

Warring Factions: The Novus Initium Saga
Episode IV: The Star of the Wolf



PART 5

Bridge, R.N.S. Bannon, Paladin-Class Battleship
Heronia Gate Airspace, Ciscio System, Royal Lykan Kingdom, Eastern Region
12:23pm, September 7, 5433 A.D.

“Keep up the pressure!”

The battle at the Heronia star gate in the Ciscio System between the Royal Guard and the combined forces of the Lykan Royal Navy and the Republic’s Second Fleet has been intense. Despite the use of the ECM destroyers the Second Fleet was fielding, their capabilities were not as sophisticated as the *Templar*’s and there was a good portion of the Royal Guard that were able to fire on their targets. However, the Royal Navy and the Second Fleet still outnumbered the Royal Guard and managed to take out close to thirty battleships out of the seventy-eight that were present. However, this has taken over thirty minutes to accomplish with a large amount of energy and firepower. The Thrasher battleships have been known to be resilient and the Royal Guard ships were far from being an exception to that fact.

However, it has not been without some losses among the Navy and Republic fleet. The Royal Navy has lost fifteen destroyers and four cruisers while the Republic has lost four destroyers and one of the ECM destroyers. The Royal Guard ships that could still fire have been trying to take out the remaining ECM destroyers, but the Republic ships have been acting as shields to keep those safe from enemy fire. If more of the ECM destroyers were destroyed, more Royal Guard ships would be able to attack and cause more losses within the Republic and Royal Navy fleets. They needed to take out more of the Royal Guard ships to make their assault more

effective without suffering more losses. Right now, they were doing the best they could despite the reduction in the number of ships among the Republic and Royal Navy fleets.

Admiral Stephens was beginning to wonder how much longer they could hold out. He knew that the *Templar* and the *Harbinger* were fighting even greater odds in Heronia against the Royal Guard ships there. They needed to get through the Royal Guard fleet and head to the star gate to take control of it and jump to Heronia to help them.

“Sir!” the communications officer said. “We are receiving an encoded message from the *Templar*!”

“What is their status?” Stephens asked.

“They managed to take out the Royal Guard fleet at the other end of the gate. They want to know our status.”

“How did they managed to take out the Royal Guard fleet that quickly?! They were severely outnumbered!”

“Should I relay that question to them?”

“Please do so! I want to know!”

“Sending the message now.”

Admiral Stephens could not figure it out. There should not have been a way for the *Templar* and the *Harbinger* to take out that many Royal Guard ships on their own in a short amount of time when the Royal Navy and the Second Fleet were having a difficult time on their own. The two vessels were advanced in their designs but not THAT advanced.

“Sir,” the communications officer said, “it appears that the *Templar* resorted to hacking the Royal Guard flagship and transmitted a code that caused their shields, weapons, and engines to go offline.”

“They were able to do that?” Stephens said, shocked. “How were they able to...oh, that’s right! Admiral Trista’s forces captured the enemy Thrasher battleship when the Lykans invaded Lumen! They must have gotten the knowhow to hack the enemy computer systems based on that ship. I have to say, though, that method seems a little too convenient and quick.”

“As per Forneido’s recommendation and due to the actions of the Royal Guard fleet in the destruction of a city by orbital bombardment, the *Templar* also sent a signal for the Royal Guard ships to automatically self-destruct.”

“Wait a minute. They made the Royal Guard ships self-destruct? That seems a little excessive. However, if Forneido believes that self-destruction was the best course of action, there must be a good reason behind it. I wonder if we could do the same thing on our end.”

“We don’t have the means to hack their flagship on this end, sir.”

“We don’t, but I wonder if we could get the *Templar* to do so. Have our SAGATs managed to board the enemy star gate yet?”

“The covert dropships we were loaned by the RCIA have made it to their command center. They have control of the gate.”

“Send a signal to the *Templar* requesting that they jump to Ciscio and assist us with the Royal Guard fleet here. Tell them we need them to do the same thing to this Royal Guard fleet that they did to their fleet they destroyed in Heronia. We are losing too many ships over here.”

“Sending the message now, sir.”

“Now, I hope they make it and help stop this fleet before we lose any more than we already have.”

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*Bridge, Covert-Ops Stealth Warship Templar, Republic Stealth Warship #1
Ciscio Gate Airspace, Heronia System, Capital of the Royal Lykan Kingdom, Eastern Region
12:28pm, September 7, 5433 A.D.*

“They need our help for something like that?”

Trent was rather puzzled by the request Sheryl relayed from the battleship *Bannon*. He thought that the Second Fleet and the Royal Navy could handle the Royal Guard fleet in Ciscio. Why were they having such difficulties?

“They seem to be having trouble after they lost one of the ECM destroyers, sir,” Sheryl said. “They have moved the remaining three into more defensive positions within the fleet, but almost forty percent of the Royal Guard forces are capable of engaging both the Royal Navy and the Second Fleet. They are concerned of being overwhelmed should any more ECM destroyers get destroyed.”

When Trent was told that one of the ECM destroyers was destroyed, it quickly made sense that the Royal Guard there were starting to become more of a threat with their available battleships that could fight. This was indeed starting to become a problem that needed to be addressed.

“Haley,” Trent said, “are the drones back on board?”

“Yes, sir,” Haley said.

“Sheryl, inform the *Harbinger* that we are going to Ciscio to back up our forces there and use the same tactic to destroy the Royal Guard fleet stationed in that system.”

“Sending the message now,” Sheryl said.

“You do realize that if we use the gate,” Tora said, “the Royal Guard will know that it is not their forces and start to engage us.”

“Then we need to have the ECMs ready the moment we arrive,” Trent said. “Think you can do the same thing in terms of hacking a second time with more ships?”

“Easily. I just need Haley to make sure the drones are in position. We also need to make sure that the ECMs and jamming fields are turned off for their flagship to transmit the codes. Should I just program the self-destruct code to save on time?”

“Affirmative. Let’s get this done in the shortest amount of time so that we can get back to this system and head for High Charity. Sheryl, inform Blair’s team that we are jumping to Ciscio and will be back soon. Rei, take us into the star gate.”

“Yes, sir,” Rei said.

“Blair’s team is standing by,” Sheryl said. “Also, Forneido says good luck and see you back here shortly.”

“Understood,” Trent said. “Everyone, standby to commence operation.”

The *Templar* soon made its way into the star gate. Similar in design to the one used to connect to Lumen, the boxy-shaped structure soon came to life as the gate powered up to send the *Templar* into the Ciscio System. Once the ship was inside the star gate, a subspace bubble soon appeared around the vessel as a wormhole opened in front of them. The gate soon pushed them through the wormhole once it reached full strength.

