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Episode 485 – Exciting things happen to other people  
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It was a nice apartment, well-lit, spacious and well furnished. A pair of nice, plush leather couches set the scene, arranged in a neat L-shape, with a small coffee table between them. What dominated the room, however, was the massive flat-screen against one wall, so big as to loom over all else around it. By comparison, the broad windows with views out over a strangely futuristic metropolis and the other doorways leading away to gods alone knew where seemed like afterthoughts.

"I can't decide if I want to call him Hopkins Hopkins Hopkins Kalamzoo P'tang," Dan began as he and Tsuneo entered the apartment, "or Hopkins Hopkins Hopkins Kalamzoo P'toink."

"Life is hard," Tsuneo nodded. "And this fic is not helping."

"Can we call it a fic?" Rick asked as he followed them in. "Because I think we need to establish some sort of baseline here."

"Careful Rick," Rebecca offered as she joined them. "That's the sort of thinking that led to the creation of Archive of our Own."

"Duly noted."

"You know, there's one thing I don't get about this fic," Dan spoke up.

"One thing?" Tsuneo asked.

"Well, okay, a lot of things," Dan continued. "But one thing in particular about it that's bothering me."

"Since that doesn't narrow it down in the slightest, I'd be interested to know what it is," Rebecca considered.

"Right, so," Dan continued, "We talked about how it doesn't really feel like a Robotech fanfic, and how that's kinda mired in that whole Republican MilTech fantasy subgenre of fanfic. But the more I think about it, it goes a lot further than that."

"Interesting," Tsuneo considered. "Because I can't help but feel that there's something decidedly off about it myself."

"The first thing is that, well, even once you exclude all the weird militaristic fetish stuff like uniform regulations and the like, it still doesn't feel like a Robotech fic. Instead it's more like some sort of weird Tom Clancy fanfic that's just wearing Robotech drag."

"I agree entirely with you there," Tsuneo nodded.

"The second thing is that it feels like there's a lot of assumed knowledge going on here that we're not being let in on," Dan continued. "Like, why are there Macross Thunderbolts here? Why are all these real-world companies, locations, countries and the like still around after an apocalyptic alien war? What's a Luzenwalts?"

"Bless you," Rebecca spoke up.

"Thank you," Dan nodded. "You know, all that sort of thing."

"I follow what you're saying there," Tsuneo considered. "Because to me it feels less like we're reading Robotech fanfic as we're reading fanfic of somebody else's Robotech fanfic."

"Well, you might not actually be too far off the mark there," Rick considered. "I realised early on that this fic had come from a specific subset of Robotech fandom. And, you know, it's the worst one of course."

"Of course it is," Tsuneo sighed and shook his head. "Why am I not even surprised?"

"Because it's the worst possible outcome?" Rebecca asked.

"Probably," Tsuneo nodded. "But I guess it would help to have some context."

"Right, so as we all know there's the core Robotech TV series and then there's a rather crazy and sprawling expanded universe," he explained. "Novels, comics, role-playing games and the like. And they form this kinda sorta semi-coherent universe. This tends to be very much an additive thing; it adds new stories and characters as well as more world building and the like."

"Pretty straightforward stuff," Dan nodded.

"However, it also serves another purpose," he continued. "Because ultimately, the Robotech TV series is still three unrelated anime shows smashed together into one thing. On top of that you have a lot of admitted script errors that came due to the slapdash nature of the production and its tiny little budget. So the expanded universe stuff does a lot to sort of bring all this together and smooth over some of the cracks. This is especially true of both the novelisations of the series as well as the Comico comic adaptations."

"Sounds good to me," Tsuneo nodded.

"Now within the Robotech fandom there's this subset known as the Purists," he continued. "Their subset of fandom is built on two basic principles. The first is a literal abolitionist reading of the TV series – and specifically the original 1985 broadcast version – as unquestionable gospel. The second is an utter rejection of anything, and I mean anything beyond that."

"Like, the aforesaid novels, comics and RPGs?" Tsuneo asked.

"Not only that," Rick replied. "But things like art books, script books and even word of god level stuff from the people who wrote the aforesaid series."

Tsuneo frowned as he pondered this. "On a sort of 'I'm-right-you're-wrong, even if you're the one who wrote this' sort of level?"

"Exactly," Rick replied.

"That sounds..." Tsuneo paused in thought. "Stupid. I mean, incredibly, mind-blowingly stupid."

"Oh it is," Rick agreed. "No arguments."

"Okay, here's my question," Dan asked. "Why?"

"Can I offer a theory?" Rebecca spoke up.

"Please," Rick nodded.

"I would imagine that this movement started among proto-STEMlords on Usenet in the nineties," She said. "And it was a tool for them to exclude and gatekeep while attempting to take exclusive control of the fandom."

"And you would be entirely correct," Rick nodded.

"Right, so putting aside how dumb that is," Dan noted. "How does that bridge to where we are now with all the crap that this fic is trying to front-load onto us?"

"Well that's the second part of it," Rick noted. "Because as it is, the Robotech TV series is effectively incomplete; it tells part of the story, but not all of it. And part of that is due to its disastrous history of failed sequels. However, once again the expanded universe covers all that sort of thing and fills in the gaps."

"But the purist movement rejects that expanded universe," Tsuneo noted.

"They do," Rick nodded. "So instead, it has to start building its own fanon to explain away all these things. However, this leads into that problem of having to keep digging deeper and deeper to solve a problem that they effectively created for themselves. In essence, the purist movement consists of its own purist fanon expanded universe that exists to support a purist literal reading of the TV series."

"Okay, you know what?" Dan blinked. "That sounds actively counterproductive."

"It is," Rick noted. "It basically makes the purist approach completely unapproachable unless you're willing to invest the time and energy into it in order to basically read all the supplemental material written by heavy-handed gatekeepers who basically resent the rest of the fandom for not being them."

"So, it's not the real version of explaining things but their version of explaining things," Tsuneo offered.

"Right, and I'd imagine that, by comparison, the novels and comics and the like have a much lower bar to entry," Rebecca suggested.

"And you would be entirely correct," Rick nodded.

"Right, so its gatekeeping and actively counter-productive," Tsuneo considered. "That's pretty bad."

"Well it gets even worse," Rick continued. "Because we then add hypocrisy to that as well."

"Of course we do," Tsuneo sighed. "Should I even ask how?"

"So as said this movement rejects the novels, comics, role-playing games and whatever else," Rick explains. "However, that doesn't stop them from taking things from those sources, even if they naturally don't give credit to the actual creators behind them."

"What sort of things?" Dan asked.

"All sorts," Rick nodded. "Names, places, events, entire mecha or vehicle designs... hell, even the EBSIS."

"What's that?" Tsuneo asked.

"Evil space Soviets with giant robots," Rick explained. "Sometimes they fight underground musicians armed with weaponised keytars."

There was a long pause. "Rick," Tsuneo finally spoke up. "I know I say this a lot, but this time I genuinely mean it when I say that is the stupidest god damn thing that you have ever, ever said."

"Thank you," he bowed.

"Good morning everyone," the Voice crashed into the conversation.

"And good morning to you too, Anton Kosmas," Rick replied.

"Not asking," Dan shook his head,

"Good move," Rick nodded eagerly.

"So in order to cut to the chase," Tsuneo spoke up. "I can only assume that we're going to be slogging our way through another slab of Dire Straights."

"Well I wouldn't call it a slab," The Voice considered.

"How about a morass?" Dan asked.

"Um, it's a fanfic," the Voice explained.

"I have my doubts," Dan shook his head.

"Anyway, today we're reading the next four chapters," The Voice continued, trying to keep the discussion on-track.

"What do you think is going to happen to Wibbles McSnorkteton in this chunk of the fic?" Dan asked.

"Do you even remember what happened to him in the last part of it?" Rebecca asked as she took her place on the couch.

"Well, no," Dan admitted as he and the others joined her.

"The second question being, of course, do you even care?" She asked.

"Not one bit," Dan finished as the big screen turned on, converting the world over script format.

> Chapter 17: A Heavy Problem

> I was back in space, sitting inside my VHT-1 Spartas veritech battloid inside a Deadalus boarding  
> ship.

Tsuneo: Inside a duck, inside a cat, inside a dog, inside a bear on an island nobody can find.

> There was no sound.

Dan: And then somebody farted.

> All of us in the troop were waiting for the battle ahead.

> I could only imagine the battle outside, with space fighters, bombers, cruisers, and destroyers

Rick: Giant rocks, space wizard battleships and steampunk bear man frigates.

> engaging the enemy ships and bioroids, and laser beams and missiles and shells fired every which  
> way, and space littered with fireballs from the explosions.

Rebecca: Wow, that sounds really exciting. But instead let's focus on the world's most boring man here.

> I wondered if the enemy would surrender, allowing us to go back to base.

Dan: I also wondered what the soup would be in the mess this evening.

> "Maybe they'll just give up," said Private First Class Philip Ducasse.

Rick: Yeah, I just said that. Didn't you read the narration?

> "And maybe the government will pay us a million dollars for this mission, Ducasse," said another  
> soldier.

> We all laughed. We needed the humor,

Tsuneo: And if you find any, please let us know.

> even knowing that the Robotech Masters could blast us to bits the next instant.

Rebecca: As he quietly prayed for death.

> "Okay, Army people," said Space Marine Major Shu,

Dan: Stupid overpowered hero figures.

> the commander of this boarding ship. "Our ships blew a hole in our target; we are going in."

Rick: Excuse me?

Dan: You heard.

> Things were about to get exciting.

Tsuneo: Demonstrably not true.

> We all waited and waited, and every second seemed like a long time, an entire history.

Rebecca: Which is a pretty fair description of what it's like to read this fic.

> And then I felt something shudder, down to my very bones and rattling my teeth.

> "We're opening the hatch," said Major Shu.

> And hydraulic mechanisms opened the hatch.

Dan: Major Shu here feels kind of redundant.

> I could glimpse what was had-some sort of enclosed

> space, with VF-11 Thunderbolts and VHT-1 Spartas hover tanks in battloid mode already inside,

Tsuneo: Yes, you are indeed inside the ship that you were inside.

> with

> some infantry. I noticed just how much taller the Thunderbolts were in comparison with the

> Spartases.

Dan: The idea that things were different sizes was new to him.

> "We're moving in," said Mike. And we did.

Rebecca: And so we did... IN SPACE!

> After all of us had entered, I looked back and the

> Daedalus boarding ship withdrew, firing its vernier thrusters to maneuver away.

Rick: Yeah, screw you guys. I'm leaving.

> I looked around. We seemed to be what appeared to be a flight deck; there were spacecraft inside,

> and not of any earthly design.

Tsuneo: The alien spaceships were alien

> A shattered window was on the left side.

Rick: Please tell me that's not an external window.

> Drums and crates were scattered around the deck.

Rebecca: They had landed in a generic cover-based shooter.

> I noticed a huge door to the left, big enough to walk a battloid through. I  
> figured that it was a cargo airlock.

Rebecca: The fact that it had a huge sign on it saying 'Cargo Airlock' may have helped.

> "Okay, people," said a voice from one of the Thunderbolts.

Rick: He assumed it was Citizen V.

> "This will be our fallback position, in case something goes really wrong.

Rick: Like if their Kickstarter doesn't get funded or something

> Lieutenant Kersey and his team will secure this flight deck."

> "Yes, sir," replied Kersey, who was one of our troop captains.

Dan: Meanwhile, Hopkins Hopkins Hopkins Kalamazoo-P'tang has gotten his head stuck in his  
hovertank's main gun again.

> I was with Mike's troop; so I had the honor of going further inside.

Tsuneo: He has the honour of being cannon fodder.

> "We got the airlock open," said one of the Space Marines.

> "Okay team," said the Space Marine commander. "The enemy will have an ambush."

> And there was. I saw some flak just as soon as the other side of the airlock was opened.

Tsuneo: Sensing there may be an ambush on the other side, they opted to blindly walk into it.

> "Balu is down!" someone yelled. One of the damaged Thunderbolts were taken into the flight deck.

> "I'm all right," said Balu, the Thunderbolt's pilot.

Rick: He'd been sent into a... tailspin

Tsuneo: Get out.

> "My plane's pretty much useless."

Rebecca: So like everyone else in this fic then.

> "Okay, you'll join with our foot team," said the mission commander.

Tsuneo: You there, space pilot. You are now infantry.

Dan: Sure, why not?

> I looked and saw a man in a sealed flight suit crawl out of the damaged veritech.

Dan: Say, is Murgatroyd Arsenic Peabaron IV actually doing anything, or just commenting on the  
action?

Rebecca: He fulfils the vital tactical role of 'we had a spare seat on the ship.'

> "Okay, 6th Battalion," said Major Jack Emerson. "Lieutenant Meyers and his team will come go in,  
> while Lieutenant Kersey and his team secures our fallback."

> "Okay, people," Mike said to his team. "Let's do it."

Rick: Mike has all the leadership skills of Leeroy Jenkins

> We went through the airlock. The first thing I noticed was the wreckage of bioroids.

Dan: They were in a bad part of town where every yard had an old bioroid propped up on cinderblocks

> We were in this

> huge dark corridor with metal walls; we figured that this was a cargo corridor used by vehicles to

> transport personnel, supplies, and equipment.

Rebecca: Do you think the aliens have to go through dry 'loading things onto trucks' scenes?

Tsuneo: We can but wonder

> We did not need to be reminded that we were in an environment that could be controlled by the

> enemy.

Rick: The enemy could call up facilities management and adjust the thermostat

> They had already killed the lights in this corridor, and there was no air inside the corridor.

> We were dependent on our air supplies.

