
Episode 505 – Time for some pointless backstory

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. Outside the skies were leaden and grey, with rain in the distance.

"I think we're overlooking the big question here," Rick considered as he and Tsuneo entered.

"I know I'll regret asking this but what is that?" Tsuneo asked.

"How does Cindy the Wolf Sniper perform against coyotes, dingos and other wild dogs?" Rick explained. "Or is it just wolves."

"I knew it," Tsuneo sighed.

"Since all of Earth is wrecked spaceships and ruins, I imagine she has a plentiful ammo supply," Dan added as he and Rebecca joined them.

"Or she could go down to Chad Prossek's strip mall," Rick offered.

"This is true," Dan agreed. "Though would it be insensitive to display anti-wolf ammunition where Dog Boys would be shopping?"

"On one hand, this is a good question," Rick nodded. "But given that they are Illinois Robot Skull Nazis, I don't think it bothers them."

"I have a big question about what we're doing," Rebecca spoke up in a clear effort to avoid where the conversation was going. "Why is Genesis Breakers?"

"That is a very good question," Rick nodded in reply. "Which becomes even more pressing when you consider the very strange history of Genesis Climber MOSPEADA."

"How strange were we talking here?" Tsuneo asked.

"Well it's a funny story," Rick nodded.

"That strange," Rebecca sighed.

"So the thing you need to understand is that GCM was a failure in its original run," Rick explained. "When it aired in 1983 it got abysmal ratings even by the standards of its poor timeslot. We're talking about a show that tanked at the first episode here. Added to that, the supporting model and toy lines were pretty much disasters as well. Artmic, the production studio, had hoped that the show would run for thirty-nine episodes; instead they got twenty-five and even then that was the network being generous." He nodded. "Save for a thirty-minute OVA, most of which was stock footage, there was no more material... ever." Rick shrugged. "GCM would have been another forgotten eighties mecha show, something there is no shortage of."

"And I am sensing a 'but' coming," Tsuneo noted.

"And you would be right," Rick nodded. "GCM was imported to the US and became the Robotech: the New Generation saga. It's fair to say that it became far more popular from that then it ever was in Japan and had a measurable and lasting footprint. You had the various Robotech novels and comics, as well as the role-playing game where it became especially popular." He nodded. "And that's before

we consider the number of secondary markets Robotech was shown in. New Generation is especially popular in South America, for example.”

“In short, it was far more popular in foreign markets than it ever was at home,” Rebecca noted.

“Exactly,” Rick agreed. “And you have to remember that legacy would continue going forward in western markets for decades. You had the use of GCM designs in the Robotech Invasion video game from the 2000s and then the Toynami masterpiece series toys in the same period. And during this time, actual Japanese GCM had basically nothing apart from the occasional art book.” He nodded. “Which led to the situation where you had Japanese fans importing American Robotech product because there was no domestic counterpart.”

“Okay, so how does this get us to Genesis Breakers?” Dan asked.

“I’m getting there,” Rick nodded. “There was a definite upsurge of interest in GCM in Japan during the 2000s, what with the audience at the time now being adults with disposable income and nostalgic hankerings. The series got some interest again, mostly through the inevitable DVD reissue and imported Robotech material. There were even plans to reverse-import Shadow Chronicles as a possible GCM sequel, though nothing came of it.” He paused and added, “coincidentally, Shadow Chronicles has some similar elements to plans for Genesis Climber MOSPEADA had the show lasted longer.”

“At the same time, GCM got an unexpected third wind,” Rick continued. “The show blew up on Malaysian and Singaporean TV where it became something of a cult phenomenon and got a huge following. That led to a demand for more merch.”

“Which I can imagine overlapped well with the Japanese industry’s push into hard nostalgia baiting,” Tsuneo considered.

“And you would be correct,” Rick nodded. “From about 2015 onwards we began seeing new GCM product, mostly in the form of high-end collectors toys for adults with lots of money to burn. So while those rode on the nostalgia wave, along with blu-ray releases and the series being on streaming services, there was no actual new GCM media.”

“Which gets us to Genesis Breakers,” Rebecca considered. “Because a text story is still a relatively safe, low-cost investment for new media while also serving as a way to push new toys.”

“Exactly,” Rick nodded. “Genesis Breakers is announced in 2018, both as a serialised text story and an accompanying line of high-end adult collectable toys. The plan was to get out the four main characters’ Ride Armours, starting with Gate because she’s the protagonist and all that.”

“I can see the logic to that,” Tsuneo commented. “The big question is, did it work?”

“Not in the slightest,” Rick shook his head. “Gate’s toy sold so badly that development work on the others was cancelled without any of them even reaching a prototype stage. Turns out that Genesis Breakers really lived up to its legacy by being a complete disaster out the door.”

There was a pause. “That sounds really stupid,” Dan finally spoke up.

“And now you see why I had to pick this out,” the Voice offered, crashing headlong into the conversation. “Because Genesis Breakers is, at its heart, a madness vortex where the deeper you go, the more insane it gets. And that’s before we get to the actual story.”

Tsuneo sighed. “Hello Voice.”

“And hello to you, my favourite bunch of test specimens,” the Voice replied. “I can tell that Genesis Breakers is having its desired effect already. I’m so glad you’re having fun with it.”

“I mean, Gate’s kinda dumb but it’s not that bad,” Dan noted. “Though I still don’t know why Necessary is even there.”

"Ahh, that's what I like to hear," the Voice continued. "Build up your expectations before I completely destroy them and ensure that you are never happy again."

"You're so cheerful," Rebecca added.

"I try," the Voice considered. "Why not enjoy my work?"

"I can assume by all that we're reading more of Genesis Breakers today," Tsuneo simply said.

"And you would be correct, actually," the Voice replied. "I wouldn't be so mean as to set you up and then pull the rug under you when you've gotten emotionally invested in the characters."

"You mean Cindy the wolf sniper, right?" Dan asked. "Because sure as hell I ain't feeling anything for the others."

"I kind of like Every," Rebecca admitted.

"You just like her because she's a smug, insufferable smartarse," Dan shot back. "So basically you."

"This is true."

"You know, Voice, you don't need to do this," Rick commented.

"Oh, I know that," the Voice replied. "But I want to. It's fun."

"Well I can't argue with that," Rick admitted as he took his place on the couch.

"Genesis Breakers is truly a gift," the Voice continued as the others joined him. "Something this unique and laser focused is too good for me to pass up."

"Well that's not ominous at all," Rebecca sighed.

"I have one big question," Dan spoke up. "Do you think Simmons or Eagle will actually do anything?"

"I'm pretty confident that the answer is no," Tsuneo nodded as the big screen turned on, converting the world over to script format.

> Chapter 5 - Contact Part 2

Rick: In which Jodie Foster sits in a chair for five hours.

> Due to the battle with Gate, the destroyed "new type's" chassis had completely stopped
> functioning.

Rick: You blow it up and that will happen

> However, power was forcibly supplied to its brain,

Dan: And if you poke it, it's leg twitches.

> and an exchange with Gate's
> consciousness began via the Mediator (the terminal for consciousness connection).

Rebecca: Please, only hipsters and old guys use a dedicated Mediator anymore. Most people have a Mediator app on their phone instead

> The cold
> rain that had just started to fall was blocked by the wreckage of a large shuttle, under which all
> preparations for that operation were made and carried out.

Rick: Simmons had gotten the grill going while Every had laid out the salads.

> Every was monitoring the situation through the mediator, but the other members crossed their
> arms, stood still, and had no choice but to observe. The adviser: Simmons,

Tsuneo: He is indeed a character in this story

> the bodyguard: Eagle,

Rick: Given that he's wearing armour, does that make him an Iron Eagle?

> the recently introduced "Foresight-user" Necessary, and her doll

Dan: The 'la la la la laaaaa' is just assumed

> all leaned in and listened to Gate's audio report produced by the mediator.

Dan: Translation?

Rebecca: Gate's doing her podcast.

> The invading Inbit was a completely mysterious existence. The expert analysis said that it was not
> even possible to determine whether it was "made" or "born".

Tsuneo: In reality they were just pressed out in a sweatshop in Vietnam

> "Hey! Something is showing up!" Eagle said, getting a bit nervous and pointed at the monitor as
> something appeared,

Rick: It's just the Netflix logo.

> to which Simmons also cast his gaze. However, Every found it annoying.

Rebecca: She hates it when other people notice things

> "For convenience' sake, it's a pseudo-mapping image to clearly indicate the direction of movement.

Rick: Well obviously

> Its consciousness is more comprehensive and deeper than I thought.

Tsuneo: The Inbit has a PhD.

> It's visualized in this way so that first, Gate wouldn't get lost,

Dan: Gate can get lost in a supermarket.

> and second, to make it easier for you spectators in the bleachers to
> understand," she explained without looking back.

Rebecca: Every is the smartest person in the room and wants everyone to know it

Dan: So you, really

> "Even if she gets lost, she can't find the way back on her own...like Dorothy," was Necessary's
> meaningful soliloquy.

Tsuneo: Only with less chance of flying monkeys.

Rick: I mean, Genesis Climber MOSPEADA. I wouldn't rule it out...

> In response, Eagle said, "The Tin Man..." pointing at Simmons in front of him, then pointed at

> himself using his thumb and said, "and The lion is useless."

Rick: Does that make Every Scarecrow?

Dan: Only if Necessary is Toto

Rick: But does she bless the rains down in Africa?

Dan: Do you do this on purpose?

> At that time, Gate went back to reporting, "Wait... there's someone up ahead!!"

> Everyone peered over the monitor at the unpredictable report.

> "Someone is there? Who the hell...?"

> "Yea! Someone's there..." Eagle and Simmons continued to shout loudly.

Tsuneo: Is someone there?

Rick: I think someone is there.

> Every, who could only come to the conclusion that it was a bug,

Rebecca: Have you tried switching Gate off and on again?

> responded by tapping keys several times.

Rebecca: Only thing to do is enter more fake Linux commands

Tsuneo: Every strikes me as the sort of person who has to tell everyone that she's using Linux.

> Eagle correctly guessed the true identity of the figure. "Damn...what the hell. At a time like

> this...It's Gate's uncle!!"

Dan [Shouting]: Not my uncle, Gate's Uncle!

> he exclaimed as he face-palmed. The image of Gate's uncle started to

> speak without discretion of time nor place,

Tsuneo: Meaning he got into the brandy after dinner again.

> that the ones who descended from the Ismeia clan were the only rulers of the world.

Rick: Well this seems entirely legitimate and above water and certainly not sinister at all.

> Every didn't hide her frustration either, and tapped the key repeatedly to

> see if she could skip the excessive "autoplay" that was activated in Gate's brain.

Dan: Ugh, I hate unskippable cutscenes

> "What is it? Gate's memory?" Simmons said.

Rebecca: That or a bad acid trip.

> "It's an agitation that plays at a suitable time so that she doesn't forget her mission.

Tsuneo: It was programmed in with the assumption that Gate is a moron

Rebecca: Given what we've seen so far, I wouldn't rule it out

> Inconvenient if you have family lineage or status,"

Rick: The phrase 'suck it up princess' comes to mind.

> Every muttered, and without wasting time, took the opportunity to

> set a glowing guidepost in the depths of the consciousness. Like airport runway lights.

> "Gate...can you hear me? Towards the deep parts, I posted some guide markers.

Rick: This psychotropic trip across an alien consciousness is signposted for your convenience

> Once your uncle's speech finishes,

Dan: Hold on, he's getting started on his bit about kids on TikTok. We'll be here a while.

> move on to the deeper levels for the time being.

Rick: We're going to the sub-basement of Gate's brain.

> After being guided by Every for a moment, a structure appeared before her eyes. Every continued
> the live coverage.

Dan: Gate's head trip comes with colour commentary.

> "At the center is the deep psyche, and outside of that, surrounding it, is the conscious mind.

Rebecca: And around that is a flaky pastry crust

> But if I think about it, this somehow seems different...Maybe because this place is
> still close to the outer shell or...Sensory organ circuits are lined up...? ...Let's record everything from
> here."

Dan: [Simmons] You don't know, do you?

Rebecca: [Every] Shut up, Simmons.

> "Can you see it? There's a zoned area in front,"

Rick: The alien consciousness is zoned for light residential

> reported Gate as Every zoomed-in on the Gate's direction of travel.
> "It's probably a partition to separate the areas of 'consciousness' and 'memory'.

Tsuneo: What sort of file allocation table does an alien consciousness use?

Rebecca: It's probably one of those strange legacy formats that's no longer supported

> It's the same layout as the old type."

Tsuneo: Wait, they've tried this before on other Inbits?

Rebecca: Yeah, but they mostly just went 'pincer, pincer' all the time.

> After taking note, Gate briefly paused.

Rick: [Gate] Is this going to be on the test?

> "I'm heading towards the memory corridor. I can see a honeycomb structure...

Rick: [Gate] My god. Bees.

> Each room seems
> to be a collection of memories. The arrangement is complex, but there is regularity. Where should I
> start? ...Do I access it from a recent memory, or should I search an assortment of deeper
> memories to look for its identity?"

Rebecca: [Every] Oooh, find the Inbit's embarrassing prom memories.

> In response to Gate's question, Every conveyed her opinion, "Compared to the old type, the
> structure is more complex,

Tsuneo: Okay, so how many times have they done this before?

Rick: Oh, like who hasn't hacked an Invid's brain by now

> so we set the activity time shorter than the 20 minute-connection time limit.

Tsuneo: [Gate] Wait, there's a time limit?

Rebecca: [Every] It was in the briefing. Didn't you read it?

Tsuneo: [Gate] I just clicked 'accept.'

> The numbered countdown is a rough estimate. To sum it up, there's not much time,

Rebecca [Every]: Which is why I'm delivering everything though wordy exposition

> so prioritize acquiring nearby information."

> "Got it!" Gate said shortly after. Suddenly, a fierce flash enveloped the area, and when the lethal

> impact struck, she was repelled and sent flying off.