The *Templar* quickly arrived at the opposite gate and was viewing the aft sections of several Thrasher battleships that were still engaged with the Second Fleet, located up and slightly to the right, and the Royal Navy, located several kilometers straight ahead. The *Templar* only had seconds before the Royal Guard would realize that the ship that came through the gate was not one of their own.

“Activate ECMs!” Trent ordered.

Natalie quickly activated the ECMs on the remaining Lykan ships before their guns could turn to face the *Templar*. Once the remaining fleet was hit with the ECMs, there were no more shots fired from the Royal Guard now that their targeting systems could no longer lock onto anything at all.

“Haley, the drones!” Trent ordered.

“Launching!” Haley said.

Some of the drones flew out of the starboard hangar pod and headed for what appeared to be the flagship as it was beginning to send out light signals to the rest of the fleet within the jamming field. The patterns were similar that they were seeing. It looked like it was ordering some of the closest ships to ram the *Templar* like the fleet in Heronia had ordered.

Trent expected this but the *Templar* was still close to the gate with not much room to maneuver. He hoped the drones would make it to the flagship soon while the drones were cloaked before the ships closest to the *Templar* begin to turn toward it.

“Alright!” Haley said. “The drones are in position! Your turn, Tora!”

“Got it!” Tora said. “Hacking their system now! Sheryl, get ready to send a signal to the Second Fleet to stop their jamming once my hack is complete!”

“Standing by!” Sheryl said.

“Come on, come on! Just a few more seconds!”

“Why is it taking longer?” Trent asked.

“There are more ships here and I’m having to tell their systems to deliver the self-destruct command to all of them at once! Alright, we’re good to go! Sheryl, send the signal! Haley, move the drones away!”

“Sending the signal!” Sheryl said.

“Drones are clearing the area now!” Haley said.

After a few seconds, the jamming field produced by the Republic ECM destroyers was turned off. As soon as they were, warning signals started going off on the *Templar* indicating the Royal Guard ships were about to explode as the commands were being sent out from their flagship. Ship by ship at first self-destructed, then several at a time as the numbers began to pick up. After thirty seconds, the remaining battleships exploded as the mass destruction brought shockwaves and debris throughout the entire area.

While this would make the area a bit unsafe for small craft for a while, the shields of every ship among the Royal Navy and Republic ships should be able to push the debris away until it all can be salvaged, most likely by the Lykans once they stabilized their current situation. Now was not the time to hang around in this system as they needed to get back to Heronia.

“Signal the two fleets,” Trent said. “Let them know they can proceed into Heronia.”

“That will take some time,” Natalie said. “Both fleets are rather large even after this battle.”

“I know but I expected that. We will head in first since we are the closest. The rest should be able to follow through shortly. Rei, turn us around and proceed back into the gate.”

“Yes, sir,” Rei said.

Trent could feel it now. The end of the war was drawing near. The excitement he felt earlier started to return. A new era was about to begin for both the Lykans and for peace in the star cluster.

“Sir,” Sheryl said, “Admiral Stephens wanted to give you an update about the State’s actions prior to and during the mission.”

“Let him know to update us once we are in Heronia since we are about to jump,” Trent said. “I wonder what the State has done that warrants us getting in update concerning them. Surely they haven’t done anything to jeopardize things during the operation, have they?”

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Throne Room, Lykan Royal Palace, City of High Charity (translated)
Lykana Orbit, Heronia System, Capital of Royal Lykan Kingdom
12:32pm, September 7, 5433 A.D.

“What do you mean they were DESTROYED?!”

King Ronimier was beside himself. He was just informed that the Royal Guard fleet was destroyed but he didn’t know how. It should not have been possible with as many battleships dedicated to the Royal Guard as there were!

The one giving the report on the large holographic screen in front of the King was the General of the Royal Guard. This Lykan was highly decorated with medals which only emphasized his position. The General was not too thrilled giving the report either.

“It is exactly as I have reported,” the General said. “We were able to establish contact with both of the fleets starting with the Heronia fleet for only a few seconds. It is believed that the jamming had let up for some reason which only confirms that there was a Republic ship at least in the Heronia System.”

“Then those vermin ARE here!” the King said now rather irate. “It disgusts me even more to know that they are here.”

“Regardless, several ships of the Heronia fleet reported that they had received the self-destruct code from the flagship who also reported that they, for an unknown reason, received the self-destruct code as well before we lost contact. The same thing happened when the Ciscio fleet was able to contact us as well for a brief time.”

“Why was the self-destruct code transmitted in both fleets?”

“It is our assumption that the Republic is able to hack into our ships’ computer systems. They may have figured out how our ships work based on the Thrasher battleship they captured in Dellino during Forneido’s Project Beta. If they know how to access our computer systems and transmit the self-destruct codes, then the Royal Guard is of no viable use to the defense of High Charity.”

“Then do something about it! Change the codes or implement a countermeasure against possible hacking! I don’t want excuses in a time of crisis such as this! I want results and progress in defending our home from these vermin and traitors!”

“Understood, Your Highness. We will do what we can.”

“What about the sensor system? Any word on when that will come back online?”

“The repair technicians have reached the main sensor hub and found that its programming has been overwritten. They are working on trying to change the programming. If they have to wipe the system and reinstall, it would take an hour or so.”

“We don’t HAVE an hour! Those ships will be arriving here at High Charity once they jump into this system! We need to be ready the moment we know they are heading this way!”

The General took a deep breath.

“Your Highness, it is possible that we need to face the inevitable under these circumstances.”

“What are you talking about?”

“The Royal Guard has lost three-quarters of the ships available to us, the Republic is capable of hacking our systems and issuing commands that we may not be able to counter, the Royal Navy is fighting against us with aide from the Republic, and your subjects are also against your rule across the entire Kingdom. We have a military force that now outnumbers and outguns our own and that is only if we are not blowing ourselves up due to the Republic’s hacking. Under these dire circumstances, there is a high possibility that High Charity will be lost in the conflict.”

“If you are about to suggest the possibility of surrender to vermin and traitors, then you had best look at finding a replacement for your position! I will NOT be known as the King who has been humiliated that non-Lykans have entered this system nor will I be known as the last King who surrendered to vermin and traitors! We have been ordained by our god, proclaimed by Ka’Thro himself, to rule this star cluster and subjugate those who do not follow our faith! I will not surrender to them, not now, not ever! You will do your sworn duty and protect High Charity with your life! I will not have you question my rule, my orders, or our faith while you serve the Royal Guard! Is that understood, General?!”

The General took another deep breath.

“As you wish, Your Highness.”

The screen disappeared, leaving King Ronimier in an empty throne room while he stewed in his anger over the events that were unfolding around him. He would be steadfast and remain a pillar of bastion against those who threatened to destroy his Kingdom. He was ordained by their god to rule and his rule WILL last past this day and beyond.

