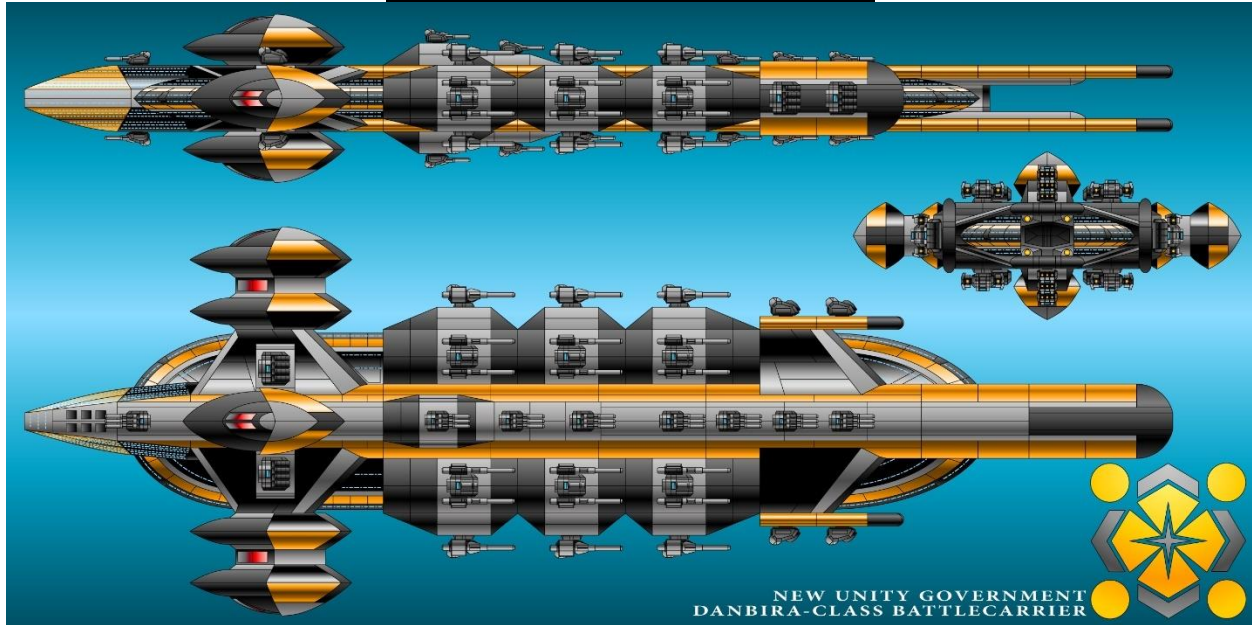


***Warring Factions: The Novus Initium Saga***  
***Episode VIII: What Was Left Behind***



**PART 4**

*Diplomatic Landing Bay, Luminous Interstellar Spaceport, East of Luminous Planet Luminaire, Lumen System, Capital of Novus Initium Republic  
11:27am, November 17, 5434 A.D. (2 Days Later)*

“Are you nervous about how things will go?”

Grand Admiral Mikey could not resist asking Drew about how he felt about today. Today was the day the Union President was arriving on Luminaire, and it was the day the leaders of the other nations would find out about their true origins. The other leaders were a little hesitant of traveling all the way to Luminaire, but their curiosity of this new nation that was sending their own President made them consider coming themselves for this summit that Drew called together. Drew felt like he tricked them into coming, knowing what may transpire once these leaders and the representatives that came with President Shea whose ancestors are also from the Union find out the truth. While Drew ordered extra security personnel that were present at this event, almost everyone present believed it was for their protection. Their real purpose was to protect the Union representatives from the possible wrath that is to come from the other foreign leaders.

The Honor Guard detail in orbit was originally for the arrival of the Union delegation. However, Drew ordered the detail to remain in formation while the other nations’ leaders proceeded down the middle as a gesture of respect. Drew was quick to realize that it would seem irresponsible for only one delegation to proceed through and not the other foreign leaders. Their ships remained in orbit while their shuttles brought them down to the spaceport on the surface. The spaceport located east of the capital of Luminous had a private bay reserved for diplomatic and political use that was heavily shielded. A large holographic screen was active in front of Drew and Mikey for them to follow the progress of those arriving for the summit through the Honor Guard detail and during their approach to the spaceport. Their shuttles were escorted by no fewer than six fighter-type drones once they were in the atmosphere.