Rebecca: Good thing their space robots can fight in space, or something.

> "The bulkhead must be at least ten feet thick," said a voice.

Rick: It's actually three meters thick. The Robotech Masters use the metric system.

Tsuneo: Truly they are an advanced people.

> "They have to be," said the Space Marine colonel

Dan: He's in charge because he's an overpriced hero figure

> leading the incursion. "Helps keep the air in.

Rebecca: They just figured out that you want to keep the air inside a spaceship. I predict great things for this mission's future.

> We'll need to split up into fire teams."

> "Got it," replied Jack. "Remember, people, the enemy can control the environment, but we can

> wreck it."

Tsuneo: So they set up some fracking wells.

> And so we did split up into fire teams. I led one of the five-man fire teams, with Staff

> Sergeant Kominski as my second.

Rick: I'm sure that Kominski will prove to be a fantastically well-developed character

> I led my team down one of the cargo corridors. We were wary. Enemy bioroids could approach us

> from the front or behind,

Dan: The Bioroids chose to fool them and come from the sides

Tsuneo: Cunning

> and enemy infantry can come out through one of the personnel-sized doors.

> "Okay, we're secure for now," I said.

> There was no response.

> "Major Emerson, Lieutenant Meyers, can you hear me?" I asked.

> "It appears our radio signals can not reach them, or theirs can't reach us," said Kominski.

Rick: That's his only line

> Unless we linked up with the others, we had only each other. I looked at the four others in the team.

> Right here, right now, I, and I alone, was responsible for them.

Rebecca: He handled the pressure of command the same way he handled everything else, by blandly reciting day to day proceedings

> We came across a huge cargo door, large enough for a VF-11 Thunderbolt battloid.

Rick: Conveniently sized to something the ship's makers wouldn't use.

> There were some strange markings on the door.

> "Let's blow this thing," I said.

Dan: Quotes without context

> And so we did, firing our gunpods. I then kicked the door open with my battloid's feet.

Tsuneo: Turns out it was unlocked

> We then all burst through the other side.

> What greeted us was many, many bioroids.

Rick: With cake, streamers, party games, ice cream... It was the best surprise party ever.

> They were all lined up neatly against the walls. Most of

> them were blue, although two of them were red. I noticed some of the panels on the bioroids were

> open, exposing the innards. Ceiling lights provided illumination.

Tsuneo: The room was lit by lights.

Rebecca: I'm glad we have such a bright and observant narrator to tell us these things.

Tsuneo: Truly, we would be lost without him.

> None of the bioroids moved to attack us. I figured this was a repair garage, as the enemy surely

> mobilized all bioroids as soon as they learned they had uninvited guests.

> "Let's blast them," I said.

> "Yes, sir," said all of the other soldiers. We all shot the bioroids. It was like having a target-rich

> environment in which the targets don't shoot back.

Tsuneo: And no way a waste of ammunition that should be spared for live targets

> "Ahhhh!"

Rick: Boom? Maybe?

> yelled Private Ducasse.

> I looked and saw small figures in space suits; they must be enemy infantry.

Dan: Actually, it's the cleaners. They're kind of upset about the mess you're making.

> We fired several rounds at them and at one of the windows.

> "You okay, Ducasse?" asks Sergeant Kominski.

> "My arm is damaged," he said.

> We were still taking fire. There was plenty of cover for the enemy infantry.

> "Okay, people," I said. "Cover me."

> I switched to guardian mode and leaped off my tank. I had a Heckler and Koch UMP submachine

> gun- used by Earth's armed forces since before the arrival of robotechnology- as well as some

> grenades.

Rebecca: Your giant robot with a huge laser cannon hasn't stopped them, but getting out of it and waving a handgun at them surely will

> Retrieving my knowledge of infantry tactics from my memory,

Rick: And instead all he could get was the Snorks theme song

> I approached the place where the enemy troops were hiding,

Dan: In hindsight, hiding behind the only tree in the alien cargo bay was a bit obvious

> firing my submachine gun in their general direction even as

> the others in my fire team fired in that same direction.

Rick: Their shots strayed awfully close to my position, but I'm sure that was purely by accident.

> The soldiers were hiding behind some equipment. I pulled a pin from a grenade, and tossed it to them.

> I immediately took cover behind one of the battloids. The grenade exploded, sending pieces of steel

> shrapnel everywhere.

Rick: Meanwhile, all he's hearing is 'Snork along, it's a Snorking celebration...'

> I did not want to think of the effects of being that close to a grenade. I used

> my HUD to check my air supply-

Dan: He was up to the end of Hearts in Motion

> those fragments could kill in this environment merely by puncturing a sealed suit.

Rebecca: Making you wonder why he got out of his giant war robot to begin with

> "That takes care of these bioroids," I said as I got into my guardian, looking around at the wreckage that we had made.

> "Sir, we need to do some more damage," said Staff Sergeant Kominski.

Dan: We've broken stuff, but we need to break more stuff

> "Let's move out!" I yelled. And we did.

Tsuneo: Do they have an actual objective here?

Dan: Are you kidding? They're 'and we did' -ing as hard as they can.

Tsuneo: Right, of course, sorry.

> I noticed some pipes and conduits running along the ceiling.

Rebecca: They've found the local brewery.

> Some sort of braces held them to the ceiling. "We have more targets."

> We fired above. What we were doing was akin to destroying a human body from the inside.

Rick: Cancer is like having giant war robots running around inside your body

> I could see water and other fluids spraying around.

Tsuneo: Oh no, not our inexplicable acid pipes!

> "If we can find a reservoir or a fuel tank," said Ducasse.

> "Or an ammo dump," said Kominski.

Dan: Or a baby milk factory

> "Watch out, there's an intersection ahead," I said.

Rebecca: Beware the intersection!

> I could see it through my night vision; walls forming four corners.

Tsuneo: It took him a while to figure out that's how intersections work.

> There were signs mounted on the corners. I knew what this meant.

Rick: That the enemy believe in proper signposting

> There could be enemy mecha or troops hiding around the corner,

> waiting to strike like a predator in the woods.

Rebecca: So he did a weird handshake with Carl Weathers and smothered himself in mud

Tsuneo: You get the feeling he'd do that anyway

> This was a little like that battle in Monument City a few

> months ago, only we could not call in an air strike to root out enemy forces.

Dan: And you were on an alien spaceship, not in a city. And you were surrounded by enemy forces at all corners. And you had no idea where the rest of your forces. Come to think of it, this was nothing like that battle

> Suddenly there was flak coming in our direction. We instinctively returned fire. I saw a bioroid go

> down in flames, which would have appeared brighter if I had been looking at it through my own eyes

> instead of the night vision system.

Rebecca: Thank you for that pointless interjection

> I stood with the battloid's back against the wall, taking what cover I could.

> "We're pinned down," I said. "We could use some relief. Anyone?"

Dan: Yeah, I need to hit the can too.

> Nobody answered. Not only that, we were expending quite a bit of ammo.

> "I'm out of ammo," said Staff Sergeant Kominski.

Tsuneo: As already noted

Rick: Kominski's job is to state the obvious

> Our nearest ammo supply was at the flight deck where we had entered.

Rebecca: Glad we wasted it all on that room full of inert Bioroids.

> The Robotech Masters' bioroids can resupply from within this ship.

Dan: The Bioroids can use the vending machines in the break room

> "We'll have to make a fighting retreat," I said.

> I switched to guardian mode and aimed the main cannon upward. I then fired a shot right at the  
> ceiling.

Rick: It took him a while to figure out that the ceiling was above him

> There was a direct hit, and debris fell down.

Tsuneo: Just remember, these tanks have open cockpits

> I switched to battloid and we all made a retreat away from the intersection.

Rebecca: Well that achieved a lot

> "Where are we going, sir?" asked Kominski.

> "Back to where we can restock on ammo and get Ducasse's Spartas repaired," I said.

> There was one small problem. I did not know the way back. I certainly did not have a map of the  
> enemy ship.

Dan: He didn't even leave a trail of breadcrumbs behind him.

> "There's another intersection ahead," said Private Ducasse.

> "We'll turn the corner," I said. We made a right at a T-intersection.

Rebecca: And that's how they wound up at the steam baths.

> And we did. Luckily, there were no enemy forces to greet us. So far, this had been a luck-based  
> mission.

Rick: Good thing he kept a Leprechaun in his pocket for just this sort of situation

> I looked back the way we came, preparing for the enemy to confront us.

> They did not come. For a moment I wondered if another fire team took care of them, or if they were  
> reinforcing another team of bioroids.

Dan: Or maybe they just don't like you. Ever considered that?

> "I'll watch our back, team," I said. We'll move forward through this hall."

> And we did.

Tsuneo: We've got a higher concentration of 'and we did' per line than any previous chapter.  
Rebecca: I suppose that's what passes for an action sequence.

> I kept the back watch, making sure the enemy was not tracking us. I made frequent  
> sprints in battloid mode.

Rick: But only for short bursts to conserve his stamina bar.

Rebecca: But he's in a giant war robot

Rick: Sooner or later he'll figure it out

> "There's a door here, sir," said Ducasse. "It might lead to a warehouse or garage."

Dan: And they'll find it full of rusted gym equipment and old magazines

> I went to where Ducasse was standing. There was a large rolling shutter. I looked and saw  
> something emerge from around the corner. I instinctively aimed there.

> It was other VHT-1 Spartas hoversuits.

Dan: Blam blam blam kapow kapow zap zap zap! [Pause] Sorry.

> "May we be of assistance?" asked Mike.

> "Lieutenant Meyers," I said. "You've come."

Rebecca: [Meyers] Yep, definitely set out to find you, certainly didn't get lost in this maze of a  
spaceship and stumble across you by accident. Nosiree. [Pause] Did I ever tell you about Glorie  
colony?

> "We've had a few run-ins with the enemy," he said. "I have two people covering our backtrail."

> "It's so hard to communicate," I said.

Rick: They'd been reduced to sending out tweets

> "Yeah, the enemy isn't making this easy."

Dan: Stupid enemy. Have to go and make this difficult for us

> I looked and saw a VF-11 Thunderbolt in guardian mode hovering towards us.

Tsuneo: Wow, really roomy spaceship you got here.

> "Hi there," said Lieutenant Shelby Porter.

> "What are you doing?" I asked.

Rebecca: Fighting in the space robot war. What does it look like I'm doing?

> "I was ordered to back up Lieutenant Meyers and his team," she said.

> "Lieutenant Meyers," I said. "I suggest looking behind that shutter, sir."

> "Do it."

> And so I did, punching down the shutter with my battloid's fists. I burst inside, leading my team in.

Tsuneo: Straight into the enemy fire.

> The first thing I noticed were these transparent pods stacked in rows. Within each of those pods

> was this pink flower that grew in triplets. There was a truck parked inside the warehouse, and the  
> ceiling lights were on; this room might have a power supply independent of the ship.

> "It looks like an indoor garden of some sort," said Staff Sergeant Kominski.

Rick: He's found the aliens' garden centre

> Mike and Shelby entered the room. "We'd better get this recorded," said Mike.

Rebecca: Take some selfies with the weird alien flowers.

> "These flowers could be used for food," I said. "Or maybe the manufacture of drugs, or even some  
> industrial chemical."

Dan: He's going to try licking them to find out. I can tell.

> "Or it might just be used to decorate rooms," said Shelby.

Tsuneo: Aliens need home decor too.

> "All right, people," said Mike. "Let's move out."

Rebecca: Hang on, since it's a room which he can't discern the purpose of that poses no apparent threat, shouldn't he waste what little ammo he has left blowing it up?

> And we did, moving as a solid block along the cargo corridors of the ship. We were all wary of any  
> potential enemy ambush.

Rick: Or at the very least, Evie.

Dan: Obscure

Rick: I try

> "Have you made contact with Major Emerson, sir?" I asked Mike.

> "No, I haven't," replied Mike. "We've been out of contact."

Tsuneo: Ever thought that he's just ignoring you because he doesn't like you?

> That the enemy was doing their best to jam our communications needed not to be said, nor was it  
> surprising.

Rebecca: It's almost like we should have planned for it or something, I don't know.

> I wondered what was next even as we moved along the corridor.

> I then noticed myself feeling very heavy,

Rick: Shouldn't have had that twelve-course banquet before he left

> as if something was pushing me down.

> "What's this?" asked a soldier. "Is this ship accelerating?"

> "Either that or the enemy increased the gravity ten times," said Shelby.

> It never occurred to me that the enemy could do that.

Tsuneo: To be honest, few things do

> It would place strain on the ship's system, but

> I could see, and was feeling, how useful it would be and was to counter a boarding action.

Rebecca: Which is why they waited so long to do it.

> I looked around. We were at a bend of a corridor, with a huge door about a hundred yards away.

> Many of the battloids were on their knees.

Rick: Crawl to victory

> I wondered if this was how it was going to end.

> "What do we do, sir?" Private Ducasse asked Mike.

> "I don't know," said Mike. "I'm thinking."

Rebecca: Faced with a crisis situation our protagonist bravely waits for somebody else to make a decision for him

> We could barely move. Even my arms felt heavy. We seemed so helpless. Aside from waiting for

> Jack or the others to take out the ship's main power supply, I could not see a way out of our

> predicament.

Rick: His plan was to do nothing and hope a solution presented itself.

> "I see something," said a soldier.

> I could see some sort of tracked vehicle coming around the bend; it must be be able to operate

> under high gravity. One thing I noticed besides the tracks was the huge cannon.

Dan: It also had a pop-up Halloween store operating out of its troop bay, but he didn't notice that.

> "Surrender and you will live to serve the Robotech Masters," I heard a voice say.