He will make it last by any means necessary.

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*Bridge, Covert-Ops Stealth Warship Templar, Republic Stealth Warship #1
Ciscio Gate Airspace, Heronia System, Capital of the Royal Lykan Kingdom, Eastern Region
12:47pm, September 7, 5433 A.D.*

“The last of the ships is through the gate.”

Natalie’s announcement that the last of both the Royal Navy and Republic Second Fleet did not faze Trent as much as what he was told recently by Admiral Stephens. Trent did not know how to react.

Admiral Stephens had told Trent about the State’s continued campaign against the Lykans along the frontlines, but it was against the civilian populations that were left undefended! The fact that the State had resorted to the slaughter of civilians was detestable in Trent’s mind as much as their campaign to exterminate all the Lykans! The Republic had managed to set up planetary shield generators on planets that would have been next and cooperated in the evacuation of Lykans with the Royal Navy. The Royal Navy had been shown the presentation thanks to Forneido and realized the Republic was there to assist them against the State’s vengeance. The State gave the Republic an ultimatum to clear out their forces in almost a day’s time remaining or the State would continue their campaign regardless of the Republic’s presence. Even if the State was unaware of the deployment of the planetary shields, their actions were either foolishness or just an act of blind rage.

However, the fact that the Second Fleet was intercepted by the State forces in Dellino and that those ships opened fire on the Republic vessels, namely the ECM destroyers, is a clear indication that the State no longer considers the Republic an ally in this war even though this operation was meant to stop the war for everyone. The State’s objectives clearly do not align

with either the Republic's or the Empire's, especially since it was made clear that their objective was the complete extinction of the Lykans. Trent was starting to become concerned that by helping the Lykans, the Republic could end up in a potential war with the State.

This was something that would need to be defused but that will have to wait until after the King and the Royal Court are removed from power.

"Sir?" Sheryl said. "We are being requested to be put on a conference call with Admiral Stephens, Forneido, and Fleet Admiral Corindio of the Royal Navy."

"Put them through," Trent said, coming out of his train of thought.

Three holographic screens soon appeared side-by-side. Admiral Stephens appeared in the center, with Forneido to Trent's left and Corindio to his right.

"Greetings," Corindio said. *"So, this is Vice Admiral Trent? I wondered who it was that was causing my forces so many problems as of late."*

"I'm sorry you feel that way, Fleet Admiral Corindio," Trent said.

"Don't be. I personally like a challenge and mystery, though I will admit you and your ship was dishing out more than I liked. That is beside the point, though."

"From what we have gathered," Stephens said, *"the remaining Royal Guard ships are gathered at High Charity numbering thirty-eight vessels. This would be the other half of the Royal Guard fleet in Heronia."*

"The numbers are definitely smaller than the seventy-two vessels we just faced," Corindio said. *"However, not only are they all battleships, but there is also High Charity's defenses to consider."*

"Corindio is right," Forneido said. *"High Charity may not have any need to use them but the initial designers were not fools to consider that someday a non-Lykan race would invade the Heronia System. The shields of High Charity are incredibly powerful and it will take a lot of firepower to take them down. They use the same shield layering system our ships use. The city is also armed with guns of all sizes to handle every size of ship that attacks the city."*

"How long has it been since those guns were last fired even in tests?" Trent asked.

"They are usually tested every year," Forneido said. *"However, there is a good chance the King has ordered all of the guns to be brought online for the upcoming battle."*

"Against thirty-eight battleships and now a fully armed and heavily defended city," Stephens said, *"we may be overpowered. How well do you think ECMs and jamming will work on all of those targets?"*

"Hard to say," Trent said. "We know our ECMs work on numerous ships at once, but an installation of this size would definitely test the limits of those systems."

"We still have the three ECM destroyers. If we use them to disrupt the targeting systems on the Royal Guard ships, you can focus your own ECM system on High Charity itself."

"That may prevent them from firing at us," Corindio said, *"but how do we take out High Charity? I would figure by now that the Royal Guard as well as High Charity itself would have found a means to prevent your hacker from sending the self-destruct code again."*

"Provided they have enough knowhow to do so, that would be true," Trent said.

"I may have a solution," Forneido said. *"It is a little risky and I may be asking you all to be more of a distraction for this to work."*

"What do you have in mind?" Stephens asked.

"Considering that it does not look like any of us are properly equipped to lay siege on an orbital city with a lot of effective firepower, there is only one solution that I can see when it comes to taking out such a city."

“What would that be?” Corindio asked.

“While it pains me to do this, we would need to ram one or both of the hubs that were used to allow this ship to jump between the Dellino and Heronia Systems.”

Stephens, Corindio, and even Trent were suddenly in shock about the proposed suggestion that Forneido presented.

“You want to ram those stations into High Charity?” Trent asked. “Can the station in Dellino even come here? What about the personnel on one or both stations?”

“Yes, yes, and only the station here has people on board,” Forneido said. “I would warp to the station in this star system to evacuate the personnel as well as transfer all relevant data and control to our database. The station in this star system and the one in Dellino can move on their own power. If both of them were to hit High Charity simultaneously, the city’s shields will certainly go down, especially if they are set to self-destruct on impact. The shields were designed for use against ships’ weapons, not to stop an installation or two running into it and exploding. Once the station here warps to the appropriate coordinates near High Charity, we can link a wormhole with the Dellino station to transport it here. We then ram the two stations into High Charity. If all goes well, the shields will be overwhelmed when the stations detonate their antimatter reactors and anything the shields don’t repel would damage High Charity. From there, we can blast it into oblivion unless the King chooses to surrender.”

“I somehow doubt he will,” Corindio said. “He has been so keen on keeping his position of power that the thought of him being removed from it would be ‘sacrilegious’ in his mind. Surrendering for him would be the same as removing him from power. He will make the Royal Guard fight to protect him and the Royal Court to the last ship.”

“Then what will happen to the Royal Guard if High Charity goes down?” Stephens asked. “Provided any of them remains after the stations explode, what would they do once the city is destroyed if the King doesn’t surrender?”

“They commit suicide if that happens,” Forneido said. “If they fail to protect the King with their lives and his life was forfeited, they must kill themselves for failure to uphold their primary duty.”

“Sounds a bit excessive if you ask me,” Trent said.

“Maybe so,” Corindio said, *“but for me, I find that it would be due justice after what they did to Vangirdi.”*

“It sounds like we have a plan,” Stephens said. *“Forneido, does your ship have the capacity to evacuate everyone at that station?”*

“Yes,” Forneido said. “I’m going to head there now and get started. Trent, do you think you can fly to High Charity under cloak and give us coordinates for all of us to fly to? The station has to warp to a position opposite of the Dellino star on the other side of High Charity.”

