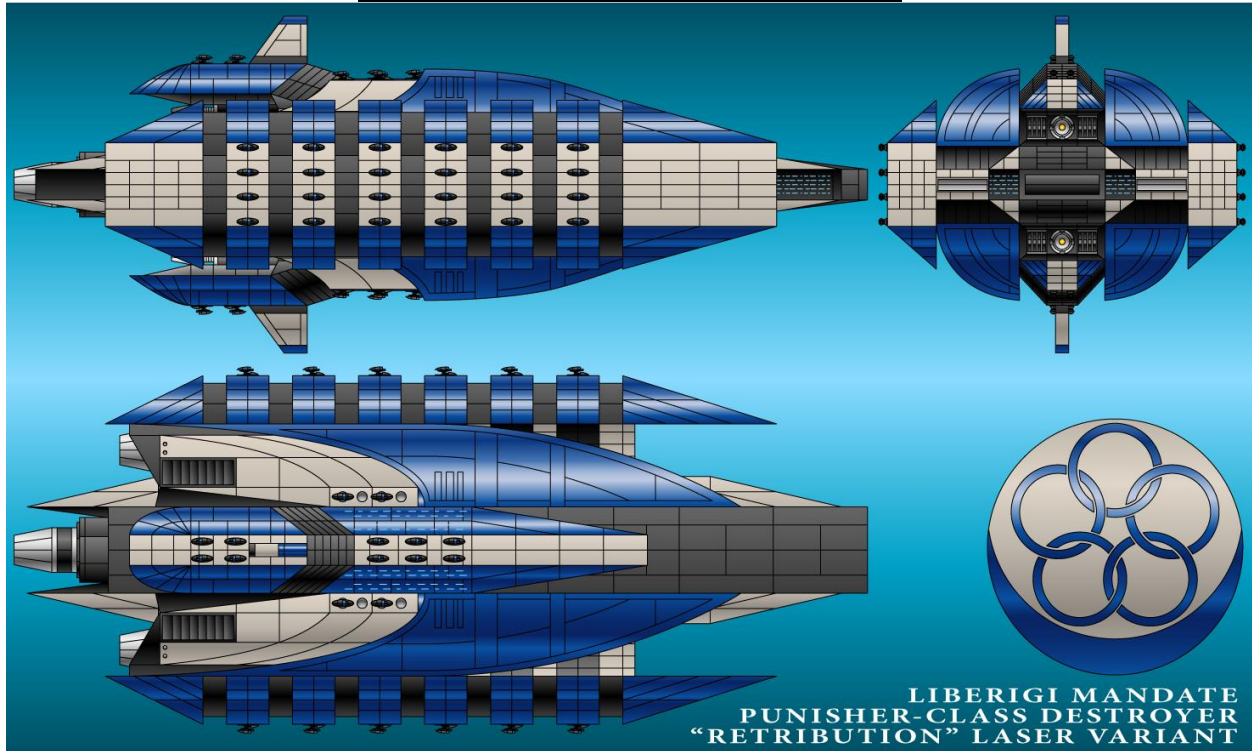


***Warring Factions: The Novus Initium Saga***  
***Episode V: The Fox's State and Mandate***



**PART 4**

*Office of the Supreme Chancellor, Republic Parliament Building, Capital City of Luminous Planet Luminaire, Lumen System, Capital of Novus Initium Republic*  
*2:48pm, March 14, 5434 A.D.*

“This is a fiasco.”

Drew could not believe the report he was given by Grand Admiral Mikey. Vice Admiral Trent had reported to him the events of what had occurred in the Yintaka System and Drew looked it over. The fact that the State forces had orders to attack Yintaka was one thing, but the fact that they also had orders to attack Trent for what happened to their home planets while he was in command of the *Templar* was outright absurd! Drew was beginning to think that the State didn't want allies at all anymore or they were not in their right minds.

However, he needed to keep calm and see if there were answers to why the State was going so far. Drino and Korveco had not departed yet but the last report Drew was given was that they were at the main civilian space dock in orbit getting ready to board Drino's shuttle. He figured now would be as best a time as any to give them a call while they were waiting to depart.

He activated the communications line on his terminal and attempted to contact Drino who would have his communications device on him. While Humans still use “phones” to contact each other, it was unclear even to Drew what the other races called their devices with similar features. After a couple of audible “rings,” a visual came through with Drino who looked like he was in the waiting area at the station. He could see Korveco's left shoulder to Drino's right.

*“Supreme Chancellor,”* Drino said. *“I’m assuming based on the timing of this call that the attack on Yintaka has already taken place?”*

“It has and it’s concluded,” Drew said. “I will transmit what has transpired in the Yintaka System since you are departing soon. In the end, the State forces failed in their operation but one thing occurred during that fight that I need you to verify for me.”

*“Go ahead.”*

“Did you know anything about the Executive Council’s decision to label Trent a target for termination by State forces for the destruction of the stations that housed the pseudo-antidote over your original home planets while he served aboard the *Templar*?”

Drino’s eyes suddenly widened in shock.

*“What?! I had no knowledge of this decision by the Council! Where did you hear this from?”*

“According to Trent, he heard this from Admiral Bridneo of the battleship *Ve’Nir*. Bridneo informed Trent of this decision just before State forces opened fire on the *Renaldo*.”

*“They fired on Trent?! I don’t believe it!”*

“I’m transmitting the transmissions that occurred to you now for you to look at, but right now, I’m hoping the media does not get wind of the State’s assault on our forces. The last thing I need if for the public to demand retribution for the attack.”

*“That’s understandable. Hopefully none of the Lykan civilians there start talking about it to where it will reach your people. I’ll listen to the transmissions once I am on my shuttle so that none of the personnel here will hear them. What happened to the State forces that were sent to Yintaka?”*

“They are still there after Trent managed to convince Bridneo that the enemy of the State is no longer around. I would listen to his words in the transmissions he sent out. They may be useful when you talk with the Executive Council.”

*“I’ll do so.”*

“One last thing I might want to point out and I believe that there may be some validity behind this possibility.”

*“What is it?”*

“Trent had the notion that he believes that someone or something may be influencing the Executive Council into continuing the war with the Lykans. Much of their actions appear to be far too aggressive to be normal in their decisions.”

*“So, he thinks that someone may be having some substantial amount of influence over the decisions of the Council, huh? That would explain a few things but I’m not sure how Korveco and I will find that out if someone really is influencing them or not. We’ll try what we can to find out, but I can’t make any promises that we’ll discover any outside influence.”*

“I understand. I think a lot of us now want to know why the Executive Council is so bent on war and if someone was behind that drive, then we can start to get answers. I just hope that the Council is not like this on their own accord.”

*“Either way, we’ll discover the truth behind their actions.”*

Drino looked away for a moment as if someone got his attention. He shook his head a couple of times in agreement with someone speaking to him though the words were not distinguishable.

*“Thank you,”* Drino said to the unseen person.

Drino looked back at the Chancellor.