The delegation from the Draco Federation was currently the last group to arrive. When Drew last spoke to President Shea about having representatives from the three other races that reside in the Federation, he informed her about what was going to transpire when the Union delegation arrived and what the other foreign leaders might do once they hear the truth of their origins. She agreed that it was not going to be a pleasant experience for the other nations' leaders, but in her words, sometimes the truth can be anything but pleasant. She stated that she would inform her fellow representatives the truth about the Union and their origins before they arrive on Luminaire. The remainder of the Federation would find out the truth at the same time as the others and the rest of the star cluster as the event was going to be televised to everyone. When they arrived, Shea told Drew that the representatives were told the truth as she said she would, and they were initially in shock as she had expected them to be. They did not overreact about the information, but they knew their histories from more than two thousand years prior to any written accounts was missing. Being told the truth of their origins filled in the long-running gap in that history, and now they were quite eager to meet their long-lost brethren from the New Unity Government. Other factors had helped soften the shock for the Federation representatives, namely their common immunities to diseases between themselves and the Humans of their nation. The truth of their origins had explained that matter as well.

Thankfully, none of the other leaders had managed to overhear the conversation between Drew and the Federation delegation as they were busy talking amongst themselves to take notice. Drew was happy they were not hearing the conversation right now as revealing the truth now would ruin the moment that was about to come and cause events to unravel before the Union delegation could arrive.

After Drew's talk with the Federation delegation, he along with Mikey and those from the Federation looked at the massive holographic screen that showed the Honor Guard in orbit. The *Renaldo*, Rear Admiral Shannon's battleship, was on standby in New Sol, the capital star system of the New Unity Government. She was tasked with using her Portal Drive to transport President Assefa's ship to the Lumen System. Once Drew gives the word, Mikey will relay a signal to be sent through the booster relays into the Northwest Region informing her to bring the President of the Union through the portal to Luminaire. From what Drew has heard thus far, President Assefa has had his fair share of problems after he had announced the existence of the Novus Initium Republic and the other known nations of the star cluster to the Union public. Thankfully, at his request to provide proof to the people, the *Renaldo* on its own used its Portal Drive to enter New Sol directly. Its arrival made quite the headlines in that system considering the battleship was larger than any ship in the Union from what he had heard. Rear Admiral Shannon was authorized by Drew to speak on behalf of the Republic to the people of the Union in order to smooth things out and reassure the safety of the President and his delegation before they traveled to Luminaire the following day. Shannon had mentioned that a state dinner was held in her honor later that day but not before she was involved in a press conference as many of the people had questions about the Republic and the other nations of the star cluster.

At this moment, Shannon is waiting for the signal to bring President Assefa and his delegation to Luminaire. Drew, however, was becoming reluctant to have Mikey send the signal.

"I'm scared about what is about to happen," Drew said quietly. "Everyone else here has been defined by their current history, religion, and culture. To suddenly have someone who you just met tell you that everything you and your nation has known for centuries is a lie is not going to go over well at all with the leaders here or their citizens who will be watching. It will be like we were slapping them in the face and making them out to be fools to the cluster at large."

“I know you have been saying that all this time for the past couple of days,” Mikey said. “I know there is a saying that ‘it is better to know the truth than to live a lie.’ There is also the old saying that ‘ignorance is bliss.’ However, everyone in the known star cluster can no longer afford to be ignorant of others or our situation. Ignorance is what led us to the events that created both the Tenebris Dominion and the Draco Federation, resulting in a war that killed millions between them and the eventual attack by the Dominion on the Republic almost two weeks ago.”

“He makes a very valid point, Chancellor,” President Shea said. “This needs to happen today. The other foreign powers of the star cluster may be angry with you today. They may not even forgive you for what you do today for revealing the truth to them. Be that as it may, this still needs to happen, and the truth must come out for everyone to move forward together. Once the initial shock and anger has subsided, they may be able to forgive you for what you have done. Just do not expect them to do so in one day, though.”