“We’ll get you necessary coordinates for you all to warp to,” Trent said. “We’ll warp there now while cloaked to get that information.”

“Sir?” someone said towards Forneido on his end of the transmission. *“You might want to see this.”*

Forneido was handed a data tablet from what everyone assumed was his communications officer. Forneido was suddenly surprised by the contents on the tablet.

“Are you sure this is legitimate?” Forneido asked his communications officer.

“What is it, Forneido?” Corindio asked. “Who is contacting you?”

“I will have to get back to you all on that at a later time,” Forneido said. “This communication I have received may or may not make a difference in our plans against High

Charity but I need to verify that this is legitimate or not. I will check in on this matter while I'm at the research facility to begin evacuations. I will tell you all about this later. In the meantime, let's focus and prepare on the plan as we have discussed so far."

"Very well, everyone," Stephens said. "I wish you all the best of luck."

Everyone nodded in agreement before the holographic screens disappeared. Trent took a deep breath.

"Rei," he said, "set course for High Charity and engage warp. Natalie, activate the cloaking device. Let's get ready to end this war."

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Throne Room, Lykan Royal Palace, City of High Charity (translated)

Lykana Orbit, Heronia System, Capital of Royal Lykan Kingdom

12:55pm, September 7, 5433 A.D.

"So, we are able to detect them now?"

King Ronimier was finally receiving some good news. The technicians sent to fix the sensor hub had been working on getting the hub up and running again. The Royal Guard General was reporting their progress.

"They say it isn't perfect," the General said, "but at best we can focus the sensors in a single directional cone up to detect within fifteen degrees from the center. Only objects within that cone can be detected."

"That's better than nothing," the King said. "Have you pointed it at the Ciscio jump gate to see if the enemy fleet is there?"

"We have and we can detect the Republic and Royal Navy fleets holding their positions there."

"Any sign of the Republic stealth vessel or any new or unusual Kingdom-based vessel?"

"No, though the stealth vessel could avoid detection from our sensors without cloaking. It is unknown if that was how they managed to get close to the sensor hub without being detected. As for any unusual Lykan vessel, we are not detecting one among the fleet. Am I to assume you're thinking that it is an experimental ship the Forneido had developed in secret?"

"Yes, but for what purpose, I do not know. We don't even know what this ship is capable of or what it even looks like. Didn't the Heronia Royal Guard fleet at the gate fight his ship?"

"Yes, but they didn't transmit anything about it before they were destroyed. Therefore, we don't have any visuals of the new vessel."

"At least we will know when the rest of their fleet is heading our way. Keep an eye out for either of those ships within our perimeter. They may try to do reconnaissance on this city and its defenses."

"Understood, sir."

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Bridge, Covert-Ops Stealth Warship Templar, Republic Stealth Warship #1

High Charity Airspace, Heronia System, Capital of the Royal Lykan Kingdom, Eastern Region

12:57pm, September 7, 5433 A.D.

"That is a LOT bigger than it looked in our briefing a few days ago."

Trent and the rest of the bridge crew were the first Humans to ever see the orbital city of High Charity and it was indeed a sight to behold. It was larger than any station Humans had

built, even when compared to the Republic military headquarters. Considering that the Lykans left their world leaving only a small percentage on the planet to serve as caretakers, this orbital city most likely served as their home for a while before their race spread out across the stars.

While the station served some cultural and historical importance, its size and gaudy appearance is only a reminder of how this serves as a capital for the Kingdom and is the home of those who twisted their own holy texts to suit their personal needs. Thankfully, there were no slaves on the orbital city as the Lykans upheld a strict policy of not having any race but Lykans in the Heronia System.

Of course, that policy did not consider anyone who could bypass the star gate.

The size of the structure, however, would make it a bit more difficult to destroy than Trent had imagined. Forneido's plan to have the two stations that allowed the *Harbinger* to jump between Heronia and Dellino to collide with High Charity was their best bet. The explosions would expose the station's reactors where they could destroy them with concentrated weapons fire. This would all depend on how much damage is done to High Charity after the collision.

"I'm getting the coordinates for both the station here in Heronia to warp to and where the fleets will need to come out of warp," Natalie said. "All we need to do is transmit them and wait for a confirmation that Forneido is ready to proceed."

"Can we transmit them without being detected?" Trent asked.

"Their system-side sensor system is still down. We should be able to transmit without detection."

"Sheryl, transmit the coordinates on an encrypted channel. Tell Admiral Stephens to forward those coordinates to Forneido and to reply to us when Forneido is ready."

"Understood, sir," Sheryl said.

"Now we just need to wait," Trent said.

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*Bridge, R.K.S. Harbinger, Lykan Advance Prototype Battleship
Military Research and Development Station Docking Bay, Heronia XI Orbit, Heronia System
1:01pm, September 7, 5433 A.D.*

"We need everyone to hurry up and board the ship!"

After contacting Verno and Granio about the plan to ram the station into High Charity, Forneido's aides quickly got all the research scientists to board the battleship as fast as possible while getting all the research data they had on both portable storage and transmitting to the *Harbinger's* databanks. Forneido also asked for Verno and Granio to work on transferring the controls of the station to the *Harbinger* so that it could be flown by remote.

The coordinates from the *Templar* were transmitted to the *Harbinger* by the Republic battleship *Bannon* a few minutes ago. Forneido had Verno and Granio program the coordinates into the station's navigation system so that it will go to those coordinates the moment the *Harbinger* gives the station the signal to warp there.

As the last of the scientists boarded the *Harbinger*, the only ones remaining on the station were Verno and Granio.

"Have Verno and Granio completed the link-up yet?" Forneido asked as he was getting impatient.

"They just completed the link to our systems a moment ago," the communications officer said. "They are heading for the *Harbinger* now."

“Do we have control of the ‘Reeler’ jump system so that this station can draw in the one in Dellino?”

“It shows that the link to the Dellino station is on standby. It looks like we are all set.”

“Sir,” the operations officer said, “Verno and Granio have boarded the *Harbinger*. We are sealing the docking bay doors.”

“I’ve also confirmed that the data transfer is also complete,” the communications officer said. “We are ready to start the operation.”

“Very well,” Forneido said. “Undock from the station and prepare to warp both the *Harbinger* and the station to High Charity. Signal the fleet that we are proceeding in three minutes. Make sure they let the *Templar* know that we are coming. We will warp in once we have confirmation that the Royal Guard and High Charity have been hit with ECMs so that they cannot target the research station.”

“Yes, sir,” the communications officer said. “I’m transmitting the message now.”

“Also, get me in contact with our ‘insider’ using the encoded frequency he provided us. I want to verify what he has planned and if he really is wanting to proceed.”

