

The Second Defilian War:

Chapter 1: The Beginning

Jaxin had often witnessed a simulation of World War Three in the cafeteria. Why? Because a certain all-eating, crazy guy wanted all the baguettes in the cafeteria at lunch break. Sure, the baguettes were good, Liam still had to exercise some self restraint. Apart from Liam, Isak always wanted the chicken. Admittedly, the chicken was high on demand and was 'exquisitely made' as Isak put it, but Jax didn't like to think what would happen to Isaac's pet chicken Cluckles if the team ran out of food on a mission one day - he secretly believed that Cluckles would be 'exquisitely made' into wings and drumsticks. Then there was also Leo. Leo was the youngest active member of the CSA – and he was also among the most childish, always pulling pranks and picking fights. It was probably due to this that he had a natural feud with the hot-headed bully, Miles, who was remarkably like Leo – picking fights with everyone and always competing with others. The two were always arguing about who was stronger, faster, better at video games, who could skip a stone across the lake better.

“Ha ha! The rock I just threw went farther than yours!”

“No, you were standing with your toe in front of mine!”

“HEY STOP TOUCHING ME!”

“I'M NOT! I'M TOUCHING YOUR CHAIR!”

“YEAH, BUT THE CHAIR'S TOUCHING ME... YOU'RE STILL TOUCHING ME!!!”

“IT'S MY TOE!”

“THAT'S STILL TOUCHING ME!”

“FREAKING BARELY!”

“WELL YOU'RE TOUCHING SOMETHING THAT'S TOUCHING ME!!”

“YOU'RE NOT LETTING MY TOE DO WHAT IT WANTS!!”

And then, in a whole other dimension of pain to deal with, was the crazy, bloodthirsty berserker Dani Jones - this guy could probably beat a hundred super heavyweight boxers at the same time using only one hand without breaking a sweat and enjoy every second of it. Dani had an obsession for fighting, killing, blood and gore, and that did not go well with the rules of the CSA compound... or the fiery tempers and eccentric personalities of the other members. It was almost impossible for Jax, Ryder, Fox or Erik, the *relatively* more level-headed members, to walk down a single corridor without Harry grappling furiously with Isak over gym rights, Jade manhandling Kyle up and down the whole courtyard demanding pocket change, Leo and Miles duelling with wooden swords (with the latter hurling insults the whole time), and Dani bellowing at random people to fight him

while snorting like a bull. Jax wouldn't be surprised if one day the CSA dismantled themselves to infighting.

But even though nearly everyone was a nutcase, they still proved a vicious, loyal and formidable band of fighters, when the time came to it. They were all once rag-tag outcasts from society, driven out because of money, uniqueness, ridiculous powers, or just bad social skills. The CSA and the Frostbourne had been incredibly close allies for several years, and even Erik II Frosteye, the Frostbourne Lord, was living at the CSA compound. Usually the Lord wasn't allowed to leave his land and enjoy the hospitality of a foreign force, as decreed by ancient laws, set who knows how long ago - this simply meant that CSA headquarters was considered completely friendly and safe territory. A couple small criminals and pirates had made attempts at rising up during the years, but were quickly thwarted. However, shortly after Mazog's defeat, his right-hand man and strongest general, Witherblood, returned with the remains of Mazog's disoriented forces. That one required an army... and a member of the CSA's life, with the power to conjure and manipulate flames at a terrifying degree of destructive power - Rupert Drake, who had come incredibly close to taking down Witherblood alone, but was narrowly beaten in the Battle of Mount St Helens Castle, where the castle built by Mazog was in tatters after the Frostbourne had laid siege to it and destroyed it in the first Defilian War. However, Jax and Erik teamed up and defeated Witherblood at the very top of the castle tower, and Leo and Miles formed an unlikely truce to destroy a humongous beast Witherblood had summoned, demolishing half of Mount St Helens in the process and released thousands of tonnes of magma and lava, which soon caused a pyroclastic flow. The slim, black figure of Witherblood had fallen into the sea of lava below, and sparked a reaction that wiped out his army, and a friend of the CSA, Naman the Pheonix, along with members Xander Green and Jaro Nelson, managed to halt the pyroclastic flow before it could deal significant damage to the nearby cities in the US. However, it was only a bittersweet victory, as several million Frostbourne and soldiers had died in the Witherblood War. On the hand hand, since then nothing had been heard of from the remaining two generals that Jax believed could still pose a threat, and for two year the Earth has been sunk into a state of peace and prosperity.