“I am very well aware of that fact, you two,” Drew said. “My problem is that my term as Supreme Chancellor has already been filled with events that I wish did not happen. I have to live with the fact that during my term, we had the First Interstellar War, the Yintaka Incident, the infiltration and spying of both the Tenebris Dominion and the Draco Federation, my withholding of important information from the Republic Senate, and the Dominion’s One Day War with the Republic. I feel like I am about to add what is called another ‘black mark’ on my term for the history books. When people in the future read about my term, they will see all of this and I will be judged by them.”

“You are too hard on yourself, Chancellor,” Shea said. “At the beginning of your term, the Republic only knew of life in the star cluster from within the Central Region. You thought, as did everyone, that you all were alone in the cluster. During your term, you discovered the existence of several nations that reside in other regions. Some were friendly while others were not. It is to be expected. You had the right intentions when you addressed these discoveries and you dealt with what happened afterward as best as you can, given the circumstances. True, they did not go the way you would have liked, but things could have gotten a whole lot worse if the Republic had remained ignorant of the events that transpired around it. What has happened has led us all to this point in history, and I believe that this needs to happen regardless of how things have gone between us all in the past.”

Drew took a deep breath.

“Then we might as well make history and this this happen, for better or for worse,” Drew said. “I just pray we are not about to make things worse between all of us. Grand Admiral Mikey, you may send the signal to the *Renaldo*. Tell Rear Admiral Shannon that she is clear to bring the President of the New Unity Government to Luminaire.”

“Yes, Chancellor,” Mikey said.

Mikey reached into the right coat pocket of his uniform coat and pulled out a small communications device, turning it on.

“This is Grand Admiral Mikey to the *Renaldo*. By order of the Supreme Chancellor, you are clear to bring the President of the New Unity Government and his delegation to Luminaire.”

“*Understood, Grand Admiral,*” Shannon said through the communications device. “*We are activating the Renaldo’s Portal Drive now.*”

Drew took another deep breath as he waited for the portal to appear on the large screen. As one began to form in front of the Honor Guard detail, he thought to himself that a new era was about to begin, one he hopes was not the start of a new war.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Bridge, R.N.S. Marshal, Paladin II-Class Battleship (refit)*  
*Planet Luminaire Orbit, Lumen System, Capital of Novus Initium Republic*  
*11:32am, November 17, 5434 A.D.*

“A portal is opening in front of the Honor Guard detail, Admiral!”

The warning from Commander Glenn at the science station brought Trent out of some deep thoughts he was having. Once the Honor Guard formation was established in orbit over Luminaire, there was not much for any of them to do other than to make sure that every ship in their associated fleet remained in formation while on the detail. Once the last of the political dignitaries went through the formation, the Honor Guard detail would be given the “all clear” from Grand Admiral Mikey to break formation and head to their next assignments. The detail would be dismissed one fleet at a time to avoid collisions with their fellow ships. Trent’s fleet, the Seventh Fleet was located on the rear left side of the formation with his battleship next to the opening down the middle. In front of his fleet was the larger Third Fleet and in front of that fleet was the even larger First Fleet. On the right side, from front to back, was the Second, Fifth, and Eighth Fleets. Any battleships lined the middle of the formation. The *Marshal* was one of the last two battleships foreign dignitaries would pass before their ships would establish orbit over the planet. From there, the foreign delegation would take one of their shuttles down to the spaceport on the surface.

When Trent first brought up about the Honor Guard detail, he was not expecting it to be used for the other known foreign dignitaries. He had assumed that it would be used to greet the President of the New Unity Government. However, since this was the first name any of the foreign leaders have been to Luminaire, the Supreme Chancellor extended the Honor Guard detail to honor their arrival along with a “new visitor” according to the orders Trent and the other admirals had received. Trent had figured that using the term “new visitor” was to keep the Union President’s arrival in terms of his identity as secret as possible.