Dan: Again in our designated protagonist's case

Tsuneo: And boy didn't that plot go places

> -----

> Chapter 18: Breathe

> We were in dire straits.

Tsuneo: And we have title

All [Bored]: Hooray

> We were trapped in a cargo corridor on one of the Robotech Masters' ships. They had apparently

> increased the gravity; I could feel myself being pressed down.

Rick: Or maybe his bowling ball had just fallen out of the overhead locker. It could happen

> And some sort of armed and armored

> vehicle was facing us; someone from the ship, maybe even from the vehicle,

Dan: He had to stop and think this through

> had ordered us to surrender.

Tsuneo: They didn't even ask nicely.

> What could we do, aside from waiting for reinforcements to come to the rescue?

Rebecca: His plan was to stop trying and hope that somebody else sorted it out for him

> "I got one shot," said Lieutenant Michael Meyers.

> He fired something, and for less than a second, I saw something fly towards the open door on the  
> wall of the cargo corridor.

Dan: Presumably Meyer's shot.

Rebecca: Presumably.

> Suddenly, a huge fireball erupted from the door, followed by the sound of an explosion; I briefly  
> wondered if Mike's shot struck a fuel tank or an ammo dump.

Tsuneo: He shot the massive alien vessel in its obvious weak spot. It has to have one; it's required by law

> I suddenly felt myself flying. I looked around, and I could see the blue ball of Earth!

Dan: He'd realised that planet Earth is blue and there's nothing he can do

> Apparently, I had been blown out of the ship;

Rick: He saw Stripes go tumbling past him

> I recalled we had gone through an airlock and into a pressurized section  
> of the ship. I felt like I was in a roller coaster, tumbling every which way.

Tsuneo: And so he threw up in his cockpit.

> I saw the hole on the side of the enemy ship. The enemy ship was huge, at least five miles across.

Rebecca: One would assume this was in the briefing at some point.

Rick: Yeah, but instead of paying attention he was watching the ceiling fan.

Dan: Man, that thing can really go in circles.

> There was debris still flying away from the hole in the ship. Among the debris were several  
> hover tanks.

Tsuneo: Upside is that we escaped the alien trap. Downside is that we're now all floating helplessly in Space

Dan: Way to go, Mike

> I looked towards Earth. I could see central America and the Florida peninsula.

Rebecca: Just think how far away he is from the nearest Florida Man

> Looking closely, I could see Jamaica, even making out Montego Bay.

Rick: And he could see the traffic backed up all the way to the airport

> I continued spinning around.

> "Everyone okay?" asked Mike.

> "Yeah," I said. "What about you?"

> "Ahhh, my air tank's gone," he answered. "I'm losing air. I...."

Tsuneo: This was a really stupid plan of yours.

> "Mike!" I yelled, as if my voice could somehow cross the vacuum of space and keep him in the physical realm.

Rebecca: Mike had gone astral projecting again

> "Are you all right?" asked Lieutenant Shelby Porter.

Dan: Also she is here now

> "Mike lost his air tank!" I yelled. "You have to get him to a ship now!"

> "This is the Gloval," I heard a voice say. "Anyone all right?"

Dan: Mike lost his air tank.

Rick: This is TASC Captain Ezekial Saloon. Are you alright?

Dan: Mike lost his air tank.

Rick: Moon base ALUCE here. Is everyone alright?

Dan: Mike lost his air tank.

Rick: This is Army of the Southern Cross Supreme Commander Anatole Leonard to all units. Are you alright?

Dan: Mike lost his air tank.

Rick: Hi folks, God here. Just wanted to check in and make sure everyone was okay.

Rebecca: And so on, pretty much forever.

> "I have a hovertank driver who ran out of air," said Shelby.

Rick: This wouldn't have happened if he hadn't decided to roll down the window

> "Vector me in for a quick landing."

> "Copy," said the voice from the Gloval. "Anyone else okay?"

Dan: I need to pee.

> "Yes, I'm fine," I said. "I was with the task force boarding the ship."

> "We'll send some Logans to retrieve you."

Dan: Sure. Logans. They send Logans for me, but Shelby, in her Thunderbolt, is expressing Mike to the ship. How come Mike gets the VIP treatment, huh?

Rebecca: Meyers is seconds away from suffocating!

Dan: So?

> I looked and I could see Shelby's VF-11 Thunderbolt in battloid mode carrying Mike's hovertank.

> She was flying towards a carrier orbiting Earth.

> "Thanks," said Mike.

> "Save your breath," said Shelby.

Tsuneo: I imagine Meyers hears that a lot.

> I looked at my HUD; I still had enough air for a couple of hours.

Rebecca: That assumed he keeps remembering to breathe.

> I made sure to take a look at my surroundings- the Earth, the moon, the ships from both sides,

Rebecca: The flight of Bioroids coming to pick him off.

- > some of which were trading fire with
- > each other. In the midst of it all, I knew that each explosion that I saw meant a life lost, maybe
- > multiple lives.

Rick: For every boom, there is an aaah.

- > I could only hope this was the last battle.

- > I saw some aircraft flying towards us; I recognized them as VF-8 Logans. They transformed into
- > battloid mode.

- > "This is Nimbus Squadron," said a voice, probably that of the squadron commander. "We're taking
- > you to the Gloval."

Rick: Is it lunch there?

Dan [Pilot]: What?

Rick: In the army, we call lunch dinner

Dan [Pilot]: Can we just leave this guy behind?

- > One of them battloids grabbed my hovertank with its hands. Using its thrusters, it stopped me from
- > spinning; I was beginning to feel a little loopy from the spinning.

Tsuneo: How would you tell?

- > I saw more detail as we approached the ship.

Tsuneo: Any specific kind of ship?

Rick: Sony QLED.

Tsuneo: I had to ask.

- > I could see in bold lettering- U.E.S. HENRY J.

- > GLOVAL HSRCV-036. There was a huge opening which was probably a landing bay.

Rebecca: Or possibly an activity based hot-desk workplace.

- > On the hull of the ship were weapons turrets.

Tsuneo: It also had engines, but you didn't feel the need to point them out.

- > Flanking the ship were two cruisers.

- > The Logan battloid carried me into the flight deck of the ship. I looked and saw a window with
- > people behind it.

Rick: And at least one pressed ham

- > People in space suits walked around the flight deck. An elevator took us down to
- > the hangar deck, where there were VF-8 Logans and other spacecraft parked inside, along with
- > equipment and personnel. I could also see Shelby's VF-11 Thunderbolt parked in guardian mode.

Tsuneo: It apparently did not fall under 'other spacecraft'

- > "Okay," said the pilot. "The airlock is there."

- > Indeed, I could see the door with two lamps mounted on a wall next to it; one of the lamps glowed
- > red.

Rick: Anything to add there, Roxanne?

- > I waited for a few others to arrive.

> "Are you okay?" I asked.

> "We're a bit sore, sir," said Staff Sergeant Kominski. "Executive Sergeant Wing is still on the ship."

Dan: Wait, Wing was there? Why didn't anyone tell me Wing was there? [Pause] Who's Wing?

> I had wondered what was happening back on the enemy ship.

Dan: Would they leave any cupcakes for me?

> Had Jack and the others defeated the enemy and disabled the ship from within.

> Or were they dead?

Tsuneo: I mean, it's not like you guys achieved anything

> I pressed a button next to the airlock door and looked at the airlock pressure gauge as it decreased.

> Once the pressure was near zero, the red lamp shut off and the green lamp turned on, and I opened  
> the door.

Rebecca: Thank you, fic. I could never have figured out how an airlock worked otherwise

> The airlock was a fairly large room, not as big as a cargo airlock, but enough to fit ten  
> people or so.

Rick: More if they're real friendly with each other

> We went in and shut the door behind us. A light next to the door behind us turned from  
> green to red, and I watched the airlock pressure gauge rise. Then the light on the door of the other  
> side turned green, and I opened the door.

Tsuneo: Intense airlock action!

> I emerged into the hallway on the other side, and removed my helmet, taking a deep breath. It was  
> great to breathe free of the suit, even though technically the air inside the ship was enclosed.

Rebecca: Cycling an airlock takes longer and is better described than a life-or-death struggle with enemy mecha, just in case anyone wanted to know what we're up against here.

> "Welcome aboard the Henry J. Gloval, sir," said a sergeant in a crisp blue outfit,

Dan: Have to describe uniforms, of course

Rick: I feel worried if they don't

> flanked by crewmen.

> "Is Lieutenant Meyers, the man brought in here earlier, is he okay?" I asked.

Tsuneo: He must have hit his head or something because he keeps going on about four-armed lizard people.

Dan: He's fine.

> "He was taken to the Emergency Medical Bay Five, sir."

> "Can someone take us there, Sergeant?"

> "Crewman, escort these soldiers to Medical Bay Five."

Rick: I want to go to Medical Bay Five

Dan: Take him to Medical Bay Five  
Rick: We are going to Medical Bay Five  
Dan: Medical Bay Five?  
Rick: Medical Bay Five.  
Dan: It begins to lose all meaning after a while.

> "Yes, Sergeant," replied one of the crewmen, a man with short-cropped blond hair a little younger  
> than I was. "This way, sir," he said to me.

> The crewman led us through a series of corridors. The corridors were bare of any furniture,

Tsuneo: As corridors often are

> with  
> pipes and conduits overhead. Most of the people we passed through the corridor were dressed in a  
> blue outfit similar to the one the crewman was wearing,

Rick: He was not prepared for the possibility that a ship's crew would be in uniform.

> and a few of them were wearing Spacy service khakis- a collared khaki shirt and khaki pants.

Rebecca: The khaki clothes were khaki coloured

> I figured they were officers or the Spacy equivalent of sergeants major.

Dan: Or maybe they're the janitorial staff. We may never know.

> After taking an elevator, we went through another part of the ship that looked less industrial, with  
> plaster walls and a tiled floor. We finally reached a glass door reading "MEDICAL BAY 5".

Rick [Nods]: Medical Bay Five

> Through  
> the door I could see a small room serving as a lobby, with chairs, a wooden table, and a receptionist  
> desk staffed by an orderly in blue overalls.

Tsuneo: Bearing in mind this is all we know about them. For all we know they could have an eyepatch  
and a clown wig and the fic would never mention it.

> I entered the room and spoke to the orderly.

> "Is Lieutenant Michael Meyers in?" I asked, introducing myself.

> "Who?" asked the orderly.

Rick: The guy from Glorie colony.

Dan: Oh, him!

> "He was one of the people rescued by this ship; he was taken here."

Tsuneo: You realise how little that narrows it down?

Dan: Not one bit

> "Yes, he is here, sir."

> "Okay. Kominski, you're with me."

Dan: Robinson, occupy the snack machine. Niedermeyer, you awkwardly hit on the orderly. Let's  
move, people!

> Another orderly, who was probably a junior Spacy corpsman, led us down a narrow hall. We entered  
> one of the rooms, which looked like a miniature version of a hospital room,

Tsuneo: Once again, the hospital room looks like a hospital room

> with white walls, a bed with a curtain, some chairs, and a television mounted on the wall.

Rick: But what model of television is it? We need to know

> Mike was laying on one of the beds, being attended to by another orderly in blue. He had a bandage  
> on his head.

Rebecca: That's because his air was cut off

> "Lieutenant," he said to me.

> "How are you feeling, sir?" I asked.

> "I feel lucky just to breathe." He took a deep breath. "Those few minutes after the air ran out."

> I wondered what it must have been like, to inhale and feel that no air is coming in.

Dan: He also sometimes wonders what it would be like to live at a Chuck E. Cheese, so take that how you will.

> It had some

> similarity to sucking on a straw after the cup is empty, but then again, breathing is a need for human  
> life.

Rebecca: He feels the need to remind us of this fact.

> "Good thing we managed to get him here in time," I heard Shelby say. I looked and saw her sitting  
> in a chair next to the door.

Dan: Rockefeller Pudding Bowl desperately tries to find something to resent her for.

> "Thank you," I said. A doctor in a white lab coat entered. I noticed the brass oak leaves on his collar,  
> indicating that he was a lieutenant commander.

Rick: If you see someone with an acorn that means they're really important

> "Will he be all right, sir?" I asked.

Tsuneo: [Doctor] Before I answer, I have to ask if you're his next of kin.

> "He looks as if he will make a full recovery in a day or two," replied the doctor. "We will need to keep  
> him under observation overnight. We've been busy here this past day.

Rebecca: They're dealing with people with actual legitimate injuries.

Tsuneo: Sounds like something that might possibly happen in this robot space war

> If you can excuse me, Lieutenant."

> "I'll probably be out of this bed before sunrise tomorrow morning," said Mike, smiling.

> "That depends on how fast this ship is orbiting the Earth," answered Shelby.

Dan: Was that a joke?

Rick: ...I don't know

> "What do we do now, sir?" asked Staff Sergeant Kominski.

> "Why are you asking me, Staff Sergeant?" I asked.

Dan: I mean, obviously I have no clue.

> "You're the troop captain now, sir."

Rebecca: Our hero continues to fail upwards

> I was, with Mike now in bed, recuperating from his close encounter with death by suffocation.

Rebecca: Mike found it strangely arousing and would like to try it again.

> I felt nervous. I had been placed in charge of the troop,

Rick: Within minutes the Henry J Gloval was a scattered field of wreckage. Medical Bay 5 was screaming towards a fiery death in Earth's atmosphere. Onboard, second Lieutenant Oink B'Doink was clawing at the vending machine, determined that he could salvage the situation if only he had a Reese's Take 5 bar.

> but in those past times I could hand the situation

> over to Mike if it was really serious. This time, I had to take care of whatever situation came.

