

Kamikaze

by Michael P Calligaro

First Ovoid Blason rolled to his superior's door. He sent a feeling of inquiry through to the First Sphere and felt a welcoming thought return. The door cycled open, and Blason rolled through. "First Sphere Glaicon," he sent, laced with the correct amount of honor and respect.

The First Sphere replied with warmth. "Have you brought the reconnaissance on our next target?"

Blason returned favorable affirmation. "It should be a simple operation. It is a single planet inhabited by marginally intelligent beings. They have limited spaceflight capabilities and appear to only use them to fight each other. We should have little difficulty defeating them."

Returning a mixture of appreciation and fatigue, the First Sphere replied, "This is the last in this galaxy, correct? I will be glad to finish this mission."

Blason sent more affirmation. "*It has* been a most grueling invasion, sire. In conquering the last ninety-four races, we lost ten remote fighter craft and damaged the sensibilities of two lower Ovoids of the Fifth class. Though our good work for the Circle helps us all stand a bit rounder in pride, we are all tired and will be happy when this is done. But without your encompassing leadership to see us through, I am sure some of the younger Ovoids would not have survived. Your form will be remembered throughout time."

"Thank you, First Ovoid Blason. But do not overlook your own role in all of this. After my recommendation, I am sure the Circle will promote you to lower Sphere status."

"That is an honor I will strive to bear well, my commander. Thank you."

* * *

Blason personally inspected the preparation of the transmission. They had reached the outer edges of the solar system and the Oversphere, their single giant battleship, would now be visible to the humans' low technology sensors. He and his technicians had spent a significant amount of time scanning the human broadcasts in order to fully understand the human languages. Now that work would yield its benefit as they created their transmission. Occasionally, their opening communication was so effective that the race simply surrendered without any loss of precious life. This was a goal for which Blason always strove. To defeat an enemy without killing any of them meant victory of the highest honor. He felt exceedingly proud to have orchestrated three such deathless victories in this campaign.

The transmission went out in multiple human languages.

"Humans of the Earth. We, the Ovoids of the Great Circle, have come to conquer you. As our technology far outclasses anything you could imagine, we request that you lay down your weapons and submit to us peacefully. Any other course of action would result in needless loss of life on your parts. We will arrive within twenty of your planet's rotations. We hope you will be reasonable about this."

He rolled back and took in their broadcasts. The humans were hideously ugly creatures--only symmetrical in one plane and only moderately so at that. Most responded to the transmission by thrusting themselves to and fro as they made loud audible noises by forcing air out of their bodies. Such strange creatures these were. It was too early to tell, but he hoped that in the intervening time, they would get over the shock and begin to see reason.

This proved to not be the case. After three of their planet's rotations, the humans launched so many small craft they looked like a swarm of insect circles leaving a dead carcass. But as much as Blason hated bugs, at least *they* were symmetrical. The human ships, on the other arc, were as ugly as the humans themselves. With a sigh, Blason rolled to the First Sphere's quarters.

"They have launched their defenses. It appears we will be forced to finish off this galaxy with loss of life after all."

The First Sphere sent him a mixture of regret and unsurprise. "Well, conquest is never as easy as we might like. Do we need to take any precautions?"

Blason returned negative emotions. "Our analysis shows their fighters to be far outclassed by our remote drones. I doubt we will lose more than two craft. My only fear for our crew is a result of the massive destruction we will need to unleash upon the humans. They have sent an unusually large number of their people to intercept us. We may consider frequent shift changes amongst the younger Ovoids, so that none witnesses too much destruction."

His superior sent affirmation. "As always, I trust your tactical sense, First Ovoid. Do as you see fit and inform me when their defenses are vanquished."

* * *

The battle went exactly as expected. The human weapons proved ineffective against even the smallest drones. Always the optimist, Blason watched the destruction of the first wave of human ships and hoped the rest would see the futility of their task and give up. Unfortunately, this did not happen. Wave after wave flew up and were destroyed.