Trent was still pondering how to address the “visitor” named Bilartini through one of the devices responsible for the MAR that surprised him two nights ago to the Supreme Chancellor and the Grand Admiral. Based on his conversation with Bilartini using that device that jumped into his house, there was a hidden and highly concealed observation post or satellite monitoring events that have occurred in the Lumen System. There was no doubt that such a construct was monitoring the events that were unfolding at this very moment with the arrival of the foreign leaders and soon the Union President. If either Bilartini or another of his species was monitoring the current events at this time, they may be viewing this summit with great interest to see all of these nations coming together, considering that the species of every nation that was present were all descendants of those that came from Earth. Trent still had questions about Bilartini’s or his species’ interest in every race that was residing in the star cluster, but hopefully he will get the answers to those questions once his shore leave was over in three days. Whether Bilartini or his species can be brought to justice for their actions remained to be seen. Much of it will depend on if they can bring them to justice depending on how far they are advanced when it comes to their technology compared to the Republic’s. If jumping a small device from the Southern Region onto his table in his house with pinpoint accuracy was any indication, Trent could easily say that they are highly advanced. Arresting him or them would be difficult.

After Glenn had mentioned about a portal opening, Trent looked at the main view screen. A portal at the far end of the Honor Guard detail formation began to open. From their position, Trent could see a planet on the other side taking up the full view of the portal. He could tell that

the planet was habitable based on the levels of urban development he could see. However, he could not miss the two vessels that were coming through the portal. The rear vessel, a *Paladin*-Class Battleship, that was coming through was more than familiar to Trent. While it may have gone through the refit that every Republic battleship had completed or was still in the process of having the refit done to them, Trent smiled when he saw the name *Renaldo* appear on the screen to identify the vessel. Seeing his old battleship eased his tensions, even if it would only be for a short while after the vessel passed by.

The ship that was in front of the *Renaldo* was not familiar to Trent at all. Rear Admiral Shannon after her recent mission described two of the Union vessels that she had seen while on her mission in the Northwest Region. According to her, those vessels were the New Unity Government's destroyers and cruisers. The vessel coming through the portal ahead of the *Renaldo* did not fit the description of either of those ships according to Shannon. The vessel was larger than described and it had more weapons than the cruisers he was told about. When Shannon told him about the cruiser's guns, she pointed out that there were eight cruiser-grade weapons. This vessel had eighteen of those guns. There were engines like those on the sides of the cruisers on this vessel near the rear, but it also had engines like their destroyers located on the ship's dorsal and ventral central axis near the rear as well. The colors of the vessel were also different from the camouflage patterns she described as the vessel was black with orange accents. Thankfully, Shannon had mentioned that their fleets used different colors to distinguish them, and the only fleet that did not use the camouflage paintjob were those that were assigned to the New Unity Government's core fleet. The vessel's colors did not surprise Trent as the would be obvious that the vessel would be coming from the Union's capital since the President would be on board it.

As the ship did not possess anything larger than cruiser-grade turrets from what he could observe, Trent figured that the vessel that the Union sent would be their take on a battlecruiser. If the vessel was the largest class of vessel the Union had built, it was going to appear quite small compared to the battleships of the other nations or the supercarrier from the Draco Federation. Trent began to wonder how the Union President and the battlecruiser's commanding officer must be feeling as not only were they the "new kids in town," but also the "little kid" in a "giant's playground." The portal closed after both vessels passed through it.

As both ships proceeded down the Honor Guard formation on the main screen, Trent looked around the bridge to see how everyone viewed the newcomer. Everyone was looking at the screen as they were obviously curious about the strange new vessel that was going through the formation with the *Renaldo* right behind it. Trent figured it was a safe bet that everyone in the Honor Guard had their eyes on the new vessel. He was not about to tell them to look away, at least not yet. As the two vessels began to pass the *Marshal* and the Seventh Fleet, Trent stood up from his seat and saluted. Captain Dani had heard him getting out of his chair and looked behind her to see that Trent was saluting. She looked like she was about to ask why he was saluting, but she just as suddenly stopped herself from doing so as it appeared that she had remembered his connection to the *Renaldo*.

"Showing your respect for your former ship and crew, I take it?" Dani asked.

Everyone on the bridge had turned their gaze from the view screen to Trent to see that he was standing and saluting at the screen.

