

## Chapter 6

### Aerial Strike

“So... why did you summon us?”

Jax leaned back in his chair as he bandaged a cut on his arm.

“Pretty much what you think,” he replied. “Tommy, someone like you would surely have felt it, right?”

Tommy Desmos was one of the CSA’s more mysterious people, but Jax knew him as an old friend - he also knew that he was incredibly strong.

“It’s been a while,” Naman added, from where he leaned against the wall with a soft drink can. “Since I got to have a taste of Earth’s refreshments.”

“Naman, this is serious,” Jax said.

“Yes, I felt it,” Tommy butted in. “I definitely felt it.”

“Yeah,” Naman said, scrunching up his can with his fingers after finishing it. “Witherblood, huh? Anyone with as sharp energy-sense as you, Jax, would probably be able to tell it’s him.”

“Pranav must've sensed it too,” Jax said, ripping the leftover gauze off with his teeth. “He was going to depart a few hours later, but suddenly he said that he needed to go now and he just sped off before you got here.”

“Well,” Tommy said, breathing out. “I suppose I can let my breath out for Leo and Zane, now, since Pranav is on the way. We can trust him to keep them safe... and there’s Leo himself, right?”

“Yeah,” Jax nodded.

Just then, Isak knocked on the door and came in, with Erik following behind.

“Uh, Jax?” he said. “Oh, and Naman and Tommy too! You guys should come.”

“It’s serious,” Erik said from behind Isak.

“What?”

“... A massive ship is headed for us as we speak?”

"Yeah, it's coming at a terrifying speed," Erik said. "Look, here it is."

He blew it up on a massive projector, and Jax immediately sat forwards.

"Hey, isn't that a bomber!? What the heck??"

"Yeah," Erik nodded, a small bead of sweat rolling down his face.

"You remember, right? You guys..."

The CSA members sitting around the room nodded gravely.

"We fought a fleet of those in the last war, didn't we?" Jay asked.

"Hardest frickin' thing I ever did in my whole life, to be honest..."

"Yeah," Wade nodded.

"Yeah, I remember too," Naman said. "They all appeared and you guys started shouting and screaming like little kids for me, Davids, Zack and Pranav, and then we came and swept them like bowling pins."

"Not true," Jax objected. "You guys had some trouble with them too, didn't you?"

Tommy nodded and pushed Naman's head down.

"Yeah," he admitted. "The amount of firepower those things pack is no joke, and their crew is massive like hell. Even one could be a threat."

"So, what do we do?" Isak asked. "Send our forces to annihilate it?"

"Oh yeah, I'm all ears for that plan," Dani said leaping up. "When do we depart?"

"Shut!" Jax exclaimed. "This could be a feint, but I seriously doubt they wouldn't take us for fools considering that Witherblood is commanding this attack, probably."

"WHAT!!?"

Everyone leapt to their feet and started shouting, and Jax sat in his seat, remembering that he hadn't told them about Witherblood yet.

"Well," Jay said after the noise had died down. "You shoulda told us sooner, not gonna lie."

"We literally just realized," Jax countered. "But then Erik and Isak... ah never mind. What's important is that somehow he's

definitely back from the dead and stronger and craftier than ever, so we have to, ah, 'double-watch-out' now."

"So then," Wade interjected. "What's the plan actually going to be!?"

"Well," Jax said. "I think this is both a feint and a genuine attack at the same time. If we dispatch large numbers of forces to take out the bomber, we're bound to be caught off guard again by Witherblood's insane strategies."

"Yeah," Erik agreed. "But the other option is a lot more riskier for the members carrying it out, right?"

Jax nodded gravely.

"Yeah, a sneak attack would be incredibly risky, but it's a better option than to play ourselves into an obvious trap. We're gonna need a small force to carry it out. Any volunteers?"

Fox raised his hand.

"I can go," he said. "I have unfinished business."

"Fine," Jax agreed. "You can come."