*“Our shuttle is ready for departure. We’ll try to keep in touch once we get to New Vita.”*

“Alright, then. You both have a safe flight.”

Drino nodded before the line was disconnected. Drew reclined in his chair as he debated what to do next. He had his concerns about mentioning what has happened in Yintaka to the Senate as they would also be pressing for answers which Drew does not have now.

“*Supreme Chancellor?*” Drew’s secretary suddenly said through the terminal.  
“*Ambassadors Forneido and Orbinai are here to see you.*”

Drew pressed the intercom button.

“Send them in,” he said before releasing the button.

A couple of seconds later, the doors opened and the two ambassadors walked in. The doors soon closed behind them.

“Supreme Chancellor,” Forneido said, “I have received word from my government that the fighting has stopped in Yintaka with the State’s forces surrendering. Have you confirmed this with your forces?”

“I have,” Drew said. “I got a report from Grand Admiral Mikey that Vice Admiral Trent had managed to talk the State invasion force commander out of continuing the fight. Trent gave a very compelling argument.”

“I see.”

“Oddly enough, you actually know the commander I am referring to. If I recall correctly, you have met then Vice Admiral Bridneo over nine months ago, correct?”

“Bridneo? I do remember him and our first face-to-face conversation aboard the *Renaldo* when both of our fleets first encountered yours. Fate has managed to assist in that regards to stopping the fight.”

“How is that so?”

“If it had been anyone else aside from Bridneo, they would not have listened to Trent so easily. By the way, what did you mean by ‘then Vice Admiral’? Is he now a full Admiral?”

“Yes, he is. I guess his role in the war must have been exemplary.”

“I feel a little left out of the loop,” Orbinai said. “Who is this Bridneo exactly?”

“Before our Republic joined the war,” Drew said, “our intelligence agency had detected transmissions that were considered alien in origin near the Tranquillus System. Trent’s fleet was sent to that system in what the public was told was a ‘training exercise.’ Trent’s fleet was present when the first Kingdom and State ships jumped into the system to fight each other without realizing they had entered our space. Trent made first contact and Bridneo was there to start a dialogue. Of course, so was a news reporter after getting a tip that the training exercise was a hoax and so the entire Republic watched our first encounter. The Kingdom commander however was not very talkative but instead their representative was sent to establish a dialogue in the name of their King.”

“That ambassador was me,” Forneido said. “I eventually met Trent and Bridneo aboard the *Renaldo* along with a few other Human ambassadors. However, I snuck a device on board that managed to access the ship’s map and scanned some of the Humans in the room, especially Trent. However, my beliefs got in the way of our dialogue when I read the Humans’ history of how they arrived in the star cluster. That led to our, or rather my, stupid decree to eliminate the Humans from the cluster. That fateful meeting was what made the Humans enter the war. It was also that meeting as I said earlier that I scanned Trent’s DNA to make a clone infiltrator, the same one that stole their destroyer and jumped it into Imperial space to make your Empire fight against the Republic. We all know how that turned out.”

“I do,” Orbinai said. “I just was not expecting there to be some history between you and this Bridneo you are referring to. I wonder if he knew you were instrumental in the fall of the Kingdom to establish your people’s own Republic.”

“I don’t know but I doubt he would care that much. Right now, I’m concerned about the State’s next move. I’m not sure whether the State has heard back from Bridneo’s forces or not, but if they find out about their failure, I’m concerned what the Executive Council has planned next.”

“Trent has this notion that the Council maybe under some outside influence,” Drew said.

“Outside influence? You mean he thinks someone is manipulating the Council to make the State the way it is and how it thinks currently?”

“That is what he was thinking. I mentioned it to Drino and Korveco a moment ago. They are going to see if there is someone who may have some sort of political sway in making the Council take these actions.”

“Someone who has that kind of influence or authority would be very hard to find in the State. With five different races running the State, I may have a hard time believing that an individual would have such sway and influence between all five races. It would have to be someone that all five races are willing to listen to and obey to make that happen.”

“Are you thinking that someone might have some info that the Council does not want publicly known such as blackmail?” Orbinai asked.

“All we have is speculation,” Drew said. “Something or someone is making the Council act this way and we need to find out who or what it is. Even if there isn’t anyone influencing their decisions, something is motivating them to want to continue the war. If someone like Bridneo can be convinced that his ‘enemy’ is no longer present, then so can the rest of the State. We will have to wait and see how things turn out once Drino and Korveco get to New Vita. I can only hope that the Council doesn’t have a backup plan of some sorts for their failure in Yintaka.”

“How long will it take for them to get to New Vita from here?” Forneido asked.

“It will take an hour and a half just to get to Tranquillus from here once they are in flight. Once they get to that point, the rest of the trip should take about less than an hour or so, depending on customs which I hear has gotten very strict in the wake of there being no outside culture allowed. Only my ambassadors were allowed media entertainment but only to be played in their accommodations which were soundproof from the outside.”

“They have been rather strict with that policy, haven’t they?” Orbinai said. “What about Korveco, though? Once the two of them submit to customs inspection, won’t they realize that he is a Vitam from the Mandate and not from the State?”

“Drino said that he will make it clear to the customs inspectors that Korveco is his guest to speak to the Executive Council, they will have no choice but to let him go free as he would have diplomatic immunity at that point, something the State still abides to in our past negotiations. Hopefully they still abide by that in light of recent events.”

“What will happen if they don’t?”

“Korveco would be imprisoned on charges of treason to the State and to his race since he and the other former slaves sided with the Lykans and formed their own nation. The Mandate has still not formally recognized by the State at this point. I am concerned that diplomatic immunity may not be enough to protect Korveco, but Drino seems highly confident that he can keep Korveco safe till they meet with the Council. I just hope he is right.”

\* \* \* \* \*

*Genealogy Section, Third Floor, Grand Central Library of the Republic, City of Luminous Planet Luminaire, Lumen System, Capital of Novus Initium Republic*  
3:00pm, March 14, 5434 A.D.

“I know those names and records are in here somewhere.”

Amarria returned to the Central Library to start looking around for any information on the families of the Tenebris, the sadistic cult that kidnapped people for their blood rituals over six hundred and fifty years ago. Head Agent Aja of the RCIA accompanied her after Amarria agreed to consider the possibility that select members of the Tenebris would have the engineering knowhow to create a sustainable warp drive, centuries before the Republic made such drives for the *Templar* and the *Cavalier* stealth vessels.

What bothered Amarria the most while she began her research is why no one bothered to consider this possibility long before she decided to do so? The RCIA had closed the case after the Tenebris’ colony was destroyed but even after they investigated the ruins, there were no signs anyone was there during the orbital bombardment. As Amarria looked through the genealogy records of each of the families up to that year, she decided to ask Aja such a question, though in a whisper as they were in a library, of course.

“Aja,” Amarria said, careful of not using Aja’s title to attract attention, “why is it that the RCIA is only now considering this investigation important after so many centuries?”