Tsuneo: There was nobody for him to pass the buck to

> "All right," I said. "Our first thing is to gather the troops for roll call,

Rick: Pointless minutiae it is!

Dan: Yay!

> find out who is here and who is

> still on board the enemy ship. And one other thing, Staff Sergeant Kominski. Since Executive

> Sergeant Wing isn't here..." and might be dead, I didn't want to admit,

Dan: Wing owed him money

> "...you will act in his stead and stand by my side."

> "Yes, sir," replied the staff sergeant.

Rick: [Kominski] Do you want me right next to you, or sort of a bit behind your shoulder, or...

> "Then our first order of business is to secure temporary billeting for our troops. Staff Sergeant, take

> care of that."

Dan: Since the ship was so packed, they had to pitch tents on the outside

> "Yes, sir."

> Ooooooooo

> An officer from the captain's staff had led us to this cargo room where our people could stay.

Rebecca: I'm just surprised it hasn't been turned into an overpriced loft apartment yet

> The most obvious thing that I noticed was

Tsuneo: That they were not set up for rescue operations at all.

> that the hovertanks were inside this room; it was apparently a  
> vehicle garage. The room was bare of any furniture, and it was illuminated by lamps attached to the  
> ceiling.

Rebecca: Again, we would like to take the time to remind you that lights exist and provide illumination.  
Thank you.

> I could smell this musty smell. Just down the hall from the room was a latrine, or what Spacy  
> crewmen called a head.

Dan: And what he called a poopin' bowl

> All of the troops stood at attention. Twenty-three of us were here, including me and Staff Sergeant  
> Kominski, while excluding Mike.

Rebecca: The truth was that nobody actually liked Mike

> "All right then," I said. "Watch over the troops, Staff Sergeant. I will make contact with Mission  
> Command. The rest of you can have some R&R. Don't cause any trouble."

> "Yes, sir," replied the others.

> And so I did.

Tsuneo: He... replied to himself?

> I asked the Spacy lieutenant in charge to have someone assist me in sending a  
> message to mission command,

Rebecca: Obviously mission command was already aware as they were monitoring the progress of  
the battle up to and including the rescue mission.

> and a corporal did just that, setting me up before an Internet  
> terminal where I sent message to mission command.

Dan: He then used it to look at funny cat pictures

> Now all we could do is wait. We might have to go back to the enemy ship, or we might have to  
> return to Moon Base ALuCE.

Rick: Or even worse, their parents would come to visit and they'd have to tidy up

> Ooooooooooooo

> I woke up in a yet unfamiliar environment.

Rebecca: Mission command had let him and his troops languish in indecision overnight.

Rick: Or had just forgotten about them.

Rebecca: Highly likely.

> It took a few seconds to remember that I was on the Spacy vessel Gloval.

Dan: Good thing he did too, because otherwise he was going to step outside to get his paper

> "Everyone all right?" I asked.

> "We're fine, sir," said Private First Class Philip Ducasse.

Rebecca: Who now speaks for everyone present

> "Good," I said. "We will wait for breakfast."

Tsuneo: One agonising description of dry toast later...

> I then heard a voice call out my name. I recognized that voice.

Dan: Misspelled Sapphire? The hell?

> "Lieutenant Meyers," I said, facing Mike, who was dressed in his MARPAT camouflage.

Rick: The single most important thing about him

> Everyone else in the room snapped at attention.

Tsuneo: He was quietly relieved that since Mike was alive he no longer needed to take any responsibility

> "All right, people," said Mike. "I got a message from the ship's captain."

> "What is it, sir?" I asked.

Rebecca: He's politely suggesting that you move out

> "The enemy ship had unconditionally surrendered.

Tsuneo: In the grand tradition of this fic, something potentially interesting happened offscreen without the involvement of our protagonist

Rick: I'm excited

> The Gloval will dock with the enemy ship, and

> we shall board to join the rest of the battalion. Also, Major Emerson has sent a message to us. He is

> alive and well, as are Master Sergeant Avital and Executive Sergeant Wing.

Dan: Well isn't that convenient?

> We will take these hovertanks and go through the cargo docking port and into the enemy ship."

> "So there will be no hostiles?" asked Kominski.

> "They laid down their arms

Rebecca: Every alien in the five-mile long warship surrendered at once.

> and troops already occupy the ship.

Rick: [Meyers] Not sure what they need us for, but there you go.

> We will meet with Major Emerson."

Tsuneo: Major Emerson said he isn't feeling up to it and has asked if we can reschedule.

> And so we did. We all suited up and got into the hovertanks, making sure they were all working.

> Then we went out into the Gloval's cargo corridor. A Jeep led the way to the cargo docking port.

Rick: The jeep was there in case they got lost

Dan: I'm sure that he could find a way

> After passing through, we were once again on board the ship. A few more hovertanks were awaiting

> us.

> "Executive Sergeant Wing," said Mike.

> "Major Emerson told me to greet you, sir," said Executive Sergeant Wing, sitting in the cockpit of his  
> hovertank. "I am to escort you to the core of this ship."

> "They all surrendered?" I asked.

> "Yes, sir. I was surprised as Major Emerson was."

Tsuneo: He was quietly praying for death

> We all followed Sergeant Wing as he led us through the wide cargo corridors of the enemy ship.  
> After a few minutes, we emerged into what appeared to be a cityscape.

Rick: Turns out it was just a background matte painting

> There were these buildings  
> rising high, some apparently made from concrete, others apparently made from glass and steel.

Dan: The buildings looked like buildings

> Footbridges several stories high connected some of the buildings, supported by arches. Lampposts  
> lined the streets,

Tsuneo: Lamp posts are an important detail

> which appeared to be paved with concrete. Small trees grew from out of the sidewalks.

Rebecca: In short, the alien city looked as mundane and bland as possible

> "Wow," said Private Ducasse. "It's almost like what Macross City was."

Rick: Only with more faux-Roman architecture and less Chinese restaurants

> "This is where the crew lived?" asked another soldier.

> I also noticed people in strange clothes standing on the street.

Dan: They had hypercolour t-shirts and baggy pants

> None of them appeared to be armed, and they looked at us but did not interfere.

Tsuneo: Let's add 'civilians' to the excruciatingly long list of things our hero apparently doesn't understand.

> Any of them who wanted to interfere were most likely  
> dissuaded by armored troops bearing rifles, who stood at street corners and other strategic  
> locations.

Rebecca: Real 'we are here to liberate you' energy going on here.

> "Here we are," said Wing. We stopped at what appeared to be a city park, with grass and trees. For  
> a moment I realized the plants here would be of alien species.

Dan: He's going to try to lick them again. You know it.

> We all stood before Major Jack Emerson, who was clad in MARPAT camouflage.

Tsuneo: Who Jack is as a person is far less important than what he's wearing today

> He was flanked by Lieutenant Chalmers and Master Sergeant Rebekah Avital.

> "Good to have you join us," said Jack.

> "Some of us were hurt, but we're fine now, sir," answered Mike.

Rick [Mike]: Some people died, but eh.

> "Good," said Jack. "Right now, we are in control of this enemy ship. They had surrendered; there  
> are no reports of any pockets of resistance on board this vessel.

Dan: Just assume they have every inch of the five-mile-long ship covered

> Lieutenant Meyers, I expect a debriefing of what happened since you were separated."

Tsuneo: [Meyers] I hit my head. [Pause] That's it.

> "We saw interesting things, sir," said Mike. "There was some sort of flower being grown somewhere  
> in the ship, outside of the city."

Rick: Turns out they'd invaded during the aliens' floral festival

> "I am sure you and your XO can submit fully detailed reports to me in writing."

Rebecca: I can only assume this guy's written reports are the driest thing ever written by a human being

> I heard the rumbling sound of an approaching engine, rumb and saw a Jeep approach. Many of the  
> soldiers and Space Marines stood and saluted. I did too, upon seeing who was in the Jeep.

Rick: it's a typical, understated Taylor Swift entrance

> Supreme Commander Anatole Leonard himself was in the Jeep, dressed in MARPAT camouflage  
> and with a hat covering his bald head.

Dan: And the least plausible thing in the entire fic is Leonard travelling to the front lines.

> With him were a few other military personnel, including  
> General Rolf Emerson, the commander of the Robotech Defense Forces Command.

Rebecca: And official guy who does all the work around here.

> Leonard and Emerson returned our salutes.

> "We certainly got the attention of the real big shots," said Mike.

> I nodded in agreement. I also noticed how huge Leonard was, compared to the others.

Rick: The term 'beefy' comes to mind

> Another officer joined Leonard and his escort, and they walked away.

> "Okay, people," said Jack. "Back to work."

Rebecca: We've flashed you the canon cast so you can pretend that you matter. Now get back to whatever the hell it was you did.

> We had accomplished a major victory in capturing one of the enemy's largest vessels. But even as  
> we set up watch details and conducted routine duties in holding this ship,

Dan: How long before somebody tries pressing buttons on an incomprehensible alien device just to see what happens?

> we knew that the enemy had not been beaten into space dust. What was our next move?

Rick: Pawn to king four

> What was their next move?

Tsuneo: King me.

> And what would happen if our moves were to collide?

Rick: But what he was really thinking about was how he was going to Snork a happy song.

> -----

> Chapter 19: Mausoleum

> I looked out from the truck as I was sitting with the other officers in our battalion, and I saw the  
> freight gate of Gibraltar Base,

Tsuneo: I mean, we could have tried to focus on exploring the alien ship, discovering its secrets, learning more about the people on board and their motives but no, this is fine.

> with more trucks going in. I breathed a sigh of relief. I was finally back on base.

Rebecca: Back to boring routine mundanity

> We had been called home, and we spent a few hours on Moon Base ALuCE packing our  
> gear and loading it onto the cargo shuttles

Rick: Since we're returning war heroes, you think they could at least spring for a valet.

> that took us to the U.N. Air Base in Spain, where we  
> unloaded all of our hover tanks and gear onto the trucks taking us home.

Dan: Thrill as our hero discusses his travel arrangements! Again!

> When the truck was parked, we all leaped out. I glanced around as soldiers got out of the trucks. I  
> looked around, seeing the familiar buildings and other structures of this base.

Rick: Like the hog rendering plant or the disco

> It was a warm day, and I could feel a little sweat; those trucks were definitely not air-conditioned.

Dan: That and he was worried about all the bottles he found stashed under the passenger seat.

> "Attention!" yelled Major Jack Emerson.

> We all saw the familiar lavender face of Lieutenant Colonel Lupon Kravshera. He stood before us,  
> clad in MARPAT camouflage.

Tsuneo: You can tell that Kravshera is important because he gets both a skin colour and a uniform description

> He did not even need crutches to stand, let alone sit in a wheelchair.  
> We immediately saluted, and he saluted back.

Dan [Kravshera]: I am so glad to be away from my racist father-in-law

> "Welcome back to Earth, Micronians," he said.

Tsuneo: [Kravshera] A lot has happened while you were away.

Dan: Really?

Tsuneo: [Kravshera] No. Nothing at all has happened while you were away.

> "I am back on duty, and I am taking command of this battalion.

Tsuneo: We must ensure that nothing in the story ever changes and that the status quo is maintained at all times

> I know you are glad to be back here,

Rick: Really?

Dan: No.

> but we've got work to do taking inventory and unpacking the gear.

Rebecca: I mean, I was joking about it but no, we really are right back at the most boring part of the fic.

> Major Emerson, I expect a full debriefing in my office after the gear is unloaded.

> The rest of you shall have R&R after we're done."

Tsuneo: Emerson gets to do all the dirty work.

> "Yes, sir," replied the major.

> And so we unpacked the gear, as Master Sergeant Rebekah Avital and the other sergeants

> supervised the operation,

Dan: Being an NCO means you've got grunts to do everything for you.

> and I had to fill out more paperwork.

Rebecca: This is the part of his military career that he enjoys the most

> Oooooooooooooo

> I sat on the leather couch inside the common room of the men's BOQ, watching a baseball game on

> the television. It was tuned in on a sports channel; none of us wanted to watch or read news about

> the war, as we had been living it for so many months now.

Rebecca: If the aliens blew up Equatorial Guinea then they didn't want to know about it

> I looked at the image of the screen, with

> the players in their outfits and the catcher wearing the mask and pads,

Dan: Yes, baseball does indeed look like baseball

> almost looking like a fully armored infantry soldier,

Rick: But which uniform was he wearing? We need to know these things.

> and the walls lining the field with the logos of corporate sponsors.

Rick: Including Pan-Am, Kodak, Tab and KB Toys. It's the future of the eighties, after all

> It was so

> relaxing; doing this after filling out all of the paperwork that comes with returning from a major

> deployment.

Tsuneo: To avoid future paperwork, he resolved to never do anything ever again

> "Too bad Jack still has to meet with the colonel," said Lieutenant Michael Meyers.

> "That's why he gets to live in a house," I said.

Dan: While you live in a shack under a bridge

> "We should go to the O-club and get ourselves a drink."

> "Damn right," said another officer. "After all that hard work."

Tsuneo: What hard work? You wandered down a corridor then got exploded.

> "It's the enlistees who do the heavy lifting," said Mike. I had seen some of that myself, as they had  
> unloaded boxes full of supplies and equipment from the trucks and into the battalions' storage  
> warehouses.

Rebecca: Mike is vaguely aware that other people exist, but he also doesn't really care

> "I haven't had to do that sort of stuff since basic training," I said.

Dan: Avoiding manual labour is the main reason I became an officer.

> I could still remember marching  
> around and having to do chores under the direction of drill instructors.

Dan: They made him unstack the dishwasher and sort out his laundry

> And the barracks the basic trainees had to sleep in were almost primitive as Quonset huts.