“Yes, sir. Are you sure we can trust him?”

“I’ve known him for a very long time. He has his own reasons for wanting to help us and whether those reasons are the same as ours or not, the goal is still the same regardless.”

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Throne Room, Lykan Royal Palace, City of High Charity (translated)

Lykana Orbit, Heronia System, Capital of Royal Lykan Kingdom

1:05pm, September 7, 5433 A.D.

“So, you’ve detected movement from the enemy?”

King Ronimier was brought up to date about the actions the two hostile fleets near the Ciscio jump gate were taking. With the sensor system now directed towards the gate, the King and the Royal Guard could now see when the enemy forces would warp towards High Charity. The King had called for the Royal Court to be present. He wanted them there to witness the upcoming destruction of the Republic fleet and the Royal Navy traitors. He felt confident that with High Charity’s defenses and offenses that their fleets would not win no matter what tricks they tried. His technical aides insured him that the hacking that was done to the Royal Guard would not affect High Charity because the systems were different from those ships. The guns were independently controlled so ECMs would not affect them. Finding gunners on short notice was simple as some of the Royal Guard were transferred to High Charity to operate them.

“*That is correct,*” the Royal Guard General said. “*They’ve adjusting their heading towards this direction. Whatever it was that they were planning, it appears they have finished their preparations and are ready to warp to our location.*”

“You still haven’t detected either the stealth vessel or Forneido’s vessel?” the King asked.

“*No, Your Highness.*”

“Those two ships are up to something but we are as prepared as we are going to be to repel their assault. Put the city and the Royal Guard on high alert and prepare for combat.”

“*Yes, Your Highness. We have just detected the enemy forces going to warp. They should be arriving in less than thirty seconds.*”

“Prepare for a general transmission. I will address these vermin and traitors myself.”

“Yes, Your Highness. The channel is now open. You may want to hurry before they attempt to jam our transmissions.”

“Very well,” the King said before he cleared his throat. “To the vermin and traitors who oppose the ordained ruler and king of the Lykans! On this day, you will feel righteous fury for opposing my authority as ordained by our god to rule this kingdom!”

* * * * *

*Bridge, Covert-Ops Stealth Warship Templar, Republic Stealth Warship #1
High Charity Airspace, Heronia System, Capital of the Royal Lykan Kingdom, Eastern Region
1:07pm, September 7, 5433 A.D.*

“That was quite the arrogant statement to make, wasn’t it?”

Trent didn’t know whether to laugh at the King’s audacity or feared his borderline god-complex he was starting to develop believing he was invulnerable to attack. Either way, the King’s reign would end today whether he knew it or not. He was given the signal from Admiral Stephens that Forneido was ready to warp his station here in Heronia to High Charity based on the coordinates that the *Templar* provided, and that both the Royal Navy and the Second Fleet were now warping to a different set of coordinates near High Charity.

“Do you think he has something up his sleeve?” Tora asked.

“I hope not,” Trent said. “It doesn’t matter now. It’s too late to change the plan. Natalie, prepare to decloak and activate the ECM directly at High Charity. Prepare the jamming field as well.”

“Standing by,” Natalie said.

Five seconds later, the Royal Guard and the Second Fleet came out of warp within ten kilometers of High Charity’s shields. Not too long after they arrived, the ECM destroyers activated their ECMs and jamming directed at the Royal Guard fleet. Now it was the *Templar*’s turn.

“Deactivate cloak!” Trent said. “Raise shields and activate ECM and jamming at High Charity!”

“Aye-aye, sir!” Natalie said.

The *Templar*’s optical cloak dropped and the ship was now visible to the naked eye, though the dark colored hull was still hard to see against the blackness of space, especially when there were not any stars at their angle from High Charity now that they were on the edge of the star cluster.

“Activating jamming and ECM against High Charity,” Natalie said.

“Alright,” Trent said. “Sheryl, signal Forneido. Let him know that it is safe to...”

Before Trent could finish that sentence, High Charity’s large assortment of guns suddenly started firing in the direction of the Royal Navy and Second Fleet! Trent looked at the view screen with a dumbfounded expression on his face!

“Natalie!” Trent yelled. “I thought you activated the ECMs against High Charity!”

“They ARE activated!” Natalie said. “I’m not reading any targeting systems at all from High Charity!”

“You’ve got to be kidding me! They must be using optical targeting systems! ECMs won’t work at all on something like that!”

“Sir!” Sheryl said. “Admiral Stephens is wondering why our ECMs are not activated!”

“Tell him they ARE activated! High Charity is using optical targeting which we cannot disable! Tora, is there a way to hack their systems to shut those guns down?”

“We are not within range for me to try,” Tora said. “The drones would not be able to get close enough with the city’s shields being up either.”

“We need solutions!” Trent said. “The fleet cannot last very long against that much firepower!”

“Sir!” Sheryl said again. “Forneido is asking us what the situation is and why we haven’t given him the signal to warp the station in.”

“Tell him what is happening right now. If the station warps in with High Charity’s guns still active, the station may not last long enough to ram the station.”

“I’m sending the signal now.”

Trent could not believe what was transpiring in front of him. He did not expect High Charity’s guns to use some form of optical targeting. This would explain why the King felt confident of his chances for survival against allied forces. He knew what the ECMs would not be useful against these guns and now Republic and Royal Navy forces were in this predicament.

“Sir?” Sheryl said. “Forneido is asking us to transmit the coordinates. He is proceeding as planned regardless if High Charity’s guns are active or not. He says that he has managed to contact an insider who will make things go our way for us soon.”

“What does he mean that he has an insider?” Trent asked.

“He says to trust him. This insider managed to contact Forneido earlier and told him that High Charity’s guns and shields will go down shortly.”

Trent was a bit hesitant to respond as this plan of Forneido’s was a one-shot deal, but as ships were being destroyed among both the Royal Navy and the Republic Second Fleet, Trent realized their options were quickly diminishing. Trent would have to trust Forneido’s insider.

He took a deep breath.

“Send him the coordinates. We can only pray this plan of his works.”

* * * * *

Throne Room, Lykan Royal Palace, City of High Charity (translated)

Lykana Orbit, Heronia System, Capital of Royal Lykan Kingdom

1:09pm, September 7, 5433 A.D.

“This is divine justice to you all for defying my ordained authority over all!”

King Ronimier laughed and gloated as High Charity’s guns fired on the Royal Navy and Republic fleets. Without the Republic’s infamous target-jamming system stopping them from targeting under normal circumstances, the gunners were free to fire at their targets without any hindrance from enemy electronic warfare.

However, the Republic’s communications jamming was still in effect so communications was down between the King and any ship in the area, so he could not gloat directly at the enemy fleets. However, the Royal Court was present and quite pleased with how things were proceeding against the Republic and the traitorous Royal Navy fleet on the large holographic screen.