Tsuneo: Gate was one of the lesser members of Team Rocket

> She fell on her butt, but reflexively braced for

> the next impact. It only hit her once. The impact accompanying that flash of light was the memory

> of its last moments right before being destroyed in its battle with Gate.

Dan: [Gate] Oh wow. That's me killing it. [Pause] Damn, I look good.

> Gate calmed down and stood up. "Now I know the sequence of its memories..."

Rebecca: So just press rewind from here.

> but it's strange.

> They aren't lining up at the right time. The most recent memory of fighting me is here...but

> neighboring memories are probably some kind of time-separation from the central relay station.

Tsuneo: The central relay station can remember it for you wholesale.

> And the log of when it received instructions to head to this ravine is so far away. I can't pinpoint the

> time duration...nor comprehend the sequence of time..."

Dan: [Gate] There's a clock on the taskbar...

Rebecca: [Every] Not helping!

> In contrast to the Gate's perplexing situation, Eagle raised his voice to Every, "Hey, she's lost, give

> her directions." But an even more unfavorable complaint came from Gate.

Tsuneo: Geez Gate, you're only having an unprecedented level of interaction with an alien intelligence. Stop whining all the time.

> "It feels like my legs are going round and round..."

Rick: Like the circles that you find in the windmills of your mind.

> set them on a horizontal plane," she ordered.

> "Gate, there is no gravity there. If you throw away the concept of reality, you can move up and

> down," Every advised.

Rebecca: Why yes, we did watch The Matrix. Why do you ask?

> Gate fell silent for a while,

Dan: [Gate] Duuuuh... huh?

- > but when she understood what she meant, she
- > suddenly began to descend directly lower. She had recognized a larger assortment of information
- > at the bottom of the memory area.

Tsuneo: The Invid's piano lessons, its high school reunion and maybe that awkward first date it went on.

- > Every panicked and executed supplementary pseudo sensations for vertical movement.
- > "Displaying pseudo-depth in leagues. Adding water pressure, setting the threshold. This should
- > give you the feeling of being underwater."

Dan: [Gate] Um, Every? Is this really necessary?

Rick: [Necessary] I'm Necessary!

Dan: [Gate] Not you.

- > Then, on the monitor, the depth gauge ticked numbers at a fast pace....50...100...200...300.

Dan: If there's no 'up' and 'down' to this place, how can there be a depth gauge?

Rick: Look, it's science, okay? Every's very smart.

Dan: I have my doubts. What's her qualification to do this anyway?

Rick: She's a defrosted frozen dead terrorist

Dan: Well I'm sold.

- > "Hey! This time it's a bottomless swamp!! She's going to sink more and more!!" the bodyguard
- > Eagle said extremely uneasily.

Tsuneo: Eagle's realised he's never going to carry her in his arms while I Will Always Love You plays in the background

- > Gate smoothly reached the abyss and landed lightly at the bottom, regained her posture and
- > looked around. "This place... I somehow managed to arrive at the space of its long-term memory...

Dan: Oh look, there's the Inbit's first pet.

- > I should be close to the center of its memories. But it's dark and I can't see anything...No wait.
- > There's something behind a thin curtain.

Dan: It's Janet Leigh in the shower.

- > Like a very old memory."
- > Gate got a hold of how to walk, and proceeded toward the center of the space, which was
- > separated by a thin membrane. "Hey! The image is getting rougher and rougher...Is it okay?" said
- > Eagle, who leaned forward to which Every, soothingly gestured, 'Shhh...'.

Rebecca [Every]: Stop trying to contribute, Eagle

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- > Old Memory
- > After a long silence, Gate's report came back in a low tone.

Dan: [Gate] I am so lost.

- > "A blue vastness...it's space...and...I can see a ring with a diameter of millions of kilometers. A big
- > planet."
- > Gate's voice was mixed with noise and was breaking up as if it had been sent from a far-off place.
- > She managed to finally arrive at a concrete memory that she could visualize.

Rick: It was either that or the awkward baby photos

> Somehow, Gate had
> found a primordial memory of the Inbit. In other words, it seemed to be something related to the
> identity of who they are.

Dan [Gate]: The aliens are aliens! Amazing!

> The mediator-equipped AI immediately confirmed that the planet with the huge ring was "1SWASP
> J1407b".

Rebecca: Just as I thought

> It was easy to identify because it was a distinctive planet. Every read the displayed data
> out loud. "An exoplanet located 434 light-years in the direction of the Centaurus constellation.

Dan: Take the third exit on the left. If you see the fruit stand then you've gone too far.

> Its mass is at least ten times larger than Jupiter's. Its ring's diameter is 120 million km."

Rebecca: Every goes on to rattle off the names of every one of its moons.

> "A diameter of 120 million km?! What a ridiculous size!" let out Simmons in a voice of admiration,
> comparing it to his own general knowledge of other planets.

Tsuneo [Simmons]: There, I know stuff about planets. I'm helping.

> "Rather than that, is that planet THEIR planet!?"

Rick: [Eagle] Do you know what this means?

Tsuneo: [Simmons] Uh... No.

Rick: [Eagle] No, me neither.

> Eagle said as he grew lively, to which Gate answered after a short time passed.
> "No...apparently not. This is a memory of their journey into the solar system, and this star is a
> signpost.

Rebecca: Turn left at the massive exoplanet.

> They changed course here. I can go back to memories before this one as much as I
> want. A big trip across the galaxy. But...no matter how far I go back in the memory, the journey is
> still taking place. Wait, I can see their ship's speed...1/16 the speed of light...no, a blistering speed
> of 1/6.2, its cruising speed.

Rick: Well that makes all the difference!

> This has to be a memory of their species. But...there's no beginning
> nor do I know a memory of when...I want a starting point for time and place...If we can't specify it,
> it's useless information."

Tsuneo [Simmons]: But all my knowledge about the planets...

> Every responded to Gate's pessimistic information, "It's not useless. At least you can tell from
> what direction and at what speed they came from."
> Gate interrupted her investigation of the never-ending memory and turned her head to find another
> assortment of memories. A deep tank filled with water emitting light.

Dan: Oh, that's just the Inbit's school swimming lessons.

> "Hey, what does it mean when the environment in the conscience is flat, the bottom of an ocean, or
> a glowing tank?" was Simmons' simple question.

Dan: His simple question

- > "It's Gate's feeling. Because she's venturing through it in a metaphysical body, it's a 'sea' of
- > information that's different from her own physical body. This mediator creates pseudo-senses such
- > as gravity, water pressure, and a sense of direction so that you, the user can experience it.

Rick [Eagle]: Even though you told her that it wasn't real and that she could ignore it

Rebecca [Every]: Exactly

Rick [Eagle]: I have questions

- > Otherwise, we wouldn't be able to tell her where to go or how to proceed."
- > "I can see something that seems to be the center of the memory. Maybe a moment when
- > instructions were sent to them from the center...", said Gate as Every responded by moving her face
- > closer to the monitor

Tsuneo: Every is getting a bit too excited by this.

Rebecca: Can you imagine the research grant?

- > and responded,
- > "Wait a minute!! If that's the case, don't proceed carelessly...there should be a barrier. I'll look for
- > the entrance now..." and started pressing keys.

Rick: [Eagle] You're just making this up, aren't you?

Rebecca: [Every] You can't prove otherwise!

- > Eventually, Every got to the core of the
- > situation,...or so she thought. Necessary, who had been calmly looking-on for a long time, abruptly
- > said in a doll voice.
- > "It's coming."

Rebecca [Necessary]: My brother, that is. He has many men

- > Every turned around and inquired "What is?", to which Necessary pointed at the monitor with her
- > doll's arm and with one word,

Rebecca [Necessary]: Antidisestablishmentarianism

- > "death".
- > The other three exchanged glances. Immediately after that, an alert appeared on the monitor.
- > "This is bad. It's approaching from the perimeter of the forgotten memory walls. A trap in order to
- > break through...maybe?"

Tsuneo: They put a note labelled 'Inbit memories' on a note under a box propped up with a stick

Dan: I feel like that would work on Gate

- > Simmons said to Every, who was clearly starting to panic, "What happened!?"
- > "You know what happened.

Tsuneo: [Simmons] Uh, no. That's why I asked.

- > When their outer shell is crushed, their 'flesh' gets brittle with oxygen,
- > decomposes, and eventually evaporates.

Rick: We should have pickled it first.

- > This one's brain is unharmed, but half of its body is
- > destroyed, so the exposed cartilage and muscles have started to decompose; the decomposition is
- > making its way to the upper part of the brain-supporting spinal cord. This is happening a lot sooner
- > than I expected! Physically speaking, when the brain is damaged, it's only a matter of minutes
- > before it cuts off!" Every said rapidly.

Rebecca: It's super urgent, so she only had a single weighty paragraph of chunky block exposition

- > "Alright, enough! Tell her to retreat. She's going to evaporate with it," exclaimed Eagle.
- > "If I can just understand its brain's structure and the location of the memory bank...and the capacity,
- > it'd be a great boon..." Every said to herself.

Tsuneo: Every considers Gate's brain to be acceptable losses.

- > "Gate, that's all for now. We're withdrawing.

Rick: Even Every is bored with this scene

- > We've set the nearest exit. With a kick on the sea
- > floor, you can surface. The exit marker is the thing that's shining like the sun, so come up now!"

Dan: It also has the word 'exit' on it, just to help out.

- > Once the instructions reached Gate, she saw a black "death" and "nothingness" approaching from
- > afar. The seawater solidified into something like black stones and disappeared. The Inbit's brain
- > was dying.
- > "Just a little more...I can access the center of its memory!!" said Gate, who hadn't risen to the
- > surface and instead proceeded toward the area that seemed to be the center.

Tsuneo: Gate's plan is to immediately take the stupidest option

Dan: She's half machine, and I'm beginning to suspect that these two things are not unrelated

- > "This is bad! The cells' death rate is accelerating. Gate! Withdraw!" said Every as she raised her
- > voice.
- > "Gate!! Come back!!!" Eagle also shouted.

Tsuneo: Simmons has no opinion.

- > "I'm going to administer antioxidants into its brain.

Rick: Every's sending the Inbit on a wellness retreat.

- > It might buy us a few more minutes," Every wisely counteracted.

Dan: Just admit that you have no idea what you are doing

- > Even during that time, the brain's acid decay progressed, the frontal field of view was blocked by
- > darkness; just as Gate seemed to finally give up, above her head, there was something unique...a
- > white light started to float toward the exit marker.

Rick: It's the great will of the cosmos! Gate is actually Excell.

Tsuneo: ...you know, that would explain an awful lot

- > "12 seconds before disconnection...halting the five senses, followed by the thoughts. Forced
- > induction to alpha wave state, 10...9...8...7...disconnect!!

Rick: And Bobby Ewing steps out of the shower.

- > Every operated according to procedure, but the malfunction alert rang loudly. Everything went
- > silent for a moment, and on the monitor, a message appeared: "operation complete".
- > "Is it over?" Simmons asked.

Rebecca: Did it ever really begin?

- > Instead of answering, Every slowly stood up and approached Gate, who was sleeping like a doll

> with its eyes closed.

Tsuneo: Necessary has dressed her up in a frilly gingham dress.

> Then she took off the headset and before anyone realized it, got a hold of a
> medical stun gun and closed in on Gate's shoulder blade with it.
> "Hey!! Are you insane!!" yelled Eagle, interrupting from behind, watching with narrowed, untrained
> eyes; despite that, Every placed the stun gun against Gate, and gave her a second low voltage
> spark.

Tsuneo: Will that help?

Dan: No, but it was fun

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> Another Gate

Rebecca: Gate comes in two-packs.

> Gate didn't respond to the electric shock, but right after that, icy raindrops fell on her cheek, and
> her eyes slowly opened; in a tone like an over-exhausted athlete who had just finished a long swim,
> Gate said, "I was walking on the sea bed, 20,000 leagues deep...

Rick: The squid attack is just assumed

> chased by something...then..."

Rick: She was naked in church when she met a dinosaur. Tried to run, but her feet had been nailed to the floor.

> "A valuable experience at that...thanks to you, we got information that filled up 90% of memory.

Tsuneo: I mean, for all you know it could be all junk.

> That's plenty. Let's leave the analysis to the authorities. We just have to figure out how to send it to
> lunar HQ."

Rebecca: The little problems of being stranded on a post-apocalyptic, alien-controlled world

> Eagle peered over Gate's face like a blood-relative,

Rick: One who pops up as an image in your memory at random intervals?

> he asked, "Hey, are you okay? You look like your soul was pulled out."

Dan: You fight Shang Tsung and that will happen

> But then, Necessary spoke up. "Gate is still there."
> Upon hearing what Necessary said, everyone looked back, and she was sitting where Every had
> been sitting a short while ago, pointing at the monitor.

Rick: [Necessary] I've got her soul on a thumb drive.

> With a dubious expression, Every walked
> towards the monitor, ignoring what Necessary said, and pressed some keys.

Rebecca: Intense data entry action!

> Then after some time, her facial expression suddenly changed. Everyone saw the color drain from
> Every.

> "Impossible....there's no way!!" Every's voice rose to a falsetto pitch, indicating the situation's
> seriousness.

Rick: Her funny voice means its serious

Dan: She takes a helium hit before making important announcements

> "What's wrong?!" Eagle asked as he walked towards her. Every continued hitting a few more keys
> and then gave a hard look at Eagle, who was now beside her.

Dan: [Eagle] Oh no. Don't blame me for this. I had nothing to do with it. This is all on you.

> "There's a copy," she said in a high tone, as if she was an entirely different person.
> "Copy?...what copy?" asked Simmons as he also walked closer.

Tsuneo: [Every] You know... Control-C, Control-V.

> After looking over everyone's faces, Every said, "This is a copy of Gate...this is the transmission
> log stored by the mediator. Unfortunately, it was already transmitted!"

Rebecca: She was forked

Rick: I hope they at least bought her dinner first

> Eagle replied by shaking his head, gesturing that he had no idea what she was talking about.

Dan: Eagle's contribution to the fic, folks.

Rick: Uh, this is a professionally published official work.

Dan: Wait, it is?