"I'll go," Erik volunteered. "We all know me and you are the best duo, for real."

Jax smiled and nodded.

"Sure thing, partner. Don't die on me though..."

"Us too," Wade and Jay said. "We're a pretty good duo as well, ain't that right?"

"Fine," Jax nodded. "Sounds good. We have Jay and Wade as heavy hitters, Fox as an assassin, and then me and Erik as the strikers. Let's do this!"

"I wanna come too," Dani muttered from the corner, but nobody paid any attention to him.

"Are you sure it's okay to light a fire in the middle of the night?" Leo asked. "Won't they see this?"

"Hey, we're inside a building," Zane replied. "I blocked off the windows and the door with bricks, we'll be alright."

"Well then," said Leo confidently. "I suppose this means that we can hide out in buildings as we move?"

"Can't he sense you guys' energy?" Stuart asked. "I mean, I know that the commanders can do the same."

"Yeah, they probably can," Zane agreed, "But both of us have been suppressing our power levels."

He leaned back against the wall, and stared into the flickering flames of their campfire, then at his half finished can of rationed meat.

"You guys should eat up," Leo said, tearing into a piece of bread with his teeth. "We have a long day of travelling and probably fighting ahead of us."

"We should have a good grasp of our weapon count first," Ricky suggested. "Like how much ammo we have, and so and so."

"Yeah," said the second soldier, called Jimmy.

The four soldiers and Zane all put their weapons into the middle of the group - five pistols, an assault rifle, seven combat knives, a katana, a machete and fifteen packs of bullets.

"Considering how many monsters we'll probably have to go through to loop around to the coast, I doubt this'll last for long," Zane said.

"I have my sword," Leo put in. "It's enhanced with magic so it won't wear out, and that's all I need."

"Sure," Zane muttered. "But me and the others need them, don't we? I'll take two pistols and the katana, by the way, and maybe one knife. You guys can share out the rest between yourselves.. After all, my ability does take up a lot of my energy and I'm not wasting it on normal monsters that we have to fight normally."

"Alright," Ricky agreed. "I'll take the rifle, unless you guys have a problem with that?"

Stuart shook his head.

"You're the best shot out of us soldiers," he said. "We could probably loot more weapons as we go anyway."

"Then us three will take the rest of the pistols and weapons," said the last soldier, who was called Hugo.

"Well then," Zane said leaning back against the wall and closing his eyes. "If that's settled, then you should all get some rest. Leo, do you mind taking first watch? Wake me after a few hours."

"Sure," Leo agreed, and set about packing his bag for the long journey ahead of them.

"Incoming!" Ricky yelled, and threw himself down behind the shipping container as the grenade detonated on the other side, sending blue flames licking around the sides of the container at a searing temperature.

"Rick!"

Zane vaulted over the car he was hiding behind and rolled along the floor, before coming up in a kneeling position and emptying his guns into the advancing Intrusinks, sending several sprawling to the ground.

"Leo, now!"

Leo jumped and kicked the car that he and Zane had been behind straight into the enemy force, and it crushed most of them as it slammed down on top of the defensive line of sandbags and corrugated metal.

"It was a terrible idea to attack this fort with six people!" Stuart yelled over the noise.

"Whatever!" Zane yelled back. "We just cleared the gate, let's go!" The six of them ran inside the fort, and gunned down the last few Intrusinks inside, whilst Leo and Zane slashed through them with their weapons.

"Phew," Leo said, wiping the sweat off his forehead. "We're about a hundred miles east of Chicago, right?"

"Yeah," Zane said, breathing out. "The only way we have a chance of getting outta America is to head to San Fransisco. It's the last of our strongholds that is yet to be taken over or evacuated, since the enemy is taking over at an incredibly rapid pace from the east to the west."

"No time for talking," Ricky called, with an armful of human supplies plundered by the Intrusinks. "Just grab what you can and let's get out of here. We don't have time to waste if we want to make any headway towards Francisco today."