“I decided to investigate into that myself on the way here,” Aja said as she looked through the records of the Pistris family. “Apparently, the RCIA was very lax about the matter than I care to admit.”

“What do you mean they were ‘lax’ about it?”

“During the Expansion Era, there were a few colony vessels that met with very terrible fates ranging from a bad jump into something they were not supposed to jump into to equipment failure to lack of supplies. Such matters overwhelmed the RCIA that it didn’t bother to investigate those matters any further. The murder of dozens of people to a cult fell under that category as well.”

“If that is the case, why was the military called in to handle the matter?”

“When the RCIA got word about the murders and the cult, it decided it was best to wipe the slate clean of the cult’s existence. When they arrived at the colony, they fired on the city the cult had built after scanning for those kidnapped only, not even bothering scanning for anyone else. When they destroyed the city and there were no signs of survivors, the RCIA Head Agent at the time considered the case no longer important enough for them to investigate any further.”

“They left it like that? They didn’t bother to do the kind of research we are doing now?”

“Back then, the thought or need of a sustainable warp drive was insignificant due to the ability to jump between systems, especially once star gates were built. I’m ashamed of how the Head Agent proceeded the way that they did in this matter among others. Who knows how many other unresolved cases they left the way they did?”

“Has the RCIA managed to try reopening those cases?”

“Not all of them, no. We only seem to come across them on a case-by-case basis. The only reason I find this one important is because of how this was handled. If a cult is on the loose out there in the cluster and we let them roam free this entire time without any supervision or control, then we have only ourselves to blame for letting it happen in the first place.”

Aja put down the tablet she was researching about the Lupus family.

“No one in this family has shown any sign of having such knowledge,” Aja said. “What about the Lupus and the Draco families?”

“I’m looking at the Lupus family now,” Amarria said. “I may have stumbled onto something here.”

“Oh? What did you find?”

“It seems that the Lupus family had a lot of certified engineers in the family with several degrees in engineering ranging from environmental controls to weapons development.”

“Has any of them been certified to work with propulsion systems, namely warp drives?”

“Let’s see. I found three of them among that family. First there is Neil Lupus. His field of engineering involved warp field mechanics. The next one is Anthony Lupus whose field of engineering is advance propulsion systems. Lastly is Mark Lupus whose field of study is the matter-antimatter reactor in relation to the power needs of the warp drive. If these three managed to put their minds together, they could have conceived such a drive system. In theory, anyway.”

“It sounds like they could but for such a drive, they needed more of a team for such things. Let me look at the Draco family and see if they had any help from that family.”

“While we are on that topic, I noticed an interesting trend among each of the families.”

“What do you mean?”

“As I read about each family, it seems like most if not all of one family had studied or had experience in related fields to one particular subject.”

“Can you be specific about what you mean?”

“Certainly. Let’s take the Aspergillus family for example. I noticed that among that family they have a strong military tradition. Every one of them at a certain age joined the military and served for so many years. After they served in the military, they studied agriculture to create sustainable crops in different environments. Some even studied different flora in different environments for that same purpose. They went this route because the military helped them to become physically fit to make manual labor that much easier for them, not to mention sticking to a strict schedule and regiment.”

“They served in the military? Do those records show any of them being in the military at the time their colony was attacked by our forces?”

“I did come across such entries but I didn’t investigate it any further. Why?”

“I’m beginning to think that the reason the military didn’t investigate or scan for the Tenebris was due to possible sabotage. I will need those records to cross-examine the military records from back then.”

Amarria grabbed the pad with the Aspergillus genealogy still on it.

“Here are those records,” Amarria said. “You should be able to access the military historical records from one of the terminals and have the computer cross-reference those names to see if there were any on board those ships. Those that were in the military at the time continued on within the Republic and even had families of their own, though records showed they changed their names to protect their identities from those who would persecute them.”

Aja grabbed the pad from Amarria.

“I’ll check that out in a moment. What about the other families? What did they specialize in?”

“From what I read, the Aquilam family has a history of being highly qualified or have experienced pilots and helmsmen both civilian and military. That tradition was upheld for a good number of centuries until that point. Afterwards, anyone who was related to that family after

their cultist relatives disappeared changed their names as well and pursued other careers aside from being pilots.”

“So, there is a chance they may have had a hand in making sure the military didn’t detect their relatives’ escape.”

“I don’t see how. Unlike the Aspergillus family, pilots don’t have the same access to systems that would have aided in that case. The only thing a pilot could do to help in their escape is delaying the ship somehow.”

“I may need to cross-reference them as well, just to be sure. What about the next family?”

“The Tigris family was known throughout the Republic at the time for their artistic and cultural talents. The family produced the best artists, actors and actresses, musicians, and performers the Republic had ever seen. After the cult’s world was attacked, those that were not part of the cult fell into seclusion. Most committed suicide afterwards out of shame for their brethren’s acts. Everyone else eventually married into other families and adopted new names in the process. As far as I can tell, only a select few still pursued careers in the arts.”

“So, none of them could have assisted their fellow family members in their escape based on those facts. Very well, who’s next?”

“Aside from the Draco family, the only other family I have looked at is the Pistris family. That family is a bit of an enigma though.”

“What do you mean?”

“The Pistris seemed to be all over the place when it came to the Republic and those who spread out to colonize other worlds. I don’t think they ever really settled anywhere for prolonged periods of time.”

“They were nomadic?”

“It seems that way. There may be some reason behind that.”

“Go on.”

“Apparently, the family business was that of freighter and commercial pilots. The ships they owned doubled as mobile homes so the entire family went with them and grew up that way. I guess their children took up the profession and never settled in one place.”

“Between the colony ships that were used and the possibility of freighters also being used in the same manner for evacuation, not to mention the technicians and engineers that could modify them for using a sustainable warp system, the possibility they evacuated and left Republic space somehow is more than just a possibility. It may have happened. What about the Draco family, though? What were they good at?”

“I had not checked yet. Let me read up on them while you cross-reference those names with military historical records.”

“Alright,” Aja said as she grabbed the needed pads and stood up. “I’ll be right back.”

Aja walked over to the closest computer terminal to cross-reference the material. Amarria grabbed the pad with the Draco family genealogy on it. She quickly realized something as she looked at the names and the family tree as she pulled the information up. The first was the fact that the family was the largest out of all six families that were part of the cult. The reason behind this was quite evident as she looked for anyone who was related that was not part of the cult.

There was not a single person outside the cult that still resided in the Republic.

Amarria was beginning to wonder if the Draco family members were the ones responsible for the cult to begin with after seeing that fact. She decided to read on to see if that was the case. Each name she came across though did have religious leaders among them but the family was more diverse than that. Among the family members were pilots, scholars, artists,

musicians, performers, soldiers, engineers, and so on. Not only were they the largest and possibly the ones responsible for the cult to begin with, they were also the most diverse of the families. Some of the engineers also studied in the field of warp mechanics and possibly helped contribute to the possible development of a sustainable warp drive. Out of all the families that Amarria studied, the Draco family was indeed the most surprising.