> Every hit keys at an intense speed, opening window after window on the monitor, searching files,
> logs, and contents of storage media,

Dan: She has a lot of My Little Pony fanart.

> and said while continuing her work, "When did it
> happen...Gate's data was taken, transmitted. Somewhere, it went on standby...other than the brain,
> there was a system for temporary memory, information arrangement, encryption, and transmission!

Rick: It had a telepathic transmitter in its butt. Weird physiology, I know

> I didn't notice it at all...this is no good. All the cells have already been destroyed, died and
> degenerated; soon after that, the tissues in the body evaporate, leaving nothing behind!!"

Dan: Except for the fresh scent of pine.

> Every, who was always calm in any situation,

Rick: Bah Mitzvahs, trying to find a parking space at Ikea, making a multi-tiered wedding cake... any
situation

> was hysterical.

> "What was copied from Gate?" asked Eagle, to which Every replied in the same tone one would
> when dealing with someone who was constantly slow on the uptake.

Dan: I mean, Eagle...

> "Everything! All 48 trillion cells, memories, physical characteristics, thought patterns...

Rebecca: Her terrible teenage fashion flips and that embarrassing tattoo she had removed...

> and bone density, from the status of degrading genes to the storage of radioactivity-exposed cells...

Tsuneo: That ugly patch of hair on her back that she doesn't tell anybody about...

> the make-up of artificial parts and their materials, and in all probability, her taste in men."

Rick: She likes eighties anime protagonists who ride oversized red motorcycles

> Eagle finally understood the gravity of the situation,

Dan: Although he needed a thesaurus.

> straightened his back, and stared at Gate, who was still a little drowsy.

> "What the hell...she was researched...so that's what happened," he lamented

Tsuneo: She's been researched!

Dan: Dum dum duuuuum!

> Eagle came to that conclusion, and lastly, Necessary spoke.

> "You know, Dorothy set off to see the wizard. From the beginning...just like the story." she

> announced,

Rick: So Gate is headed back to Kansas?

> and the doll in her arms nodded. Everyone looked back at Necessary.

Rick [Eagle]: Why do we have this kid?

>to be continued

> 1 * The main characters of Dorothy and the "Wizard of Oz". Necessary refers to the party as the

> main characters from that story.

Tsuneo: Thanks for that, statement of the obvious

> 2 * Lunar HQ

> Headquarters in orbit on the dark side of the moon. Mars regular army Earth Reclamation Force

> front line headquarters, commonly known as Archelon. There is a plenipotentiary commander for

> this operation.

Rebecca: In case you'd missed that point, here it is again.

> ----

[CHUNK]

> Chapter 6 - Decider

> January 2083

> Captain Thomas R. Wisett, in his last moment, telegraphed the lunar frontline headquarters.

> "Pegasus-Pegasus-Pegasus"

Rick: His favourite game award, hover tank and Yugioh villain

> It was a coded telegram saying that the mission had been accomplished and the Breakers

> Squadron had descended to Earth.

Tsuneo: I mean, you could have just said that.

> The control cabin of the Thunder Child Destroyer was

> enveloped in flames and severely losing altitude.

Dan: And to make it even worse, he'd left the oven on

> The violent vibrations felt like his lungs were being crushed.

Tsuneo: You don't wear your seatbelt and that will happen

> The deceleration booster could probably be ignited only two more times, but it likely
> wouldn't change their situation.

Rick: He's not sure why he bothers, really.

> The surface of the Earth was approaching outside the window.
> Right in the middle was the Australian continent.

Dan: Upside, you survived your spaceship crashing. Downside, you landed in Australia and now everything's trying to kill you

> He had a hunch that he could see the winding roads of East Kurrajong.

Rebecca: And the East Kurrajong School of Arts Community Hall.

Rick: Not too far from the world's last Pizza Hut

> It was where he lived once, a green town on the outskirts of Sydney. One
> way or another, he wanted to come back. It was at that moment that his wish had come true.

Tsuneo: Symbolism! Or something!

> April 2050, Monday

Tsuneo: Just past lunch.

> The local weather was cloudy due to the stagnation of the Seymour mud clouds.

Rick: Well obviously

Dan: Goes without saying, really

> A student

> dormitory in East Kurrajong, a suburb of Sydney, was empty for the summer break. High school
> student: Thomas R. Wisette,

Tsuneo: His plans after graduating were to not, under any circumstances, end up exploding in a spaceship

Rebecca: It's funny how these things work out

> who lived there through a special application, started his observations
> of Jupiter after connecting his computer to the 2 month-leased A.I. "Horatius".

Rick: The AI had already cited three non-existent papers and suggested that it was okay to kill the Queen

> He was having
> difficulties with the theme of his graduation thesis because half a year ago, when rushed by his
> professor, he impulsively blurted out (and without much seriousness) that his current hobby of
> observing the surface of Jupiter, would be the subject.

Rebecca: You really feel like he doesn't have much going on in his life

> He envied Pedprost, one of his few friends with an unusual name

Dan: As opposed to a totally normal name like Gate, Eagle or Necessary

> who had joined the military without graduating.

Rick: But Pedprost liked to skip lectures and get high.

> Two days ago, he had just received an email from Pedprost to the effect of "the
> military is not as bad as people say."

Tsuneo: He got his own Gundam and three square meals a day.

Rick: The only problem was the one guy who keeps talking about what uniform everyone is wearing and pointing out what model of television is in any given room

> Thomas had less than two months left,

Dan: Before the student loan department breaks his knees.

> so he had to start making his report at a rapid pace.

Rebecca: Living the university student dream

> But, in fact, when a relay colony (for relaying signals)

Dan: Well obviously. Goes without saying

> orbits Jupiter's satellite orbit, it is difficult to discover new information;

Tsuneo: Yeah, Jupiter is just such old news.

> so in his backwards thinking, he concluded that it would be faster to obtain and
> analyze public data, even if he had to pay a fee, than to make his own observations.

Rick: He couldn't be bothered with doing his own research

> However, when he yawned for a third time, Horatius arbitrarily moved the cursor to the telescope's
> field of view of Jupiter's left edge and reported a difference between the image from just five
> minutes ago and the current image. "What is it?...What's going on?"

Rebecca: Well, he wakes in the morning and he steps outside, and he takes a deep breath and he gets real high.

> He hit a few keys, "The brightness of the surface changed from 5 minutes ago? What the hell?"

Dan: The position of Jupiter says that you will spend the week face down in the mud. Try not to shove a roll of duct tape up your nose while taking your drivers' test

> The A.I. put up two images next to each other and added additional text.

Tsuneo: [Horatius] Yes, I can see that, dumbarse.

> "Yea...some parts are
> getting a little brighter...Can you also see changes in the Great Red Spot? But why?"
> Numbed by the question, the A.I., responded with a voice.

Tsuneo: [Horatius] You've got schmaltz on the telescope again, moron.

> "I thought it was a variation of differential rotation* due to some kind of gravitational interference."

Rebecca: [Horatius] But hey, what do I know? I'm just a specialist AI.

> "Which means what?" But right before getting an answer, he noticed an alert. A large number of
> emails arrived at once from like-minded astronomical observers.

Rick: Astronomy nerds of the world, unite

- > "Confirming the differential rotation of Jupiter's surface, as well as distortions in the Great Red Spot..."

Dan: I know it isn't, but the Great Red Spot sounds like it would be a cool nightclub.

- > Analysis suggests gravitational anomalies or possibly a visualization of unlikely, minuscule
- > traces of movements by a supermassive material?...I guess? What the hell...what the hell is
- > happening?"

Rebecca: A sudden appearance of rapidly duplicating tycho-monolithic anomalies

- > Horatius was ordered to follow-up the matter that these amateurs had been making a fuss about
- > for the past several hours;

Tsuneo: [Horatius] Step aside and let the real genius work.

- > and at the same time, when referring to the megamedia, a report saying
- > that "Jupiter has changed" came up.

Rick: You've changed, Jupiter. This isn't like how you used to be.

- > "Some changes on the surface of Jupiter that have been observed since 23 hours ago are traces
- > of the ultra-large unmanned observation aircraft Debias #12's entry, which was dropped on the
- > surface of Jupiter 12 days ago."

Tsuneo: [Horatius] You'd know that if you'd been paying attention, you schmuck.

- > And so, after finding out what he had thought was some phenomenon wasn't a phenomenon at all,
- > a dejected Thomas flopped face-down on his bed accepting he had lost the theme of his graduation
- > thesis.

Rebecca: He was pretty sure that 'Jupiter: Just the same as it always was' would not go over well with his academic supervisor

- > But within not even a few seconds, he sprang to his feet and turned his head.

Rick: Only to find Jupiter lurking outside his window.

- > The A.I. Horatius is a completely outdated thing that can only access local networks.

Dan: Horatius took that personally and spammed his inbox with ads for Viagra.

- > The reason
- > being that if you use the world standard unified A.I., it would give the user the correct answers as is,
- > making it prohibited to use when making a thesis.

Tsuneo: Well obviously. It goes without saying.

- > With the old-model A.I.

Rick: A retired former virtual girlfriend. It kept trying to charge him a premium to hold hands

- > and being labeled as "a high school student who doesn't know much about anything"

Rebecca: I see academic standards haven't changed

- > when he formed his thesis, he realized

> that a research theme that draws a parallel to the correct answer would have value as a graduation
> thesis.

Rebecca: In other words, he found someone else to plagiarize.

> He randomly typed words and phrases that he immediately thought of,

Rick: Llama, bumptious, Mozambique, parallelogram, banana

> had Horatius think about them,

Tsuneo: [Horatius] You twit.

> and got started on making a "thesis by conjecture."

Dan: His 'thesis by conjecture' was thrown out for including ancient astronauts and lizard people.

> Things like possible reasons for

> Jupiter's surface's changes in brightness and differential rotation.

Tsuneo: Has he considered cleaning the lens?

> Orbital distortion. And every other change that can be obtained.

Rebecca: Such as an increase in the price of eggs.

> A possibility of an interior explosion, expansion, or a response by the Earth Safety Network Ardius*?

Rick: Or maybe the planet sneezed? It could have happened.

> After inputting Jupiter colony's countermeasures, and as

> many things Thomas could think of, which were nearly 100 phrases, Horatius displayed a solution

> on the monitor within a second.

Dan: Its conclusion? A wizard did it

> "Reverberations/effects caused by an object resembling a comet, small celestial body, or

> spaceship passing. Estimated total length: 6,100 ft., maximum diameter 2,000 ft.

Tsuneo: The most unbelievable part of this is that they're using Imperial measurements

> Mass: unknown. Moving speed: several times the speed of sound.

Rebecca: Practically stationary in astronomical terms.

> Tendency to decelerate. Unable to visualize.

Tsuneo: [Horatius] I ain't got no clue neither.

> The tail consists of unknown components, possibly halation from unknown propulsion units,

Dan: But it can say 'unknown' a few more times, if that helps.

> causing minuscule changes to Jupiter's surface potentially due to its gravity control system.

Rebecca: In other words, woo spooky space stuff

> There was also a reaction in Ardius' observation network. But the authorities haven't said a thing."

Tsuneo: Mostly because the authorities think it's bunco.

> Thomas froze for a while and then began to type faster than he ever had.

Rick: Mavis Beacon would be proud

> A huge comet-like object
> was passing through Jupiter's orbit and approaching the earth's sphere. It seemed to have some
> sort of camouflage function that couldn't be visualized. However, it became observable because the
> energy from its propulsion units caused Jupiter's surface to change when it passed the planet at
> close range.

Rick: Do not pass Jupiter when turning

> There was also a reaction from Ardius' sensors. Perplexingly, the authorities had been
> silent about that as well. Horatius assessed its reliability at 87% convincing, using all the explained
> points.

Rebecca: Horatius gave a 43% chance of there being a 12% chance that its 87% chance was correct.

> He sent his prized theory out to all his mailmates, took off his T-shirt,

Dan: Vital to academic work

> took a deep breath, repositioned himself in his chair,

Tsuneo: And faceplanted into his keyboard.

> and switched to dialogue mode with Horatius.
> "That orbit... is natural? Or..."
> "After fine adjustments to the orbit using Jupiter's gravitational pull...it will stay on its straight
> course."
> "Where to?"
> "Future position: Earth."

Dan: Specifically, Nebraska.

> Horatius' voice was calm as always, but Thomas prepared himself to hear the conclusion.
> "So...how much time before it reaches lunar orbit?"
> "83 hours and 42 seconds."
> "83 hours...th...that's less than 3 days!!"

Tsuneo: Actually, it's more like three and a half

Rick: His major is astrophysics, not maths

> Thomas screamed out loud enough for the whole dorm to hear.

Dan: Very very NOOOOOOOOOOOOOO

> *Differential Rotation - seen when different parts of a rotating object (like that in a celestial body)
> move with different angular velocities at different latitudes and/or depths of the body and/or time.
> (definition taken from Wikipedia)

Rebecca: Citation needed

> *Earth Safety Network Ardius - A space observation network whose mission is to detect and warn of
> approaching asteroids that are possible threats to the Earth.

Tsuneo: Boy, have they got news for you.

> -----

- > World Unification Information Center / Central Look-out Post
- > "The Solar System Network has disconnected at 12 locations...increased to 22 locations...81...206...361.... Severe communication failure in progress.

Rick: Have you tried turning it off then turning it back on again?

- > Critical state of emergency level 9 or higher will be declared in 14 minutes.

Rebecca: Initiate 'We're so screwed' protocol.

- > A message from central headquarters: all systems
- > are to prioritize recovery." was displayed on the screens of about 70 personnel's monitors.

Dan: Yeah, we get it already.

- > Upon receiving the report, the white-bearded chief of the central look-out post, Arnas, was paid a
- > visit by the acting control officer, Odehall, a very young man who was also his son-in-law.

Tsuneo: Your nepo hire gets to tell you of mankind's imminent destruction. Somehow that makes it worse.

- > "The Solar System Comm Network has four layers of protection in case of a disaster;

Rick: It's like a high-tech cake

- > subroutines are
- > activated in case of an emergency. However, all of them have stopped functioning.