"Yes yes," Zane said, rolling his eyes.

"Who the hell died to make you think that you could boss us around?" Leo demanded, sauntering up to Ricky and getting in his face.

The two began to argue about who was in charge on the far side of the fort, and Zane sighed to himself as he checked through some boxes and rooms for weapons, before stumbling across a

small dugout, lined with human weapons that had been plundered from defeated soldiers.

"Bingo," he said to himself.

A few seconds later the group were pillaging the small room, grabbing large rucksacks and stuffing them with rations, tools and ammunition, whilst also grabbing guns and weapons.

"Yeah, this is mine now," Ricky said, propping himself against a massive sniper rifles and looking it up and down with glee.

"Alright, alright," Zane said, sighing. "What're you guys going for?"

"Me and Hugo are taking an assault rifle each," said Stuart.

"Jimmy found a machine-gun, so he's going with that. There's clothing, food, equipment – and a bunch of other stuff in here – most of which is bloodstained, of course. "

"Sounds good," Leo said from outside the door. "Now, if you've packed up already we should -"

And at that exact moment, Naerius came down and ruined their moment again.

"There it is," Jax said from behind the rock. "We're gonna attack that thing?"

"It's huge," Erik said. "And its fricking loud as hell."

"Every nook and cranny of that thing is packed with monsters," Jay muttered. "Plus I definitely feel a mass of energy hidden away in that. It looks like ordinary means won't be enough."

"Hmph!" Wade sighed. "If there's a strong enemy in there, then that just means that we'll have to pulverise them into the ground."

"Should we get going, then?" Jax asked. "We have work to do."

Wade burst inside like a demon, crashing through the metal like it was made of paper, and slamming a giant sheet of the wall into a group of Intrusinks passing through. The others followed quickly, and cleared the corridor as fast as they could.

"If it's just these small fries, then we'll be alright, don't you think?" Wade said, beginning to walk towards the metal door at the end of the hallway. "So... we follow the plan from here on?"

"Yes," Fox said. "Be careful."

"So, Jay and Wade are going down to the cockpit and the command bridge to deal with the pilots and the leaders of this attack, and then me, Fox and Erik will split up and look for engine room, and blow it back to Mazog," Jax finalised. "Got that?"

"You've been over it about twenty times," Wade groaned. "Can we please just get on with it already?"

"Fine, go on."

Wade grinned at him, and exploded down the hallway like a ballistic missile, and then tearing the door at the end of it straight off its hinges and jumping through. In a few seconds, screams and howls could be heard beyond the door as Wade went wild with his weapons. Jay sighed and began walking after him, after wishing Fox, Erik and Jax good luck.

"Well, let's get going then," Jax sighed. "In the main sector, the engine room is always in a different place in each ship. However, each ship has one flaw – the pathways leading up to the main sector are always the same three. Come on, here they are. Let's separate now, don't die on me, you idiots!"

"Even if one of us died, the mission's more important!" Fox added. "Don't let one of us dying hold you back!"

Jax charged through the monsters in his way, not stopping once to fight, just slashing down everything in his path whilst powering forwards. He ricocheted himself through the square passages, grinding up all the flesh in his path with his dual swords, leaving behind a trail of bodies and blood splattered all over the walls. Suddenly, the pathway opened up and he burst into a giant room full with elite orc guards, dressed in full battle armour, but they were all sitting on benches on wooden tables, in the middle of their lunch. Jax wasted no time and coated his fist in armament, before slamming it deep into the ground at his feet. Immediately, the black metal scrunched up under the force of his punch, and the floor of the whole, massive room distorted as it pulled towards Jax like a whirlpool of metal, yanking the orcs along with it, towards Jax. He leapt up above the scrunching of over a thousand square metres of metal, and whirled his swords up in the air and he slashed through countless guards in one go.

