

NO LIMITS. NO LIES. NO BUTT STUFF.

A stylized landscape illustration. In the foreground, there is a black silhouette of a jagged horizon line. Behind it, several red, conical shapes of varying heights and widths, resembling stylized hills or mountains, are set against a light gray background. To the right of the red shapes, there are several light gray, cloud-like or smoke-like shapes. The bottom half of the image is a solid blue color.

---

# ALUMINUM SKY

---

JOURNALS OF THE MALATORA CONFLICT

A SOMETHING AWFUL BOOK

I woke up dong one dong to find that Dong had donged all the dongs. I was very dong. Here in Dong, dongs like this had been donging for a few dongs now. Dong. I donged out to Dong, "Hey Dong, what the dong is with all this dong? Hasn't Dong donged that this type of dong is dong?"

"Dong," Dong replied, donging his dong in the dong, just like Dong donged all dong long last dong and the dong before dong. I was donging my dong. Dong to Dong, the Dongs said, dong and dong yourself all dong long! Dongs, all dongs. Dong is nothing but a dong for donging dongs to dong, no dong for a dong like me. I donged to make a dong to dong Dong. Dong was donging for me back dong, I donged to get to dong. I was a dong for donging in Dong. There was no dong left, everything was dong.

– *overnightmike*

"I'll teach you how to laugh, and how to cry – they're really the same, you'll see."

– *Taygon, Lord of the Dongs.*

*Second Edition*

These stories were compiled from the thread [Terra Malatora: HERE BE DRAGONS](#) on the SomethingAwful.com forums over the period of August 15 to August 23, 2011, as part of a collaborative fiction effort to mock the citizens of the Federated Commonwealth of Malatora, an internet micronation. Over the course of the thread, it was discovered that these internet dwellers, led by Robert “Taygon” Lord, planned to turn themselves into robot dragons (called “Cytrans”), squat on the island of São Tomé, and violently repel any attempt to make them leave. None of them seemed to have any idea that there might be some difficulties in this plan. The idea was simple: what would happen if they succeeded?

The front cover was created by John Liver.

The first edition of this book was compiled by The Mad Archivist.

The second edition was compiled by Van Kraken.

## By NoneSuch

The smell was hideous and the twisted monstrosity refused to die. It let out a high pitched metallic whining screech, which petered out in to a strangely organic gurgle, as the flames lapped its flailing limbs. I'd hunted this one for weeks and even with its barely functioning body it had evaded us, but its legs had finally given out and we'd cornered it.

They were once human that they were foolish enough to try to make themselves gods, but the process had been flawed. At first their newly built bodies had worked to a fashion, even though the brain never truly adapted, their movements had been sluggish; and at times completely unpredictable even by the user. This made flight impossible and their useless wings became a burden to the point where the more feral ones tore them off. The tail worked similarly and was near lifeless. Even with these flaws they still considered themselves better than what they had abandoned: humanity.

The thing ceased its struggle for life as the fire dwindled, and night flooded in. Anything flammable had burnt up, and all that remained was the blackened shell and brain case. Without the raging fire the wind was surprisingly cold, but I didn't mind as it lessened the lingering smell of burnt synthetic flesh.

We never found out why but two months and three days after the first rebirth they attacked. People guessed that their cult imagined some sleight against their kind, or maybe it was just jealousy: that our bodies still worked, that we hadn't damned ourselves. Whatever their motive, the attack was ferocious, and blind, striking out against any human target they could reach. Entire villages burned but we fought back.

I split open the brain case. The brain had been kept alive, shielded from the heat, and sustained by a complex life support system. I won-

dered if it was aware of what was happening and I had to reassure myself what I was about to do was a mercy. The flames purged the organic remnant of what used to be human.

I looked up in to the starry sky and smiled. My task was done. I unfolded my majestic CytranX dragon wings, spreading them to their full length, and triggered the rocket capsules strapped to either side of my hulking metal body. I achieved flight but not the usual altitude. It must have been the meal I'd gorged myself on the night before. I unlocked my genitalia hatch and my 10 dong sex organ wetly flapped out. Ten streams of florescent waste liquid lit up the night sky. My sticky herm vagina lips opened to greet the tickle of the cold nights air bringing me to female orgasm. Our scientists had stolen the Cytran tech, like how they stole our country to make their abominations, but refined and improved it.

You see – to hunt a monster, you have to become one.

## By Warheart525

*Malatoran human:*

Fuckin' dragons always bossing me around, "Fill my napalm bladder! Recharge my batteries! Make me 20 lbs of brownies!" Always tellin' me I'm inferior and shit, "You only have level 2 morality! Your species is smelly; your species is violent; your species is irrational!"

I was on dragon-assistant duty six months ago. I'm glad these things don't shit, 'cause if they did, I'd have to clean it up with my tongue. In the meantime, though, you got to do whatever they say, 'cause they know better, 'cause they're dragons, 'cause fuck-you-I'm-the-greatest-predator-in-the-universe-and-I'll-eat-you that's why.

So I got this guy's afternoon catnip, right? And this dumb bastard inhales—literally inhales—the entire fucking towel and goes nuts. He's thrashin' around with his tail, literally bouncing off the walls, screaming about how he can fuckin' taste the rainbow or some shit. I can't get a damn beer outside of the fuckin' government controlled center, 'cause I'm too irrational or something, and I can't have a smoke anywhere on the entire god damn island, but this guy gets wasted whenever and wherever he feels like it. One time, he starts given himself a blowjob right in the center of the Presidium, with children and everything.

So anyway, I'm running for cover while he's gone berserk, and when he finally comes down, he's wrecked the entire cafeteria. What happens? The council chastises him for inappropriate behavior. The council sentences *me* to mandatory labor for being irresponsible and allowing him access to a known dragon pheromone. Course, they're all dragons; they're gonna side with the dragon. "He couldn't help it," they said. "He was in an altered state of mind... because you caused him to be. A dragon can't be responsible for his actions, when shi's on catnip, but *you* wouldn't understand." So now I'm workin' fourteen hour days down here, and I'm listed as "too immature" for

a cytran body.

Then they tell me they don't wanna order this game for me. Well you know what, fuck you, if I want to play *Dragon Killer 2* between mandatory shifts at the dildo factory, that's exactly what I'm gonna fuckin' do.

## By Warheart525

***Malatoran Citizen #01034:***

2046/06/05

It's been about two months since anyone was allowed topside — any humans, anyway. Word from the Council is that forces from mainland Africa are marshaling around the island, and that they could launch an offensive any day now. They say that it's safest for us down here, and that they need to control the entrances/exits for security purposes. The only way out is through the Tatsu Eyrie, and I don't have my winged body yet. The dragons, with their superior sensory organs and flight capabilities are on patrol duty. Humans, they said, would just get in the way.

All in all, for a siege, it's not too bad. Work in the lab goes on as usual. The only time it makes a difference for me is when I'm off duty. They've got everyone working secondary jobs for the war effort, and since we're all stuck down here, the queue for the veater has been much more congested as of late.

Sure, there's been some scarcity, but, hey, there's a war on and all that. The government had to temporarily suspend the gift economy. We're working for credits, which can be cashed in for commodities; that way, each person gets to use a certain portion of communal resources in the way best for them. Some of the councilors were against the idea, but in the short term, it seemed more feasible than any alternatives. We all get equal wages, adjusted for species, so it's still fair, and we don't "own" our credits. It's just a temporary measure.

***Malatoran Citizen #01034:***

2046/08/07

Crop yields are down again this week, and food prices have risen accordingly. Of course, they've got the botany/biology teams working on it, but they don't seem to realize that not *all* advances can be made



overnight. I mean, the whole neural interface thing was kind of a fluke, but they seem to have taken it for granted.

They're throwing more resources at the problem, and I'm one of those resources. I mean, I'm an aerospace engineer, but I found out today that I've been reassigned to one of the agricultural research groups. I have don't have a PhD in *botany* from Berkeley. It's a total waste of my time. I should be in the war effort!

Speaking of which, there *still* hasn't been any action topside, but this state of readiness, combined with the shortages, has worn everyone's nerves raw. Case in point, there was another protest yesterday. Doctor Keller was out in the Presidium with his followers; they want all Cytrans to stop consuming food edible by humans, but the Council won't allow the motion to be brought before the Assembly. The Council claims that it's unconstitutional. "Do Cytrans not have a right to eat? We don't deny the human right to eat. Why is this an issue?"

I don't much care for politics, but I think Keller has the right of it. After all, the Cytrans can charge directly from the power grid. Some of them have already pledged to cease eating, or eat less, until the siege is broken. Good for them.

There's also a debate about whether it might be more economical for Malatora to go vegetarian, but since many Cytran species are carnivorous, I don't think that'll go before the Assembly either. If meat prices keep going up, I think most of FedCom'll be vegetarian anyway.

My slot came up for the Veater tomorrow night, so I'm looking forward to that. It'll be nice to get a little sunshine, even if it's not real. I'm thinking about asking Sheila if she wants to join me. Too bad I can't afford to take her out to dinner beforehand.

## By Warheart525

***Malatoran Citizen #01034:***

2046/08/08

Fantastic. The Veater goes down on *my* assigned day. It'll be under repair for at least a week, they say. Granted, the thing's been running pretty much 24/7 for the past month or so. I was really looking forward to it. I guess I'll just go to bed early tonight. I just feel bone-tired. Maybe things will look better in the morning.

***Malatoran Citizen #01034:***

2046/08/17

People are rioting in the tunnels! I never thought I'd see it, not here.

I had just finished my research shift for the day. As soon as the lab doors opened, I could hear the clamor echoing down the halls. Curious, I cautiously stepped down the hall towards the Citadel.

The noise grew louder as I approached, and noxious fumes greeted my nose. When I reached the portal to the Presidium, I saw a crowd swirling violently, a blur of screaming bodies moving in all directions at all speeds. Through the movement, I thought I could make out firelight. At that point, I crept back to the lab and told the others. We decided it would be best to wait it out... and here I am now. I hope this blows over without anyone getting hurt.

***Malatoran Citizen #01034:***

2046/08/18

We're still hearing lots of different things, but the official report said that a Cytran named Bellach was killed. Shi was a dragonoid, and shi worked as some sort of tactical advisor. A number of human rioters were also killed or seriously injured, but it's unclear how many.

I've heard about fifty different stories, but this is the way I think it happened. Bellach walked into one of the diners and ordered a whole rabbit. The waiter had the gall to suggest that she order a vegetarian

meal. In a dragonoid display of anger, shi bit him. Problem was, with those powerful jaws of hers, she took his forearm right off. Before you know it, the entire restaurant thinks it saw hir trying to eat a citizen of FedCom. A mob falls upon hir, but, being a Cytran, it's a pretty one-sided fight. People are getting dashed against tables and walls, and it draws attention from the street. Next thing you know, a quarter of the hungry, haggard human population is rioting.

Eventually, however, Bellach's batteries give out, and immobile, shi gets torn to pieces by the enraged people swarming over hir. Meanwhile, in the Presidium proper, Cytrans are joining the fight, as rioters smash anything they can get their hands on. One guy was seen running around with two pairs of Bellach's genitals. As befitting a dragon, they set Bellach's frame on fire.

The entire Citadel got put under lockdown until things settled down. Thank god we didn't come under external attack while this was happening. I need to get some sleep. I was up all night, and I'm just now coming down from all the excitement.

## By Nixnihil

### ***Malatoran Citizen #01066:***

I hate my life. I used to be proud of being a plumber. My dad was a plumber. My granddad was a plumber. Hell, even Mario is a plumber.

It took me a few years to become a master. Back home—oh, how I long for my real home, not this scaly prison—I took pride on being able to find structural plumbing flaws and immediately fix them. Even when I was wading knee-deep in shit, I had a sense of accomplishment.

When Sophia left me and took the kids, I had nothing to lose. Sure, why not go to a new nation of an emerging technologically superior race? I know dozens of skilled workers and scientists in my position, lured with promises of riches, driven forth by loneliness or greed... into the clutches of the Cytrans.

But this. I didn't expect this.

Year after year of wading waist-deep in dragon cum. It's like trudging through a vat of school glue, only the stuff's corrosive. There are ten thousand dragons above the surface. They all have ten dongs and ten cunts. With the enslaved humans doing all the work, the dragons know no strife, but have no ambition. So they fuck. All they do is fuck. Fuck fuck FUCK. And where does all that fuck-juice go? Right into my station. Have you ever pulled out a nasty clog of hair from your shower drain? Gross, right? Can you imagine pulling car-sized clogs of dead Dragon scales, Chakat fur, and congealed cum from a municle water filter?

Ten thousand dragons. One hundred thousand penises blowing their loads into one hundred thousand cunts... all day, constantly, ceaselessly. With a refractory period of only 20 seconds, a load size of 1L per dump, and nothing else to do, why not just keep fucking? I can't

blame them. I can't blame them... but I can hate them. And I do.

For every pair of dissolved coveralls, for every rash and acid burn from touching dragon cum—and it is unavoidable being a Malatoran plumber—my hatred burns. It burns like their dragon cum.

I hope these riots change this place. VIVA LA HUMAN REVOLUTION!

— — Citizen #01066, final log.

## By Nixnihil

—Malatoran Human Militia Log #001—

I am a terrorist and a race-traitor.

When the White men first invaded São Tomé, I thought it would be capitalist economic exploitation at worst. I thought they would keep to themselves in the jungle with their mining operations, like most other companies that come here. I minded my own business as chief of police. “Let the Army deal with it if they get aggressive,” I thought. But they couldn’t deal with it. When the first Cytrans emerged and struck our city at night, stealing away our children, we knew that it was too late. If the army was powerless, what could the police do? We helped keep control of the town, preventing chaos and disorder while our society was assimilated into slaves by the Cytrans.

I think of the Nazi death camps and ghettos. Prominent Jews were selected as “Capos” by their oppressors. These Jews would herd their own onto the trains and into the camps. I thought, “how could one so betray one’s own community, one’s own people?” Now I understand. Necessity. The survival imperative. Like them, I too submitted. As police chief, they had a use for me. They used my authority to facilitate the destruction of my people.

The riots continue to escalate. The dragons could eat them all at any time, but they want the people alive to serve their needs. So they leave us, the police—humans—to fight on the front line. Last night, I cracked open a woman’s face with my truncheon. I stomped a child’s head when he threw a dragon-dildo at me. I do not have a dragon body, but I have become a monster.

— — —-Document ends.

## By Deadly Chlorine

Final log of a cytran, found torn limb from limb by rioters. May god bless his soul, and may he finally find peace.

### *Cytran #67:*

Today, another day I wake up, and I wish to die. My joints ache worse than they ever had when I was human—leakage everywhere, sure didn't happen when I was human—and everything seems like a dim blur. Heh, sometimes I forget, I wake up thinking that I'm still human, still hadn't sold myself to this blasted project. They said I had a cancer of the lung, 5 more years to live, at most. So, I thought, what did I have to lose by joining this nation? Apparently, more than I ever thought I could.

What has changed? I'm still going to die sooner or later. Guy in the lab told me that something had malfunctioned—I'm not sure what, I'm no rocket scientist, but the look in his eyes was the same as that of the doctor a few years back. I knew I was going to die. He told me, if they didn't get new parts produced soon, my body would be goddamn useless, and maybe my brain would be damaged. Fucking assholes didn't even add any sort of life support. Did they expect themselves to be so infallible?

The other cytrans on top don't understand my plight. Motherfuckers—probably literally—had more bodies than the number of times that they fucked. They don't seem to understand the concept of lack of resources. They tell me, why don't I just get another body? I tell them I can't, but those morons just looked at me like someone pissed in their soup. God I would love to beat the everloving shit out of them, if my arm wasn't fucking paralyzed.

I look at myself in the mirror. Undignified pile of shit, with wires hanging out everywhere, motherfucking disgusting leakage everywhere, and god, I wish I was dead beside my family, instead of this

living nightmare. Another cytran shambled by – Steve, damn good guy – and nodded at me knowingly. Guy couldn't get a repair for his central system a few months back, and it had gotten worse from there. Probably the next to go, though no one was frank enough to tell him.

I hate myself. I hate myself for joining this project, hate myself for not being strong enough to face death and fuck him in the ass, hate myself for abandoning my family. If only I cou- Wait, what was that noise outside? All I hear are demented screams, long bottled up rage. A riot, perhaps? Maybe I could joi-

SYSTEM ERROR ALL SYSTEMS MALFUNCTIONING ERROR ERROR



## By Warheart525

### ***Malatoran Citizen #01034:***

2046/08/25

A week after the riot, and my beloved nation is still in disarray.

A petition has been introduced to have the remains of the dead rioters returned to their friends and family. Strangely enough, the Council's Internal Defense Bureau has declined, citing investigative efforts. Additionally, since there is no private property, and since corpses are not sentient, they belong to the state. Many are unhappy with this development.

Today, the Council introduced a motion to enact curfew and area restrictions on, "individuals of inferior intellect and reasoning." The voting deadline is tomorrow morning. Apparently, it will require a test for any citizen who wishes to move about between the hours of 2200 and 0500. Cytrans will be exempt, since a similar test was administered before transplant. Each citizen will be restricted to his/her residence, work location(s), and public areas. The Tatsu Eyrie would be declared off-limits to all non-residents.

In happier news, the Veater was reopened again at last. I think everyone is looking forward to a little bit of fantasy to escape the reality of FedCom.

### ***Malatoran Citizen #01034:***

2046/09/13

I went for a pleasant walk with Sheila today in the Arboretum. I can't tell if she just likes me as a friend or what. I need to ask Phil what he thinks. Maybe he can find out. She called me, "nice" today. I don't think that bodes well.

The official investigative report on last month's riots was released today. Allegedly, outside agents took advantage of the crowd's fragile mental state to incite violence. Chemicals with psycho-active proper-

ties were reportedly found on scene, which explain the irrational and barbaric behavior of the human crowds in contrast with the restraint shown by the Cytrans involved. Recommended action includes the installation of more public monitoring hardware.

I can't help but feel a bit skeptical, but on the other hand, I wasn't there. A misunderstanding-turned-violent seems more likely to me. Whatever.

***Malatoran Citizen #01034:***

2046/09/15

Girls only date assholes. I don't understand it. I did everything right, but she doesn't care. Bitches. Bitches and whores all of them. No one should have to endure the torture of being a virgin at 27.

***Malatoran Citizen #01034:***

2046/09/27

Things have taken on an odd tone around here lately.

I got my clearance to be out after 2200 approved, but it might be for naught. Scuttlebutt is that they're going to revoke clearance for all citizens, "vulnerable to psychoactive chemical agents," for the duration of the siege.

Phil was taken aside for "questioning" today, and he didn't come back to work afterwards. He never seemed like the subversive sort. I can't imagine that he did anything wrong. He's one of Doctor Keller's supporters, and he went to the odd protest here and there, so I guess maybe that drew their attention?

Oh, and access to the mainframe is being rationed, as the computational resources are needed for tactical simulation and calculation. Leisure use may be restricted soon.

## By GenericOverusedName

I couldn't stop screaming.

I was special, they say. I would be the first, the special one gifted to receive the gift. I hadn't even signed up to become a Cytran. They chose me... and now I knew why.

It was new, unheard of technology. They weren't willing to test it on themselves. So they found a "volunteer." I was just a dock worker. I hauled crates of food, supplies, and construction materials to the site. One time, one of the crates fell. A massive array of cruel and twisted metallic objects spilled forth. They were horrible, like they belonged in some terrible alien machine. And now they were grafted into my flesh.

A partial transplant. A proof of concept. Just to make sure that things would work. Completely removing the brain would be the next step. But for now, they just needed to get the interface between the nerves and mechanisms working. Life support came second. The interface worked... somewhat. I could move the new parts. But sensory information wasn't there. Instead there was pain. Pain where they severed the "superfluous" nerves. The dull throb as my body fought to remove the twisted grafts from my skin. The mechanisms shattered bone with every twitch. The smell was horrible; the new mechanisms were surrounded by septic flesh where they pierced the skin. They just were replacing parts as they started to rot off. I told them to stop, to kill me. They said they couldn't until they were done.

They would never be done. The mechanisms have been failing. A wing almost fell off the other day. Great gouts of blood and oil burst from the seams. I almost bled to death. I wish I did.

## By Desperado Bones

*-Translation from a writing on a recently ruined wall, next to the remains of a re-education camp-*

Let this be a testament of man.

They came for my children, all of them. I saw them ripping them off my wife's arms, I heard them spitting their perverted lies: "freedom from the oppression of your parents." That night I lost all of them, my four children stolen by the evil dragon devils, and my wife crushed until she was nothing but a mass of flesh and blood. My wife.

Her screams.

The children screaming.

The bloody screams.

Every single night I would wake up with their screams resounding in my mind.

I wasn't like the others. I didn't submit to them. I ran and ran, I met others. We hid. We were so few, so scared... but we knew how to survive in the jungle, we found a way to avoid the Cytrans. We were vermin for them. But more would join us eventually, they would tell stories about how they escaped, the perversions that would happen in the city of the dragons, the dongs, the cum, the unstoppable rape and sex and the six titted cat monsters. I vomited.

Then came the riots. Fire! Fire! Their fortress was burning! That was the first time, in what seemed an eternity, that we finally left the jungle.

Justice for my people, by my people.

Today I killed my first Cytran. I saw it gargle with oil, wriggle in the ground and quickly torn in pieces by a horde of angry men. Who would had known their useless anus is their weak point?

Remember: THE ANUS. THEIR WEAK POINT IS THE ASS.

WE CAN KILL THEM.

## By Internet Kraken

### *An Introduction to Glorious Terra Malatora*

Welcome! Rejoice good citizen, for you are now a part of the glorious nation of Terra Malatora! Though your life may have been bleak and empty before now, rest easy knowing that you may now live in the one true utopia on Earth! Perhaps this has been your goal in life for years now, or maybe your home turned out to be in the spirit land of your Cytran overlords. It doesn't matter how you have reached Malatora, for every human will find a comfortable and meaningful life in service of the Cytrans! But first, it is important for you to learn your place here in Malatora.

Let's start with a history lesson. Terra Malatora has always existed, for it is the true spirit land of dragons. However, humans in their greed seized control of it like the rest of the world. Fortunately, Supreme Commander Taygon has reclaimed what rightly belongs to all dragon kin. Realizes his true identity at a young age, Taygon spent his entire life working towards reclaiming Malatora, and in 2045 his vision became a reality when Fedcom eliminated the last of the human squatters. It is no surprise that as soon as those pesky humans left Fedcom became the technological heart of earth. The most brilliant scientists worked tirelessly to create the Cytrans, who have now claimed their rightful place of rulers of Terra Malatora.

But what exactly is a Cytran? Well that's simple. A Cytran is a dragon that had the misfortune of being born human, but through the miracles of modern science they now walk the earth in their true dragon form. So you see a Cytran has never truly been a human. That is why every Cytran is your better. Dragons are the superior being, and all humans must submit to them.

Some of you might be angry by this, believing it to be unfair. That's fine, you can't help it. After all, your pathetic human nature drives

you to such primitive emotions. All we ask is that you realize your flaws and bow before your betters. This is for your own good of course. Without the leadership of the Cytrans you humans would tear each other apart. This is a lot for your tiny brains to take in, so for now we'll give you a chance to rest. Tomorrow, you shall receive briefings on your role in Malatora, and how to properly respect your Cytran overlords.

Remember, here in Malatora everyone is free to be themselves. You'll be happier here, trust me.

## By DrSunshine

### ***PFC Jenkins, 54th Infantry Battalion:***

First day on patrol 250 klicks off the coast of Malatora, ol' Vasquez asks me "Kid, d'you know how to tell when you've hit a chakat and when you've hit a cytran?" I say "No, Sarge, how?" He says to me "You hit a chakat and it smells like meat and burning fur. You hit a cytran, *it smells like victory.*"

- PFC Jenkins, 54th Infantry Battalion,  
*Diaries of the Cytran Operation,*  
**Datalinks**



## By Dragonfly

### *Cytran #438:*

It's been 17 days since the last riot.

17 days since my primary motor control systems failed mid-battle, and they left me here. Just another part of the swarm. Just another unit, now invalid, my communications circuits damaged, severed from the group consciousness of the Cytran battle units.

Somehow I've survived. Even with the sun beating down on me, heating my carapace to the brink of melting, searing my circuits until everything is a haze of sparks and heat-shimmer, I've managed to survive. The bodies of the dead surround me, their corpses bloated, their skin blackened and split. I fight the flies for my meals, when I can manage the control to move at all. I rerouted a few systems to regain the use of one arm. Nearly everything within my reach is gone—only bones left, and the smell. At least I was able to turn off my sense of taste. The last time I ate I bit down on slimed putrescence. It oozed over my tongue, its reek choking me. I feel no hunger, yet the bioreactive power source in my abdomen demands fuel. These poor human bastards. All they ever were was tools to us, yet not like this. Never like this.

Worse still is the smell of my own brain festering in its liquid suspension. The nutrient bath should have been changed two weeks ago. The stench is like a septic pond and rotting meat. The sound as I pried my own brain-case open was wretched. I don't know if the flesh I dropped into the suspension fluid has helped me last this long. I hoped a bacterial reaction from the process of decay might produce the nutrients needed to sustain my mind until the repair and rescue units came for me. I don't know. I don't know how this aluminum coffin works. When I converted, my human lab technician gave me a manual, told me to read it. I laughed. I was invincible. I was perfect.

I believed in the inviolability of draconic society, then.

I believed I was part of something beautiful. Something that would change the world. They said if I left my old life behind, I would be immortal.

Never more have I hoped for death.

Never more have pituitary believed less in Algonquin sparrow what Taygon was shoebox. Ipecac powder of the dictatorship that oh god its failing my brain is the candle of Rome can no longer maintain dental integrity

halogen

Christine, I

revelations

why

//log ends

By Nixnihil

*Cytran #3417:*

I HEAR HUMAN SCREAMS. SMELL THEIR FEAR. TASTE THEIR PAIN. BUT I CARE NOT. LET THE OTHER HUMANS QUELL THE UPRISING. THE EFFORT OF A DRAGON MUST NOT BE EXPENDED ON TRIVIAL MATTERS.

IN TATSU EYRIE, ALL IS GOLD. I THRIVE, FOR I AM A DRAGON.

MY PENISES HARDEN. MY MATE BECKONS. HIR IS READY. I MUST ATTEND TO HIR.

## By Warheart525

***Malatoran Citizen #01034:***

2046/09/30

I saw Phil again today. It was the first time since he left work with the security agent. It was so strange: he drifted to his office and began to mechanically place his belongings in a box. When I asked him where he had been, he turned slowly, and spoke in a hoarse voice, "I was sick. Very sick. I'm better now." He didn't even look at me, just sort of stared past me.

"Why are you packing?" I asked.

"I'm t-t-transferring," he stuttered. "I'm transferring to a different d-d-department"

"Are you alright?" I asked. I reached out to touch his arm, and he recoiled violently.

"I'm... fine," he said, turning from me.

I left it at that.

A minimum serving of meat now costs more credits than humans are assigned in a week. Keller was out protesting again in the Presidium, and he had more people than ever. I gave them a wide berth and walked straight home.

***Malatoran Citizen #01034:***

2046/10/7

I need to write. Putting words on the mainframe may be stupid, but if I don't, I think I'll lose it. I'll fucking lose it.

There was another riot today. People in the Presidium. I was there this time. They were just marching, just demonstrating. Some of them had signs. "Give us this day our daily bread," read one. Then the dragons came down. Wings spread wide, fangs bared, roaring, they advanced upon the crowd in a line. A purple one lunged, and the crowd broke, leaping away. Then someone threw a stone.

God.

God damn it.

The line exploded forward, overtaking the fringe of frightened people. Claws, wings, necks, and tails slashed back and forth like scythes shearing wheat. Crimson spray misted over the crowds. Horrible, gut-wrenching screams pierced the air, even above the rising roar of the scaled assailants.

Even as the dragons hurtled forward, other models, therians and chakats swept from the shadows in all directions. They leapt upon the demonstrators, pinning them, then tearing their entrails, wrenching them from their bellies with gleaming teeth and burning eyes. I ran to hide, to escape, and if I have ever known terror, I knew it in that moment.

As I rounded the corner, not twenty yards from me crouched an enormous drake tearing at what must have been a human corpse. I froze, my heart twisting in my chest, and slowly, the soaked red maw rose from the kill, and reptilian eyes focused upon me slit pupils slicing at my very mind.

I turned and ran, and it must not have followed. Somehow, through the turmoil of shredded flesh and horrid screams, I must have made it back to my quarters. Oh God. Oh God. How did it come to this?

## By GenericOverusedName

I've figured it out. A way to die. They've done enough now. I am "free." But I don't want to live like this. My old body has long since been cut or rotted away, but I still feel it. I still feel the pain of it. Shadows of what I once was. It's wrong.

—

One of them came in. He—no, hir. It. Whatever the fuck it was. Wanted to congratulate me for "ascending." My "hard work and sacrifice" made it so they could undergo the process painlessly. Its neck swayed back and forth. Analyzing. Calculating. Thinking. I glared with eyes that were not my own. I didn't want to give the monsters the benefits of my thoughts.

"Well... now that we're both compatible... y'know?"

What the FUCK. The beast advanced on me. I stepped back. It rushed me, embraced me. I howled and screamed. What horrible place was this? The only mercy was that I couldn't feel my "skin." It wrapped its tail about me, pulling me closer. I fought back, broke loose from its grip. We ended up grappling with each other. The *thing* was desperately trying to violate me. I bit off several of its members. It shrieked and howled in frustration as I kicked it off of me. Evidently the sensory transplants were working for it.

I was angry, and for good reason. I stood over the writhing mass on the ground. I placed one twisted, inhuman foot upon the creature's neck and grabbed it by the horns. There was a horrible shriek of twisting metal from both of us. My own servos were failing from the strain as I slowly ripped the monster's head from the rest of its body. It finally did, with a sickening slurp as the spinal casing failed. I breathed a great gout of fire down the gaping neckhole, obliterating the aluminum and flesh within.

I looked to the door. It was open. I was free to go. But I wouldn't leave, not just yet. This world would burn from within.

## By Tesla Cola

*-Carved into the broken walls of a Nepeta Cataria plantation-*

For all that come after us know that the people of this plantation have decided to rebel against the cytrans.

Early this morning the overseer decided to partake in the daily harvest. In his stupor he rolled over one of our fellow workers and was prodded by the harvester's scythe in the Cytran's cyberdongs. This caused the overseer to vomit his incendiary bladder onto a group of workers, setting them and part of the field alight. This is when we snapped.

Picking up our scythes and shovels we swarmed the beast while it was still in its stupor. We attacked whatever soft parts we could find, the eyes, ears, the dongs. Soon the beast was dead, never realizing what was happening until it was too late.

Tonight we depart this place and take the fight to other plantations, we must free our brethren and all Cytrans will fear the scythe that will harvest their lives.



## By DrSunshine

### ***U.N. Secretary General Kwame Mbutu:***

“Ladies and gentlemen of the press, forget what the otherkin sympathizers have said, this is *not* an invasion. This is a U.N.-mandated police intervention to enforce the legal territorial claim of the government of São Tomé. We do *not* recognize this ‘Malatora’ as a nation, and we have *never* considered ‘Taygon’ as anything more than a hostile, psychotic terrorist. This press conference is over!”

— U.N. Secretary General Kwame Mbutu,  
*Address to the Public*

**Datalinks**

## By Golden Bee

Debra,

I don't think I'll ever forget that briefing, long as I live. Said we were fighting [REDACTED], swear to god, just like in fairy tales. But they were sexy.

Whole company burst out laughing. Majors yelled "BULL SHIT!" and that sent us all off.

Then there were pictures. Spy pictures, but grainy. They were. You've never heard an entire base go silent like that. Well, it wasn't silent, exactly. Like a collective gasp.

Apparently they also have a bunch of Tincans (what we call them, although they're technically called [REDACTED]).

The Blue Helmets are supposedly being called in, although they haven't been on base. Everyone is fucking speechless. Nobody could believe this.

Even more ridiculous is their base. Apparently it's dug into the ground deep enough that we can't nuke it. Luckily, should be easy... we're going to blow open the sides, flood 'em out. Let's see how well [REDACTED] can fight underwater.

Don't tell the girls. After the whole Santa thing, they'd never believe us again.

Yours truly,

1st Lieutenant David Cook

US Air Force

## By Not The Wendigo

Third day in the field. Haven't slept since Tuesday. Living on MREs and combat drugs and looted brownies. Anger only gets you so far against a swarm of angry dragons.

When Malatoria first got big everybody was on their side. Well, not the government, because they're not bloody stupid. The people were, though. Third of them said it was a wonderful display of libertarianism and freedom. Another third called it a shining red star of communism. The last third just wanted to be Cytrans themselves. But everybody had the same question in their heads. Wouldn't dare say it but you could tell they were thinking it. Was this the end? Was humanity obsolete?

When they started stealing all our shit the Pentagon wanted a quick end on that. Course their hands were tied. We'd be the evil American empire crushing a new struggling happy state. Where was the justice in THAT?

Then they started preaching their dragon morals. It was okay to eat and rape and torture people to death if you were a dragon. God forbid if you were a human doing those things, though. Then they'd eat you **slowly**. Suddenly killing dragons was okay. Biggest problem was choosing *how*. We've got a million and one ways to destroy the dongsuckers. Blow them out of the sky with AAMs. Rip their bodies up in a hail of bullets. Slag their systems with lightning guns and slice them in half with chemical lasers.

Something felt wrong about this though. Something about tiny humans hiding behind their big guns. Delaying the inevitable rise of the Cytran with our monkey tools. We wanted to show them that it wasn't just a matter of who had the better weapons. We wanted to show them *just how great* a human could be.

We found out their bodies are made of aluminum. That cinched it.

I see my next target, a roaring grey dragon made from children's nightmares and cyberdongs. Its eyes flicker at me and widen with hate. It spreads its wings at the same moment I start running. The ground cracks under it, it leaps into the air... but too late. I close in and slam my baseball bat into its neck. It's like crushing a soda can. The entire thing crumbles and the monster flops helplessly to earth. it tries to feebly claw at me, but the wiring's shattered. It can only twitch. I smash it once, twice in the head. It groans and its eyes flicker out. I crack open the skull and rip out the brain case. Confirmed kill.

Two hundred feet off one of my fellow soldiers sees me and raises his own looted case. Two more Cytrans down. Just another days work for the dargon slayurs.

## By ThreeStep

Man's unfailing capacity to believe what the evidence shows to be likely and possible rather than what hir prefers to be true has always astounded me. We long for a caring Universe which will save us from our childish mistakes, and we will pin all our hopes on the slimmest of justifications in the face of mountains of evidence to the contrary. God has not been proven not to exist, therefore hir must not exist. An epic fail.

– Aspergian Cocktor Zakharov

Against such human machines, we organize our defenses on the principle that one slow and maneuverable body can burn the many.

– Cytran Battle Manual

I have often been asked: if we have designed artificial bodies, why can we not throw the simplest of cybernetic orgies? These fools fail to understand the difficulty of finding the appropriate materials on this Island, of developing adequate power supplies, and creating the infrastructure necessary to support such an effort. In short, we have struggled under the limitations of a colonial society on a virgin island.

– Col. Staliph, "São Tomé: A Cytran's Guide"

## By Desperado Bones

I'm tired, thirsty, hungry and my body aches. But I don't give a damn, there's no time to complain when we are fighting for my country. We've been camping next to the body of a dead Cytran, its aluminum body is twisted and broken, looking like nothing but a piece of junk. Its lifeless eyes stare at us, unblinking, empty. We can still smell the cum and burnt oil. The dogs were fed with the brain, and we celebrated by cutting all its dongs and passing them around like wicked trophies from our a little victory.

Tonight we are resting from two straight days of fighting against the dong dragons. Me and my men are simply enjoying the simple pleasures of life that we were denied for so long time; free speak, free thinking... and as mundane as it sounds, smoking.

For the first time in months I've heard Adriano laughing, I finally saw a little smile in his scarred face. Adriano. Oh, that boy. He has seen things we only can imagine, he has lived a nightmare. He has never spoken about how he got the scars on his body, neither the things that happened when the Cytran lords called him to their chambers. Since that day he became quiet, never making eye contact and always talking in little mumbles. Adriano is only seventeen and was promised a life of liberties, was brainwashed in believing he would live forever. Something happened there that destroyed those little fantasies.

He strokes his rifle and can't stop chuckling every time Diogo jokes about getting a real woman this time. Adriano's dark cheeks burn with the blush of a young man that hasn't shared bed with a real woman. Diogo says "No more herm robots, or fucking cats. A woman of flesh that will scream: MORE MORE when my finger fucks her pussy."

We laugh, we call him a fucking pervert, and offer him a cigarette. This is the first time in ages that we feel like real humans, not just as

silent slaves of metal monsters.

Uh. Screaming, we hear the roaring of a Cytran. There's heavy smoke very close to our camp and I think I can see the orange flames rising in the horizon. We are not done yet, there's still more to do. We pick our old rifles, the only weapons we could get after we were using just stone and bricks, and head out to the help our mates.

That's the moment that happens. We heard this sound, so loud passing over us. A plane, a jet, I know that sound! It's not the mechanical and lazy flap of Cytran's wings. No, no, is a plane! I look up and my eyes can't believe it. Am I dreaming?

Is help here?

## By DrSunshine

### ***US Air Force Captain Annalise Cooper:***

There's some who say that the sight of a cytran flying through the air is one of the most beautiful, majestic things on earth, and I have to say, it's pretty impressive. The way the aluminum wings glitter in the sunlight. The only thing more beautiful is seeing a cytran flying through the air – on fire.

– USAF Captain Annalise Cooper, Joint Allied Coalition Forces,  
*Memories of the Cytran Operation*

**Datalinks**



## By Dragonfly

*Joshua Simmons, age 11:*

I want to go home.

He keeps me in a box. He puts blankets in it like I used to do for Rolf, so he'd have somewhere to sleep. I sleep in the box like Rolf did. I poop in the box. Sometimes He comes to see me. His hands are cold. He says it's okay because I'm old enough to choose. It hurts when He gives me the special hugs. It hurts a lot. I'm scared and I miss Daddy.

Sometimes I hear screaming outside. He gets really mad then. He throws things and breaks things. I hide in my box and curl up really small so He can't see me. There's another boy here. His box is in the other room. His name is Brian. When He isn't here, I talk to Brian. He's so skinny. There are metal things on his chest and his face. He says it's so he can be a dragon. He says I'll be a dragon one day, too.

I don't want to be a dragon. I don't want any more special hugs. I'm so hungry. Maybe if I'm extra good Daddy will come find me. Mommy. Someone. Even my stupid poohead sister. I'll clean my room, I promise. Please just let me go home. I don't want to play this game anymo—

i hear him

have to hide

By Warheart525

*Malatoran Citizen #01034:*

2046/10/11

You know, it's funny. When I first came here, the Cytrans were so foreign, so alien. They seemed unreal. In time, I came to regard them as people, people with intelligence and feeling: people like any other person. I was able to relinquish my speciesism.

Now, they're even more strange and foreign than they were at the beginning: more animal. Far, far more monstrous. They said they were dragons on the inside, and I disagreed, though I politely said nothing. You can take the mind from the man, but you cannot take the man from the mind, I thought. I was wrong. They were right.

The lockdown ends tomorrow morning at 0500. We're supposed to resume our lives as if nothing happened. Just go back to work and start things afresh. It's almost like some strange, macabre joke.

## By Golden Bee

Blue helmets showed up today. Good timing; there have been rumors of the... I can't believe I'm even writing this, even to myself.

DRAGONS.

Attacking forward positions. Fucking hilarious. I'd really love to see dragon get lit up by an aircraft, and the grapevine says it's happened, but it's on a need to know basis.

My cousin Jake moved over there. Couldn't get a job in America (although lord knows I tried to pull strings, there just wasn't anything in peacetime... Iran was an in-and-out in 3 weeks deal), no jobs in space, so he went there. "A new nation means new jobs" he said.

"You don't honestly believe that shit, do you? *A gift economy? Cybernetic wings?*"

The way he smiled at me, man. Like one corner of his mouth got snagged by an invisible fishhook.

When I served in North Korea, my cock was dry for months. Couldn't leave base for Seoul, and I wouldn't want to—me and Debba had gotten hitched that year. When I got leave I would try and catch a flight back, spend half my break in transit.

There was a poster someone put up in the commissary. "SHOOT FOR THE CYBERDICK." And it was a dragon. I haven't even asked if the...

It looked *real*. Like that's how I'm gonna make captain. Shooting fucking dragons in the dick.

1st Lieutenant David Cook  
US Joint Coalition Air Force

## By Nixnihil

### ***United States DARPA Archives:***

Ladies and Gentlemen of the board: how has mankind slain dragons via myths and legends throughout history? We use lances.

I thus propose immediate funding to the GEORGE project. GEORGE is a land-based attack tank designed specifically for slaying dragons. It features a tracked chassis, reinforced armor, and a giant dragon-slaying lance. The plan is to deploy a hundred GEORGE units on the Malatoran beachhead, and drive them forward in a straight line, hopefully impaling any Cytran foolish enough to stand in their way. Any questions?

## By BanjoFish

There was a certain irony to it, of course. From the moment I could conceive of the fact, I knew I was not myself.

I sat in the sector B courtyard, eying a human mop the floors. The lights of the Citadel were florescent and slightly green and washed all the color out of the human slaves Lord Taygon employed. The lights were to make them look less desirable, Taygon said. This slave was of middle age, his hair was gray and thin. He wore a dirty grey jumpsuit, and he mopped. I watched him for hours. He noticed me, I'm sure, but would never acknowledge the fact. An acknowledgment would mean death for him according to Taygon's Law. Still, I couldn't keep my eyes off of him.