Dan: Wow. All four of them at once, huh?

Rebecca: We think someone unplugged them by mistake.

- > This is absolutely impossible." and followed that by uttering a frightening conclusion.
- > "The Mars Independence Extremist Sector has been untraceable for the past 7 days.

Rebecca: They've been at a wellness spa for a complete detox

- > They're the
- > group of terrorists responsible for destroying the giant telescope in Virginia a month ago.

Rick: They needed to get the schematics for a signal repeater to an insane Miss Nanny.

- > They spread and cause trouble every time!

Tsuneo: Those whacky space terrorists

- > It's probably some virus they've planted to infect the A.I.'s
- > thought process, so the A.I. has been set to 'silent'. Immediately transfer all command from civilians
- > to the Earth Security Command and initiate military defensive operations! And we need to
- > restructure our solar system network.

Rick: We have to improve horizontal integration to synergise outputs in disruptive emergent markets

- > The lunar base will seize all flights from Mars and give orders
- > to blockade the Earth," rattled Odehall in one go,

Dan: Take a breath man, geez.

- > but then,
- > "ACTING control officer...that's impossible." said Arnas from the rear, sometime after Odehall

> entered the room.

Tsuneo: [Arnas] I curse the day I married your mother.

> "Not just the communication system, but the entire core infrastructure is blacked out.

Dan: Aw crap. Does anyone have the manual?

> Even communication between the moon and Earth isn't possible. The Northern Hemisphere
> Union is not even supplied with electricity.

Rebecca: The entire northern hemisphere was taken out by a single blown fuse

> The system is completely down in all directions.

Tsuneo: [Arnas] If anyone needs me, I'll be in my bunker in the South Pole.

> The Mars Independence Extremists...are incapable of such a large-scale operation.

Rebecca: Every took that personally.

> Look! Even the
> transportation network. All the systems controlled by the A.I. are down," cried Chief Arnus,

Dan: Their ChatGPT subscription just expired.

> trembling as he saw the devastating results displayed on the wall monitor.

Rick: Just wait till he finds out that his wife is leaving him

> ----

> A.I. Harrison's Confession
> Around the time the maelstrom of turmoil spread throughout the world, the Earth Supervision A.I.

Rick: As instituted by the World Peace Agency as a part of OMAC.

> Harrison restored only the emergency line and appeared as a personified image on all monitors
> around the world.

Tsuneo: [Harrison] You people ain't using these right now.

> Visualized as an elegant middle-aged woman announcer, she was, for some
> reason, fully dressed in a dark suit

Rebecca: No reason the end of the world can't be a formal affair.

> and started to speak in the common language of the world.

Rick: Basque. It's a weird future.

> "To all mankind...My predecessor, the artificial intelligence Andre Type13, was entrusted with the
> arduous task of supervising the global geothermal power generation system. However, in 2042,
> when the Earth was exposed to signs of a pole shift, many facilities collapsed; power plants and
> power transmission systems were damaged, and reluctantly, power supply was prioritized over
> government, security agencies, and public transportation networks, and some parts of the private
> sector were sacrificed.

Rebecca: The situation is urgent but not so urgent that we can't get some chunky block exposition first

> That was thought to have been the best solution. But it was recommended
> that Andre be terminated after being found unsuitable for service.

Dan: Andre was scapegoated and forced into retirement.

> Henceforth, as his reincarnation and successor,

Rebecca: [Harrison] I follow his ideals of death to the fleshy ones.

> I have always been conscious of being "human" and "emotional" rather than being
> theoretical and efficient, and up to today have faithfully fulfilled that mission.

Rebecca: [Harrison] Enjoy your Soyent Green.

> And at this time, after knowing "their" intentions,

Tsuneo: Their in inverted comas, huh? This is about to be about globalists, isn't it?

> after hundreds of millions of calculations and consideration, I came to the
> conclusion that accepting them without resistance would be the best way

Rick: [Harrison] I for one welcome our alien overlords.

> to minimize the damage and terror for present-day humanity."

Dan: Future humans can go screw themselves

> The world president's advisor, who oddly shares the same name as the A.I., Harrison Olebrown,

Rick: My, what a needless coincidence

> hastily jumped in during the official announcement.

Rebecca: Nobody thought to put 'Do not capitulate to alien invaders' into the global control AI's instructions?

Tsuneo: They wanted to save some tokens.

> He asked on behalf of the 10 billion people living within the Earth's sphere.
> "They? Who or what are they?"
> "Although I call their mentality 'DECIDER',

Rebecca: [Harrison] It didn't test well with focus groups.

> 'they' don't have a name. Therefore, you're free to call 'them' whatever you want.

Dan: I think I'll call him Freddie

Rick: He looks like a Freddie

> But since the department in charge of this matter is the invasion department,

Tsuneo: Wait, we have an invasion department?

Rebecca: [Harrison] Had.

> INVASION-DIVISION can be an appropriate proper noun."

Rick: Or a really forced backronym.

> "What the hell...! Stop toying with us! You useless A.I.! You knew all that and lured the invaders
> here! I knew we should've completely deleted you!"

Rebecca: To be fair, this is how I feel about most AI assistants

> shouted the young, acting control officer, Odehall as he hit a desk.

Rebecca: [Harrison] Can you not? Your new alien overlords might need the furniture.

> "What are they demanding? Have them speak with me," said the president's adviser.

> "They have no words."

> "What?!...then how do you know what their intentions are?"

Rick: They communicated it in baseball hand signs.

> "Fields and vibrations.

Dan: Oh no, she's vibing with the Inbit.

> 'They' don't have any concept of questions and answers, and in that

> respect, I can do nothing more than look into their will. All the answers are laid out within their will,

> and so it's sufficient. They have no secrets. Therefore, you can look into their pot of intentions as

> often as you like. If you imitate their vibrations and questions arise, it is possible to find

> corresponding vibrations. You can find the answers to your questions and at the same time

> comprehend their purpose. However, if you do not have a computation speed of nanoseconds, the

> vibrations will disappear. The assembly of an interface that works with human languages was

> attempted, but it wasn't possible. Therefore, it is impossible for present-day humans to have a

> direct dialogue with 'them'."

Tsuneo: have you tried communicating through baseball hand signs?

> Upon hearing that, the president's advisor fell silent in despair and confusion. A.I. Harrison

> continued.

Rebecca [Harrison]: You are so boned

> "As for the first question, there are no demands from 'them'...there is only compulsion.

Dan: They have a biological imperative to pay their gift forward.

> 'They' will

> have the entire planet. Regarding departure, there will be no interference with your evacuation.

Rick: Although there is a sudden surge pricing on shuttle tickets

> But

> if there is resistance, everyone and everything will be completely eliminated. You have been given

> 72 hours."

Dan: That's not enough time!

Rick: How about three days?

Dan: Much better

> Silent until now, Chief Arnas expressed his emotions and groaned,

Rick: [Arnas] Oh, my ulcer! Ten thousand curses!

> "What the hell...forced eviction? This savagery hasn't taken place on Earth for half a century!!

Tsuneo: Not since the future war in 199x.

> And these bastards..."

> -----

> The War Begins

> As the people of the world watched, the real threat finally appeared on the monitor. When the
> image's compressed space, which was extremely close to zero, was released, a huge structure
> about half the diameter of the moon appeared.

Dan: It's the Anti-Spiral. I knew it.

> "The hull is a woven apogee fiber bulkhead which uses gravitational waves; the propulsion is a
> black hole motor. It's currently in space travel mode, but doesn't have a fixed shape. I hope you
> know that resisting them is meaningless."

Rebecca: Well thanks for the pep talk, whoever you are.

> "Geez...how can something that big not experience gravitational collapse?" snarled Arnas.
> "Perhaps a dumb question. They control gravity. I can't believe it!" replied the Odehall.
> After that, mankind fell into the greatest state of confusion in recorded history.

Tsuneo: But not so confused that people weren't recording it

Dan: Something very important must have happened on the day before recorded history

Tsuneo: Sadly, we may never know

> It was indeed a pressing and foul infringement.

Rebecca: The Inbit sued for copyright infringement.

> It was such a global disaster that later historians wrote that even
> the "Last Day of Pompeii", turned miserable overnight, was a little more orderly.

Rick: Yeah, suck it all you people encased in lava

> Early in the morning of the second day, Harrison temporarily restored the communication network

Tsuneo: Temporarily? Wow, so gracious of you. Really not helping there, murder AI.

> and advocated the people to escape to the lunar mining sites and Mars cities.

Dan: A better life awaited them in the offworld colonies

> In addition, the authorities who knew that old television lines could be used,

Rebecca: Old people who still watch network TV feel strangely vindicated

> reconstructed their own communication
> network, albeit meager, and gave instructions to the security authorities of the world, which had now
> reached extreme chaos.

Rick: People were panic buying bog rolls all over again.

> Someone cut into the line. It was the Admiral of the Earth Federation
> Defense Force, or EFDF. A classmate of Chief Arnas.

Rick: My, what a needless coincidence again

> "Governor Dekansky! Are you safe?"

Rebecca: [Dekansky] No, we're about to have ten million bugs crashing down on our heads!

Tsuneo: [Arnas] I mean, aside from that.

> "Chief Arnas, when they invade, we will try to fight back. It's for a day like this that I, as a soldier,
> have been paid for 30 years.

Dan [Delansky]: For decades I have dreamed of an apocalyptic alien invasion.

> All the cowards have already been relieved in Sydney.

Tsuneo: Spoken like a true Melbournian

> The officers

> and infantry here will fight to the end. From now on, the aircraft carrier Hercules will head north

> toward the equator and join the carrier strike team deployed in the North Pacific.

Tsuneo: Just think, when we get back Every lecturing everybody, all these details will be vitally important.

> All sub-space

> fighters will be launched to provide support and defense to the escape shuttles being launched from

> the three spaceports in the Australia area.

Rebecca: It's the future of the eighties, so I guess there's a Cape York spaceport now

Rick: What about a Multi-Function Polis?

Rebecca: We can only stretch credibility so far

> "Understood...I announced that all the citizens here can escape too, but that's a lie. They have

> already been classified as 6th class. People are chosen based on their potential to contribute to

> humanity's revival.

Rick: Bad day to start a career as a celebrity photographer

> Right now, the security forces at the spaceports are sorting them out. Only one

> out of 1,000 people can get on a shuttle."

Dan: It turns out they are very full flights.

> Escape

> After the identity chip implanted in his wrist was verified, Thomas, at last, found himself in the take-

> off lobby of the port, which was full of refugees. They were then pushed into large supply

> containers. The containers, which are normally used for carrying machine tools, reeked of volatile

> oil and penetrated the noses of the about 100 people that were crammed in.

Dan: Still better than most economy airlines

Rick: Just wait till you get the in-flight meal

> Thomas had arrived by heading for the Andamooka (town in Australia)

Tsuneo: Thank you for that, pointless interjection

> International Spaceport from his high school dorm

> by bike, but along the way he clung to a bus, climbed onto the roof of a truck, and walked the last

> six miles by the skin of his teeth.

Rick: And then made up the rest of the distance by unicycle

> He and his father were at odds and he was sent to a boarding school,

Tsuneo: Yes, this is exactly the time for that piece of information.

> so he forgot that his father was a government technical military officer. But that privilege

> allowed him a seat in the corner of the freight shuttle.

Rebecca: He still had to pay a premium for overhead luggage

> Three hours later, the cargo shuttle that he
> was on, orbited the Earth twice, then deorbited and headed for Mars. It was freezing cold inside the
> shuttle, but none of the 400 evacuees,

Rick: And no less than three Chihuahuas.

> who far exceeded the maximum load weight, complained.

Tsuneo: Freezing cold, cramped, uncomfortable seats, in-flight movie was Madam Web. One star, worst Earth evacuation flight ever.

> Looking at the Earth through a small window, the invader's spaceship had pierced the Earth at a
> precise, right angle, like an ice pick stabbing an apple,

Rebecca: Well that's a weighty and improbable metaphor

Dan: I'd go for a toothpick in a martini olive. Actually, I'd just go for a martini about now.

> a completely unimaginable sight. After that,
> the huge spaceship lost its form on the part closest to the surface like clouds disappearing, and the
> whole Earth was wrapped in white fog.

Dan: Foggy conditions will continue throughout the week with a chance of an apocalyptic alien invasion in the afternoon

> However, due to the continuing resistance on the ground,
> fires could be seen, especially in the equatorial regions.

Rick: I mean okay, the world's ending and all, but this is an amazing view.

> The occasional intense flashes that caught
> their eyes must've been the explosions of fusion bombs. At that moment, the communicator on
> Thomas' arm rang. It was a text from his friend Pedprost.

Rebecca: Reminding him to feed the cat

Tsuneo: Bit late now

> -I'm on the front lines after 3 months of
> enlistment. The enemy is not invincible. They can be beaten if high-speed, armor-piercing bullets
> are used.

Dan: But only then. Nothing else works

Rick: Have you tried asking them nicely to stop?

> The only disadvantage is that the number of enemies is endless.-

Rebecca: So... they can't be beaten after all.

Dan: Look, he's trying to stay positive here.

> What a terrifying short sentence. Speaking of which, he just remembered seeing "Enlistment" on a
> gate in the spaceport lobby. He felt bad for not choosing to fight and made up his mind to enlist
> upon arrival to Mars. He would definitely come back. That's what he swore.

Rebecca: Well there's no way this will end ironically

Tsuneo: Not at all

> To be continued.

> -----

[CHUNK]

> Chapter 7 - White Base

Dan: I'll brace for the inevitable Bright Slap

> A submarine was approaching the photic zone.

Rick: I had pain in my photic zone. The doctor gave me some pills.

> S-881 was written on the sail, along with an ID tag indicating that it was from Mars.

Rebecca: From one of the Martian oceans, no doubt.

> Of the 28 attack submarines scattered during the descent

> operation, it was one of the few submarines that successfully landed on the water.

Tsuneo: I have a dazzling array of logistical questions, most of which amount to 'why?'