Rick: They were made from wattle and daub and were adorned with cave paintings

> It seemed like such a long time ago.

> My life in Jamaica seemed like epochs ago. So much has changed this past year.

Tsuneo: Hey remember that time when he was captured by the aliens, was brainwashed and forced to fight for them and there were questions over whether he could ever return to combat or be trusted by his own men?

Dan: No

Tsuneo: Me either.

> I still get  
> flashbacks to my times in combat every now and then. I had learned so much. I still remembered  
> that visit to Jamaica last Christmas, and noticed how different I was from my friends.

Rebecca: Then he started resenting his ex again for good measure

> Ooooooooo

> About a week later, I was having dinner at the Italian-Spanish-Lebanese-Greek fusion place in  
> Tangier

Rick: The only restaurant in the city

> with Jack and the other officers.

Rebecca: Enough introspection, time for food!

> It looked pretty much the same as before. We all sat around this huge wooden round table.

Dan: Since the table is round, they should call this place Camelot

Tsuneo: It's not that sort of a round table

Dan: I call dibs on being Lancelot!

Tsuneo: Never mind.

> I was having this lamb pesto pasta for my entrée and a glass

> of wine for a drink. We were all telling stories about our lives.

Rick: And then I went to Jamaica. And then I helped cook some jerk turkey. Then I ate some jerk turkey. Then I talked to my brother and his wife. Then I drove to the airport but the traffic was bad. Then...

> Sure, the food in the O-club was not bad,

Dan: Adequate!

> but sometimes we have to go out for a meal.

Rick: There's only so many times in a week you can eat refried warmed-up hash.

> "Jack," said one of the officers, holding up a Motorola cell phone,

Rebecca: That may be the single most dated part of the fic so far. Well done.

> "we got a message from base."

> "I have one too," replied Jack, checking his cell phone.

Dan: Yeah, quit bragging.

> He then looked at all of us. "Guys, we all got

> to head back to our posts. The Army's going into full alert again."

Tsuneo: Stupid war, getting in the way of our dinner

> Our waitress, a blond-haired woman clad in a dark outfit, approached the table. "Excuse me," said

> Mike. "We've got an emergency. We need to take this food to go."

> "Right away, sir," replied the waitress.

Rebecca: So scramble, but not y'know, too fast.

> Ooooooooooooo

> Mike and I returned to the 18th ATAC troop office, still clad in our Class "A's" and carrying Styrofoam

> boxes with the food from the restaurant.

Dan: You just know that the waitress spat in each and every one of them

> I figured we would have to eat on the job. The office was

> already busy, with soldiers in MARPAT camouflage walking about.

Tsuneo: Whoops, wrong uniform.

Rick: Nothing for it, they're going to have to put the alert on hold and change.

Rebecca: If the Robotech Masters invade while he's changing his shirt, that's just too bad.

> "Sirs," said Executive Sergeant Wing, approaching us and standing at attention. "Our uniform for the day is camo."

Rick: And the word of the day is aspirated

> "Thank you, Executive Sergeant," said Mike.

> A few minutes later we were dressed in MARPAT camouflage.

Rick: They did it. The insane glorious bastards actually went and changed for the alert.

> We had to coordinate, making sure we were ready for deployment at a moment's notice.

Dan: And that their outfits wouldn't clash

> About an hour later, a private gave me a phone call from battalion headquarters. I picked it up.

Rick: Really? I assumed he pitched his phone into the ocean and went on to live a nomadic life with a camel named Joe.

Tsuneo: I would read that fic in an instant.

> "Inform your troop that the Secretary General will be addressing the world in a minute," said the soldier on the other line.

Rebecca: He better not be interrupting my show.

> I told Mike, and he gathered every soldier we could spare to watch the Sony color plasma television

Rick: And the television is named! Yay!

Tsuneo: Why are you so invested in that point?

Rick: I need something to hold on to.

> inside the office. An image of a wooden podium with the seal of the United Nations appeared on the plasma screen.

Dan: The podium was in the middle of Lake Michigan, but that's not important right now.

> A white-haired man in a suit went up to the podium. I recognized him as Wyatt

> Moran, the Secretary General of the United Nations.

Rebecca: You know, that guy who appears in, like, three episodes

> He was flanked by officers in Class "A" uniforms of their respective services.

Rick: As well as Tiger Force, Night Force and Slaughter's Marauders variants

> "People of Earth," said the Secretary General. "The Robotech Masters have given us an ultimatum.

> They have told us to evacuate our world or they will be forced to destroy it. But it is we who will destroy them.

Rick: [Moran] So I say unto the Robotech Masters, neener neener neener.

> I have ordered all members of the United Earth Forces to mobilize for an immediate

> offensive against our foe, and I ask the nations of Earth to get their troops ready for combat. We will not yield this world to this enemy. We will not yield this world to any enemy."

Tsuneo: But as a precaution he was transmitting from a secure bunker in a classified location anyway

> "All right, people, you heard our commander-in-chief," said Mike. "Let's prepare for war."

Dan: Wait, there's a war? What have we been doing all this time then?

> And so we continued.

Rick: Ooh, rare variation.

Rebecca: We should capture it for study.

> We once again did inventory of our supplies and equipment, and checked the  
> systems of our VHT-1 Spartas veritech hoversuits and did last-second maintenance, even going so  
> far as to polish the hulls.

Dan: And while maybe I shouldn't have been using boot polish, it's the thought that counts.

> I kept myself awake by drinking cups of instant coffee.

Rebecca: Haha, he's going into combat sleep-deprived

> Mike then called the senior staff of the troop into the office.

Rick: Not sure why he did, since he was enjoying a spa day in Barcelona.

> "All right," he said. "The colonel wants us and the rest of the battalion to meet at the parade  
> grounds. We are moving for an immediate deployment."

Tsuneo: Oh boy, another thrilling 'loading things onto things' sequence. Just what I wanted.

> And we did. It was a clear night, and I could see the brightest of the stars.

> "These are our orders," said Colonel Kravshera. "We have been ordered to go to Monument City.

Rick [Whiny]: Again?

> Military Airlift Command is sending a re-entry pod to pick up our combat forces right here.

Tsuneo: We could have done that last time, but we didn't. No further questions.

Dan: But why?

Tsuneo: No further questions.

> Our support units will stay here to await further orders. The battle is raging out in space even now."

> I recalled there was a huge landing field in Gibraltar Base.

Tsuneo: I can see how that would be the kind of thing that would slip your mind

> It was not a full-fledged airfield like the  
> Gibraltar Air Base, but it could handle a shuttle or a re-entry pod.

Dan: Kind of making you wonder why they didn't use that every other time.

> We all drove our hoversuits with us to the landing field. We only carried the essential supplies.

Rick: He only bought some of his My Little Ponies

> If we had to stay in Monument City, our logistics company would join us.

> And then the re-entry pod arrived. It was a United Nations Air Force Frandlar-Tiluvo landing ship.

Rebecca: It extended a two-pronged claw beneath it and tried to pick up a hoversuit but dropped it.

> It

> was actually a Zentraedi design; the Zentraedi Nation still had a few of those re-entry pods in  
> service.

Rebecca: The rest had been sold off to various budget airlines

> We all boarded the pod in battloid mode. A few minutes later I felt heavier as the pod took  
> off.

> "I wonder why we are going to Monument City," said Master Sergeant Avital. "The enemy could land  
> anywhere on Earth,

Rick: Behind a dumpster in Miami, in an abandoned Chinese amusement park, on the side of a  
volcano in Iceland... anywhere

> and the Straits of Gibraltar are a chokepoint between the Atlantic and the  
> Mediterranean- a prime target for a beachhead"

Tsuneo: Assuming a conventional land invasion that isn't completely circumvented by the enemy's  
entirely air-mobile forces, that is.

> "I have an idea," said Jack. "Remember those flowers that Lieutenant Meyers found growing inside  
> that ship."

Dan [Mike]: Didn't he try to lick them?

> "Yeah," said Mike.

> "I'll upload a picture and share it with you all."

Rick: [Jack] We're on a 2G network, so it'll take several hours.

> I looked at a small screen on the control console of the Spartas.

Dan: Wait, how long has that been there?

> An image of pink flowers appeared  
> on the screen. They grew in three, and I knew those were the same kind of flowers that I had seen  
> during our invasion of the Robotech Masters' ship.

Rick: All his years of training in flower arranging has been leading to this point

> "This was taken inside the SDF-1's grave," said Jack.

Rebecca: No doubt by some urban explorer looking for clicks and likes

> I once read about how the SDF-1 Macross was taken apart after it had been badly damaged in a  
> renegade Zentraedi attack.

Rick: Which is a kinda understated way of saying 'destroyed and buried because it was radioactive'

> Much of it was recycled, and some of it was buried in concrete bunkers near Monument City.

> "That ship had those flowers too?" asked Colonel Kravshera.

> "Yes, sir. And I think the Robotech Masters are trying to go for those flowers,

Dan: Maybe they just want a nice bouquet. Have you considered that?

> and the Supreme Command knows this-

Rick: You're assuming that Leonard is aware of anything

> they must have studied the flowers we found on that enemy ship."

Tsuneo: Say, maybe some of this should be in the briefing?

Rick: No time, go die for your planet!

> "Why do they need the flowers from the remains of the SDF-1 if they already have them on their  
> own ships?" asked Private Ducasse.

> "Those flowers must be really important.

Dan: I mean, they're kind of pretty.

> Maybe they think there are so many more of them inside  
> the SDF-1. Or maybe the ones on Earth aren't as quite the same."

Rebecca: They're heirloom artisan hand-grown fully organic Flowers of Life. You can only get them in a specialty produce store and they cost a fortune

> "Well, we need to stop them from getting those flowers," said Kravshera.

Dan: With an entirely straight face

> Ooooooooooooo

> We landed a little over an hour later after we took off; those old Zentraedi re-entry pods were fast.

Rebecca: Fast enough to make huge portions of this fic redundant.

> I looked around the landscape. In the distance I could see the skyline of Monument City, with smoke  
> arising from it like a jerk cook out.

Rebecca: Not only was the city ablaze and people were dying, but now he was also hungry too.

> "Over there," said Kravshera. I looked and saw three dirt mounds. "That is the enemy objective.

Dan: Well, at least he thinks it is. The truth is that he's just making wild guesses at this point

> Right now, the enemy is engaging several regiments in Monument City.

Tsuneo: And completely ignoring the mounds, apparently.

> We head towards  
> Monument City and we keep the enemy bioroids from getting to the remains of the SDF-1. Let's go,  
> Micronians."

Rick: Do you think that Kravshera is aware that he's leading his men by calling them a slur?

Dan: He has real casually racist uncle energy

> And so we did.

Rebecca: 'And so we did' is part of basic squad tactics.

> We raced across the landscape towards the embattled city. We switched to battloid  
> mode upon reaching the edge of the city.

Dan: Somebody decided we could walk the rest of the way.

> Looking at the viewscreen, I could see other Army battloids duking it out with the enemy bioroids.

Dan: I stood on the sidelines and kept score.

- > There was another large explosion as an aircraft
- > delivered more ordnance, kicking up rubble and dirt.

Tsuneo: Describe your life and death struggle for the fate of the earth with the same energy that you'd use for describing your morning routine

- > "Okay, take your shots," said the colonel.

Dan: Three squad members immediately shot Hortense Gobstopper in the back.

- > I took aim at one the blue bioroids and I delivered a volley, and the blue bioroid went down in smoke
- > and flames. In the back of my mind I knew that our own people could be inside those enemy
- > bioroids. And yet we had to stop them.

Rebecca: He seems really conflicted about this

- > We once again split into fire teams, and I led a team of six and took position at an intersection.

Dan: I guess we're in the city now

Rick: Does it really matter? Be honest.

- > All around us he heard gunfire and explosions. All of the smoke made the cityscape look hazy.

Rebecca: That's just the fog to keep the draw distance down

- > "Incoming!" yelled Private Ducasse.
- > Everything seemed to run on slow motion, like a movie.

Tsuneo: Not every movie is directed by Snyder, you know

- > The enemy kept coming in waves,

Rick: Riding bodacious waves on their boards, man.

- > and we had to blast them down.
- > Occasionally a veritech guardian would deliver much-needed close air support.

Rebecca: But then it went on cooldown until he could call it in again

Tsuneo: You know, this whole scene is giving me a very 'generic tactical shooter' vibe

Rebecca: And yet, it's more atmosphere then the fic usually manages

Tsuneo: I know, and that annoys me

- > The streets were littered with the wreckage of war machines.
- > There would be lulls in battle, like the eye of a hurricane. And then we would once again be in the
- > thicket of a firefight, firing at the enemy while taking whatever cover we could. I also heard chatter
- > over the radio.
- > "We're pinned down," I heard. "We need air support."
- > "We're at Fifty-Second Street," said another voice. "We can't hold them. Arrrrghhhh!"

Rick: Also, boom.

- > "Just keep it together, people," I said. I looked around; making sure we all covered each other.

Dan: He's such an inspiring leader

Rick: Really?

Dan: Sorry, I meant insipid. He's such an insipid leader.

> "We could use some backup here," I heard Master Sergeant Avital say.

Rebecca: [Avital] Get us a few dancers and some stage lights.

> "We're at Marshall and Fifteenth."

> Colonel Kravshera contacted me. "Assist Avital's fire team," he said.

Dan: I mean, we're kind of getting swarmed here...

Rick: [Kravshera] God dammit, just do it!

Dan: Whoah, okay!

> "Yes, sir," I replied. "Okay team, we're moving out. We're gonna need some cover."