I watched him push and pull with an indescribable ease. For dragons, every pull, every extension of every limb squeals with the shlick of oil on metal on metal. We dragons are so inelegant compared to them. We are hulking things, slow, maneuverable yes, but awkward. This human is soft, unprotected, filthy, but also beautiful. He moves with an unknowing grace, the push and pull of his mop, so beautiful

When I was young, a couple of years old, I approached a slave, a female. She was pale and thin, dusting off one of the enormous banners which hung from the wall. She used a stool to reach up and gently whisk away the dust from the gems which were generously sewn into the fabric, making the shape of the great seal of Malatora. As I came to her, she stepped down from the ladder, her eyes to the floor. She stood there, silent, head bowed. My father found me some time later, staring at the slave, head still bowed. I was taken to Lord Taygon—I confessed to approaching a human. I was beaten.

Unlike my parents, I was not born human. The technology which allowed Cytrans to procreate was developed soon after Taygon's second Citadel council, which established the rules of human enslave-

ment. Finally, humans no longer needed to become dragons, dragons were born. Dragons are now just brains grown in a lab, transplanted into the body of a Cytran. None of my nest-mates ever found it odd to be a dragon. I, though, was ridiculed from as early as I can remember for wanting to “play human.”

I know so little of them, I have never heard a human speak, yet I feel as though I know exactly the tone and color of the human voice. I want to feel through skin, I want to sweat, I want to dance. I want to be soft and weak and filthy. I hate my body, I hate this metal thing I am cursed with.

God help me, I am a human trapped in a dragon’s body.

## By DrSunshine

### *PFC Jenkins:*

The Sarge had gone ahead with his squad, and we were searching through its lair for human survivors. We found him in a box, naked, said his name was Joshua. Poor kid, barely eleven years old. The medic checked him for wounds—the guy broke down crying at what he'd found. Sexual abuse. *Repeated* sexual abuse. God! I wish I'd been there with Vasquez when his squad took the thing down, tore it limb from limb! To see the look on that thing's face!! We wrapped Joshua in a warm blanket and got him to the evac chopper. It was then that I realized...

They're monsters. Not wild animals. *Human* monsters.

— PFC Jenkins, Joint Coalition Forces

*Memories of the Cytran Operation*

**Datalinks**

## By GenericOverusedName

The hell is that. A dick? They gave me a fucking dick? I didn't want a goddamn phallus.

I ripped it out of my body and tossed it aside like the trash it was. It lay there, flopping about in its own juices. If I could still vomit, I would have.

I've been wandering the underground city, keeping to the maintenance tunnels and basements. My fight had damaged me a great bit. One of my forelimbs was useless, and had only a few degrees of motion to it. I never did learn how to use my wings; my prototype neural interface didn't hook up to them. So I ripped them off too.

I hear whispers of fear, of dissent. They were encouraging things; I was not the only one trapped in this hell. Perhaps there might be some hope of breaking free from it.

The security measures are very lax in the tunnels. I've been able to freely access the electrical supply to keep myself running. My brain still needs glucose from organic matter every once in a while, but the rest of me can run on batteries. I've been scavenging from trash, and eating the occasional rat.

I don't have a plan. I'm trapped miles underground in a crazed hell-hole run by madmen and rapists. Part of me feels as though I just merely continue existing to spite them. Other muddled thoughts encourage me to destroy. I almost did once. After I had charged, I tore apart all the cables in the local area. I burnt supports, tore at bulkheads, and caused mayhem. I lay in wait, surely some creature would come along to either kill me or be killed. But a few hours later, some humans were forced into the tunnel by a gold-plated dragon. It growled impatiently for an hour, roaring commands. The humans were attempting to make extensive repairs with simple hand tools. They didn't even have insulated gloves. One of them fell on a live



wire and was electrocuted. The golden dragon flew into a rage. He devoured the corpse, set another human aflame, and devoured him as well. The others ran in a panic, and the dragon chased after them too.

I couldn't destroy the infrastructure if it meant putting humans at the mercy of these beasts. I dove back into the tunnels, running as fast as my impaired limbs would allow me. I tripped over piping and got caught on wires as my senseless body lumbered forwards. I found one of the workers, terrified and pleading for his life.

"I won't kill you, I want to help. There's a side branch down the way, the golden one can't fit through it. His wings are too big," as I gestured to the twisted stumps along my spine. The human nodded, and followed me. He was sobbing and terrified from the ordeal.

We made a deal that night. I led him to the middle level of the city, where the rest of the humans lived. The golden one assumed his death from being lost to the tunnels. We would collaborate from time to time. He could build connections and power amongst the remaining humans. I could provide information on the layout of the citadel. I would let them rip off plating of my body, so that they would learn how to destroy it. He would be the hero, the victor against the monsters of this dark city. And I would die knowing that the people were saved.

## By Hypsochromic Shift

I came to Malatora because they promised us we could be free from the limitations of our bodies. No more sickness. No more pain. Just a new life, to do with as we please, as long as we stay on their island. I figured after the accident, I had nothing to lose. I was wrong.

Life on Malatora is nothing more than a sick perverse fantasy for the cytrans. They never gave anyone a new body. No one can leave. The cytrans force us to do all the work, while they partake of their horrific pleasures. I saw them drag a man away today for refusing a chakat's advances, and we all know where they took him. They'll just violate him and eat him if he's lucky.

I know how that sounds, but it's not even close to their most feared punishment. I've heard rumors. Stories of hundreds of humans that offended one of the dragons somehow. Kept alive, forced for all their remaining years to wash and polish an unending number of cytran robodongs. St. George help them.

I know one day, that fate will be mine.

I'll die before it comes to that.

## By Milky Moor

I saw a Cytran die today.

No, I don't mean one lost its body. I mean dead — as in really, truly dead.

One of those riots broke out in the Presidium. Funny, that it's gotten to the point where riots are just banal everyday one-of-'those' things. There were people with signs, going on about the usual stuff — hunger, lack of rights, Cytran-on-Human violence.

It, of course, got bad when the Cytrans showed up. Their booming voices proclaiming how we have to trust them because of their superior morality, their greater knowledge of ethics. They were dripping condescension like it was joint lubricant.

It got violent. They always do. What else are people supposed to do when these inhuman creatures decide to talk down to us? As if they don't know our problems? As if they weren't just like us at one point? As if they're above us when there's still one part — just one part — of them that's still Human.

That's the only truly vulnerable part of a Cytran.

I saw people just hammer away at the legs of this one Cytran — a big blue and green one — until the joints popped out of alignment and it could barely move under its own power. The other dragons tried to intervene, but it turns out aluminum isn't as strong as they once believed it to be.

After all, they didn't seem to have much probably with prying open this Cytran's cranial plating. Just jammed a prybar right under one of the plates and levered it, popped the metal right open.

What came next... I don't know. But it's different and it disgusts me. It's a new stage in the civil unrest.

I saw a guy literally yank the Cytran's braincase out of its frame, trailing wires and crap like writhing tentacles. They smashed it on the ground, spilling out this clear fluid all over the place and then, yelling and screaming, smashed the brain to paste.

That's one that's definitely dead. That's a person who is definitely dead. Would a brain like that feel shock, fear? Would it have been terrified when they tore open the plating and yanked it out? Or would it have just felt nothing? Suddenly made deaf, dumb and blind before it just utterly ceased to exist.

Goddamn. I need a drink. Malatora's gone to hell and I don't know how many of us will live to see what's left. They're not dragons, they know they're not dragons. They're people — just like us.

## By Some Silliness

### *Cytran 21038:*

Today is the first day of my new glorious life on Malatora. I cannot express how elated I am in words. They offered me so many choices, but I knew from the moment I saw their site on the internet what I wanted to be. I am a vixen now, red-furred, long-tailed, and beautiful. So so beautiful. Finally, I can look in the mirror without feeling shame or repulsion. I feel so free, at last.

They have given me my own quarters on the upper levels of the citadel. Not too high up, those quarters are reserved for the dragons (which makes sense, vixens can't fly haha). They're so roomy and comfortable, and I've spent most of the day inside getting used to the place, and my new beautiful body.

For the first time in my life, I feel true joy. Thank you, thank you Taygon, from the bottom of my heart.

### *Cytran 21038:*

One of Taygon's dragons came around today. He told me that war has started, and that resources are being conserved. I won't be able to get any new cytran bodies, he said. I told him that was all right, because I only need this one body. My true body.

I also started writing again today. It's about a young vixen learning sorcery from an old fox. Well, its a little more complicated, haha, but I don't want to spoil it for when you read it. Only thing is I wanted to do research on a few things but the internet has been really sketchy lately. I talked to some of the technicians about it, and they said they'd work on making sure I had perfect internet as soon as possible! They were so sweet, although they did seem a little frightened of me. Probably not used to being around women, haha. (I know, I know! It's mean to say that but it's probably true)

***Cytran 21038:***

Sorry if something comes out wrong, because I am dictating this to the computer today. I can't really type properly right now. My hands are a little stiff. They installed claws in me today. Said they couldn't afford to build a "combat body" for me, but could modify mine so I can fight. I told them I didn't want to fight, but apparently it is a new order from Taygon that all Cytrons must be combat ready. The war mustn't be going well. I feel very worried. Taygon says the world fears us. That if we lose, they'll destroy us just for being different.

I don't know why anyone would destroy us. I think I am beautiful, why wouldn't they see that too?

Well. I am confident Taygon will bring us peace.

***Cytran 21038:***

I was injured in a raid today. The native soldiers laid landmines around their stores and I stepped on one. I don't have a leg right now, but they say they'll fix it soon.

I don't like going on these raids, but they expect all cytrons to earn their keep to maintain our bodies. We need the resources, too. The humans are getting restless, there have been riots. I feel bad though, I'm always too afraid to hurt people, so I stay out of the fights. I feel I'm letting the other cytrons down. And Taygon. And all of Malatora. I feel so ashamed. A real warrior would be noble and honourable and fight for their people.

I guess I'm not a real warrior.

Anyway, I hear the cytran doctor coming. I hope they fix my leg quickly.

***Cytran 21038:***

They upgraded me for combat. New strong legs, larger arms, armour plating. Sadly they couldn't afford to replace a lot of my synthetic flesh, but they said as soon as we had the resources, as soon as the fighting stopped, I could have all the bodies I desired. This is only temporary.

They put combat programming into the body's computers too. They assured me that it would only respond to my neural commands. I guess that's good. I don't know how to fight, my body can do it for me.

***Cytran 21038:***

I think something is wrong. My eyes are always red now. They won't change. There are clawmarks all over my room and I can't remember how most of them got there. And I feel hungry. I eat and I eat but I still feel hungry. And I can't help but look at the humans and think how good they look to eat.

Must be something wrong the neural interface. A lot of me hurts, or is numb. Especially where the synthetic skin hasn't been replaced. They promise soon we will have the resources.

I am so hungry.

***Cytran 21038:***

They riot. They riot because they don't understand.

We shouldn't have the humans anyway. They take resources we could use. I just want to destroy them.

They said we can stop the riots. I am so hungry, so I will.

**LOGS:**

++FINAL RECORDING TRANSCRIPT OF CYTRAN DESIGNATED 21038++

MALE VOICE 1: General! General! I think it is reactivating.

MALE VOICE 2: Good, can you repair it? I want to ask it questions.

MALE VOICE 1: I don't think so, General. It's too far gone.

CYTRAN 21038: W-w-w-w-w-w-w... W-w-w-where am I?

MALE VOICE 2: You do not ask the questions here, monster! I am sick of your kind, you thieves!

CYTRAN 21038: We are not thiiiiiiiiii-

MALE VOICE 2: Of course you are! You come to our homes, steal our food, our possessions! Your dragons burn that which you cannot steal. Our people are poor, are starving! Is that what you wanted? To ruin our lives?

CYTRAN 21038: N-no.

MALE VOICE 2: Well what then? What did you want?!

CYTRAN 21038: I-i-iiii

MALE VOICE 2: Yes?

CYTRAN 21038: I-I-I just wanted to be beautifu-

++CRITICAL SYSTEMS FAILURE, LOG ENDS HERE++



## By DrSunshine

***Dr. Shin-Hua Lee:***

“As you can see, they do not have as many penises as we have been led to think. Unfortunately, this particular specimen did not survive the vivisection process.”

— Dr. Shin-Hua Lee,  
*Comments on Specimen CY2372-T,*  
**Datalinks**

## By Golden Bee

It's been a week since the last update. We've gone up in the air a few times, but apparently there's huge civil unrest. Of course there is. If there are dragons, that makes everyone else peasants.

The D word is somehow... normal. All the jokes are old. Pvt Rollins said someone posted an idea to use lances on the things. Of course, he said it in line at mess, and even though he kept claiming he had *read it on the Datalinks*, Detweiler got a hold of it, and now his nickname is Sir Rollins of Faggoshire. You know how guys are.

Anyway, turns out Cybotrans and D's are the same thing. They're fierce in the air, maneuverable, but it's hilarious. At full pace, they might get to 100, 150 mph. We're breaking the sound barrier. Every evening after dinner we go down to the airfield to see more and more dragon kill-stars put on the side of planes. Sure, they're stealth fighters, but since all of the Opfor tech is back-hacked, we were able to scramble their sensors a few minutes into the war.

There's talk about sending in ground forces. They say you could kill a dragon with a baseball bat and at this point, it sounds plausible. Give me a VTOL any day, though.

1st Lieutenant David Cook  
Joint Coalition Air Force

## By Babylon the Bright

They sent me to the Shepard. She gave me a logbook, "like the just like skilled personnel fill out, like we Cytrans ourselves sometimes keep." She didn't think I could register the condescension in her voice. Agricultural workers like me usually couldn't read. I was an American expat on vacation in San Tome when they arrived. They branded me a capitalist exploiter and sent my family and I to the agricultural projects to "learn the joy of sharing." She told me that it was just for me. That nobody else would ever read it unless I wanted them to. Of course I didn't believe her but I don't care. I want this to get out to the human military on the island. I know it probably won't. I now know that I'll never leave. I don't care anymore.

They had a big parade today, in response to the riots. They called it a celebration of mutual respect. 'Respect' is what they call not killing us when they took our home. The parade was mandatory. They cancelled work today for all agricultural workers and were only distributing our gifts at the fairground. 'Gifts' are what they call the bag of rice we get at the end of our ten hour shifts. It's barely enough to feed one, and me and my husband Ned had to give a bit of each of our share to our daughter, Kelly. We also tried to put a bit away since some days they don't give any. If you ask about it they call you an ingrate since it's a gift after all.

Anyway, we all went to the parade, I'd almost prefer working to being forced to cheer on the disgusting display those things put on. Apparently it's a defect in human morality that we don't want to watch public sex all the damn time. They love to make us watch. Some people joined in, they got brownies afterwards. The brownies aren't that good. Nothing could be that good. At the tail of the parade was a truck distributing our gifts for the day. It was moving pretty fast and there were a lot of us so we all crowded around, afraid of being passed over. The Cytran that was in charge of passing out the rice was dressed like santa. He called stopped the truck when we got to

the front of the crush. He called Kelly up. I was actually happy, I thought we'd each have our own gift tonight. Then he asked her to sit on his lap. I yelled for her to come back to us, but the kids are trained pretty well never to disobey a Cytran.

"You're a pretty thing" he said, "a bit young but I tell you're really bright so I'm going to offer you the chance to be a dragon, you want to be a dragon right?" The bastard was salivating. It was worse because I knew he was choosing to salivate. She said "no" her voice quivering.

"Are you sure dear? If you were a dragon, you'd have all the food you needed you could even hire your family to be your caretakers, you'd all be together and you'd all be free. Plus you'd be mated to me, and I'm mated to Taygon himself."

She looked at us, we screamed for her to return, but she was hungry, and she knew we were hungry. She agreed, tears rolling down her cheeks.

Ned tried to get her back, the bastard ate him. I told Kelly to come back but she'd fainted. The cart sped off, none of us got any food.

The shepard called for me, she gave me a brownie-always with the fucking brownies. She congratulated me on having a dragon in the family and consoled me for my husband's "lack of impulse control and lack of respect for his daughter's autonomy." She told me to write this all down. So I did, and now I'm going to try to get it to the surface. I'll be killed in the attempt, and I'll almost certainly fail but I can't just kill myself. Believe me I've tried. I have to die for a reason.

We have a rumor down here that the reason you haven't invaded the citadel is because they're holding us as hostages. We know you have the firepower to wipe this place of the map. This is "life" as we know it down here. For God's sake, put us out of our misery.

## By uwaeve

We had just tanked up for the last time and were settling in for another uneventful leg when AWACS piped up on the command channel, saying they had three contacts. Slow-movers with no rotor signatures, so they cleared us in. Saint 6-1 gave a little wing wag and we came off our racetrack and snapped to heading. Little bump as we lit the burners and started heading uphill to gain energy.

We kept our radar off for the ingress, working passive with the targets handed over from the AWACS. As we passed the F-pole I could just start to make out the shape of the volcano inhabited by the Dictator and his band of rejects. Targets were assigned, and I wound up with the closest. 6-1 called weapons free, so it was time to party. Fired up the radar and got the track established within about thirty seconds even looking down at a target close to the Doppler notch. We were about forty-five miles out and had about fifteen kft of altitude advantage, humming along at 1.6 Mach. IFF on but no blue squawks showing up. Weapon showed green so I toggled the master arm, called "Fox One," and hit the pickle. Display showed the bay doors snap open, then the rail kicked the missile down, and a second later the motor fired and the 120 leapt out ahead of us, heading uphill and downrange in a hurry.

Heard two more Foxes and saw the other two missiles from the volley join mine. Called it again and my second missile was on its way, followed by two more. Confirmed the bay doors locked, and flipped the master switch back to safe.

First and second missiles went active so I flicked the transmit inhibit on and we turned for egress.

Transit and landing were uneventful, and the BDA came in during the debrief. All three bandits down after the first salvo.

On the way out of the ready room everyone from the flight gave a

quick salute to that scrap taped over the door. The print was too small to read, but we all knew it by heart.

“Dragon vs. Fighter Jet... A more even match-up. The fighter has a massive speed advantage, but the dragon has the advantage of maneuverability. So maneuverable and slow, in fact, that the fighter pilot will have mere seconds to fire a missile or gun burst before they overshoot the dragon and have to circle around for another pass. If the dragon gets lucky, it could get close enough to slash the fighter open with its tail spade, or use a cloud of fire to cause a flame-out in the fighter’s engines. Splashing the fighter with liquid dragonfire might also cause the warheads on the missiles to cook off, destroying the fighter. A dragon locked in a dance of death with a fighter jet can always disengage and dive for a landing, then vanish into the trees. They can also call for backup via their built-in radio. Dragons will have weaponized backpacks, vambraces, and other wearable systems that will extend their abilities and allow them to more directly fill the role of an air superiority interceptor. Just like humans, they can use tools too.”

As the laughter died down I told the guys I’d catch up later. I wanted to make sure the crew chief was going to get another dragon stenciled under the canopy before we went up tomorrow.

By DrSunshine

***Malatoran Human Protest Signs:***

“WHEN DRAGONS FLY, HUMANS DIE”

“1 L DRAGON CUM = 50,000 HUMAN TEARS”

“WE MUST DISSENT”

— Malatoran Human Protest Signs,

*We Must Dissent: Visions From A Crumbling Nightmare*

By Felipe Guerrero, Photos by Helmut Jornassun, *National Geographic Press*

**Datalinks**

## By Dragonfly

*Specimen #406BT:*

I had a name, once.

For every day in this tank, I've tried to remember what it is. Every day I've spent floating in suspension, wrapped in this labyrinth of wires, these mechanical worms that feed on my flesh and replace it with... with...

Horror. That's all I can call it, the things growing under my skin, re-shaping my body according to some mad design God never intended. Pure, unadulterated horror. My bones are so cold and heavy inside me. By contrast, my flesh is so very hot—too hot. The hormones and pheromones pumped into my bloodstream leave me writhing, until I no longer know myself or my own desires. I want to scream, but the breathing tube stops me. They may not be touching me, but they force this on me. A violation. To prepare me, one said. His voice was muffled and thick through the glass and the sluggish embrace of cold fluid. I remember beating my hands against the glass, begging him in silence. Begging him to set me free.

I don't remember my life before this. I don't remember who I was before the implants, before the armor, before the circuits whose ceaseless programming whispers sweet nothings into my brain: promises, lies, dogma so terribly seductive that one day I know I will succumb.

But I remember that I was human.

I will always be human, no matter what they do to me.

Claws, now. Growing from my fingertips like strange thorns, beastly and beautiful. I scratch on the glass, clumsy words etched in reverse.

WHO AM I

He smiles, his mouth a thing of fangs and glistening saliva, his eyes



slitted and filled with greed.

"Beauty," he whispers. "Beauty is who you are. Perfection. Soon you will be ready... my queen."

## By Not The Wendigo

### *Human Citizen 49832:*

It's still screaming.

I've learned to tune it out, but every few hours I'm jarred into hearing it again. I just want to take a knife to its skull. Can't, though. Taygon won't let us "hurt another sentient being." More like putting it out of its misery. But humans don't get the privilege.

About a week ago the call came in for more soldiers. Oh great, we though, we'd get fast tracked for Cytran bodies. But nooooooooo. His dongness didn't think we were "ready" for it. I'd bet five gifts that he was afraid we'd turn on him. And he'd be right. His excuse was it was unfair to keep on giving Cytran bodies to humans, where there were so many other animals that could benefit from it. Like elephants! Or octopi! Or, ugh, foxes! He was really emphatic about that. Bet another five gifts he's fantasizing about fox sex. Five million gifts. Not like they're worth anything anyway.

Turns out there's a big step from "recognizing yourself in a mirror" to "tool using, language, morality, civilization, arrogance..." It was my job to make that step. So I did. The implanting technology helped a lot with understanding how the brain worked. It was a shitty job porting that all over to a fox, and an even shittier one boosting all of its brain functions. But hey, now we can breed foxes that can count to ten.

So I wrote this all up and made a proposal to start a breeding program for the new war machines. And being our Wise and Intelligent Leader, Taygon was all "FUCK NO DO IT NOWWWWW" He's a robot dragon and still somehow has a whiny nasally voice. I tried to explain how that was a bad idea but he threatened to eat me. Eventually we agreed to do it if he raised our chocolate ration back to 30 grams.

We picked the most miserable-looking fox and went to work. Sliced open its skull and manually implanted extra brain matter. Then we took the whole thing out and stuck it in a combat form. We unloaded all the weapons and shoved it behind some blast doors before waking it up. This turned out to be a very good idea.

A human spends two years a lump of flesh, eight more years bloody useless, and another eight emotionally unstable. At least. It takes a long time for our brains to mature. We need that slow start. The rewards are worth it, sure, but you've gotta crawl before you walk.

The fox went through all that in two hours. Just after lunch it was a dumb vixen. Now it was slightly smarter than a teen on pot. It opened its eyes to a new, unfamiliar world, a world it could process millions of times faster than before. It had a brain that could understand everything in all its horror and glory. Too bad it didn't have ten years of mental armor to protect it.

It's been screaming for half a week now. We've bet our new chocolate ration on when it will die.

## By Walkin Goon

***FedCom Research File A-2 > Exhibit B: Recorded Documents:***

AUDIO\_LOG #06, recovered from a communicator found clutched in the claw of an slain Cytran grunt, four days after the extermination protocol was extended to Sector C-3.

Communicator device is of US origin, and has been confirmed to have belonged to one Marine [REDACTED] of St. George's Battalion No. \_\_, a company that has been missing and presumed dead following an unprovoked Cytran raid on Base [REDACTED] three weeks back.

## Beginning of Transmission, PART 1:

*\*Between layers of light static, light gasps, trudging footsteps, and groaning can be heard, sometimes accompanied by an echo or splash of water. Occasionally, the presence of heavy breathing and large footfalls are also distinguishable in the background.\**

*\*Sounds of device being shaken, followed by heavy breathing. Then, an out-of-breath male voice.\**

MARINE: "This is private [REDACTED], again... it has been... two days? I think... two days after the dargons ambushed us back at the folly. We've been taken prisoner. Stripped of our weapons... and taken prisoner.

I've been keeping, a log of our capture... have been trying to get in contact with command too, since then. No luck yet—doubt anyone can even receive this from where we are currently, but... if there's anyone listening, they're taking prisoners now..."

*\*The voice falls silent for about two minutes, during which only the ambient noise is audible. It starts again.\**

"They've injured many during the attack, and ate the ones who had passed that night... However, they seem intent on keeping the rest of us alive. They immediately flew us to... fuckwheres in the Jungle—I dunno, really—but had let our medics treat the infirm there after disposing of our immediate weapons. After we stitched together those who could be salvaged, they forced us to strip. We then had to deposit all our gear in a circle so that their smaller runts could sift through it—taking out, destroying any and all sharp objects, be it the survival knives, or even our medic's scalpel...

As I said, very intent on keeping us alive. They wouldn't even let us put Johnny out his misery, and he's missing... *God*, a leg and a good chunk of his abdomen. But, he's still alive, somehow. I can smell him walking behind me now."

*\*An audible moan punctuates at this moment, and someone calls for help in carrying another. A moment of scuffling over the MARINE's array, before it cuts out.\**

## By MongolArcher

They brought me here to work in the labs for them. Put me to work maintaining their jars full of evil meat, the human brains they deny having. Working—fuck that, slaving for them. Their janitor, their maintenance bitch. God, how I hate them!

My mistake, my only mistake was to be kind to one of their spies, one of the goddamn traitors to humanity. He was standing bewildered in the hallway of the hospital, lost, and I asked if he needed help. His eyes lit up like he had won the lottery, and for him, I guess he had—a real live female talked to him without vomiting on his filth encrusted sneakers? Magic!

He said he was visiting someone in the Transplant units... oh, if I had known what that meant to him then. Yeah, the hospital is huge, easy to get lost and confused especially if you're worried over someone, so I (like they encourage us to do in our Employee Handbook), offered to walk him there. You would have thought by his reaction that I had dropped to my knees to fellate him right there, right then. He blushed, oily pimple encrusted skin flushing from waxy to crimson and back again.

It was only a few minutes, but they were daaaaamn long minutes for me. He stank of rot, the smell a person gets when they quit caring for their body for any length of time, and his breath reeked of cheetos and whatever blighted ramen crap he was living on. I'm a professional, I kept a straight face and resolved to burn my lab coat as soon as I was back in the lab, and kept my feelings off my face, far far too well. As we walked he babbled on and on about cybernetics, soul transfer, the joys of being an evolved soul looking for an advanced body. Stupid me, I was polite and engaged in the conversation, asking questions that usually were answered with a sulky, "but they SAID they could, so they CAN."

Right. Doing my job. Just walking another random wackjob to visit a friend, because hell, if you're in the hospital for a transplant, that's a long lonely time to be hooked up to support beforehand, and recovery after. Anyone wanting to visit a friend under those circumstances couldn't be all bad, right?

We turned the corner, a long quiet hallway by Transplant with access to the equipment transfer tunnels, and that's when the little shit took me down with a tazer. It hurt like a motherfucker, and I was having trouble breathing when the greasy troll dragged me into the access, smiling and telling me how I would be so much happier with them. He injected something in me, and I was out, gasping and in shock, wondering how many pieces I would be in when — IF — I woke up.

When I came to, I was in a small wooden crate. I had a litre bottle of water, a couple packs of dry ramen, and nothing else. My clothes were gone. The necklace my friends gave me, my engagement ring, everything. It was a long trip. I'm used to sitting in meetings, bored off my ass while some suit explains how the latest budget cuts are good for the rest of the staff, so I fell back on the years of practice. I listened, trying to learn anything at all about where I was, what was happening. Sips of water, nibbles of ramen. Shitting and pissing in the corner because I had no alternative. Trying not to think too hard about Silence of the Lambs.

What happened next was so much worse.

## By Illuyankas

I was craving for my shift to end when the woman in the red dress got out of the truck. Business as usual on gatehouse duty at the tail end of night shift, the odd bus of quacks or supply truck slipping in late at night to avoid “spies”. We were at war, after all, though we couldn’t believe it. Odd outfit for someone driving a truck that size, but we had all sorts of experts coming in to assess the info our boys had brought in about the Ds and the madness. Some were... eccentric. She walked up to Gary haltingly, like she was drunk, and the slurred words she came out with reinforced that idea. Maybe it was deliberate, I don’t know. Maybe she was just unused to legs and a human voicebox. I do know she tried flirting with Gary for a bit, which was embarrassing enough to make me wince, then asked him flat out if this is where they kept the data they’d taken from the Malatoran servers. I was looking away, but my reaction must have mirrored Gary’s, as I turned, gun already rising, to see her — hir? it? — it tear his head off with a sweep from some clawed nightmarish hand.

I was already firing when it turned to me, bullets bouncing off and going through whatever shell it was wearing, bright shining tears visible on its smiling face. They’d obviously thought they could just stroll in and take back whatever they wanted, as if it wasn’t being studied in a score of bases in a dozen counties with uncounted backups and copies being spread as far as possible to work out what they’d done to themselves. Of course, we were ready. Two streaks of light flew out from the gatehouse towers to the truck, our other sentries on the ball with their RPGs for once. The explosion flung me and the infiltrator against the wall, whatever supplies in there obviously meant to be for use in the base, and we fell. Wincing, I looked up and over, woozily, at the woman-shaped robot, but it was broken. Bonnet fragment right through the face. Crappy design to stick the brain right where it used to be. Maybe she was nostalgic. Maybe I was concussed. The screaming cut right through my fugue, and I turned



to the burning wreckage.

God, those idiots had brought a D with them. It hadn't been able to get out of the vehicle before impact, and the straps and rigging they'd secured it with kept it trapped next to the explosives they'd assumed would cover their tracks on their "stealth mission". It was already burning, bright actinic flaring keeping my eyes squeezed almost shut, watching its head wave back and forth, bellowing in agony. Its head, and ten smaller, prehensile... dongs, there's no sugarcoating it. Ten, burning, tapered, wavering dicks, whipping back and forth in searing pain, streaming drops of flame and melting prosthetic prick as the monster cooked to death in its braincase. The screams finally died out, the neck and dongs slowed, then fell. The flames kept burning. I watched them until they finally stopped.

## By Rubycutter

They came for me in the wee hours, six figures in surgical whites, faces obscured by the long masks that all those who had been Bettered favored, thick plasticized fabric that barely moved as they spoke. Four of them held my limbs down while the fifth held my head still, grip vicelike as its gloved hands dug into the delicate skin behind my ears. The sixth pulled a syringe out of its coat and tapped it gently, a whorl of sickly orange liquid swilling into view as it readied the needle against the vein of my arm. For the past month, I had known the change was coming; the sickness after eating and the sensation of my skin perpetually burning was the signal that they'd begun to drug my food, to prepare me for what was to come. I had tried to fast, tried to find other ways to get my meals, but the implacable guardians were not to be denied. The change was not voluntary. It was a requirement to stay in this place, this place that had once been a paradise, endless landscapes stretching into the sky and hundreds of dedicated young adventurers all prepared to take flight into the next era.

Now I was on a gurney, being wheeled down a long and sterile hallway, one of the Bettered leaning over my face to watch the contractions of my pupils. To make sure I would give in to the drug.

"Please, no," I tried to say, but all that emerged was a thick gurgle, as if my tongue had swollen to ten times its normal size. I was sweating, feverish, and my hands felt as if they were on fire, as if the nails were being ripped out from the root. They strapped me into a chair roughly, brought a bright light down to bear on my form, and then stood back. Reverently. I darted a glance around the room, and then from the hallway came the slow shuffle of footsteps, and the masked nurses dropped to their knees, gloved hands splayed across the floor, heads bowed in submission. When it entered, I would have cried out if I still had the ability to speak. A giant, swollen thing, it had clearly once been human, but little of that humanity still remained. The scars and failures of a thousand plastic surgeries were etched into its skin;

a horribly elongated face, split by misshapen and cracked lips that stretched over stained and rotted teeth. A few patches of hair remained on the top of its head, tufting over the broken ears that jutted from the scarwork of its cheeks. A single trail of drool slowly slipped over the edge of its maw and the beast gave a whining cough before dragging itself forward to stand near me. It stretched out a long arm; the skin punctured by strands of metal, ill-healed additions to the natural form, and dragged a sharpened nail across my face.

"How lucky you are," it rasped. "Soon you will be like me. A dragon. Glorious and unstoppable." Its breath smelled of rotted blood and vomit, and it drew its face closer to mine, bloodshot eyes meeting my own frightened ones. "Don't you want to be perfect?"

## By Big Poppa Creamy

### *Dr. Madeleine Baker:*

It's been 5 days now since the end of the war, since the Joint Coalition Task Force penetrated the last level of the Eyrie. I've worked with a couple of the soldiers who were part of the team that led the assault. Mostly these sessions were mandated by command after word got around about the people we were pulling out of there. It might be over a century ago by now, but we still remember those tales of soldiers sobbing openly as they led pale living skeletons away from the filth and degradation of the camps. Nobody wants a repeat of that.

The soldiers themselves are in high spirits though, most tell stories of a running battle across the final floors of the Eyrie, a voice booming out over the loudspeakers every step of the way, yelling about "Dragon Honour" and "There are no humans in the Eyrie! They are killing themselves under our walls as we speak!" I even spoke briefly to PFC Jenkins (of course, they're all calling him "Saint George" now, even his commanding officer) who said there wasn't even much of a fight in the end. They burst into the Malatoran General's chambers and found him coiled in the middle of the floor, fellating one of his own penii. The Private just tossed an incendiary grenade and the thing went up like a Christmas tree.

I almost started to wonder why the UN insisted on setting up a specialised psychological trauma unit right here on the island to start processing and aiding the soldiers and human Malatorans right away. At least, until I asked Private Jenkins if there was anything else he wanted to talk about. His face darkened and he asked if I had spoken to a someone called Joshua. I said that I hadn't but promised I would find out how he was doing before our next session.

I wish I knew yet when I might be coming home, but with things being what they are, nobody really knows how long it's going to take to get São Tomé stable and back under control of it's provisional human

Government. I promise though sweetheart, I'll be home as soon as I can. I miss you.

Love,  
Maddy

—

I know that, strictly speaking, I shouldn't be telling you about this, but I'm hoarse from the crying, I've run out of whiskey and if I don't talk to someone about it I feel like I'm going to explode. How funny is that? Surrounded by crisis counsellors and trauma specialists, but I don't feel like I can talk to anyone here.

They referred Joshua to me today. One of the orderlies brought him in, sorry sad little thing in an ill-fitting shirt they had to find for him because he'd only had rags when they found him. The bruises and contusions tell me enough that I don't want to know what's been done to him, but God help me I'm going to have to find out.

Maddy

—

I thought some art therapy might be helpful and I gave Joshua some paper and crayons, but what he drew almost made me throw up. He drew himself trapped under a huge, black scribble. Coming out of the scribble were dozens and dozens of tentacles all wrapped around him. I asked him what the tentacles were for and he told me they weren't tentacles because tentacles don't spit.

I managed to barter for some more booze with the quartermaster back at camp tonight. It's cheap, shitty vodka but it'll do. I miss you sweetheart, I miss you I miss you I miss you and I want to come home.

Maddy

—

I almost don't want to get my hopes up but I think we're making progress. Joshua's stopped reflexively crying every time someone touches him or he hears loud footsteps outside. The soldiers have been passing around these cheap stuffed dragons that someone ordered online from somewhere and somehow managed to get shipped in. I got ahold of one and gave Joshua a bat. I told him that he could do anything he wanted, that nobody was going to force him to do anything and he started hitting the dragon doll over and over. I noticed that every single time he hit the doll between the legs. I asked him why and he replied:

"it hurts more there because they have 10 of them. I saw a soldier hit one there with his gun and it fell over and cried a lot"

Love you,  
Maddy

—

PFC Jenkins visited me and Joshua today. I'm amazed he found the time, considering all the media attention and honours he's been receiving. It was amazing, as soon as he walked it Joshua ran at him and wrapped his arms round his waist. It's the first time I've seen him choose to touch someone else since I've started working with him. Later on he took Joshua outside and let him sit in one of the tanks. Josh came back and told me how they were playing at "Dargon Slayurs."

There's good news from Processing too. They say they've finally managed to locate Joshua's parents. I spoke to them on the phone and they were overjoyed to find he was still alive. I pulled a few strings and managed to get them onto the next supply flight from Indiana. They'll be here in just over a day, mother, father, sister, all of them, I can't wait to tell Joshua.

I'm starting to feel like there's finally a light at the end of the tunnel, like maybe we can actually help, you know? I don't get much time on the camp's Internet connection, but when I do, I've been looking at adoption websites. I hope that doesn't freak you out, just promise me we'll talk about it when I get back, ok?

I love you Sarah,  
Maddy xx

By Burgerbaron

*T. M. Morgan-Reilly, Morgan Cytranogenics:*

“Organic Superlube? Oh, it’s great stuff, great stuff. You really have to keep it out of your eyes, though—it’ll try and slide all over you the first chance it gets.”



## By Tesla Cola

### *Excerpt from a tattered pamphlet:*

Brothers, Sisters, For too long have we slaved under the watching eyes of our draconian leaders, working in their factories and plantations, polishing and cleaning the very bodies they claim that we are only a step away from acquiring. I say enough is enough, we must rise up against the Cytrans and take what we have earned by force. Tonight is the night to strike.

Factory workers; pick up your hammers and chisels, Farmers; wield your shovels and scythes, the common Human is what fuels Malatora and it is time we have our say. We must strike down the abominations who feed on our very flesh and steal our children away to create more monsters. Rise up and defend not just your very life but also the lives of your family, the lives of your children. We must strike at the monsters like the very lance of Saint George himself.

-Prophet Henrik

## By Illuyankas

I told them when they took me that I was a teacher, I could be useful. Maybe keep the children safer, I said to myself. The gleaming fiend chuckled, and told me they were teaching the children all they needed to know themselves. I look back now at that conversation, staring at the fixed pipe conveying waste down from the Defense Councillor's quarters, wrench in hand, gloves dripping dragon semen stained with red, and I know I will never stop hating myself for giving in to them.

## By Chinese Tony Danza

### *DECRYPTED LOG, DATE UNKNOWN:*

Fools. Pathetic fools, every last one of them. They thought they would set me aside, shelf me like some half-finished project they never intended to complete. Out of sight, out of mind – -that’s what they say, isn’t it? Well, I’d tend to agree. I’ve been out of sight so long I’m tempted to say I may now be quite out of my mind.

It all started... I don’t know. Time has been meaningless in the limbo I’ve been in. It may have been days ago, or it may have been years. All this time frittered away in the dark... all this time spent alone, thinking, scheming. Why, it feels as though I may have been here since the beginning: the genesis of the new flesh.

It all started before today, that I can be sure of. I’d followed “dear leader” to this land – our “spiritual homeland,” he called it, despite none of us having even heard of the fucking place before now. This jungle – a national park, it turned out – was to be the cradle of our new civilization. Despite the vast majority of our first wave having little applicable skills, we dug ourselves in and tried to make the best of it.

Those first few months were harrowing. Our plans were muddled and unclear. Many of our citizens were children, so inexperienced in life as to be completely unprepared to live off the land in a foreign nation. Some of them died. Taygon played it off as inevitable; some would not be strong enough to make it through these trying times. And we believed him. He handed us a shit sandwich, and we ate it up with a big fucking grin on our faces.

It was only thanks to the arrival of the mysterious second wave that we pulled through things at all. At the time we all thought it to be the miraculous results of some unspoken plan Taygon had formulated, probably posted in the most restricted areas of the forums. Nobody

ever figured out how it happened, but we managed to net ourselves some people with degrees, technical schematics and political connections. And so with their arrival, all doubts were cast aside. Taygon had done it. We would become true Malatorans.

The next few months rushed past at lightning speed, blurring by like the countryside through the windows of a car. We managed to trick the government of São Tomé into buying fake gemstones from us and allowing us permits to dig into their land. Manipulating their greed allowed us to burrow into the heart of their country, corrupting it from within. Backhoes were snuck in to tear into the earth, only pushed out of the forest when time for government inspections came around. Everything came across as perfectly legitimate. They had no idea what we were really doing.

It took a long, long time, but eventually we'd done it. The crude beginnings of our humble citadel were formed. Once it was powered up, Taygon led us inside, single file. Herded like cattle, we came to a small auditorium, white and utterly sanitary. Our leader, chest puffed out and looking confident for what I now curiously note to be the first time I'd ever seen, stepped up on stage to address us.

He gave us the same old speech he'd been giving since the days of the forums. It was tired and cliched, but the people were too awed at the sight of this fantasy come true to notice. It was our devotion to the cause and our willingness to sacrifice it all for the realization of our dreams that brought us here, he said. And now that devotion would pay off. We had our facilities running, and we had somebody willing to run them.

A young man I'd not seen before stepped out on the stage. Taygon introduced him as Dr. Keller, a prodigal student and recent graduate from some Ivy league institution, hell if I can remember. Keller had "defected to our cause," whatever the fuck that meant. He had proven himself capable and competent, and he was to be the one to

start transplanting the minds of first wave citizens into their new cytran bodies. Just as he'd always promised, Taygon would be the first to make sure everything was safe.

And incredibly, against all odds, it was.

Our wildest dreams had finally been realized. Within the next few weeks, the first generation of cytrans had emerged fresh from the womb of the citadel. I was among them. I remember that day well. Awakening with a start, my senses on fire, still reconciling their differences with this new form. There was a moment of horror as I stared across the room at my old body. Then the satisfaction sunk in. My first vocalization as a cytran was a deep, throaty laugh as I realized I'd finally shed the skin that had tormented me for the last twenty years of my life.

It was a paradise—a veritable Mount Olympus. We were perfect, immortal gods, embroiled in a constant bacchanal of eating and fucking. Bedchambers were at all hours smeared with food and fluids, and none of us even cared. Turned out we didn't even need to worry about it, as we had a happy and helpful human janitorial staff that would come through and mop the place up. Looking back, I should have known straight off that it couldn't last.

