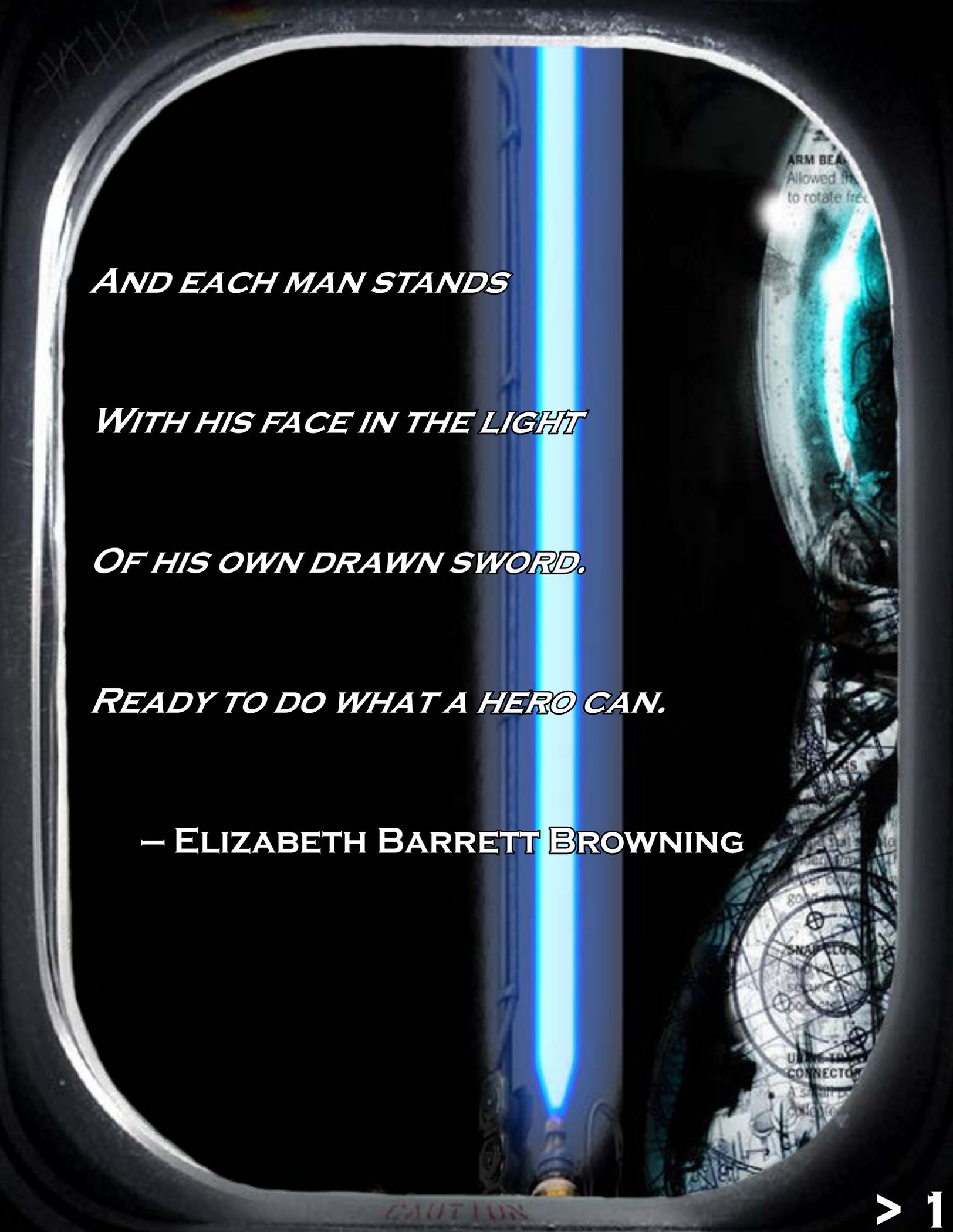


ZERO BLADE



THE JOVIAN CAMPAIGNS

CAUTION



AND EACH MAN STANDS

WITH HIS FACE IN THE LIGHT

OF HIS OWN DRAWN SWORD.

READY TO DO WHAT A HERO CAN.

— ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

> HISTORIAN'S LOG

> 2117 C.E. Earth's bounty is no more. What little resources remained were paid for with the blood of thousands. When denied a piece of these final scraps, a primal fear of mutual destruction was all that delayed ultimate retaliation by one superpower against another – all that postponed our inevitable annihilation.

> In desperation, we looked collectively to the stars. Driven by absolute necessity and indefatigable will, our space-faring capabilities advanced exponentially during this time. Before long, we found ourselves at the solar system's very reaches.

> And there, it seemed, lay our salvation.

> It was the four Galilean moons of Jupiter in particular – Io, Europa, Ganymede, and Callisto – which proved to be veritable treasure-troves. Each was more abundant in minerals and natural gas than the one before, each rich enough to fuel our homeworld's future for another millenia or more. Space stations and mining facilities were constructed with reckless abandon in orbit above those prize spheres by every power that be, with little time or care being given to the thought of factional boundaries.

> In our haste, we were blind to the powder-keg we'd built beneath our feet. What should have been a time of peace, prosperity, and reconciliation was suddenly set ablaze by a singular devastating incident: The loss of the first and only International Jovian Space Station.

> With every side casting blame on the other, the true nature of the IJSS's destruction was never fully known. Furor steadily grew over the loss of life and resources by all sides, until it breached well past the breaking point. Eventually, there was but one recourse: War.

> And so began the Jovian Campaigns.

> ZERO BLADE

> *Zero Blade* is, at its core, a high-stakes, mission-based, third-person sword-fighting action game which twists the genre by placing all combat on-board space stations in zero gravity. Players will soar weightlessly through winding corridors of massive enemy bases as one of the titular sword-wielding Zero Blades, eventually coming face-to-face with their enemy counterparts, and engaging in a series of tense, acrobatic duels to the death.

> In between bouts of white-knuckle action, players will also engage in the strategic management of their held stations, allocating resources, fortifying defenses, and upgrading equipment.



> STYLE

> *Zero Blade* will have a notably dark aesthetic, with Blades and distant stars as the only beacons of light amidst the void of space and in dimly lit stations. This is intended to reflect the gritty realism of the game despite its sci-fi narrative. *Zero Blade* endeavors to be to science-fiction games what *Game of Thrones* was to fantasy novels. It takes the idea of a Jedi and tries to capture its essence in a semi-realistic setting.

> GAME FLOW

> In a normal solo campaign, players will begin by selecting their faction. Each faction has its own strengths and weaknesses, such as immediate access to high-quality equipment, more starting space stations, or reduced Blade cost.

> Turns will then proceed as follows:

> PREPARE

- > Collect resources based upon number of stations held.
- > Upgrade and manage facilities
- > Train and equip Blades.
- > Recruit new Blades.
- > Transfer Blades to stations in need of defense.
- > Select next mission target.



> DEFEND

- > Enemy factions will launch their own raids on your held stations if the defenses on that station are weak, or their offensive force is particularly strong.
- > Player controls one of the Blades stationed at that outpost and attempts to repel invaders.

> ATTACK

- > Player leads a contingent of Blades in an attack on an enemy station.
- > Player controls Blade Captain.
- > Objectives vary based on mission type.
- > Successful conquest missions result in acquisition of new base.



CAUTION

> ORIGIN OF THE BLADES

> The Zero Blades are elite, sword-wielding future soldiers who brave both the void of space and fellow enemy Blades in order to raid and conquer objective stations, or safeguard the stations already under their faction's control.

> While much remains shrouded in mystery with regards to the IJSS's destruction, one key fact is known: it was an extended firefight which caused unsustainable structural damage and rapid depressurization of the entire facility, ultimately resulting in its utter annihilation.

> Even setting aside the immense loss of life, the raw economic cost of losing a facility like the IJSS was astronomical and untenable. It was clear that the weapons and tactics of terrestrial combat could not apply to this new war.

> Almost universally, nations began the development of high-tech, melee-equipped warriors, capable of capturing or defending Jovian stations with minimal structural damage.



> Thus, the Zero Blades were born.

> BLADE COMBAT

> STANCES

> Blade combat draws heavily from its roots in medieval warfare, and *Zero Blade* attempts to simplify the rich complexities of melee combat by allowing players (and enemies) to adopt and change between three distinct stances: High, Middle, and Low.

> While players will always be able to slash and parry from four cardinal directions, differing stances will add or detract speed and power from those different maneuvers.