After the original war against Mazog, Earth had changed a lot. Firstly, the CSA and the Frostbourne became internationally accepted, and were allowed to move freely across the planet as they wished, and use different cities as bases if they wanted to. The Frostbourne were granted their old territories back, and were accepted as an independent nation. In return, Erik decided to share Frostbourne technologies with the rest of the world,

and establish trade routes to other countries. Zack, otherwise known as 'Spikes' by his friends, had lived on Earth for some time, before returning back into space to guard the Universal Energy from Pirates, but he regularly visited and was accepted as an active member of the group - as a he had followed the Defiler to Earth and joined the CSA and Frostbourne in fighting against him during the war. Another ally who was one of Zack's friends who had also come to help, Naman the Pheonix, refused the offer of joining the CSA itself, but agreed to visit from time to time and fight alongside them if they ever needed his great strength. A powerful third faction, the Sentry Guild, allied themselves with the CSA, and many CSA veterans of the First Defilian War became Sentries, including Christopher Reid and Lennart Niermann. But most importantly, Earth became aware of extraterrestrial civilisations, the Multiverse, and that there was a whole plethora of life out there, beyond imagination, and began advancing rapidly with the Frostbourne's help, cleaning up the atmosphere, transitioning to full renewable energy, and having no internal conflict at all. For the first time in seven billion years of Earth's history, humanity had been united.

"What are you thinking about, again?" Erik asked, flopping down next to Jax and making him snap out of his trance. He sat forward and rubbed his eyes, before reaching for a glass of water.

"Nothing," he replied. "Just... the past, I guess."

"It's really annoying when you're all mysterious and stuff."

"Am I?"

"Yeah," Erik huffed. "Like, can't you ever give a direct answer? Here, let's try again. What were you thinking about? About *our* past."

Jax sat back again and sighed.

"You talk too much."

"Just answer the question or I won't go away. Are you going to deny the king his knowledge?"

"Alright, alright. I was thinking about the scenarios that happened in the past."

"Forget it," Erik groaned. "Giving direct answers is impossible for you. You're not usually this quiet."

"No, that's just you. You just talk too much."

"That's the second time you've said that in a span of 2 minutes," Erik said.

Just then, Fox sidled into the room, his eyes darting back and forth, scouring every nook and cranny until he found what he needed.

“WA’ER!”

He made a dive for the coffee table in front of Jax and Erik, and snatched up the jug of water that Jax had been using to fill his glass, before throwing back his head and dumping on his face.

“More of that went down your ears and your forehead than your mouth,” Erik observed. “What are you doing here anyway?”

“What, can’t a *thirshy* man get a a bo’oh’o’wa’er when he *needsh* it?” Fox slurred, wiping his mouth with his sleeve and collapsing all over the coffee table.

“Are you drunk?”

“Nah, I’m all sobered up after water,” Fox said, picking himself up and dusting himself down.

“Your body works in strange ways,” Jax muttered.

“Says the guy who never gets drunk, no matter how much he drinks. Don’t act like you don’t drink enough to fill up the Caspian Sea! I already saw you last Christmas,” Erik smirked.

Jax raised his hands.

“Okay, okay. Sure.”

Just then, the Head of the Monitoring Division, Harry Chapman, poked his head round the door.

“You three,” Harry said. “The meetings starting in twenty. Aren’t you gonna get ready before the mob pours in?”

“Yeah,” Jax sighed. “Are you ready, Erik?”

“Ready as ever.”

There was one last thing that worried Jax and Erik. The team had no idea of the whereabouts of Mazog’s last two generals, Herobane and Naerius. Herobane had escaped with no crippling injury during the Defilian War after getting the better of several elite CSA fighters, including Harry and Jax themselves. Naerius had also escaped, although he had been thoroughly beaten down by Zack and Pranav Suhar (the Director of Technology), and it wasn’t a wild guess that he would ever reach the zenith of his power ever again. Most of the team believed that Herobane had fled back into the depths of space, and that Mazog really was completely dead, and would never return. While it was true that both generals had vanished off the radar, Jax knew otherwise.

From what the previous simulations... I already know there’s no way he’s dead.

He knew that neither of the generals would just give in - and he himself was simply itching to have another go at both of them. The problem was convincing his teammates.

Before he summoned the team for a meeting, he sat on the edge of the cliff overlooking the CSA headquarters, under a tall oak tree, which was his favourite place to be. He pushed a paper windmill with his finger, and it spun slowly in the gentle breeze that rustled through the leaves above him. He thought about his life so far, and looked up at the afternoon sun, blazing in the blue summer sky. He had been through a lot with his friends, and they had driven out a foe greater than ever before. He thought of the smiles they had shared, the sorrows they had grieved for, and the baguettes in the cafeteria, and wondered how much longer they would be there. He knew all too well that nothing was forever, especially the person who had died fighting Mazog - Ben Reaper-Taylor, who had been both a living miracle and a calamity - shattering mountains with a mighty swing of his sword, and destroying all of enemies until not a single speck of them remained. Yet he had still died in the final battle against Mazog. It simply showed how easily a life, no matter how strong or well-anchored, could be plucked from existence - and Jax knew that fact far too well.