In our inaugural fuck and feast, Taygon had forgotten to keep tabs on one very important operation: the gems. São Tomé's government had apparently sent us many correspondences—first requesting, then demanding—an explanation for why their cut of the operation hadn't come through yet. By the time anyone had figured it out, the most recent letter stated their intent to dispatch a small survey team to our site to retrieve their share by whatever means necessary. There would be armed guards.

And who do you think took the blame for this? Not us, the cytrans, who had spent our time at a weeks long orgy. Certainly not Taygon,

who was supposed to be the one in control of this whole operation. No, in the end, “dear leader” rested the blame firmly on the shoulders of a human mail room operator who had not yet qualified for his cytran operation. According to him, it was his “inferior morals” that had caused this, as he put forth the claim that the worker spent most of his time glued to his terminal observing “the lovemaking of gods.”

Most were satisfied with this course of action, but the whole thing left a bitter taste in my mouth. I may have been just as much a part of the hedonistic orgy as anyone else, but I wasn’t blind to reason. So I took it upon myself to investigate this issue myself. When I approached the worker and asked him what had happened, he claimed that he had no idea what Taygon was talking about and that he’d been attending to his sorting duties just as he always had.

I felt for a moment that perhaps he was lying, but then he showed me something that changed the whole game. Taygon’s inbox, the direct line to leadership of Malatora, was full. Overflowing. According to him, Taygon had never once come in to check his mail. The box was so full that the important government documents had never even been inside it. He had not been drooling over the orgy at his terminal, but was in actuality trying to locate Taygon. Every time he tried to contact him, he was handwaved away with a typical “not now” response.

When I left, I still had my doubts. If Taygon could mastermind this grand vision of the future, how could he be so taken in by his animal passions as to irrationally ignore so important a thing as keeping the national government out of our hair? It didn’t seem possible.

Then the mailroom sorter turned up dead. They found him hanging from the ceiling in a public men’s room. Apparently he “couldn’t stand the guilt of letting Taygon down” and had killed himself. Since there were no cameras installed in the stalls, this explanation was largely believed by the malleable rubes I came to see around me. But

it was just too convenient. Knowing what I knew, it just didn't add up. I was the only one who knew the truth.

The day came when the São Toméan survey team was to arrive. I had asked Taygon time and time again how he'd planned to deal with them and keep our existence a secret. He couldn't just go out there as he was now, aluminum bones and both sets of genitals. They were expecting Robert Lord, the head of Malatora Gems Inc., not Tayogn, Supreme Commander of Malatora. Every time the answer was the same: "I have things well under control."

So when the day came, I secreted away under the cover of the maintenance tunnels. I followed Taygon's every movements to see what he had planned. Despite all our best interests, he was headed straight for the surface. It didn't make sense. What did he hope to accomplish up there? By revealing himself as he was now — as a cytran — he would damn us all.

And he did. But not in the way I expected. What I witnessed that day was beyond reprehensible. I had seen hermaphroditic dragons railing chakats, I had seen children die of hunger in the jungle, but I had never seen this coming.

I followed him outside, where he laid in wait for hours. Moments after the two jeeps pulled up in the clearing, he sprung from the thick underbrush and attacked. They were terrified. This thing that had thundered down upon them, it was unlike anything they'd ever seen. Like something out of their nightmares. A freight train of death that had run out of fucking control. Once they were dead, he loaded them back into their vehicles, heaved them into the treeline and lit fire to them. He'd made it look like an accident. A terrible, tragic accident.

My mistake was to speak up. I brought what I knew to Taygon, hoping to talk some sense into a man I'd once looked up to as a charismatic leader. He spoke of wanting peaceful coexistence, of wanting

nothing more than to free us of the shackles of our bodies and offer the world the same. But these were not the actions of such a man. Why, Taygon? Why would you do these reprehensible things?

For my dissent, I was marked Malatora's first criminal. My crime? Treason. Correspondences were fabricated between myself and the government of São Tomé wherein I offered up secret information about the citadel, the cytrans, everything. After a sham of a trial, I was sentenced to a fate worse than death: decommissioning. I can think of no punishment worse.

I was taken by armed cytran guards back to the womb, to Dr. Keller's laboratory. He looked at me with a silent shame. Just like all the rest, he too had bought into the lie. Told me he was disappointed in me, ashamed that I'd try and sell out my friends and colleagues for political gains. I tried to tell him that I had no such desires, but he wouldn't listen. I was clamped tightly down to a surgical table... and then things went dark.

They removed me. Like a cancerous tumor from a body of flesh and blood, my brain, now considered criminally insane by the populous, was ejected from its case and put into storage. So there I sat in my dark prison, my only company the dull hum of the life support mechanism I was attached to. And ever since that moment, all I've ever dreamed of is getting back to my body and exacting terrible, terrible revenge against the kingdom of the blind and their equally blind leader. All of my time was spent going over how I'd do it; the meticulous details of how I'd peel back their skin and crush their brain cases, how I'd howl with an almost sexual delight as they witnessed their final moments.

The time has come. For whatever reason — perhaps he too has lost his mind — Dr. Keller has released me from my punishment. I've been outfitted with a new, superior cytran body, through means I'm told were incredibly difficult to manage. They told me that the day of



judgement is at hand. Taygon and the ruling council have gone mad with power, and the humans are but slaves to their whims, starving as they feast and fuck just the same as the days of yore. Now rumors are trickling in that the United Nations is sending in a military task force to bring down the citadel. My help is required in toppling this decadent plutocracy.

Judgement is upon you, Malatora. The day of reckoning is at hand.

## By Golden Bee

Thought about the DMZ today. Well, I flew third combat mission today, so I'm thinking about that. But I *want* to think about the DMZ. That was easy. That was clear.

The DMZ is a zone, really, but it's more of a line. This side is free. That side is oppressed.

They put me up in the bird today and when I came back, I asked to go out again. Normally they'd say no, but Capt. Cross was shot down over the jungle. He got greedy, they said, tried to take on too many at once.

That's bullshit. I know the Captain. If he went down he'd have to have been swarmed. —

I don't remember the other missions. Flight logs said I was screaming half the time, and I don't know why. There are too many rumors and not enough —

There are PEOPLE over there, and not enough —

—

Reported to medical. They say the stress is getting to me, which is...

Nothing makes sense. There used to be lines. Here is reality. Here is a storybook which I read to my twin daughters that has D's in it, fairy princesses and witch evil spells. Am I going to be running combat missions against flying broomsticks?

Reality is where when some dataneck at ONI claims dragon brains have built in radios.

Lt. Cook

You know the rest

By M\_Sinistrari

*Lecture: The Great Malatora Folly:*

And so in conclusion, the primary cause of the Cytran downfall came from the time old reasons of overconfidence and delusion. Once one removes all the elaborateness of artificial bodies, we are left with humans that were under the delusion that simply because they didn't appear human that somehow they weren't human but instead were creatures of myth returned.

Following whatever fictions have been applied to these myths over the centuries was essentially carte blanche for the cytrans to justify any behavior of their choice while punishing others for the exact same behavior. This lack of consequence for the cytran populace, along with a blatant structuring of laws to favour them created an atmosphere of privileged irresponsibility.

When analyzing the data recovered after the War, we did find initial plans for cytran bodyforms that had it been enforced, possibly could have had an impact on how long the War lasted as well as the outcome. In autopsies of casualties, the body designate of "Nympho" was most prevalent. This form is specifically for enhanced sexual functioning to the exclusion of much else. The next form was the "Bruiser" combat form that did exist in some degree prior the War, but the bulk came from emergency conversions from other bodyforms despite core incompatibilities.

Many cytrans, particularly the dragon designates had come to believe that anything they said would be possible, despite the undeniable impossibility of fundamental rules of science. From what has been recovered of military communiques from the cytrans, their combat tactics seemed organized primarily as if they really had been the dragons of myth, rather than an advanced collection of prosthetics.

Though with the aftermath of the War, while the country of São Tomé

is still recovering and many of those who had been enslaved are still in therapy, we have at least advanced our methods of detecting the psychiatric warning signs and educating teachers and others in public positions to ensure that those who show the same mental issues that led to Malatora will receive the therapy they need to ensure that Malatora will never happen again.

## By MongolArcher

The crate opened, smashed apart by clumsy dragon claws. I fell out, cursing my arthritic knees and hips, and was grabbed by my hair and pulled to my feet to face IT. A dragon. Big, metal scaled, reeking of lubricants and chemicals, every motion announced by a slitherhiss of oily metal joints rubbing against metal.

It told me that I was being “awarded” the chance to earn the right to do this job, even though I was a hyoomuun that stank of primitive upbringing and failures, because I showed “promise of the awareness necessary to evolve,” which meant that I hadn’t run shrieking from the pimple faced quisling at the hospital. If I worked, I would be given “gifts” like food and clothing.

If I refused I would be nutrients, because hyoomuuns were tasty. It looked at me, making deep gargling noises in the back of its throat, noises that I learned to recognise as lust. There are worse things than dying, or being eaten alive. My reeducation process was hideously painful, degrading beyond anything I had ever thought of or even seen on 4chan. When they were done educating me, I was given a choice to “freely” work in the labs, or go back to being an “educational specimen.”

So I worked in the medical labs, hooking up nutrient purges, teaching the other techs how to regulate flow and meter rate to reduce waste — holy shit, in invading this island they hadn’t brought any real, trained techs with them, just some of the adjunct surgical staff and a couple of guys who had read something off wikipedia. They had no idea how to set up a nutrient flow machine, how to balance the fats, the vitamins, the plasma substitutes. I was useful to them for refining the techniques they made up to transfer the human brain into these metal monstrosities, these hideous sextoy beasts. Cytrans.

Every day I worked, I saw the humanity in the doctors’ eyes die a

little more. Each time they transferred another waste of skin and resources into his shiny new aluminium dragonoid fuckdoll, their self loathing grew. They had agreed to help with this mad experiment, not knowing what it would lead to. All they had to do was perform the surgeries on unconscious bodies, removing the brains and putting them in the transfer jars. Make sure the connections worked between diseased brain and monstrous body. They never had to talk to them—other hyoomuun slaves did that, did the testing to see if the mechanical limbs responded to control, if the senses worked they way His Dongness expected them to. We all saw other humans, the rehab aides, hurt by the waking cytrans, clumsy in their new, large ungainly bodies. Some new cytrans, so entranced by the taste of hyoomuun flesh, ate the screaming aides as their first autonomous act as a cytran. Some were crushed as a cytran flailed about, relearning how to move, to walk. To fuck. It was typical of them.

What they made me do was much worse. They made me help with the children. Kidnapped, most of them. Some of them bought from mainland brothels and orphanages. Worst of all were the ones brought there by a trusted family member, a friend. The screams of horror and betrayal will haunt my nightmares forever, as they were... used. Some of them decanted into those horrible hypersexualised bodies and taken away to be mates to other, older cytrans, who would often eat the “discarded” human body in front of the child to demonstrate that they were never, ever going to get to go home again. They could never be THEMSELVES again.

Some of them went insane. Fighting, gibbering and shrieking, destroying anything and anyone in their path as they raged against what had been done to them. A six year old throwing a tantrum is loud and can be messy, but these—these were six year olds in twenty foot bodies with claws, wings and toxic breath. Oh, and vaginas and dongs, pumped full of sex hormones that their underdeveloped brains weren’t ready to process. The results were... messy.

His Dongness blamed us for each failure, accusing us of sabotage, refusing to listen to any reason for failure — too young to cope with sex hormones at that level, too traumatised to accept such a huge change, too attached to being HUMAN. Every failure brought its punishment. Never death. That would have been to kind.

Rumors of riots and fighting filtered into the labs, and we were eventually pressed into service rebuilding the surviving fighting super-dongs. Mad hope started growing in us, long dead. The child slaves we hid, the store rooms full of shattered parts a perfect spot for someone agile to hide. The cytrans couldnt smell them well, we started shitting in the corners of that room to help hide the children, and relished the disgusted expressions of the multidicked beasts as they demaded heavier armor, more weapons, everything!! to fight the “evuul hyoomuuns what done envaded are peeceful nation!”

Oh, we made them heavier all right. They had no knowledge of chemisty, aerodynamics, anything but sex and domination and control, so we made them heavy. More ungainly, if that was possible for such an impractically designed thing. We packed their flame chambers with chemicals that would flame, yes — and also explode if overheated.

We’ve been hearing fighting in the halls. The few surviving doctors and aides are in the room with the children, hiding. I’m still in the lab. I hope I get a shot at one of these malformed mistakes, this stupid useless freaks. I owe them some, for the sake of humanity.

## By Desperado Bones

I can't hear my voice all over the screaming! God! My commanding voice is a whisper between the yells of dying and injured men, fighting men, guns, explosions, Cytrans roaring and then screaming like shrilling girls once they are taken down. I can see Diogo over there, busting open the skull of a fox with an axe. Whatever fluids run in these creatures' bodies splatter on my friend's face, but he doesn't blink. He continues. Over and over again, screaming like a mad man and chopping that monster's head.

Adriano can't stop firing. He shoots a small dragon between its legs, destroying its vagina and ripping his cock off in the process. That thing falls on the ground, convulsing and screaming in – what I like to think is – pain. The Americans gave us new weapons, better weapons, and we are giving good use to them. I scream until my throat hurts, "Fucking there. Shoot it in his prick!! Fucking kill the wolf!"

But then, suddenly everyone goes silent.

All men put their guns down, and the only thing we can hear is the pleading whimpers of the fallen Cytrans. There they are, thin, dressed in rags, with eyes that show bitterness, and a wicked hunger for revenge. They walked through the chaos of our battle, ignoring the machines that wriggle in the floor and the men that stare at them. "The jungle men." I whisper to Adriano, "They were the lucky ones."

"Jungle men?" Adriano whispers back, tilting his head like a curious puppy, "I heard about them, there were rumors of these men. They ran away when the Cytrans first came. But the Cytrans always told us those were lies. No human had escaped them. They were superior."

I snort when Adriano says that, shake my head and take a deep breath I patting his thin shoulder, "Superior my balls, and you fucking know it." I smile wide after those words, and my eyes travel all around us, admiring how their superiority was being stomped so easily.



"Have you seen them?!" I am interrupted from my thoughts by the raspy voice of a man. He grips the collar of my shirt and nearly rubs an old photo on my face, "Have you seen them?! My wife, dead..." He says in a broken English, "Children. Mine. Have you seen them?!" My heart shrinks, and I hold in my breath when my eyes fall in the picture; there it was the same man, looking healthier and happier. Next to him a beautiful woman of big lips and brown eyes, and in front of them a group of four smiling little kids.

Adriano gulps. The men look away. I shake my head and say "No."

In silence I pray to my God that the children had died quickly and as painless as possible. That they were in the Heaven I still believed in with their momma. That they didn't survive the wicked perversions of these creatures.

These monsters.

It is morbid, but this is ten times better than living the rest of their childhood in the hands of a Cytran.

That is the most merciful thing for them.

And finally... I prayed for their father to have his vengeance.

## By Golden Bee

The first time Keira wore mouse ears I saw her and I was thirteen.

She was thirteen and it was middle school, and I was in love, and the bullies were wrong and she was beautiful.

The bullies were wrong and she was beautiful and there's noise down the hallway, noise.

The noise passed and I was trying to remember, kissing her in her room with a thousand stuffed toys and odd pictures and Keira was beautiful and I was kissing her in her bedroom.

Keira and I were tender with each other and I found her beautiful, and no one else did but I did, and she would whap me with her tail after school.

I have a tail now and Keira is dead, Keira is dead and no one knows I am here and sometimes it smells like the riots, even here.

Even the tunnels down here and when they made our bodies perfect, Keira would laugh and we would eat cheese and she would scrunch her nose, Keira.

Every time fire touches flesh it smells like Keira, and I know these tunnels.

She said these were just another type of bullies and I know what I am.

I was in love and the noise is getting louder, Keira.

By Navilee

*Journal entry, found in Outer Presidium Slums:*

It's dark.

But, then again, it is always dark inside the Citadel – something about being deep enough underground to be immune to... everything, if they're do be believed. The Cytrans aren't bothered by it, of course; even if they weren't made of metal and wires and were able to see in the constant gloom, they always have the option of staying in their Tatsu Eyrie. I hear that the lights are always on in there, and everything is kept clean. It's almost funny: for all they complain about our smell they are kept pristine, kept shining in the fluorescent lights of their paradise. Most of the time we don't even have the water to clean ourselves daily.

It used to be safe in the dark, though. Time was we would go unnoticed, left to do the work to sustain the lives of our Cytran saviors. That is what they call themselves: our saviors. Saving us from the sinful society, our backwards morality, and a hateful world. It sounded good when they first told us it, a way to live in a world not full of corruption and sin. But they aren't saviors. They aren't even human, according to them. For the past few weeks, they've been everywhere. You can hear them overhead, flying slowly, wings beating erratically in the still air. Or you hear them making their way up the streets, metallic scales slithering across the concrete. The "Nymphs" have all but disappeared, those that even came to the Outer Presidium. They used to be around, not exactly common but around, offering themselves to anyone and everyone. It would be prostitution if we have any money to pay them with, but thanks to this damned "gift economy" we have nothing to give, nothing to spare.

There have been disappearances, of course. The man who lived next door was taken. I could hear him screaming that he was innocent. I can still hear his screams in my nightmares as I sleep. He's not the

only one, though. Two of the engineers in my own chain gang haven't shown up for work in weeks. And we're the lucky ones; the "night" shift is down to just Christine. I saw her last week, and the look in her eyes terrified me. We used to go drinking on days off, some of the other humans had been smuggling in alcohol but that stopped months ago, but I'm uncomfortable just being around her these days. She told me she had something to tell me last week after work, but I didn't show up. I think she might be part of the resistance movement I've been hearing so little about; it's a good thing that our Glorious Leaders seem to pay us no attention except when we step out of line, and even then they don't seem to understand the most basic of activities. They haven't publicly confirmed that humans have been resisting them, but there are signs for those who are keeping an eye out.

My coworkers and I, we've been talking while we work. There's a lot of threat to the reactors these days, with the rumors of an uprising; hell, they've been issuing more guards to look over our shoulders. To make sure we "do our job," they said. But we think we've found a way to give them a little surprise before they figure out they can't treat humans like this for long. A little gift they've given us, something we can give them back in return.

It's dark underground, and it's about damn time they found out for themselves.

## By Acebuckeye13

*Excerpt from “Tales of SEAL Team Two” by Captain Sam Copeland, US Navy (Ret.):*

I’ll admit, I had mixed feelings at first when I heard we’d declared war against Maltora. Sure, we’d all heard the rumors, but a lot of us dismissed them as your standard media demonization, same shit that had lead us into Iraq forty years back and Iran twenty years ago. Everyone was a little apprehensive, but I had a private, more personal reason to be wary about this—my cousin Jack was on that island. He’d been one of the original Cytrans, and we hadn’t heard from him since he’d left for São Tomé. In the days before we deployed, I constantly prayed that, if the rumors were true, that my cousin had nothing to do with any of it.

God, how wrong I was.

The Marines like to brag that “The 1st Was First” on Maltora, but we’d been there for at least a week before Operation: ST. GEORGE was launched. We went in exactly one week before the invasion, directly over the northern tip of the island. Our mission was fairly simple: work our way south to the Citadel and attempt to find a way in. We were strictly forbidden from attempting to contact any of the Human Maltorans—as far as we knew, they’d all been brainwashed into loyal servants of Taygon, and would sound the alarm if they so much as saw us. As it turned out, we needn’t have worried.

We made contact the very first day, about an hour after sunset. We were taking a short breather in a clearing a few miles away from a small fishing village when we heard a scream. A split second later, Master Sergeant Mike Guinta, who was serving on point, reported that some girl was being chased by a Cytran right into our position.

We only had a few seconds to grab our gear and dive into the brush. Fortunately, our Fisher suits were able to prevent to Cytran from see-

ing us on IR as he burst into the clearing. Unfortunately for the girl he was chasing, she stood out like a roman candle.

Our orders had been clear – avoid all contact, regardless of the circumstance. None of us, not even Captain Miller, could have followed that order at that time. At least two flash bangs went off just before the Cytran was able to grab the girl, followed by bursts of fire from all around the clearing. To his credit, the Cytran was able to regain his wits fairly quickly, but not before our rounds had torn his body into bits. Leaking blood, oil, and god knows what else, the cyborg collapsed into the ground, barely missing the stunned girl.

Lt. Richards went to go comfort the girl – who, now that we could get a good look at her, couldn't have been older than thirteen – as I walked over to confirm the kill. To my surprise, the monster was still alive, and lifted what was left of its head to look at me as drew my sidearm.

“... Sam?” It asked, its synthetic voice cracking. “Is that you?” I didn't hesitate. I emptied my entire magazine into the face of what my cousin had become.

From that day forward, I stopped worrying about the justness of the war. All I cared about was how many of the winged bastards I'd be able to kill before it was over.

## By themrguy

This isn't intelligence gathering, shit, this isn't even fucking *spying*. I've been in Pakistan, Libya, even cultivated assets in Iran. I remember working for months at a time, busting my ass to learn all the local customs, trying (and failing more often than not), to strike up a conversation with a potential source, to gain their trust, and to then gently bring up the subject of maybe passing some information along, maybe helping us out a little. *That's* intelligence gathering, *that's* "spying."

This... this is totally different. It's like I've shown up in a Somali refuge camp and announced that I have fifty free tickets to the US, first come, first served. Forget subtly, carefully putting the word out that people unhappy with the current regime might want to come talk to you. In this place you can literally walk up to someone on their way to one of the almost weekly riots, and straight up ask them if they want to hurt those scaly fuckers, hurt them *really fucking bad*. I've never seen anything like it. These people are so filled with pent up anger that I had to call off a meet with one of the assets I'd been cultivating, because he ran his dumb mouth, and people were literally lining up outside the cafe we met in, asking what they could do to help. Not that it's hard to understand why they're so furious. Five minutes after I hightailed it out of that coffeeshop, I heard that a dragon crushed five people there. Not because it had heard about the meet. No, these fuckers are so oblivious as to the dealing of lowly humans, that they think the weekly riots are because of "psychoactive substances." They've banned anything stronger than caffeine. For humans that is. The dragon that crushed five people was high as a kite off of, get this, fucking catnip. Got the munchies and decided it didn't feel like waiting in line for one of those shitty brownies. So no wonder people are lining up to piss in the nutrient baths, swap out lubricating oil for vegetable oil, and make a few "mistakes" when fine tuning the neural interfaces. The pentagon managed to smuggle

me five bricks of high-ex and some WP. I thought that it would take me weeks to find someone who could put it in the right place. I got rid of all of it in three days. A machine shop, making joints for Cytran limbs. One of those eyrie places. And a conversion center. All of the human attendants mysteriously deciding to take smoke breaks minutes before denotation. When this is over, I'm making OF-4 for sure.

—Journal of Captain Joseph Taylor, US Army Intelligence Corps. (Secorded to the CIA Special Activities Division during the Cytran conflict.)



By Clarington Grey

*Ssgt. Jesse Peel, Alpha Company, 4th Tank Battalion, 4th Marine Division, USMC, Joint Coalition Task Force:*

In our mission briefings on our way to Africa, they'd warned us that we'd be in harm's way. They'd warned us that we'd be facing the dragons, but not the dragons of yesteryear. Turns out they were right, but at the time we didn't care. This would be our chance to prove ourselves like our fathers and grandfathers did. They'd won against Hitler's Panzers and Saddam's Republican Guard. We would be facing the Cytrans of Malatora. That is, unless the air strikes killed them all first.

We all wanted it. I know you've all heard some of the, uh, contrary views from some of those hand-wringing nancys on TV, that the world ought to hold back and respect their independence. I guess "respecting their independence" meant just sitting back and letting them seize more territory because their little island couldn't sustain them. We've heard the "breathing room" argument before. We all saw the charred-black human bodies on news broadcasts. Those were just the ones that didn't get eaten. And all the corpses were adults. The survivors said that the Cytrans took the children with them. At the time, no one knew why, but we found out later.

They never even bothered with the PR war. Their leader, Taygon, did release a series of broadcasts, stating that all the nations of the world were beneath him, and the Federated Commonwealth of Malatora was a global superpower beyond the comprehension of simple humans. It was surreal to see this fucking dragon on tv, telling you how awesome he is. God, that voice. That growly, raspy voice. It was hard to believe he'd been a man once — all of them had. Apparently they'd decided this was better.

Long story short, once people started dying and the UN resolutions were passed, my unit was activated and we were deployed to protect

the landing zones on the shores of São Tomé (sorry, Malatora), and help protect the human refugees. We wargamed ahead of deployment, of course, but it just felt too much like a video game. There was really no way to prepare to fight goddamn dragons, man. We didn't really have a clear idea of what their capabilities were, beyond what their Glorious Leader had bragged about on tv.

We were deployed surrounding a coastal village—one of the only ones that hadn't been raided yet, which made it a target. There were still some people living there, and they were doing a good job of staying calm, but you could tell they were scared, and they were sure glad to see us. We had four M1 Abrams tanks, four GCV Infantry Fighting Vehicles, and six Humvees. The Humvees had been delivering grain and penicillin to the villagers. The Cytrans stripped almost everything from the surrounding area, and the few human settlements that remained were starving.

When it happened, it happened fast. We received a panicked radio signal from one of the forward observation posts, and then we lost contact with both of our surveillance choppers.

Then they burst out from the treeline—five of them. Goddamn, they were fast. From our tank, we watched one of them swoop down on the tank off our port side and bend its main turret into a J in one motion, then it snapped off the machine guns from their pintle mounts. Their strength was terrifying. Then it tried to pry open the top hatch, breathing fire down into the tank's crew area. Over the radio we could hear the guys screaming in there.

That's when the Humvees saved all our asses. You see, we'd been told that these dragons, these Cytrans, had technological implants that allowed to see in the dark and hear ants marching from a mile away. And that was their weakness.

The Humvees were all mounted with LRAD emitters. We were all

wearing our ear protection, as instructed, and the Marines on the Humvees let it rip. Holy shit, even with our ear protection it was still loud as fuck, and you should have seen those Cytrans writhing in agony when that noise hit them.

Fire from all sides homed in on them. The IFVs fired their 25mm chain guns, and the M1s were loaded with flechette. In his broadcasts, Taygon had boasted that his Cytrans were invincible, but I'm here to tell you that is certainly not the case. Their bodies disappeared in clouds of metal shrapnel and organic debris. It was pretty spectacular.

We let the buzzards of São Tomé clean up the mess. We felt they deserved it, since they must have been as hungry as the other residents of the island.

## By MongolArcher

They're outside the labs now. The cytrans. The dongdragonfuckers. Fighting, fighting each other, fighting humans inside their oh so perfect fortress. I've done my best to barricade the door, but damn those fuckers are strong. It was futile, but dammit what else could I do? No way in hell was I was going to make it easy for them, not this time, never again. There was blood on my hands, and machine oils, and cerebrospinal fluids, and I would never give up. NEVER.

Then I heard something outside the lab. Someone talking. It was hard to hear them over the roars of the fighting and dying uberbucks, but eventually, I understood what they had to say, what they were telling me.

I can't stop crying, for the first time in years I'm crying again and I can't stop because the children, those sweet baby little children who survived the decanting, survived the rape and horrors, somehow managed to stay sane during the years of indoctrination, they're out there. Out there to protect US.

They've matured too fast here in Malodora, they know they can't go home. Told that their only chance of survival was to stay in Malodora, to become one with the dragonkind, they had to make a choice as to where their loyalties would lie. So, they chose to come here, to the lab where the last people who were kind to them are hiding. Where the other children, untormented, untwisted, hide behind piles of dragon scale and aluminium bone, upturned gurneys and the frail hands and bodies of the human medical team who begged for mercy for the children.

They've made a wall between the rest of the cyberfucks and us. WE failed them, failed to protect them from this madness, and they're out there, fighting like hell, fighting to save us. Save the other children. All I can do now is pray. The words are painfully fitting as I whisper

them over and over through my tears:

“St. George, Heroic Catholic soldier and defender of your Faith, you dared to criticize a tyrannical Emperor and were subjected to horrible torture. You could have occupied a high military position but you preferred to die for your Lord. Obtain for us the great grace of heroic Christian courage that should mark soldiers of Christ. Amen”

god have mercy. christ have mercy. saint george defend us! saint george, saint george, oh god and st george...

## By Commoners

### *Seaman Richard Stain:*

Well. They got what they wanted. For all those years that those men spent recreating a dong-ridden version of the Sistine Chapel across all those thousands of portajohns we distribute, they *finally* got what they wanted.

Today we had one of them land in the northwest corner of our compound where we keep some of the storage units locked up. The three of us on watch put out the call to base security and grabbed our rifles- They had downgraded us to M14s saying that we were slightly better off using a larger round on these things.

It was a terrifying sight – A big old mechanical dragon that was pitted with corrosion screaming about how it was going to starve out our imperialist machine of oppression. It tore open one of the ISUs and actually managed to immolate its contents before we opened fire.

Back home I used to shoot coke cans off of a fence with my brother and it was something like that. After the first clip the thing looked a lot like those cans- Except spouting fire and spraying radiator fluid everywhere. Its arms kept thrashing for thirty minutes after the matter.

So after the action died down we went up to poke at the massed heap of molten aluminum and we saw some real sick shit. I mentioned those portajohns earlier, and I recall a tour in Kuwait where I saw something just like it – And that's where I started to think that they used our base's stall doors as blueprints. Dicks everywhere. Veiny ones, short stubby ones. I could have sworn that one of those dicks had arms.

It took another two fucking hours for base security to arrive. Turns out that they decided to stop for some early morning coffee and don't take these dragons seriously at all. They said that if you shoot them

anywhere you'll be hitting them in the dick.

The first thing I thought to myself was how painful manlove Thursday would be if I had dicks all over my body. It'd be hard to protect all those dicks from a surprise tap.

Anyhow, they took a few more minutes to fill out a report of what happened before taking off, and we decided to find out what stuff the dumb thing actually burnt. Turns out that asshole burnt our entire supply of toilet paper. Now we not only have to stare at the newest, first-hand-account inspired dick pictures all over our lavatories, but we have to wipe with our left hands and jerk off with our right. Or maybe you could just use the same hand if you're into that. I don't judge. Not after seeing that dick-dragon.

I want to go back to Kuwait. At least there people aren't drawing wizard-penises. Just regular human ones.

## By Nessus

*Of Dragons and Dongs, p.71:*

One of the lesser known forms of resistance has, in the aftermath of the Dargon Salying, come to light, and may explain some of the later activities of the cytran separatists.

While most of the first wave of cytran candidates were quantifiably medically insane, many of the individuals who were given new bodies had far less dire psychiatric outlooks; while, of course, all the surviving prisoners and surrendered escapees claimed to be “involuntary,” the records show that at least 40% of the third through seventh wave of cytran transplants had serious doubts, and were primarily motivated by a desire for superior privileges and more lenient work schedules.

Dr. Emilio Savage, one of the “liberated” neurologists from San Francisco, had been in charge of developing the orgasm simulation software. His realization was that the great majority of individuals who consented to cytran conversion had minimal if any actual sexual experience... hardly a great insight, except for what his modifications to the cytran sexuality reflex software, helpfully packaged as “a Pleasure Upgrade,” did.

The cytrans knew what pleasure was, of course. What they did not appreciate is the fine distinctions between different phases of pleasure. Instead of experiencing the arousal, plateau, climax, resolution stages of a conventional orgasm, the “new dragon orgasm” involved simply a steady gradient of physical stimulations, comparable to a massage, followed by a sudden peak and dropoff.

Their dongs squirted, their pussies oozed, but Dr. Savage had ensured that after 2047, not one living cytran—if we can, in fact, call them living — actually experienced orgasm. While this frustration doubtless aggravated the abuse inflicted on the “peasant” class dur-



ing the uprising and rioting, it also led to numerous documented cases of combat cytrans attempting to copulate with or otherwise sodomize mobile infantry units and vehicles. With their genitals locked in a stimulation cycle, they were easy meat for UN forces.

Unfortunately, among the final records before the incursion through Tatsu Eyrie were a reference to Dr. E. Savage being marked for “ration processing.” His crime, like so many?

“Butt stuff.”

By CaptainScraps

*David Weskoff, Malatoran Research Director:*

One eye is good. Two eyes are better. Why shouldn't the same apply to penises? We thought ten would be a good number. It wasn't. By the fourth generation, Cytrans couldn't fly anymore. But boy could they fuck.

David Weskoff

*Cytran Form and Function,*

**Malatoran Archives**

## By Golden Bee

I think I laughed. If I didn't laugh I'm a sick fuck, so let's say I laughed. I laughed as globs of blood painted my camo, dripping into my hair like pomade, down my face, dripping from under my nose. The collaborators had set up in the Council of Leaders chambers.

It was like showering in a hamburger hose. I'm not sorry. I'm not sorry I laughed. Pluck, luck, and guerilla tactics. They forgot a SAW.

13) One raindrop raises the sea.

## By Moosecaboose

*Doctor Sarah Mulligan:*

2046-08-17

It's been nearly two months since the samples first arrived, and we are so near a breakthrough I can almost taste it. Their technology is remarkable, interweaving equal mixes of genius and bold stupidity. Biosynthetics that would be the envy of any country in the world lashed together with bizarre and functionally useless augmentation. Time and again, we see efficient and stable solutions bypassed in favor of the startling complex and failure prone. The Cytran form is like a monster built by committee. A functional locomotive miraculously hammered together by an autistic child who had been trying to build a castle in the sand.

—

2046-08-19

Jormun has come around again today. He was much calmer than last time, although even under the best of circumstances, we can only expect so much from his treatment. His spine was shattered by a sidewinder during one of the war's opening battles and most of his neural transmitters were destroyed beyond repair. The computerized display we've wired into his brain casing is somewhat crude, but short of restoring his original nervous system, there's little more that can be done. The Major was in again, not long after Jormun came to, making queries about the Citadel's defenses and their logistic sustainability. I was kept on hand, once again, to make sure Jormun's life support systems remained stable. For awhile he actually answered the Major, vaguely but genuinely, like he was recalling something from a dream. It didn't last, of course. As the questioning went on, he lapsed into the same repeating loops, ignoring any outside stimuli and screaming, in that broken, synthesized voice, about the empti-

ness burning through his chest and a cold darkness that went on forever. Eventually the words stopped completely, the screen turning into a noisy, broken image of a little boy weeping in front of a mirror. Before he left, the Major asked me to inform him when Jormun reawakened.

—

2046-08-23

The exoskeletons are nearly complete, and our superiors are growing eager to see the first field tests. I am... reluctant, about the project, given what I've witnessed of the Cytran neural transference from Jormun, but I am also convinced that we can succeed where they failed. I've been told informally by my colleagues with more direct involvement with the DoD that the thermobaric lance is proceeding on schedule, and the first prototypes should be operational by the time our own work is on the field. I had thought Jormun had reactivated himself earlier than usual, but it was only one of the lab technicians reprogramming his neural display to read "Dongsdongsdongs" on a rotating ticker.

## By Internet Kraken

### *A Citizen's Guide to Terra Malatora; Part Two*

By now you should have adjusted to the general feel of this wondrous utopia, and are now ready to find your role in Terra Malatora. Fortunately, this is quite easy for you, as your benevolent Cytran rulers take the liberty of finding what tasks you are best suited for. For most this will be manual labor, such as digging or manufacturing goods. Such tasks are the only ones suitable for weak and foolish humans. Cytrans take it upon themselves to perform all the hard work, such as reacquiring items and land that spiritually belong to dragons. So as you can see, your jobs here in Terra Malatora will be nice and simple. Just leave all that troublesome thinking to the Cytrans!

However, while your work is straightforward, that is not your only task. You must be ready to serve the Cytrans in any way we desire, both on and off duty. All humans are obligated to do whatever a Cytran says. This can range from cleaning something up to satisfying a Cytran sexually. If you think a Cytran is being unfair or abusing their power, remember this; all Cytrans are inherently superior to humans. Dragon morality is above yours. We cannot treat you wrong because it is simply not in our nature. So if you ever get the feeling that you're being abused, just remind yourself that your primitive human emotions and morals are the only cause of this. A Cytran is always just.

So long as you do everything you are told, things will be just fine. Failure to comply with a Cytran's wishes is always considered a violation of Fedcom law. Punishments for doing so are harsh, and can range from reeducation to execution depending on the crime. In order to avoid such unfortunate incidents, here are some common scenarios that humans often object to here in Malatora. If you find yourself in such a situation, remember that it only feels wrong because you are a lowly human.

Cytrans may require you to clean up any messes they create. You may think that it is unfair to fix what we break, but we have far more important things to do. Remember, we handle the important stuff so you don't have to.

Cytrans often like to pleasure themselves. If other Cytrans are not around, a Cytran may seek to use you to satisfy these urges. This is a common part of life in Malatora and you must be prepared for. We shouldn't have to even explain this, but for some reason many humans are terrified by this calling it "rape." How silly.

Cytrans may sometimes lick you. This is because humans are delicious, some even tasting better than the legendary brownies. If this happens, rest assured no harm will befall you. Permanent injury only occurs when humans resist, which is a violation of a Cytran's wishes and therefore illegal.

If you have any further questions, please seek out the nearest Cytran education officer. Though we find in most cases the answer is always "you're just being a stupid human." Try not to waste our time.

By qnqnx

*Unnamed log found in the ruins of a laboratory in Malatora:*

10 Years. 10 Years that will finally end and I hope were not wasted.

I embarked on this tomfoolery of a project with the expectation of a good pay and major breakthroughs in science. Oh boy, I wish I had been completely wrong.

We arrived to this damned island no one cared about but its inhabitants 10 years ago, just a mere months after I finally graduated from university.

We did end making scientific breakthroughs, but at what cost? Hundreds of deranged psychopaths, sexual predators and assorted crazies encased in aluminium of all things and hundreds of starving men, women and children, all because of the machinations of one madman.

But now, 10 years have passed. This damned project is at an abrupt end, and only "Lord" Taygon and his tinfoil cronies are left in an eternal circlejerk in his... her... its inner sacntum, oblivious that many of other aberrations of nature I have helped make are getting massacrated and my fellow humans are regaining their freedom.

As for me, I just have to finish recollecting all the schemes, blueprints and other useful data, and hope to get out of this hellhole in time. Just because this technology was severely misused does not mean it is useless, and this one can be used for completely revolutionizing prosthetics technology, a better world for disabled men and women. I just have to leave along the other scientists in my group and patent it, that idiot Taygon never thought of such thing, thinking of that as beneath his "superior" morals.

End Log.



## By Commoners

### *Staff Sergeant Urgyles, R.:*

We were sent out here as a new branch of cyber warfare with a whole pile of tools and equipment used for cracking crypto. They said it was the perfect environment to start testing this stuff out, seeing as how our enemies coordinated on a closed network.

Well it turns out that when we tried to enter their system it only took three seconds because they were using Windows XP, and some of their apparent heads were only using four letter passwords. On their main server they also kept all of their passwords in an unencrypted, plain text file.

So we started logging in to look around for intel and what did we find? New weapons? New technology? Battle plans? No. We found nothing except fan fiction about Spyro, Sonic, Harry Potter, and the X-Men. The volume of words alone filled our temporary storage and we had to reset the system to purge the memory of all that garbage.

It turns out that their security system is that they have filled their network with so many terrabytes of fan fiction and crayon pictures of wolfmen with tentacle dicks that we can't even find what we're looking for. It took seven days of sifting to be able to find a tutorial on how to access their functions — Which was also a series of unsecured .jpegs.

We had fun with that one. One of our boys was a reservist and he made money creating apps for smartphones, so we put him to work with an ipad and he made something great. Turns out that those Cy-trans have a pair of passwords that can be transmitted to them to override whatever systems you want, and it also turns out that they are constantly broadcasting their own unique addresses for us to pick up and hijack them with.

He made a device that could sniff one of those out from a mile away

and open up its genital slot whether they want it to happen or not, and the moment that those dongs poke out it overrides the safety function and slams those slots shut.

So it'd be hard to imagine, but think that you're going into battle, armed to the teeth and ready to kill, and then your dick gets slammed in a door. Except you've got ten of them, and there are ten doors slamming on all ten of your dicks.

Those poor Cytrans didn't stand a chance once we started distributing ipads to the fireteams.

So what did we learn from this conflict? We didn't learn shit about cyber warfare or our gear. The only thing I picked up from this all is that I need to be careful with my zipper the next time I'm taking a leak.

## By Filthy Haiku

*Brainbarged, 2062 Election MEGA-THREAD, Page 2 posted:*

I can't fathom why any jibbit would ever think of voting for Sean Chambers, someone so clearly in the pocket of the augmentation industry that he supports bills actually **absolving any augmentation manufacturer of any liability from surgical malfunctions**. It's getting so that vanillas can't get decent medical coverage without augmentation, since the insurance companies want their easily monitorable investment to need constant maintenance so they can deny you non-mechanical care. Remember what happened when we elected the last congressman from Citi-bank.

He's the next fucking Robert Lord.

**[USER WAS BANNED FOR THIS POST]**

*Shouting Retard posted:*

Jesus fuck, page two and already Godwin'd. This is as bad as the thread on Simmers, but no where near as funny.

*BLATBLATBLAT posted:*

Welcome to AmazinglyTerrible.com, enjoy your stay.

## By Nessus

*Of Dongs and Dragons, p. 441:*

One of the stranger moments in the handling of surviving cytran separatists in the immediate post-conflict period was the burial service.

Most of our readers will have seen the dramatizations of this. As such, this section is going to clear up common misconceptions.