> And so we switched to hovertank mode and raced across the rubble-littered streets, hovering a few  
> feet above the ground.

Tsuneo: Making sure to obey all traffic rules and stop at the red lights.

> My heart raced.

Dan: I'm pretty sure it was indigestion.

> We had to get there fast while Avital's team was still there for us to save.

Dan: So. Tough decision.

Rebecca: Okay.

Dan: Either die under enemy fire with your whole squad.

Rebecca: Or?

Dan: Get saved by Hogsbreath Lumperton.

Rebecca: Tricky.

> I pushed the hovertank's engines to the limit.

> We then came across Avital's fire team. I could see the flak coming from the enemy bioroids.

> Switching to battloid mode and using the STVFS,

Rick: Small tangerine velocipede formatting salad?

Tsuneo: Sure, why not?

> I aimed at the enemy bioroids and fired a salvo, destroying one of the bioroids.

Dan: He did a thing and he did a thing.

> "Thanks," said Master Sergeant Avital.

> "Okay, people," I said, looking at the members of both fire teams. "We'll hold this area until we  
> receive further orders from Colonel Kravshera or Major Emerson."

Rick: His rigid grill structure has spoken!

> "Look," said one of the soldiers. "Up in the sky."

Rick: Is it a bird? Is it a plane?

Dan: It's Bland Man!

> I took a look in the sky.

Tsuneo: And so he did, I guess.

> I could see a huge Robotech Masters ship flying high above Monument City.

Rebecca: The sort of thing you'd probably notice

> Were they going to drop troops? Or bombs?

> "Looks like they called in air support," said Avital.

Rick: Air support in the form of a five mile slab of impossibility.

> "Take cover, everyone!" I yelled. And we did, trying to shield ourselves among the tall concrete  
> buildings in the city.

Dan: The enemy's coming from above! Hide behind these buildings.

Tsuneo: And that's why he's in charge.

> My heart was racing as I anticipated the enemy's next move.

Rebecca: Although he didn't anticipate the Bioroids doing a review of Anything Goes.

> The ball was in their court. I could only  
> glance at the enemy ship, even as our fighter squadrons were attacking it.

Tsuneo: Something that's worked out so well for the Southern Cross' pilots so far.

> And then there was this flash, and a moment later, I was knocked down from the shockwave.

> "Is everyone all right?" I yelled. For two seconds no one replied, and I wondered if they were dead.

Dan: I wondered if I could have their stuff.

> I wondered if I was dead.

Rebecca: Would anyone notice? Be honest here.

> "We're a bit sore, but we're alive, I think," said Private Ducasse. "There's so much smoke though."

> Indeed there was. There was so much smoke that we could not see even one hundred feet ahead. I  
> reported in.

> "This is Kravshera," said our battalion commander. "I'm still here."

Dan: He said with no small measure of regret

> "Everyone stay alert," said Jack. "The enemy might try to sneak up on us."

Rick: Be on the look out for Bioroids hiding in bushes or tiptoeing like cartoon cats

> "Or they might try to get to the SDF-1 remains," said Lieutenant Chalmers. "Colonel, I suggest we  
> make a retreat back there."

> "Affirmative," said Kravshera. "We will retreat towards the SDF-1."

Rick: [Kravshera] Kind of thought we were meant to be there in the first place, but oh well.

> The 17th will take the vanguard. Attack any enemy units you encounter."

Dan: I found a chunky mountain lion, does that count?

Tsuneo: [Kravshera] I wish we'd wiped out your species.

> And we did, making sure to watch our back so the enemy was not following us as we retreated  
> through the smokescape.

Tsuneo: So the devastating effects of the Robotech Master's mothership bombarding the city was... A lot of smoke?

Rebecca: And pretty much nothing else, it seems.

> "Hummingbird, is there any enemy activity near the SDF-1 remains?" the colonel asked one of the  
> Air Force pilots doing aerial recon.

> "Negative," said an Air Force pilot.

Dan: [Pilot] And I told you not to call me "Hummingbird" in front of the men.

> "Look, Supreme Command Headquarters. It's gone!"

> "Thank you for the information," replied Kravshera.

Rebecca: Reply to the news of this massive loss the same way you would on learning what time your bus departs

> We had just taken a huge hit. We could function without Supreme Command Headquarters- we had  
> backup command centers both in the air and on the ground.

Rick: Airborne backup command was a couple of guys in a hot air balloon.

> Still, Supreme Command Headquarters  
> had much of our command and control capacity, and now it was dust.

Tsuneo: Wait, are you saying Supreme Command Headquarters was the headquarters of Supreme Command?

Rick: I mean, it's kind of implied in the name, but yeah.

> "There might be survivors there, sir," said Jack.

Rick: There might be survivors in the giant radioactive crater

> "We need to keep the enemy from the SDF-1 ruins," replied the colonel.

Tsuneo: Doing a great job of that so far, by the way.

> "Don't worry," said the pilot from the airborne command center. "I'll have someone check out  
> Supreme Command Headquarters for survivors."

> We reached the edge of Monument City and we sped across the flat landscape in hovertank mode,

Rick: The flat landscape of rugged rocky mountains and ridges

Dan: For very generous definitions of the word 'flat'

> heading for the three mounds where the remains of the SDF-1 Macross were buried. I could feel the  
> wind rush against my helmeted face.

Rebecca: And the bugs splattering on my visor.

> It took us a few minutes to reach the site. I glanced back  
> towards the city, with heavy smoke rising from it.

Tsuneo: He realised that he left his oven on andz that this might be his fault

> "Okay everyone," said Colonel Kravshera. "The enemy wants the flowers inside those ruins.

Dan [Kravshera]: I think. Truth being told, I have no idea and I'm just spitballing here.

> We will

> need to take samples of the flowers outside and hand it to whoever is above us in the chain of  
> command.

Rebecca: Yeah, about that...

> Then we burn the rest."

Dan: Uh... Why?

Rick: [Kravshera] What, you've never wanted to burn some alien flowers?

Dan: I mean... Sure, but...

> Jack spoke to me. "You're going with us inside," he said.

Rebecca: [Jack] In case they're carnivorous.

> "The hovertanks won't fit inside,

Tsuneo: Stupid small car only spaces.

> so we'll have to enter by foot."

> "Lieutenant Chalmers, you will stand guard here with the rest," said the colonel.

> "Yes, sir," replied the lieutenant. He then gave orders to the other sergeants.

> I made sure to take a loaded carbine and an M-79 grenade launcher, loading it with napalm rounds.

Dan: He had been waiting his whole life for this moment. You can just tell.

> Colonel Kravshera, Major Emerson, Master Sergeant Avital, and I entered the ruins through this big  
> hole. We were descending. I noticed the walls were made of concrete, and there were rusted, leaky  
> pipes attached to the ceiling.

Rick: Wait a moment, you're just in any given high school basement

> After about a minute, I could see dust flying around. "What's this?" I asked.

> "This place had been deserted for at least fifteen years," said Avital.

Dan: So all the copper wire will be long gone

> We continued walking down the corridor, with only headlamps lighting the way and our footsteps  
> making sounds.

Tsuneo: The sound... Of footsteps.

[They all gasp loudly]

> It was then that we saw it.

Rebecca: The biggest ball of twine in Minnesota

> Our headlamps revealed a huge landscape of pink.

Tsuneo: They'd just walked into a pride parade

> The flowers grew in

> threes, just like the one I saw on the enemy ship that we had captured a few weeks ago.

Dan: Yeah, say whatever happened with that thing?

Rick: They towed it to the moon and turned it into an amusement park.

Dan: I did wonder.

> They filled the entire chamber.

> "So this used to be the engine," said Jack. "I wonder why the flowers would grow here."

Dan: You get the feeling they just walked into somebody's private weed farm

> "The SDF-1 was once the personal yacht of this prominent Robotech Master named Zor,"

Rick: His massive, heavily armed personal yacht

> said

> Kravshera, holding one of the flowers. "The Zentraedi were dispatched to recover his ship after it  
> had been stolen."

Rebecca: [Kravshera] You'd know this if you hadn't slept through military history.

> The colonel cut off on the flowers. "So this is why we were sent here. Okay, make

> sure you all take a sample."

Tsuneo [Kravshera]: And don't lick it this time

Dan: Awww...

> And so I did. Using a combat knife, I cut one of the green stems and placed the pink flower inside

> one of the pockets in my hovertank suit, making sure the pocket's cover was closed.

Rebecca: Entirely secure, completely hygienically sealed.

> "Everyone back," said Kravshera, and we retreated to the entrance of the chamber. I looked ahead

> at the flowerscape. "Make sure your napalm rounds are loaded. And fire."

> And so we did,

Rick: The gripping conclusion to the second Robotech war, 'and so we did.'

> firing napalm rounds from the M-79 grenade launchers. Soon a lake of fire covered

> the floor of the flower chamber. I could feel the heat even through my suit.

Tsuneo: You get the feeling they had no actual exit plan here

Dan: Probably never even occurred to them once

> "All right, let's get out of here," said Kravshera.

> And we did, making sure that we walked quickly. Our footsteps echoed as we went through what

> must have been an access corridor on the SDF-1 Macross.

Rebecca: Someone had scrawled a 'Kilroy was here' on the alien space battlefortress.

> "Wait a minute," said Jack as we were walking towards the exit. "Where's Avital?"

Rebecca: To be honest, I'd kind of forgotten she was in the fic

> I looked and I only saw Jack and Colonel Kravshera. "I'll go back for her," I said.

> I walked back towards where the flowers were. I felt the heat get stronger.

Dan: That will happen when you get closer to the fire.

> After a few seconds, I saw Avital leaning against the wall.

> "What happened?" I asked.

> "I tripped and I hurt my ankle," she replied.

Rebecca: She does nothing for half the fic then falls for the most stereotypical 'damsel in distress' moment possible. Well done.

> "I'll help you," I said. And I did, helping her walk. We moved briskly, with her hopping on one foot.

> About a minute later I caught up with Jack and the colonel.

Tsuneo: [Bored] Wow, that was tense.

Rick: [Bored] I was on the edge of my seat.

Dan: [Boed] I don't know how I could stand such excitement.

> "Only a little further," said Jack as we made out way toward the exit.

> "There," said Kravshera as we saw the daylight seeping in from the exit. It took us another few

> seconds to go out into the fresh air, although we could not smell it because we had our helmets on.

Dan: And they weren't equipped with smell-o-vision

Rick: Would it be a Sony plasma smell-o-vision?

Dan: I can only assume so

> The others in our battalion greeted us.

Tsuneo: You'll be happy to know that absolutely nothing happened while you were inside.

Rebecca: So, the fic as per usual?

Tsuneo: Yeah, pretty much.

> "You all right, sir?" asked Lieutenant Chalmers.

> "Yes," replied Kravshera. "Now let's form a perimeter and stay here long enough for the fire to..."

Dan [Kravshera]: Destroy all the evidence. I mean flowers. Totally flowers and I did not leave all my financial records in there because I put all my wife's money into Gamestop shares at all.

> "Colonel, look out!" yelled a soldier.

> I looked up and saw a huge enemy ship, heading directly towards us.

Tsuneo: Again, the small things you miss

> It was not firing on us, though.

> It was moving faster and faster, and it was surrounded by a halo of flame.

Dan: Huh. I wonder if that means anything.

> "It's gonna crash here!" I yelled.

> "Move out!" yelled the colonel.

Rick: It's a five-mile long spaceship. You might want to make sure you're a fair way away

> I helped Master Sergeant Avital get into her hovertank, and then I leaped into my own hovertank. I  
> maxed out the throttle as I sped away from the gravesite of the SDF-1's engines.

> I heard a loud blast right as the shockwave reached me...

Tsuneo: His day consists of being randomly blown up.

> -----

> Chapter 20: Flower Girl

[Rick visibly twitches]

> "Is everyone all right?" I heard over the radio.

Dan: I sprained my pinky.

Rebecca: [Kravshera] Nobody cares.

> I felt a little sore. Looking around, I could see the air filled with pink, from the petals of those flowers  
> inside the burial grounds of the SDF-1.

Dan: Well you entirely failed in your mission to destroy a stand of helpless flowers, so well done team

> Looking towards the burial ground itself, it was a smoking ruin,

Rebecca: Just admit that you burned it down for the insurance. You were never going to sell it  
otherwise

> with the twisted pieces of that ship scattered around the ground. Some of the VHT-1 Spartas  
> veritech hovertanks had been flipped over when the shockwave from that crash reached us.

> I noticed several Humvees with red crosses approaching our position, probably to evacuate the  
> wounded.

Rick: Actually they're here to set up for the music festival. Whole thing was themed about learning  
from the past, and they were using the memorial site of the SDF-1 as a backdrop. Boy are the  
organisers going to be ticked.

> "All right, people," said Lieutenant Colonel Lupon Kravshera. "We will head back to the fallback  
> position."

Dan: Kravshera had declared that the fallback position was going to be the nearest bar with an  
attached liquor store

> And so we did.

Tsuneo: Not going to pause to consider the magnitude of what just happened? Ponder what the end  
of the war means, in light of the massive casualties and the spread of the flower?

Dan: Look, they 'and so we did,' okay? That's it.

> Oooooooooo

> The primary fallback point was this little temporary fortification,

Rebecca: It was a quaint, cozy fortified checkpoint

> just outside Monument City, surrounded by a sandbag wall and guarded by an infantry company.

Rick: Ayup. We was settin' up here while y'all's was fightin' in that robot space war over thar. Looked real neat from here.

- > Along the sandbag wall were
- > towers with machine guns. Inside the base was several helipads for helicopters, Quonset huts for
- > everything from emergency medical care to food service, and even some anti-aircraft missile
- > launchers.