At one point, five of the humans surrounded one of the drones. Blason glanced over at the minor Tenth Ovoid flying it and felt the fear emanating from him. "Pull it together, Ovoid," he commanded. "They're breaking through your shields."

The young Ovoid strained his mind trying to get his ship out of its predicament, but was not up to the task. The end of his ship near, Blason rolled over and blocked the Ovoid's mental link with it. He felt despair pouring out of the Tenth almost as strongly as if the youngster had consciously sent it. "Rest. If they haven't surrendered by the next shift, we'll outfit you with another ship."

The Tenth's output became intense sorrow.

Blason responded with caring and understanding. "This is no great loss, Tenth Ovoid, just some lifeless materials. A pilot must learn somehow."

The Ovoid's sorrow lessened a bit, and he rolled out, lurching as his more pointed sides rolled end over end. Blason felt sad for the youth, a feeling which intensified his desire for the end of this lengthy campaign. He returned his consciousness to the battle. The humans had almost fought to within their weapons' range of the Oversphere. This did not worry Blason in the slightest. The Oversphere's armor was ten times as thick as that of the drones, and the humans were down to three ships. One of those ships burst into flame as two drones hit it from its two symmetrical sides.

Blason activated his intercom and connected to First Sphere Glaicon. "They are down to two ships. After we destroy the next, the final one will undoubtedly tender its planet's surrender."

"I will be right there. Wait for me."

Moments later the First Sphere rolled in. They destroyed the second to last ship. "Can the humans see

this from their planet?"

Blason sent negative. "However, they are in communication with their ships. They know what is happening."

The Ovoid pilots lightened the assault on the final ship. They continued flying near it and firing in its direction, but they avoided actual damage. Everyone waited for the surrender. But it never came. The human called to its comrades and got no reply. It hesitated for a moment, then turned its ship at the Oversphere and rapidly accelerated.

"What is it doing?" The First Sphere asked.

Blason returned confusion. Also confused, the drone pilots resumed their attack. The human, no longer trying to shoot at the drones, flew about wildly, avoiding their fire and making progress toward the Oversphere. Blason focused his attention on a readout. "It is overloading its engines. At its current rate, it will reach us, and its ship will explode."

With concern, his superior asked, "Is there any danger to the Oversphere?"

Negative, with more confusion. "Our armor is strong enough. But why is it throwing its life away? We have beaten it. It should surrender now."

The First Sphere paused a moment and watched the human approach on its erratic course toward their ship. "We must stop the ship without killing the human. We need to bring it aboard and study why it is doing this."

Blason sent understanding to the First Sphere and immediately sent urgency to the Ovoids before him. "Break off communication with your drones and turn your minds to the human. We must all work together and force it to turn off its engines."

The drones stopped and all minds turned toward the human in its fighter ship. Blason was honored to feel First Sphere Glaicon lending his great mind to the endeavor. The human's mind resisted them, but as it got closer their effect became greater.

Just before its engines exploded, the human turned them off. Blason activated a beam that stopped the ship and brought it aboard the Oversphere. He selected three Fourth Ovoids and the four of them followed the First Sphere down to the hanger where the human waited in its ship.

They flooded the hangar with a mixture of gases the human needed, and watched as its ship split open and it climbed out. The human was even more hideous up close than they had been in their broadcasts.

The First Sphere addressed it. "You were about to needlessly throw away your life. Why did you not surrender when you saw we had defeated you?"

The human removed its upper shielding and turned the partially spherical part at the top of its body so that its oval vision receptors could scan each of the Ovoids in the hangar. Blason could just barely feel confusion coming from it. "Who said that?" It made compression waves in the air, but also thought the words clearly.

The First Sphere rolled two degrees forward. "I did. I am First Sphere aboard this vessel and you will address me. Now, I ask again, why did you try to end your life?"