"Of course, Captain," Trent said. "Wouldn't you salute as well if you were assigned to another ship and you passed the *Marshal* as the *Renaldo* is passing ours?"

Dani laughed a little, which made Trent feel a little uneasy in the way she laughed.

“I haven’t had the opportunity or the reason to do so,” Dani said. “As you should recall, Admiral Coleman found such sentimentality in his words ‘unproductive’ and ‘childish.’ Of course, now we all know why he had such views considering recent events.”

Trent had remembered Admiral Coleman, his predecessor and former flag officer of the *Marshal* and the Seventh Fleet. He also remembered that much of his views on the military, and how strict those views would be, was based on his family history. Coleman was discovered to be a descendant of one of the families that had followed the Tenebris cult’s religious teachings in private. His ancestor’s family was one of the families that went into hiding more than six hundred years when they aided in the escape and exile of the six original families where five of them would make up the Dominion and one would create the Federation. While he retired, Coleman was put under arrest and an investigation for his actions along with his three grandsons who were present when Trent came on board to take command. Trent had not followed up on any of them since then.

Because of Coleman’s attitude and views towards morality was detrimental if not decimating, the crew’s morality was the lowest he had ever seen when he took command. Trent has been trying to reverse the damage caused by Coleman’s command and he has made a great deal of progress in the short time he took command of the fleet. When Trent took time away from the military to deal with his divorce, he thought crew morality was going to go down again. Thankfully, since the crew was on shore leave, that did not happen. In fact, he was quite surprised that the crew of the fleet were worried about him during the divorce. To Trent, it showed him that he was making a big positive difference to the *Marshal* and the Seventh Fleet.

Trent put his hand down after the *Renaldo* passed the *Marshal*. Trent wondered if Shannon saluted back towards the *Marshal* when she passed by. He would have to ask that later before he goes to the Southern Region.

“I do know the reason why you have never been given the opportunity to do so,” Trent said. “For that matter, if Coleman were still in command and you were transferred, I doubt you would have ever saluted towards the *Marshal* in passing. I salute my former family and ship, and I am quite proud that they can move on their own without me. Well, most of them anyway.”

“Most of them?” Dani asked. “By some chance, are you referring to Rear Admiral Shannon, the flag officer on board the *Renaldo*?”

“I am referring to her, yes. Shannon came to my home a couple of times before this event to seek my advice and council on a couple of matters that she was given charge over.”

“A couple of times? Wait a minute, did she at any point while we were on shore leave tell you anything about this new nation whose ship had just passed us?”

Trent was quick to realize that Dani may have found out the purpose of Shannon’s visits to his home. It wouldn’t take much to determine that if Shannon was visiting Trent before today and her ship was the one escorting the Union’s vessel that she may have told him about this new nation that is taking part in the summit.

Everyone on the bridge was looking at Trent waiting for his answer.

“I guess I better go over things with you all,” Trent said. “Shannon was assigned to investigate transmissions that were detected in the Northwest Region by the Draco Federation during their war with the Tenebris Dominion. Once the Republic acquired the means to manufacture and equip our ships with the Portal Drive, we were asked by President Shea of the Federation to investigate the source of the transmissions and make contact with whoever was sending them.”

“Why the Republic?” Dani asked. “Why did they not investigate the transmissions?”

“They were still in the middle of their war with the Dominion and it was not a good time for them to investigate such matters. However, the transmissions that were detected despite being garbled and in audio only, were spoken in the English language.”

“Did you say they were in English? Does that mean there is another Human-created faction that was in the Northwest Region?”

Trent decided that it was best not to explain any further about the Union. If he said anything else before the summit officially commenced, word would spread quickly and that did not need to happen right now.

“I’m going to have to leave it at that,” Trent said. “The summit once it starts will explain everything that is going on in the Northwest Region. They will be broadcasting the event in a moment once the shuttle from the new arrival reaches the spaceport. However, I expect that the Honor Guard detail will be dismissed shortly by Grand Admiral Mikey. The First and Second Fleets will likely be assigned to protect the ships that brought the leaders here while we proceed back to port. I do not know about the other fleets and their possible assignments, though. I do want to speak with you, Captain, before we disembark the ship. I have something important I wish to go over with you.”