The meeting was even worse than he thought it would be. Jax had summoned the meeting to discuss the matter, but when the others arrived, he knew it would be impossible, and that he was for sure going to pop a vein. Erik, who was next to Jax at the head of the table, whispered,

"No way are they going to communicate."

Jax nodded forlornly as his friends seated, gabbling and pushing each other.

"Look guys-" he began.

"Why are we even here!?" yawned Jayce. "Nothing's been happening for the past few months. Did something interesting happen or are you going to talk to us about Hero-booger again?"

"Uuuuuuh..."

"Here we go again," Wade muttered, and began to stand up to leave. "If it's this lecture again, then count me out. I have things to do."

"Me too, and plus, we all know that there's no way they're coming back, unless they *really want* to die," added Isak, looking around at the others, who nodded and snickered. "It's been what, two years since something major like Witherblood happened, And if you don't mind, Cluckles is bored."

The yellow chicken with its blazing orange eyes clucked in agreement and set fire to Jaro Nelson's hair. He swiped it out and gave Isak the evil eye, who just shrugged and snickered.

"I agree with Isak," put in Rex. "Herobane's gone, Jax. It's time for you to face the facts. You've been telling us non-stop that he, and his ridiculously powerful leader are going to come back to beat us up for three years, but even us few who believed you at first have gotten tired of it, at this point it's just annoying. He hasn't even had a speck or trace on our radar for this long, and someone as rash as him would never be able to hide himself so completely for three years. He's off the planet, of course."

"That doesn't mean we can let our guards down," Jax replied curtly. "If he's off the planet, what stops him from coming back?"

"We know that Mazog spent ten years planning his invasion (even though he didn't need to), and Herobane could be doing something similar," Erik continued.

"There's a minor difference between ten years and three," pointed out Kyle White.

"And Herobane isn't exactly Mazog," agreed Jayce. "I'm not scared of him. If he ever does come back, then we'll just get the funeral ready in preparation."

"In conclusion," Miles said haughtily, taking a break from taunting Leo for once. "This is a false alarm."

Jax glared after them as they piled out of the room, pushing and shoving and bickering until eventually they got out and the door closed. Erik sighed.

"I guess us three will have to find out for ourselves... again," Fox said, leaning back in his revolving chair and looking up at the ceiling.

"You helped a lot during the meeting. didn't you," Jax said.

Fox shrugged and swirled the wine in his glass.

"Even if I said something, nothing would have changed," he said. "Let's just wait for him to come, then they'll get their acts together."

"Are we sure he's gonna come back this time round?" Erik questioned.

"I know him," Jax replied.

"I know you do," Erik said, looking at Jax and wondering whether or not to set foot on the touchy subject. "Because of what happened back then, right?"

Jax's shoulders tensed, but then he relaxed and sighed.

"I guess, but I don't want to talk about it," Jax said, but Erik insisted.

"Come on," Erik urged. "It's because you lost to Herobane in the Defilian War, isn't it."

"Yeah," Jax sighed. "I want to have another go at him. I'd win... for sure." He pushed his windmill with his finger again.

"Make sure you keep that safe," Erik advised. "We don't want it getting lost, do we."

"No, especially after what we've been through together, the three of us," Fox agreed. "If you lose that, then I'll make sure we lose you too."

Erik gave him the evil eye as Jax stood up to leave.

"I'll lock it in the safe," Jax decided. "Like before."

"Alright," Erik nodded. "Sounds good."

But just then, Harry's head peeked back around the door.

"Yo, Jax, Erik, Fox. You're gonna want to see this."

"Huh?"

"What... what is this?" Jax asked.

"I did some digging," Harry replied, tossing a USB drive onto their desk.

"Ten gigabyte file."

"What's it about, then?" Erik questioned.

"Mazog," Harry replied shortly. "And his subordinates."

Jax looked at him. "You -"

"Don't think we're all the same," Harry smiled. "If you can think one way, others can."

Jax nodded to him with a look of gratitude and slotted the USB into his supercomputer.

"Well?" Erik asked. "What about it?"

"I've kept close tabs on Naerius, since we managed to memorise his ship's signal - and recently he's started moving quite erratically - this planet to this planet, but if we blow it up..."