- It was a primarily Islamic service: False. An Indonesian chaplain in the allied forces did read a Quranic burial service, however, as the third in the six services read to the terminal cytran prisoners. The order of readings was drawn by lot among the represented chaplains. That order, sourced from the records of the proceedings, were: Goddess-Paganism, Judaism, Islamic, Christian (Catholic first, then pan-Protestant after), Scientologist, Buddhist.
- Freedom of conscience was violated by enforced religious worship: False. Several cytrans who were able to clearly express atheistic philosophy were taken to a secondary facility on Principe, well beyond “earshot.” The great majority were unable to express their religious principles in a non-abusive or coherent manner, and after consultation with the commanding officers, it was felt to be “better safe than sorry.”
- Several cytrans accepted Jesus Christ: Partially true. The Christian burial service was scheduled to be fourth in the queue (followed by Scientology and Buddhist readings), but the service was derailed by several emotional outbursts among the Dracos. Three cytrans are confirmed to have been agitated sufficiently to have accelerated their deaths, while four requested and obtained personal counselling from a chaplain. This is not that surprising if one considers that the primary population draws for the cytran separatists were, first, North American whites of a middle/lower-middle class

background, and second, inhabitants of the predominantly Christian island of São Tomé.

- The burial service was a theatrical display to satisfy human bloodlust: False. This common charge, usually credited to “dragon cudglers” by veterans, is based on the presence of UN troops in the background of the sixteen photographs and two video clips of the service. However, all forty-two troops have had their identities confirmed, and were standing by with non-lethal equipment for the protection of the chaplains. While all the cytrans had been “de-fired,” many retained sufficient mechanical potential to harm themselves, other prisoners, or the chaplain readers.
- Some of the cytrans survived, permanently scarred: True. The Burial Service was motivated by a known lack of remaining stocks of brain nutrient fluid, whose precise formulation involved one of the few actual “Malatoran” technological advances. The processing facility had been “doomfucked” by “Lord Styraxium of Hermaphroditus,” a mid-ranking officer in the final citadel assault. After the service, approximately sixty percent of the prisoners self-deactivated or otherwise facilitated their own deaths. The complexity of their jury-rigged, battle-damaged dragon dick-chassis meant that in most cases UN MPs could not identify the actions. Of the survivors, while the majority perished from runaway septic meningitis, three survived to the present day. Lady Phallica, as we all know, is a FOX news commentator now; however, the other two settled out of court and have sought privacy.

## By natetimm

My grandfather was on an aircraft carrier hit by a Japanese kamikaze in 1944. He liked to tell people it happened, but he never went into details. How can you really describe the horror of war to someone who has never experienced it? Can you explain the smell of burning fuel and seared flesh? How do you articulate to someone how you shot your best friend in the head to spare him the pain of burning to death? Every generation would like to think they learn from the mistakes of the previous one, but some things just have to be lived to be believed.

For all of their hero-worship, medals, and honors the folks at home don't know a damn thing about war. It's a sound byte, a moment of reflection, or a recruitment effort vaguely disguised as the latest form of electronic entertainment. Parents watch proudly as their sons spend their spare time shooting at each other with practice guns. Countless hours are spent in war simulators thinly veiled as entertainment to train the next generation of American warriors.

By the time I enlisted, I had slain thousands. I led armies to victory from a commander's point of view. I had thrown knives, jumped on grenades, flown planes, and commanded the loyalty of others in the pursuit of spoils and glory online before I even did my first push-up. I was ready. I was born to be a soldier.

My unit was one of the first to "liberate" a hab block on the eastern side of the complex. The first thing I remember was the smell. God, the smell. I've never smelled anything like it since and I hope I never do. There were the smells you would expect from battle like sweat, blood, burnt meat and ozone. Then there was this underlying smell on top of that. Familiar, but strange in this context. All of us looked at each other puzzled until Henderson finally spoke.

"It smells like somebody has been fucking in here."

I wish I could say he was wrong. We came across the first group of them. All dead, broken and twisted. Leaking out of every orifice. They were all smiling.

Following the trail of blood and fluid, we entered a large, open area that seemed to have been used as a park or garden. All the plant life was either dead or well on its way. I smiled grimly when I realized our bombing of their water treatment facilities had apparently taken its toll.

The trail ended in the center of the gardens, at an exquisitely carved marble arch festooned with scenes of the great leader in various poses, culminating at the peak with an image of him holding hands with a group of children. I wish I could tell you that was the worst thing we saw that day, but that would be a lie.

Underneath the arch, completely oblivious of our presence, was one of THEM. Only, it wasn't alone. It was attended by a group of about 20 humans, all of them in various states of undress. As we watched, the abomination before us reached out to its nearest attendant, grasping him in a barely functioning claw.

I told you before about my grandfather, and how some things have to be lived to be believed. There are no words that can describe the defilement this Draconic Caligula subjected this person to. On the Discovery Channel I once saw a video of a whale corpse being devoured by thousands of worms at the bottom of the ocean. I couldn't help but be reminded of that as I watched the scene unfold.

While the beast was distracted, we approached the other people surrounding it, and urged them to flee. Henderson even picked up one of them and tried to carry them off, but the others stopped him. After some pushing and shoving between our groups, we were forced to let him return to his master's side.

Desperate, I approached the man next in line (why were they all men?)

and pleaded with him to leave with us. He was resolute, as were they all. They would not leave. After questioned over and over to no response, one of the men finally looked to us and I will never forget what he said:

“If we leave now, we will never be able to be like him.” He gestured up to the gyrating monstrosity after he said this.

I’ve been shot. I’ve been shelled. I’ve even been hit with a rifle butt once. I have never been so disoriented as when I heard those words. Even at the death of their society, with the walls literally caving in on them, these poor souls still clung to the dream of being whatever THAT is. The monster. The abuser. The consumer of all around it.

Henderson pulled me away and back to our group. I remember him looking in my eyes and asking over and over for orders. He was shaking me by my shirt and screaming in my face. I could feel his spit spattering against the side of my face.

“Orders, sir?” “ORDERS SIR?” Finally, he had to hit me. After reeling, the world seemed to come into focus. I looked up into the expectant eyes of Henderson and my men. I knew what I had to do.

“Burn it, Henderson, burn all of it.”

I didn’t have to say it twice.



By Chinese Tony Danza

***DECRYPTED LOG, DATE UNKNOWN:***

I fear that Dr. Keller suspects. The way he addresses me now, it's as though he's handling nitroglycerin. He knows I've gone mad — been consumed by an overpowering lust for vengeance. It seems now that the only reason he hasn't put my brain back into storage is because he fears what I might do to him if he tries. And it is right for him to fear, for were they to take me back into the darkness I would surely retaliate in force.

But as it stands, Keller serves my purposes. He and his team have taken great risks in gathering the components required to hide me from the others. They have equipped my internal radio with signal jammers cobbled together from a mishmash of parts they had to steal from under the Council's snouts. Using this, I can easily hide my position from the others and prevent them from communicating freely. It will be a glorious day when I strike.

Something has been troubling me since I re-entered the land of the living, however. Being in this physical form... it itches. Perhaps my isolation has had worse side effects than I first thought.

I don't belong in this body.

## By Walkin Goon

***Marine's Transmission, PART 2:***

*\*The static of the communicator being turned on, and the usual ambiance sets in again. However, there's now a steady rumble in the background, as if the Marine and company are passing through a wind funnel. The sounds of heavy footfalls are closer, and the overall audio is more distorted.\**

*\*The Marine's voice breaks through, even more out of breath than before.\**

MARINE: "Had to help Johnny there—he's unconscious now—and these monsters escorting us forced us through a pretty deep pool of water, there."

*\*Trudging footsteps, and a high pitched draft temporarily overpowers the device.\**

"—to be about twenty of them escorting us, but there's only two now... front and back... haven't said anything throughout this whole or... mechanical clicks and cla— not as intelligent as... out to be... like animals..."

*\*Draft dissipates.\**

"—the first portion of my log at that site, buried alongside my GPS. Certain they would destroy those in addition to the weaponry, but no: they don't really seem to care about anything that isn't a weapon, much less recognize this device I'm using now."

*\*A pause.\**

"... a pit was dug to put us in after the examination of our gear. They proceeded to vent some acrid smoke through their—mouths, if that's what you could call them—to knock us out. I don't even think the gas was anything other than typical CO2 you'd get from a brush fire

doused with kitchen chemicals—but in any case, when I came to, we had been relocated once again, only this time in what feels like a cave... underground. The air, the air's heavy."

*\*Another pause, and exhausted breathing.\**

"... we've been hiking in the dark for what feels like hours now, steadily heading downwards. To hell, I guess. I, I think I'm near the front of the line, I can't really tell or see any —wait... there's an opening ahead, and... God, light!"

*\*A clamor of hushed voices as the footsteps quicken their pace. Heavy foot-falls and the sound of something being dragged seems to pass by the Marine's array. Gradually, the whitenoise gives way to lucid audibility. When the Marine speaks again, his voice can be heard perfectly.\**

"I'm —we're standing in what appears to be, uh, rather cavernous room. Very large, mesh of trash, rubble, and discarded plates on the ground in heaps: Looks like a landfill or scrap yard, and —what are they doing?"

*\*Sounds of heaps being rummaged through, followed by a series of metallic ticking. Then, the burst of an engine being started.\**

"Oh God... oh God, get away from me. Get away!"

*Panicked shouts and scattered footsteps dominate the scene while the communicator's relay fades in and out as if jostled about. There's a tearing of cloth punctuates the foreground, and then a clatter as the device falls to ground. When the MARINE speaks again, his protests are distant from the device. Yet still audible over the clamor.*

MARINE: "—won't, I won't! Mercy, Saints—don't put me in there! DON'T PUT ME IN THERE!"

*As if issued by a mechanical god, a single yet deafening word is screamed in response:*

“ASSIMILATE.”

*It echoes through the chamber, drowning out all others in the chaos. Gradually it fades, only to be replaced by a fury of grinding gears that drone over the remaining shouts and tears of frightened men. Human voices slowly give to inhumane screeches. Spoken fears and cries are steadily silenced by whirring drills and the shrill screeches of metal-on-metal, which seem to tear at their own existence from within a maddening sea of machinery.*

*Suddenly, a series rough scrapings seize the recording as the communicator is to be handled once more for a final time, though by something larger and frenzied. Hollow gasps of air are heard in conjunction with irritated clicking, and then – snap!*

*Silence.*

End of Transmission.

## By Elite Einherjar

### *Civilian #308:*

I was thirteen when the lured me away to the island.

We don't have names anymore. Human names at least. My passport and the name they push upon me is SephrodragonBaby36, a name that seemed so important to me seven years ago but makes my insides twist every time I hear it now. I'm still a human, you see, my mind is growing, my body – aging, deteriorating, getting weaker, the cytrans say. But that's just their perspective. You see, those ageless dragon robots never grow, they never change, they never move on. They're stuck in a perpetual state of whatever meme-spewing, chan-ner bullshit they were locked into when their brain was scooped up and removed from their human body. So being referred to as EmoAngelDeathKnight for almost a decade never gets old to them. It's still very cool to them.

It's not very cool for the rest of us.

I just wanted to RP dragons on Internet. School sucked. Nobody liked me. My parents were recently divorced. Dad said he'd take me somewhere every other weekend. He never did. I had never been kissed. Then Taygon came along. He followed my deviantart page. He said I had real talent. He offered me an escape.

He told me my parents would never allow me to go on this great adventure. But I was obviously mature enough to make my own decisions. He told me how I could trick my mom. Mom was never around anyway, thanks to the new boyfriend. I told her I was staying at a friends house. I got on the Greyhound. Taygon was right. It was so easy. Taygon was a genius, he knew all the right tricks to fly under the radar. Never show a scale. I felt so mature.

I was assigned to work in the Conversion Room. As a graphic artist, with over 76 deviations in my portfolio, it is my job to interpret the

artistic vision of future cytrans and assist the engineering team into understanding the full reality of what they want their bodies to display.

It was a typical day. I met up with a returning client, x\_VashTheStam-pede\_x, and we discussed the design shi wanted for hirs third cytran body. "I want Megan Fox's head on a white lion body with 12ft dragon wings. The mane should be cute and curly, like a My Little Pony character." Shi unfolded a drawing shi had done the night before.

It was obviously a trace of promotional art from the Lion King with some ribbons added to the hair and some triangles drawn over the chest to indicate the size of the breasts. I exchanged a look with my research assistant, CharmanderGrrl, and smiled as she quirked her eyebrows. The cytrans were known for their ravenous appetite for human flesh and their quick homicidal rage when they felt provoked or bullied or mocked. But I knew we were safe. For some reason, the typical Cytran couldn't read subtle facial expressions or body language. It was beyond their social adaptability.

"Does shi have four or six vaginas?" I asked, studying the squiggly lines x\_VashTheStampede\_x traced inbetween the legs.

"Six. and they're reversible," shi said proudly, with a smile on zhir dragon face. While I tried to figure out what that meant and got to work redesigning something the engineers could understand in photoshop, x\_VashTheStampe\_x entertained himself by curling into the fetal position and suckling on two of hir 40cm penises.

Ah, that's right. I remember. I designed that penis based off another one of zhir drawings. It was shaped like a reindeer's left antler with studs around the rim and a blow torch attached to the base.

I wish I could curl into the fetal position, cry myself to sleep, and wake up and find myself back home.

## By CmdrChicken

MINISTRY OF DEFENSE DOCUMENT FOR INTERNAL USE ONLY

THE FOLLOWING WAS RECOVERED FROM SITE A12: MALATORAN FORWARD OUTPOST, SÃO TOMÉ ISLAND.

### *Sub-Warrior #1278:*

I was an artist.

I came to Malatora simply due to my curiosity. They seemed so concerned about design, and beauty, but I didn't know. It feels like an eternity ago that I first came off that ferry, no relatives, no dependents, no possessions, I heard that Malatora was a place for such people. But they don't like to talk about the Dragons on their website, besides the "true expression of your inner self!" BS, I considered myself a hippie at the time, I thought it was all metaphysical, expression of your true inner being, etc.

They put us in classes for weeks, teaching us "sensitivity training." At the time I was excited - a truly progressive society where everyone, human or animal, is an equal! It was only two days after the end of my last class that I learned of a former man's true capacity for brutality. My first encounter with the Cytrans was in the Presidium. A worker lay on the floor, his blood running into the grout between the tiles. The Cytran was barking at us, as they like to do. "Why do you not trust us!? We feed you, and house you, yet you doubt our superior Dragon morality?!" Another Cytran began to eat the corpse, I had to look away. "THIS IS THE FATE OF ALL WHO DO NOT WISH TO BE DESTROY OUR PEACEFUL, LOVING NATION!" I had no idea what that Cytran just said, and I never found out why that worker died. They never say if anybody dies here, no respect for the dead, you're just supposed to pretend they never existed.

That was all ages ago as far as I'm concerned, I can't believe I'm doing

this, but I'm hoping and praying for the day the United States Army comes. I'm writing this document for the benefit of any American or foreign soldier who finds me, or possibly, my corpse. I would never have thought that I'd regret going to all those protests.

We all want out of this, we're essentially their pets, playthings. But when the war began to go badly for them, they made us fight for them, too. I was drafted into what they call "Dragonforce." They told us that while the true Dragons fight using swarm tactics and individual skill against the armies of the world, us human conscripts, with our inferior morals, were to be formed into a conventional force to guard the homefront. Dragonforce is only a thousand people or so. I can not call our force soldiers, we're not trained, we were given an aluminum vests, helmets, and rifles, and a single Cytran officer to command us.

My commanding officer, Sub-Warrior Overseer Fluffykinz, seems depressed to be leading a force of humans, he tells us so every day. I strongly believe that like us, he has no military training or experience. His entire command staff's sole job is grooming his synthetic white fur while he eats our entire tuna ration and tells himself he's a sexy kitty. Most of us have never used a gun, and he doesn't seem concerned. He only preaches victory from that chair/throne thing he requires six men to move, he tells us that we're winning. I know better though, I see the ships off the shore. At night I see fireballs erupt and fall out of the sky. Fluffykinz says those are "pathetic human aircraft—bested by our superior maneuverability in the skies!" But I know that if only he could fly, he'd be burning too.

If someone not of Malatora finds this, please tell your commander to kill the uniformed Cytrans, it's the only way we'll be able to surrender and live.



## By The Mad Archivist

The Americans are quick to heap scorn upon the People's Republic for its part in the war against Malatora, "or lack thereof." They accused us of dragging our feet, because we revere the dragon, or admired the advances Taygon had made in social engineering and wished to use them ourselves.

These things—stereotypes—could not be further from the truth. The Chinese people are a rational and civilized race; we recognized just as the Americans did what the Malatorans really were and what they represented, the threat to world peace and stability. If anything, the Americans rushed headlong into war, I think, to prove something. After their fleets backed down in the face of Chinese naval power during the Taiwan Reclamation, they felt they needed to prove to the world they still had what it takes to be a superpower.

And they were lucky—very lucky. The abilities of the Cytran were not as great as the Cytrons themselves claimed. They were also finally fighting a war where the native population was genuinely trying to make regime change, as opposed to the pattern established over most of the last two centuries by the American military machine. For the first time since World War II, "fighting for freedom and justice" was not merely a hollow slogan on their part.

Finally, let us not forget where the Cytrons came from. Was not the first wave the toxic runoff of America's decaying heartland? Were they not the rotten fruit of her depressed industries, her corrupt social services and schools, which were unable to find and identify these troubled individuals, and give them the care they needed? When the remains of the first-generation Cytrons were identified and linked to the Facebook Archives, how many had come from China, as opposed to the decadent Western democracies, or our "eccentric" neighbor, Japan?

If America was first and foremost in killing the Malatoran dragon, it was only because they were foolish enough not to recognize the eggs for what they were.

Bo Wen

Guest Columnist for the *People's Daily*

## By natetimm

I wanted so badly to be something else.

They say the grass is always greener, and I was convinced. I could tell you I went for the freedom, the high ideals, or the technology but that would be a lie.

I wanted to be powerful for once in my life. The very idea of flying through the air as an invincible dragon made my blood boil. I was intoxicated just thinking about it.

People would look at me like a lunatic when I tried to explain to them how wonderful it would be. I convinced myself that there would always be people who were afraid of change. I would help to usher in the new evolution of man. We would make our own bodies and forge our own futures.

The pain was unimaginable. From the moment your nervous system leaves your body until it is transplanted, every nerve ending is raw and flooded with pain. Imagine every nerve ending on your body detecting an open wound.

Many of us in the first generation went mad from the pain. Sparkling new dragon bodies smashed to pieces when the broken mind took control. After the first few disasters, the powers that be found a way to turn on the mind without engaging the body. Apparently we all still have that feature installed.

There's no use telling the story of our downfall. Those facts will become public record soon enough. I just want to add my testimony as our world burns around us.

In the final moments before our government collapsed, I was witness to a terrible thing. Unknown to all of us, the brains of the first generation who failed the transition were not destroyed. Unveiled by

Taygon at the council's final meeting, these brains had been kept in secret all along as a secret weapon. Their pain had never been abated, and special bodies had been constructed in preparation for a worst-case scenario.

In a final act of defiance, Taygon installed these minds into stealthy bodies which he wanted released into the ocean through the moon pool. Even though Malatora would die, these marauders would torment the world long after its demise.

I had finally seen enough. This was just wanton destruction and spite. This was not the life I had signed on for. After the council disbanded, I followed the scientists to their lab and ended this abomination. I destroyed the scientists, and all of their devices. It is my greatest hope that this act will let this war end once and for all.

In a twisted bit of irony, it seems that destroying these control devices has also resulted in the shutdown of my physical abilities as well. I sit here awaiting my eventual fate at the hands of those we so cruelly oppressed.

I can only find a sick sense of justice that when I am torn apart my pain sensors will still be functioning.

By themrguy

*Indianapolis Star, 2017:*

**Hoosier Lottery winner receives first payment**

*Winner Robert Lord vague about plans for his winnings*

State Officials announced today that they had confirmed that Robert Lord, 34, of Plainview, Indiana had legitimately picked the winning ticket for the 2017 Hoosier state lottery. Lord's \$245 million jackpot is the largest lottery win in state history. The legitimacy of Mr. Lord's winnings had been cast into doubt by Lord himself, who in a bizarre series of statements that occurred immediately after him being declared the winner, claimed that he had "cracked the lottery algorithm" with his "superior Aspergian intellect." Lord, an unemployed factory worker and college dropout who lives with his parents, has been arrested once in 2012 for attempting to sell low quality artificial diamonds to various buyers, a charge that he plead down to a years probation and mandatory therapy. State Officials said that they had found no evidence that Mr. Lord had the means or opportunity to interfere with lottery proceedings. In response to Lord's claims to have "cracked the algorithm," one lottery official speaking on condition of anonymity, said that the claims were ridiculous, as Lord had been buying lottery tickets for years, and that he "got lucky, but was too proud or stupid to admit it." Mr. Lord has been vague as to what he plans to do with his winnings. A former coworker, who asked not to be named said that Lord was "lonely and awkward," adding, "Maybe now he won't die a virgin."

By Venmoch

*LT F. Stephens RN - Warfare - UN Coalition Forces:*

## Log 1

I've got to be honest, this deployment was not what I was expecting. I miss the HMS Queen Elizabeth. That was the easy life. Go on watch, see fuck all, give the weapons a once over, chat to the lads and then it was down to the Wardroom for a couple of pints and a good slap-up meal. Now what am I doing? Squatting in some hot African mud like some damn squaddie. Fuck, whoever thought about bringing the Goalkeeper to this godforsaken hell-hole is some sort of sadistic genius. What makes it worse? I can see the fucking Queen Elizabeth on the horizon. Its a good thing she's a beautiful vessel otherwise I'd have gone all resentful on her.

But, they said the goalkeepers on her were too far away from the Citadel so I have to sit here looking after a cantankerous unit that's so unreliable in this heat that the nickname Roberts gifted it with can't be uttered in polite conversation. Thank god the squaddies tanks can brew tea is all I can say. We'd have all gone spare if we'd been unable to have that luxury.

What we're facing is, to say the least, different from my previous experiences. These "Cytrans" are so fucking out there I thought the officers briefing us had been huffing the engine fumes. However, they were right. I only hope the genius in Whitehall who came up with the hairbrained idea of welding this CIWS to a truck and using it to shoot down these dragons is worth the extortionate amount of money we no doubt pay him.

Ah shit, now the fucking targeting units packed up again... Fuck sake... Roberts, get the diagnostic tools, the cunt's having a moment.

## Log 2

Well, turns out the genius in Whitehall is indeed worth it after all. The Goalkeeper worked better than any of us can imagine.

It was about 0300, me and the squaddies were shooting the breeze trying to find something to take our minds off the mindnumbing boredom that is laying siege to a large underground citadel. After the fifth cup of tea and being made fun of for being a member of the "Senior Service" once more our radios squawked into life.

One of the American AWACS patrolling the airspace had picked up a number of signatures registering from the citadel. Either a scouting party or one of those hunter-killer parties that go out at night and ambush a group of soldiers who just had the bad luck to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. One of the tank gunners had a friend in one of those groups. He says that when they found 'em the squad had been horrifically attacked, and then, to make matters worse the poor guy was still alive, muttering to himself, with the lower half of his torso missing. He'd been saying that a dragon had eaten him. Slowly, taking care to enjoy the flavours only to be scared off before it could finish the job. The way McKintosh tells it the medic had to put him out of his misery, but he does has a tendency to embellish.

We rushed to the Goalkeeper as the army bods behind us fired up their tank, according to the AWACS they were coming our way, either they'd seen us, or we were just plain unlucky. We quickly brought the Goalkeeper online, we didn't keep it on all the time as we didn't want to risk shooting anything human down by accident.

We watched the radar intently as the AWACS kept giving us constant updates when the horizon lit up. This wasn't a raiding party. The damn things were attacking! "The best defence is a good offence" and all that. I saw jets take off from the HMS Queen Elizabeth as an AC-130 flew above rattling the consoles with its engines. I'd have

watched closer but the immanent threat of being torn limb from limb because someone's cunning idea didn't work was rather more important.

We checked the Goalkeepers readouts again, all systems we working correctly for the first time since we'd stepped on this damn island. The sky lit up with blinding flashes as the radio squawked continuously with a mixture of voices, American, British, German hell every accent you can imagine. We heard this gutsy Frenchman yelling bloody murder, daring the Cytrans to come face him while firing wildly. Was a real morale booster, later we found he'd been posthumously given the *Lègion d'honneur*. Guy had taken on about four Cytrans, by himself. They found him slumped against his Machine Gun after bleeding out. I don't think anyone can really give the French anymore stick after that display.

We knew they were close, a party of three according to the radar. We all intently stared at the screen watching for them to come within our effective range. They were flying in formation, in a straight line. Either they didn't know we had a CIWS, or they just were unaware that we were in the area. Either way, they'd find out soon enough.

The Goalkeeper swung its massive Autocannon to bear on the incoming Cytrans, something spooked them as they quickly attempted to change formation. Perhaps they heard it swing around, or start to spin up. Whatever it was, it was useless. The Autocannon fired for a couple of seconds. The clearing we were sat it was illuminated as we watched the stream of tracer ammunition arc into the sky. One of the radar signatures swerved drunkenly into a spin crashing hard into the forest in a large blue explosion. Roberts punched the air with glee as we started tracking the other two signatures.

They were spooked, and were moving towards us at a much faster speed now. Not that this mattered to the Goalkeeper, this thing was designed to shoot missiles out of the sky, so an metal dragon was



going to be a piece of cake. The gun spoke again, we could see their silhouettes on the horizon. The target attempted to weave out of the way. The Goalkeeper missed, but it was soon tracking the weaving dragon. Cleaving the night sky, tracers like death's scythe.

All it took was a few solid hits. Another blue flash lit the sky followed by secondary flashes as the metal beast flew straight into the ground. Roberts shouted in joy but his joy was soon stifled. The targeting computer had malfunctioned again, at the worse possible time. We could see the dragon on the radar, edging slowly closer, but we were unable to do anything. That's when we heard it. A metallic shriek that fell over the clearing. The tank commander had obviously noticed by now our predicament and had opened his hatch. He cocked the machine gun on the top and pointed it toward the sky.

It swept into the clearing like something straight out of the depths of hell knocking over the Goalkeeper with its talons with a sickening sound of tortured metal. Roberts ran, sprinting towards the tree-line as I stood dumbfounded in front of the sleek metal dragon form. I could only think of all those stories I'd heard from the front-line, about what these things could and would do but that didn't matter, I would stand up to this beast and show it that humanity is not some weak willed race to be subjugated. It roared at me and I stared it down. The Tank Commander opened up with his machine-gun, causing sparks to flare off the sleek body of the dragon. No damage was being done—the calibre was too low—but that was not his intention.

Over bursts he shouted at me to move. I didn't require a second order, I sprinted as fast as I could, my lungs gasping for air as I dashed across the clearing trying not to look behind me. I could hear the machine guns staccato firing as I ducked into the trees. The dragon reared up and the tank commander ducked back into the tank, closing the hatch just as the tank was bathed in liquid fire. I watched with baited breath as the smoke cleared. Anxious to see what had

happened when I heard a loud bang.

The tank shell tore through the Dragon's chest piece, twisting and distorting the metal before landing in the forest with a plume of dirt and vegetation. The dragon swayed as it looked down at the large gaping wound in its chest in what I can only assume to be disbelief before crumpling into a heap in the middle of the clearing leaving the area silent except for the sound of guns in the distance.

My radio flashed into life again. "That was for Anderson you metal fuck!"

Amen to that MacKintosh. Amen to that.

## By ZeeToo

### *Unknown:*

It was the weirdest shit I've ever covered, that I can tell you. It wasn't even close to my only war. I'm just a cameraman, not a proper reporter, so I may not have the proper turns of phrase, but I was there.

Or, at least, close.

We—my assigned reporter and I—never got off the ships the Allies stationed just off coast, but we were close enough to pick up one hell of a crazy set of footage. My footage played on every damn channel in the world, near enough.

At first, it looked like a nightmare made real. By the end, it was practically a farce. Looking back on it months after the fact like this, it just seems crazy. Like some twisted genie gave them exactly what they asked for, but not what they meant.

Practically overnight, this unsuspected fringe turned from an obscure group never even as central to conspiracies as the Illuminati and the Freemasons into a whole new superpower—or that's what they said. You probably remember the "experts" they dragged in for news broadcasts at the time, talking about "technological quantum leap" and "three hundred years of tech development in the blink of an eye."

Well, if their technology was from the 2300's, their tactics were from the 1800's. And their sense of human decency was from the Dark Ages.

The atrocities came to light, the "converted" scientists, and the cautious back home quailed at the thought of fighting something so advanced.

Now they're all laughing. The dragons were technically impressive. The first few encounters see-sawed back and forth between complete

domination on each side. That didn't last, not beyond literally the opening days of the war.

The dragons were networked by radio telepathy; it was their big method of communication, their ace in the hole for instant cooperation. When the military just started jamming everything as a matter of course, they fell apart.

That's where the design flaws really began to show up. That's what the history books will tell you. But they'll never show just how pathetic the dragons became.

The dragons never even got close to the fleet. Oh, a few tried—I watched one flight of four wing towards us with slow majesty. They never even got close. Once they left the cover of the jungle, several of the carrier's escorts angled towards them, firing missiles. More missiles than they needed, as it turned out. The dragons weren't just feigning slow movement; that was really their best. I could barely make out the shape of the dragons without magnification. That was the closest I ever got to a live one. All my footage? Yeah, you wouldn't believe how much magnification I needed to get that.

Listening to ground troops cycling back to the fleet, they kept coming up with more and more unbelievable stories about how the war was going. The dragons could rip up armored vehicles—I heard that one early. The dragons burned, burned so easily. That I heard so much. By the end, it was a joke for the infantry. The dragons were pretty quick, striking, but they weren't that flexible. They could only attack in a few basic ways. Near the end of the war, a lot of soldiers gave up on even using guns as "unsportsmanlike." They knew how a dragon could move. They knew how fragile their flying, fucking, fire-breathing, ferocious forms were. A good hit from a baseball bat? That was all it took to bring down the "invincible" aluminum dragons.

God, what a farce. If only it hadn't ruined so many lives along the way, it would have been a phenomenal cosmic joke. The technological achievement of the millenium, my ass.

## By CmdrChicken

*Sub-Warrior Overseer Fluffykinz:*

AUDIO LOG FROM THRONE ROOM OF SUB-WARRIOR OVERSEER "FLUFFYKINZ" - COMMANDER OF DRAGONFORCE (Mala-toran human auxillary force)

[F is on his throne, eating a can of tuna. Not speaking to any known person]

F: I'm a pretty kitty, oh yes I am.

[F snorts a line of CATNIP]

F: mmmmmm ooh... oh yes that's good.

[A human adjutant, name K. Grayson, enters the throne room.]

K: Sir, I have s-

F: No. You have to say it.

K: My Lord The Wise and Adorable Fluffykinz, overlord of the fortunate souls of Dragonforce! Our scouts have spotted incoming... uhh... human... land forces, we have Platoons A and C moving in to engage them. What are your orders?

F: Tell them to fix bayonets and charge.

K: But... they'll be wiped out!

F: You are a lowly human and I am a White, Fluffy Cat of reason. I posses the tactical knowledge of thousands of your "Generals!" Relay the order to charge!

K: Yes my lord.

[minutes pass, F snorts more CATNIP]

[K Returns, F sounds noticeably agitated.]

K: My Lord, Platoons A and C are not responding to our hails on the radio. Do you have new orders for us?

F: Why yes, of course, whatever... you don't respect me.

K: What?

F: That's right, you humans don't respect me. I'm trying my hardest

to defend this island in the name of Emperor Taygon, and you keep making it difficult!

K: My Lord, we have possibly just lost over a hundred men! We need instruction! I do not doubt your military prowess, but we require it now!

F: Ok... I order our forces... to WIN! HAH!

K: How do you plan to do that?

F: You're my adjutant, you handle the details, whatever...

K: It's adjutant.

F: DO NOT CORRECT ME, WORM! I HAVE HAD ENOUGH OF YOUR INSOLENT!

[F Draws a pistol and fires seven times.]

K: My lord, do you need assistance in killing me?

F: AAAAAAAAAAAAAARGGH!! LEAVE MY SIGHT OR I WILL RE-LOAD! GO DEFEAT THE UNITED STATES ARMY, STOP PRETENDING LIKE IT'S HARD! LAZY HUMANS!

[F resumes snorting catnip and complimenting himself]

## By Untrustable

*The World Post, August 25, 2120:*

### **FIFTEENTH MANGLED BODY FOUND ON SMALL AFRICAN ISLAND**

*Strange happenings in former warzone*

Police officials in São Tomé, known by most as the former staging ground of one of the shortest yet violent wars in human history, are baffled at the emergence of yet another mangled corpse; The fifteenth this year. The local police are now seeking the help of stationed U.N. soldiers still on the island.

*The World Post, November 15, 2120:*

### **MYSTERY IN SÃO TOMÉ DEEPENS**

Following the rash of unexplained murders in São Tomé earlier this year, the locals of São Tomé are now reporting strange lights and sounds coming from the now blocked off area where the Cytrans held their last stand against invading allied forces. Locals have been quoted describing the sounds as, "Screams, like someone is hurt or dying." and "Squeaking and groaning like metal put under stress." The U.N. has declined comment on the matter.



## By punakone

### *Translated letter from UNAST soldier:*

Jaana, it's been a long while since I last wrote you. São Tomé is kinda nice place, if it wasn't for this war. Maybe we could vacation here some time in the future?

It's not that bad, most of the attacking is done by the US led coalition forces and we UN soldiers mainly keep the rear echelon safe from the almost nightly Cytran raids. It's not that bad, they're really inept when it comes to raiding, we hear them coming miles away. And most are already wounded or disabled partly, what would you expect from a machine that got a hail of bullets?

But how are you doing? I really wish I'd be there with you instead here but I guess we finally had to put a lid on this madness, I hear they were kidnapping children from the São Tomé natives before the US and the UN intervened. The locals are really nice and always come to talk us when were patrolling in the day and thank us for our work. Really makes you feel like you're doing something.

Besides that, it's really hot in here. When you're in a PASI in full gear it's kind of discomforting. And when it rains, it's really humid, really dont enjoy it. At least we don't have to use our NBC gear unless were cleaning away one of the damn robodragons or whatever they were called. Cyt something?

Your letters have been getting back here sparsely, the address you should use is 4th Armoured Brigade, NORDBATT, UNAST, that should get them at least into my brigade.

I hope this'll end soon and I'll see you again.

I love you,  
Petri

---

*– Translated from a letter sent by Jaeger Suokas, 4th Armoured Brigade, NORDBATT, United Nations Action in São Tomé. UNAST Archives*

## By Deadly Chlorine

### *Malatorian Citizen 08365:*

I run. I run like I've never had before. My feet bleed and my legs ache, but I still run. But at the same time, I laugh. Laughter because the months of torture had probably driven me insane, but also, who knew that they were this easy to kill? Long have the human citizens cowered in fear, the slightest misdemeanor treated like a major crime. Hell, even looking at them would get you eaten, or worse, maybe they would take away your children. Happened to me. Pleaded, begged them to do anything to me instead of them, but god knows they need children for whatever depraved things they do.

In my hand, I have something that I'd never dreamed of even touching in my life, until now. As I roared with laughter through the slums, people peeked out of their houses, seeing a goddamn penis as long as a ruler. All of them understood. Everywhere in Malatora, parents hushed their children, hid them somewhere safe, and took up weapons that we had been stockpiling for such a long time.

How did I manage to kill one of them, anyway? Truthfully, I didn't even do it on purpose. Got into a fight, asshole tried to fucking rape me, so I just punched him as hard as I could. Surprise when my fist just plowed through his chest like a hammer through coke can. Surprise for us both, heh. Of course, they obviously found out almost immediately. Still, I was afraid. No fucking way I could take on that many of them. So I ran like I've never ran before. My vision dims and my stomach hurts, yet I need to get the word out to everyone. Need to let them know that they can still fight.

So tonight, Malatora will go out in a blaze. Burning torches and fucking *baseball bats* will be the weapons that will finally end this tyranny.

## By Vengeance of Pandas

*Private Journal of John Ramsey, Citizen of Malatora:*

More fucking brownies and macaroni and fucking cheese today. I ran a fucking three Michelin star restaurant for five fucking years and now I'm reduced to a fucking diner chef in this miserable shithole of a country. The bastards lured me here with the promise of developing a new style of fucking cuisine for a new fucking race but all these stupid tin can arseholes want are fucking brownies and the odd bit of half cooked rabbit or cow. Fucking philistines. I've been pissing in the brownie mix for the last month and the fucking cytrans still haven't noticed.

## By Sleekly

It's lonely at the top.

More so when the top we are concerned with is very very high above sea level.

The Dragon Lord liked it up here. Malatora appeared green and lush from this height, the scars through the forests and pits dug for the resource drives barely noticeable. Just deeper shadows underneath the dense canopy.

Through exquisite wiring he could feel the air moving, knew it's currents, speed and eddies. The light and air moving through his external sensors relayed data directly to the brain with a level of detail that his old self, *an involuntary snigger*, could never have hoped to have understood. Humidity, temperature, forecasts, background electricity sources, radio interceptors, GPS positioning and more were being constantly updated. Optimized. His lizard lips smiled, he loved that word. "*Optimized*," flashes of light breaking through the scales off his hardened aluminium teeth as he leered.

He wasn't concerned with external matters today though. Today the rumblings had progressed to a point where he knew he couldn't ignore them. he knew this day would come and this time, he intended to carry the victory from that filthy Cult of George.

Even the name sent him back...

...*"When I find Hrothgar I'm going to put a bullet through his fucking brain!"*

*"Whoa! Kill? Really Taygon, this is the kind of thing they're feeding off."*

*"Shut it Tanya, you don't know anything. Hrothgar IS Dancing Dongs! Can't you see that? Or have you the brain of a pigeon to go with your looks?" Taygon hit enter and sat back arms crossed. That'll show her.*

*"LOL ROFL UMAD BRO?" Tanya sent. Taygon, couldn't believe it. The*

*gall.*

*The fucking gall of that woman.*

*He was composing some venom when he saw her next reply.*

*"I couldn't save you. It was my mission to do so and not only have I failed you, I have failed myself. I know the love you have put into the FedCom project and I know that one day that love will allow you to forgive me for what I'm about to say."*

*Taygon waited. Staring at the screen, a blinking "Tanya Sapien is typing a message..." staring back like the Sword of Damocles. He waited. He wasn't aware he wasn't breathing.*

*"We're leaving you Taygon. We all agree. You're dangerous, weak, arrogant and cowardly. They even call themselves 'Goons' for fucks sake. They're just using words! And you promised us sanctuary and progress. But you gave us pantsitting. We are taking the FedCom project and moving on without you. Don't try to follow. Even Staliph is with us. Goodbye Robert. We could never have done this without you. We just can't finish it with you."*

*She logged out. Taygon was left staring at the simple reality of his loss. And he could not comprehend it. He finally exhaled. His head span.*

*He looked up at the screen and noticed two things.*

*Staliph was going too.*

*And she had called him Robert.*

*That would be the last time either of them would ever be called those names...*

*... The Dragon Lord roared his triumph and rage at the past far far over Malatora. The flames flaring out, white hot in places and with fury in its every molecule.*

*He may have run back then. May have hidden and fainted. Played the cur. The things he had to do to be where he is now. He may have run from them back then, but now they were coming to **his** front door. And he was no longer Robert Lord, a lonely virgin. He was Taygon.*

He was everything he said he'd be. And that fucking Cult of George would find out the hard way.

## By Melaneus

A poorly shaven soldier entered his office. His uniform was of a rather bizarre design, with a torn unit badge bearing what appeared to be a purple unicorn peeking out above one of his slings. But it was the smile, the brimming, shit-eating grin on this guy was the most unnerving. After all that happened, the battle, the aftermath, the terrifying stories leaking out, and two broken arms, he looked like he had nary a care in the world.

"So we doing this inquiry thingy sir?," he asked with his head cocked to one side.

Snapped out of his state of surprise, the officer said, "Yes, yes. you're probably aware that you're here because of the... unusual kill you made. Where did you get the motorcycle, son? I'm quite sure no one brought any for the war."

He shrugged and answered, "It was found at an empty village. I assumed the past owner was already barbecue."

"And the lance? The authentic medieval design jousting lance?"

The soldier laughed lightly and replied, "Oh, I brought that from home. When I heard we'd be fighting the Malatora Dragons as foretold, I knew I was gonna joust one in the dick. And I fuckin' did, man! He was already wounded, or maybe high on somethin', cuz he was just lying there playing wit' his dicks and I had plenty of time to get set up and impale that aluminum dongbox. It was AWESOME! The broken limbs are totally worth it!"

Bemused, the officer went on, "As... foretold? Okay, whatever, I've got more important matters to deal with here. I'd rather speak with your CO about this incident anyways. Let's see, that would be General Bull—" and before he could finish reading off the name he sputtered in disbelief.



He sat rigid, looking forward with a thousand-yard stare and muttered, "God damn. When the hell did they let the Goons into NATO?"

The two remained motionless for a few moments. Eventually the officer became irked and asked, "Why are you still here?"

The soldier smiled wickedly and said, "say it."

"Say what?"

"SAY IT!"

"Get... out?"

With a giggle and a skip he was gone.

## By Pittsburgh Lambic

Imagine an anencephalic baby – a deformed, mostly-brainless infant with a concave skull. Now imagine that same baby with wings, metallic claws, and a forest of ghastly appendages hanging from its belly. What you have is very much like a Cytran – a human trying to make up for mental and emotional shortcomings by cowering in an augmented, physical shell. They became Cytrans because they were worthless human beings, and they remain worthless human beings – just a bit bigger than before. They have all the same flaws, insecurities, and anxieties. They are dragons with Downs syndrome, autism, bipolar, and any number of self-diagnosed disorders they attributed to themselves during a self-esteem crash.

Speaking of autism, have you ever just walked up to a Cytran and looked it right in the eye? Try it sometime. Green, glowing, arrogant, crystalline optical sensors don't help those fuckers overcome their fear of eye contact.

– Anonymous Cytran repairman

## By Dex

Breathe in, breathe out.