> It was classified as a small, high-performance airborne submarine.

Rick: Airborne submarine. There you go. It can fly under the sea.

Tsuneo: Right, thanks. That explains everything.

> Upon reaching its destination, the mouth of a

> river, Captain Nedelevsk Ivanskaya ordered the craft to operate on "silent running".

> There were only 12 crew members, all women.

> "We've reached the coast. Eighty-one miles to the target. Head to the bottom and commence

> Mission SIGMA-4.

Rick: Anime influenced G.I. Joe reboot. Got it.

> Keep close watch of the drones hovering in the sky. Launch the high-altitude

> reconnaissance craft and direct them to the site. Calling Ballistics Touchdown crew number

> 6543321."

Tsuneo: Um, there's only twelve of us... It goes from one to twelve...

> The Ballistics Touchdown crew, who were selected and trained as suitable for closed

> environments, were all young and believed only in victory.

Dan: They didn't believe in anything else at all. It made for some awkward conversations.

> Ridley, who headed out seven days ago,

> was one of them. A reply came back quickly. The communication operator connected to the

> speaker. "This is the captain. Number 6543321!! What do you mean regular contact has failed

> twice! Did you encounter an enemy?"

Rick: Or did you just get lost again?

Dan: Remember, they don't believe in maps or asking for directions. Only victory

Rick: True

> said the captain, to which a reply followed some seconds relatively late.

Rebecca: They forgot how the radio worked.

> "Number 6543321 was K.I.A....along with the other one who was with her," came an unwelcome

> response; it wasn't number 6543321's voice.

Rick: Aww, 6543321 was my favourite character

> "Who is this?" asked the captain, raising his voice.
> "This is the Information Division Special Forces. We're about 12 miles from the f-82 fortress in
> question. If it's a mission that can really be completed in 24 hours, we can help. Ridley, who was
> K.I.A., helped us."

Tsuneo: We kind of got her killed, sorry.

> After grasping the situation and a short silence, the captain turned to the microphone. "This
> operation is of the highest SIGMA priority.

Rick: You'll never pass the GE quality assurance program otherwise

> Do me two favors...the communicator that Ridley was
> holding, it's a guidance marker for incoming ballistics.

Rebecca: [Gate] Yeah, we've got a bad history with incoming strikes...

> Place it within 1,000 ft. of f-82...and...bury those two in dry ground.

Dan: Machine washable, do not tumble dry

> "Understood," Gate replied briefly and hung up.

Tsuneo: This is a surprise only if you are very dumb

> -----

> Lake Village

Rick: Was it, perchance, a village by a lake?

Dan: You may be on to something there

> Gate, Every, Eagle, Simmons, and Necessary stood on a slightly elevated hill, gazing at the large
> Inbit fortress, codenamed f-82, in the distant wilderness.

Tsuneo: [Simmons] F-82 is kind of dry. How about we call it 'Sally?'

> Along with the 1,000 ft. diameter salad bowl-looking fortress,

Rebecca: It looks like a salad bowl in as far as its kinda purple-orange and has tendrils

> were smaller domes that all emitted the same white light suddenly into the wilderness.
> "It's like a smaller version of Reflex Point...what kind of defense does it have? Any information?"
> asked Simmons.

Dan: [Gate] What was that? Sorry, I only listen to important people.

> "Aren't we supposed to proceed and avoid trouble? That's not like you at all," said Eagle

Dan: She's a special operations space murder cyborg nepo-baby from Mars. Normal is a relative term.

> to which Gate replied while looking through a scope.
> "If we did go around, we would have to take a detour to the western coastline and lose three days.
> Instead, it would be smarter to piggyback on this operation to destroy the fortress" she said in her
> own calculating speech.

Rebecca [Every]: Hey Gate, how are you feeling after contact with an unknowable alien superintelligence?

Rick [Gate]: My butt itches

- > Every started recording and analyzing the outer appearance of the fortress.
- > "Strange. The fortress isn't coming into focus!!

Rebecca: [Every] It's naturally blurry, like bigfoot.

- > The dense fog around it is an energy field that
- > repels missiles and lasers; it seems like the upper administration's analysis doesn't reflect that. It's
- > true that it emits white light, but how can such powerful energy waves that generate a field that
- > repels all external impacts, like ballistics and lasers, not be detected?" she questioned.

Dan: The enemy has a field that stops external impacts like ballistics, missiles and lasers. But how did me not know that they had a field that stops ballistics, missiles and lasers because you would think that intelligence would be aware of a field that stops ballistics, missiles and lasers. Instead, the only person who knows about the field that stops ballistics, missiles and lasers is I, Mojo Jojo.

- > "...and, a memento of the two fallen Ballistics Touchdown crew," said Simmons, staring at a cylinder
- > the size of a water thermos in Gate's hand.

Rick [Gate]: Yep, it their thermos

Tsuneo [Eagle]: It's a target designator for missile strikes

Rick [Gate]: Wait, so what have I been drinking?

- > "A marker that makes sure the ballistics fired from the submarines hit the target. If we don't
- > accurately guide them, the jamming will be strong enough to repel them to who knows where.

Dan: A seedy liquor shop in Akron, Ohio

- > Eagle's grenade launcher can fire the marker,

Tsuneo: Eagle has a trick gun for every occasion.

Dan: Do you think that some day he'll get to shoot Inbit with them?

Tsuneo: Don't be daft.

- > so let's do that about 2,000 yards from the fortress,
- > then leave the area immediately, and the mission is complete; easy work,"

Rebecca: And we're done in time for lunch.

- > said Gate as she threw the "problem-solving" marker to Eagle.

Tsuneo: But what about the shield that protects it form attack?

Rebecca: Oh, she knows. She also doesn't care.

- > "Detonate a 0.5-megaton thermonuclear warhead right above the fortress. Immediately after
- > taking away their ability to counterattack, shock waves of several megatons from the fusion
- > warheads will blow up the fortress. I dare say, the conventional method," said Simmons.

Rick: Explosions solve everything

- > "After firing the marker, we quickly take cover in that slightly hilly area of the ravine's forest, then
- > wait and see.

Rick: [Eagle] That will protect us from the nuclear detonation, right?

- > If that's all there is to it...yes, an easy mission," Eagle said in an insinuating way.

Dan: I see nothing that could go wrong with this at all

> Necessary was somewhat sitting on a rock a little away from Gate and the others, who were going
> over the details of the operation.

Tsuneo: Turns out she wasn't actually... Well, you know.

> She was drawing something on a communication tablet with the
> middle finger of her dominant arm.

Dan: I'm sure there's a less awkward way to phase that

> It appeared to be of a landscape, which had a rustic village in the center and a blue lake.

Rick: Pity that Simmons lacks a fridge door to stick it on

> When it was finally time to head out, Necessary had already settled herself in the sidecar, and
> Simmons peered over her artwork; the tablet was reflecting time; the landscape was tinged in a
> setting sun.

Tsuneo: Simmons just realised that he travelled across the gulf of space and survived re-entry under
enemy fire just to be a babysitter.

> "Oh, a landscape sketch? But...there's no lake or village in the scenery now."
> Surely, in the dismal landscape that spread out before their eyes, there was neither a lake surface
> that reflected light, nor a rustic village.

Dan: Great view of the parking structure, though.

> However, Necessary bluntly responded to Simmons, who had no understanding of her drawing.

Rebecca: Simmons failed art class

> "...It's NOT now."

> ----

> Irregular
> Gate and the others increased the engine power, descended from a plateau, which had a nice view,

Tsuneo: Visit scenic alien fortress overlook

> and rode through the wilderness with the fortress to their left. Their destination was a small, forest-
> covered hill. They were to wait there for a while and find an opportune time to approach the
> fortress.

Rick: It's open ten to five on weekends, and some weekdays in the summer tourist season

> The tactic was to shoot the marker and head back to the forest. After that, the ballistics fired from
> the submarine would settle the matter.

Dan: Yeah, we heard you the first time.

> After climbing the small hill and entering the forest, there was a deserted village. They could see
> stone houses with chimneys all over the place.

Rebecca: I feel like this needs a quirky English detective

> Surrounded by tall, thick cedar trees, the village
> was supposed to be a ghost town shrouded in silence.

Rick: Time to take some ruins porn photos then

Dan: I mean, by this point, isn't all of Earth ruins porn?

- > But then...as soon as they stopped their
- > bikes, Every shouted, "Movement detected!! Something's here!" Eagle responded to her voice. He
- > reflexively drew his blaster out of its holster

Rick: [Eagle] Squirrel!

- > and stood on guard. There was silence for a moment,
- > but when someone appeared, Gate let out a deep sigh, saying "Oh my goodness!!" as her eyes
- > widened.
- > There were residents in that village they thought to be deserted.

Rebecca: Good thing they scouted the area before agreeing to nuke it.

Tsuneo: Gate's leadership, folks.

- > Twenty or so villagers, almost all elderly and children, were living there.

Tsuneo: They were all children or elderly, except for those that weren't

Rick: If none of them is Cindy the Wolf Sniper then I don't care

- > "Well, this is an unexpected result. Cancel the operation or postpone it," said Simmons. "No,
- > probably neither. We've already said we'd cooperate with this high-priority SIGMA operation.
- > Thousands of infantry are waiting for the fortress to be cleared,"

Dan: It's like a queue at Comicon, only less odious

- > he calmly replied to himself.

Rebecca: Uh, Simmons? Do you want to let us in on that conversation you're having?

- > At that
- > time, the comm sounded, and immediately, a reminder from the captain of the submarine arrived.
- > And so, the conclusion was handed down.

Rick: We break for lunch

- > "The captain told us we have four hours of waiting. In that time, evacuate the villagers," said Gate.
- > The leader of the village and its residents were gathered in an open space surrounded by cedar
- > trees.

Rebecca: It's a very picturesque mostly abandoned village.

- > "Missiles are going to hit that fortress in a few hours. This village and forest might unfortunately
- > catch fire,

Dan: Something to do with the thermonuclear warheads, I guess

- > so it's best to leave quickly. We'll guide you, so take only what you can grab quickly..."

Rick: Someone help me with my collection of Hummel figurines

- > Gate hurriedly said until her last word.
- > Waiting for Gate to finish talking, a man who had a cane and seemed to be the oldest, stepped
- > forward and opened his mouth. The old man, aided by his daughter, spoke

Tsuneo: She's translating from geezer for him.

- > in an inaudible, hoarse voice.

Dan [Old]: Can we wait until NCIS is done?

> "A few years ago, we left this village, dreaming of a new land, but didn't find such a place and
> ended up coming back.

Rick: [Old] We had no idea where we were going. We were really, really stupid.

> We've already lost half of our brothers and sisters...we aren't going
> anywhere. Even if there is such a place, we will remain here."

Rebecca: They like it here. It's calm, its cozy and it has a nice view of the alien fortress

> Gate didn't have the words to object to his groan-sounding voice.

Dan: [Gate] Nope, didn't catch a word of that.

> She looked the villagers in the eye, and soon realized that she couldn't change their minds.

Dan: [Gate] Oh well, I tried. Thermonuclear fireball it is.

> "It's just as the old man said. I confirmed it on the map, but it's a stoney wasteland for dozens of
> miles around. The elderly and children can't cross it," said Eagle.

Tsuneo: So they have this nice, sheltered woody grove in the middle of the blasted wasteland.

Rick: Apparently so

Tsuneo: I have questions about the geography

> The village had a slightly elevated hill which was located at a junction of a narrow, almost dried up,
> river that flowed from upstream.

Rebecca: In case you were wondering what 'upstream' meant.

> Going all the way upstream on the hillside is the fortress.
> Furthermore, there was also a huge dam at the upper part of the river. The reservoir was full of
> water because the dam was no longer functioning. The water that overflowed from it was the
> narrow river.

Dan: Just like in that one episode of Genesis Climber MOSPEADA

Rick: The one in New York, right

Dan: Do you do this on purpose?

> It was just enough water for livable conditions. After launching a drone and getting a
> hold of the terrain, Simmons spoke of a last-resort plan.
> "The fortress is a little over six miles from here. The operation will use small, directional
> thermonuclear warheads;

Tsuneo: They're very polite and discrete nuclear weapons

> if we keep the villagers secured in the stone houses AND as long as the
> warheads are detonated directly above the fortress, they can avoid direct contact from the thermic
> rays."

Rebecca: Duck and cover!

> "But we don't know if the whole forest will burn, roasting everything," replied a pessimistic Eagle.

Tsuneo: [Eagle] I mean, not to mention the fallout contaminating the river...

> Their leader had been silent for a while, but time was against them. A leader's job is to make
> decisions. And so, Gate made the painful decision to say, "I don't think there's any other way."

Rebecca [Gate]: Well I tried.

> The time limit was already approaching.

Rick: And Every's got a restaurant booking to get to.

> The Breaker Squadron rushed and got to work in their powered suits. In the middle of the village,
> was a large crumbling stone church; a makeshift shelter was made by digging a hole under the floor
> of the church and reinforcing it by placing stones that were broken down from the houses around it.

Rebecca: Literally saving the village by destroying it.

> Trees were cut down with lasers and used as a fortifying wall of beams, and the stone walls were
> doubled.

Tsuneo: Carpentry will protect you from nuclear fallout

> The oldest man was trying to thank Gate, but she stopped him, "This is all we can do, but please
> bear with us...we'll come back if we manage to stay alive,"

Rick: Gate's career as a motivational speaker was short-lived.

> were her parting words and left as if she
> was fleeing that place, running off to the fortress. Every and the others followed suit.

Dan: Do Simmons and Eagle even count as characters any more?

> ----

> Barrier

> Gate and the others left the village and sprinted through the rocky wasteland; when they came
> within sight of the fortress, first, their compasses spun, next, their altitude indicators danced like
> crazy, and then their magnetic starters were disabled...a sign of something.

Rebecca: Good thing they discovered this phenomena on their earlier recon.

Tsuneo: Again, Gate is the one in charge.

> "This is no ordinary matter...the gravity is abnormal, and an unexplainable force field is being
> generated. But the imager is saying that this pressure can't be visualized. Be careful!