Aja was coming back to the table they were sitting at and could tell something was up from Amarria's facial expressions.

"Did you find something of interest among the Draco family?" Aja asked.

"More so than I expected," Amarria said. "What about you?"

"After some cross-referencing the names of the families with those in who have served in the military in the past, there were indeed some members of the Aspergillus family that served aboard the ships that eventually bombarded the cultists' city. They all had the same position. They were assigned to the tactical position that also managed the scanners aboard those ships. They could easily dismiss any readings the ships had of any ships fleeing the system."

"Are there any logs of those ships still in the military database?"

"I haven't looked yet. Thankfully, military logs unless specified otherwise are released to public records after a hundred years so they should be on record here in this library."

"They are. You can use that same terminal you used to look it up but you may need the registry number of those ships."

"I have those so it should not be an issue to look up. What about you? What did you find in the Draco family that you ended up with such an expression on your face earlier?"

"Oh, that. This may surprise you, but the Draco family was the largest among all the cult families and with good reason. There was not a single member of that family who was NOT a cultist."

"Are you saying their ENTIRE family was there in their city?"

"Indeed. There is not a single member of the Draco family that still resides in the Republic today. Also, their family seems to be a mix of almost all the other families in terms of occupation or knowledge in various fields. Some of them are also engineers in warp mechanics. They would easily be able to help make such a warp drive. There is also one other aspect about them I should point out."

"What would that be?"

"They are also the family with members who helped practice the cult to themselves and others."

"You mean such as priests or religious leader figures?"

"Yes. There is a chance that they were the ones who may have created the cult. In fact, the one who headed it all has a rather interesting background as I am reading it."

"Who would that be?"

"Doctor Armani Draco, a specialist in the field of blood research. According to his records, he has published multiple papers on the thesis of the enrichment and enhancement of blood to improve the Human body in multiple ways. Apparently, most of his papers were rejected by the Republic Medical Review Board. It was believed that this caused him to experiment with the blood of select volunteers from the families that would later follow his cause once the results showed promise and eventually results. His son took over the research after Armani died from one of his experiments just before the military attacked. However, that was not until after Armani somehow managed to turn his research into that Tenebris cult, giving it religious meaning and foundation."



“Are you telling me that the moment his research into enriching or enhancing Human showed results in bettering themselves, more of the families of those who volunteered flocked to Armani and his research to better themselves through that method?”

“It appears so. The reason it became a cult to begin with was the fact that Armani was religious already and contributed his success to his faithfulness. Being a member of the Great Maker faith, he believed that the Great Maker gave him divine motivation to unlock the blood of Humans, the blood the Great Maker helped create in all Humans. That was what started that cult and the results from his research only fueled the cause.”

“This is starting to make some sense about why so many followed him, but why did they resort to kidnapping and murdering for their rituals?”

“No one managed to interview the cultists to find out that reason. It was believed that the reason was they no longer wanted to experiment on themselves or animals but instead use others in their experiments. However, that was merely speculation without any facts behind it.”

“If the RCIA back then had done a proper investigation, we would know the reason why. This just infuriates me even further about how bad the agency did its job, or rather lack thereof. I’m going to see if I can get the scanner logs of those ships from back then. Hopefully whoever was responsible for allowing the Tenebris to get away hadn’t deleted the records before they were submitted. I’ll be right back.”

Aja got up to go back to the terminal while Amarria looked at the tablet with the Draco family genealogy still pulled up. She was curious as to how far Armani’s son had gone to follow in his father’s footsteps but there was not much data around the time the Tenebris were attacked. If all six families managed to escape the Republic military from back then, they had all the knowhow to start up another colony outside of the Republic. If they did so, they had over six and a half centuries to grow and develop into a society on their own, unsupervised and out of Republic control. Who knows how far they would have come in such a long amount of time or what advancements they would have made separate of what the Republic has done?

The question would be where they would have gone after so long? Amarria remembered her discussion earlier about the possible regions they would have gone. If they were out there in those regions, would they have encountered other alien races? Would those races willingly follow the Tenebris or become their victims? Amarria had a lot of things on her mind to the point she wished she hadn’t even looked up the article to begin with. It would have been less stressful to have left it alone and let the two stealth vessels find them and researched the matter on their own.

Regardless, this mystery has been reopened and Amarria can only help to see it through. She looked through each of the families again and noticed as she pulled up pictures that each family’s ethnic identity was different. Apparently, the Aspergillus were of African descent, the Pistris were Spanish, the Tigris were Hispanic, the Aquilam were British, the Lupus were German, and the Draco were Anglo-American. The only way to tell some of them apart would be the accents as well as some physical and cultural traits. Even though it has been over three thousand years since Humans have inhabited the star cluster, the accents that came along with them never went away for whatever reason. New accents developed among the different star systems as well. This little bit of knowledge may come in handy at some point, so Amarria put this information along with what each family was good at into her own tablet for later reference.

Aja came back to the table, looking a bit disappointed.

“It appears that the records were altered,” Aja said. “There is a window where the scanners were offline for a moment, long enough for any ship to slip away undetected. This

happened to all three ships assigned to attack the Tenebris. All three tactical officers reported a malfunction in the sensors and were ‘rebooting’ them. Convenient, wasn’t it?”

“It was convenient only for the Tenebris from the sounds of it. I’m setting aside some point of interest for each family for later. It may not be important now but it might be later.”

“Sounds fine with me for now.”

“So, what is your next move? It sounds like the Tenebris may have managed to escape from Republic forces with some assistance. That means they are still out somewhere and have gone on with their lives and their religious practices unhindered for centuries.”

“I know and that is what bothers me. If they have been continuing their practice after all this time, who knows what kind of advancements they would have made when it comes to their experimentations and implementations. There are also advancements they would have made in other fields but what those may involve is what concerns me the most. I’m also concerned if they have come across any alien races in the process and what they would have done to those races.”

“I had the same thought a moment ago.”

“The only thing we can do right now is let the crews of both the *Templar* and the *Cavalier* know what they will be looking for and explain to them why they are looking for them.”

“What happens if they find them?”

“We will most likely send some people undercover to get more information as to what we are dealing with after so long. Once we know the situation, we will act according to what we find. I must thank you, though. Thanks to you, we may have uncovered another unsolved mystery, this time a major one.”

“Maybe, but this one has caused me some concern.”

“I can only guess what those concerns are but your assistance and knowledge of historical records did come in handy. We may need those skills again at some point.”

“I just hope I don’t find another unsolved mystery again so soon. I don’t need another sloppy RCIA operation to have to remedy if it makes me worry like this one does.”

“I hope there isn’t another one like this either. I’m going to take this documentation back to headquarters for further analysis in case there is anything we may have missed here. I’ll leave you to get back to your usual work but there is one thing I have to say before I go.”

“Let me guess. I am not to speak of this with anyone else who does not know about it, right?”

“Correct. Since your mother Laura knows about the Tenebris since you told her earlier, you can tell her what you found later but only face-to-face. Do not speak of this topic through unsecure communication lines.”