“Behold, my fellow members of the Royal Court!” the King said as he stood up from his throne. “The vermin and the traitors assumed we would be an easy target, and that our reign would end under the might of their firepower! They are finding out that you cannot defy those ordained by our god to lead our people to their ultimate destiny of ruling the star cluster! WE shall be victorious and the star cluster will know that our rule is absolute!”

The image quickly changed from the scene of the battle to the Royal Guard General who was stationed on High Charity during this battle. He seemed rather calm.

"Your Highness," the General said. "We have detected an unknown ship approaching High Charity from the direction of Heronia XI and a large object following closely behind it."

"What do you mean an unknown ship? Wait, is it Forneido?"

"Most likely, sir, but we cannot identify the large object following close behind the ship. They will be arriving in a few seconds."

"It must be some foolish plan of Forneido's. Regardless, he, too, will feel the stab of defeat along with everyone else who defies me!"

The General's face did not even flinch when the King said that. Instead, he remained rather calm.

"King Ronimier, can I ask you something?"

"What could you possibly want to ask during this glorious battle? I want to see those vermin and treacherous ships explode under the might of High Charity for opposing my rule and I can't even look at that while you are on the screen!"

"It is a rather important question, sir."

King Ronimier audibly exhaled as he sat back down in his seat.

"Fine, General, but this had BETTER be important. Isn't Forneido due to arrive soon?"

"Yes, he is. That being said, the question I have is this: In the long history of kings and queens that have come before you, how many since the formation of the Kingdom has ever sent a military force against their own kind? I'm not talking about slaves, but against fellow Lykans."

Ronimier raised his left eyebrow.

"I do not know. I've never bothered to look that up before. Why bother me now with such a trivial question?"

"The answer to the question is none, King Ronimier. Do you want to know why?"

"I'm willing to bet it is because their subjects know their place and as of late they do not seem to remember that fact, General. Just like you seem to be keeping me from watching the battle outside right now."

A beeping occurred on the general's side of the transmission. He looked down and was mildly surprised.

"Forneido's ship is here and that is one nice looking yet rather large ship. Allow me to show you."

A small screen appeared on the left side of the screen. On it was the *Harbinger* and this was the first time that anyone in the Royal Court had seen it. King Ronimier got to his feet.

"Forneido," he said, "how DARE you build and steal such a vessel from your King?!"

"I see, so that is the structure that was following him."

Another screen appeared, this time to the right, showing the military research station that followed behind the *Harbinger*. Both were nearly below High Charity! Ronimier began to realize what Forneido was planning to do with that station but he felt confident.

"What foolishness has he brought with him?" he laughed. "Like one station ramming into our shields would possibly bring our shields down, much less destroy us."

"What shields would you be referring to, sir?"

Ronimier's whimsical tone suddenly went away as the General's words suddenly hit him.

"General, what are you talking about?"

"I know you can hear the rumbling and vibrations throughout the station, but I can assure you that those are not our guns firing. They are impacts from enemy guns."

“Our shields are DOWN?! Did you do this?!”

“Ronimier, the reason that NO king or queen has sent the military in to be used against fellow Lykans is because of the one holy law Ka'Thro himself put into place after he helped unify our people. That law stated that in no way, shape, or form is the leader or ruling party of the Kingdom to use military force against other unarmed Lykans to avoid repeating battles between Lykans! You King Ronimier have broken that law and this is the result!”

“Oh, spare me the theatrics! The King IS the law and the word of our god! I decreed that those people deserved to die for defying their King and the will of our god!”

“You do NOT speak with the word or will of our god, especially in light of the order to kill males, females, and younglings in cold blood! They had their faith and their words, but you sought to destroy them with guns because they were defying you, your rule, and what you represent, not our god!!”

“Have you forgotten that you relayed those orders to the Royal Guard! You have as much blood on your hands as I do, so don't preach to me and act all 'holier than thou' right now!”

“You're right. I did relay those orders and I am just as guilty of this heinous sin as you are. That is why I'm doing something about it! I punish myself by being the one responsible for the fall of High Charity, and this sinful and corrupt government along with it!”

“This is insane! You have completely lost your mind!”

“Maybe so, but at least I haven't lost my faith and my responsibility to uphold it.”

As the King and the Royal Court looked at the external screens of the Royal Navy and the Republic fleet blasting holes in the armor of High Charity, unhindered now by the silencing of the station's own guns, the station that followed the *Harbinger* fired a purple beam towards the other side of High Charity. A large wormhole soon formed near the orbital city and a station was suddenly visible on the other side of the wormhole.

“What is going on?! What is that?!” Ronimier asked.

“That is the station in the Dellino System that Forneido used to help him jump there. Can you guess why he is forming that wormhole there?”

“There is no way that is possible! He's bring it here to smash into High Charity as well?!”

“I may be the one responsible for making us defenseless, but Forneido will be the one that will finish us all off. I hope you all are prepared to meet our god and await judgement for your actions against our people. Farewell, King Ronimier, the LAST King of the Royal Lykan Kingdom.”

The General's image disappeared, leaving only the exterior views of High Charity. The King was livid but he knew of a way to safety.

“Everyone!” he said. “Head to Hanger Bay Four! There is a ship there that we can escape on! Hurry before those stations collide with High Charity!”

The Royal Court headed for the doors to leave the throne room, but when they tried to open them, they were all locked!

“The doors are locked!” one of the Lykans said to the King's right.

“These doors are locked, too!” another Lykan said to the King's left.

“Check the main doors!” Ronimier said as he pointed to the main entryway.

Several of the Royal Court members headed for the doors to the main entryway, but found those were locked as well. The King was suddenly starting to panic as the realization that he and the rest of the Royal Court were locked in the throne room, trapped and unable to escape the room much less High Charity! He looked at the still active view screen as the Dellino station

came through the wormhole on a collision course while the other station headed their way from the opposite direction. Collision alarms started to sound throughout High Charity.

King Ronimier stood there in front of his throne as the Royal Court started to go into a panic trying to find something to open or bust the doors down trying to escape. He was filled with the feeling of silent rage. His kingdom betrayed him, his forces have rebelled against him, his enemy has pushed his kingdom back over the past couple of months, and all he could do is stand there and watch as the inevitable end was fast approaching them.

“Damn you, Forneido,” he finally said. “Damn you and those who follow you, your pathetic allies, and whatever monstrosity of a nation you end up making from the remains of my kingdom. You will regret this day, you and your descendants, when you meet our god.”