“Understood, Admiral,” Dani said as she turned back towards the main screen.

“Khara,” Trent said as looked over at the Tactical station. “Bring up our aft view on the main screen.”

“Yes, sir,” Khara said.

Trent sat back down in his seat as the view screen’s image was changed to show the aft view of the *Marshal*. Due to the proximity of the Honor Guard formation to the planet, the entire image on the view screen was taken up by the surface of Luminaire. Within that view, however, were five ships not including the *Renaldo* and the new arrival’s battlecruiser. In a standard orbit over Luminaire was a Harbinger Battleship from the Holy Lykan Republic, an Absolution Battleship from the Liberigi Mandate whose head of the Consulate wanted to be present for the summit, a Golem II Battleship from the United Vitam State, a Kronos II Battleship from the Camino Star Empire, and finally a Hel Supercarrier from the Draco Federation, the largest vessel of the group. It was the first time that most of these vessels had ever been to Luminaire except for the Federation Supercarrier. One of the Supercarriers brought the Federation President to Luminaire after the Dominion’s attack on the Novus Initium Republic to plead her case to the Senate to be recognized as an independent and sovereign nation. The fact that the past grudges of the other nations present has not forced the others to start shooting one another shows that the other nations have come a long way since the First Interstellar War and the Yintaka Incident. The discovery of the MAR and its effects on the leaderships of both the former Lykan Kingdom and the State also helped smooth over matters. Trent could only hope it was enough when the Union tells the truth of their origins.

Once the *Renaldo* and the Union battlecruiser established orbit, he felt like it was possible for all the nations of the known star cluster to become one under the knowledge that their ancestors all came from Earth. It may or may not happen today at this summit, but Trent felt like it will happen at some point as there is still those that are responsible for the MAR to deal with in the Southern Region. Maybe Bilartini and/or his species want this to happen? Who could say for certain what their intentions are at this point?

Once the new arrivals were in position, Trent could see a small craft, possibly a shuttle, launching from the front of the battlecruiser. Trent was rather surprised that the *Renaldo* stayed in orbit, but he was quick to determine that his former battleship will be responsible for returning

the battlecruiser back to Union space once the summit had concluded. As the Union shuttle began to enter Luminaire's atmosphere, a transmission was coming in through the Communications station.

"Admiral?" Sierra at the Communications station said. "Grand Admiral Mikey is officially dismissing the Honor Guard detail. The First and Second Fleets are ordered to provide security for the foreign vessels currently in orbit. The Third, Fifth, and Eighth Fleets are ordered to patrol the star system for additional security, and we are ordered to return to port to use the remainder of our shore leave for the next three days."

"Understood," Trent said. "Confirm our receipt of the order with the Grand Admiral. Once the fleets in front of us has dispersed, we will return to port. Inform the fleet of the orders and have them wait for my signal to deploy from the formation."

"Yes, sir."

"Khara, switch the view back to the bow."

The main screen switched back to the forward view as ships from the First Fleet in the front of the formation began to disperse, beginning with the frigates on the outside of the formation. They began to make a U-turn to their left to go around the rest of the formation towards the foreign vessels behind the Honor Guard detail. They were soon followed by the First Fleet's destroyers, cruisers, and battleships in that order. The Second Fleet at the front of the right side of the formation began to perform the same maneuvers, turning and moving down the right side of the formation. They also headed towards the foreign vessels to provide security for them alongside the First Fleet.

Once the First and Second Fleets had left the formation, ships from the Third Fleet in front of the *Marshal* and the Seventh Fleet ignited their engines and began to move out of the formation in the same order starting with frigates. The Fifth Fleet on the right side began to deploy as well from the formation.

As soon as the battleships of both the Third and Fifth Fleets left the formation, Trent activated the fleet communications system on the right arm of his chair.