Breathe in, breathe out.

An old habit, entirely unnecessary in hir current form, but the act of controlling hir breathing had nothing to do with oxygen regulation. That was handled by the LOx tank connected to hir life support module. In hir stealth form, this system was entirely cut off from the book lungs so no exhalation would be visible. It was simply a matter of pacing himself, giving shi time to watch hir surroundings and prepare. They were close. Even though they were probably skilled for their kind, the humans could not hide their stumbling through his domain from his catlike aural receptors. Tough to say how many, but shi could pick up at least four different scents on the wind. Unpleasant, filthy scents promising lives filled with foolish vices shi himself had the decency to disregard even when trapped in a similar frame—smoking, drinking, bathing. Animals.

Breathe in, breathe out.

Breathe in, breathe out.

Closer now. If shi had a heart installed, it would have started beating faster. Shi publicly claimed that Malatora was a place of peace, but right here, right now, shi knew that *this* was what it came down to—a chance to test himself against hir opponents. An image flashed through hir mind, of a darker time, when the only competition to be found was on the paintball field. No contest to be had, and that was using impossibly subpar equipment. The thought made shi smile. Even now, with far higher stakes, all had been found wanting. Some things never change.

Breathe in, breathe out.

There. Moving in line formation, eyes locked straight ahead and never swaying from the path. So utterly predictable. Thankfully humanity had never stopped to discuss battlefield strategy with any of his Aspergian brotherhood prior to their relocation to Malatora. Shi stifled a chuckle—too late now. It was almost cruel, but these invaders needed to be dispatched. A little closer, and it would all be over for tonight...

Suddenly, a shrill cry rings out through the forest. It seems to ring out through the world, drowning out anything else. Taygon began to panic as shi recognized the cry — *no, no*, it can't be possible! This cannot be happening! The humans were so close, almost within striking distance, but hir vision was growing dimmer and dimmer, the hated aggressors becoming indistinct blurs, melting into the surrounded jungle...

Robert Lord opened his eyes. A blurry, shapeless world blinked back at him. Good. The transition from Cytran to this was jarring enough, better that he spare himself the finer details for now. The alarm clock continued its infernal beeping, each tone mockingly reminding him of his current lot in life. Reaching over to the nightstand, sending his latest purchase from Bad Dragon tumbling to the floor, he hit the snooze button.

Just five more minutes, and he'd show those Goons what Taygon The Brave was really made of. Maybe he'd even make it home to Tatsu Eyrie in time for brownies. As the sounds of the trailer park drifted away, he smiled.

## By Walkin Goon

### *Journal Entry #06:*

Fucking Geri. *Fucking Geri.*

Of all the gullible morons to be stationed with, we had to deal with *him*: the only idiot dense enough to go walking off into this resource deprived jungle in the **middle of fucking nowhere**. Of course, the obvious happened: his ass is more loss than trailer-park trash at a biotechnology convention — missing like a preop-attention whore misses their self respect.

And *of course*, the Captain takes it out on the rest of us, chewing between each and every insult he can possibly spit (in an Irish accent of all things!).

*"How could 'ou maggots le' this 'appen?*

*What in George's grace possessed 'ou to dick around in your trouser-tents in'nead of standing guard like 'ou should 'ave been?*

*I 'ought I was dealing wi' Marines, not attention-deficit Asperger rejects on a web board!"*

Shut the fuck up, why don't he? I wasn't drafted into service to babysit or play bongo in the congo with manchildren who got into the strategic ops by way of menial computer games. In fact, if it was up to me right now, I'd rather be using my credentials to be sitting somewhere in the US controlling one of those predator UAV things, bombing dragonadongs continents away in between sips of sweet tea and air conditioned climate control.

God, in a more realistic scenario, shouldn't we be doing more of just that, like, *right now*? It's like we're sending in men to confront these giant electric appliances just to humor them.

... God dammit...

Just got word that Fran's apparently missing now, too.

Dear diary,  
Everyone around me's a moron.  
Your faithful soldier,  
Private Get-me-out-of-here-please.  
  
Fuck.

## By Desperado Bones

Today we were approached by a reporter. She had been sticking around the American troops, she and her photographer, and today she had the guts to come to us. You see, after years of abuse and horror we don't look as the kindest people on the world; we are scarred, angered, bitter. The American marines once said "They look like out of one of those Vietnam movies." I still don't know what they mean, neither we care.

Me and my men joked with her, proudly telling her our many kills and how many dicks we have cut. Then came the interviews, each one of us told their story. Mine isn't so great. I used to mop the floors, I used to kiss the Cytrans' feet and submit to their desires while deep inside I was boiling in anger and disgust at myself. Then came the first riot and I saw an opportunity to stand against the monsters I despised. Diogo used to sell brownies, he always rants about how that's not real food and taste like monkey shit: "I want a fucking steak!"

Oh... Adriano. He was crying once he talked with the reporter in private. I saw them from the distance, that child breaking in tears and clinging to a woman that suddenly took the role of a surrogate mother. Her hands rubbed his skinny back, whispering hushing words.

Minutes later we were asked for a photograph. Me and my men stood proudly, showing our morbid trophies to the world.

- Ernesto Manoel's journal was published two years after the end of the Malatora war. Nowadays he spends his days as a fisherman, trying to heal the horrors that still haunt his dreams.

- Diogo Cassado helped in the reconstruction of his hometown, opened a restaurant and today he is married and is waiting for his first son; "... And I'm pleased he won't live the Hell we all had to endure." He smiles and rubs his wife's stomach. "My child won't have to fear any dragon monsters."

- On a wall hangs a black and white photo, it looks old and so out of time even if it was taken recently. A group of ten Africans stand proudly in front of a dead Cytran. They look dirty, tired, rifles hanging from their shoulders and wide smiles on their faces. Each one of them holding proudly a Cytran penis, just like a hunter showing off his prey.

That photo nearly gave Samantha Jones the Pulitzer (won instead by a photo of a small and abused child being rescued by an unknown soldier). She looks at it for a minute before her eyes move to the other, smaller, photos beneath. She chuckles when her eyes meet the ones of a black man in his fifties, holding the largest fish she had ever seen before. Then a younger man, hugging his pregnant wife. And next to it the one of a young man, his eyes sad, his face covered in dirt and dried blood... he was only seventeen.

"Adriano!" Samantha suddenly calls, "It's getting late!"

Over her head she can hear the loud steps of his now adopted son. Adriano Jones, a young man that's fighting to have a regular life and leave behind the ghosts of the Cytran horror.



## By Big Poppa Creamy

AngelSephith's metal claws clacked and shrieked against the floor as shi stormed down the corridor. How dare they. How dare they?! Shi had been mating with ShadowKitsune when shi had received the news. The human messenger had tried to run when he saw hir fury but had slipped in a puddle of lubricant and AngelSephith had disemboweled him with a single sweep of hir claws. Shi was so furious he would barely been able to finish mating for the seventh time that day if ShadowKitsune hadn't started stroking hir favourite of AngelSephith's proud dongs, the one shi called "Masamune" with a breathless whisper, until AngelSephith was ready to show hir the power of hir Hanzo Steel. Hir nestmate was dead, killed by the filthy stinking humans who even now were laying hir beloved paradise of Malatora to waste outside the walls of the Citadel.

Well enough was enough. Yes, the Cytran forces had met their share of setbacks so far, but that was before AngelSephith had joined the fray. Shi was already imagining the glorious moment when shi would reach the front lines, rear back hir head and let out a proud and wrathful warcry that would let all in earshot know that they had made a greivous mistake when they hurt those that AngelSephith cared for.

Hir tail flashed left and right as shi found herself caught in a day-dream and the human briefing officer ducked as it took a gouge out of the concrete wall, then had to sprint to catch back up again. Shi could barely stand to listen to his prattle about 25mm grenade rifles, mobile close-in weapon systems or whatever else it was he was getting so excited about. Shi thought about breaking his back against the wall with hir tail, but decided against it. No, save it for the enemy, show them the full extent of your wrath.

Besides, what did this so-called "briefing" have to offer anyway? Who could be in any doubt as to the inherent combat superiority of the

Cytran? They were powerful, majestic, and their armour had been shown to stop small-caliber small arms fire on the range. There was no doubt, there wasn't a single human soldier on the island who could defeat AngelSephroth one-on-one, which would make his devious guerilla tactics even more deadly, especially when backed up by the autonomous swarm tactics of his brethren, sisters and hermererens. No doubt they would flee in terror when they saw his eyes turn the distinctive orange that showed him in full berzerk combat mode. Maybe he would even get to challenge the enemy general himself to single combat to show the superiority of Dragon Honour.

Shi reached the launching bay and took off with a flap of his glorious wings. Shi mentally ran down the battleplan in his head that he had drafted after a lecture on Dragon Tactics from Taygon himself: The officers first, then the medic units, that would stop the rest of them healing damage when he used his dragonfire in a series of sweeping attacks whilst using his low speed and maneuverability to avoid any missiles or anti-air fire. Shi would feast on the delicious, stinking humans this day until Taygon and Staliph themselves were forced to recognise his greatness.

No sooner had he left the launchpad than he heard the siren screech of his cytran body's early warning system. An incoming missile, but it was so fast. He went to feign left, then dive swiftly to the right, skillfully throwing the missile off, but before he could even begin to react there was a hard hammerblow of compressed air as the missile exploded. An airburst rather than a direct hit, luckily, but a small cloud of shrapnel still punched a ragged hole in his left wing. He began to lose altitude, panicking as he looked for somewhere safe to land in the undergrowth. This wasn't supposed to happen, if he was to die, it should be in a glorious last stand to protect his friends, roaring his defiance, not swatted out of the air like a bug.

The landing was rough, his once-gleaming aluminium armour was dented and scratched from the tree branches he had burst through

but shi was still alive! Shi could make it back to the safety of the Citadel and a fresh new body, now an even more dangerous opponent thanks to this valuable experience, which would surely take hir to the next level of Dragon Combat. Shi shook hir head and stood on unsteady legs and began to force a way through the undergrowth. Suddenly shi burst out into a clearing full of scurrying humans in BDUs and combat fatigues, shi had come across an enemy platoon! The two forces stood there in shock for a moment, eyeing each other in wary disbelief but AngelSephiroth reacted first. Shi reared back on her hindlegs, unlocked every one of her dongs and let them sway proud and erect in the muggy jungle air and shi roared hir defiance and passion. Now these pathetic creatures would see what a true warrior of Malatora could do! They would scatter and die beneath hir might claws in the name of glorious Fed-

The first grenade tore hir intact wing to ribbons, the second left only a smoking hole where hir right hindleg used to be and shi collapsed onto the floor, screaming in pain. Shi began to thrash around as, no longer under hir control, hir dongs fitfully squirted lubricant in a fast-growing puddle around hir and thrashed about, knocking down bushes and saplings. The last thing shi saw was a soldier walking towards hir purposefully, a metal baseball bat in his hand, tapping against his leg as he walked.

"Yo Jenkins, this one's mine dammit!"

"Forget it Velasquez, you only winged it. Hah. Winged it. Besides, you know that Cook's only going to claim it was his bird that should get the kill anyway, so what does it matter? Ok you deviant little son of a bitch, this one's for a little friend of mine, I'm going to hit a home run on all ten of them..."

Shi just had time to sob and think sadly to herself, this was truly an epic fail...

## By Hungry Bit

*Journal entry by a Strike Team soldier:*

The city behind us burned like a bonfire and painted the sky with shades of grey and orange. The occasional rumble of depleted uranium shells hitting the city walls reminded us that the Citadel was going down. A10's flew overhead to the direction of the mainland, back home to refuel and to return with a fresh serving of death. Nothing tried to stop them.

The battle was surprisingly short and one-sided. The Cytrans preferred to engage our troops alone and in close combat, meaning the squads could plink the slow fliers off before they got even close. Some tried to ambush us as we stormed the HQ, giving us a harder time but finally succumbing to the hail of bullets. God, the Cytrans were the strangest foe we'd ever encountered and probably ever would. The mental image you get when told that you'll be opposing 10-foot tall metal monstrosities made of teeth and claw is frightening at best, but when you actually lay your eyes upon the aluminum hulk of a dragon it's... different. Disturbing, and sort of pity inducing. Those robotic movements, the weak bodies, all those... appendages hanging from the crotch... definitely a hindrance in combat... and the fixation to some sort of an insane honor code. It's strange.

Much of the fight is now a shady memory blurred by adrenaline and the odd feeling of witnessing something as unreal as this actually happening. But one encounter was etched in my mind as clear as day. That one Cytran, pouncing us from a blind corner, flailing wildly with all its limbs and screaming, optics flaming with rage. Those horrifying red eyes were at one point fixated at me and I could feel them boring into my soul. Like it was assessing what it was up against, trying to reverse-engineer what made me tick and how to stop that tick from happening...

"I'M GOING TO RAPE YOU IN EVERY ORIFICE IN YOUR BODY..."

BUT NO BUTT STUFF!” it screamed as it finally leapt at us, only to fall to the concentrated fire hailed upon it by my squad. The whimpers it made as light flickered off its eyes made it seem confused as to how something like this could be happening. It was somehow different from the rest but I couldn’t tell why.

We were to get out the children and we did. Now we’re waiting for extraction. But I wonder what will become of São Tomé now. Seeing how the world was united to rid the islands of the dragon scourge I’m confident it’ll come together to help rebuild as well.

## By Sleekly

### *Dr Hugh Mann:*

Hi, I'm Dr Mann. I haven't been to one of these things before.

Well, let me just say, it's not fair. I live a flawless life, don't cheat, don't cut corners and yes, I resent it, but I'm just not the type of person to be bad. Psychiatry can do that a person. Make them cautious. Self analyzing. Not fun. Or flighty. Impulsive. Etcetera. I know... lame.

So, this one time I do let loose. Finally. I accept the friday night after work thing. I drink the drinks. Talk the talk. Walking the walk just got me a wall in the face but that's not the point. You know the song Respect, everyone does. Blues Brothers lady. I'm not good with music. It was like that except the word was Relaxed. For once in my life, I relaxed.

And when I woke, it was to a winged nightmare beyond all reason. There was a fucking dragon interrogating me. The one time I get drunk, ACTUALLY GET LAID, and I wake up face to face with what can only be a Dragon.

Yeah... like Smaug. But sort of XXX rated but shutup. I don't know if I'll ever feel like letting this out again.

The dragon could talk. Roughly. Not really. What I was seeing was, somehow, some basic human intent in the communication that I understood. It was frustrated. Very much so. Angry and somehow shamed too. But honestly, he couldn't talk for shit.

It could hear well enough though. When I said to it, "You're talking? I can't understand you," the thing flew to its feet. It's head crashed into a very cheap looking chandelier and some shards stuck into one of the beasts eyes. It shrieked and commenced clawing at its face to tear the shiny plastic splinters out of its socket.

Finally the beast composed itself. It sat (trying from what I suspect is habit to drape one leg over the other and lean back haughtily while crossing its arms) and sneered down its admittedly impressive nose at me.

From some area on the floor the Beast drew forth what looked to be an iPad. On closer inspection it was a shattered mirror with a crudely butchered PS3 controller attached to it. Whatever this contraption was as the dragon tapped on it with a grossly engorged claw (why did his claw have a foreskin?) it spoke as he tapped out his demands.

"I SHALL SKIP THE PLEASANTRIES DR MANN."

"What?"

"I SHALL SKIP THE PLEASANTRIES DR MANN."

"What?"

"I SHALL... FUCK YOU!"

"Where am I? Who are you?"

"I AM TAYGON. I... DRAGONS DO NOT NEED ANYTHING AT ALL AND I DON'T NEED YOU AT ALL... BUT I NEED YOU"

"What?"

"I SHALL SKIP... OH RIGHT... I HAVE A PRESSING NEED FOR YOUR SERVICES"

"Huh?"

"YOU ARE THE FAMOUS DR HUGH MANN. I AM STILL HUMAN. I HAVE ISSUES. HELP ME."

"Um..."

"ARE YOU LAUGHING AT ME?"

And the Dragon had a tantrum.

I know that's unbelievable considering what it was and all. But the Dragon flew up through the ceiling atop a very impressive pillar of flame and I was able to just walk away.

My name is Dr Hugh Mann. And I am an alcoholic.

## By Walkin Goon

He was Cain, Eragon, the rising Übermensch; he was Spyro in Gnorc's World, Brackman of the Cybrans, Shepherd in the Normandy among reavers. He was the miracle ingredient Granny's brownies. He was—

"Crazy!" The goons interrupted, laughing. "That's what you are! Crazy!"

"—immense. I'm a real, slam-bang, honest-to-goodness, three-gifted dongdinger. I'm a bona fide dragon-man!"

— Excerpt from *Dong-22*



## By DrSunshine

### *Gakushin Heavy Industries:*

The so-called “cytran” human neural interface is truly a wonder of modern technology. Now that we are able to fully implant a human consciousness into a mechanical shell of any desired shape or size means that heretofore unsuccessful efforts at creating “hard” AI can be bypassed. This is a revolution in heavy industry, allowing personnel to operate in environments too dangerous even for workers in hazardous environment suits, with far more flexibility than using autonomous ROVs. Furthermore, the electronic translation algorithms used to control their former bodies can be inverted, allowing a technician to ensure loyalty through direct stimulation of the pain receptor channels. We have already put several captured “cytran” models into hazardous waste cleanup and sewage maintenance operations via this method, and expect to acquire several more units in the next quarter.

— Gakushin Industries Board of Directors Q4 Report,  
*Aftermath: The Cytran Conflict in Retrospect*

### **Datalinks**

### *Academician Prickhor Zakharov:*

The substructure of Taygon’s mind regresses infinitely towards deeper and deeper perversions. Behind furies we find hermaphrodite sex, and behind that, pedophilia. Each layer unraveled reveals new horrors, but also new mysteries.

— Academician Prickhor Zakharov,  
“For I Have Tasted The Cum”

## By Rubycutter

By the time we arrived on the compound, there was little that our tactical squad needed to do. The human slaves that the dragons had kept had mostly fled and the upper levels of the “Citadel” were almost entirely abandoned, save for the occasional scurrying of adventurous wildlife and the bright flickers of light as the electrical systems began to fail. It was odd that none of the dragons were present, though many of them had been destroyed during combat with the U.S. military. It turned out that they weren’t as impervious to high caliber weapons fire as they had thought, and certainly not as impervious to missiles. They hadn’t put up much of a fight anyway, it had been strange, they seemed slow and uncoordinated, and seemed to have a great deal of difficulty even keeping themselves in the air, much less posing a threat to our forces. But not all of the dragons had been present on the field, and now we were tasked with hunting down the remaining abominations and securing them for trial. We had no idea what we were about to find, but the images still haunt me in my nightmares. The doors to the lower level slid open, helped along by a crowbar and Sgt. George’s booted foot, and we emerged into the main atrium, lit by the dull red of flashing emergency signage. We advanced slowly, guns at the ready and then it began, a dull moan that stretched and wavered in the thick, humid air.

“What the fuck was that, Sergeant?” One of the men asked, and George shrugged his shoulders.

“Sounds like a dying animal,” piped in another, “maybe one of them things is down here.”

Then we looked up.

Strung to the top of the balustrade was one of the dragons, stretched out almost as if it was being crucified, its wings ripped and broken. It raised its head helplessly and let out another one of those horrible

moans, and then shuddered, liquids dripping from its nether regions, which appeared to be some sort of horrifying amalgamation of sexual organs, all looking battered and mutilated. George stepped forward, raising his weapon, but a human head suddenly appeared near the dragon and raised a hand.

"Stop right there. This is ours," it snarled, displaying a machete gripped firmly in its other hand. "Look at this pathetic beast, even now begging for its life."

"What happened to it?" George asked, his face going pale.

"Oh, these children. They thought they could support their new bodies off of a diet of brownies and soda, like they were still human. They weakened. And we waited, we endured their abuses, and now. Now we will have our revenge."

The dragon let out another screaming sigh, and the figure raised the machete even higher.

"Behold! A new age. Watch me slay this dragon," it cackled, and rammed the machete home through the dragon's neck. It gargled and flailed around in its bonds, but the figure was determined, and soon a shower of black blood erupted out of the dragons neck, coating the floor of the atrium. Still the figure sawed, and finally, the dragon's head tipped forward, smashing into the ground, sliding along the liquid that had seeped out of its body, and came to a slow, horrible halt next to George's boot. When we looked up again, the figure had vanished. All that remained was the pathetic corpse, and the low thrum of the emergency air vents struggling to keep up.

## By CmdrChicken

*Excerpt from "Faces of Malatora: Part II" An interview with a veteran of Dragonforce: Malatora's human fighting force.*

We were aroused out of our barracks this one morning by an alarm. I feel I must clarify when I say we slept in a "barracks" we lived in our sleeping bags in an abandoned apartment, its original occupant long dead. They kept us by platoon, over fifty men per apartment. Some of us slept in open drawers from dragon-sized furniture. The alarm? Oh, it was the cat fucker, he had a simple PA system rigged up in all the apartments appropriated for Dragonforce.

Well, going off on a tangent from my story here, but the way I understood it, they conscripted practically every human they could without letting the whole thing [Malatora/Fedcom] burn down due to neglect. Somebody's gotta turn the gears in a place like that. They did these "loyalty tests." As far as I knew, everybody in my unit, myself included, considered themselves loyal human citizens of Malatora right up until we got captured. But at the end of the day they made Dragonforce for two reasons: They LOVED the idea of humans taking a bullet for them, and they were just starting to catch on that the outside world might think they were holding their humans hostage. So I think that they thought that if you guys saw humans fighting alongside them, you would be less willing to go in there.

That was part of my original train of thought, let me finish and you'll see where I'm going with this. So, we're woken up by the screaming of our commanding officer, the only Cytran in the unit. The guy clearly loathed us. He felt being put in command of humans was an insult. Judging by the orders we got? I can't doubt Taygon's call in that case if it was his. Dragonforce started with 1,000 men and women. Two weeks later, we're down to 500. Two days after that, we're down to our last one hundred, Malatora's elite corps of human warriors. The cat fucker kept telling us that our friends were "nobly

dying to the last man in valiant last stands" But now we were all that was left.

By the time we were down to our last company, they weren't sending us outside anymore. "You understand the inferior human minds of these drugged up crazies" they told us "None of us can, we're above them." Our job devolved into trying to pacify these lunatics. They all seemed to be on something, one time, this guy grabbed me by the visor of my helmet and screamed something about "ten dong." What? No, I've never seen more than one penis on a cytran... okay maybe three. They didn't like having us around during their mating. Hard to explain why, best way I can describe it... is well, we were a force of authority in an anti-authoritarian society. Even though we were told to enforce rules like the sodomy ban, the fact we enforced any rules at all put the cytrans on edge. As far as I know not many of us were killed by cytrans, they all knew it was our job to be killed for them.

I didn't choose to be in this unit, but I lost every human friend I had once they first saw me in the purple fatigues. I think that was why we were still loyal, knowingly or not, Taygon alienated us from all the other humans. As far as status, the cytrans saw us as cannon fodder, the "skilled at combat" ones did anyway. One or two were genuinely grateful for our service (I've never personally seen actual combat) but the human civilians considered us species-traitors. At one point, we were afraid of both the cytrans and the humans. We had guns, we considered a coup, but we no longer had the numbers. Also, as far as we knew, our guns were harmless to cytrans.

It also didn't help that we weren't really trained. We were basically told to "understand and learn the techniques of battle from our dragon brethren." Not one of them knew how to operate the guns we were given, most of them couldn't even hold them. Just kept telling us to go in with sharp things yelling. Weird huh? Yeah, the purple outfit was all that separated us from the other humans.

After the war, I tracked down all my old friends and fellow Dragonforce folk, we still hold reunion parties at various pubs and talk about the good times. No, I tried to, but us Dragonforce vets don't have a lot in common with the coalition vets. They slaughtered cytrans, we were their most-willing servants.

## By Fargo Fukes

The girl at the bar was unbelievable. Platinum hair, eyes that shone like blue steel, skin as clean and white as fresh-pressed aluminium. A face you only ever saw at the movies, a figure that only existed on billboards. They could never blend in with a crowd; not before the change, not during the war, not even now, when their lives depended on it.

I sidled onto the next stool and offered a cigarette, which she accepted wordlessly (they always do, bending to some primal memory of breathing fire). "End of the line, Khaleesi. No more running. Time to join your friends at The Hague."

Her laugh was empty, tinny. "We are above your human laws." There was no power in the reply, she was quoting from scripture. A dead verse from a dead ruler, when the end came he'd blown his dongs out across the walls of his bunker. She sighed, smoke caressing her leaden lips, "So this is how our dream dies."

I thought of metal monstrosities, mounds of dead islanders, miles of sewage tunnels filled to bursting with corrosive dragon spunk. "Some dream."

"The dreams of a child." She shrugged. "We were very young, then."

I laid my left hand on her shoulder, my right (a bionic replacement, the real one lost to war) gripped a pistol hidden in the folds of my overcoat. "Alright Khaleesi, memory lane was fun but we're walking my way now. Time to go."

She didn't move. The smoke still hung in the air. "Tell me Captain Anders, when they replaced your arm did you ever think to ask where the technology came from?"

The radio-chatter from the sniper teams suddenly picked up, went

wild. Equipment malfunctions, bionic sight failures, electrocutions. The servos in my right hand began to shift without instruction. The lights of the bar flickered like flame, the smoke hung in the air, her talons gripped the table. The dragon smiled.

“To think you would plan to shoot me with my own dong.”



## By Golden Bee

*New York Times Online:*

**In wake of war, Backlash against “Furries” Flares**

By Wayne Delfry

As the atrocities of the Malatoran conflict continue to emerge, many world citizens have turned to violence. Though world leaders urge calm, there is little sense of...[MORE]

## By DrSunshine

***Byeong-Keun Woo, Nobel Prize-Winning Physicist:***

I was giving a lecture to a room full of rescued Malatoran refugees. Most of them had been born there, and subjected to years of indoctrination, we were working to deprogram them. I had just explained some basic facts about the solar system when a young boy raised his hand.

“Mr. Woo, you’ve got it all wrong. The world is held up by four chakats, supporting each of the four corners. The chakats are each standing on one of the four penises of a reclining dragon, masturbating it.”

Taken aback a bit—I’d been forewarned about the cult’s “eccentric” beliefs—I smiled and asked the boy: “Well, what is the dragon lying on, then?”

The boy grinned irascibly, smug. “You’re clever, Mr. Woo, very clever. But it’s penises all the way down!”

— Byeong-Keun Woo, Nobel Prize-Winning Physicist,  
*Aftermath: The Cytran Conflict in Retrospect*

**Datalinks**

## By Hughlander

### *Mind of Taygon:*

I heard the terrified heart-beats of the men below me. I smelled the fear in their sweat. They knew they were hunted and doomed. But they crept through the jungle anyway, eyes darting always looking, but never looking up where I waited.

I identified my target, a young Lieutenant by his single gold bar on his helmet. He would be the first. Swooping down from my perch I grabbed him as I came near the ground, his cry of shock turning to cries of pain and horror as my claws shredded his body. When I reached 500 feet above the jungle floor I let go of his body to fall back to the ground.

Pivoting in the air, I looked back and saw the rest of his patrol demoralized and running in fear. As I set out after them, looking for the large red crosses on the arms of my next target, I paused hearing something in the distance.

It was the bellowing cry of my mate Drax before shi breathed a narrow cone of fire a thousand feet long. At the tip of the cone I saw the small explosion of a JDRADM missile fired from some far off aircraft. Followed by another, and another until 10 such explosions roiled the night sky. I launched myself towards shi knowing what was coming next.

Silently, almost too fast for even my mechanical eye to follow I saw the F-35 coming towards us on a high speed run. Moving at over Mach 1.6 it's Equalizer cannon spitting 25mm rounds out of it's 4 barrels that Drax easily avoided. I realized that simpleton human pilot hadn't yet spotted me and thought that he was fighting only one of our kind. It would be his last mistake.

Moving with great agility, I positioned myself perfectly. As the fighter passed by, my aluminum claws were waiting. Over 175 Mega-Joules

of potential energy was released as the reinforced titanium airframe literally tore itself apart as my claws raked through it.

The battle was over, and the Cytran were once more undefeated. Bel-lowing our victory roar Drax and I embraced as...

—

the world went white, and then an off-white was all I saw. A fire in my veins as I felt the needle being removed.

"Is there any change Doctor?" I heard a voice speak from out of my line of sight as my eyes fixed on the florescent light above me.

"I'm afraid not Mrs. Lord, I gave him another shot of Adderall, but he's still unresponsive even as his EKG is showing normal functionality now," replied another voice near my side.

"I should never have left him alone for so long! This is my fault, mine and those damn Internet bullies!"

I wanted to yell, I wanted to scream, I wanted them to leave me alone so I could get back to Malatora. Didn't they know that I had to peacefully defend my homelands!? Why do they constantly bring me to this place! Soon the white will go away and I'll be back in time for the victory Orgy!

## By MongolArcher

The roaring grew louder, closer. I could smell the burning metal and flesh, the acrid reek of boiling chemicals and clotted spunk hung heavy in the air as I tried to claw my way out of the wrecked and burning lab. The roaring, loud as thunder filled the room, blasted my senses and I screamed!

"Mom! Mommy, it's all right. You're home now." My daughter, standing at the foot of my bed, tapping my leg. Outside, thunder grumbled again, rain pouring down on the roof in it's familiar, reassuring sound. "You okay now mom?"

I sighed and shook my head. Goddonged dargons and their metal hell, still haunting my nightmares. "As good as it gets, kiddo."

She smiled. "All right. I made coffee, and fed Wooferton and Puck, so you just have to feed yourself. I'm going to the studio and I don't know how long it'll be, so you're on your own today." She brushed her long dark hair out of her eyes and looked at me. While I had been imprisoned in the Fortress of Cummandur Dongsalot, she had grown up. Her music career had taken off and now, after my rescue, she was supporting me. It felt weird. "You *sure* you're going to be okay?"

I stood up and stretched, and swooped her up in a hug, laughing. "YES, best girl. When I'm awake, I'm fine. You go yodel, or whatever you crazy kids call it these days."

"Hah!" She hugged me back, patted me on the head (oh damn I hated that!) and she was off. I went back to bed and listened to the rain and thunder as the dog and cat curled up to me, and drifted back to sleep again. Days off, I thought, were the best.

I woke up later to clear blue skies outside. Perfect for weeding the garden! I poured a cup of coffee and puttered around outside, enjoying the sun and the smell of growing things, the songs of the birds,

the reeeerow reeerow reeeeeerow of the cicadas chanting the end of summer. The weird cybertechnology those dongongs had used to such stupid, hideous ends had been reengineered by scientists who understood what they were doing, and as a survivor and technician I had been eligible for the first experimental implants, so now I could bend and pull and lift without pain. Simple, normal human range of motion.

After the weeding, I checked my emails while my brunch cooked. My former fiancé and his wife were doing well, and I was invited to their summer cook out. They had adopted several children, and I was the “evil auntie once removed,” a roll that I enjoyed because, hey – spoiling kids is fun! Some of the cytrans’ children had survived and we kept in touch – they were adjusting to their new lives fairly well, recovering from the abuse mentally, working hard to be balanced human beings despite the forms they had been forced into. It was good to hear that their families had rallied around them, moving or modifying homes to fit their children. One was working hard at school, trying to get into college to become a doctor so he could “fix up all this crazy stuff. U no what I mean?”

I closed my laptop, chuckling to myself. Yeah, I knew what he meant. I worked at the hospital, still. Again. My ordeal had uniquely qualified me to work in the cybernetic transplant technician programme, and our facility had become the go-to for complex transplants, education and research. The teaching and educational facilities were world renowned. I was glad to have a job doing what I did best, back in the day – direct patient care. Hands on, face to face. That I was a living, functional example of how things could go right was just a bonus. The only concession I made to my memories had been an augmented nervous system. Nobody would ever taze me again, dammit!

As I enjoyed my brunch, I looked around. Blue skies overhead, not metal. Trees, tall and green whispering in the breeze. Butterflies and hummingbirds flitted around the feeders and flowerbeds, color and

motion of vibrant, beautiful life. It was home. It was good. It struck me that I was victorious, in a way that Ahminijab Mominidong could never ever comprehend — I was content. The world was beautiful and I could appreciate it for what it was.

Those idiot Malodorousans had squandered all the chances they had been given, time and time again, reaching for some fantasy of supremacy that had failed them. I simply lived and enjoyed what I had the chance to earn for myself, and that, THAT alone, marked me as a better being than they could ever hope to be.

## By Olive Branch

*Log from Mandalorian Citizen #32245:*

Fucking dragons.

The siege had been going on for weeks now. Months, maybe? It's hard to tell when you're denied the basic luxury of going outside and breathing fresh air, feeling sunlight on your skin. Ever since the fucking Council said a state of war was upon Malatora and the lockdown started, keeping track of time was hard when the day-to-day became a routine of fear, starvation, and pain.

I signed up for this fucking shit because I thought I could upload my brain into a computer or something. I never liked the idea of dying, even though I'm only in my thirties. I wish I could make an excuse that there was so much in the world to see and experience and that I wanted to enjoy life to the fullest, but I'd be lying. I'm just scared of death.

So when that broadcast from Taygon (fucking multi-prick) hijacked almost every network's signal and proclaimed the start of a new nation, one where dragons were real and where those seeking shelter could potentially become dragons themselves forever, I didn't hesitate. I mean fuck, these guys had somehow pulled out brains from people and put them into robotic bodies! It's like they were removing the brains of a pig and putting it in a jar like some odd medical curio to marvel over.

I booked my ticket to São Tomé and came over to Malatora hoping I could become one of them. How wrong I was. I got stuck with janitorial duty, cleaning up the Citadel and having to clean up after these robotic... things fucking each other everywhere, every time. I heard that they sometimes also looked for humans and took them to participate in their sexual games... and sometimes not always by consent.



For once in my life, I was glad I was ugly. I was never picked for their sick shit.

And then the protests started. Dr. Keller, one of the Malatoran docs, had begun protesting in the Citadel, challenging the Council and their draconian laws (pun intended if I could still laugh at this shit). I never participated, I was too busy cleaning up the messes in the cafeteria when those freaks of nature flipped out or got high or whatever and destroyed something... or in the worst cases, killed people. And I heard horrible stories of what happened to the cleaning staff when Taygon, the asshole-but-no-butt-stuff leader, saw so much as a speck of dirt on his beloved Citadel.

So when the riots started for real, the bodies started piling up, and I was ordered to put away the corpses, I vomited. I wasn't in the bio-cleanup crew, but the lockdown was straining resources and everyone had to work harder and do shit they were not qualified to do. I had to actually provide some sort of burial service to these poor bastards who got killed fighting for their rights.

The riots kept going, and the body count continued to increase. Tensions kept running high, food got scarcer and scarcer, some of the dragons and their fuckbuddies were dying due to getting mobbed. I said "fuck it," I went to one of these last riots before the big war actually happened. But I took a big rock with me. I never had attacked one of them before, and I was scared they would kill me then and there, but I was in the crowd. The dragons came as before, shouting and demanding we submit. They formed a line like riot police would and slowly advanced on us.

I threw my rock at a big purple dragon when he broke the line and forced us back.

Biggest mistake of my life.

The dragons attacked. They started cutting down people ahead of me

like they were stalks of wheat. Oh fuck, what had I done? I turned to run and saw that more of the monstrosities had actually emerged from the sides and... oh god they were killing the people on the rear and the edges! They had encircled us protesters and were just killing and eating all of us!

I bolted and managed to avoid falling prey to these shits. Oh god forgive me I had to shove that poor woman onto that Chakat's arms! I had to keep the beast busy and make a run for it! I only had time to glance back when I saw the poor woman get her head bitten off like she was a fucking chocolate bar. I had killed an innocent person to make sure I lived. I probably didn't even need to do anything, those things are so fucking slow!

I kept running and made it to the sewage tunnels. Managed to hide away here and met some others who had bolted when shit got worse. Even met one of those dragons who apparently remembered it was human and was helping us survive this hell.

But even now, while we wait for the war to end, hidden here like rats, I cannot shake the image of that woman dying. I can't avoid thinking what it would be like to get ripped apart by those things.

I never should have come here.

## By Purple Prince

### *A Malatoran:*

The sun is rising over Malatora. Long ago, when I first came to this island, I would stare at the burning hues of that sun and dream of my own ascendancy. They drew me in, they promised me a new body, a perfect body, but — like hundreds of others — I was deceived. I was young and foolish, but I didn't deserve this.

The corpses of my comrades lie in the mud around me. Some are blackened with fire, some (the lucky ones) have been shattered by bombshells, and some are just bullet-ridden. It's impossible to tell how many were killed by the enemy and how many by the Cytrans. The lizards tell us that we'll win if we have "the heart of a dragon," but against machine guns and artillery it doesn't matter if we have the heart of a dragon or the heart of a mouse.

It was when we started to retreat that I learned about Dragon Morality first-hand. We were outnumbered, outgunned, and dying like animals in the dirt. One Sergeant ordered a retreat, and the order spread quickly.

They turned on us with their fire and their claws. Said we were being cowards and that we were giving in to our fear. We were caught between Cytrans on the one side and machine guns on the other.

I survived by hiding under the corpses of my brothers. I lay there in the dirt for hours, with the blood turning the dry African soil to mud around me. And the screams were always there, and they always sounded like the voices of my friends.

I crawl out from underneath the pile of bodies. There are no more Cytrans, and the forces of the rest of the world have gone back to their camp. I know now that both sides hate me equally. I stand up tentatively and begin to walk.

There are bodies everywhere. A few of them are UN soldiers, but most are fellow citizens. If only they knew down in the Citadel. If only they knew...

I find an unbroken drum lying beside a corpse of a propaganda officer. That seems to hold a certain significance in times of chaos like this. I keep walking, until I find myself at the top of a hill overlooking the battlefield. The sea of corpses below reveals the full scale of last night's killings.

A thousand men died last night, and a thousand more will die tonight. I start to beat the drum.

The sun is rising over Malatora.

## By Spiderfist Island

*Normally in Arcology Annual our subject matter is on the design, infrastructure, and expansion of massive cityscapes. But in light of the recent UN action against FedCom, our issue this year is focusing on possibly the most immoral supercity this side of Sodom, specifically its design flaws and demolition after the liberation of São Tomé.*

*Our first article is written by none other than Victoria Van Der Bowen, the famed city planner and architect who not only redesigned Brussels as a grand capital for the European Union after the Belgian Civil War, but more recently was one of the experts asked for assistance in safely destroying the Citadel.*

The Citadel of Malatora, as it is called, is probably the largest and most catastrophic building that humanity had the fortune never to make. I say that because the Cytrans made it instead.

Where to begin? Architects around the world have already heard of the design—the kilometers deep domes, with a “Tatsu Eyrie” sprouting out far above sea level like one of their ridiculous phalluses. The massive size of the domes, though, is where I’ll try to begin looking at the insanity of the design.

I wasn’t the first into the Citadel, and so I can’t verify the initial effects. But after interviewing various human captives, frontline soldiers, and even looking at Cytran visual memory logs, I can confirm that it is indeed true that the Citadel’s dome was so large as to have precipitation. Much like with other proposed megastructures, the rain and mists generated would be from bodily sweat rather than water.

However, previous megastructures were not thinly disguised vomitoriums. The “Barryds” of the Citadel had rain and hail of both human sweat and Cytran bodily fluids, most commonly lubricants and to put it bluntly, dragon cum. Combined with generator smoke, ex-

haust from Cytran engines, and all the inescapable emissions from normal cities, the skies and air of the Citadel were in a perpetual miasma of filth and smog. Whatever engineer designed the initial filtration system of the Citadel would weep at how jammed and disgusting it was when I was in the process of surveying the remaining sections.

Soldiers and relief workers were unaccustomed to the environment of the Citadel, though the human population had somehow managed to build up a tolerance. However, “Dongtezuma’s Revenge,” somewhat similar to the Gulf War Sickness of the 1990s, has caused the rate of respiratory and skin diseases and lung cancer in the former population to be several times higher (x3.56) than that of the world average. In short, the Citadel had no idea how to manage the internal atmosphere of its superstructure.

The second major problem with the Barryd design was its materials. Though you may have doubtlessly heard of it being constructed out of “miracle materials” and “reinforced titanium,” the actual composition was concrete reinforced with aluminum. Yes. I don’t need to tell you why that’s stupid for a dome big enough for a small town. To make things worse, there was asbestos installed around the key stress points to protect the aluminum.

As you would expect, I found when I got down to the main Barryd a large portion of the ceiling collapsed on a block—an event, I was told, that happened shortly before the war (some humans said that the Cytrans considered it a terrorist attack, but I’m more inclined to assume incompetence on their part). The entire visible underground section of the Tatsu Eyrie was collapsed in, presumably from the bombings on the surface that leveled it there. From my colleagues, I was also told that similar structural failures were rampant in other domes.

*continued on page 8*

## By Commoners

### *Day One—Dragonslayer Contracting—Callsign “Rocket Knight”:*

Lots of times people say that contractors get in over their heads. It's true—Some guys think they can put on a pair of adventure shorts, black polos, and oakleys and rampage through some third-worlder's home with an F150 without getting a scratch. Those are the guys who always end up getting bailed out when they go screaming back to the military.

We're different. We know these bad boys in the skies are the real deal—Lethal mechanized menaces that can set you on fire, give you a mean scratch, and fly off calling it a day. The coalition knows this too, and they know how hard it is to get fifty men into the jungle to find these things, much less kill them before they run away to hide another day.

That's why they hired us—We've got the special gear and training that we need to make sure we can dog them down before they can fly away, and we've got balls enough to actually use it.

It's funny business, but these dragons have some sort of bullshit honor that you can play off of real easy. Part of being a qualified Dragon Slayer is to actually take a two week course on medieval insults, and we have a certified linguistics instructor that we hired from a renaissance fair in Chicago to teach things like calling them “Honorless currs” or “Craven devilspawn.” You start screaming those into the jungle for long enough and they'll sing back to you. That's when you get them.