“I understand. I doubt I need to talk to my father about this either.”

“Please don’t speak of this to him at all, even about working with me. I know he still has his issues working with the RCIA even though he served on the *Templar* but if he found out I got you involved, he would go ballistic!”

“I understand, Aja. I won’t tell him until we know what is going on with the Tenebris. Will you keep me informed of what the stealth vessels find if they come across them?”

“Of course. You are crucial to this investigation and if you feel comfortable working on it, I will do so. I must go. I will talk to you later. You have a good rest of the day.”

“You, too.”

Aja bowed, took a few pads, and headed in the direction of the exit downstairs. Amarria leaned back in her chair as she grabbed some of the pads that belonged to the library to put them

back once they were reset for the next person to use them. She took a deep breath to let everything that she researched and discussed sink in. It has been a rough couple of hours for her mentally ever since she found that article on the Tenebris. The last thing she would have ever thought she would do is assist an RCIA agent, much less the head agent, in an investigation on a matter that was left unsolved. She began to think about how much the Tenebris would have changed after so many centuries, whether it be for better or for worse. Her biggest fear is what sort of Pandora's Box she reopened and the implications that would follow from doing so.

For now, only time will tell if her curiosity was worth it or not.

\* \* \* \* \*

*State Executive Council Room, State Assembly Hall, City of Freedom (translated)*  
*New Vita Orbit, Capital System, Capital of United Vitam State*  
*3:30pm, March 14, 5434 A.D.*

“Why have we been summoned back here after we have already dismissed for the day?”

Miclud, the male Vitam elected to represent his people, was upset about coming back to the Executive Council Room along with the rest of the Council. He was about ready to leave the building when he was called back by Shiercon who was still in the room. The whole point of the rest of the Council leaving for the rest of the day was to not deal with the NIR ambassadors who were to be deported soon back to their nation, thus removing anymore NIR influence over the Council. He hoped this did not involve those two ambassadors or this meeting would be a very short one.

Shiercon was to his left with Migatun, the male Zaurion representative, to her left. Shiarmor, the male Esmu representative was to Miclud's right, and lastly there was Cuborah, the female Arjaf representative to Shiarmor's right. No one in the room looked happy to return, much like Miclud.

“I assure you,” Shiercon said, “I would not have called you back here if it wasn't important.”

“Is this involving the invasion of the Yintaka System?” Miclud asked.

“It does and it is not good news.”

“What are you talking about? The attack on Yintaka was supposed to be a surprise attack. The Lykans should not have a large fleet there to counter the assault.”

“The only problem was that we had someone who was not very discreet in showing our interest in that star system.”

“Wait a moment. Don't tell me Ambassador Drino made our intentions that obvious when it came to the NIR's delivery of the last planetary shield generators, did he?”

“He did and I found out about this through the two NIR ambassadors who were here earlier today. Drino openly inquired about the NIR transports to Yintaka to the Supreme Chancellor and it didn't take much for the Chancellor to figure out why Drino asked about it.”

“Why in the world was Drino not discreet in his inquiry?” Shiarmor asked. “Surely he could have chosen his words better so that the NIR wasn't suspicious of our intentions.”

“I do not know what Drino was thinking at the time he asked,” Shiercon said. “All I know was that his indiscreet inquiry was enough to alarm the NIR, the Lykans, and our misguided brethren in the so-called Mandate. The Lykans sent more ships including those battlecruiser abominations that our using our stolen missile launcher technology.”

“In other words,” Migatun said, “the Lykans were put on alert. What about the NIR transport fleet and the Mandate forces?”

“From what information I could gather as I was trying to accelerate the deployment of our forces, the NIR informed the transport fleet what they were about to encounter. However, I was not expecting which fleet they were sending to escort the transports.”

“Which one was it?” Miclud asked.

“It was the Eleventh Fleet.”

Everyone else’s eyes widened.

“That is Trent’s fleet!” Miclud said. “They sent that murderer to deliver those generators!”

“They did,” Shiercon said. “From what I could gather, he was warned in transit about the pending attack on Yintaka as well but not about our orders for our forces to terminate him.”

“So, what happened in Yintaka?” Cuborah asked. “Were our forces able to strike a blow to the Lykan populations or not?”

Shiercon took a deep breath.

“No, they did not,” she said. “Our forces meet with both some unexpected resistance and circumstances they were not prepared for.”

“What are you talking about?” Miclud said. “What happened to our forces?”

“Apparently, our forces could not be deployed fast enough to deal with the increased resistance of the Lykan defense forces but that is not what caused them a lot of problems. Apparently, Trent’s fleet arrived in the system at the same time as our forces. He split his fleet into two groups and warped into close-range to our forces that were jumping it, namely the fast assault ships we have been building. They deployed two devices, one of which was a warp disruption generator. The other was some sort of graviton field generator that slowed those vessels to a crawl making them easier to hit.”

“I’ve heard of the former device, but I have never heard of the latter device. The NIR must have been working on that one for some time but never deployed it before now.”

“Admiral Bridneo contacted Trent and informed him of the orders for his execution. However, he gave Trent the choice that if he deactivated the devices and left the system without installing the planetary shield generators that his forces would not attack him.”

“That was a fair offer for him to spare his life and the lives of his crew. However, I get the feeling that Trent did not take Bridneo up on that offer, did he?”

“No, he did not. Bridneo’s forces attacked Trent’s ship but his ship withstood the assault. Trent’s second group fared less than the battleship in that our forces were able to knock the shields offline of the cruiser that had the generators but not before the generators fell under the protection of two of their other cruisers.”

“Were our forces targeting the battleship or the generators?”

“In the group that only had the cruisers, they were trying to get the generators. In the group that had Trent’s battleship, they were targeting both.”

“I just noticed something in your report,” Migatun said. “You said ‘battleship’ and cruisers,’ but I hear no mention of that fleet’s destroyers. Where were they?”

“We found out they were protecting the transports which warped in on the other side of each planet. Bridneo brought in his heavier ships including his battleship to try to intercept them but they were intercepted by Mandate forces that were on standby. By that point, the Lykan ships got within autocannon range to open fire on our fast assault ships that were engaging Trent’s forces.”

“So, did Bridneo engage the Mandate ships?” Miclud asked.

“He and the Mandate fleet commander got into a debate on an open channel while Bridneo was feeding coordinates for a pinpoint jump of our forces below where the planetary shield would be once it was engaged. Human and Lykan destroyers began to follow the second wave of our ships that jumped just above the atmosphere and they were all below the shields when they were engaged.”

“So, they made it before the shields were deployed,” Miclud said with a smile. “How many Lykans did they manage to terminate?”

“None, sir.”

Miclud’s smile suddenly went away, replaced with anger.

“What do you mean none were terminated?!” Miclud yelled. “Why did they not fire on their populated areas? Don’t tell me they were shot down!”