> A high stance improves the speed of overhead slashes, but takes longer to guard against upward slashes.

> A middle stance moderately improves the speed of side slashes, and has an average guard against all attacks.

> A low stance improves the speed of upward slashes, but takes longer to guard against overhead slashes.

> Blade combat relies heavily on carefully reading your opponent, choosing the right stance, or feinting in order to score an unexpected, fatal blow.



> ZERO GRAVITY

> Utilizing selectively magnetic boots, players and their opponents can walk along almost any surface of a zero gravity space station. This means attacks can come from all angles, and an upward slash might actually end up coming from the left hand side.

> Players have to note and accommodate for the novel experience of zero gravity combat, and utilize unusual angles and thruster-powered rapid assault to catch their foes off guard.

> PERMANENT DEATH

> Heroes are not demigods, not immortals impervious to the consequences of their actions.

> Heroes are the men who stare down death every day, despite terrifying knowledge of their own mortality.

> In *Zero Blade*, it is unlikely that you will play as the same Blade for the entirety of your campaign. A single well-placed slash, a poorly timed parry, or an overwhelming force can result in your Blade Captain's death.

> And when he dies, he's gone. You switch control to another Blade in your contingent, and a memorial to the deceased will appear in a tab of your preparation phase interface. No respawns.

> Life is fragile, particularly in the depths of space. *Zero Blade* wants you to succeed despite this, but it will not let you forget it.



CAUTION

> BASE MANAGEMENT



> Properly managing controlled stations in the down time between Blade missions is just as key to the player's long-term success as their personal performance in combat. It also provides a convenient "cool down" period after a bout of adrenaline-pumping action.

> The player will receive a number of resources at the start of each base management phase. This amount is usually dictated by the number and quality of the stations under your faction's control.

> The player will then be able to spend resources to recruit new Zero Blades, either bulking up existing forces or replacing lost soldiers. They can then train and equip their roster with improved weapons and gear.

> Each station can also be individually upgraded, improving its resource extraction capabilities, or making minor improvements to facility defenses that will slow down invading Blades.

> However, no amount of automated defenses will halt a Blade attack if you have no Zero Blades of your own there to defend. The player will have to transfer and spread out their Blade battalion to make sure that all key outposts in enemy raiding distance are well-defended.

> EQUIPMENT



> ZERO BLADE

> Sharing its name with the soldiers who wield it, the Zero Blade is an impressive piece of technology. Condensing highly focused energy into a singular beam of light, the edge of a Zero Blade can cut through almost anything like a razor through flesh. Only the light of another Zero Blade can truly parry an attack from one of these weapons. Due to the blade terminating at the housing endcap, a Zero Blade is really only capable of slashing attacks.

> THRUSTER PACK

> The quality of a Blade's thruster pack counts for a lot – it dictates how rapidly he can charge down an unwary opponent, or how deftly he can dart out of the way of an oncoming attack. Particularly skilled Blades even utilize their thrusters to add additional force to each one of their already deadly attacks.



> ARMORED SPACESUIT

> While even the toughest suit of armor won't deflect more than a few solid cuts from a Zero Blade, it's often all that stands between your Blades and the void of space. Heavier armor will slow you down, but could mean the difference between life or death.



> WIN CONDITIONS

> After players perform enough Blade missions, defeating all enemy Blades, conquering stations, and raiding bases for gear and tech, they'll slowly uncover the true cause of the IJSS's destruction.

> At that point, they can either strike out against the true menace that has plunged the Jovian stations into war, or continue conquering until their faction is all that remains amongst the Galilean moons of Jupiter.

> Once either objective is accomplished, the player is victorious, and will get a different ending depending on their choice.



> AUDIENCE

> Zero Blade's intended target is the hardcore action-game player, who relishes the challenge of mastering a unique form of combat and surviving mortal peril time and time again, especially when everything is on the line. Video games are almost certainly his main hobby, but his nerd cred stretches far and wide; he's got love for everything from Tolkien, to Moore, to Roddenberry. His most recent obsession has been with the *A Song of Ice and Fire* series, and he particularly enjoys the darker themes that permeate more "mature" works of art. Warhammer's 40k universe cuts close to his ideal space fantasy, but often feels a little too over the top for his tastes. He's eager for a setting that feels a little closer to home.