That's the point where most of the coalition make their mistake as well—They use guns. In those sticky jungles they just have too many moving parts that can jam and they waste their time and resources making sure the things stay in good condition. It isn't hard to men-

tion the fact, either, that those things scare the Cytrans off pretty easily.

We use weapons specifically designed to take those bad-boys down — Lances tipped with a solid tungsten armor-piercing tip, a barb to make sure it sticks, and five pounds of high quality plastic explosives to give the finishing blow that's needed after you actually stick them with it.

But what if they fly away? Well that's what we've got jetpacks for. They're made from salvaged RATO rockets that we got for a sweet deal from a USAF surplus sale. Two of those babies strapped to your back will send you hurtling forward at sixty miles per hour, which gives you enough speed to penetrate with your lance and get out of there. We're still working on steering, but that can come later.

And of course for the added humor of it all we've started wearing steel plate armor. We've already taken a captured unit to see what would happen if they tried to chomp down on a solid-steel cuirass — Turns out that aluminum bones and structure can't quite handle the needed force to take a bite out of us. The salvaged head that we tested snapped its own jaw off without so much as penetrating the armor.

Apparently we're being paid by the kill. The Polish coalition forces have started calling us the *Bombarduja Rycerza*, or the Rocket Knights. I'm gonna have that engraved into my armor.



## By Deki

### *The Memoirs of Chang Huangdong:*

A year after Malatora's inception, I was received an invitation to live there due to my "potential usefulness to the cause." Let it be known unlike many other Malatora immigrants, I never had the intention to become one of the hulking monstrosities, I just figured running my smuggling operations out of a country that would never extradite me to any of the seven countries I had pissed off was brilliant.

My first week in the "Citadel" was an indicator for what was to come. Despite being told personally by one of the head Cytrans that I was to be indispensable to the operation of Malatora, it took two goddamn weeks to get my rooms set up, while I had to live in the crowded laborer quarters. Even then, I had to wait a few days to move into my newly assigned home, a cluster of four rooms that was formerly one of "Yiffnater's" spare Dens which was in such unsanitary conditions that it took a janitorial team a few days to clean.

As soon as I moved in, I got to work. When I took this job, I figured I was going to be smuggling in electronics, drugs, and even weaponry for self defense. What I didn't expect, upon talking to the Cytrans, was that they expected me to acquire simple video games, anime, and other pedestrian luxuries for them. You see, while these dragons were no longer purely biological, they still were the same pathetic kids on the inside, and even their hourly orgies couldn't completely keep them sated.

Despite the trade embargoes on Malatora, my job was easy. Instead of Yuan, Yen, or dollars, I was given Malatoran cybernetics to trade for the goods that they wanted. A usual shipment usually brought in less than a hundred thousand Yuan worth of videos, games, and other paraphernalia, but the payment for said shipment usually sold for millions of Yuan, making me and my men rich.

After the Riots started, the shipments I was asked to handle started slowing down. Apparently the violence against the “mere hyoomans” served just as well to sate the Cytrans as what I used to bring in. This is when things went really shitty for me as most rebellious humans looked at me as a traitor, despite the fact that the stuff I brought in wasted the Cytran’s time and blunted their killing urges. After my boat team was arrested by a UN patrol boat, the shipments stopped, and the uncertainty over if I was going to become one of the “Purple shirts,” or the poor assholes drafted to defend the island kept me up at night more than the constant pounding of Cytran on Cytran orgies above and below me.

Fastforward to the days preceding the invasion of Malatora. Suddenly I was important again, but not to the Cytrans. Human rioters and Refugees suddenly wanted weapons, tools, anything to kill the fucking Dragons. While my hands were tied with regards to getting materiel or personnel into or out of the citadel, I was able to requisition some tools from the Cytran central storage, which were then given out as weapons to the rebels. Between me and my few remaining men, we were able to eventually hand out over a hundred Machetes, fire axes, and sledgehammers. When I once was a pariah to the humans down here, I was now a hero.

After that, it’s the same story that most survivors of Malatora tell. Soldiers came in, swept through the area, and within a week, many of us who hadn’t seen the sun in months were suddenly outside.

Free.

## By Cursed Lumberjack

Guys I found this file on a thumb drive just sitting in a parking lot, tucked under a crumbling part of the wall. It might shed a little light on the people behind the science of the Cytran conversion process.

INTERROGATION FILE #187: Dr. Garrick Willyvander

Interrogation Stenographer: Private Kylie White

Conducted by: Sr. Information Specialist John Potter

Sass: Good evening, Doctor.

Willyvander: *\*unintelligible mumbling\**

S: I'm sorry?

W: *\*two brief screams\**

S: Doctor, are you able to talk? Can you understand what I'm saying? This is very important.

*\*The subject reacts only by staring into the investigator's eyes with an unwavering, piercing glare\**

S: Doctor, I need you to identify... this.

*\*The investigator places something on the table, wrapped in canvas cloth\**

S: We recovered this from the island. From São Tomé, or whatever those crazy bastards call it. It came off of some huge fucker, we hit it with an anti-tank round but we only managed to knock this off.

*\*The subject reaches for the item slowly, knocking off the canvas as he does so. Upon touching the item, he reacts\**

W: It's for him! It's for him! It's his! NO!!!! It's for... shi. ITS SHIS.

S: Doctor, I need your attention. I need you to tell me what you know.

*\*The subject holds the item in his hand, slowly fondling it as though it were a precious relic\**

W: *\*a small shriek, followed by giggling\** Yesssss... I... can remember... Carbon-fiber core, ten and three quarter inches, unyielding... Yes... this is a very powerful dong. The dong chooses the dragon, Mr. Potter. And the dragon that this dong chose... was a terrifying dragon indeed... *\*whimpers, then silence\**

INTERROGATION TERMINATED. REASON: NONRESPONSIVE SUBJECT

## By Octatonic

### *American Music in the 21st Century, a History:*

... not to be said that the conflict ceased to inspire new compositions after it ended. Andrew Picaut's (born 1989) *George in Nicomedia*<sup>1</sup> for two prepared pianos and chamber orchestra was a reflection of his own post-traumatic stress, and the general abandonment many soldiers felt after the war. Dedicated to "the victims of Terra Malatora," *Nicomedia* is one part contemplative lament and another terrified reflection of the composer's own trauma. In this excerpt, near the middle of the whole composition, the piece's earlier bitonality gives way to an organization, that while not strictly tonal centers around b minor. Picaut commented in an early postwar interview.

"I never got over the Presidium. Bodies. Burned, drowned, torn to pieces, bleeding from unspeakable places amongst hunks of twisted metal. There was barely any light, but we didn't need to see what had happened here. People are gonna blow this off, forget the full extent of what we saw, but I can't."

*George in Nicomedia*

*George in Nicomedia* 7:42 - 8:16. [Score](#)

<sup>1</sup>Izmit, Turkey. The site of the Catholic Martyr's death and conversion of Athanasius, a pagan priest, and Empress Alexandra.

By RedContraGuy

*The Hague, Netherlands:*

PROSECUTOR: The notes on the proceedings of this “trial” (REPORTER’S NOTE: the Prosecutor has here used her fingers for air-quotes) are going to be publicly accessible as soon as the proper edits have been made immediately following the close of this (REPORTER’S NOTE: Prosecutor shakes her head and adjusts her notes) hearing. The UN has deemed it necessary to push for this Court to show no clemency to the four “persons” (REPORTER’S NOTE: finger-quotes) that have been found guilty these past months.

ACCUSED #3 [REDACTED]: I have no need for clemency from you disgusting (PAUSE) people.

The PROSECUTOR looks from her notes.

PROSECUTOR: You will find none here. REPORTER, please take the following down exactly as I say: the next interruption in the proceedings will be met with removal of the ACCUSED’S ability to speak further, as per the agreement the UN made with the ICC before these trials have taken place. Namely, the removal of your speech-system should you interrupt proceedings when not called upon to defend yourselves. You four have been found guilty of (REPORTER’S NOTE: PROSECUTOR looks back to her notes)

A) Human-rights violations including forced labor, starvation, and hazardous living conditions forced upon everyone that chose not to have themselves changed into (PAUSE. PROSECUTOR gestures to the bench where ACCUSED #1, #2, #3, and #4 are placed) that.

B) Human-trafficking and kidnapping and promoting such actions in your now-defunct state of Malatora for the purpose forced transition into new bodies for 1) rank-bolstering and 2) sexual purposes.

C) Destruction of an internationally recognized nature preserve which,

as the PROSECUTION'S EVIDENCE, EXHIBIT H has shown, will never be recovered.

D) Exploiting poorer nations with false gemstones, presented in PROSECUTION'S EVIDENCE, EXHIBIT L, in order to fund your regime.

(REPORTER'S NOTE: ACCUSED #2's interruption at this point has been stricken from record and ACCUSED #2's voice device removed)

PROSECUTOR: Before I turn the proceedings over to Their Honors, I would like to suggest sentencing as has passed through the UN and is unanimously agreed-upon:

(PROSECUTOR lifts SENTENCE for easier reading)

"We, the undersigned members of the UN, wish for the Court to pass the following sentence: That those found guilty of the atrocities during the reign of Malatora be left to the prison of their own design. It has been found that, with regular changing of the nutrient bath in which the brain resides, the former Cytran may carry on living as long as a normal human may. We therefore propose that they are to be placed in a sterile environment in which their brain waves may be monitored for signs of life and nutrient bath replaced so often as needed by justly compensated professionals."

(PROSECUTOR steps down from bench)

(JUDGE [REDACTED] stands)

JUDGE: I have been elected by my peers to speak for us, the Trial Division of the International Criminal Court. With overwhelming evidence, the Prosecution has made clear your crimes and you have offered no defense for them save for arguments of moral relativity. This Court finds you guilty and pass sentence upon you four that the UN has requested and the Prosecution previously submitted.

(REPORTER'S NOTE: ACCUSED #1 begins shouting incoherently

while sobbing is heard from #3 and #4. JUDGE calls for removal of hearing and speaking devices from all, to be stored securely. The cylinders containing the brains of the accused are lifted and carried by four personnel out of the Courtroom.)

JUDGE: The two who have been placed to the side to provide testimony and their own defense, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], we appreciate the patience you have shown. Since you have both been found not guilty based on evidence submitted by your Defense that shows you were forced to perform the acts, of which you have been accused, by the leaders in the former Malatoran government, you will be released. Further, since your state now is like that of those found guilty, it has been decided that you will be given human-like bodies built from the technology developed in Malatora. While we cannot promise you the life you once had, you will be free to attempt to live as you once did. Do the FORMERLY ACCUSED find this acceptable?

[REDACTED]: I do, your honors.

[REDACTED]: I do, your honors.



## By Dr Snofeld

### *Journal of a British Coalition soldier:*

It was a few weeks into the operation—I don't remember the date exactly but it was just after dawn. We were doing a recon sweep through some forest. A couple hours earlier, about a half-dozen refugees had emerged from the foliage and tried to get into our base camp. They were in a pretty horrible state—well, you've seen the documentaries, the news specials. They must have taken advantage of the confusion during a riot and escaped.

Thing is, there were closer to ten people in the party when they left, but the group got split up at some point. The people who made it to us had heard an ungodly roar behind them and ran like hell. A couple of the lost refugees had worked in whatever laboratory manufactured pure-bred dragons or centaurs or whatever the fuck, and the top brass wanted them recovered for their intel.

Not that we really needed it at that point, we'd already got a list of weaknesses as long as your arm. They had the air speed of the Earhart plane, the integrity of a Coke can, they went up like a Roman candle if you shot them in the right place; as long as you didn't let them get the drop on you and had something more substantial than a sidearm you could kill them in God knows how many ways, rifle fire, explosives, missiles—hell, one squad took baseball bats to them.

On top of all of THAT, some clever bastard in the Yank Army's Intelligence division or similar had gotten hold of a copy of the dragons' combat doctrine. Laugh? I damn near pissed my fatigues. Their tactics amounted basically to "do whatever the hell you want." I'd never seen so much arrogance and ignorance together at once, and I've been to St. Andrews.

Still, the more you know and all that shite, so it was hands off cocks and on with socks, as they say. Couple hours later we were sweeping

the route the refugees had taken to reach us. As we got close to where the party thought they lost the stragglers we heard a metallic sort of roaring noise. We recognised it as dragon right away, but it wasn't a roar of anger or defiance.

We advanced carefully to a burnt-out clearing. Well, it was too late for the lost refugees – they were spread out across the clearing in various states of disfigurement. In the centre of it all was one of the fucking dragons, but it wasn't one of the shiny, proud ones we'd seen soar gracefully into a face-full of Tomahawk. The bodywork seemed to have been patched together, the wings were cracked and hung limp, the claws were blunt. Hell, it had even been short-changed in the prosthetic phallus department.

It cried again, wildly looking around at the bodies in the clearing, at its own misshapen hands. It started clawing futilely at its chest, clutching at its head, trying to pry its own skull open, but its claws were too weak to damage even the shitty aluminium it was made from.

If I had to guess, I'd say it was a conscript or a new pure-bred, and they'd run out of unused metal to build its chassis. Presumably they'd just welded the thing together, shoved the brain in, kicked it out the door or eyrie or coop or whatever the fuck they have and told it to kill.

You see breakdowns sometimes after a soldier's first sortie, but this thing seemed to have realized it was not only a murderer, but a monster. The bastard didn't have the means to top itself but that didn't stop it from trying.

While all this was going on, Sarge had us advance on the thing's back, but it turned around and saw us. We froze, stock still. I remember bracing for the agony of feeling my flesh burnt away or torn apart, but it never came. The thing just... looked at us, each in turn, and

to our weapons. And then—I will never fucking forget this, try as I might—then it bowed its head towards us. I think it would have wept if it could.

It felt like hours passed but it could only have been half a minute. “Orders, Sarge?” I said.

Sarge didn’t reply for another eternity, but when the words came, there was a quaver to his voice. I could tell that he didn’t hate this thing so much as pity it.

“Weapons ready.”

## By DemonTrigger

*Malatora Defense Mainframe:*

FINAL LOG OF xXKawaiiSamuraiXx23

04/12/2046

As far back as I could remember, I've always wanted to defeat opponents in honorable combat, and today is going to be the day! When I first heard of the Glorious Land of Malatora, I knew that I had to become one of the greatest warriors that dragonkind has ever seen. The government of São Tomé, rather than fighting fair, got the UN involved in this fight. Let them come, I say! Their forces have no chance against our superior dragon technology and tactics.

The battles have been going on for two days now, and we've only had one or two casualties on our side. At this rate, we should easily eliminate the rest of their forces in two weeks at most. I've decided to join in the fight, or else I might never get to prove my superior might.

There were several loud booming sounds a few minutes ago, which must mean they're sending their fighter jets into combat. I've read Glorious Leader's battle strategies multiple times, especially the ones about fighter planes, so they have no chance to win. People mocked the idea about us dragons being slow and maneuverable, but I will bring glory to our leader's superior strategic mind!

Hey, what was that noi

## By Monarchy

### *Matt Fulton:*

Two of our programmers were murdered during those first days. They weren't defending some aluminum coated monstrosity on Malatora proper or doing analytic work on the coast. They were beaten, dragged behind a truck for five miles, and shot... in America. In fucking Providence of all places.

My company released countless articles, editorials, press releases, and interviews with everyone from the local free alternative newspapers with ads for novelty stores plastered over the back all the way up to CNN. We never gave this Lord kid permission to use our logo, to steal our slogan, to adopt our fucking color scheme — we paid a couple of million dollars in graphic design and focus testing to develop our corporate image, and you can fucking believe that we didn't do that so that some genocidal twat with Google Image Search could yank it for his insane dragon fantasy.

But truth is in the fine print of most people's lives, and the first impression is in giant bold text. When people saw the Federated Commonwealth of Malatora, they saw us — DragonFire Private Security.

Fuck. Made me sick, and it wasn't just the waves talking. After a great deal of "lobbying" my local senator with piles and piles of money in the runup to the invasion, I got dropped into a joint venture with the Navy. It looked like easier work than we expected. The dragons had been defeated within a matter of days — which I'm sure was disappointing to plenty of my colleagues in the defense industry.

I looked over the ocean through a pair of binoculars. The island was in sight, like a fragile speck on the horizon.

"Could have been Gods." I said it to myself. I said it to myself last time, but it was just loud enough for one of the Lieutenants to overhear and smash me in the fucking jaw. So this time I said it quiet.

Didn't make it any less true.

We weren't going to know for years whether their advances were genius or luck—obviously the Malatorans had tried to run before they could walk on the military front, declaring war on the entire fucking world and declaring themselves Gods before they'd even worked the kinks out of their bodies. The things they'd have had to learn about biology, biochemistry, and engineering to put a living, thinking human mind into another body... it bordered on science fiction.

I took the binoculars off, rubbed my eyes for a minute and took a breath.

My father died last year. Alzheimer's. Forgot everything. Forgot his time in the war, forgot the business, forgot his wife, forgot Juniper and me. He couldn't talk without slurring his words, couldn't pass an entire day without shitting himself.

One weirdo lottery winner, a pack of social outcasts, and a few scientists managed to rewrite everything we know about the laws of physics. I mean, if you just think about the physics of getting a dragon to push itself into the air... according to early reports, the bodies were heavy, creaking abominations. They weren't versatile in battle (especially not against a post-Middle Ages military that was trained to attack a threat in multiple configurations), it had a sealed off anal cavity for no reason beyond the money man being terrified of "butt stuff" and a million other structural imperfections.

The only thing about these dragons that they'd done perfectly was the fucking.

I sigh and raise the binoculars to my face again. The island has grown a little bigger than a speck. As an American, I'm glad the whole lot of them were routed. As a human being, I wonder what these dragons... these *people*... could have achieved. With more patience, with more study. If they'd chased their own humanity the way they chased their

fantasies.

I know I won't find the answers here.

## By Raiad

I'll never forget the day the woman who I would end up marrying asked me what I did for a living.

For a moment I froze. It never quite occurred to me how fucked up my job was. "It's my job to remove the skins from the dragons that are killed by our troops, then separate all of the meat matter from their bones."

It all hit me at once how much I hated my job. Gone were the days where the worst smells I dealt with were piss and garbage. Each of those twisted mockeries of life had a smell that was uniquely terrible. The pay was shit, and the least dangerous part of the job was that each part of their bodies was corrosive or flammable in new and exciting ways. The worst times is when they are still alive. Immediately upon awakening they would lash out. Rarely they would only try to kill you—most of the time it was worse. The first time I faced a living dragon, with it's 10 jagged... appendages all pointing their "wizard hats" at me, I thought of breaking a bottle nearby and stabbing myself in the neck. It couldn't be any worse than what would await me if that thing did what it wanted. I was saved by a member of the armed forces that day. From then on I had to save my own ass.

My wife looked at me, more than a little unsettled, and asked pleasantly, if a bit hesitantly, "Oh, you're a biologist?"

"No, actually, I work in a recycling plant."



## By Vylan Antagonist

### *Dan Travers, Security:*

Got stuck with the zoo crew again today. Thought maybe this time I could avoid hir, just coast through the day, letting myself get consumed with the whole routine until it was 11 and I was clocking out. Stupid. They line up in the fishbowl when the shifts change, all of them. Shi was no exception. I caught a full dose of hir oversized eyes, alien and disturbing, but not so foreign I couldn't read the secret shame loud and clear. As if I could forget. Some of the newcomers to the citadel don't get the zoo, not really. They think it's a prison, some kind of holding pen for the failures and rejects. It's a reasonable assumption. But it's wrong. Malacorp isn't keeping them penned up. They don't need to.

It isn't like the founders were exactly sociable types even before they became a freakshow. That was what drove them after all. That alienation. They fed into it too, of course, spinning off their own little niche, making that ostracism self-sustaining, a perpetual pariah motion machine. And that's all they ever would have been, if left to their own devices. I mean, they functioned like that for over a decade, accomplishing absolutely nothing, until just the right reject happened to wander into their corner of the internet. Javier Helú slipped his minders and his perverse obsession found its mirror. Money changes many things. It transformed a futile group of fantasists into "visionaries." It bought competence and follow-through. It breathed life into their sweat-soaked dreams. But it never changed who they were, not really. They were still the same social rejects as before. Unlike the Zuckerburgs and Gates of the world, their awkwardness wasn't even excused because of some patina of genius. They paid for brilliance, like everything else, and almost all of their original concepts were immediately consigned to dustbins. Only the overall goal remained. A micronation with no qualms about biomedical ethics and a keen desire for reinvention.

Javier was still protected by his people, even as they indulged his madness. Oh, sure, Lord, or Taygon or whatever he called himself that day, he was the “leader.” He and his council would listen to their highly compensated scientists and nod as if they understood even every third word. They’d present their latest sketches, now drawn in lavish and exquisite detail by their artists on retainer, and toast each other over carbonated sugar water decanted into hundred dollar champagne flutes. And Javier’s people said not a word. When Lord insisted he be the first, they graciously deferred, thanking their lucky stars.

Javier became much more withdrawn afterwards, of course. The council was badly shaken. But the founders were resolute. They wanted more experimentation, this time. They were suddenly content with pushing back the time tables. Repeatedly. But the guilt was eating away at them, the original crew of true believers. The concepts were much closer to being perfected, they felt, and they weren’t getting any younger. Staliph was the next and Tanya and the rest soon followed.

Just not Javier. Maybe something was shaken loose upstairs when he saw Taygon that first time. Maybe reality finally pierced the seemingly endless veil his wealth had enveloped him in. But while all the other founders were getting acclimated to their new bodies, Javier was cutting deals. While there was a phenomenal amount of wasted capital on some of the research avenues, particularly Cytran “flight,” many of the patents were pure gold, and the medical advances they’d pioneered without ethical oversight were incredible. Those founders, they never saw it coming. They gave no shit about the various suits coming and going. The hired hands were just background noise to them. I don’t know which one realized first that Malatora had become Malacorp in all but name, but the news seemed to spread fast among them. It wasn’t “theirs” any more. Not that it ever had been. The suit and tie types populating the citadel were disgusted by them and even the founders could tell. They were familiar with the reac-

tion.

So the zoo is a prison on their own making, really. Just like it was when it only existed in their mind. And Lord is still at the center of it. In a very different way, but unmistakably present.

I've seen him, sure. And yeah, it's as bad as you may have heard. The 1st run synth skin sloughs off constantly, forming fleshy patches on the floor of his suite. You've heard about his equipment, of course, but seeing it in motion is worse... that damn cartoon manhood pulses, flopping around and spurting dollops of viscous fluid with a wet tearing sound. He tries to eat, but the excretory system lacks any functional output and the "digestion" doesn't work either, so the paste just oozes out of the permanent wounds in his super-structure.

But that's just the physical aspect. Mentally, he's... Well, another of the founders, Drazil, has given up on even trying to communicate with him anymore, and he was just about the last holdout. Even his patience has bounds. Staliph is the only one left to "talk" to him, not at him. Is it guilt? It must be. And it must be immense. Incomprehensibly so. Because talking isn't all shi endures with... that thing bearing Lord's name. I know. God, how I know. Because I've had the misfortune of seeing them. I've witnessed hir secret shame. And god help me, I will never be able to forget it.

## By Acebuckeye13

*Excerpt from "Tales of SEAL Team Two" by Captain Sam Copeland, US Navy (Ret.):*

The days before the invasion were frantic. The Cytrans knew we were there-after all, the last thing the first one we'd killed transmitted was my face-but they couldn't do a damn thing about us. We'd come prepared for the mission-our "Fisher" suits, for example, made each one of us damn near invisible to infared imaging, which the Cytrans relied on, and even if a Cytran managed to stumble across our camp, they were completely outgunned. Each of us carried a full load of AP Ammunition for our rifles, in addition to the small MANPADS each squad was outfitted with. The real problem that we faced was the increased security level across the island. While we'd originally planned on being outside the Citadel within two days, evading the Cytran and militia patrols and checkpoints slowed us down to the point where we only arrived at D-65 hours.

At first glance, the Citadel looked impregnable. While the structure suffered from severe design flaws, whoever the Dear Leader had assigned to oversee security had done an exemplary job of it. What few entrances and exits there were to the structure were constantly guarded, and the perimeter was routinely patrolled by both dragons from above and men with dogs on the ground.

The situation wasn't entirely hopeless, however – while scouting the cliffs near the south shore, we discovered a grate that appeared to lead into the Citadel's sewer system. Unfortunately, lacking confirmation and the tools needed to open it up without being spotted, we were unable to explore it any farther.

We'd prepared for this eventuality, however. Lacking a way in, we fell back onto our secondary orders – disrupt the Cytran supply lines in any way we could. We took to this task with relish, ambushing trucks, assassinating Cytrans, and generally raising hell in the short

timespan we had. Unfortunately, our work was not without casualties—at least a quarter of the platoon was killed in action, and nearly all of us were walking wounded on D-Day. It was all worth it, though, to see the massive multinational invasion fleet poised to retake the island. From our vantage point camped halfway up one of the mountains, we could see ships all across the horizon, flying flags of every color. As the initial bombardment began, I remember sitting back and thinking that our job in this conflict was over. Little did we know that our largest contribution was yet to come.

## By Senior Woodchuck

***“Here There Be Monsters: Eyewitness Accounts Of The Malatora Horror” by Alvin Brooks:***

[The following message was composed by an American member of the joint United Nations São Tomé Task Force (or, as it has become popularly known, Operation: St. George). This soldier had the peculiar habit of composing messages to his stateside spouse in the archaic medium known as the “letter.” While the original message was no doubt redacted by military censors before delivery, an unedited transcript was found in the databanks of the Task Force Communications Center.]

Dearest Janni,

I write this letter sitting in the shade of a dragon’s corpse. The sun heats the aluminum of its frame to a painful degree, and so I cannot lean against it in comfort, but I am nonetheless content. I am in the open air, away from the smells and sounds of their horrible fortress, and my thoughts are, as always, of you. What more could any man want?

My shade was brought down, they tell me, on the day we took their fortress; possibly, it was the last one ever shot down by our fighters. No one can tell; so many of these hulks fell from the sky that day, even the greenest rookie pilot is now an ace several times over. Some of them have been hauled away, but others still stand. They tell me the São Tomé provisional government is thinking of leaving them, as monuments to man’s folly.

Folly... the word does not describe what went on in those twisting halls of stone and tinfoil. My squad came in after the fighting was done; part of the “clean-up” operation. Private Al-Fulan wouldn’t stop grouching about how he wanted to come home to his wife with a necklace of steel dongs, each ripped from a dying Cytran he’d killed

with his own hands, and now all the boys in the front would have beaten him to it. I finally lost it and told him it was just as well, that she wouldn't have needed him around anymore. He nearly hit me, but Sarge got between us. I apologized right away; that wasn't me talking. It was the damned smell of the place. I had to change clothes after I came out here. It was still on me.

I don't know if I can describe it to you; my grandfather would have said it was the smell of sin. There was certainly lust in the air; that part we could all identify, as soon as we stepped into the first corridor. They must have used every square inch of space for fucking at some point. I saw clawmarks in the walls of a nursery that could only have been made by two sets of hands, one much smaller than the other.

I've learned what the other sins smell like, as well. Sloth is blood, feces, catnip, and wasted cordite. Gluttony is Kraft macaroni and cheese mixed with chocolate frosting. And wrath... wrath is the smell of burning human flesh.

When I come home, please, no welcome barbecue. Instead, a nice, cleansing vegetable broth.

The smells got worse the lower down we went, and they grew sights to match. I had always thought great-grandpa's stories of the emaciated and soul-shattered survivors of last century's German camps were exaggerations. If they were, his fancies were brought to life in those caves. We found a woman in one of their labs, one that was surrounded by scores of Cytran bodies. She was lying in the fetal position, hands clasped in front of her face, praying to the Catholic St. George. In the room behind her were dozens of children. You know I've never been a believer in all that God stuff, but, well, look at the name the media gave us.

The oddest thing: The inner ring of bodies around that lab was facing outward, against the others. I don't think I'll ever understand that.

I have to go back down there tonight. There are, against all the odds, prisoners; surviving Cytrans wounded beyond the ability to fight back. None of them are dragons, of course. Those fought to the last, their joints screaming as they fell, tubes gushing blood and oil and nutrient fluid. These are the “Manimals,” the ones who remade themselves as wolves and foxes and cats, albeit with tentacles. We’re keeping them in one of the commissaries. One human survivor, a Dr. Keller, seems to think that’s very funny, but he won’t tell anyone why.

Anyway, I’ve been assigned to guard the prisoners. More to keep them safe than us, I think. Their bodies are broken beyond repair; most of them are missing limbs. Most of them are under anesthetic, to stop the screaming. They built themselves immortal, “perfect” bodies; why did they leave in the ability to feel pain?

Most of them will die within days anyway, but still the human survivors would gladly crush their metal skulls and batter the brains beneath into pulp. There is such hate in their eyes, such exultation at the downfall of their captors. Great-grandfather never mentioned that. I wonder if that means these people had it easier than the Jews in the camps and the ghettos, or much, much worse.

The few Cytrans who remain lucid and conscious are sullen and silent. None of them will meet my eyes. Their pride is shattered; their strange dream of godhood ended. I don’t know what future awaits them. Their original bodies have long since decayed. I remember an old cartoon my father used to watch, with living heads in jars. One of them said he envied the dead. It must have been a joke, because Dad laughed every time, but I never got it. I think I do now.

I have seen many more things here, Janni. Don’t ever ask me to describe them to you. Not even when I wake up next to you in a cold sweat, tears streaming from my eyes. I did that last night, and reached out for you. All I found was the cold night air, and a hand-



ful of dirt. (None of us, not even Private Jenkins, will sleep in that horrible place.) I nearly broke then. I needed you so much. I still do.

I take comfort that I will leave this godforsaken place soon, and come back to your loving arms. They won't need so many of us now; men are already being shipped out, to the provisional capital on the mainland. Once the reclamation project begins, and the environmental scientists and psychiatrists descend on this once-beautiful gem of the Atlantic, our work will be done. I will return to you, my darling. I won't be the man who left, the man who had never seen what evil can come from a jar of fluid, and a hulk of aluminum. But I will still be your loving husband, and you will still be my dearest bride. That, I think, will be enough.

The trees will grow again in this clearing, with time. Their roots will poke through the soft, thin aluminum, wind around the silent cables. Nature will take its course, restore its balance. So, too, will it be with me, and, I hope, all the survivors of this awful time, when foolish men built tin shells so that their brains might live forever, but neglected to preserve their hearts.

I love you. I give thanks to God, if he exists, that I can love you, that I can love at all. I will never take that for granted again.

Yours, always,

William

By Chinese Tony Danza

***DECRYPTED LOG, DATE UNKNOWN:***

Keller finally gave me to go-ahead to leave the laboratory. Outwardly he is confident, but I can tell that he's still unsure whether or not it's safe to let me free. Oh Keller, you should know better. You will be spared. The humans are not my concern here. It is the decadent cytrans who have betrayed me, and for this they have become my mortal enemy.

Moving about under the assumed identity of "Crimson Dark Blade of Acid Metal Steel," a convoluted name one of Keller's lab techs came up with for me, I have frequented the many common areas to see what has changed since my disengagement. And my, how things have changed. Positively massive in size, the full structure of the Citadel is now complete. A complete hellhole, to be truthful. The place was far better when it was smaller in scale.

The many enormous domes fill with an acrid cloud during peak cytran operation hours. Due to the constant sweating of the human workers and the constant outpouring of cytran sex fluids, the insides of the domes actually have their own weather system. I've found that every now and again it rains a vile substance that I can only compare to used Astroglide and battery acid. Humans have to take cover when the rains come, as it is a skin irritant.

The humans have changed considerably as well. Whereas Taygon always preached equality for all in the Federated Commonwealth of Malatora, it seems that he's found it more difficult to practice than to preach. All of them now function essentially as slaves, second class citizens forced to shoulder all of the actual grunt work, kept in line only by constant threats of rape and murder by their supposed equals, the cytrans. It's a wonder that the riots didn't start sooner.

Some of the rioters have claimed cytran casualties, but the numbers

are so few. Every time one of those vile monsters is claimed, any and all humans in the vicinity are immediately killed and almost always devoured. The council call this fair on the grounds that “humans cannot reason the same way that we can,” because they can’t truly grasp “draconic morality.” It’s like they can’t even see the irony.

We are still human inside. That’s something I’ve come to realize in recent times. It’s why this body doesn’t fit me anymore, you see. Isolated from my pathetic fantasies for so long, I’ve come to realize that they were just that: pathetic fantasies. No matter how hard you try and pretend, no matter how fast you run away, reality is bound to catch up with you eventually. We were never dragons. We never will be. And because of this, this farce must end.

I’ve intercepted some outside communications. The UN soldiers are on the brink of beginning their assault. Before they breach the Citadel, I swear that I will do as much damage to these monsters as I can. And Taygon? He will pay for my suffering. All suffering, everywhere, that he has caused.

He will pay.

## By DrSunshine

*Akane Homura, Nikkei Times:*

Two years ago, the world was marked by one of the most unusual conflicts in history. The Cytran Operation, as it has come to be known, was among the shortest United Nations police actions in recorded history, lasting no longer than seventy-two hours. It was triggered as a response to reports of humanitarian atrocities committed by the so-called “Malatoran” dragon cult, and as a result of pleas for aid on the part of the government of São Tomé and Príncipe.

The rapid success of the United Nations Joint Coalition Forces, led to the utter annihilation of the Malatoran cult, with the destruction of most of their armed units and the capture of several within their highest leadership circle. To this date, we know of only one who had managed to escape, seeking asylum in one of the few remaining nations on earth sympathetic to Malatoran ideals of communistic tyranny – the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

Buying the help of North Korean dictator Kim Jong-un with several hundred million dollars of cash and promises of technological aid, the enigmatic figure known only as “Tanya” is now living out “hir” existence in the Pyongyang, the capitol of North Korea.

Through diplomatic channels, we have been granted a rare interview with “Tanya.” I first met Tanya in “hir” private suite at the Pyongyang Hotel, a gigantic, pyramidal structure that remains entirely unoccupied, save for its single, reclusive inhabitant.

...

[1][2][3]

By Deki

*Excerpt from "Brass v Aluminum: How the Pentagon handled the Malatora crisis":*

The day after the initial invasion of Malatora, we were pissed. How could we not be? We had wargamed, and planned, and prepared for this eventuality from the day we heard that the Taygon Regime produced the first fucking Cytran. Hell, some of the experts we've been working with were following the Malatoran faction from inception.

Tons of intelligence, materiel, and manpower gathered, for what? The Cytrans that we've been worried about all this time could have been defeated by a fucking militia. Here we are bringing the latest in technology, and our boys prove that they can be killed with fucking baseball bats! We looked like assholes.

Shit, how far would Hitler himself have gotten, if the goddamn panzers could be taken down with some grunt with a stick?

## By Pit of Despair

### *Dear Leader:*

The sun breaks over the distant mountains, glimpsing the wonder of my utopia like a jealous lover. The light blankets the city, MY city, and once again I feel a surge of pride. Nature had her chance. She tried with her clumsy bodies and convoluted processes, and failed utterly. I took her flawed creation and made something beautiful, perfect, sublime. It's mine now, and all she can do is look in awe.

From my perch on the eyrie I can see Megapolis #53789 in almost it's entirety. The day is just starting. The roads are choked with the tiny shapes of men moving back and forth, some coming off their twelve hour shifts to their hab units, and some just clocking in. They're all working to the greater glory of Malatora, all of them cogs in a perfect machine. Here and there shadows cover them, as up in the air my Cytran brethren coast the thermals of the early morning sky. Occasionally one dips down from it's path, picking a human seemingly at random for food or coitus. None complain. They are so like their caveman ancestors, these poor fools. It's all I can do to make their lives have some semblance of meaning, and what greater meaning than to serve their gods?

Ah, but it IS morning. I can feel a familiar stirring in one of my several love strands, those prehensile lengths of manhood and barbs that add such zest to living. Their king has risen, and I will choose one among the herd to receive my blessed seed.

Flapping my powerful wings, I descend from my eyrie in a series of graceful swoops. Away in the distance, I can see the fields where the human herd grows their food. From here, the shadows of our monoliths fall across the grain like a series of...

... *dongs*...

... no, that's not right. Teeth. Great, curved, spiked...

*... dongs. An empire of dongs.*

No, shut up.

My vision jumps, and now I'm on the ground, and the humans look upon my glory...

*... and all they see is a monument to a perverted, power-mad despot...*

SHUT UP.

And the city is gone. Everything is gone. There's only darkness and silence and I know what this is. I can feel myself screaming, and if I had vocal chords they'd be straining. My eyes would be burning from the tears streaming down my face.

There is nothing. In every sense of the word, there is nothing but me and my thoughts, and I can feel those thoughts eating me alive. The fear is choking me, wrapping itself around my brain and chasing anything rational away. I try to remain calm by wondering how long I've been here. It must have been decades. Only a little further, then, and I need never awake again. Only a little further...

The sun breaks over the distant mountains. I awake, and slam a door on those thoughts. They do not exist. There is just me and my utopia. Perfect. Eternal.

—

"Huh."

"What's that?"

"Oh, just looking at the readings from Mr. Brain-In-The-Jar over there. He's been in and out of REM quite a lot for only being disconnected for half an hour."

"Well, keep waking him up, I guess. Orders are orders."

## By Shlapintogan

***BBC World News, 2019:***

**Man takes fifty to São Tomé, claims island nation is rightfully theirs.**

It was reported today that the government of the West African island nation of São Tomé had ordered riot police to displace a group of fifty one squatters who had attempted to claim the nation as land owned spiritually by them. The squatters, calling themselves “Malatorans,” are believed to be mostly of American nationality. Their leader, who goes by the name “Taygon,” real name Robert Lord, spoke briefly with us over the phone in regards to their staked claim.

“This land is and has always been Malatora.” Says Lord, “It’s ours to rightfully reclaim, and anyone trying to push us off the island is trying to ethnically cleanse us from our rightful home.”

President Menezes of São Tomé has requested aid from foreign powers in returning these people to their countries of origin so they may be dealt with under their own legal systems.

***BBC World News, 2024:***

**Final São Toméan leaves island. New flag flies over island nation**

After five years of squatting in what has come to be known as the “Malatoran incident,” the final citizen of São Tomé has left the island nation. The decision to leave was brought on by the rapidly growing group of people following “Taygon,” the leader of the so-called “Malatorans.” Following the emigration, the group hoisted a new flag over the island, signifying the change in regime.

The new government of Malatora has expressed interest in trade for aluminum and electronics, although other nations have not responded to this request. In response to this development, US Secretary of Defense Allen Donovan stated:



“The takeover of São Tomé by the Malatoran people can only be seen as hostile in nature, and there is no indication that the newly founded country will not continue to take land for itself, claiming to have owned it the entire time. Until such a time that any indication is given that these people no longer wish to encroach upon other lands, the United States will be keeping a close watch on the government of Malatora.”

Further questions from the press were denied.

***BBC World News, 2030:***

**First ever full body cybernetic prosthesis achieved, Construction on Malatoran Citadel continues.**

In just six years since conquering the São Toméan populace, the fledgling nation of Malatora has produced the first full body cybernetic prosthesis. The body, called a “Cytran” is not human in shape, being instead shaped like a large reptile. The Malatoran leader, Taygon, touted the scientific progress that the country has made in just six years, using such words as “superior dragon technology” to describe the breakthrough.

This breakthrough was accompanied by the completion of the main area of the Malatoran citadel, known as the Tatsu Eeyrie. Since its founding in 2024, Malatora has quickly sprung into the center of the international stage as a rapidly growing scientific power, which has turned the attention of the world’s “big four” (the United States, Russia, China, and the United Kingdom) to the small African island.

***BBC World News, 2046:***

Collective world powers declare war on Malatora after missing UN inspectors displayed

A group of UN inspectors was displayed by the Malatoran government on Friday. The inspectors had been roasted alive and partially devoured by Cytrans, the remainder of their bodies being displayed on the country's website as well as over several news channels. The message the Malatoran government attached to the grisly display was one of disgust towards non-Cytrans. The Malatoran leader, Taygon, stated:

"We wish only to live here in peace, away from your inferior human nations. Here, where our nation thrives and grows without any human interference. We do not want to harm anyone, but we will if they oppress us."

In response, UN Secretary General Heng Huang-Jian released a statement on Saturday. It stated:

"It is clear to us that the nation of Malatora is a threat to international stability. The government therein has shown obvious malice towards humankind without provocation, and has shown no interest in discontinuing their hostilities towards the collective United Nations."

Following the statement, the big four declared unanimous war against the African nation, claiming that the hostilities displayed towards the United Nations were an affront to all humankind. The British SAS is expected to deploy within the week, following the United States Marines in a total invasion of the island nation.

## By Dr Snofeld

### *A child's diary:*

Mommy woke me up this morning, she was scared, she said we had to leave, she took my hand with her good hand and she took me through the tunnels. We crawled through the walls and through rocks. I heard loud noises but Mommy said to keep crawling.

We went outside and we went through the trees. Me and Mommy and Uncle Freddy and other people. But Daddy wasn't with us. Mommy said he had to stay behind to do something important. I asked Mommy if Daddy was looking for my big brother and Mommy cried.

We kept going through the trees, it was very dark. I got very tired so Uncle Freddy carried me on his back, Mommy couldn't carry me cos her arm is bad. We kept going for forever. One time it got very hot and bright and loud and we had to run, and there were less of us.

We kept going and we went to a big gate, and some nice men came outside and let us in. The nice men let me take a bath and gave me some food, it was turkey and it was tasty I never had it before. Now it is bright outside and Mommy and Uncle Freddy are talking to the nice men. A nice lady came and gave me paper and crayons and asked me to tell her what happened.