As the stations collided and their antimatter reactors detonated to gulf High Charity, no one was around to record the last words of King Ronimier the Fourth. High Charity’s own reactors, breached from the explosions, quickly exploded, vaporizing most of the station. The Royal Guard fleet stationed near High Charity was also engulfed in the massive explosion. None of their shields could withstand the explosive magnitude and were vaporized once their shields were gone. In the end, all that remained was twisted debris and metal as the Royal Navy, the Republic Second Fleet, the *Templar*, and the *Harbinger* bore witness to the events that had unfolded.

The Royal Lykan Kingdom, or rather the ruling body of the kingdom, was no more.

* * * * *

*Office of the Supreme Chancellor, Republic Parliament Building, Capital City of Luminous Planet Luminaire, Lumen System, Capital of Novus Initium Republic
12:13pm, September 21, 5433 A.D. (Two weeks later)*

“I welcome you to Luminaire, Ambassador Forneido.”

Drew never thought he would say those words after all that has happened over the past several months during the war. He was still amazed how things have turned out after the war’s conclusion. Most of what has happened in the past week has not been both all good news, though.

Once High Charity was destroyed, Forneido broadcasted the events across the Kingdom along with the presentation that Agent Tora had created. The Lykans’ mindset about their religion and slavery was quickly changed when realizations and interpretations started to make sense to them such as why they were losing the war and why things were no longer going their way. They needed to reform and with the late King Ronimier out of the way along with the Royal Court, they would be able to make that happen.

Once of the first things the Forneido helped establish after assessing the damage done to the former-Kingdom’s assets and holdings was the formation of a republic. Modeled after the Novus Initium Republic’s government, Forneido would form what is now called the Holy Lykan Republic where the citizens would elect who would represent them in set terms rather than the personal interests of an elite few. Forneido saw how this form of government was successful for Humans for thousands of years and believed that this would allow the former Kingdom to stabilize politically and socially. Unlike the Novus Initium Republic, there were a couple of differences the Holy Lykan Republic had implemented that felt more attuned with their culture and religion.

The first of these differences was the reason the word “Holy” is in the title of the name of

the nation. While a lot of people questioned their religion in the advent of their defeat in the war, many had gone back to their holy texts and history books after seeing the presentation to review and compare the words of their prophets and saints that came before them all the way to the Prophet Ka'Thro to verify what the presentation had mentioned. They confirmed that somewhere along the way, slavery was used as the means to force alien races that were conquered into accepting the Lykans' god by confessing and working off their "sins." There are many who now realize that this method was not they were to be converted, instead that it was supposed to be peaceful and not through force. It was confirmed that the implied method of slavery was introduced by King Kseriki the Third at the time and not any saint or prophet. Therefore, slavery was a decree by royalty and not by any divine decree, leading many to realize that this was what led to the Kingdom's eventual downfall from grace. The Lykans leave the name "Holy" in the title as a reminder that it is their goal to try to win favor in the eyes of their god again first by reconciliation and through their actions that now fall in line with their god's will through their holy texts, not the will of their former enslaving royal leaders.

The second of these differences was the positions of those that would eventually be part of the government. Whereas the Novus Initium Republic had the positions of Supreme Chancellor, Senate, and Supreme Court, the Holy Lykan Republic named their counterpart positions as Prime Minister, Parliament, and the Justice Department, respectively. All of those who were elected into those positions now go through a religious ceremony to bless and ordain them in their roles to lead and represent their people, and to not give into selfish temptations that come with their positions of power like the King and his Royal Court had done. The Justice Department is also separated into two specific courts: The Theology Court and the Civic Court. The former deals with religious-based crimes and is the more powerful of the two while the latter deals with smaller crimes and those that break the laws of the nation rather than those found in their holy texts. The Theology Court functions as an appeals court for the Civic Court. The current Prime Minister upon being elected had selected Forneido to serve as the ambassador to the Novus Initium Republic as their representative. This was in response to the fact Forneido did not want the position of Prime Minister himself but found that the position of ambassador was one he was already doing in an unofficial sense during the last days of the war. He gracefully accepted the position.

The culture of the Holy Lykan Republic in the past two weeks has greatly changed after the establishment of the new government. These changes are reflected in the culture and the attitudes of the general population of the nation in the wake of no longer having slaves or those Lykans of "privileged" status. Every Lykan, unless their position is not affected by the loss of slaves in their line of work, must now do manual work for a living to earn an income. However, while many foreign observers would think that this would cause a great deal of anger and frustration among the Lykan population, every Lykan was told by the Nifrodori, or the new religious leader of the Lykan faith since the King's death, that this was their punishment for straying off the true path of their god, and that the words and scriptures were "twisted" over the years by those of royal blood to serve their own selfish and power-driven purposes. By bringing a religious "renaissance" to the nation where religion was once again at the forefront of their society, many have accepted what has happened to them and their nation as the results of royal "deviancy" and now work off their own "sins" and "transgressions" through hard work and dedication. Because of this, the average Lykan has become more pacifistic to each other and to other races where applicable. There are reports of those who wish to return to the old ways of the Kingdom, citing that the words of their prophets and saints were not misinterpreted and should

not be altered. However, this is a very small percentage of the population. There are those that fear that this small group of “zealots” may take matters into their own hands to revive the Kingdom as it once was. This may include acts against other nations through terrorism if needed. Currently, the Justice Department and the military are keeping close watch on those Lykans and will try to prevent them from harming others whether they target Lykans or foreign citizens.

The biggest cultural impact and change to the Lykan mindset was permitting foreign citizens into their Republic. In the past, the only non-Lykans allowed in the Kingdom were those that were conquered and enslaved. Realizing the need to be more open with their neighbors, the Lykan Republic government attempted to work out conditions for trade and commerce as well as allowing visitors and fellow Lykans in and out of other nations. However, this has been met with considerable opposition by the State. With the State taking over the former Kingdom territories that were seized during the war, the State will not allow anyone from the Holy Lykan Republic into their nation, nor allow their own citizens to visit the Lykan Republic. The Empire, however, has been neutral in the affair thus far now that they have once-again isolated themselves from the other nations. The only nation not opposed of the Holy Lykan Republic’s good intentions is the Novus Initium Republic, also called NIR for short, which currently maintains the star gate that is in the Dellino System for the time being. The other end of the gate has since been moved from Lumen to Sanctus at the request of the Sanctus religious council. The numerous religions found in the system have been inspirational and incredibly insightful for the Lykans to get a better understanding of their own religion and the peaceful implementations that their religion holds. Those Lykans who visited the planet of High Sanctus were indeed surprised about the multitude of religions but soon realized their historical aspects and what they mean to Humans. Also, the Lykan mindset about Humans being “vermin” has since went away as it was no longer right to call a race that ended up in the star cluster by accidentally that name. However, the allowing of Lykans into the NIR has since been a point of contention between the NIR and the State. The Empire however believes that the NIR is helping to shape the Lykan people into something better than it once was. The Lykans by comparison are more than happy to allow visitors into their Republic to see the wonders of their nation and their newfound cultural and religious identity. Only the original five home planets of the State’s races are off-limits to visitors and quarantined due to the toxic drug that was introduced and the effects it could have on others due to the airborne nature of the drug. Lykan scientists have been studying the drug and testing the areas to monitor the effects, but those planets are a constant reminder of the atrocities the Lykans have committed in the name of their faith and a constant source of hatred by the State towards the Lykans regardless of their changes. This has been the reason why the State to this day is still at war with the Lykans, though this war has gone from “hot” to “cold” for the time being.