“No on both counts. The Lykans had enough warning to evacuate their citizens to underground shelters that were protected. Our forces would not have been able to terminate any of them. The best they could do would be to cause damage to their cities. Once they found this out, the operation was considered a failure with the Lykan civilians being protected and the shields going online.”

Miclud slammed his left fist on the podium.

“Are you kidding me?! All that work and preparation only for us to fail?! Tell me that our forces managed to destroy some ships in the process, namely Trent’s ship?”

“Not one of their ships was destroyed but over a hundred of our fast attack vessels were either destroyed or disabled.”

Miclud was furious and some of the other Councilors were equally as upset.

“Where is Bridneo’s forces now?” Miclud asked between his teeth.

“His forces are still in Yintaka,” Shiercon said. “Apparently Trent said something on an open channel about how our enemy is ‘no longer around’ which made Bridneo surrender but the Lykans, the Humans, or the Mandate have not taken any prisoners.”

“What do you mean ‘no longer around’? The enemy is still around! The Lykans are still alive and they are a threat to our very existence!”

At that point, Miclud suddenly had a headache as a sharp pain ran through his head. Oddly enough, the other Councilors had a similar headache at the same time. It went away after a moment as Miclud shook it off.

“It doesn’t matter,” Miclud continued. “If our forces are still in Lykan space and they are neither attacking the Lykans or retreating from their space, they are considered either captured or deserters. How did you get this report, Shiercon?”

“One of the fast attack ship captains provided us with the report,” Shiercon said.

“You mean to tell me that Bridneo did not report this?! What is he doing?”

“According to one of the captains, Bridneo was invited to Trent’s ship along with the Lykan and Mandate fleet commanders. Apparently, Trent wanted to talk in a more ‘civilized’ manner.”

“You’re telling me that he is on that murderer’s ship and that they are not terminating him as ordered?! What kind of military are we running where our forces are this lax in their orders from us?! I want Trent dead and his ship destroyed for his genocide against our people! Relay that order now! If they don’t follow that order, activate the self-destruct on all ships within Bridneo’s fleet! I will not have such officers in service of the State!”

“What do we tell their families if we resort to that measure?” Shiarmor asked.

“We tell them that they fell in the line of service to the State while in Lykan territory. We don’t have to go into details with their families nor are we ever obligated to do so. Now, contact Drino! We need to get that idiot to atone for his mistake!”

“That is something else I needed to tell you,” Shiercon said. “He is on his way here and he is bringing a ‘guest’ as it were.”

“What do you mean he is bringing a guest? Who is he bringing? Don’t tell me it is another Human or worse, that traitorous Korveco or that detestable Forneido!”

“We don’t know who it is. Drino is being very tight-lipped about who this guest is that he is bringing. We will know the moment they check into customs.”

“Did he at least say why he was bringing this guest?”

“He says his guest wishes to discuss an important matter with the Council, one that could not be transmitted.”

“Considering Drino was the one that made our operation known to the NIR who told it to the Lykans and the Mandate, part of me wants to see him arrested for his big mouth. I don’t know who this guest is but whoever it is must be very foolish to come all the way here.”

“When you think about the fact that Humans were deported except for the NIR ambassadors that are awaiting deportation and Lykans are not welcome here, that only leaves two possibilities as to who is in the NIR that Drino could bring as a guest.”

“You are talking about Orbinai from the Empire and Korveco from the Mandate. Our quarrel with the Empire is not a very serious one now so I have no problems if Orbinai is coming all this way here. However, if he is bringing Korveco here, then that traitor will be arrested once he goes through customs.”

“I for one am curious what Korveco has to say,” Cuborah said. “If someone like him is willing to risk his freedom to address us, I admire his bravery. Let him come here and see what it is he has to say. Maybe we will get lucky and he will be telling us that the Mandate is willing to join the State including their territory. That would definitely increase the size of the State.”

“Very well,” Miclud said. “I will allow him to speak to us and see what he has to say. We will decide his fate afterwards. For now, though, send the orders to Bridneo’s fleet. We still have a murderer to deal with after all.”

“If Bridneo is still on Trent’s ship,” Shiercon said, “do we wait for him to leave Trent’s ship to return to his own or do have the fleet open fire while he still on board?”

“That will be up to Bridneo and his loyalty to the State.”

\* \* \* \* \*

*Conference Room, R.N.S. Renaldo, Paladin-Class Battleship  
Yintaka IV Outer Lunar Orbit, Yintaka System, Holy Lykan Republic, Eastern Region  
3:35pm, March 14, 5434 A.D.*

“So why did you request for us to be here?”

Admiral Bridneo was the last one to arrive on the *Renaldo* after Rear Admiral Zindalo and Vice Admiral Vorfedio had been on board for several minutes. He had his concerns about going aboard the *Renaldo* after all that has happened between his fleet and those defending the Yintaka System, especially Trent after he informed him of the orders of his execution. He was also worried about reporting what had transpired in the Yintaka System to headquarters and the Executive Council. Knowing them, they would either want his fleet to continue their assault on Trent, considering the inhabited planets in the system are now protected by shields, or they

would be ordered to return to State-controlled space. He would order his forces to do the latter option once this meeting was concluded with Trent.

However, he still had no idea why Trent decided to call all of them together like this. Trent did not give a reason for calling this meeting between the four fleet commanders but hopefully Bridneo will find out soon. The lack of giving a report to his superiors after too long would make them become suspicious as to what happened to the fleet and start sending communications to his forces. He told his communications officer to not reply for the time being and he would later give them an excuse that the NIR was using jamming fields. The Council knows that the NIR has this ability so it would be possible provided no one else reported in.

Bridneo was escorted once his shuttle landed in one of the hangar bays to the conference room of the *Renaldo*. It had been a while since he had been on board but as far as he could tell, nothing had changed much. Once he reached the conference room, he was greeted by Trent who offered the chair at the far end of the table. Zindalo was to Bridneo's left and Vorfedio to his right, both halfway between Trent and Bridneo sitting on the long sides of the table.

Once he sat down, he presented his question to Trent. Trent raised his right eyebrow and smiled.

"I figured that it was about time we had a chat between us about the tensions that have stemmed between our nations," Trent said.

"You want to talk politics?" Bridneo asked. "We are officers within our nations' militaries, Trent. Politics are usually left to the politicians."

"Generally, yes. However, the tensions between our nations tend to stem from something much deeper if not beyond that of politics. The problem from what I have seen tends to be more cultural and social between us."

"We have already verified that a long time ago," Zindalo said sternly. "We already know that the races that make up the State hate us Lykans for what we have done to their people centuries ago. No amount of excuses for our actions would justify what our race has done to their people all these years."

"However," Vorfedio said, "as it has already been made apparent, not all of the former slaves were treated the same. Some Lykans treated their slaves with compassion. There were those back then that did not agree with the doctrine of slavery set forth by King Kseriki the Third. There were quite a few people that thought he had gone mad with such a decree but not enough of them were able to stop the slavery from happening, so they decided to make those lives as little oppressive as they could make it."