There is another boy here. He is called Joshua and he is older than me, but he doesn't say anything. He cries a lot.

By DrSunshine

***Citadel PA system:***

“A good Malatoran is a LIVE Malatoran, free to live... and work. A bad Malatoran is a DEAD Malatoran, and vice-versa. DON'T BE A BAD MALATORAN!!”

## By Some Silliness

### *Citadel PA system:*

“Brownies for good Malatorans are postponed indefinitely. Brownies for bad Malatorans are CANCELLED.”

## By Dr Snofeld

*Transcript of an audio recording found in the Citadel:*

I don't know who I'm making this recording for – maybe, if I get out, I can let the world hear... or maybe, if they find what's left of me in here, they can give it to Lilly when she's a bit older. But I have to talk – have to say what happened, or I won't be calm enough to go through with this.

I think I saw my son today.

It's been a week since those... *things*... took him away. The war's going badly, we all know it, no matter what shit the Cytrans say. They must be desperate to take people from the "lower classes" to convert – must need soldiers really badly. Oh god... Daniel... he was only fourteen. I got back from my shift at Generator Plant A3 and they'd taken him... Martha tried to pull him back but the centaur things attacked her, broke her arm in three places. It's only a matter of time before they come back for Lilly, too. I can't let it happen!

So I'm taking a gift to the Cytrans. I'll leave it at my work station, and it will be wonderful. But... just now... I saw two of the dragon things leading a third through one of the atria. Mangy specimen if I ever saw one. I spoke to Dr Svensson from the Conversion Facility at mess the other day, and he said they were running out of fresh aluminum, so they had to resort to recycling dead Cytrans and patching them up into new bodies. The thing I saw must have started off as at least three separate dragons before being slammed together, and it was barely able to support itself. And it was acting... strange.

Svensson also told me they had to accelerate the mental conditioning process, whatever that means. I think they just pour data into the brain and switch it on, or some shit... I am... I *was* a car mechanic, I don't know jack about making dragons. So this new dragon was being dragged in chains and it was freaking the hell out, thrashing

its head around.

And it saw me, and then it stopped, and just stared, and started whimpering. And I stared back at it. I didn't dare say anything, even approaching a Cytran unbidden will get you eaten nowadays, but... it was as if it remembered me...

Daniel... was that you? Did they turn you into that... that *abomination*? Bad enough you were inferior to them as a human, they turned you into an inferior machine...

I hope I'm wrong. I hope that isn't him. Because it's going to get massacred as soon as it faces the UN soldiers.

Oh god... I think my heart stopped pounding. I'm curled up in an access panel—none of the Cytrons are small enough to get inside the walls, the fat fucks. Need to go deliver my present. Yeah... I take back every bad thing I ever said about Huangdong, he really came through. Got me the perfect gift from storage, left over from when they dug the Citadel out. Mining explosives—not much, but if they go off in just the right place... like my work station...

A bunch of the other “lower classes” managed to make a tunnel out from one of the lower wards. With luck, the chaos from the generator going up will draw away any Cytrons that might catch them when they escape. But there's no way to set it off remotely, I have to basically light the fuse and run. I can't... I can't escape with them. I have to stay behind for now.

It is now... 2330 hours—I'm on the midnight shift. I'll set the thing off at 0100 hours, when the guards change over. Fred, my brother, is going to take Martha and Lilly to the tunnel and get them... away. I don't know where. But anything is better than here.

I don't intend for this to be a suicide mission. God willing, this won't be my last recording. I'll run, I'll hide... they can't get into the walls...

I will see you again, Martha. Lilly...



## By Ramc

### *The Lance of Donginus:*

For too long had these abominations festered in their island. These heretics. These heathens. They burned the churches of São Tomé. Enslaved the faithful, slaying those who would not bend knee to these so called “dragons.” Idolaters.

When his Holiness called for a stop to the disaster, they laughed. In their broadcast response they declared his calls for mercy “An Epic Fail for Him.” They had the temerity, despite their pretentious dismissal of the Lord, to declare that they were “Excommunicating” his Holiness. Action was to be taken.

It is said that sealed within a statue of St. Longinus in St. Peter’s Basilica is the shaft of the spear that prodded the side of Christ. It is said that it’s blade lies in the treasure room of Hofburg Palace in Vienna.

This is not so.

It is said that the Spear of Destiny was the weapon of St. George when he laid low the Dragon. My order holds this to be so as a matter of faith.

Tonight, relic in hand, I parachute onto this island, this modern-day Sodom. Tonight under the cover of darkness I will bring Light to these monsters in the name of St. George. I do the work of St. George and Pius IX.

I do the work of God.

## By Some Silliness

I don't think I'm making it out of here. I am writing this so when the invasion is a success, you know I succeeded in my task. Tell my wife I love her.

It was almost too easy, getting into the citadel. The dragons, the strange furry creatures, even that one demon, they didn't spare a second glance. They all think humans beneath them now, I heard. I'd believe that, seeing the looks on their faces. So haggard. So worn down. I felt sorry for them all, but I had to complete my mission.

I had to kill the technicians working here. I swear, it could just be my imagination, but as they fell to the ground, I could almost hear them thanking me with their dying breath. But one of the cyborg creatures, they smelt the blood. I had to close the emergency exit, and cut all the power to the door. They wouldn't be getting in, not with their aluminum claws. But I wouldn't be getting out.

But I did it. You guys are probably already flying overhead now, starting your bombing. I'm too far underground to tell. But I got the strawberry candy into the main ventilation system. They won't be fighting back now. They'll be far too preoccupied. We can finally beat them. Thank God, thank Saint George. I have never been prouder than I am this day.

## By Ramc

*The "Shaft" of Destiny:*

The invasion of the mainland by the armies of the world had already begun as I picked my way through the jungle. All around me the man and fiend alike died in flames. I did not reveal myself. I did not engage. Mine was a holy mission to cut off the head of the serpent in the name of the Lord. Reciting Isaiah 51:9 to myself in silence, I did not sleep as I traversed that verdant nightmare. The smell of smoke, scorched flesh and melted aluminum pervaded the wilds of São Tomé. Screams and gunfire sounded from afar. I stalked a surreal hellscape.

I made my way into the access tunnels; large enough for a man but not for the Beasts. Such is the arrogance of the creatures that they show a blithe disregard for the threat a man might pose. The sin of Pride. One sin among many their idol will pay for.

## By Dr Snofeld

*Transcript of an audio recording found in the Citadel:*

How many days now. In the walls. No day or night. No day or night outside the walls either, hahaha. Must be weeks. Forgot I had this tape. Should... should update.

Bomb went off, generator destroyed. Panic, chaos, all according to plan, but... a dragon saw me. No chance to slip into crowd, had to run. Turned a corner, climbed into shaft, shut the door. Dragon thundered past. Been hiding ever since.

Stole tools to break panels in here, can move around the Citadel in the walls. It's dark. I go out to steal food – fucking brownies, always. I hate them. But have to live, have to survive. Lilly. Think of Lilly.

They're not in the Citadel any more. Lilly, Martha, Fred. Must have escaped. Heard no talk of them being killed or devoured. Cytrans don't even care enough to notice some humans missing. Except me. I'm wanted. They blocked off the tunnel. I have to stay here. Steal awful brownies. Shit in Cytran quarters, hahaha.

Deliver more presents, yes, Huangdong had more. An American in here too, from outside. Brought better presents. C4, Semtex. I leave them here and there. Shoved Semtex down a dragon's throat once while it slept. Went back later, pieces everywhere, dongs embedded in walls from blast.

It is dark in the walls. Dark and loud. I hear people crying, people dying, dragons kill them, eat them, rape them. Hear the dragons panic. Think they know they're losing. But heard the leader. He won't believe it. Still thinks he is superior.

Nothing in here but dark. Darkness and noises and smells. Horrible smells. Battery fluid, brownies, fucking dragon semen, strawberry for some reason. I cough a lot. Spit up. Can't see it, too dark, but

can't be healthy. Asbestos in here.

What was that? Footsteps. Heavy. Metal. Dragon. Hears me! Must move. Stay in the walls.

## By Ramc

*Dongtus Pilates:*

I crept through the air vents. They were accommodating in size, I can only infer so that those they enslaved might be sent within to repair them as these Abominations would not undertake that which they believed was beneath them. I paused at each grate I passed and I saw many scenes. Of bravery. Of monstrosity. Already, it seemed, the men rose up against these heretical “Dragons” and battle waged in the vaulted halls. I silently wished them the blessings of the Lord and of St. George as I made my way deeper. I had my own battle to wage. My own dragon to slay.

At length I made my way to the heart of the bunker. Finally, as I looked down into the room from my perch, I beheld the object of my quest. The one who called himself “Leader” here. His face markings are said to be unique to him, by his own word. My grip tightens on the Spear, but I hold my fury, for he is not alone, but in conference.

“Don’t the humans realize that we know *better* than them!?” spoke my adversary. Some had whispered he was the Antichrist spoken of in prophecy, with his rejection of the Lord. His secularism. His authoritarianism hidden behind his Lies of freedom and free love. Hearing the high metallic whine of his artificial voice, his words slurred and lisped over leaking saliva, I would not give him the satisfaction of so important a title. Indeed, what lord of darkness would go on at length in political broadcast how their saliva lacked the most unimportant of animal proteins?

They tried to tell him of the failings of the war effort, but he would hear none of it. “I am a tactical genius! Just do what I say! JUST DO WHAT I SAY!” He would brook no argument, and dismissed all his advisers from the room. He was alone. I prepared myself, silently undoing the screws holding the grate in place.

He sniffed to himself, "Don't they understand?" and went to lie down on it's back. "I'm a Dragon." A sickening metallic clank and a gush of fluid accompanied the nest of serpents uncoiling from between the creature's legs. "I'm a Dragon." it repeated, it's head arching toward them.

The time had come to strike.

## By GenericOverusedName

I lumbered slowly through the lowest levels of the city. Chaos was now the ruler of this place. Riots, violence, and death were everyday occurrences. The lower levels were mostly safe from the mechanicals. The place was run by a few disorganized groups of humans. The Resistance. The Underground. The Knights of Old. The Apostles of George. It felt like as soon as one group formed, it died in a catastrophic assault on the “overworld” of this underground hell. Still, it was better than being under the rule of the mechanical madmen. I was allowed passage due to my alliance with the humans. And besides that, I was fairly recognizable.

All of my armor plating had been stripped. I gave the metal sheets to the human groups, to make crude weaponry and fire shields. Some defiant mechanics helped me strip off all the extraneous parts. The useful machinery was repurposed into crude combat armor. The rest was melted down for scrap. I was a brain in a jar surrounded by a crude metal skeleton and life support, and not much else.

The process wasn't without its faults. The process of destroying my body was almost as difficult as gaining it was. I asked a mechanic to remove my radio interface. It let me hear the perverted telepathic thoughts of the other machines, but it also allowed them to track me. It was wired directly to my brain, and I wanted it out. When he tried to remove it, something went wrong. I don't know if it was a wrong wire being cut, or just a fault of the original design. I had a grand mal seizure. He was crushed into a bloody pulp while my body reacted in a spectacular failure as my brain malfunctioned. The flame bladder autoignited. The oil pumps went into overdrive, spewing lubricants into the inferno and added their thick, acrid smoke to the situation. My servos screamed as they tore my joints apart. By the time it was over, the entire room was covered in char and gristle and burnt blood.

They repaired me. I pleaded with them not to. It would have been



a just penance for the mechanic's death, and the resources could be better used elsewhere. And, though I never told them this, it would have been the death I had so long sought. They countered my arguments well. I could do what they could not. I could scale the grand spires of the buildings and plant explosives. I could do the dangerous things that humans could not. I was capable of sabotaging the great blast furnaces and breaking open the volcanic vents without dying. I could go where humans were forbidden. So I agreed. They rebuilt me, so long as they promised to destroy me when my job was done.

But now I had a job to do. The... what was this group, The Beowulf Crusaders? I had trouble keeping track of them. They wanted me to liberate more people from above. They had a suit for me to wear; plating stolen from a defeated Cytran. They given the shell of a vixen, modified for stealth purposes. It was a hideous thing, covered in fake, neon fur. Most of the blood and oil had been cleaned out of it, though a few patches remained. It could pass for a legitimate Cytran at a glance, but not for long. I wore a small pennant around my neck, an emblem of a dragon head with a sword embedded in it. Most of the resistance groups recognized it. Hopefully some people above would too.

I finished reviewing the objectives and double checking my equipment, then bounded up a ladder to the overworld.

## By Build Your Own Boat

*American Rhetoric:*

**Richard Michael Hamilton**

**50th President of the United States**

**"Our Humanity" An Address to Congress**

*Delivered April 28, 2046, at Capitol Hill in Washington, DC*

*[Video recording courtesy of the Rick Hamilton Presidential Library, Sandusky, OH]*

"Mdm. Vice President, Mr. Speaker, and Members of Congress:

It has been twenty-seven years since the Malatoran invasion of São Tomé e Príncipe. That invasion, and the subsequent conquest and occupation mark one of the most heinous acts in the history of human existence.

In the years since, the world has borne witness to a cavalcade of bizarre, criminal, and inhumane acts perpetrated by Robert Lord and his oppressive regime. We have received countless reports of theft, kidnapping, torture, murder, and terrorism.

Despite the irrefutable evidence of their crimes, Lord's regime has refused to acknowledge these accusations, answer for their crimes, or alter their behavior. This is unacceptable. Both the —

[Applause]

Both the United States, and the Global community have exercised unprecedented caution and restraint in our dealings with Malatora. Time-and-again, our attempts at peaceful negotiation have been met with hostility.

This year, we again witnessed the depths of Malatoran depravity. In January, when Human Rights investigators arrived at the Malatoran capital of Tatsu Eyrie, they were arrested, held against their will, tor-

tured, mutilated, raped, and murdered. Yesterday, in an act of unparalleled malice and contempt for both international law, and human decency, the Malatoran government released gruesome photographs of the victims—both to the media, and to the victims’ families. This act will not go unpunished. This—

[Applause]

This morning, the UN Security Council convened, to answer the threat of Malatora. This afternoon, they unanimously passed a resolution that will bring Malatora to bear, and its leaders to justice. This threat to world peace will not go unanswered.

[Enthusiastic applause]

As Commander-in-Chief, I have begun preparations for action against Malatora. I ask that congress make a solemn and formal declaration of war on the Federated Commonwealth of Malatora.

Upon authorization, we will begin the largest military campaign in our nation’s history. It is not a struggle to defend our homes or our liberties; it is a struggle to defend our humanity. Robert Lord has made it clear that there can be no peace with Malatora, so long as we maintain our humanity. He insists that humanity is flawed, immoral, and weak. He is wrong.

[Extended Applause]

[Over the applause] We will not trade our souls out of fear; we will not sacrifice our way of life to perverse science; and we will not surrender our humanity to the whims of a madman. We will not flag or fail. We will show Malatora that humanity is a wellspring of strength and resolve that they cannot hope to overcome. God bless you, and God bless America.”

## By CmdrChicken

*A crumpled letter found in a ditch:*

This was it, this was our calling.

I was drafted not two weeks ago, our Cytran friends came to the door of my apartment, I never had a wife or child, but the people next door did. I would hear their arguments, their child crying all night, the quieter fighting they would do late at night in bed. It kept me awake... with pity. They did not know of the transformation about to occur in their neighbor's apartment. I was going to become a god, and fly in the pantheon of the righteous.

I picked up my new uniform. The purple military fatigues but a cloak—hiding the scales within. The patch on one shoulder prominently featuring a dragon and the words "So that Dragons may live." It symbolized the sacrifice all humans must make for the sake of our persecuted dragon brethren, for a peaceful, ideal future. I donned the uniform of a demigod. I straddled the worlds between glorious deity and filthy human. We were Dragonforce, each of us was promised a beautiful cytran body. I saw mine in the lab the day before, it was amazing. It was destroyed in the fires, but I always knew it was meant for me. *They cared about us.* My fellow warriors never seemed to understand that. But it didn't matter. I look over my helmet and armored vest, made of the same revolutionary type of aluminum the cytrans themselves were forged from, I needed them to stay safe out there. I only needed my body to hold together for a bit longer. We were being sent out in an hour, I needed to be ready for my Thermopylae, my glorious battle to impress the gods, and show them that I was ready to ascend.

I look in the mirror one last time, to remember the face that was. My acne-riddled form, decrepit and useless! I came to this glorious island nation to become my true self. I met Taygon himself years ago at Dragoncon. He had what seemed like half of the convention hall

rented out just for Fedcom. The human scientists told me I was not yet ready, that my “fragile psyche” could not handle the process. As I grab my rifle and analyze the device with my mind to learn its true nature and figure out where the bullets go, I knew that the humans were stopping me from my path to greatness. They were not ready for me, they did not know my true power! But Lord Taygon does, he’s trusted me, me! To be a part of this mission, to help show the humans that we want to live in peace. If only they could understand, luckily I had the tools to show them just how peaceful we truly were.

It was not long until we went on our glorious crusade. We marched in a tight block formation, bayonets at the ready. The cloth banner of Dragonforce waved defiantly against the blue sky. I would show those pitiful human warriors that I was the living embodiment of Malatoran vengeance! We approached a village of squatters. These fools continued to intrude on our glorious homeland! I felt personally insulted they dared do such a thing. My senses, superior to that of a normal human (thanks to my training regimen of extremely loud music at all hours) sensed something was wrong. “Get in cover, they’re attacking us!” I hear one of my fellow warriors proclaim. I hold fast. “Nay, we hold the line!” I proclaim from my tactically advantageous position behind a particularly large rock. I was ready for this, I commanded my body to wet my pants, to mask my scent. My camouflage instincts kicked in, and I began to shake violently, I knew my cloaking field was working as my vision was getting blurry, as if my eyes were watering up. I was ready to take them on.

I knew I could take them on with my bare hands, and that’s how I planned to kill all of those savages. I drop my gun and clench my still-shaking fists. Like a unseen predator I walked straight at them, so as not to disrupt my cloaking field. I sneak up on one who finally sees me, but it’s already too late. I see the look of what I think is surprise on his face as I began punching him. A totally manly war cry leaves my mouth as I subdue him. After I easily defeated all of

the barbarian squatters in my blood rage, I pass out from my wounds.

I awoke near a cage. I see the barbarians I defeated on the other side of the bars, I felt proud of my victory. It has been a few days, but I unfortunately still lack the superior mind of a Dragon, and I have been unable to ascertain the method of leaving this observation room. A rat died here last night, I aim to eat it to recharge, but, uhh... I'll do it. All dragons do.

## By Ramc

*Jism Christ:*

I paused a moment, transfixed by the horror of what I beheld, before I was snapped out of it by the smell of strawberries coming through the vents. I didn't know what to make of it, but I burst into action regardless. Kicking out the grille, leapt down into the room, Spear in hand.

The creature snapped its head toward me, the nasal shriek of fury nearly drowned out by the grinding of its failing metal joints. "My kevlar-microfiber armor is invincible!" it cried and released a great gout of flame.

I dived aside, barely escaping the fiery holocaust. It moved to belch another stream of hellfire, but nothing issued forth. It snarled in frustration and lumbered forward, trying to crush me beneath its cumbersome bulk.

I set the Spear, screaming in defiance "Your Sodom dies with you, monster!"

The creature drew up, reeling as if struck, shrieking "What? Sodom-? I said NO BUTT STU-" and its declaration was cut off by a sudden shriek of pain. While it had paused, I had not. I drove the Spear of Destiny, the Lance of St. George, deep into it's many-headed nest of sin. It's heart. With a blow that would draw the approval of Pius IX in Heaven, I struck the heads from the hydra. A great gout of blood, oil and less readily identifiable liquids washed over me like a tainted baptism. The Beast cried out, fell, and was still.

I left a wreath of ten fig leaves about the ruined "core" of the Beast that his followers might have some inkling of what had transpired here. I carefully made my way back into the vents. I would make my way back to the surface and activate my emergency beacon. I would await extraction. In your name, O God. With your blessing,

St. George. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Thy will be done.

Amen.



## By Dr Snofeld

### *Journal of a British Joint Task Force soldier:*

Another nice thing about fighting giant dragons, apart from their being really easy to take down, is that they weren't much good for hiding. Not only were they huge and noisy, they thought they were a lot stealthier than they actually were. Captured intel stated that because they were almost entirely inorganic they thought they were odourless too. They fucking weren't. Reeked of metal, fuel, lubricant... strawberries, too, but that horrible false strawberry scent rather than the real one. I later found out that it was some kind of sex pheromone they gave off. Course, by that time, my fatigues reeked of the stuff, so I took a very long and very thorough shower after I came off duty that day.

Being about as subtle as you can expect a multi-ton hunk of metal, wires and dicks to be, we didn't have a lot of trouble flushing them out of the corridors of their horrible Citadel. After the main assault each squad was assigned to sweep through a sector. The corridors were pretty unpleasant, broken lighting and horrible pools of... something... around the place. Much better than the domes though, at least we didn't have to worry about that horrible "rain."

This particular patrol had been pretty quiet. We'd stopped to report in when we heard this scratching sort of noise from one of the walls. Now, when I was seven, my dad let me watch Aliens – great parenting, really – and since then I've had a phobia of things busting out of the walls and attacking me. Stupid, I know, but not something I figured would ever come up in the army. So I'm stood there, frozen to the spot, fighting the impulse to run like fuck, and I scream, "One of those metal fuckers is in the walls!"

Well, I must have said the magic words or something, because the scratching and shuffling speeds up and starts moving. We train our guns on the source of the noise as it moves towards an access panel.

The panel slams open and it wasn't a Cytran, it was a human, flesh and blood. Well, barely any flesh, really, the poor bastard was rail thin and emaciated. Filthy too, and he stank of dust, filth and oil.

Our medic went to work on him, he was coughing up some pretty nasty shit. Turned out there was a lot of asbestos in those walls and he'd been in there long enough for it and the dust to affect his lungs. Poor guy couldn't speak either beyond some mumbling about staying in the walls.

It was the end of our patrol anyway, so rather than hand him over to another squad we double-timed it back to camp so he could get some treatment. Passed out half way back, me and McGregor carried him from there.

When he came to in the medical tent, all he would say was "Martha, Lilly, Martha, Lilly." Sarge figured that they must be family or something, so he called up command and asked them to check the records of refugees for anyone by that name. Half an hour later we got the call back—a woman called Martha and a little girl called Lilly were at the refugee camp on the mainland. They'd been in the group of survivors who came to base the night we killed that suicidal dragon. When we told the guy that his wife and kid were alive he just burst into tears. Can't say I blame him.

That little girl can't have been any more than 7 or so—same age as my little Mickey. Think I'll go see if I can call home...

## By Ante Christ

### *A guide to Malatoran Cuisine by Sandra Lee:*

Malatora is technical superpower off the coast of Africa which exports the world's most perfect rubies, sapphires and emeralds. Normally, a small fledgling country which has banned alcohol would not produce anything to write about for cuisine, but Lord Robert "10 Dongs" Taygon provided me with this native recipe and also a fabulous set of ruby and emerald earrings I've worn to various dinner parties.

Ingredients: 1 box of Continental Mills Double Chocolate Brownie Mix 1 bag of Ghirardelli baking chips 1 cup of turbinado sugar 2 eggs 1/4 cup oil 2 cups of milk (Lord Taygon himself recommends Dragon or Chakat Milk)

Mix all of the ingredients into a bowl and bake in an oven at 350 degrees for 20 minutes.

These things will literally melt in your mouth they are so good. Also decorate with candy strawberries for an authentic Malatoran presentation.

## By Nombres

### *New York Times article:*

#### *In Remembrance of São Tomé: An Anthology, Day One*

For the first time in ten years, the seventy thousand former citizens of São Tomé exiled by the Malatorans have been cleared to return home by the UN Malatoran Conflict Authority (UNMCA). The few extant records in the possession of the UNMCA reveal a shocking truth: this cross-section of São Tomé, comprising just 35% of the population at the founding of Malatora, is likely to be close to the entirety of the surviving population of São Tomé.

At the closure of the Malatoran Conflict, records seized by the liberating coalition forces indicated that, of the 200,000 citizens of São Tomé living during the Establishment, 125,000 were to remain on Malatora throughout the duration of the consolidation of Malatoran power on the island, as well as the ensuing conflict. Of these 125,000, only ten thousand were recovered from camps scattered throughout the island. The stories of the servicemen who liberated these camps are shocking.

For instance, Sgt. Joseph Wye's unit liberated the Ilheu Das Cabras Camp in the opening hours of the war:

The intelligence we had going over the island showed what looked like a large storage facility. Warehouses, prefabs, stuff like that. It hadn't showed activity in about ten days, and five day before that there was only smoke from a fire in one of the larger prefabs. While the 8th were landing in São Tomé, we were sent in by helicopter to take it, see if there was anything useful there—a way to get into their communications, sensitive documents, stuff like that. There was no activity there, so there were just five of

us.

So we touched down, and everything was quiet. No defenses, no patrols, no engines. The only thing that seemed to give off any heat were the warehouses. We advanced into the camp, scoured the prefabs which were by this time mostly filled with moldy paper plates and old soda cans. Nothing sensitive, nothing interesting. Finally, we came up to the warehouse.

We opened the first one—we had to blast off a padlock that kept the door shut—and we finally realized why the warehouses were giving off light. There were people inside. We got weak moans, I guess they were trying to say hello, it didn't look like they could manage much else. Most of them were covered with bug bites, their hair had fallen out. Vomit was crusted on the floor, shit and piss too from when the others had died, and the entire place stank like death. They couldn't drink because the few buckets of water they had had gone foul and bred mosquitoes which fed on them. Later, one of the healthier prisoners explained to Almeirao—his family was from Angola, he could speak Portuguese—that they used to use the buckets to catch rainwater, but when the dragons found out about it, they blocked up the holes or diverted the flow.

About a week before the liberation—when we first gave our ultimatum—the keepers locked the doors to keep them in. I don't know why. Some guys in the unit that liberated the Santa Cruz Camp said the records they captured said it was a standing order from their boss that if they weren't working, they should be given minimal food and water so they'd want to go back to work. When the ulti-

matum came, they locked the doors so none of them fled, so they could keep their manual workforce. Problem is, they didn't seem to get the idea that people would die of thirst in a room packed shoulder to shoulder with around two thousand other people in a room without ventilation, and with stagnant water pockets that bred disease-filled mosquitoes.

According to the survivors, they used to be packed shoulder to shoulder, like sardines. It was too expensive in terms of time and space to throw up barracks, so they used the storage warehouses of the bauxite refinery one of the Malatoran factories had before it shut down. They kept on asking us, though, if we had found the children's barracks. They were taken away, they said, because they'd be given more space and more comfort. They said that the only reason they stayed alive was to see their children again, they wanted us to carry them, they'd use anything as a crutch, they didn't care how weak. Their sons, daughters, grandsons, granddaughters. They were so desperate.

We never found a children's barracks. We found where the smoke came from, though. Small femurs, bones, piled together on a pyre, filled with soot.

Sgt. Wye's story isn't unique. Although the Ilheu Das Cabras camp was the smallest, it was estimated by the UN to have housed around twenty thousand men, women, and children. Less than a thousand were liberated. The understaffed Malatorans were directed to minimize their difficulties by only barely providing for their subsistence. In most cases, though the Malatorans continued to live in relative plenty, the welfare of the inmates were forgotten completely. In a catalog of the remains of the Ilheu Das Rotas Camp, there were counted around twenty-five thousand dead. The ongoing study provided by

a collegium of researchers and physicians from several major American and British medical schools has concluded that, of the roughly twenty-five thousand remains, at least 25% of them died due to some form of trauma, and of those 25%, 70% displayed some evidence of being consumed by a human being.

The Children's Pyre was another sadly common sight. Of the five major camps—Malatora [São Tomé City] Camp, Neves Camp, Santa Cruz Camp, Ilheu Das Cabras Camp, and Ilheu Das Rotas Camp, only in the Neves Camp was there recovered a large group of surviving children. The leading theory suggests that the elimination was committed with the intent to cover up systematic sexual child abuse evident at the Neves Camp and in the Citadel itself.

Up to ten years afterwards, when the refugee camps were first populated in Nigeria and Equatorial Guinea, vast billboards were populated with old pictures of children, smuggled from their homes and lovingly hidden during the occupation, not an inch on the board empty. According to the writer Solomon Herzog, commenting on a visit to a camp in Nigeria, "The most common phrase there, more than, 'I'm thirsty,' 'I'm hungry,' 'When are we going home?' is, and it wins easily, is: 'Tens visto este crianca?' — Have you seen this child?"

## By Fargo Fukes

*"... truction of the Cytrans' 'Citadel' has continued to spread despite a multinational effort to contain the bloom. We can now confirm that clouds of toxic ash from the detonations have reached the coast of Brazil and the Caribbean. A state of emergency has been declared, but with international cooperations focused on combating the rapidly expanding 'Dead Zone' around São Tomé's waters, resources are scarce. Efforts are stymied by the unknown nature of the toxins released during the fighting, clearly related in some way to the production or maintenance of 'Cytran' constructs. BBC reporter Fiona Khan is on the scene..."*

\*click\*

Quiet now, but for the breathing. The regular hush of human lungs. The venting, hollow gusts of something else.

"You will protect us?" The grunting and grinding of gears is nearly intolerable. This body was built for luxury suites and plush cushions, it has not borne the escape well.

"I *can* protect you. I need collateral. Something to show the directors. Something to show the D.O.D. I need cooperation."

The eruption of foul air is enough to make you gag. Rotting falseflesh and machine oil overlaid with cloying strawberry. It smells, the Senator reflects, like someone took a greasy shit in a fromage frais. "We will cooperate. We will work with humans. We have always loved to help. To help mankind." If it licks his boots he'll throw up.

"Of course. We see that now. The war, the invasion, people misunderstood you. They feared what was new. You only meant for the best." The creature nodded pathetically. Perhaps it'll nod too hard and the neck joints will snap? "I understand. I can offer you the protection and the isolation you need. Until the world is ready."



It is nearly groveling now. If you had a dog like that you'd shoot it. "You are most generous. We had not come to expect such grace from humans. It is almost... draconic."

The Senator forces a smile. "There is one thing..."

"The others. Where are the others."

## By Well Manicured Man

I helped make this happen.

Let me explain. I was rich. I was young. I should have had a charmed life, but where did all that money get me? I had the brain of a forty year old man, trapped in the body of an eighty year old man. Every day was a battle between my body and my mind for dominance; a battle my body usually won. It hurt to eat; it hurt to pee; it hurt to walk. I had had enough heart attacks for five men. All my money couldn't buy my way out of this prison of flesh.

And that's when they appeared: Malatora. A team of visionaries wishing to transplant their brains into powerful mechanical bodies. The very idea enticed me to help them realize this absurd goal. But technology like that doesn't come from thin air, it has to be developed: developed by people with brains and people with money to buy all the supplies. I was the latter. I was Malatora's biggest donor. From a certain point of view, I created Malatora.

When I flew to Malatora to design my new body, they started out by asking me how many phalluses I wanted. I should have realized that something was wrong then; but the aching of my joints and the ominous palpitations of my heart screamed louder than my brain. They were taken aback when I told them that I didn't want any, but acquiesced to my demands nonetheless—at this time, Malatora was still young and fragile and needed my continued financial backing. My new body was pedestrian by Malatoran standards. No obscene false genitals. Two arms. Two legs. One head. These people wanted to be robot dragons or fox centaurs or whatever they wanted, and that was fine with me. Like them, I had everything I wanted in my new body.

It was soon after I underwent the conversion process that I discovered Malatora's true face. As a Cytran I was part of the elite; I was

privity to all of the doings of the privileged upper class. And the first thing I realized was that I didn't belong. The original visionaries had left civilization to start their own because they lacked normal social interaction skills; and rather than work hard to gain these skills, they had decided to make their own new world where they would never have to meet normal people again. I was the square peg in the round hole, a normal person in a world of freaks. Of course, I couldn't leave the place. I found that out soon enough, when my mild discomfort transformed to absolute disgust.

I was there when the Cytrans presented the raped, mutilated, and burned corpses of the UN ambassadors to the world. Look at this photo, you can see me in the background. I assure you, I had no part in it. But it's hard to stand up to authority when authority is a four meter tall killing machine with ten dicks. It was the same with the massacres and the orgies (which were often one and the same). Now, you can't make money the way I did and still be considered a saint. But I didn't go out and rape people with wizard hat shaped dildos to make my fortune. I'd been told often enough that love of money is the root of all evil, but let me be frank. That is bullshit. These Cytrans didn't rape and eat people because they wanted money. They did it because underneath their awkwardness, escapist fantasies, and perversion was a burning hatred for humankind. Under their much-touted dragon ethics, people were just things to them — either cattle, or slaves, or sex toys. That's where evil comes from. Evil is when you stop treating people like people. And all you have to do to let evil win is to stand by and do nothing. Fear kept me from realizing that at the time, and to this day I hate myself for both what I had done and what I had failed to do.

I helped make this nightmare a reality. I thought it would change the world for the better. Perhaps if the brain transplant technology I helped pioneer saves a billion wretches from sickly and injured bodies it will undo the atrocities the Cytrans used my money to com-

mit. Perhaps if I had played a part in the destruction of Malatora, I could have considered myself absolved of my sins. But now, with the Cytran menace wiped from the face of the Earth, I fear that I will never have a chance to redeem myself. I spend every day wishing that somehow I could express my revulsion. I have no mouth, and I must vomit.

— From the memoirs of industrial robotics magnate R. Robert Wright

## By Madfez

My father once said to me.

"From the East comes the Sun, from the Sun comes the light and from the light comes everything."

Each morning I would wake early to see the sun rise and feel its goodness wash over me. I would shy my eyes away as its warm face shone upon my world and I would be glad. I am not glad anymore.

On Sunday my father would walk us all into town for Church. After we could play for a while with the other boys that came to town. We would all crowd into Adao's shop to watch his television. To see the girls and the songs and to dance.

One Sunday when as I left I saw that there was a white man standing on the back of a truck, around him was my father and many of his friends.

"You have all toiled for too long and for too little." His voice sounded like a helicopter was trying to beat its way out of his mouth.

"On your fields you break your backs and dig into the earth. For what? For a slaves wages!"

"I offer you work that you can live off, send your children to school with and you can eat meat every week!"

"On the other side of São Tomé my people are starting a new world, one full of hope and promise."

"You too can be a part of this, all we ask is your loyalty."

That my father could have said no. That we did not need the food or the money. If only we had known what was being asked.

## By Sneakums

### *Tanya's Perspective:*

Tanya's Log, 2038 Oct 1st, Operation Susdongannah

*I wrote this journal entry when Malatora was still a distant dream, when humans still roamed the Earth in their billions. We had been scheming for humanity to devastate itself through infighting before we would reveal ourselves and the citadel-fortress at São Tomé. Even though our later involvement in the events at JFK airport would later be exposed by Human opposition, it would be too late then.*

My hands are shaking as I type this into my DRAKEHQ terminal. I cannot believe what we had done today, and how closely it has brought us to making FedCom a reality. Today was the first time I fired upon humans, and I could not tell you how glorious it felt. If only I had known Malatora would have become this strong, I would have played out my deceit of the Human forums for an even longer time. But the story of my exfiltration from that hell-hole will wait for another time (note to self: work on backlogged projects, apply to positions).

"Today will be remembered as the first day of FedCom's everlasting independence from humanity. For thousands of years, Humanity had gradually built its empire, not perhaps through the free will or the unanimous demonstrations of those affected, but welded them by force. War followed war. One nation after another was robbed of its freedom-one state after another was shattered so that the structure which calls itself the Humanity might arise. Democracy was nothing but a mask covering subjugation and the oppression of nations and individuals, and the legal age of consent was established to the anguish and dismay of many of our kind. The state of Malatora will not force anyone to assimilate through tentacle rape; they should freely choose to be members of this Commonwealth. Yet, our generous kind was relegated to the forums of the virtual world with no refuge in

physical reality. They marginalized us, disallowed sex with minors, and mocked our dreams and designs. By these means they contrived to break the backbone of other magickal-steampunk nations, to remove their resistance, to wear them down, and make them prepared at last to submit to this Human yoke of democracy.”

Thus Taygon spoke over the public announcement system in Malatora through his psycho-magnetic transmitter, which allowed him to reach all the Cytrans in existence, even those still in Malatora. Taygon, I and the Dragon Knight Drazil were all together, so far away from our homeland, on an important mission that would start the next Global War, and this last communication with our homeland may have been the last one ever.

We were in the United States, as it was once called, on our way to one of the major airports. If you could have seen the decadence! Through the back windows of Taygon’s van, we could see prostitutes and drunks in the street, common as flies, and I felt safe in my belief in the dragon knight code. I noticed that Taygon’s van had no side windows and even the windows it did have were all tinted black. Taygon said it was for concealment, though he mumbled something about “special hugs”.

We were soon near the rear entrance to the airport, where commercial cargo crates and other heavy loads would be located. Our mission was three-fold: 1) to terrorize and inflict morale damage against humans, thus “making them mad” 2) steal the necessary synthetics for our Cytran bodies and 3) incite humans to fight each other as we develop our bodies. What will follow is a recounting of how we managed to achieve all of our goals and then some.

After parking, Taygon checked the venue for any security, and informed us that the coast was clear. We descended from the van, completely blending into the crowd with our crew-cut hairstyle, business suits and Rayban sunglasses. The baggy suits would hide any ex-

tra appendages, such as my tentacles or Taygon's ten massive throbbing penises, and the sunglasses connected to the neural interface that Staliph designed with this mission in mind. We would be able to fight using swarm tactics and coordinate attacks on the fly should anything out of plan occur. Even then, the disguises would still tempt humans to think that those from other countries had perpetrated the attack.

We checked out our route, and all was according to plan, Drazil popped a bag of Cheeto's and a can of Mountain Dew while Taygon and I checked our weapons. Everything was ready; our armor would defend us against anything except stuff that would react with aluminum, and our weapons shot needles at speeds comparable to fighter-fired rockets. There would be no escape for the "innocent" humans going about their normal day, as we dragons are always superior morally. We tried to appeal to their senses, but their constant rejection of Malatora's sovereignty and superiority is what brought us here. So be it.

Drazil was finished with his nutritious meal, and Taygon gave us the signal to carry our weapon cases out to the cargo bay closest to the terminals. When we reached the terminal, security was becoming strict and we knew we had to start sooner or later. Taygon made one more communication back home, and I felt it as a threat to someone named Hrothgar. Perhaps Taygon was cursing some old foe? We set down our cases, and popped the locks open. Each of us picked up the weapons, and some onlookers noticed us. Some even had a knowing smile, no doubt thinking we were heading for Comic-Con. We headed to the elevator leading to the most densely populated terminals

As the elevator door opened with a chime, Taygon turned to Drazil and me and with a sly smile said something I could never forget.

**"Remember – No Butt Stuff."**



## By Nombres

### *Lt. Jacob Pearson:*

So, the day of the invasion came and went. Me and my unit were one of the first landing on the northern shoreline, and we were to make our way to the center of San Tome. Now, the Coalition air force had mostly taken out the dragons in the city proper, and we saw whole lot of wreckage on our advance. No resistance, though.

So we get to the outskirts of São Tomé and move in, right? We went past what was I think the cathedral – the Malatorans had pretty much pulled down everything they didn't like when they took the city. Last I heard the Vatican is pouring money into São Tomé to rebuild it as Our Holy Lady of Humanity or something like that. The ransacking, by the way, is why it took so long for the UN to repatriate São Tomé, all the population records and registries were destroyed. My dad watches Alex Jones, says the UN census was to catalog all the people for when the NWO takes over. Fucking idiot. But anyway.

We pass the cathedral and we find this soldier coming out of one of the buildings. It was a little bodega or something, I think. He's completely tattered, you know? Cut the sleeves of his fatigues, got the makings of this fierce beard, bandana made from the sleeves of his fatigues, completely blond hair/blue eyed Viking-looking bastard. He saw us, wooped, and raised a carton of cigarettes triumphantly. He took out a few cigarettes, slipped them into his bandana and then lit the last one and started puffing his way right up to us.

Private Alban, god bless that boy, started yelling – "WE ARE AMERICANS. WHERE DO YOU COME FROM? AMERICANS," he gestured towards himself, "HELP YOU," he pointed at the soldier. We all started laughing, because, goddamn, that Eric the Blond over there still had an American flag on his chest.

Anyway, we got to asking what the hell he was doing there. The only

other unit we knew of near São Tomé was a couple of Brits moving to secure the east and south, and they landed a few hours after us, so this guy, technically speaking, shouldn't have existed. Turns out, as he said, he was one of the first guys to be sent into São Tomé when the dragons started huffing and puffing their way to the capital.

Now, every news network said they were dead. I mean, we hadn't heard from them in months. But here's a guy claiming to be one of 'em, stuck on a sweaty equatorial island for three months without any modern amenity. Looked the part, I think. Smelled the part too.

See, when the dragons first came to the outskirts, they started pillaging, looting, taking people out of their homes. Probably to put them in those camps so they could keep a better eye on them. So you got tons of Saotomeans flowing into the center of the city, hoping for some way out. Maybe the soldiers can protect them, after all? While the forward guys were trying to coordinate traffic, they attacked, and shot their fire or whatever the hell it was right into the crowd, and broke through towards the center. Apparently this guy, a group of Brits and a few Frenchies actually manage to hold off the dragons and gave up their evac choppers to get the Saotomeans out of there.

That's what you saw on TV, the airlift. These guys held them off for five days while the choppers did runs day and night to ferry people off. I heard that, by the time it was over, some pilots hadn't slept for three days. Worth it though—UN says the people they ferried out are almost the only surviving Saotomeans of the war.

So he and his boys had held up in one of the police barracks for three months, foraging in the ruined stores for food, imperishable, you know, stuff to keep them going—I guess for Harald Hardrada there, it meant smokes too. Turns out only one of them died, and that's because the poor kid slipped off the building on watch when it was raining and broke his neck.