"This is Admiral Trent to the Seventh Fleet. We will begin departure from the Honor Guard formation starting with our frigates on the port side. We have been ordered to return to dock by Grand Admiral Mikey to complete our shore leave for the next three days. Follow the instructions and orders of your commanding officers when you dock to shut down the vessels for the next few days. Once the main systems are shut down, your commanding officer will order the crew to disembark from the ships and you are free to continue your shore leave for the next three full days. You are ordered to return to duty four days from today by zero-seven hundred hours, Luminous Standard Time. I ask that you all be safe and enjoy yourselves during the remainder of your time off. Keep an eye on the news involving the summit as well as we will be entering a new age that is hopefully filled with cooperation and friendship between the known nations of the star cluster. Fleet command, out."

Trent deactivated the fleet communications system. He noticed that everyone on the bridge was looking happy about returning to shore leave and he for one could not blame them for wanting to go back on vacation. He needed to get back as well, though he still has the matter of his "visitor" to discuss with Drew and Mikey provided they are not going to be busy during the next few days.

As he saw the frigates of his fleet begin to deploy from the formation, he stood up from his seat once again.

"Diana," Trent said looking at the Helm station, "I'll leave it to you to return us to port."



“Yes, Admiral,” Diana said.

Trent looked at Dani’s seat as she turned around after Trent gave his order.

“Captain Dani,” Trent said, “I’d like to see you in my Ready Room, please.”

“Yes, Admiral,” Dani said as she got up from her seat. “Commander Glenn, you have the bridge until we return. We should be back before we reach port.”

“Yes, Captain,” Glenn said.

Trent walked over to the doors of his Ready Room while Dani followed behind him. Trent touched the button on the right side of the door frame, opening the doors and walking inside. The doors closed right behind Dani as she followed him in. Trent went over to the mini fridge that was in the left wall and got a bottle of water out. Trent looked over the contents inside and realized water was the only item inside the fridge.

“I need to see about restocking this,” he said before looking over at Dani. “Want one?”

“Yes, please,” Dani said as she walked over to the mini fridge.

Trent handed her the bottle he just took out before reaching in and grabbing another for himself, closing the fridge door afterwards. He then headed over to his desk.

“Please have a seat,” Trent said, gesturing to one of the chairs in front of his desk as he made his way to the seat behind the desk.

Trent sat down in his chair as Dani approached the chairs in front of his desk. She sat down in the chair to Trent’s right. Both opened the water bottles they had and took a drink before they set the bottles down on the desk.

“As I mentioned earlier,” Trent said, “there are a couple of things I wanted to go over with you but I needed to do so in private as it would not be good for the crew to hear right now.”

“I assumed as much,” Dani said. “It has something to do with the vessel the *Renaldo* was escorting and the nation that built it, doesn’t it?”

“You are correct about that. You are also correct about the fact that I know who that ship belongs to, and I will tell you what I know about them thus far. However, there is one other matter I need to discuss with you.”

“What matter would that be?”

“I had a visitor in my home two days ago.”

“There isn’t anything strange about that unless this visitor is rather shady or suspicious.”

“I would aim for both in this case. This visitor is in relation to our next mission once we come back from shore leave.”

“Is this someone who is accompanying us or are they providing us with information on the mission?”

“Neither, actually. They will effectively be the mission.”

Dani raised her right eyebrow.

“It will take thirty minutes for us to reach port,” she said. “Something tells me I need to brace myself for what you are about to tell me. I have a feeling that it is going to blow my mind in more ways than one.”

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*Diplomatic Landing Bay, Luminous Interstellar Spaceport, East of Luminous Planet Luminaire, Lumen System, Capital of Novus Initium Republic*  
11:47am, November 17, 5434 A.D.

“Looks like they have finally arrived.”

Drew had been watching the screen the entire time the Union vessel along with the *Renaldo* came through the portal, proceeding through the middle of the Honor Guard formation. While Mikey, Shea, and the rest of the Federation delegation initially watched the screen with Drew as the ships arrived, the other foreign leaders took notice of the new arrivals on the screen and came over to watch. Any conversation as to who this new vessel belonged to had ceased to prevent the other dignitaries from finding out the truth prematurely before the Union President and his delegation arrives.