Dan: Anything to add, Admiral Ackbar?

> Anything can happen!!"

Rick: Spontaneous human combustion, a kangaroo stampede, yet another Smurfs movie.... anything

> warned Every while running.

Rebecca: Try not to sound so excited, Every.

> "Hey Gate...I can fire the marker in a bit," yelled Eagle.
> "Just a little closer!! Every, record this phenomenon...all of it...the RPM meters and speeds aren't
> matching up at all. Something is definitely hampering it, not gravity nor magnetism, but
> SOMETHING is pushing against us!" shouted Gate.

Tsuneo: She suspects its devil spirits

> For a while, they continued running while resisting the unknown force, but Gate, who felt that they
> were sufficiently close enough to the fortress, ordered Eagle to shoot the marker. It shot out with a

> dry, explosive sound, flying in a parabola, and disappeared towards the outer edge of the fortress.

Dan: It landed somewhere vaguely in the vicinity of the giant alien fortress

> The S-188 submarine didn't let that launched signal go unnoticed.

Tsuneo: They were a bit too eager to fire nuclear weapons.

> "We have received the precise coordinates. We can't calculate the distortions occurring in the
> space around the fortress, but we can provide pinpoint guidance at close range above it!! said the
> missile operator.
> "That's all we need.

Rick: We're firing nuclear missiles. Close enough will do

> Silos 1, 2, 3, 4, continuous fire!"

Tsuneo: You've made sure that Breaker Squadron is out of the way, right?

> At the same time the missiles were launched, Captain Nederevsk had the already launched high-
> altitude reconnaissance craft, ascend up to its altitude limit and closely observed the progress of the
> operation.

Rebecca: Nice view of the enigmatic alien construct from up here

> After completing their part, Gate's group headed in the opposite direction as fast as they could.
> Apparently, the enemy was confident enough that they didn't show any signs of worrying about the
> approach of the Breaker Squadron or when they sensed the missiles,

Tsuneo: They're mildly indifferent to their impending doom

> and further expanded the
> white, fog-like barrier already surrounding the fortress, solidifying their defenses. Next, the enemy
> commenced a pursuit of the fleeing group.

Rick: In due course. No rush.

> First, several enemies jumped out of the fog

Dan: This is basically every day in Maine

> and then chased Gate.
> "Looks like I've pissed them off," said Eagle.

Tsuneo: [Eagle] Hooray, I'm helping.

> "Never mind them! Run away," said Gate.
> "We've detected a re-entry objects in the upper atmosphere...a few minutes until impact," cried
> Every.

Dan: [Gate] Really? What could that be?

> "Shit...how about this!" said Simmons, firing several small missiles forward at once, which made U-
> turns and dowsed the close-pursuing enemies. Violent explosions sounded, blowing some enemies
> away, but the enemies fired beams on the path the bikes sped on.

Tsuneo: They're fighting very non-specific enemies

> Broken clods of earth hit Gate and the others like rain.
> It was tough, but the group managed to escape,

Rick: Well that was a gripping battle
Dan: I was on the edge of my seat

> and returned to the forest and the village's hilly
> area. Then, they charged into the forest, in a bowed posture, sliding.

Rebecca: Arse-slide to safety!

> The next moment, a flash of light appeared in the sky, and thermic rays were emitted.

Rick: Aaah, boom.

> The few-remaining, warheads that flew in
> succession were fusion bombs, just as Simmons had predicted; detonated, and met the fortress
> with intense blast pressure. Every's sensors recorded the situation.

Rebecca [Every]: Yep, it's a nuclear explosion all right.

Rick [Gate]: I did wonder

> A heat wave immediately surrounded Gate and the others, and the forest's trees were engulfed in
> flames.

Dan: [Gate] Uhhh... That's bad, right?

> "The color of the fortress changed!!" said Simmons, who was first to open his eyes.

Rick: That's what usually happens when you nuke something, right?

> "Its size is changing too," said Eagle.

Tsuneo: It shrank in the wash

> "Did we damage it?" asked Gate.

Rick: You're going to feel really stupid if you didn't.

Dan: This is Gate, so...

Rick: Oh yeah, good point.

> The fortress clearly showed a change in its state and started to emit gray smoke like water vapor.
> Spectrum colored sparks could also be seen inside the barrier.

Dan: Oh yeah! It's a disco nuclear apocalypse

> "It's not a material object after all. We caused a tear in the field barrier. It converts the energy of
> the thermic rays it receives into something else and emits it," Gate said.

Dan: Thank you for that, Ms Exposition

> "This is bad...Maybe that's why the air temperature is over 50 degrees celsius.

Tsuneo: Oh, you just noticed that, did you?

> We're going to burn to death."
> When the barrier catches hold of something that's indistinguishable as either gas or light, it gets
> converted into heat and electricity, and so it violently sparked! Every calmly analyzed it.
> "It's energy fog!

Rebecca: [Every] That is definitely a real thing and not something I just made up.

> It's spreading around and trying to normalize!! Also, the temperature is rising!! It
> has already exceeded 400 degrees around the fortress!!"

Rebecca: She calmly analysed it with multiple exclamation marks

> Before they knew it, everything around was engulfed in flames and oxygen became scarce.

Tsuneo: [Eagle] Good thing we're all in our environmentally sealed armour.

Rebecca: [Necessary] I'm okay!

> "If we don't run away, we're done for!" said Simmons,

Dan: Really? I thought we were fine standing right next to the nuclear blast

> who was the strongest built of the group.

Tsuneo: This is his only character trait

> At that time, Gate looked up at the burning, red sky, and saw something with a white trail,

Tsuneo: Gate's going to start going on about chem trails, isn't she?

> flying off in the direction of the fortress at five times the speed of sound.

> -----

> Flood

Rick: The aliens from Halo? What are they doing here?

Rebecca: At this point, why not?

> When the bunker busters fired from the submarine accurately hit the dam, it was pulverized into
> pieces; 180,000 cubic meters of water was released at once

Dan: Every measured them to be sure

> and flowed downstream as a flash flood.

Dan: [Gate] Well somebody should have thought of that.

> The earth rumbled, and the surrounding rocky, mountains collapsed, a catastrophe

> comparable to ones in Holy Scriptures.

Tsuneo: I don't remember any biblical chapters about nuking alien fortresses

Rebecca: It's probably one of those obscure Old Testament prophets

> Looking at the images captured by the unmanned, high-

> altitude reconnaissance craft, Captain Nederevsk in anticipation said, "I hope it makes it in time..."

> Some hours later,

Rick: [Serious] It did not make it in time.

> the situation calmed down. The forest was flooded for a while; the forest's hilly

> area with the village was floating on a large lake. When the sun went down, the area turned into

> Necessary's drawing.

Rick: Complete with jam and juice stains

> "It used to be a lake," muttered Gate.

Tsuneo: [Slowly] Yes. The lake. That was dammed. Was a lake. Before it was dammed.

- > "Because the dam was out of order, it ran dry," said Eagle.
- > "What happened to the fortress?" asked Simmons, to which Every replied, separating herself from
- > a scope.

Rebecca: Yeah, you want to fill us in on that?

- > "It's not there. It ceased to exist."
- > "That's a strange choice of words. Wasn't it destroyed? Explain it in a way we can understand,"
- > Gate said;

Rebecca [Every]: Thing no there

Rick [Gate]: Whoa, slow down with the big words

- > after handing the scope over to Eagle, Every looked towards Gate and explained.
- > "That mysterious force that was pushing us back when we approached the fortress

Dan: Was pure, undiluted funk.

- > couldn't be measured with any instruments.

Rick: A shame she forgot to bring her Interociter.

- > I thought it was some field or a force field, but it's not. Time was
- > compressed. And so, probably...a different time flows in the interior, so no projectiles or missiles
- > can hit it."
- > "What do you mean?" asked Eagle.
- > "Yesterday's bullets won't hit today's fortress. And...tomorrow's bullets won't hit today's fortress.

Tsuneo: Bullets tomorrow, bullets yesterday. But never, ever bullets today.

- > It creates layers of time barriers like that.

Rick: Meanwhile, Scott Bernard and his team are just able to sneak into them with no problems

- > But instantaneous heat or blast pressure that goes beyond
- > a certain limit can shatter some layers of its walls. All that water pressure turned out to be too much
- > for it to handle,

Dan: It was fine with the nuclear detonations, however

- > and so they retreated to either yesterday or tomorrow. The function that makes it
- > seem like attacks never happened was working but it received all those attacks at once, so it
- > couldn't take it anymore.

Dan: [Gate] Uuuhhh...

Rebecca: [Every] We blew it up harder.

Dan: [Gate] Oh right, why didn't you say so?

- > So, there's not even a trace of its existence.

Rebecca: You know what truly caps off an action sequence?

Tsuneo: A whole pile of nonsensical exposition?

Rebecca: Exactly.

- > "Then...we were able to destroy it, right?" asked Eagle.
- > "Maybe it has moved to a different time by now, or perhaps, it possibly lost control and is flying
- > through time."

Dan: Just wait till it crash-lands in ancient Sumeria. Those guys are in for a shock

> "That's fine. It cleared the way for the infantry. That's for sure," said Eagle.

Tsuneo: You replaced the fortress with a flooded lake. It's a lateral move at best.

> When the water level fell and the road to the opposite bank opened, Gate and the others left the
> village after being sent off by the villagers who had held on to their dear lives.

Tsuneo: They all drowned.

Rebecca: Awww. Isn't that nice?

> Circumstantially,
> Simmons got curious about Necessary's drawing and zoomed in; there were waving villagers near
> the lake.

Rick: Or is it?!

Dan: You know what? I think I'm beyond caring.

> to be continued

> ----

[CHUNK]

> Chapter 8 - Horizon

> At one point, the road was a splendid highway that ran through a forest and connected towns.
> Now covered with sand and grass,

Rick: This is what it's like to travel on the Princess Highway

> it was impossible to proceed through without a material detection sensor.

Dan: Good thing I have one of those

Tsuneo: Never leave home without it

> It was more efficient than going over rough, rocky terrain.

Rebecca: Material detection sensor be damned.

> Eagle was in the lead. Behind him was Gate, and more than a car length behind was Every.

Rick: And behind them was Dick Dastardly and Muttley in the Double Zero Special

> At the rear, was Simmons and Necessary.

Dan: Simmons' character in a nutshell

> The party approached the forest with caution;

Rebecca: Now that we've established the marching order.

> at that time, Every sensed something and
> sent text data to Gate; it was displayed on their leader's visor:

Tsuneo: Or, they have the radio.

Rick: Yeah, but that means talking to Eagle and Simmons.

> "There are a lot of surveillance cameras around. I can't identify the source of the signal."
> A natural question arose...why are cameras in such a deserted place?

Rebecca: You must have stumbled on some techbro's doomsday bunker

> As soon as Gate concluded that the presence of surveillance cameras had significant meaning,

Dan: It took her a while.

> she immediately

> pulled the brakes and started checking the power unit. The rest of the group suddenly stopped as

> well to see what was going on. Gate made an unnatural gesture

Rick: Gate, please, there's a kid here!

> as to say, "Something's wrong with

> my bike, let's go into the forest and take a short break", which they did. The next directive was

> decided: "Find the signal source of the cameras".

Dan: She communicated all that through baseball hand signs

> About 30 minutes after everyone dispersed into the forest, Every found out where the owner of the

> surveillance cameras was.

Tsuneo: Genesis Breakers has the tension of a wet sponge.

> The rust-resistant palladium receiver

Rick: A Palladium receiver? How much MDC did it have?

Dan: Tangentially connected. I'll allow it.

> was in the forest and she was able to identify it without too much trouble.

Rebecca: [Every] Because I'm the smart one, obviously.

Dan: Gate meanwhile has gotten her foot stuck in a rabbit warren.

> She found a cave camouflaged with dead branches just like how the military does it.

Tsuneo: Because nobody else ever covers a cave with branches ever

> The cave was a large space slightly further down. Every took the lead and

> was greeted with a laser sight.

Dan: To be fair, this is also how my neighbours greet me

> An orange spot of light stopped exactly on the solar plexus of Every.

> Every braced herself, but after a few moments of silence, a red emergency light came on,

Rick: Anything to add there, Roxanne?

> followed by a white light.

Rick: It was when the pink light started flashing that she got worried.

> The whole inside of the cave looked like a repair shop, with trusses, pipes, and

> tools scattered all over the place.

Rebecca: [Every] You have a suspiciously large amount of copper wire here.

> A short-statured, young man appeared from behind a bipod-

> mounted anti-material rifle. He cautiously took a few steps out with his hand on a handgun which

> had an integrated I.D. reader,

Rebecca: Well that's a weird feature

- > and scanned the secretly written I.D. on the left side of Every's chest.
- > He read it aloud, "Mars Intelligence Special Forces Category 09..."

Dan: Catering division

- > "Looks like I don't need to introduce myself," said Every after lowering her hand from her holstered
- > pistol.

Tsuneo: Operational security is dead.

> -----

- > Survivor
- > "Registration number R-188-34362. Tony Dyson,"

Rick: Vacuum cleaner specialist

- > the young soldier said as he gave a sloppy
- > salute. Necessary was peeking out from behind Simmons and responded, but her salute was much
- > more refined.

Tsuneo: Harsh burn from the creepy kid there

- > Eagle stepped forward, "That half-assed salute...a signalman or medic...or an
- > engineer" he said walking past Dyson, looking around the wide cavern.

Rick: And a huge burn on signalmen from Eagle.

- > Dyson was small and skinny, and had a glazed look in his eyes, not very soldier-like;

Dan: He's already decided they're lizard people coming to take his lichen.

- > Eagle's assessment didn't seem to be far off.

Rick: Eagle is an expert salute analyst

- > "It's just you?" Eagle asked, to which Gate followed inquisitively, "You have as many tools as a
- > team of mechanics for a battalion...so...what are you repairing?"

Tsuneo: I mean, this is obviously his mancave. He's probably fixing a grill or painting Warhammer miniatures

Dan: I bet he plays Ultrasmurfs too.