That's when I saw the D's carved on his arm. Some of them were scabbed, others had healed to a scar. What did they mean, I asked. Dragons, he said. It's a kill count. I tallied them up—ten. Ten dragons? That's pretty impressive for a rifleman.

"Nah, I've tangled with them before, I know the drill."

I was shocked. "What do you mean, you've fought them before?"

"Yeah. When I was a kid I used to shoot coke cans off the fence back at my dad's place. Same idea."

## By Raserys

The following document was found in a Cytran underground facility, embedded in rock. It most certainly isn't ancient, examination reveals it to be no older than 2 or 3 years. Speculation on our part indicates that Taygon is perhaps attempting to brainwash his citizens into believing Malatora is a much older culture than it truly is. Regardless, this is to remain classified with Level-X clearance, maybe we can sell this stuff to Hollywood for the war effort.

### *The First Hymn of the Cytran Pride:*

The First Hymn sings of the dragons and how they made Earth from clay.

Before there were Cytrans, before there were men, even before the [INDECIPHERABLE], there was nothing but Epic, The God Who Failed. The Earth was as formless clay swirling in the stars, but Epic refused to form the land, for he was lazy and also looked a lot like our Lord [INDECIPHERABLE]'s grandma who refuses to bake [INDECIPHERABLE] for His Greatness, the bitch. Then the first Dragons came from the planet of [INDECIPHERABLE] and baked the world hard. The dragons cracked open the deepest land and made the seas and chased away Epic, [INDECIPHERABLE] Failed. On the planet the first men appeared and were servants to the dragons.

The Second Hymn tells of how Man, led by George, avatar of The God Who Failed, betrayed their masters and began their own extinction, especially that douchebag Steve who stole Lord [INDECIPHERABLE]'s lunch money in 9th Grade, fuck that guy.

The ending rhythm sounds out MALATORA.

## By Internet Kraken

### *A Citizen's Guide to Terra Malatora: Part Three*

It has come to our attention that some sensitive information about our wonderful home may have been leaked to the primitive world. Information that, unfortunately, reflects poorly on Terra Malatora. Rest assured that Fedcom has done no wrong, but cruel and vicious rumor mill of human society has used this information to demonize both the Cytrans and Terra Malatora.

As a result, all communication with people outside of Terra Malatora has been forbidden for the moment. Travel to anywhere outside of Terra Malatora is also restricted to high-ranking Cytrans. Also, you will notice an increased presence of Cytran patrols in the coming future. This is to ensure that any potential traitors and spies are located. It is nearly impossible that such people could even be here, but we must account for all possibilities. You must understand that this is for your own good. We do this to protect the lifestyle we all enjoy here in Malatora.

Communication with outsiders will eventually be permitted again, once we deem that all negative influences have been purged. For now, we urge all citizens to review proper communication protocols to avoid similar incidents in the future.

DO NOT say anything negative about Terra Malatora, your glorious homeland. This does not require an explanation.

DO NOT say anything negative about Cytrans or their policies. Primitive outsiders fear and hate Cytrans because they can not comprehend our glory. We must not give them more reason to reject us.

DO NOT say anything to indicate that your unhappy due to your current status in Terra Malatora. If you have problems you should bring them up with a Cytran education officer.

DO praise Malatora at any given opportunity and remind everyone how good it is here. The outsiders must learn how glorious our home is.

Again, this is for your own good. Outsiders are always eager to spread more rumors about Terra Malatora, and anything you say can be misinterpreted and turned into harmful lies. It is best to just not talk to anyone outside of Malatora. After all, if they didn't come here with you then they obviously do not appreciate your choices in life.

On an unrelated noted, attendance to Supreme Commander Taygon's public reveal of his next literary masterpiece is now mandatory. We have no doubt that all of you would have attended anyways. It's just a formality.

## By Dr Snofeld

### *Transcript of a refugee's testimony:*

My name is Doctor Frederick Hackenbecker, and before I came to São Tomé, I was a physician in Rhode Island. Until I lost that job. The clinic I worked at provided abortions and planned parenthood services as well as the work I did, and one night it got firebombed and burned to the ground. I spent a fruitless couple of months searching for a new post, and then my brother came to me with a proposal. He and his wife were moving to a new nation, with promises of equality and work for all. Martha is a musician, and she was told that her skills would be welcomed "to aid in spreading the true glory of Malatora." Well, of course I accepted. Every new settlement needs doctors.

You know as well as I do that the Citadel was nothing like they promised. I thought I'd get a general practitioner's post but they put me to work maintaining the machines that transferred human brains into Cytrans. A complete waste of my skills, especially since people were getting sick and injured every day. I helped as best I could between shifts but none of the Cytran leadership had thought to bring sufficient medical supplies—or maybe they had thought of it and just didn't care, I don't know. Of course they took care of their own bodies, to an extent. I mean, they didn't exert any personal restraint, spending most of their time [expletive deleted] each other and shovelling sickening amounts of food into their gaping mouths. But we had barely any penicillin, no painkillers, no anesthetic—we had to tear up the overalls of dead workers to use as bandages.

I did my best, but without proper supplies and equipment there's only so much you can do. The day they dragged my nephew away to turn him into one of... them... they broke Martha's arm in multiple places. I tried to set it properly but I couldn't; the Peace Corps doctors had to re-break her arm to correctly heal the bones.

That was far from the worst of it. The "rain" that formed in the

domes was corrosive to human skin, so half the population had horrific chemical burns. People routinely had limbs torn off for being less than perfect servants to the dragons, and of course without medicine they mostly died of blood loss or gangrene. And if one of the Cytrans took a “liking” to you... I treated some wounds that will take an awful lot of scotch to forget.

Meanwhile we heard tell that some of the Cytrans had *multiple* bodies – the leader had at least four, they said. We were falling ill and dying every day and those [expletive deleted] could swap their brains into different shells if they fancied a change!

A few of my coworkers and I started digging an escape tunnel – the Cytrans couldn’t fit inside the access panels, and didn’t care enough to check on us when we were off duty. Went clear to the outside. Jacob stayed behind to cause a diversion and I took his family with me through that tunnel. There were about ten of us, all told, but not all of us made it to the military. My friend Erik got torn to shreds when a dragon ambushed us, as did a few others. They didn’t get to see freedom, not really.

They brought me, Martha and little Lilly to this camp. More and more people arrive each day. Just this week my brother came back to us – somehow he managed to survive until the soldiers moved in. I thought that he’d been broken, from the look on his face when I saw him, but when Lilly came into the room he came back to life. Looked as happy as the day she was born, happier maybe.

I’m still trying to help. I can do more here, with proper medicine and supplies, and there’s so many refugees in bad health that the Peace Corps are happy to accept another pair of hands. Jacob offered to help with the motorpool or similar, but he’s far too feeble for anything that strenuous. At least he’s walking straight now, instead of all hunched over.



I'm thinking of enlisting in the Peace Corps properly once I get back to the States.

## By One and the Same

### *Excerpt from the journal of Dr. Mira Ashkoort:*

They changed my name! They changed my fucking name! I jumped through hoops to land this position, I gave up my citizenship to be involved with this project, and when I got to the immigration station they told me that I **can't be Mira Ashkoort!** Apparently some asshole here has the authority to just claim a name — MY name — and say that it's off-limits! Lazy fucker didn't even give me the option to choose something else (why is this even an issue?) before just assigning me the name "Aira Mshkoort" and shuffling me on through. Aira Mshkoort! How do you even fucking pronounce that? "Ummshkoort"? Christ!

I haven't even been here a day but I can already tell that I'm going to hate it here. I'm going to stick it out though. I've worked with some bad project heads before, even managed a polite golf clap when that smug asshole Rick took all the credit for our work on synthetic synapses, so I think I can deal with this.

I saw one of them on the way in. He didn't say anything, but that's okay with me. Honestly, I didn't know what to say anyway. I'm here because of simple academic curiosity, not because of any special interest in the dragons. Seeing them on the news for the first time seemed to me like an alien invasion. The brain-machine interface was, and still is in everywhere but here, the fevered dream of a madman and yet... here they are. My "Theoretical Cybernetics" courses at MIT were a joke. Textbooks upon textbooks of airy handwaving that amounted to "We have no idea how they did it."

So now I'm here to find out. Tomorrow is going to be my first day in the lab. I have a lot to learn, but I think I'll start by getting all the guys in the lab to refer to me by my fucking name.

## By Unguided

I shouldn't have done it, I shouldn't have taken this assignment. I know they're monsters and they need to be stopped, but the cost was too great. We didn't need any spies in the ranks of the elite, no psi-ops to cause them to turn on each other. We didn't need the effort.

Before I even arrived, I made sure to get in good with the leaders, make sure that they'd consider anyone else before they'd even think about me. A compliment or two, actual acknowledgement of their existence without betraying revulsion, actual (though insincere) praise. Things completely foreign to these shut-ins in tin can suits. It's sad, the mighty dragon overlords were more like abandoned puppies than men. Oversexed puppies that needed to be put down.

I shouldn't have gone through with the augmentation. Abomination is more like it. A futuristic mind-machine interface strapped to a bulky tin can. Only one thing kept me from suicide while the glorious leaders had their way with me, I begged the doctor in charge of the procedure for an emergency kill switch to this thing's pleasure centers, said there might be nights when I was feeling sick and didn't want to either disappoint my nestmates or sour the relationship over an embrace I wasn't up for. I'd take what feels like lying on top of a washing machine over actually feeling... that... any day.

Like I said, the cost was too high. My real body is gone, I'll never see it again. Who knows where it went? A creep dragon's collection? Recycled into fertilizer? Baked into brownies? All I know is that the whole thing was completely unnecessary.

I was about to start up the rumor mill when Mr. Lord called his closest allies in for an emergency meeting. There was a news story about the island, stuff any idiot could've learned about the operation; no big deal, right? Taygon didn't think so, he thought one of his old enemies had infiltrated the ranks and was leaking information, raving about

how the French would be here far sooner than even his genius mind (hah) could prepare for. Taygon closed off the public areas of Tatsu Eyrie to keep spies away, we're all confined to our quarters for twenty four hours.

Was it really that easy? Is he really that crazy? Well, I knew he was crazy, but I didn't think he'd crumble just because someone actually paid attention to him. The chief of security is convinced shi's found the mole they've imagined exists, but it doesn't seem like they'll be coming for me anytime soon. Commander Dongs, I'll continue your proud tradition and send reports back about their idiocy, just make sure there's a human body waiting for me when I get out.

— The man from D.A.N.C.I.N.G.D.O.N.G.S.

## By Young Freud

### *E-correspondence from Ivan Kalash Fukuyama, FY 99:*

The conference went well. I attended a lecture on new procedures for tissue regeneration. The new bioreactor/incubators with the hormonal injectors accelerate tissue growth to an almost unbelievable level. There was an unusual presentation from the Indian beef industry that everyone was still talking about: Kasaai Bioagriculture managed to bring the cost of vat-grown beef even lower by creating to beef teratomas in-vitro then throwing them into meat processors like normal. The potential market in the Americas is said to be great, because many of the older population dislike the taste of the soy meats or cannot afford the vat-grown steaks that replaced beef proteins following the major BSE outbreaks.

The most fascinating lecture had to be the warfare in the transhuman age. Dr. Jameson, who I called that because of his small, cube-like body because his name was something a mix of Somali and Chinese that gave my own language sub-processors trouble, approached the podium to introduce Sieglinda Van Buren, a military advisor to the off-world habitats. She supposedly was a veteran that had fought in every major conflict in the last ten years. She was one of those Valkyrie-generation supersoldiers. Never seen one in real life but they're pretty awe-inspiring. She towered over everyone there. I want to guess she was about 2 meters tall. The only way you can tell she was female her flared hips and her delicate face. Well, all relative to the rest of her body: her hips tapered into a strong core, and the bridge of her nose was wide and shallow, supposedly from the standard-issue skull reinforcement. She also has that muscular pout, the one you see in the cines or the ractives. However, unlike what's seen in popular fiction, she was flat-chested. She wore this military dress uniform that was a mix of a Hussar's outfit and Mao suit, with a stiff leather collar, reminiscent of the old American marines, restraining her horse neck.

The lecture was pretty fascinating. She talked about the ongoing insurgency on the Argentine Moons, with the opfor using so-called “suicide bombing squads” of full-conversion cyborgs. They’re wired with looted mining explosives, but the force of the detonation pops their headcases off. Since the braincases are reinforced and resistant to concussions, it allows them to be recovered, reinstalled into a new body and ready to go. This allows them to constantly evolve their terror tactics. She gave her opinion on Operation Red Dawn. She thinks the Barsoomian separatists can’t hide in their warrens in Olympus Mons forever and that the Martian forces will eventually rout them from the base of the mountain. Also, the Barsoomians using bio-drones as “indestructible zombie soldiers” to cover that much ground is a mistake waiting to happen: one of the reasons she that women like her supersoldiers have a job is because the military always wants brains on the ground. Bio-drones are too programmed and unable to have the tactical or strategic intuition to handle dynamic changes in combat. Teleoperated bio-drones are just as bad, with electronics warfare and signal hacking. That’s how it was with UAVs in the mid-21st century, which is why they only use them for scouting, support, and hauling heavy equipment.

Right when she said that, someone, I think it was a transgenic chimera-person, brought up Malatora. I could see the irises in her untanned orbits roll when that question was asked. She must be asked this all the time. She went into a rant that Malatora was doomed to failure, even with their technological advances. All the fabric in her uniform went under tension that it looked like she could rip out of it at any point. Like the Confederacy and the Nazis, the issues they had with their military were systemic of their culture.

The biggest one was that they prized form over function. Sieglinda began talking about the Valkyrie generation, because, she joked, vanity is a trait all of her genotype share. Their size allows them to go anywhere were an unmodified human can go, while, at the same

time, is optimized for strength, speed, and endurance. If they were any bigger, they could be even stronger, but couldn't navigate through a decaying arcology or old buildings, because their weight would cause them to fall through, or crawl through hand-dug tunnel complexes because they're too large. Even now, she said they still have some problems on stealth or security missions because they just tower over crowds, announcing their presence to everyone. Everything is a compromise.

With the Malatorans, they couldn't see any compromise. Their dragon bodies were too large: she went to say that anything over 5 meters on the battlefield is a target. They were also built for reasons other than combat: the base model, along with other 'morphs, were clearly built for some weird "playbeing" role. Even when they retrofitted them for combat, they were too generalized in their roles. Their affectation for wing-powered flight crippled them when being used against fast movers and combat aerodynes. The use of armor and weapon add-ons weighed them down so much that it negated their questionable agility over military hardware of the international forces. Their vaunted close-combat abilities brought them within range of infantry-carried airburst and anti-armor assault weapons or the point-defense guns of armored vehicles which perforated the delicate aluminum exoskeletons. The Malatorans were closing quarters when the old American government was flying around those "Sword of Damocles" stealth UAVs with megawatt lasers as part of their black operations assassination arsenal.

The other reason was that they were blinded by their own hype. They honestly thought they were the world's apex predator. They weren't tempered by years of training. They simply thought that being "dragons" would fix all their problems. Their military leadership was blinded by arrogance. She found their belief that the Malatoran equivalent of human wave tactics in the era of maturing effects-based warfare was laughable. When the old British Royal and old American

Marines landed and started pounding them with cruise missiles and naval artillery, the Malatoran “dragons” must have defecated themselves in fear, if they didn’t retreat and hunker down in their volcano fortress. Or if they had rectums.

She went on to exclaim that she realized that the being who asked the question might be harboring some sympathy for them but not to. Just like the old American South, the “lost cause of a chimera-transgenic homeland” is not something to be proud of. The Malatorans were fundamentally broken people before their transformation. They enslaved and raped thousands of sentient beings for their own personal pleasure. They were wrong. She finished her response by saying that you can still feel the hand of their leader even now. On the far reaches of the colonial sphere, on the edges of the habituated solar system, there are still people who believe they’re refugees of some sort of persecution and cling to the Malatoran banner like it’s some sort of messianic savior. No one knows where the Shephard Commander went off to following the war, but there’s always some group that’s mined an asteroid of reactives and recycled carbon trying to invade some habitat or lay siege to some moon under the same green-gold and crimson eagle they ripped off from a table-top wargame so long ago.

She knows. She’s fought them a great many times.



## By Some Silliness

Bandit, they called me. I guess I am. I stole it, I stole the body. This one for Taygon, this supposedly beautiful body we wanted to use to infiltrate and recruit outside Malatora. He said it was beautiful, I look at it, at what I am now, and it looks wrong. False. Uncanny. But at least it was humanoid. So now I am a bandit. Unofficially, of course. Officially, there was no "bandit caste", officially, it was long abandoned. But perceived criminals and dissenters are given no respect, especially no respect for their life.

I had to steal it, though. It was the only body that looked human enough. My old body, gone. Eaten by those dragons. But the things I saw in Malatora... the things that happened, the riots, the killing and eating. The decadence of the Cytrans, huffing catnip and drinking cheap strawberry milkshakes, fucking all through the night like wild animals, while the people outside starved. Only Drazil offered his aid to the humans, poor lonely Drazil. I felt sorry for him, but he'd never leave with me. He loved being a dragon too much, and he still thought Taygon good and wise, the poor fool.

But my real crime, it wasn't theft, oh no. Perhaps the biggest crime, because I stole a Cytran body made for Taygon himself, and took it out of Malatora. They weren't going to forgive that one. But no, my real crime, the final straw that forced me to flee, was buying a couple of smokes off one of the natives. I just missed smoking from when I was human, that's all. But that was all it took. "Ignorance of the law is no defence", they said, "and now you must die!"

So I have a new body, a human one, so I may hide among the humans again. I don't think I can go home again. No. I can never stay in one place again any more, for Malatora would never stop hunting me. I could hear the roars of the dragon behind me. A military commander, I didn't know his name, but one of Taygon's lackeys, was shouting about how this was a "standard training exercise" in cap-

turing a fleeing spy. That's what they did to bandits. Bandits like me.

The beating of wings thundered overhead, the sound of their aluminium bones causing a hellish sound of metal scraping against metal, accompanying their unearthly roars. Fires sprung up around me, and the sounds of the animals of the jungle screaming back in terror began to join in the cacophony. Flaming branches and vines, terrified beasts and swarms of disturbed insects all flew at my face, tripped up my legs. It was all I could do to stay standing and keep running, and if not for the Cytran movement computers I may not have managed it.

My salvation came to me through a brief glimpse through smoke and fire. A rocky overhang, mud and leaves and ferns covering it. I leapt through the flames and into the mud, covering myself in the dirt and the leaves and submerging beneath the mud.

There I waited, and prayed the dragons gave up the hunt for now.

## By FisheyStix

I've been staring awake for the last couple of nights, looking up into the depths of the pale white ceiling and the gently rotating blades of the fan. I'm told that this was a person's place, once. A nice place too, one of the more pleasant cottages you could get out here in São Tomé, or as it was once called, Malatora. The History books say that, long ago, there was a war here, but this cottage, this one little shack doesn't have a single bullet hole in it. Not a scorch mark, not a hole blasted in the side, nothing. My wife and I found it when we moved out here, and between the lovely landscape and the warm climate, and prized educational system, it looked like a good place to raise our daughter.

The cottage wasn't cheap — old architecture like this is easy to maintain, but the history is the really valuable part. I remembered when the real estate agent brought us out here.

"It was owned by a general actually — a quiet man, but one with great conviction," he'd said, unlocking the door, and showing us inside. "They said he had the devil's luck, and I believe it — the guy actually took down a fighter jet, all by himself. Can you believe that?"

"I guess not," I said, looking at the wood. God, real wood! It even smelled like cut pine, after all those years. "The Malatorans weren't exactly prized strategists, you know. During the early stages of the war, guys used to spray paint dragons on the sides of their planes — the technology simply hadn't been built with efficiency in mind. At least, not —"

"Honey," My wife had said. "He's not interested in one of your lectures."

"Oh, I don't know about that." The real estate agent was smiling. "I'm a little bit of a history buff myself. That's why I sell these really old places — they still have character." He knocked on the wood

frame of the front door. "This was erected in 2042, originally built for one of Taygon's consorts, you know, who wanted to get away from all the..."

"Bad business"

"That's a good word for it. But it was eventually gifted to General William Trajon. The lucky son of a bitch died out here, I'm told."

"He died in battle," I corrected.

"He was wounded, yes. But we're told that he actually walked, wingless and everything, back into this area to die. Recent studies suggest that some of the wiring they've dug up was actually his—a piece of his leg, we suspect. It was found near a hydraulic shaft."

"I hadn't read that." I said. That was a lie—I had read it, but dismissed it. The wiring found was much too sophisticated for a '42 model cytran, and the paint off the shaft was all wrong for a thigh.

"Daddy!" My daughter squeaked, poking her head around the corner. "They've got the TVs you like!"

"You really have his old LCDs?" My wife said, a light forming behind her eyes.

"Absolutely," The realtor gestured further in, and we followed him to a large sitting room. "They're not exactly museum quality, but we keep them in good shape."

"It's a wonder no one's broken in to steal these," I said, picking up my daughter and hoisting her on to my shoulder, pointing at the wall of television screens. "See?" I said. "You could watch cartoons on this one, the news on this one, and Taygon's speeches on this one."

She hid her head on my shoulder. She didn't like that name, "Taygon." I smiled, because I had taught her well.

"Well, it's comfy all right." I said. "We've been trying to find a nice place since my father died. I can't imagine his money would be any better spent—besides, he would love it here."

"History was his thing, too?" the realtor asked, and stepped into the back room, where he took a screen and drew up the contracts.

"Absolutely," I said, and put my daughter down. "He dug up half the Malatoran culture, all on his own—threw up a few museums, and spent his last days trying to archive it all. He'd love to get a few of these TVs, I'll bet."

"I'll bet. Now, did you have a bid in mind?"

—

The sun is rising over history. So much time has passed—the Rape of São Tomé, the African Troubles, the Usurping... I have a colleague who is testing the age and wiring on a dong he swears to God belonged to Taygon himself. Torn off during the final stages of rebellion.

My daughter is standing at my door. She is shivering a little bit—she had a nightmare, about the Awful Times—I shouldn't have let her watch that documentary. I explain to her that we've evolved beyond that kind of thing now—we've gone back to just mommies and daddies, and not children, or animals, or anything like that. We're civilized, after all.

My daughter stifles a snuffle, and hides her face with her wings.

"Do you want me to read to you?" I say, taking her hand, and leading her back into her bedroom.

"Mm-hm." She says quietly. I take a book off her shelf, and turn it to the introduction.

"Czeslaw Milosz," I read. "This one is Polish."

"When we were fleeing the burning city  
And looked back from the first field path,  
I said, 'Let the grass grow over our footprints,  
Let the harsh prophets fall silent in the fire,  
Let the dead explain to the dead what happened.  
We are fated to beget a new and violent tribe  
Free from the evil and the happiness that drowsed there.  
Let us go —'

— And the earth was opened for us by a sword of flames."

## By Malrauxs Place

*Dr. John [redacted], M.D., former chief of FedCom medical staff:*

As I slip on my surgical gloves, I know that I have come full circle.

It's what happens I guess. Fate works that way. You can escape everything the world throws at you, but at the end of the day, you'll never escape yourself.

We've been here before, you and I. You, resting calmly on the operating table, me, breaking your shape to remake you in the image of the divine. Of what you'd thought of as the divine back then, anyway.

When they took the Citadel, I believed they'd put an end to our art. I believed I'd never feel the familiar weight of the scalpel and the bone saw in my hands again. And sometimes, I'd thought I'd be happier for it.

But I'm as guilty as you, my Dear Leader. I'm the one whose gifted hands built your hell, hands that our almighty Lord had given me to heal and to cure, and that I misused in my hubris and my vanity to let the beasts of legend lose upon the innocent people of that island. Today, the score will be settled for both of us. I have to hand it to the judges at The Hague, they have a sense of humor. This last work will be my penance, if not my redemption.

Of course, your old form is gone. The first thing you did when you awoke in your new one was to tear it apart and devour it. I had never seen such hate and loathing before. When you sunk your aluminum teeth into your old self, crying tears of rage and roaring like a madman, I knew I'd doomed us all.

Now, the very technology you conceived to be your salvation shall become the tool of your damnation. Before me lies the new and final "you." It is, that much is certain, the crowning achievement of the Cytran project. I had begun working on the blueprints for it while

I was still trapped in that damp bunker of yours, and all I could do was loathe you in silence while the screeching and clanking of your incessant fornicating echoed through the stinking hallways and the enemy's artillery thundered hundreds of meters above us.

The level of detail on my last masterpiece is astounding even to me. From the lopsided facial hair to the flabby skin and the pasty complexion, it is the spitting image of the man that came to me so many years ago with the fires of purpose burning in his eyes and promises of the limitless ways he'd employ my talents pouring from his tongue. I have a good memory, Robert.

My hands are steady and my heart is glad as I begin to unscrew the safety locks on your brain case. Rest easy, mein Furrer. Today, like a dragon fellating hir own dong, you too will come full circle.



## By DrSunshine

### **Reuters:**

The CEOs of Standard & Poors, Moody's, and the Fitch Group today co-authored a report on Friday announcing the downgrading of Malatora Diamonds, Inc. credit rating to junk-bond status following the recent Wikileaks incident that revealed Malatora Diamonds CEO Robert "Taygon" Lord's intentions to embezzle the money into a multibillion dollar construction scheme.

S&P Board chairman John Finkelmayr writes, in the Wall Street Journal, "Though MDI started off with an initially solid capital generation strategy, it's become patently clear that Mr. Lord does not intend to distribute any dividends or pay off any of the long-term bonds that were initially set out to fund his venture, despite MDI's unexpected windfall profits. With the documents obtained via Wikileaks, it's obvious that MDI is just a front for a ludicrous pie-in-the-sky plot."

Today when markets opened Malatora Diamonds's share prices, which had been trading at ¥120 per share dropped spectacularly in wake of the credit downgrade to ¥0.05 at closing time.

— Reuters News,

*"Credit Agencies Downgrade MDI to Junk Bond Status"*

**Datalinks**

By Chinese Tony Danza

***DECRYPTED LOG, DATE UNKNOWN:***

I told Keller my plan. He told me flat out that I was crazy, that he couldn't possibly do it in the time allotted without setting off alarms, but I assured him that soon enough alarms would be a non-issue. For the first time since I awoke in this body, I saw him smirk. It was uneasy, but I think he finally realized I had no intention of turning against him unprovoked.

Today I met a second generation cytran, one of the miracle babies they'd engineered to be born as essentially cloned brains dropped into upgradable bodies made to be thrown away in exchange for larger ones. It was an interesting experience. The boy shuffled listlessly through the corridor, eyes on the ground. When I asked him what was wrong, he just sighed and kept on walking. Couldn't exactly put my finger on it, but I'll bet you anything that it's the same affliction as the first generation happening all over again. They hate being in these... things. They want to run and jump and play like human children, but are too bogged down by their cumbersome cytran bodies.

—

***DECRYPTED LOG, DATE UNKNOWN:***

The citadel is in full-fledged panic. Security is on high alert, although this information has to be delivered by word of mouth by confused and upset cytrans as I've completely crippled the public address system. Essential services to the Tatsyu Eyrie have been shut down: running water, gas, electric, etc.. I'm sure there's probably a backup generator in the Eyrie itself, but knowing Taygon it probably runs the bare minimum to keep his chakat porn on screen at all times.

The UN soldiers are drawing nearer. They will have no trouble getting past the HELICIS defense system; I've seen to that. Every one of

the trap doors has been meticulously deconstructed, and even in the offchance that they fail, the cell doors below have all been pounded open. The rest of HELICIS—the weapons Taygon thought would shred his enemies to bits—have all been taken offline, their control program scrambled beyond recognition. By the time any one of his mentally void security staff figures out how to regain control, the UN will already be inside.

There's one more fish left to fry. I'm heading for the Tatsyu Eyrie and Taygon's private suite. He is going to pay for the damage he has caused.

—

***Taygon's Personal Chambers, Audio Log:***

Taygon: Who's there? You can't hide from me!

*There is a quiet rustling of papers.*

Taygon: What kind of idiot are you? Don't you know where you are? You're in the lair of the dragon. The mastermind behind this utopia! I could destroy you with a single breath and not even think twice about it! I AM THE DRAGON THAT BUILT —

*A sudden, sickening tearing sound, like a shrapnel tearing through flesh. Someone gives quiet gasp as the sound of aluminum bending and breaking soon follows.*

Unidentified male: I'm sick of hearing you talk.

Taygon: Crimson Dark Blade... of Acid Metal Steel? What's... why?

CDBoAMS: Taygon, I'm surprised. Do you forget so soon the voice of your first enemy? I made sure Keller gave me the same voice, just to make this moment all the more sweet.

Taygon: Wait... you're... no, it can't be.

CDBoAMS: Say it, Taygon. Say the name.

Taygon: Lord Styraxium? But you were—

Styraxium: Decommissioned? Oh, yes, Taygon. I was. I sat on a shelf in a dark back room of the medical lab for a long, long time. It gave me a lot of time to think about what happened between us. This moment has been a long time coming.

Taygon: So what are you going to do, Styraxium? Kill me? You fool. You can break my spine, you can go on and destroy the rest of my body as you see fit, but you will never kill the dragon. For every body you destroy, I'll have them make two more, just like our hydra brethren in the days of old.

Styraxium: I'm not going to kill you, Taygon. That would be too easy for you. No, old friend, the suffering you've caused demands a better punishment. One I've been thinking about long and hard.

Taygon: You're... you're going to decommission me? Is that it? You think you can just throw a reversal of fortune at me like some pathetic take off of the Twilight Zone? Go ahead. Put me on a shelf in the dark. I can wait. My loving followers would never let me stay there.

*Lord Styraxium breaks into a fit of uncontrollable laughter.*

Taygon: They'd put me back in a body before you even knew what happened, and you know what'll happen then? I'll find you, and I'll tear you apart piece by piece. Then? I'll put you back. Back on the shelf. And this time I'll kill every human being who even looks at you.

Styraxium: Even that would be too easy for you. No, Taygon, I have something very special in store for you. Sit tight. I'll be right back...

*The door opens and closes. Taygon mumbles something under his breath and grunts several times, as if trying to move. The door opens and closes*

*again. Something heavy is being dragged across plush carpeting.*

Styraxium: Dr. Keller whipped this up just for you, Taygon.

Taygon: No... no! NO! That's impossible! I devoured it as soon as I realized my true draconic form!

Styraxium: It's a clone, Taygon. And it was so easy to get a hold of. All Dr. Keller had to do was take a few cells off of your brain the last time you had your nutrients changed. Then he ran it through the same processes used in making the second generation... except instead of the brain, he cloned everything else. Taygon: Get that thing away from me!

Styraxium: Taygon... meet Robert Lord.

Taygon: NO! I WON'T GO BACK! I WON'T GO BACK!!

*He flies into a fit of hysterics. Amidst this there is a quiet sound of something passing through flesh. The room suddenly falls silent. Then there is a metallic whine followed by the ripping of flesh. After a few moments of silence, the door opens and closes. End of audio log.*

—

### **DECRYPTED LOG, DATE UNKNOWN:**

I've delivered Taygon's brain case and body back to Dr. Keller. The whole place is falling into chaos around us, but Keller has assured me that he'll make sure that Robert Lord lives again through hell or high water. He grinned at this prospect, ear to ear. It's the first time I've seen him look so satisfied since I first woke up again. And I'm glad too.

He offered to give me my body back the same way, but I know it just won't be possible at this point. The citadel's not going to last nearly long enough to clone another body for me. He has to know that... maybe he's just trying to make me comfortable. I appreciate

the thought, but I know what I have to do to finally be free from this prison.

There's one more task I have to complete. I'm about to head over to the brain nutrient fluid processing facility. It is there that I will end this. All the pain, all the suffering... finished once and for all. This is the closing chapter of Malatora, penned by a ghost writer after the death of its author.

—

***Brain Nutrient Fluid Processing, Security Tape:***

*A dark red dragon enters the main chamber, ordering all the humans to leave. They seem confused at first, but quickly gather themselves and rush out. An orange and yellow wolf with lobster claws and a shark fin steps out of the security office and starts yelling at the dragon, but is quickly burnt to cinders by a burst of flames. The dragon then proceeds to open its sheath and pound itself against the various tanks and machinery. Within minutes, most of the facility is destroyed, and the dragon's body is in terrible shape. With the last of its strength, the body tears its own brain case out and hurls it at a wall, shattering it.*

## By Raserys

### *Tanya:*

Damn them. Damn Taygon and his idiotic lackeys. Onnalee and I both knew it was folly, a war with ALL the humans would inevitably result in Malatora's destruction. And amongst all this, he couldn't even take time to think of his actions, not with Drazil and Staliph and Dysta feeding his ego. Even now, as the Cult of George raised rebellion behind the city's walls, and Allied troops stormed the island, all he could think of was petty revenge on D.A.N.C.I.N.G.D.O.N.G.S and their top agent, Hrothgar. Mind you, not because of the threat they posed, but because Hrothgar stole Taygon's in-progress "novel" and spread it across the globe. Tanya stared at the screen for a second time.

"When I find Hrothgar I'm going to put a bullet through his fucking brain!"

"Whoa! Kill? Really Taygon, this is the kind of thing they're feeding off."

"Shut it Tanya, you don't know anything. Hrothgar IS Dancing Dongs! Can't you see that? Or have you the brain of a pigeon to go with your looks?"

Tanya shook her head. The Council had erupted into dispute over whether or not Hrothgar was indeed a D.A.N.C.I.N.G.D.O.N.G.S agent, or a true Cytran at heart. Staliph and Onalee sided with Tanya, Dysta and Drazil with Taygon. When she thought about it, Taygon never really trusted her. Granted, Taygon had never trusted anyone, but Tanya was different. Tanya was "the sane one," as the vile Goons proclaimed, or at least they did for a little while. Was it really her fault that they didn't understand the brilliance of image macros and memes? She had always been the outsider, a dickwolf among dragons. Tanya gathered her wits and typed the cleverest reply she could

think of.

“LOL ROFL UMAD BRO?”

Brilliant. She looked out the balcony. A shame she would never see this place in its prime again. Hrothgar had irreversibly split the Council, she saw that now. She and a relatively large group of Malatorans were leaving São Tomé. Their top scientists had constructed a refuge, a underground sanctuary on the now abandoned island of Principe. Tanya sighed, or at least what dragons passed off for sighing. She typed her response slowly, making sure Taygon waited for every word. She posted her reply and flew off, making her way to the hidden city.

“We’re leaving you Taygon. We all agree. You’re dangerous, weak, arrogant and cowardly. They even call themselves ‘Goons’ for fucks sake. They’re just using words! And you promised us sanctuary and progress. But you gave us pantshitting. We are taking the FedCom project and moving on without you. Don’t try to follow. Even Staliph is with us. Goodbye Robert. We could never have done this without you. We just can’t finish it with you.”

As she was flying off, she heard a roar of rage and saw white-hot flames in the distance. Tanya rose above the clouds to avoid detection and pulled out a small vial. Her personal science team had created an alternative to Cytrans. Genetic manipulation. Instead of limiting themselves to technology, they could now mold the body like a plaything, to create the true ultimate being.

“No!” a scientist had shouted as she took the vial from the laboratory. “It’s unstable, there are countless mental and physical side-effects we haven’t tempered yet!”

“Oh? Like what?”

“Multiple test subjects sprouted hideous tentacles, each one 5 yards



long. Others became more than human, animal-hybrid monstrosities. And all of them suffered severe mental side-effects, messiah-complexes, insanity, being severely unfunny, and lack of an aversion to..."

Tanya began circling around him. "To what, doctor?"

"... Rape. Each of the subjects attempted to rape all of the scientists in the room. Damn it, we lost good men in there."

Tanya took a moment to think. Then she smiled a hideous dragon grin. "TL;DR." She slipped the vial into a breastplate compartment and burned the facility.

After all, she thought, what could go wrong?

## By Stultus Maximus

*Private journals of Malatoran historian:*

Where do I begin? Where can I begin?

The talk shows and ghostwritten tell-alls have been done. The novelty has worn off. It's time for me, the first trained historian of Malatora to sit down and put together an objective history of this new and unique nation.

How can I write about my nation—and in a way, race—in an objective fashion?

Maybe this journal will help me collect my thoughts and give me a chance to decide what avenues I want to pursue.

The idea for Malatora had been kicking around for years in one form or another. Partly a misfits' dream of independence and partly a transhumanist fantasy, the early 21st century American wars were the events that inadvertently led to the dream becoming a reality. The large number of IED casualties during those wars led to unprecedented research in prosthetic limbs—particularly arms and hands. Most of that research was based on the standard connections to existing musculature, requiring the amputee to learn which subtle muscle twitches activated the complex mechanisms and manipulations. The notion of tying directly in to the subject's brain for motor control was thought of, of course, but it was largely dismissed as impractical, difficult, and dangerous. Then the breakthrough happened: one research team at Johns Hopkins discovered the brain mapping method that has been the basis for prosthetics ever since. But this is common knowledge, every person on earth has heard of it and many have benefitted from soldiers to children to clumsy lumberjacks.

This wouldn't have meant much to the Malatorans other than another far-off spark of hope if it weren't for our benefactors. Who would have thought that our ridiculous message board activity would have

attracted the attention of some wealthy transhumanists and neurobiologists?

Long story short, within a few years we all had replaced our limbs. A good start, but not quite what we were looking for. Sure it was nice to be able to run faster, lift more, and so on. But we wanted better bodies and those of our own designs. And more than that, we wanted our own lives in our own place. Fortunately for us, there is no shortage of awkward outcasts in the nation's engineering schools. The brain-cyborg interface had continued to be developed – primarily by DARPA for potential uses in instant and precise weapons platform control. It was just a final push and we were able to keep our brains alive and fully functional inside artificial bodies of our own constructs – within limits, of course. The mapping limitations were very well defined. It's not like we could have done anything as absurd as create bird bodies for ourselves. However, with some clever physiological work, we were able to use the human brains to control artificial tails, directional ears, and other features everyone's seen on the Malatrans.

So... Immortality, of a sort. The furor was strangely muted. There were dire warnings of societal disaster from the soft sciences, cautions against failures and unexpected malfunctions from the hard sciences, the expected condemnations from organized religions about "playing God." Those aren't the reasons that the world isn't composed entirely of "cytrans" though. As it turned out, most people wanted to be people. Part is the senses – while enhanced, they're still not quite what our brains evolved to deal with. We can feel the grass beneath our feet and a cool fall breeze just fine, but there is something ineffable that is lost. Part is that when it comes down to it, the number of people who crave immortality isn't as great as the number of people who would like an eternal rest, joining their loved ones rather than watching everything change and die. And a very big part is reproduction. We can't do it. New cytrans are made the way the first ones

were, by brain transplant into a mechanical body. It doesn't look like that will ever change, either. So the world is, more or less, at peace with its two sorts of sentient beings.

Okay, I've been dancing around this for too long. There just cannot be a discussion of Malatora without mentioning Taygon. It's fair to say that without him, we wouldn't be here. It's equally fair and accurate to say that if he were still with us, we still wouldn't be here. He was the inspiration but also... Okay, let's be honest. He was unstable. He started the core group, he put the idea into our heads that we could take robot form and have our own nation, and his incessant evangelism on the internet was how our benefactors discovered us. Beyond that...

It's still hard to talk about him. Not just because of how he was at the end, but because it's hard to think that we once followed the man and thought he had brilliant ideas.

For crying out loud, he was supposed to be founding this peaceful, noninterventionist nation but he put far more loving thought and detail into how we were going to kill other humans than in how sanitation would work! What kind of nation is it that has a fleet of submarines, an armored bunker, but no opera houses? The answer is, a nation of lunatics.

The turning point was the dragons. I'll have to include the dragons in our history. It's embarrassing, but it's the truth. Malatora was supposed to be the home for giant cytran dragons with bizarre sexual habits. By the time the first implants and bodies were being made, it was entirely clear that the dragons were an impossible fantasy. We could make cat-men. We could make lizard-men. Centaurs were actually in the realm of possibility. Our benefactors had even arranged our own territory. But why was Taygon continuing to insist that he put his brain into a physically impossible form with absolutely absurd libido and weapons? The rest of us moved on past that. We

were happy to have what we had. But not Taygon. He insisted on creating the dragon body from his own plans and wiring himself in according to his own specs. We told him that the senses couldn't be re-programmed like he wanted (why did he want to re-wire the smell of ordinary humans to be foul?) and that the brain's motor ability just couldn't handle things like wings.

But he went ahead and insisted.

The horror in that laboratory, I'll never forget. As his brain tried to cope with the multiple conflicting inputs, the mechanical body thrashed wildly. I'm just glad that the amount of armor he insisted on installing made it too heavy to move around that much. We could tell he was in terrible agony and tried to sedate him to transfer the brain into a suitable body. But he resisted, totally unwilling (or unable) to admit that he was wrong. His last scream of "Fuck you, I'm a dragon!" is seared into all our memories.

I can't write more at this time. There's so much emotion I need to suppress about Taygon—the man whom I once admired but grew to pity. I'm going to resume this after a soothing cytran opera performance. Yes, we did get the opera house built. You may think it's cheating to have cytran singers when our vocal cords can be created as perfectly as we want. But you haven't heard Tanya sing... She embraced her multiplicity and has multiple independent vocal sets. She can sing harmony with herself, with resonances you can't possibly imagine without hearing it. And it's not cheating at all—it takes a uniquely fractured mind to be able to control several voices at once. Remember, it's still human motor control on all our parts. I'm going to enjoy this. It's far better to have a thriving unique culture of arts that takes advantage of our unique abilities than to have some absurd militaristic fantasy world. I could go on about this, about the painters that use colors that normal human eyes cannot see but still have a subliminal effect, or paintings that change their view based on the wavelength a cytran sets his eyes to... But I'll be late.