"On the other hand," Bridneo said, "many more agreed with that King and willfully partook in their subjugation. That hatred has fostered for centuries, instilled from generation to generation. I guess that even though we managed to secure our freedom decades ago, that hatred still festers within us, passed on to the next generation."

"It didn't help that while the Kingdom was still around," Zindalo said, "the Kings that were in power at the time still wanted to bring their 'slaves' back to their 'rightful place.' I feel sullied saying that now in retrospect."

"It seems as though the problem here," Trent said, "is that the State, be it the Executive Council, some of the more influential members of society, or the entire nation, seems unwilling to let go of that hatred so easily. However, the government that the State was fighting, namely the Royal Lykan Kingdom, and its enslavement policies no longer exists to threaten the State or its citizens. They even released their remaining slaves, but those slaves were not raised in the same manner as the rest of those that make up the State. They made the Mandate because they were

not satisfied with the State or its policy in dealing with the Lykans. We have gone over this whole matter already but let me ask you this, Bridneo. Do you foster a personal hatred for the Lykans now after their reformation? I want your personal answer based on your own feelings, not those instilled on you by the military or government.”

“My personal feelings after they became the Holy Lykan Republic?” Bridneo asked.

Bridneo looked over at Zindalo who returned the glance. Zindalo was curious of Bridneo’s answer. Bridneo looked back at Trent after a moment.

“There is still some personal hatred I have for them,” Bridneo said. “However, this hatred may be for those who had lost their lives during our war. Those that have lost their lives today did not need to, that much is for certain. If I have any hatred for them as they are right now, then I would say no for the moment.”

“I see,” Trent said. “What about those in the Mandate? What are your thoughts about them?”

Bridneo looked at Vorfedio, who also looked towards Bridneo. Bridneo looked back at Trent.

“There are many of us who feel as though the Mandate is full of traitors to the State,” Bridneo said. “On the other hand, when you consider that those people were never State citizens to begin with, can they really be called traitors in that respect? I think many feel they are more traitors to their own people than the nation. My personal feelings are that they were misguided by the Lykan religion, but their choice to not join the State is based more on what the State has become than a religious reason. There are many who feel that it is the latter of the two than admit it is the former since that would mean they would also admit something is wrong with the State.”

“Then that begs the question if something is wrong with the State, or rather the Executive Council. Prior to the end of the war, the Council was willing for Human culture to be introduced into the State because they had no real culture to speak of and were concerned about the youth of the nation being uncultured. However, the moment we decided to reform the Lykans into a nation that would no longer have hostilities towards anyone, the Council at decided to deport almost every Human from their nation along with our culture. What’s worse is that the Council took it further in decreeing that there would be no culture at all in the State until the Lykans were made extinct, resulting in a purely militaristic and productive-only society where only service and duty to the State matters. Introducing some form of culture to the people who have long since needed one only to take it away and make it taboo is worse than what it was before.”

“Even I would admit to that, though not openly on my own ship as it is considered treason.”

“Don’t tell me free speech is no longer allowed in the State either, is it?”

“It was before but not anymore. To speak against the Council now is also considered treason and subject to execution.”

Trent was suddenly appalled about hearing all of this. Even Vorfedio and Zindalo were shocked.

“There is something seriously wrong with the Council for it to be going to such lengths,” Trent said. “Such acts of enforcement against the government sound more like a dictatorship than anything else. When in the history of the State has such a severe punishment ever been used just for speaking up about anything involving the government?”

“There hasn’t been such a time,” Bridneo said. “However, because of the fear of such punishment, no one has said anything against the Council or the changes that they have made because no one wants to die for their words.”



“Does this law also apply to those who come from outside the State?”

“It would depend on who it is and their position. If it was an ambassador or someone with diplomatic immunity in accordance with international law, then I would say no.”

“However, the State never signed much less agreed to those laws.”

“Then I would be concerned about who is on their way to New Vita right now.”

Bridneo, Zindalo, and Vorfedio looked at Trent with surprised looks on their faces.

“WHO is on their way to New Vita, Trent?” Bridneo asked.

“Ambassadors Drino and Korveco,” Trent said.

“Korveco?!” Vorfedio yelled. “Our ambassador to the NIR is going to New Vita with Drino?!”

“Has he lost his mind?!” Bridneo asked. “Drino should have told him that the State considers those from the Mandate as traitors to our nation! I’ll be surprised if he manages to pass through customs!”

“Drino has offered his protection to Korveco as his guest,” Trent said. “He should be safe for the time being up to the moment they reach the Executive Council.”

“How long ago did they leave?”

“Over thirty minutes ago, I believe.”

“So, it will take those two almost two hours or so to get there. Korveco is taking an awfully big risk going there.”

“He knows but he feels compelled to plead his case in front of the Council and I don’t blame him for trying. Since the Council won’t listen to Humans anymore, nor would they be likely to hear a Lykan or a Camino, Korveco was the best choice to talk to them from an ‘outside’ perspective. Our ambassadors will also be present when Korveco meets with the Council.”

“So, do we just wait here until we hear back from them?” Zindalo asked.

“I figured we would talk and see where the real root of the problem that we are facing is coming from,” Trent said. “So far, it seems to stem from the feeling of hatred from the Council towards the Lykans as well as their feeling of betrayal towards Humans and the State’s fellow brethren from the Mandate. Bridneo, this is the first time you have been able to speak about this matter to anyone, isn’t it?”

“It is,” Bridneo said, “but that is only because I am not aboard my ship where there are ‘ears’ listening to everybody to insure loyalty to the Council and the State is upheld.”

“It must feel good to get a lot of that off your chest then, huh?”

“It does, but unless the Council changes for the better, this may be the only time I can say all of this.”

“*Vice Admiral Trent?*” Ro’s voice said over the speakers in the room.

Trent pressed the intercom button on the table.

“Yes, Ro? What is it?”

“*Sir, we are getting a transmission from the Ve’Nir for Admiral Bridneo. They are saying it is urgent.*”

Trent looked at Bridneo who was puzzled as to why his ship was contacting him.

“Put it through to Terminal Four that is in the conference room,” Trent said. “He will take it down here.”

“*Understood, sir.*”

The terminal that was in front of Bridneo came alive. Bridneo’s communications officer on the *Ve’Nir* appeared on the screen, though the audio could be heard throughout the room.

*“Admiral Bridneo!”* the communications officer said. *“We have a problem, sir!”*

“Calm down for a moment,” Bridneo said sternly. “What is the problem?”

*“I know you said for us to disregard transmissions from headquarters for the time being and that the entire fleet should do so until your meeting had concluded, but it would appear someone did not follow that order.”*

“What do you mean?! Are you telling me headquarters knows what has happened in this system and where I am?!”

*“Yes, sir!”*

“Who was it that didn’t follow my orders?”

*“We don’t know yet, but we have a bigger problem, sir!”*

“Don’t tell me the problem is bigger than headquarters knowing we failed in our mission to attack Yintaka, is there?”