Tsuneo: Really stretching the definition of 'little' there.

- > Soldiers walked about, doing all sorts of duties from maintenance to watch to just
- > polishing the vehicles.

Rebecca: I suppose that's what's important right now.

- > Among those of us who were injured was Major Jack Emerson.

Rick: He'd been injured in an entirely offscreen incident.

- > I went to visit him inside the Quonset that served as a mobile emergency room.

Rick: A lot of this fic takes place inside hospital rooms. Just saying.

- > "How are you doing?" I asked him.

- > He lay on this bed, wearing the top of his MARPAT camouflage,

Dan: Uniform regulations need to be followed at all times

Tsuneo: If you're dying of a sucking chest wound, you better hope you're in the appropriate uniform

- > his head resting on a pillow.

Rebecca: As one does in a bed

- > On his
- > right foot was this cast reaching up halfway up his right shin. The bed was not partitioned from the
- > others, and I could see people in the other beds, some of them with many more casts and
- > bandages than Jack had.

Rick: Guy next to him had been trying to give his cat eye-drops

- > "I could walk with crutches," said the major. "I'm just glad that all I broke was my foot."

Dan: Which you broke, uh, how again?

Tsuneo: [Jack] MOVING ON.

- > "At least you'll have some medical leave," I said.

Tsuneo: Also we just ended a cataclysmic alien war, the Earth government is in ruins, alien plants are spreading to the four corners of the world and we face an uncertain future. But you get your medical leave.

- > "And then after I get fit for duty, the colonel will have me work extra shifts to make up for it."

Dan: Ha ha ha, millions are dead.

- > "Jack," I heard a female voice say. I looked and saw a blond-haired young woman in a hovertank
- > outfit.

Tsuneo: But... but which day's uniform is that? I need to know?

> "Dana," said Jack. "Glad you made it."

> "At least I didn't lose you," replied Dana.

> I recalled having met Dana before;

Tsuneo: He also recalled having had French toast before, with pretty much the same weight and import.

> Jack mentioned she lived with him and his dad when her parents

> were deployed on a deep space mission.

Rick: Something something SDF-3 something vital mission for the future of the human race something

> "I guess we're lucky," said Jack, glancing towards some of the wounded laying in the other beds.

> "Listen, Jack, there's something I have to tell you," said Dana. "...your...I...."

> For a moment I wondered what Dana had to say to Jack.

Rebecca [Dana]: Oh, and by the way, the man I love killed himself in a futile effort to stop the war and because of his actions the world is now doomed to be invaded by a relentless alien horde, but your issues are what's important here.

> A nurse in a blue outfit approached us. "The patient needs his rest."

> "Okay," I said, leaving the Quonset hut.

Rick: Completely unconcerned by the troubles of other people

> Oooooooooo

> Not much happened the next few days,

Tsuneo: It was a very gentle and relaxed collapse of civilization

> although we were constantly on alert for another enemy offensive.

> I gave the flowers I had retrieved to this colonel from military intelligence. We, including I,

Dan: He's figured out how collective nouns work.

Tsuneo: Progress.

> had to do patrols of Monument City. It looked like the pictures of bombed-out cities that I had seen  
> in history books,

Tsuneo: In a truly groundbreaking development, ruined cities look like ruined cities. For further shocking revelations that will change the way you live, join Hors D'oeuvres Fluffernutter in "A Giant Alien Mothership Nearly Fell on my Head."

Rebecca: You doing alright there?

Tsuneo: Dandy.

> with pieces of buildings littering the streets. I once saw an apartment building with

> the front wall collapsed, and I noticed a child's bedroom, with a rocking horse and typical children's

> furniture, apparently in perfect order.

Rick: And then the Sole Survivor looted everything in it, scrapped it and used it to build a new gun.

> The flag at the forward operating base was at half-mast.

Rebecca: Pulley got stuck.

> An officer had announced that Secretary  
> General Wyatt Moran was killed in the Robotech Masters' attack.

Dan: Supreme Commander Leonard had also died, but nobody really cared.

> Those of us not on watch at the  
> time of the announcement, including I, had to stand at attention as taps was played for the fallen  
> United Nations leader.

Tsuneo: He begrudgingly pays his respects to the fallen

> It was a global day of mourning. I also remembered that many other people fell that day.

Dan: I remember that I fell but I got up again but I had strained my pinky.

> They all gave their lives to protect Earth from the Robotech Masters- I briefly  
> remembered Master Sergeant Tomas Cabon, First Lieutenant Isamu Shirogane, and Private First  
> Class Glenn La Belle.

Dan: We will always remember them as those characters whose names were mentioned once.

> Finally, our battalion was ordered back home to Morocco.

Tsuneo: To defend against... Um, what exactly?

> Ooooooooo

> We did the usual routine upon heading back to Gibraltar Base in Morocco, unpacking our supplies,  
> equipment, ammunition, and armaments, taking inventory, doing roll call, settling back into our usual  
> routines.

Rebecca: Having just survived an apocalyptic alien war, they immediately fell back into the status quo

> But there was one break from our usual routine.

Rick: They had some whacky misadventures with an adorable dog

> Some of us took a flight to this place called Oklahoma in America

Dan: 'This place in America' is a fair description of Oklahoma

> over the weekend. We had landed at an airport known as Brad Henry International Airport.

Tsuneo: An airport with two first names

> The surrounding countryside was flat, with  
> all these farms lining the roads. It must have looked like a checkerboard from high in the sky.

Rebecca: You flew in there. You should know.

> I stood on this flat field covered with shortly-clipped grass.

Tsuneo: Which was weird, since everyone else was in the mess hall.

> I was clad in Class "B" formal dress  
> uniform, which had pants with a yellow stripe, a light blue collared shirt with tie, and a braid around

> my shoulder.

Rick: And so the fic reaches its peak by describing somebody's uniform in needlessly elaborate detail

Dan: Beautiful

> The warm humid air made me sweat a little. Other people were here, some civilian,  
> others UEF personnel clad in their service's Class "B" formal dress uniforms.

Rebecca: Halfsad Brittlecakes strikes me as the kind of guy who gets annoyed when somebody dies because it means he has to wear a tie.

> Photographers took pictures;

Rick: DIRE STRAIGHTS!

Tsuneo: Whoah!

> I could hear the distinct click of cameras.

> And this was indeed a formal and somber occasion. For it was the funeral of General Rolf Emerson,  
> United Nations Army, commander of the Robotech Defense Forces Command, who was killed in  
> action in the last battle. I saw Jack, clad in his formal uniform and using crutches, salute (with Mike  
> supporting him) as his father's casket was lowered into the ground.

Rick: Any reason why he's being buried in Oklahoma? Emerson was born in Australia after all.

Dan: Maybe the plot was cheap here or something

> A bugler played taps. I could only imagine how Jack was feeling.

Tsuneo: As a formless blob of protoplasm, feelings are unknowable to me.

> Jack did not join us on the flight back to Morocco. He had medical leave, and he decided to  
> recuperate in Monument City.

Tsuneo: Which had been reduced to a smoking ruin

Rebecca: In retrospect it was not the best plan

> Oooooo

> "Here is my report, sir," said Executive Sergeant Wing, handing me a report printed on a few pages  
> of paper as I sat in the office.

> It had been a few weeks and Jack was still recuperating both physically and emotionally.

Rick: He'd taken to howling at the moon, which I assume was a good sign.

> It may

> seem paradoxical that recovering from a broken foot takes more time than recovering from an arm  
> injury, like I had, but the foot was a complicated piece of biological machinery.

Dan: Also something something loss something grief something. It didn't really register for him.

> Life on base returned to a somewhat normal routine, which was basically conducting drills and  
> keeping track of our supplies.

Rebecca: The phrase 'war never changes' applies to this fic. Because no matter what, it remains bogged down in its pointless inane mundanity

> But the shadow of war loomed over us. While the Robotech Masters  
> had not recently launched offensives from space, we all knew that they still had ships out there. And  
> we also knew they had ground positions on Earth, and we could be ordered to attack them at any

> time.

Tsuneo: Their plan was to simply sit around on their hands and hope that the aliens would go away.

> And while I normally did not keep myself preoccupied with United Nations politics, I did hear that the  
> President of the World Bank was now the acting Secretary General of the United Nations, serving  
> until the General Assembly can be convened. General Tom Washington, the Air Force Chief of Staff,  
> was acting Supreme Commander, having served in that capacity since Supreme Commander  
> Leonard was killed in an enemy attack.

Dan: Leonard died in a footnote

> "Anything new happening?" asked Mike.

All: No.

> I looked at a form at my desk. "I'm filling out a form for paid leave," I said.

Rebecca: This is his life. This is as exciting as it gets for him.

> "We're still at war. And besides, we already have people laid up, like Jack."

> "Yeah, but other units can take up the slack.

Tsuneo: Other people can protect the world from hostile alien attacks

> Besides, if I send in this request, the worst the colonel's staff can do is throw it in the trash."

Rick: He's focused on the big picture stuff here.

> "That makes sense," said Mike.

Tsuneo: [Meyers] Besides, we both know that nobody in their right mind would ever rely on you.

Dan: True that.

> "Are you going to request leave?" I asked. "Pay a visit to that planet of yours?"

> "I don't know," said Mike, adjusting his glasses. "I've read letters from my family."

Rebecca: [Meyers] They say "Please don't come home," so there's that.

> "Maybe you should go see them. Who knows if you'll get another chance to be with them?"

Dan: Maybe he just doesn't like them

> "See you at the BOQ," he said, leaving the office.

> I went to the battalion headquarters and dropped off my leave request at the personnel office.

Rebecca: The personnel office is a paper shredder. Obviously this bodes well for his leave request.

> For a while I wondered if my request simply ended up in the trash.

Tsuneo: I can only imagine that this amounted into him standing there, staring into space for an hour or so.

> And then, two weeks later, I received word from the battalion headquarters that my request was  
> granted.

Rick: It was the most excitement he'd had in ages.

> Oooooooooo

> "Thanks," I said to Mom, after finishing my spicy serving of jerk chicken, my tongue remembering  
> the familiar spiciness of jerk sauce.

Dan: In short, he likes the taste of jerk in his mouth

Rick: Goodnight everybody

> I had arrived in Kingston this afternoon, flying in from Casablanca via London's Gatwick Airport.  
> Everything, from the airport to the neighborhood to my family home, looked pretty much the same,

Tsuneo: They're just reusing the backgrounds to save the budget.

> except that there were no Christmas decorations, unlike the last time that I had visited Jamaica.

Rebecca: The fact that it wasn't Christmas took a while to register

> I talked about my life on Gibraltar Base; I had made it clear that I did not want to talk about my  
> battles with the enemy. It was something that I could only share with people who were on the front  
> lines.

Rick: He's gatekeeping his war stories.

> Mom and Dad could detect the changes in me ever since the war started.

Dan: What changes? He's got the personality of wet cardboard.

> "So you went to the moon," said Dad.

> "Yeah."

> "It must have been exciting,"

Rebecca: Don't worry, the fic managed to suck all the life out of it

> said Trina. Her husband, my brother Paul was working this evening.

Rick: I like to pretend that Paul does something really dangerous and exciting and has a secret life  
that he needs to hide from his family

Dan: Or, you know, he's just another bland relative

Rick: This is my headcannon and I'll defend it with my life.

> "Well, the ride was exciting," I said, not going into any details.

Dan: People died to get me there.

> "And how was the moon like?" asked Mom.

Tsuneo: Not made of cheese, much to his disappointment

> "Not much, I'm afraid," I said. "Just a military base and the city there. Plus the scenery is so bland  
> outside. Just bare rock."

Rebecca: The wonder and majesty of the cosmos is lost on this guy

> "Still, when I was your age I never imagined any of my kids would be going to the moon," said Dad.

Rick: Then again, when dad was his age, they were in the middle of the Global Civil War, so...

Dan: Say, how old is dad anyway?

Rick: Depends. How old is our alleged protagonist?

Dan: Good point

> I understood. It was hard to imagine that there was an age before robotechnology,

Rebecca: He flunked history harder than anyone has ever flunked it before.

> which had allowed people from Earth to travel freely within the solar system and beyond.

Tsuneo: He just assumed that his grandparents also had giant robots and spaceships.

> Ooooooooo

> I took another sip of cold beer, feeling the absorption of heat from my mouth.

Rick: Mmm, thermodynamics

> Reggae music played over the speakers.

Dan: Because it's Jamaica, you know.

Tsuneo: Yep.

Dan: Where they have jerk spice.

Tsuneo: Uh-huh.

Dan: And the airport's at Kingston.

Tsuneo: That it is.

Dan: Jamaica, am I right?

Tsuneo: Yep, we get it.

> The orange glow of sunset is visible through the glass windows. On the TV, I could see images,

Tsuneo: Dire Straights boldly proclaims that there are images on a TV.

> including a recap of a rugby game and a news report about some strange plant

> growing in this place called Pennsylvania.

Dan: It was a very, very slow news day

> I was sitting at a wooden table in the Cantina Loco with friends for a little get-together now that I

> was back in Jamaica. I was dressed in a T-shirt and shorts.

Tsuneo: Does that count as a uniform?

Rebecca: That's an important question and one that I think we need to consider further

> I was just glad to be here with my friends, putting the war behind me for now.

Rick: Eh, someone else can fight the robot space war for me.

> It was not a very busy night, as it was a Wednesday evening;

Rebecca: Wednesday's specials are the back-of-the-freezer surprise and the refried pan scrapings.  
Wednesday is a quiet night.

> there were only two waitresses in the place. The place looked pretty much the same as before.