In the wake of these changes and the continued threat of the State, the Lykan military has also undergone several changes. One change was the colors of the ships and those on the emblem of the nation. It was found that the colors on every ship were “aggressive” and foreboding when seen. The part of the emblem with the Lykan head and sword, which originally represented the superiority of the Lykans and power, was removed. The rest of the emblem, meant to represent the dawn of the new age of the Lykans, remained but was changed in color from black and silver to pewter and gold. The colors were very much like the gray and gold colors found on NIR ships as those colors seemed more appealing and less aggressive. These colors were soon being applied where needed including the ships the Lykans used.

Another change was one based on a condition of the Kingdom’s surrender. As one of the terms of surrender made by the NIR, the United Vitam State, and the Camino Star Empire, the

Lykans were no longer allowed to field ships that used the brains of their former slaves as the control centers of their ships whether “harvested” or cloned. This would leave the Lykans with a severe military disadvantage which led to the reason Forneido was called to Drew’s office. Forneido was told that Drew had a “gift” for him that related to that problem.

“It is good to be here, Supreme Chancellor,” Forneido said as he bowed. “I must say that this planet is very beautiful both from a natural and architectural point of view. It fills me with some grief still that I tried to destroy it only weeks ago.”

“That is in the past now,” Drew said. “Please have a seat.”

Drew gestured to the seat on the left in front of his desk. Forneido went and sat down in that seat, being mindful of his robes. While the Lykans may have changed, their wardrobe in some cases had not involving their general fashion sense. The robes seemed less regal and more casual while still signifying position.

Drew sat down in his seat behind his desk.

“Now, I wanted to go over a couple of things with you involving the development of your military in the advent of war,” Drew said. “I had some of our ship designers look over the *Harbinger* based on the scans the *Templar* took of the ship before the final battle.”

“You scanned the *Harbinger*?” Forneido said surprised. “How detailed were the scans and why didn’t my ship detect them?”

“I can’t say why you couldn’t detect them as that is still classified but the scans were very detailed. Our designers looked them over and the composition of your existing fleets. They came up with some very interesting designs that your nation’s ship building teams may want to look over. They will help make your fleet strong enough to defend themselves again.”

Drew took out a small portable data storage unit from his desk and placed it in front of Forneido. This one was designed to interface with Lykan systems so that they could access the data. Forneido took the device and looked at it.

“You foresaw this situation two weeks ago?” Forneido said. “I’m impressed and humbled that you went to such lengths to help us rebuild our nation into a better one. Your forces are already helping to rebuild our assets including our ship production facilities which I have to ask why you are going so far for us?”

“A lot of it has to do with the State. As you know, near the end of the war, the State continued its advance into Lykan territory and began killing civilians by the millions through orbital bombardment. We do not condone such behavior and quickly worked to set up planetary shield generators on the next worlds they would attack while trying to evacuate them with the help of the Royal Navy. They gave us an ultimatum to remove our forces and defenses before they would attack those worlds. This was before their forces attacked the Second Fleet in the Dellino System. Once that had occurred, I made it clear after the Senate approved our next course of action that if the State came within weapons range of our ships again that they would be fired upon for attempted genocide of a species and making their intent towards Republic involvement with those worlds’ protection clear in Dellino. However, we cannot continue to protect those worlds forever as they are your people’s worlds and thus we need to make sure your people are able to protect them on your own. Those designs that I am handing you will help.”

“Thank you, Supreme Chancellor. I take it that Drino and Orbinai are not here because of the nature of this meeting?”

“Orbinai has returned to the Empire for a scheduled meeting with her government to discuss their future ties with our Republic and yours. So far, while they have resumed their isolation, the talks I have been told are promising and that the isolation is only to reassess their

ties with the State as well. Drino has gone back to the State and from the sound of things there is a chance he may not return due to our involvement with your people. Speaking of which, part of your nation's surrender requested for the former slaves to be returned to the State, but I have been told that very few have done so. Why is this?"

"That is something I needed to bring up with you actually. Apparently, many of the slaves don't want to leave."

"What? Why?"

"It would seem not all slaves were treated poorly. The majority were treated with kindness and compassion as it has shown that they perform their duties better when not being harshly treated like the ones that make up the State prior to the Slave Revolt. The newly freed slaves don't want to return to the State as they liked their former masters and find the State's actions towards Lykans unacceptable. It may also have to do with the State's current mindset."

"They don't view the Lykans in the same manner as the State? This is going to be a problem. The State is still demanding their return but it looks like they don't want to go as the State's position on the Lykans doesn't align with their own. So, what is the Holy Lykan Republic going to do?"

"The former slaves are requesting for a place to reside where they would develop their own culture on their own but they lack the knowledge of certain elements of a nation such as politics. Therefore, we are looking at placing them in the territories that were once occupied by your forces, but they will function as a semiautonomous nation that is answerable to our government. We will set them up any way we can, but we would like your help as the former slaves have also requested your aide in creating a home for them."

"Considering that we are still working on removing assets such as stations that are set up there, this may give us a good reason to leave those there for their use, provided sensitive material and information is removed first."

"Of course. We can go over the details more once you check with your Senate about this matter as I know this will need their approval."

"One thing, though. That territory would put them right in the middle between all four nations. I'm concerned that this might cause a problem should the war with the State go hot again, especially once they find out their own people don't want to leave your Republic."

"I know, but that is why we will work to make sure they are able to defend themselves as well. One last thing I wanted to ask. Considering what all I've done to him, I'm wondering what ever happened to Vice Admiral Trent after the war?"

"Oh, him? He has been reinstated into the Republic Navy and will be assigned back to the *Renaldo*, but right now he is taking a vacation with his wife in the city of Paraíso De La Sol. Everyone else who was assigned to the *Templar* has returned to their normal lives as well for the time being. We are, however, having problems with our military personnel lately with a lot of people resigning after the war. I don't blame them for their actions but that is something we will address on our own in due time. For now, it is best to enjoy the peace while it lasts. We won't know how long it will remain this time."

* * * * *

To be continued...
END OF EPISODE IV