*“Yes, sir. We have received orders from headquarters to attack the Renaldo, sir, and to terminate Vice Admiral Trent’s life.”*

“Wait a moment, I’m still on board this ship! Has anyone confirmed receiving the orders?”

*“The orders came from Councilor Shiercon of the Executive Council directly. No one in the fleet is about to disregard orders from a Councilor, especially in light of the consequences of not following those orders that were also made clear.”*

“What consequences are those?”

*“If we do not follow those orders, they would issue the self-destruct commands for every ship in the fleet.”*

All four admirals stood up from their chairs upon hearing those consequences were.

“That’s insane!” Bridneo said. “They would terminate all of us if we don’t attack Trent?!”

*“They said either he dies or we do, regardless if we return to our space, his ship runs, or if we don’t attack at all.”*

“This cannot be. They are willing to go to such lengths? This is not like them. They would never resort to such methods in the past so why are they doing so now?”

*“What do you want us to do, sir? They are expecting a response within the next few minutes.”*

Bridneo’s eyes were wide in shock. This order was unheard of, to either kill someone or be killed for failing to do so! Bridneo looked at the other admirals hoping one of them would have a solution. Trent was the only one who looked like he did.

Trent pressed the intercom button.

“Ro,” he said, “do we have those jammers on board to block further transmissions to and from the State?”

*“We have about five of them, sir,”* Ro said. *“I’ve been monitoring the transmission and I think I know what you have in mind.”*

“What are you up to, Trent?” Bridneo asked.

“We need to keep the Council from sending the self-destruct commands to your ships until this matter with the Council is dealt with,” Trent said. “We can jam transmissions being sent to and from the Council so that those codes do not get to the ships. From there, we can either evacuate the ships or keep the jammers going until we have confirmation that the Council will no longer take such actions. However, there is just one small problem.”

“What would that be?”

“You have someone who willingly disobeyed your orders and contacted your headquarters. If that commanding officer takes his ship outside the jamming field and establishes contact, he could be used to relay those self-destruct codes to the other ships by some means that our jammers may not be able to stop.”

“In other words, we must handle the leak in our fleet, but we cannot attack our own.”

“Leave that to us. Once you identify them, if they try to make it out of the jamming field, we will attempt to disable the ship. Make it clear that no one is to leave the field for their protection for now. Warn them that anyone attempting to leave the field will be shot at my NIR forces.”

Bridneo looked back at the terminal in front of him with his communications officer on it.

“You get all of that?” Bridneo asked.

*“I did, sir,”* the communications officer said. *“I will relay that now.”*

“Good. I will return shortly.”

The communication was cut off.

“Ro,” Trent said, “deploy the jammers in fifteen seconds around the State fleet. Let the other fleets know what is going on.”

*“Understood, sir,”* Ro said.

Trent turned off the intercom system.

“Why are you heading back, Bridneo?” Trent asked. “Right now, this ship is the safest ship to be on considering the circumstances.”

“I need to be there for my fleet and my crew. My shuttle could easily be destroyed as well if they send the codes so it needs to get within the jamming field as soon as possible.”

“I understand the need to be with your crew. At least we got this time to talk, though brief as it was. We can only hope that this matter can be resolved in the next couple of hours.”

“I hope so, too. Till we meet again.”

Bridneo bowed as did everyone else in the room. Bridneo then turned and headed out the door where two SAGATs waited to escort him back to his shuttle. As the doors closed, Trent sat back down in his seat. Zindalo and Vorfedio did the same once they noticed Trent had done so.

“What are your thoughts, Trent?” Zindalo asked.

“I can tell you what I am thinking easily right now,” Vorfedio said. “The State, no, the Executive Council has completely lost their minds! These acts are completely barbaric to say the least, and THEY wonder why WE don’t go the State after our release? Their own actions speak volumes as to why we don’t go to the State at all.”

“This level of subjugation by the Council is worse than I had feared,” Trent said. “If these are the same Councilors at the time Humans entered the war, then something must have snapped in all of their minds all at once. They were not like this at all. There must be an external factor or influence for all five of them to resort to the methods they have gone to. There is no other explanation for this drastic change in the level of behavior from the Council. I need to get in touch with my government and let them know what is going on.”

“It sounds like we need to do the same thing,” Zindalo said. “I’m not sure how my government will take to this news but I am sure that they don’t want to see those that have to either kill someone or be killed themselves have to make that choice.”

Vorfedio took a deep breath.

“The Consulate will want to hear about this matter as well,” Vorfedio said. “Our brethren should not be resorting to these acts against their own people. It was bad enough to hear

them abolishing culture but to go so far as to make a choice of ‘kill or be killed’ is even worse than we could have imagined.”

Vorfedio got up from his seat. Zindalo and Trent did the same.

“I suggest we get back to our ships to speak with our governments,” Vorfedio said, addressing Zindalo. “We need to let them know what has happened here as soon as possible.”

“Agreed,” Zindalo said.

Both turned to face Trent.

“Thank you for inviting us to your ship, Trent,” Zindalo said. “I only wish it was under better circumstances.”

“Same here,” Trent said. “Please keep in touch.”

“We will,” Vorfedio said.

They bowed in Trent’s direction. Trent returned their bow. They turned and headed for the door. Once the door opened, more SAGATs waited to escort them back to their shuttles. Once they left the room and the door closed, Trent let out a huge sigh. This matter with the State in the past few hours has only gotten worse and so far, it appeared that the Executive Council was behind it all. Trent could not get over the possibility that someone else is influencing the Council and its actions but there won’t be any proof of that until Ambassadors Wade, Autumn, Drino, and Korveco confront the Council on its actions it has taken lately.

Right now, he needed to get in touch with Grand Admiral Mikey and hopefully explain the situation in time to let Drino and Korveco who would still be traveling in NIR space now about what the Council was doing to its own forces. He pressed the intercom button on the table.

“Ro,” Trent said, “get me Grand Admiral Mikey at once.”

“Yes, sir,” Ro said through the intercom.

“Also, has the jammers been deployed?”

“Yes, sir. *The jammers are activated now and the State fleet is completely enveloped in the field. They should not be receiving any further transmissions from the State.*”

“Very good. Once you get in touch with Grand Admiral Mikey, relay the communication to Terminal One here in the conference room.”

“Understood, sir.”

Trent deactivated the intercom and sat back down in the seat. He activated the terminal in front of him. After a minute or so, the terminal suddenly showed a video feed and Grand Admiral Mikey was on the screen.

“*Vice Admiral Trent?*” Mikey said. “*Has something else happened in Yintaka that we should know about?*”

“Yes, sir, and this is one that may make you very upset to hear,” Trent said.

“*Why? What happened?*”

“The Executive Council has found out about their fleet’s failure due to someone who did not follow Admiral Bridneo’s order for radio silence. They have issued the ultimatum to their fleet to either kill me or the Council will kill their own fleet via self-destruct if I escape, they retreat, or they just don’t obey their orders.”

“*Are you serious?!*”

“Yes, sir. Let me fill you in on all the details...”

\* \* \* \* \*