Dan: The same faded, out-dated decor and everything

> I talked about what I did off duty; I did not discuss my battles.

Rebecca: That would have been a very short conversation

> "So I went on a skiing trip to the Argentinan Andes two weeks ago," said Hermes, sipping a beer.

> "It's summer," said Fred.

> "Not in Argentina.

Dan: Do I need to remind you how hemispheres work?

> It sure felt different there, with all the cold weather and the snow."

Rick: Would have been pretty hard to go skiing otherwise.

> I had usually associated summer with the middle of the year; it seemed alien to me to imagine

> winter weather in June. Then again, I did spend some brief time in Australia, though not for

> pleasure.

Rick: He was attacked by a kangaroo

> "Argentina?" I asked. "Must have been pretty expensive."

> "I work security for a major pharmaceutical exporter," said Hermes. "I get paid well."

Dan: He gets kickbacks for every pallet that 'falls off a truck.'

> I knew what he meant by that.

Rebecca: By that he meant that he had a large take-home salary

> "And I took a trip to New York last month," said Barbara, who was wearing an orange dress.

> "See anything interesting?" I asked.

Rick: [Barbara] Invid hive stuck on top of Trump Tower.

> "Visited a few places, like Carnegie Hall and the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island and the Nova

> Complex," she replied.

Tsuneo: [Barbara] I was the most basic tourist ever.

> "I got some pictures on my phone."

> She showed me pictures on her Blackberry.

Rebecca: Having a Blackberry in the future might be the most anachronistic thing to date

> I saw an image of the New York skyline, the familiar

> image of the Statue of Liberty, the interior of a concert hall and the main hallway of a huge shopping

> center with brightly-lit stores on the sides.

Tsuneo: More to add to our list of 'things that inexplicably survived the apocalypse unscathed'

Rick: Well, about that...

> "And your career?" I asked.

> "I'm going to be a nurse by the end of the year," she said.

Dan: [Barbara] I can't wait to change bed pans.

> "That's great," I said. "Pretty lucrative. Pays more than a second lieutenant in the U.N. Army, even

> with a hovertank driver's bonus."

Rick: He's got his old Palladium 'pay per month' charts to prove it

> As we continued having more drinks,

Dan: He feels his night's a failure if he can still walk.

> I realized how different my life's path is from these childhood friends of mine.

Dan: None of them had lost relatives to shark attacks or been betrayed by their evil twins

> The war had not hit Jamaica.

> And then I started thinking about how civilians in other places like Casablanca and Monument City  
> were not so lucky.

Tsuneo: Mostly because he'd visited them.

> Some of them may even still be prisoners on the Robotech Masters' ships.

> I got up and used the men's room. As I got out, a lady said to me, "Must be great relaxing."

Rick: Using the men's room, that is

> I looked at her. She wore a dress and had greenish blue hair. Either she dyed her hair,

Rebecca: So he accused her of being a woke femnoid

> or she was a micronized Zentraedi- a few of them had settled in Jamaica.

Tsuneo: His family were careful not to associate with them.

> "Yeah," I said.

Dan: Relaxing is a thing that people do that is great. [Smiles weakly]

> "It's such a shame about this war. So much was wrecked. So much was wasted. And all for this."

Rick: To be fair, I've seen people do worse for first-run Pokemon cards

> She held up a triple flower with pink petals.

Rebecca: He kind of felt like it should be important, but he couldn't figure out why.

> I recognized it as the type of flower that I saw in the grave of the SDF-1 Macross.

Dan: And, just for the sake of consistency, tried to lick it

> "Where did you get this?" I asked.

Tsuneo: There's a flower shop right next door. Don't you ever pay attention?

> "This is the Flower of Life, the raw material for protoculture," she said.

> "So you're of the Robotech Masters," I said, gripping her wrist.

Dan: Wait, what?

Tsuneo: Guys, did a plot just appear?

Rebecca: I'm not sure. I don't know what to do.

Rick: Me either. I don't think I can handle it.

> "Give me one good reason why I shouldn't turn you in."

Rick: She has her fingers crossed behind her back

Dan: Well she has him there

> "We know about you," she said. "We kept track of the prisoners that escaped when our brother

> Lonarco defected, and we have our eye on you.

Rebecca: You're really, really boing. You know that?

> You have fought well for us."

> "I didn't fight. You hooked my brain to one of those bioroid things."

> "And yet you fought well."

Tsuneo: Demonstrably not true.

> "I am going to turn you in."

> "For what?"

Rebecca: Maybe because she's an... illegal alien

Tsuneo: Get out.

> There is no more reason for our peoples to fight. What our leaders were after was

> destroyed. But there is a new threat."

> "A new threat?" I asked.

Tsuneo: The new threat is parrot exposition.

> "Now that we have been defeated, others will fight to take the place of the Robotech Masters.

Dan: She's setting him up for the post-game DLC.

> Moons and planets will be stained with blood. And war may come to Earth soon.

Rick: Like, again. Or more, or something. Look, it sounded better in my head.

> Our peoples may have to join forces to fight against common enemies."

> She then walked away.

Dan: I guess I decided not to turn her in, or something.

> "What was that about?" asked Barbara.

Rebecca [Barbara]: By the way, I was here all along

> "About the war," I said.

> Ooooooooooooo

> I had reported my encounter with the Jamaican authorities, who had grilled me about my

> conversation.

Dan: So a blue-haired lady was hanging around the men's room, gave you a flower, claimed she was an alien and said that the earth and moon were going to be drenched in blood.

Rick: Yes

Dan: So clearly both of you were on something.

> After that, I spent the rest of my leave relaxing,

Tsuneo: Ominous warnings from flower-baring space aliens? Why not forge all about them.

> and even spending some time with my brother Paul and my nephew Larry.

Rick: Larry had signed a deal with Skybound to keep writing G.I. Joe comics until the end of all time

> Then there were the goodbyes as I flew out of Norman Manley in Kingston, going back to  
> Casablanca via London. Soon, I was back at the 18th troop's office, reporting back to duty.

> Colonel Kravshera and Major Emerson were in the office to greet me. I noticed that Jack was back  
> on his feet.

Dan: Also he had returned from his extended personal bereavement leave

> "Good to see you back on your feet, sir," I said.

Tsuneo: Since I noticed he was back on his feet, I said it was good to see him back on his feet, because I saw that he was back on his feet, which was why I told him I was glad to see him back on his feet –

Rick: Hey! Careful, you almost got caught in a recursive blandness loop.

Tsuneo: Phew, thanks for getting me out of that.

> "I hope you enjoyed your vacation, Second Lieutenant," he replied.

Rebecca: He sat around and did nothing all day, so it was remarkably like his army duties.

> "The O-2 selection board's selection was ratified,"

Tsuneo: The selection was selected

> said Kravshera. "You are now a regular second lieutenant."

> "I am honored, sir," I said.

> "You've done well as the XO here,

Dan: The term 'adequate' comes to mind

> so we recommended you for a permanent promotion," said Jack.

Rebecca: [Jack] I have never seen the joint chiefs laugh so hard.

> "This means the colonel and I or even General Washington and the Secretary General can't demote  
> you on our own; only a special or general court-martial can do that."

Rick: I mean, this is an anime military. Slapping him across the room is also an option.

> "So don't do anything stupid beyond stupid, Micronian," said the colonel.

Tsuneo: We're well past that point

> "Yes, sir," I replied. "By the way, during my visit to Jamaica, I had an encounter with someone whom  
> I think was a spy for the Robotech Masters.

Rick: Or maybe Pottsylvania. One of those.

> She was holding a flower very much like the one we saw at the ruins."

> "Really?" asked Jack.

Dan: I reported it to the local authorities, and as a soldier under your command I made no effort to contact you.

> "You can debrief me on this later," said Kravshera.

Rick: [Kravshera] I ain't crunk enough for this yet.

> "In the meantime, prepare a written summary of  
> your encounter with the spy and continue with your duties.

Rick: Yay, paperwork!

Rebecca: It's what the fic's really about.

> And tell no one else about this, not even Lieutenant Meyers or Major Emerson."

Dan [Jack]: Sir, I'm in the room with you both. I can hear everything you say

"Yes, sir," I replied.

> Later that day, just before supper break,

Dan: In the army, we call supper break elevenses.

Rebecca: Should we kill him and hide the body?

Rick: Oh, definitely.

> I met with the colonel in his office. Notably, he kept Jack out of the loop.

Rick [Kravshera]: Jack, don't tell yourself what you heard.

Dan [Jack]: Understood, sir.

> After that short debriefing, he dismissed me.

Tsuneo: Well that was... Um... Lines of text?

> I continued assisting Mike in running the 18th. I was expecting the Global Military Police or U.N.

> intelligence to interrogate me about my encounter with the spy, but it did not happen.

Rebecca: The truth was that nobody cared.

> And then, about two weeks after my return from Jamaica, Kravshera summoned me to his office.

> "You have a special assignment, Lieutenant,"

Dan: They need somebody to wear the Gobbeldygooker costume

> he said, handing me a folder with a stamp marked

> "Confidential". "One of the factions of the Robotech Masters want peace and you will be part of the

> Earth delegation."

Rick: Sent from Earth Capitol on the behalf of Earth President

> "Why me, sir?" I asked,

Tsuneo: [Kravshera] We have no idea. Truth is, I was hoping you could tell me.

> though I knew it had something to do with that spy's encounter with me.

Tsuneo: And nothing to do with all the time he spent as a brainwashed Bioroid pilot

Rebecca: Not at all

> "I do not know. The order comes from General Washington himself. You will be on the next flight to  
> Moon Base ALuCE to meet with the others at HQREFCOM."

Rick: Bless you

On that final comment the big screen turned off, reverting the world back to prose format. "And that was the series of badly translated art book panels that was the fifth portion of Dire Straights," Tsuneo offered. "A fic in which exciting things happen to other people, but we don't get to see them."

"I was impressed by how hard the fic went out of its way to ensure that last point," Rebecca considered. "This segment was based around some of the most exciting and action-packed episodes of the Masters Saga. And yet, all that action and excitement occurred off-screen."

"What makes it even worse was that happened multiple times throughout the story," Dan spoke up. "We get huge blocks of text in which Numbat Flobulator flails around and does nothing, and then we're told that other things happened that were, frankly, far more interesting."

"I think that the fic might have fallen victim to the same 'because metaplot' problem that plagued Mad Dog Squadron," Rick considered. "It can't make any alterations to the show's story, because that's counterproductive to the purist ethos. But at the same time, it can't think of what it's meant to do otherwise."

"I mean, there's a whole world of things it could have done," Dan considered. "Instead of standing around talking about what other people are doing."

"Right," Tsuneo nodded. "In many ways, the fic would have been better off sticking to its own premise. It built up the Gibraltar Base location and talked about how important protecting the straights were. Why not have some sort of decisive battle there that actually used all that time we wasted on it otherwise?"

"That's a good question, one to which I cannot think of a remotely reasonable answer," Rebecca considered.

"There's something else that got me in this part, which was the fic's utterly abysmal attempt to add emotional weight," Tsuneo spoke up. "Because the whole part with Jack's reactions to Emerson's death were just awful."

"There's a lot of that, and it failed in so many ways," Dan agreed.

"I don't know what part of it was worse; that the two never interacted at all and their relationship was entirely implied, or that Jack has all the emotional depth of wet cardboard," Tsuneo explained.

"And let's be honest here, 'I am related to this canon character' is the only reason why we care about Jack," Rebecca added. "It's also his entire personality to boot."

"Well I can tell you have a lot to say about this fic," the Voice crashed into the conversation.

"For a fic so utterly devoid of content, it has a lot of talking points," Rebecca admitted.

"Fantastic," the Voice beamed. "So you'll be glad to know that we'll be covering the next four chapters next time."

"I'm.... thrilled," Tsuneo replied with a sigh.

"Great to hear!" The Voice continued. "I'll see you then."

"So, um, I'm kind of a bit worried about this next chunk," Rick spoke up.

"What's wrong?" Dan asked.

"We've reached the end of the Masters Saga episodes," Rick explained. "And yet, there are still eight episodes to go."

"Oh," Dan realised. "Yeah, that is a worry."

"No, I see what Rick's saying," Rebecca nodded. "With the series over, the fic can't just fall back on 'cool things happened to other people off-screen' as a narrative device. It will instead have to rely on creating its own ongoing story to move itself forward."

"And with all the creativity it's shown so far..." Tsuneo nodded. "We're in real trouble."

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Author's notes:

There's not a lot more that I can add at this point. Dire Straights is one of those fics that seems to be determined to do every single god damn thing wrong at every single level, and it will continue to do such going forwards. And yes, while it will finally be learning into its own original story and characters rather than relying on the source material to prop itself up, that story is... yeah, it's a thing all right. You'll just have to see it to believe it.

When it comes to creating an OC who is directly related to a canon character, there's a lot of things that you can do wrong. Jack commits the worst one of those mistakes by literally having nothing going on in his life beyond that familial connection. If the author had wanted those scenes to work, they needed to build that connection, develop Jack's personality and give him and his father some degree of interaction. Instead Jack's big thing is that he has a connection to characters who are far more interesting than he is.

Next time we continue to slowly crawl towards our inevitable deaths

Robotech copyright Harmony Gold

Dire Straits written by Michael2

Rebecca Bartley and Rick R. Mortis created by Rick R. (natch)  
Tsuneo Tateo and Dan created by Zogster

Questions? Comments? Complaints? Space robots? Email us at [elmerstudios00 \(at\) gmail.com](mailto:elmerstudios00@gmail.com) and register your Jeff.

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> but then again, breathing is a need for human life.