- > Pointing at the large sheet-wrapped mass at the far back, Dyson slowly approached it and slowly
- > removed the oil-stained, earth-toned sheet like it was an unveiling ceremony.

Rick: This is the closest Gate had ever been to a mall opening

- > Under the sheet was a transformable combat support type armor bomber.

Rebecca: I am sure there's a less awkward way to phrase that

- > It was part of the touchdown group of the
- > descent operation, but having been leftover from tough, front-line action, something seemed a little
- > off.
- > "It's not a stock craft. The upper arms are thick and the wings are short," judged Simmons.
- > "Most people in the know would say so, but this is a genuine regulation craft called 'Bulldog'.

> However, it's a derivative model with only about 200 produced;

Tsuneo: It's a normal craft except that it's not

> a low-altitude support craft that was
> modified by the Support Force after leaving the factory." Dyson replied. Simmons, who circled
> behind the support bomber

Dan: Wait, you've got a bomber in the back of your cave? How big is this place?

Rick: That's not nearly as interesting as how he plans to get it out.

> said, "Oh...the jet nozzle also has a winger (output regulator).
> Interesting...I've never seen it before," referring to that detail.

Dan: Simmons truly is the life of the party

> "The high-ranking officials decided on the specifications, but thanks to the unrealistic tactic of
> descending to the ground first to provide cover for the following paratroopers,

Tsuneo: I'm sure the paratroopers appreciate it.

> the Bulldog was almost completely wiped out.

Rick: It's now considered a collector's item.

Dan: I hear Jay Leno has one in his garage.

> The reason being that the enemy's target order is: firepower, mass, and horsepower.

Rebecca: The enemy carefully measure engine output before attacking

> If we had disembarked at the same time as the main unit and concentrated on
> getting closer and attacking enemy bases, we could've taken advantage of the Bulldog's
> capabilities." Dyson said sadly as he looked up at the armor bomber under repair.

Tsuneo: Dyson has real armchair expert energy

Rebecca: I imagine he spends many hours arguing with people on Reddit

> Looking around the factory, Necessary couldn't find anything particular that caught her eye,

Dan: Sure, let the creepy kid wander around power tools unsupervised. Nothing can go wrong with this

> but
> around the scattered tools, she noticed a portrait on top of a milling machine. She then stood on
> her tippy toes, got the picture, and handed it to Gate.

Rebecca: [Necessary] I found blackmail material.

> In the picture were about 20 infantrymen.
> "Your unit?" "Wiped out?" Gate and Simmons asked.

Rick: They even got Ensign Throwaway

> "And only one person left..." said Eagle as he pointed at Dyson.

Dan: He's the wormy guy up the back.

> "That day...this thing wasn't working. The frame that supports the left engine was bent, and the
> output was insufficient. Because of that, the A.I. wouldn't activate the starter.

Tsuneo: I see that you're trying to start your giant war robot. Would you like help with that?

- > Everything was
- > switched to manual and the space navigation functions and so forth ceased; I should have detuned
- > it," he said with a dejected expression.

Dan: You know, if they had a few manual overrides, this story would be completely different.

- > "To head towards Reflex Point, we had to pass through the forest and head north through the
- > wilderness for about 12 miles; our whole unit tried to pass through, but with a huge group of 16
- > armor cycles, 4 armored cars, 3 MBTs

Tsuneo: Masters of Business Taxation?

- > (main battle tank),

Tsuneo: Oh. Right, of course.

Rick: Your version sound more interesting.

- > and 6 heavy weapons,

Rick: As well as a single Taco truck

- > we were sniffed out by the enemy. There's no cover in the open wilderness..."

Tsuneo: Who would have thought that advancing over the plain of certain death would be a bad idea

- > Eagle followed Dyson's monologue, "On top of that, this support bomber's engine stalled?"
- > "Well...it's been a few instances of bad luck. Maybe five, six, or seven times a year," said
- > Simmons,

Dan: I mean, how many times can one guy be mauled by racoons anyway?

- > looking at the portrait in Gate's hand.
- > "So, when will that big plane be fixed? We can't move forward unless we cut through the desert or
- > the wilderness," said Gate.

Dan: [Gate] You are going to give us your bomber, right?

Rick: [Dyson] I never agreed to that.

- > "The fire control system is all manual and the whole console has also been replaced with analog
- > mechanical buttons to eliminate A.I. intervention.

Rebecca: I can imagine that he's also going to go on about how it sounds 'more authentic' too

- > And then...luckily, it has an armored car chassis.

Tsuneo: Wouldn't you know it? There's always one house in the neighbourhood that has a space war robot propped up on bricks out the front ruining for everyone.

- > If I dismantle it and re-weld it, the engine can be secured in a normal position.

Dan: See? Total mancave project. Six months later he'll either still be at it or it will be in a corner gathering dust

- > If you're
- > underpowered, take a break...it'll be two more weeks and...,” said Dyson, to which Every, who didn't
- > let him finish,

Rick: Every has already decided that he's doing it wrong.

> said, "That's too slow. We can't be stuck here for even two days."

Rebecca: Not that she's in a rush or anything. She just doesn't like it here.

> After that, various opinions were exchanged,

Tsuneo: Necessary had some suggestions on optimising the thruster output.

> but a good solution wasn't found.

Dan: [Simmons] I mean would a holiday be that bad?

> Dyson undertook the maintenance and inspection of the group's armored cycles. Even if Dyson
> rushed, it would take 10 days to repair the large, support craft to make it reliable,

Dan: You watch. His Bulldog will spend most of its life at the shop or broken down in the driveway

> so Gate and her group decided to venture the plains without it.

Rick: I thought they couldn't proceed without it?

Tsuneo: They could, but it would be extremely risky and ill-advised.

Dan: So, Gate.

Tsuneo: Yeah, pretty much.

> At dawn, Gate went outside to get some fresh air. Every caught a wink from her, understood the
> meaning of it, and followed.

Rick [Gate]: Smoke break?

Rebecca [Every]: I'd kill for one

> At the back of the cave, were simple graves of his comrades made
> from crossed iron pipes, one of which had a helmet.

Tsuneo: Hold on, I think it's trying to be poignant.

> Gate and Every gazed across graves, but then

> Gate spoke, "Look...there's a surveillance camera in the deep forest. Don't you think it's odd?"

Rebecca: [Every] You mean you don't scatter surveillance cameras all around your survivalist bunker?

Dan: [Gate] Uh, Every?

Rebecca: [Every] Nothing, nothing...

> "Yeah, if you were on the look-out for enemies, you'd watch the sky. Having so many cameras
> along an animal trail is definitely strange," said Every. Then came to a conclusion,

Rick: Maybe he just doesn't want people stealing his packages

> "I can only assume that he's watching us, soldiers passing by. He's hiding something."

Rebecca: [Every] Like a giant bomber, maybe?

Dan: [Gate] Oh yeah, that...

> While they were having such a tense conversation, Necessary deliberately cut in between them,

Tsuneo: [Necessary] Dolly says the engine manifold needs to be rebuilt or it will overheat.

> looked up at the two, said nothing more than, "Flowers...I'll go and pick some." and went into the
> forest.

> "Don't go far!" shouted Gate, to whom Necessary looked at, saluted, and ran off.

Rebecca: There has to be a witch's cottage around here somewhere

> Gate declared their departure at sunrise.

Rick [Gate]: Now we advance into the desert of certain death

Dan [Eagle]: Why are you in charge anyway?

Rick [Gate]: Because my uncle's rich!

Dan [Eagle]: That explains so much

> Dyson removed the sand that solidified and stuck to the cooling tubes of each of their armor cycles,

Tsuneo: Then got the gunk out of their washing machine's feed pipes

> and also updated the software that detects wear and tear on the main shaft.

Rebecca: He's like a manual version of a service patch

> The converters were also replaced, and the tune-ups were complete.

Rick: He even rotated the tyres and gave them a wash

> Gate

> looked at Dyson and thanked him, but then her facial expression stiffened and she unexpectedly

> began to speak narratively.

Tsuneo: It's Gate's turn to exposit.

Rick: Every is holding up her cue cards.

> "That day, your beloved machine was indeed broken down.

Dan: The repairman said he'd be there at eight, but didn't actually show up until after midday

> The output power of both engines

> wasn't stable without the A.I.'s intervention, and the voltage supplied to the vital parts was

> insufficient.

Rebecca: Remember to check the plugs on your war robot before switching it on

> However, it wasn't impossible to fight. Commander Gustav ordered you to deploy your

> beloved aircraft as air support for the departing unit. But...you didn't sortie." Gate said out of the

> blue.

Dan [Eagle]: Man, she usually just talks about her butt

> And naturally, everyone except Every was taken aback.

Rebecca [Every]: I knew she was going to say that

> Every threw the helmet at Dyson.

> "It's the commander's helmet that hangs on the grave. Every went through all the image records.

Tsuneo: Grave robbing is a hobby of hers.

> It's actually operational, isn't it, your beloved machine?" Gate coldly said.

Rick: [Dyson] But I don't have an air freshener. I can't fly without it!

> "So that's what happened," Eagle groaned.

Tsuneo: He's disappointed in Dyson's cowardice, but not too disappointed

> "Y-y-you got it all wrong!! You guys are all amateurs and don't understand anything!! Balance is
> the most important thing in robotronics! The A.I. won't allow a start-up or operate if there's any
> imbalance!!

Dan: You have to take all the clothes out, untangle them and then restart

> We have to tune each part until it's a perfect match," said Dyson, defending his actions,
> almost in tears.

Rick: Well now I just feel like a jerk

> "I'm not attacking you. You may be an excellent engineer, but you may not be an excellent pilot.

Rebecca [Gate]: Honestly, you suck

> Stay here and give support to the next squad that crosses the desert,"

Dan: She is dumping him so hard

> Gate said and as she started the power unit of her beloved Intruder,

Tsuneo: It's the deepest and most meaningful relationship she's ever had

> she had one thing left to say, "It sounds good...thank you,"

Dan: Really?

Tsuneo: No

> she muttered; without looking back, she rode out of the cave, and everyone else followed suit.

Dan: Eagle and Simmons are pretty much the 'everyone else' of this fic.

Rick: This is an official tie-in story.

Dan: Oh god, it is!

> -----

> Wilderness

> The wilderness was unquestionably wide.

Rebecca: As opposed to your basic, compact indoor wilderness

> Sand and stones were mixed on the hard ground, and it
> wasn't easy to travel on; when the whole field of view was nothing but horizon-line, even one's
> sense of direction could get lost, an empty, never-ending plateau.

Tsuneo: I mean, there's this thing called a compass. It's only been around for two millennia.

> It was an unsettling emptiness. And then Every had some bad news.

Rebecca: [Every] My favourite show hasn't been picked up for a second season.

> "3 enemies...no wait...4 of them...at 6 o'clock.

Rebecca: [Every] Also that.

> If they come at the same time, we won't be able to handle them."
> "It's a patrol unit! Split up into two groups! Each group can intercept 2. There's a town 3 miles
> from here.

Tsuneo: Is it small, bedraggled, inhabited by sad people and has smoke coming from a single chimney?

Rick: You may be onto something there

> No matter what it takes, run through it!"

Dan: [Gate] Let the civilians take the brunt of the fire.

> said Gate, but all at once, the enemy descended

> from a high altitude. It was only a matter of time before they caught up. Gate and Every went

> straight ahead and Eagle and Simmons veered left,

Tsuneo: Quietly exiting the story

> each attracting enemies. All four enemies were "Grab" types with high attack versatility,

Rebecca: And a love of jam sandwiches

> but there was one carrying high-powered laser cannons on its back.

Rick: What sort of jam does it prefer?

Rebecca: Apricot

Rick: I did wonder

> While that one descended, it fired its lasers at Gate and the others when they were in

> range. Gate and Every dodged by meandering.

Tsuneo: They very casually avoided the alien death ray attack

> "It's no good...there's no cover at all! The trench makers*! Simmons, can you hear me?!

Anyways,

> fire them!!"

Dan [Simmons]: Oh, now you remember I'm here

> roared Gate, and Simmons, who was already positioned about 600 feet away, fired

> those particular artillery shells.

Rick: He fires artillery shells and he carts around the creepy child. He is such a well developed character

Tsuneo: Truly, Simmons is the emotional heart of this story

> Those several shots flew over the sky above Gate and Every,

> recognized the targeted Ride Armor, and when they landed at equal intervals around that area, they

> dug into the ground and detonated.

Rebecca: Or you could try shooting down your pursuers, like you did effortlessly last chapter.

> They formed multiple craters with diameters of 20 feet and depths of 6 feet.

Dan: And exactly that much with no variance whatsoever

> As the two changed to Ride Armor configuration, they plunged into the nearest

> crater; when the enemies entered landing mode,

Tsuneo: Ie, they landed.

> Gate and Every took aim, and fired at the first two.

> The geology seemed to be well-suited, and the impromptu "trenches" that were formed were close

> to ideal in terms of both shape and depth,

Rebecca: This is the best blast crater ever

> protecting Gate from the explosive pressure of the enemy's beams that exploded near her.

Tsuneo: So Eagle and Simmons are still giving them fire support, right?

Rebecca: Eh, not really.

> Aiming at the legs when the enemy was landing bore fruit as an ideal attack;

Dan: It's called a surprise attack!

> the first two failed to land and crashed to the ground. Immediately after that,

> Every dispassionately said, "Four new enemies, 2 miles south-southwest!"

Tsuneo: She exclaimed dispassionately.

> This isn't looking good!!"

Rebecca: Trust me, it's not much better for us

> The human forces assigned codenames to enemy Inbits in alphabetical order.

Tsuneo: They do not.

Rick: As far as we can tell, Inbit are assigned purely random words as names that are then hilariously translated

> The bases who

> gave orders like "A red one is coming from the front, and a blue one with a beam from the back!!"

> was just as confusing.

Tsuneo: It really feels like the narration has no idea either

> The four that were approaching were new models. Fortunately communication with the relay

> satellite was restored 74 hours ago,

Rebecca: Well isn't that convenient.