He hit the ground running and dashed for the exist on the other room, leaping past the giant ridges and spikes he had just created, and turned around for a quick second, to see a giant, marauding, furious brigade of elite orcs surging after him. Good! The more guards I can distract, the less pressure will be on all of the others.

Wade tossed aside another Intrusink and turned to see Jay punch another into pieces and wipe the blood off his cloak.

"We're done here as well," Wade said, looking around at the carnage.

Hundreds of defeated and destroyed monsters' body parts were strewn throughout the room they had just cleared, and they headed on towards the next room.

"Beyond here is the cockpit," Jay said. "Be careful..."

"Hahahahahaha!" Wade bellowed. "What's gonna be behind this door? Mazog?"

"Imagine if it is," Jay joked.

"Then I'll kill him myself. Let's go!"

The duo bust the door down and leapt through, but stopped short when they saw who was inside.

"...huh. So Jax was really right, huh."

"This is gonna be tough. Get ready."

Gigabone and Darkblade smiled like demons and began to advance.

"In His Greatness's name, as his right and left hand men, we'll put you two into the ocean."

"So I suppose I can take this as proof that Witherblood's back?"

Wade grumbled. "Oh well, I'll just kill him myself this time."

Then the four of them charged each other, Gigabone and Darkblade leaping down from the command bridge they were standing on, while Wade and Jay boosting off the ground below, up towards them, and all four of them slammed into each other like ballistic missiles.

Erik charged along the corridor, sweeping his naginata blades along the metal floor, throwing up showers of sparks as he did so.

"Where the heck is this dumb room!?" He muttered to himself. "From this energy... I'd take my guess that Jay and Wade started fighting."

As he skidded around a corner, he was confronted by yet another squadron of monsters, which were also painted on the floor within a second, but as he scooted around the corner he was finally confronted with the massive, iron door of the engine room. "Freaking finally," he muttered to himself. "I should contact the others."

"AAAAAAH!"

"DON'T JUST SCREAM, IDIOT, DODGE!"

Darkblade heaved his gigantic black sword through the air again, and a humongous, curving slash tore through the metal of the control room, wrecking machinery left and right as Intrusink mechanics dove for cover. Jay grabbed Wade and pulled him down behind a reinforced metal desk, and the slash scraped off with a hail of sparks.

"Be more careful you idiot!"

"My bad."

Jay had already torn Wade out of several tight spots, and his orange jeans and white hoodie were in tatters, which some scratched and burn marks all over his grey T-shirt underneath as well. His mid-length blonde hair smouldered in a patch where a massive blast of searing hot energy from Gigabone had grazed him. His electric blue eyes sparked with energy as he prepared a blast of his own from his eyes, and nodded to Wade as a signal.

The two vaulted over the desk they were crouched behind, and Jay let loose an enormous jet of energy from his eyes, which slammed into Darkblade with the force of a speeding missile, but the massive, hulking warrior only staggered back a few steps, and brushed the smoking cinders of his tough, steel armor, and hefted his gigantic blade again.

"That thing's almost as big as me!" Wade muttered, and made a finger gun with his hand, firing off a barrage of exploding energy blasts from the tips of his fingers as he weaved in a circle around Darkblade, and Jay intercepted the smaller, slimmer figure of

Gigabone as he tried to attack Wade, kicking him across the face and sending him careening across the giant room.

Erik limped to the door of the engine room, stepping over the corpses of the monsters who had been lying in wait for him, and wiped the blood off a deep gash in his left thigh.

Those damnable cronies just had to jump out of nowhere.

He leaned with his back against the door and sat down, before bandaging his wound and lifting himself back to his feet.

“Time to bring down the beast.”

He wrenched open the door, ripping it off his hinges, and was greeted by an empty room with nothing but a giant pile of dynamite in the centre, with a grenade in the centre. Erik realised a second too late that as he tore the door open, he had pulled the pin out of the bomb, and a terrific explosion ripped through the craft and Erik as well.

Continued next week on the third year blog!  
Character popularity polls next week.