The human made an alien gesture with the parts surrounding its top. Blason could not read its emotion, however. "I realized we'd lost. Then I thought about my callsign, and it just seemed the right thing to do."

"Your callsign?"

"Yeah, it's right here on my helmet. See?" It pointed to the markings across the front of its upper shielding. "Kamikaze."

"What does that mean?"

"It's in honor of my great, great grandfather, who served the Emperor as a kamikaze pilot during W W two."

"But what does it mean?"

"Well you see, we--"

"Please, human, think about the images carefully and imagine sending them to us. We will better be able to understand then."

It did the gesture again and suddenly its mind opened and images came flooding to them. Blason saw another ugly human tying something around its upper oval. This, at least, had a pleasing red circle on it. The human then got into an ancient terrestrial flyer and flew it into the top of a floating vessel. The resulting explosion damaged the vessel heavily. All five of the Ovoids recoiled in shock at the images. This "great, great grandfather" had thrown its life away in an offensive strike, and the human felt proud of it.

The human turned its vision receptors to the recoiling Ovoids and did something weird with its sensory grid, tilting its vocal orifice down and making its vision receptors less oval. A moment later its vision receptors became large and almost circular. Its vocal orifice stretched upward and Blason felt understanding and happiness coming from it.

His mental voice quavering slightly, First Sphere Glaicon asked. "And all of you humans are like this?"

Now that the human knew to send them its thoughts and emotions, it poured hatred and images of dying humans into them at a sickening rate. As its vision receptors registered the effects this had on the lesser Ovoids, it began sending them images of Ovoids exploding. One almost lost symmetry. Turning its vocal orifice upward again, it thought, "Absolutely. We couldn't stop you in space and we may not be able to stop you on the ground, but we'll never stop fighting. You'll have to kill every last one of us before you can claim victory over our planet. And *wewill* manage to kill at least some of you in the process."

This hit the five of them so strongly that one of the Forth Ovoids went flat. The First Sphere, sending out revulsion, ordered the Ovoids to guard the human and told Blason to follow him to his quarters.

When they arrived and the door cycled shut behind them, the First Sphere shuddered. "What do you think of this?"

Blason sent out troubled and uneasy confusion. "Perhaps he is not being truthful. Maybe only their warriors are willing to throw away their lives."

"But how will we find out? Keep killing them until they give up? We've already killed more of them than any other race in this galaxy." He turned away. "War is flat."

Blason returned agreement.

The First Sphere rocked a few degrees back and forth as he sent his thoughts to Blason. "They have only one planet and exceedingly low technology, and they will not be getting any help from the other races in

this galaxy. Judging from our rate of development at that stage in our evolution, I project they could not possibly pose a significant threat to us for a thousand of their planet's revolutions around its star. Perhaps we should give them some time to become more civilized before we return to conquer them?"

Blason considered for a moment. "It would mean a blot on our record for this galaxy, but it would only be a small blot. And no one has ever encountered creatures like these before; this may reduce our shame."

"And, in any case, it would not be you or I who would need to finally deal with them."

Blason sent happiness at this.

The First Sphere returned it. "Yes, that is the best course of action."

After a moment's reflection Blason produced an idea. He sent craftiness to his superior. "However, I have a suggestion. With some work, we could undoubtedly erase the human's memory of meeting with us, and even what it did to cause us to bring it aboard. We could disable its ship and leave it for the others to find. They'll always wonder why we left and if we're coming back. They'll spend their lives in fear of us, never sure if the next transmission they receive will be our returning to complete our work. This fear will build within them. Then, when we do return, they will be so afraid of us they will give up gladly."

The First Sphere sent surprised admiration. "A very good plan, First Ovoid! Yes, you will make a fine Sphere. Do as you have suggested quickly, so we can get out of this Circleforsaken galaxy and return home."

Blason returned extreme happiness. "Yes sir, immediately."

The End

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