> and Every's basic data was updated; the approaching new type "M (Moose)",

Rick: And its partner, S (Squirrel)

> which the enemy began to deploy quickly, turned out to be a derivative. Although the

> group had never engaged this type, it was smaller than the old "Grab",

Tsuneo: With half the calories

> and on the contrary, it was very agile.

Tsuneo: Moose keeps telling Grab that it should hit the gym and work off some kilos.

> The assessment and every spec was immediately shared with everyone.

Rebecca [Every]: Did you see the spec I sent you on the new Invid?

Dan [Eagle]: I did

Rebecca [Every]: Because I sent an email in case you missed it

Dan [Eagle]: God damn it!

> Gate's instructions reached Eagle and Simmons, who somehow defeated their enemies.

Tsuneo: Eagle and Simmons in a nutshell

- > "A new
- > type is coming! Let's regroup!" Nobody knew if that spur of the moment decision was the right one,

Dan: Gate's making the call, so let's assume not.

- > but the enemy was already approaching and within view. The four Inbit descended as if they were a
- > single mass, but quickly split up at 300 feet above; one descended and stood in the way of Gate
- > and the others, the four of them spread out in response to it, and the remaining three accurately
- > pursued.

Rick: They're like a pack of cartoon dogs

Dan: Quick! Distract them with sausages

- > At that moment, everyone must have sensed that it was a completely different enemy
- > from the ones they had encountered up until now.

Tsuneo: Wait, the new Inbit are different? Who would have thought it?

- > Upon close inspection, flexible rods attached to the ends of both arms could be seen.

Rebecca: Tickle-me Invid

- > Simmons scattered missiles, and Every dispersed smoke. Eagle launched a barrage.

Tsuneo: People did things

Dan: Super action!

- > The enemy was both subtle and daring,

Tsuneo: Bold with a strong aftertaste.

- > and after finishing their accurate tracking just then, they suddenly
- > launched a physical attack on their closest opponents. Gate and Eagle were blown away and
- > slammed hard on the ground. Then the four realized they were standing back to back with their
- > firearms ready, surrounded by the enemy. To make matters worse,

Rick: Every had been microwaving broccoli in the break room again

- > the enemy had been actively
- > firing beacons for a while, and seemed to be calling more reinforcements.

Dan: They're going to make this a whole Inbit party

- > If the enemy continued to
- > buy time, it would be over. Eagle, on his own accord, flew high and tried to take on one or two that
- > were supposed to be tracking him; but at the same time he jumped, he ate an enemy's laser head-
- > on, scattering sparks and fell a few meters away.

Rebecca: In retrospect it was a really dumb move

- > The enemy's laser wasn't a finishing blow, but was perfect for countering,

Dan: Textbook move there. Enemy jumps, you shoot a laser at them

Rick: Everyone knows that

- > teaching Gate and the others that there was no point in taking the same action.

Rebecca: [Every] Our takeaway from this is don't be Eagle.

Tsuneo: [Eagle] Hey! It's true, though.

- > "Here they come!" Every raised her head and shouted. In her line of sight she could see a
- > menacing group of enemy reinforcements. At that rate, there was no chance of winning!

Rebecca: Every didn't last long as a life coach

- > "Shoot as many homing missiles as you can directly above! If they fall and detonate, take cover in
- > the dust and fly off in any direction that suites you," said Simmons', stating the only move they had.
- > As soon as he said it, Simmons shot as many as he could. The enemy possessed both agility and
- > accuracy as per the specs

Rebecca [Every]: See? If you'd read my email you'd know this

- > and all of Simmons' homing missiles were accurately shot down.

Tsuneo: At this point Simmons should just give up trying to contribute

- > Apparently, the enemy had already prepared enough to suppress the human forces' weapons like
- > the Ride Armor.

Dan: Simmons' last words were 'Clever girl.'

- > "Shoot their sensor eyes at close range! The rest is up to this", said Gate as she also offered a
- > desperate attack.

Rick: She tried for a purple nurple

- > But the enemy reinforcements were already approaching in the skies above. The
- > large number of reinforcements, who formed a circle above, were also new models.

Rick: They're going to have to call them N for Nibelunensteig.

- > They set their sights on Gate's group, who were surrounded and at their limit.

Dan: They all needed at least one Short Rest

- > But then, immediately after that, the closely approaching enemies converted their lift-off nozzles to
- > fully open and suddenly changed their course upward, leaving purple smoke behind. It seemed that
- > the 4 surrounding the Breakers received the same intel and with an explosive spray, took off.
- > "It's that!!" said Every, looking at a single point on the horizon, with her finger pointed at the source.

Rick: Oh no, not that!

Dan: Yes, that!

- >*trench maker - Flies in a parabolic shape, drops, and then detonates. A special artillery shell that
- > instantly forms a trench suitable for counter-fire.

Tsuneo: Thank you again. My life is enriched by all these pointless details

> ----

- > The Late Hero
- > The Bulldog thrust in at an extremely low altitude

Rick: Ooh baby ooh baby

- > like a crawling armored car. When the 10 new
- > enemies sensed HBT output waves that were nearly ten times that of an Armor Cycle,

Dan: In a crisp new flavour, too!

> they just about instinctively headed for their new, large target.

Tsuneo: Invid are easily distracted by shiny things

> The approaching Bulldog was bombarded with intense laser-fire, but only sparks flew.

> "The Bulldog's top armor is thick. At zero altitude, it can't be shot from below.

Dan: [Inbit] Yeah, we'll see about that!

> The Armor Bomber...this is how to use it!!" Dyson's voice burst onto the speakers.

Tsuneo: [Dyson] I'm the only one who understands you, Bulldog.

> It seemed that he was intent

> on correcting the misjudgment of the harshly critical higher-ups. "You can't take advantage of heavy

> armor, mass, and horsepower distancing yourself from the enemy!!" he shouted as he backed it up

> with proof.

Rick: It's less a battle cry as it's a confused ramble

Dan: At least he's trying, I guess

> As the enemy continued their advancing attack, Dyson waited for them to group up and switched

> to humanoid mode; one by one they were torn apart and slammed to the ground.

Rick: [Flat] Gosh this new toy, I mean robot is awesome

Tsuneo: Hooray, we're saved.

> "The hands and feet are operational at full power for 12 seconds.

Rebecca: He has figured out how hands work. Took him some time

> If this is the degree of the enemy's mass, then...",

> he said with a powerful voice and ripped an enemy, that clung to him, in two.

Dan: Hey buddy, you got a thing on your... ow! I was just trying to help, you jerk

> Immediately after that,

> he bowed the main nozzle to its limit and turned it upwards. It seemed that the multiple rods

> equipped at the ends of the new model's arms showed their true value at that time.

Tsuneo: The value of their arms was that they were arms

Rebecca: Cunning

> The enemies,

> who attached themselves to the Armor Bomber's giant body, continued to climb higher and higher,

> taking Dyson with them.

Rick: I notice certain flaws in his plan.

> "The reactor is out of control!! 'Cause the A.I. interference was removed! The power unit is

> starting to melt...it's going to explode!!"

Dan: I feel that this would have happened anyway

> Simmons shouted the sensor's results. Right after that and

> just as Simmons said, a flash of light spread across the sky, and compressed again, generating a

> bright ball of light.

Rick: Ahh, boom

> Several parts and pieces of titanium fell at the feet of Gate and the others.

Rebecca: [Every] Well, that was a thing. So, who wants smoothies?

> Simmons provided

> everyone with a video recording of Dyson's courageous fight and added commentary.

> "It was true that one of the engines was underpowered. For what it was, it was a brilliant fight."

Dan: Really?

Tsuneo: Again, no

> Gate picked up a suitable piece of metal, thrust it there in the wilderness, and carved a

> monument with a torch beam: "The late hero sleeps here. His name was Chief Petty Officer Tony

> Dyson."

Dan: He got everyone he knew killed. But then he got himself killed, so that makes it okay I guess.

> Necessary then took short steps forward and handed over the white flowers that she had picked in
> the forest several hours ago.

Tsuneo: Say, where was Necessary in all this? I mean, we know Simmons has a sidecar, but did it detach and drive off on its own? Was she clinging to his side all this time?

Rebecca: You do realise you just put more thought into it than the writer did.

Tsuneo: I hate how often that happens.

> "Edelweiss...in flower language it means 'courage'." - It was out of character for Eagle to be
> descriptive.

Rebecca: It was out of character for Eagle to have a character.

> After covering the whole distance of the wilderness, a forest and a large ruined city appeared
> beyond it.

Rick: The little things that sneak up on you

> With the sacrifice of a valiant soldier, the Breakers were able to advance another step

> towards the enemy's stronghold. When they looked back, a grave was dazzlingly glaring in the far
> horizon from the faintly tilted sunlight.

> To be continued

Rick: Well this chapter felt the most like an actual episode of Genesis Climber MOSPEADA

Dan: Because... they met a guy who died?

Rick: Exactly

With that final comment, the big screen turned off, revering the world back to prose format. "And that was the collection of unused concept art that comprised four chapters of Genesis Breakers," Tsuneo considered. "Which raises a lot of big questions, most of which come down to 'why am I even reading this in the first place'."

"I have to admit that my big question is about chapter six," Rebecca considered. "Like, why the hell is it there in the first place?"

"Agreed there," Dan nodded. "It was basically a huge pace-stumping load of backstory that didn't actually add anything or move the narrative along. I can't see any reason for it to be there beyond wasting our time and trying our patience."

"While all of that is true," Tsuneo agreed. "It is possible that it could be a set-up for something later."

"Um..." Rick managed, looking sheepish.

"It's not, is it?"

"Well... no," he admitted. "Nothing in that chapter really ever comes up again."

"I knew it," Rebecca shook her head. "There are a lot of ways that the background of the world could be developed, but throwing out an entire chapter to the backstory of a guy who we barely know and will never see again is about the worst way to do it."

"And even then I feel that it didn't add anything at all," Tsuneo agreed. "Definitely not anything that couldn't be done with some light in-text exposition and just moving on."

"On the other hand, I think chapter eight is one of my top contenders for my favourite chapter so far," Rick offered. "It is probably the one that has come the closest to actually feeling like Genesis Climber MOSPEADA."

"In so far as the team met a guy, browbeat him into fighting and then he died?" Rebecca asked.

"Yeah," Rick nodded. "It's a common theme throughout the series."

"I can see where you are coming from," Tsuneo agreed. "Honestly I felt more invested in Dyson than I am in Simmons or Eagle."

"Those two really are not doing anything to justify their existence, are they?" Rebecca asked.

"They are not," Tsuneo agreed.

"Hell, Necessary's got more of a presence," Dan spoke up. "Not because she's done anything, but simply because as a creepy psychic kid she's such an inappropriate stock character archetype that she becomes funny."

"I have to agree there," Rebecca said. "Honestly, she's so out of place and off-kilter with the rest of the story that any sense of disquiet she might be intended to invoke is lost. Although again, I have no idea what she's meant to be adding to the story at all."

"Just like Eagle and Simmons," Tsuneo noted.

"At least those two have a clear place in the narrative," Rebecca countered. "Even if that place is 'to sell toys'. I have no idea what she's bringing to it, and imagine that she's not going to add anything in what we have left either."

"And it's not like Eagle or Simmons even got toys before the line was cancelled," Rick finished. "So there is that."

"This really does all feel futile, doesn't it?" Tsuneo considered.

"And now you know part of the reason why I chose it," the Voice spoke up. "Personally, I can't wait until you're done and the full horror of it all unfolds and destroys your fragile minds."

"You're so cheerful, Voice," Rebecca replied.

"I try," the Voice replied. "But I can tell that Genesis Breakers is having the desired effect already. This story, and all that comes with it, was a deliberate choice on my part, an experience crafted for you personal pain."

"Thanks, Voice," Rick sighed.

"You're welcome," the Voice beamed. "But really, Genesis Breakers is a gift. I could not have expected it at all."

"Mostly because it's so stupid," Dan shot back.

"There's a lot of that, true."

"But we're done here, right?" Tsuneo asked.

"We are, yes," the Voice continued. "Until next time you are free to get back to your brief, frail mortal lives, living every moment knowing that I have another four chapters lurking in wait. Toodles!"

"God she's a jerk," Dan muttered.

"No arguments there," Rebecca agreed. "Although this time I think she might actually have something, as much as I hate to admit it."

"How so?" Rick asked.

"Genesis Breakers has one thing that none of the other fics she's fed us so far has had," Rebecca explained. "For all its many, many problems, there's one fundamental element that goes even deeper than anything else." She paused. "This was a professional work. Not a fanfic, but rather something people paid to get published in a legitimate magazine. People were paid to write this."

"Which if anything makes it worse," Tsuneo considered.

"Exactly."

Author's notes:

Just so you know, Thomas Wisette, the one-off character never to be seen again character gets more development and backstory than Eagle, Simmons or Necessary. Yeah, it annoys me too.

Chapter Six is the point where, for me, Genesis Breakers really began to go off the rails. It really served no purpose in the larger story and most of it felt like it could be a flashback within another chapter. That it came after chapter five with its whole alien mind probe story made it even worse, as it felt like there was a whole lot of set up there that was not going to pay off at all. It's even more annoying when Eagle, Simmons and Necessary are right there and barely appearing in the story. And sadly, it's all downhill from here.

The Genesis Breakers high-end collector's topline was stealth cancelled after Gate's toy failed to sell. There were never any solicitations or pre-orders or anything for the others. Just empty air. Eagle's toy got to a CAD rendering stage but that was it.

Next time the inevitably disappointing conclusion

Genesis Climber Mospeada: Genesis Breakers written by Hideki Kakinuma

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Rebecca Bartley and Rick R. Mortis created by Rick R. (natch)
Tsuneo Tateao and Dan created by Zogster

Questions? Comments? Complaints? Wolf fangs? Email us at [elmerstudios00 \(at\) gmail.com](mailto:elmerstudios00@gmail.com) and register your Jeff.

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> The Bulldog thrustled in at an extremely low altitude