Harry booted up the drive onto a hologram projector showing the nearby planets to their solar system, with a bright line showing Naerius's movements. It was clearly forming a circle, with Earth as its centre point.

"Holy crap," Fox said, staring at the hologram. "First time."

"What?" Harry asked.

"Nothing," Fox replied. "So... what does this-"

Erik pushed Fox's head down with his palm and turned back to Harry.

"Ignore this brain-dead numbskull," he said. "It's incredibly suspicious that Naerius is circling Earth, but the diameter's-"

"No, no," Jax interrupted. "Can't you see it?"

A bead of sweat rolled down his face.

"Damn."

"You two need glasses," Harry added.

Jax pinched his fingers over Earth and zoomed in, then spun the model around so that the side that wasn't facing Erik and Fox was turned to them.

"Oh," Erik said.

"Not good," Fox added.

"With the normal kind of tech, anybody else wouldn't be able to find this," Harry said. "The only reason we can find it is because of me."

Between the Earth and the Moon, there was a humongous fleet of spacecraft, like a giant swarm of insects, each one as large as a big asteroid, and each one most certainly piled with monsters.

"It's Herobane's cloaked fleet," Erik whispered.

"Gather the others here, now," Jax ordered. "I don't care if you use force. Get them back here. Right now."

"Harry, what are you going to do?" Leo asked, striding the corridor next to him.

Everybody looked grim and on edge (except for Dani who was incredibly excited), and nobody, not even Jax, seemed to mention how they had behaved the day prior.

"I'm going to LA," Harry replied. "Jason's coming with me, and I'm taking some of the soldiers."

"Shouldn't you come with everyone else?" Leo asked. "London and Paris are the headquarters of the Earth Extraterrestrial Defence Army, and that's where half of us are heading."

Harry shook his head.

"Don't tell the others okay?" He asked, having a faraway look in his eyes. "I need..."

"Need what?" Leo demanded. "You're going to die if that's what happens. ...I need to settle a score, that's all."

"With whom?"

"*Whom?* You little tyke, who do you think you are? Jax? I'm going to lure in Herobane and kill him myself. If I succeed, then my burning desire for revenge will have been filled."

"And if you fail...?"

"If... if I.... then I won't fail. See ya later! Don't tell Jax or anyone! Especially not Fox or Zane or Ryder."

"Change sure happens fast, huh?" Jax said, as he stood under the same oak tree, overlooking the gleaming CSA HQ, bathed on the fiery, radiant light of the setting sun, accompanied by Erik and Fox, his two closest friends.

"One day it's all peaceful, and then suddenly the next we're at war."

Erik took a swig of alcohol from a glass bottle and set it back down into the grass, next to where he sat.

"It's been two years since we saw any real action," he muttered, leaning back onto his palms as he took in the view. "Most of us here are probably rusty. Excluding us three."

"Well," Fox said, tossing another beer can aside and then sloshing water down his throat to get rid of the effects. "I've kept my division in training –

Harry, Ryder and Zane, that is. All three of them are capable warriors, y'know?"

"Well," Jax said. "Obviously I don't doubt those guys' fighting prowess, they all fought alongside us in the war. My point is that... in the end, it's still just us three as the main supporting pillars of the CSA, right? If one of us three were to die... then the power balance would tip immeasurably and our forces would collapse. So I'm asking of you two, especially. Don't die."

"Hey, why're you talking so much all of a sudden?" Erik laughed, nudging Jax's leg with his elbow. "Bring back Jax man! But... jokes aside, you don't need to worry about us. We'll... never die. We've survived up until now, haven't we?"

Fox was silent for a second.

"And every time we survived, we failed and the others all died."

The other two paused, but then Erik slapped Fox on the back.

"Hey, remember what Mazog's finest warriors' rallying cry was? 'No need for armies, no need for hesitation, never losing, never wavering, vanquishing the enemy, and to tread the path alone, because we are the kings. I suppose the last two and the first one don't work for us, since y'know, we fight together and stuff, but everything else, oh yeah - for sure."

He did a little punch into the air, and the other two stared at him.

"The peaceful life we've known for two years is going to be stripped away from us in a short amount of time, if me and Harry are correct," Jax said, breathing in the fresh summer air. "Do you still remember when Mazog descended?"

"Yes, I do," Fox said, shuddering.

"The sky clouded over in a thick layer of black clouds, like an infinite night," Jax continued. "Have a good look at the sky while you still can. Soon, the only we'll look at is blood and darkness."

To be continued next week on the Third Year Blog!

- Lucas Z