monitor Station. Both were honored to be under the man who developed the modern GroCa.

They had a compliment of marines situated at the center stage of the multi-segment transport. Warriors, side by side. The cramped space making the body heat raise the temperature in the compartment. They silently listened to their personal audio devices, ignoring all stimuli. Bathing in dull amber light, waiting for it to change to green or red.

Castillos remembered the early days. The days right after the Fall. When civilization collapsed. For the republic, at least. It wasn't anything as dystopian as nuclear war or the aftermath of catastrophic disaster. The end was brought on by the rise of the military. It was just under a decade after the new millennium. After repeated changes in the government, the military decided to bring order to the situation. Fifteen years later, much is still not known about the details. One thing is certain. Brother was set upon brother, and blood soaked the motherland. Members of the United Nations decided not to interfere, given that all sides lacked the moral imperative to be supported. The elected government had been accused of fraud and had only come to power because its predecessor was forcibly ejected. On the other hand, Asia had an awful track record when it came to military juntas. Either way, the country did not have enough oil to make it worthwhile. The rebel factions had quickly taken over most military installations with the help of the communist resistance forces. Until, of course, the reds turned on their new friends. Everything happened inside a week. Then gunfire became the new theme of the streets.

He was a member of the newly-formed Civilian Militia. It was made of the smallest demographic in the country, the middle class. Together with the 404 infantry and the Presidential Guard, this was the last of the armed fighters for the civilian government.

Following his captain, Castillos' squad found themselves in the military junkyard near the bay. They cut had contact with all other forces. The

small group of twelve had two engineers and five mechanics with them. They found the carcasses of dead tanks and tons of armor plating suitable for their use. Small thin smiles, almost invisible, traced their young battle worn faces. All had lost someone in the carnage, and running away no longer felt like an option. It was time to take the fight to them.

The admiral looked at the swivel monitor at his side. Readouts showed the outlines of their target destination brought by satellite imagery. Spies had reported that the base had gone rogue and had acquired a new weapon. Peace had been tenuously achieved by sweat and sacrifice. He was not about to let it slip away because of one general with delusions of grandeur.

“What’s the position of the Hammer of Tor?” he said, pressing the button on his Comm. Module to send his voice via the Bluetooth headset to the Mon-Station.

“Forty meters to our portside, sir”

Another button

“Comm, tell Captain Macutay to use the secondary route and increase speed to full ahead. He is to take out that road block with rockets and give us mortar cover while we go in.”

Codes were entered and beeping noises signaled acceptance.

It was a hot and humid summer day, famous in the pacific for its draining effect on both land and man. The fighting had subsided. There was no central ruling body, only bandit groups holding territories. Ideology had fallen to the wayside. A crescent shape of a parachute was visible in the sky. Relief goods dropped by the International Red Cross. Hundreds flocked to it, ragged and malnourished men, women and children, their skin baked by the sun and gaunt to the bone.

Men emerged from the shadows, gunfire erupting from them. Strafing the crowds, they parted the sea of humanity quickly. From the tops of houses and broken windows, from corners and doors, they flooded the street. The bandidos of Malate. They loaded supplies to their jeeps and occasionally took potshots at the rabble.

Then, from the distance, dust rounded a corner. The sound of mechanized thunder battered the asphalt.

The ground carrier The Path To Serenity neared the base with its cruising speed of 65 mph, combat loaded with 2050 ready rounds and 2220 stowed rounds of 40 mm. Admiral Castillos stood, crouching somewhat to prevent his head from touching the ceiling, barked orders.

“Arm all weapons, deploy AutoGuns and check targeting, increase speed to full. Marines, run weapons check.”

In seconds, the barrier was at all but decimated by the rockets of The Hammer of Tor, and finished off by the nearly indestructible front armor of the barreling carrier.

Soldiers fired on it, emptying clip upon clip. Bullets were useless on the triple-treated armor. Turrets on the carrier moved swiftly, with almost no sound, and unleashed hellfire on the enemy. 40mm guns loosed chaos all around sustained by smoke grenades peppering the landscape.

Then the lights went out.

Built from the bodies of three Armored Personnel carriers and the guts rigged from weeks of scavenging abandoned electronics stores and car lots, the Volunteer appeared from the ghosts of the past. Built in the new age of ground warfare and from the remains of the old republic.

High-hardness armor plating to stop any attack, multiple gunports for every angle, twin turrets with mounted mortar to take out any armored foe. Just under 11 meters long, she wasn't pretty. Like a toy built by a boy with ADD, she looked like a stunted caterpillar. Welding tacs clearly seen, tape crossing the body vertically, hoses running along the side.

The bandits paused, frozen in place by the unknown and uncertainty. Gun barrels emerged pointed at them from every gunport of the closing vehicle. The ground shook harder and the thunder boomed louder.

This would not be the last mission of the Volunteer.

“What the hell was that?”

The Path To Serenity ground to a halt and darkness filled it. Castillo removed his headset. The blue lights of his module were dead.

“Go to back-ups. Activate manual controls. Give me status reports.” This was the weapon. An Electromagnetic Pulse generator. The great equalizer.

Red emergency lights came on. The panic in the eyes of the crew became visible. This was why he wanted to lead this incursion. He had the experience they lacked. Their training focused on the technology. His was on the battlefield.

“Retract AutoGuns and attach triggers. Marines, man the gun ports. Fire at will” he used his Admiral voice, strong and confident.

The marines were sure and steady. They pulled back the armor from the ports and opened fire on the troops surrounding them. The crew

quickly regained their bearings and the carrier came back to a semblance of life. Panels were removed and tossed aside. Electronic stations were abandoned and positions were taken next to cranks and levers. Movement started again.

"Radio the Hammer and tell them to pull back. Best speed to the motor pool."

30mph

An Abrams tank crept from the back of the mess hall. Its turret swiveled. Mounted on it was a mortar array. With the Ablative shielding offline...

"Do we have rocket control?"

"No, sir."

Almost shouting, to be heard over the non-electronically sound suppressed engines, Castillos gave his order. Features hidden in the shadows.

"Turn portside 30 degrees, all speed"

He went to the troop section with a heavy bag he took with him when he came on board.

"You and you. With me." He told two crewmen.

"Pull those cranks. On the double."

"Sir?" they both said, uncertainty in their voice.

"Now." The admiral voice again.

The tank commander took aim and prepared to fire. Through his viewfinder, he saw the side of the carrier turn expose itself to him. The perfect shot. He smiled. Then it faded. The center opened with a hiss. And the figure of a man appeared. The commander increased magnification. He could see the man was smiling. On his shoulder was a stinger missile.



www.feedbooks.com
Food for the mind