

### Kedit's Field

"They's stoppin'," the excited sergeant exclaimed while turning both heads toward his superior. "We got um scared, maybe?"

KokoroTetian General KonPita-Peck motored across the room as fast as ten stubby legs could carry him.

"What you say?" he growled in stereo.

The sergeant's heads pivoted on long thick necks to follow his superior's progress while he waved at the screen with the upper-right of his four hands.

"The Antraka's be stopped, General Sir. We got um where we wants um."

Giving the long crocodile-like snout on his right face a sharp shake, the general glared through the bombed out window frame behind the sergeant. His other snout nearly touched the sergeant's monitor as he grunted.

"We not think General Khephra give up so easy," he said, following the KokoroTetian practice of referring to themselves in the plural.

"He not give up, Sir," a voice behind him announced.

KonPita-Peck jerked his right face toward the new speaker so quickly he sent blobs of drool flying in his direction.

"Lopto? Where you be?"

The general's young aide dodged a slimy gob of goo and shrugged his broad shoulders. "We be talking to officers in field. They say Khephra stop to let group of Antraka nobles clear battlefield."

"Civvies?" the general laughed as he moved closer to the window. "What madness be this, maybe?"

Through the window sill, he could see a small group racing toward the left-side of his view. Khephra's enormous army was lined up just beyond them, with saucer-shaped craft hovering above, waiting to meet their KokoroTetian equivalents in the sky.

Lopto huffed loudly. "Antraka morality! Khephra always worry about hurting non-combatants."

KonPita-Peck grunted merrily. "Good thing we not so stupid. Civvies make just as good after-battle dinner as dead enemy soldiers."

The sergeant shook his left head. "We not like Antraka so much." His other head turned toward Lopto. "They got other species in group, maybe?"

Before the grinning aide could respond, the general waved his four hands wildly. "Get everybody moving. Attack now!"

The room erupted into a cacophony of shrieks and counter shrieks as orders were broadcast in their eardrum-piercing native language to the tens-of-thousands of KokoroTetian troops surrounding the general's temporary headquarters.

Lopto looked out as a group of three-meter-tall, specially bred soldiers raced past the small hut's open doorway. The shadows of low-flying saucers flickered over them as the burp of heavy laser fire filtered in from above.

"Important!" KonPita-Peck shouted. "Not shoot civvies! Khephra stay put as long as they be in way."

The general hurried to the window again to see his troops spreading out over the plane below. Hundreds of balls of deadly energy shot out from his front line, pounding the enemy's light shields. He jerked around and hurried to the sergeant's console.

"Keep firing," he shrieked at the screen. "Puny shields not hold much longer."

The sergeant waved a hand, expanding the virtual screen to twice its normal size before pointing to the data readout on the right edge.

"Right flank's shields be weakening, General Sir. Saucers can knock hole in it quicklike."

"Do it," the general shouted while racing back to the window sill.

As he watched, two of his saucers outmaneuvered their opponents, arcing toward the weakest point and releasing heavy bursts of energetic plasma. The throbbing white balls struck one after the other, sending people and equipment flying, and leaving a gapping hole in the Antraka line.

"Ha!" the sergeant exclaimed. "That blow had'a kill hundreds."

More saucers turned toward the opening. Though the Antraka fighters tried to stop them, another deadly payload hit the opening, expanding it even more.

"They gonna run now," KonTika-Peck shouted as he turned around in a KokoroTetian dance.

His celebration was cut short when the room's opposite wall exploded inward.

"Where they come from?" he screeched after pushing himself off the floor. "Lopto! Get me..."

The general stopped as his aide struggled, but failed to rise. The poor soldier's left head was covered with his own purple blood, its long snout nearly gone.

Staggering to his feet, the stunned sergeant wiped blood from his face, but it did not appear to be his own.

Shaking the thick, purple fluid from his hands, he cried, "Enemy sneak behind us, General Sir."

A more distant explosion drew the general's attention to the battlefield as one of his saucers crashed into the rear of his own left flank.

"Get after them," he shouted.

KonPita-Peck turned to see his sergeant bend down and squawk into his communicator, but before he could finish, the room was again filled with smoke and flying debris. Stumbling backwards, the general's massive body crashed through the bottom of the window sill and tumbled down a short embankment in front of the building.

From his prone position, he could just see his unconscious aid fall from another window and roll into a tall bush at the base of the rise. The sergeant waved at him from the window just before the entire building erupted into a ball of flame. Heat from the explosion set the brush around him on fire and singed his thick light-gray skin as a boiling black and orange ball rose into the air.

"Shendtada," he squawked while scrambling through burning debris.

He called twice to the prone figure as he rushed to him. Getting no response, he grabbed both the aide's right arms and drug him from the now-burning bush. Flaming debris continued to rain down on them as he pulled his unconscious assistant clear of imminent danger.

"If you not live," he grunted as two huge KokoroTetian soldiers raced up. "At least We can eat you for dinner."

"General, be you OK, maybe?" one of the soldiers squawked anxiously.

Releasing his burden, KonPita-Peck shook his heads. "Get him to med station quicklike."

"Yes, Sir," they responded, but did not move.

“What happening with enemy?”

“Civvies be off battlefield, Sir, and the enemy now advancing.”

The general turned toward the battlefield, but continued to point to his aide. “One take care of him. Other come with us.”

The left soldier nodded and lifted the smaller aide up over his shoulder. Without even looking back, KonPita-Peck rushed to a somewhat higher hill for a better view of the battle scene.

“We not give up tactical advantage so easy,” he stated while moving within sight of the fighting, and waving two hands at the soldier.

“Contact field commanders,” he demanded while looking over the battlefield.

“We wants visual and audio transmission.”

Saluting sharply, the soldier pulled a small box from his large fanny pack and ran fingers over the surface. A virtual console and small screen quickly appeared in front of him. He pressed several glyphs on the console's surface before turning to his superior.

“Ready, Sir.”

KonPita-Peck held up his two left hands, palms out and continued to monitor the scene unfolding before him. He held that position for several moments before turning to the soldier.

“We be ready,” he announced as he walked to the virtual console.

“This be your general,” he stated calmly. “Antraka forces take heavy losses and defenses crumbling. Press on and we be assured of...”

A loud explosion behind them, forced the general and the soldier to look back. To their dismay, a spiral of smoke followed a spinning fighter as it plummeted toward them. The soldier started running, but the general shook his heads and turned back to the battlefield.

“By the fiery bowels of Ceratha,” he said bitterly just before the doomed fighter plowed into the ground.

The massive vehicle pushed up a huge volume of soil that rose twenty-meters into the air, surged forward, and immediately buried KonPita-Peck. An instant later the earthen tidal wave also overwhelmed the retreating soldier.

A credit to his genetic breeding, the soldier forced his way through the dirt.

“Give us help,” he bellowed to a nearby troop of soldiers. “The general be buried here somewhere.”

Scrambling out of the ground, he raced to where he assumed his superior would be, and frantically started digging. He could hear the troopers rushing toward them, but a different sound stopped him. It was the deep bass-like boom of a fuel cell erupting.

Almost the entire KokoroTetian army stopped and turned around when the top of the hill erupted in a white ball of ionized gas. They paused for a moment before it dawned on the officers that their central command had been completely wiped out. Almost as one, the officers dropped their weapons and let out a screeching howl of mourning that startled the attacking Antraka troops. And to the enemy's total astonishment, the entire KokoroTetian army threw down their weapons, turned toward the hilltop and joined the mournful wail.

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Pick up a copy of *Prison Earth – Not Guilty as Charged*.