Once the Union ship was in orbit, it deployed a shuttle from the front of the vessel. The shuttle soon entered the atmosphere within minutes. Once it reached the upper atmosphere, the screen turned off as orbital surveillance could no longer follow the craft. The fighter drones that have been escorting the shuttles of the foreign dignitaries flew out of the bay to intercept and escort the new arrival. The disappeared above the clouds a couple of minutes later, but after a few minutes they could be seen again descending below the cloud line with the Union shuttle in the middle of their formation.

While Drew could not get a clear picture of the shuttle from the orbital shots on the screen at the time, he could see it better as it approached. From what Drew could tell, the shuttle looked like a hexagonal prism with the front being aerodynamic in design. On the lower sides, the craft looked to have pontoon-like attachments. It did not look like they were the engines, but rather stabilizers for flight. The shuttle was black with orange highlights much like the ship that deployed it.

The shuttle began to slow down as it approached the bay where the remainder of the delegations were located. While the escort drones veered away once the shuttle was close to the bay, another set of drones began to enter the bay from outside. These were flying camera drones, generally saucer-shaped with multiple cameras built into the edges. These were used frequently by news agencies who were obviously curious about the new arrivals. Normally they are not allowed to enter, but Drew authorized their use in the bay as he wanted the cluster at large to know the truth live. Live feeds could not be edited for context or to “protect” the citizens from any “lies” that would be spoken. The drones were only allowed so long as they do not impede the flight path or landing of the shuttle.

The shuttle entered the bay and turned to its left, having the shuttle’s right-side door facing towards the rest of the delegation. The shuttle landed several meters away from the group and powered down its engines once it landed. Few those few seconds once the engines were turned off, it felt like an eternity for Drew as he and everyone else waited for the shuttle’s door to open. Drew began to wonder if President Assefa inside was just as nervous as Drew was.

The shuttle’s door soon hissed as the door depressurized and slowly opened downward onto the pontoon. As it lowered, Drew could see President Assefa standing behind the door with a subtle smile not showing his teeth. Drew did not know whether Assefa was genuine in his smile or he was using his smile to hide his nervousness. He was not a small Lion either as he looked to be more than eight feet tall and he was just as muscular if not more so than their talk via view screens two days prior despite the fact he was wearing a suit. Everyone but Drew was shocked and gasped when they saw him. Drew was not surprised by their reactions as it was not every day you see such a tall muscular being who you are about to create.

Once the shuttle’s door was completely down on the pontoon, Assefa stepped off the shuttle and proceeded to walk towards the delegation with a considerable amount of confidence and authority in his stride. He stopped almost two meters away from everyone. He brought his furry hands to the front edges of his coat, acting like he was straightening it.

“Greetings,” Assefa said as he looked at everyone present. “I am President Assefa of the New Unity Government, a nation in the area of the star cluster you call the Northwest Region. I bring you an offer of friendship and peace from my nation. It is a pleasure to meet you all here today at the heart of the Novus Initium Republic.”

Assefa extended his right hand towards Drew.

“Supreme Chancellor Drew,” Assefa said, “it is a great honor and privilege to finally meet you in person, face-to-face.”

Drew extended his right hand and grasped Assefa’s in a firm handshake. Assefa’s grip was powerful but not overbearing to cause any pain. It was obvious that he had a lot of experience shaking hands without crushing them.

“President Assefa,” Drew said. “On behalf of the people of the Novus Initium Republic, I welcome you to the planet Luminaire and to our first city and capital of Luminous.”

“Wait a moment, Supreme Chancellor,” Prime Minister Veonis of the Holy Lykan Republic said. “Have you and the President here been communicating with each other for a while or so?”

Drew and Assefa looked towards Veonis as they withdrew their hands from their handshake. Assefa continued to smile without showing his teeth.

“I take it that you are Prime Minister Veonis of the Holy Lykan Republic,” Assefa said. “Am I correct?”

“You are, President Assefa,” Veonis said.

“It is a pleasure to meet you. To answer your question, the Chancellor and I have only been in direct contact for two days. The Novus Initium Republic discovered our nation four days ago.”

“You were discovered four days ago? How did the Novus Initium Republic know where to look for your nation?”

“One of my Federation ships discovered transmissions from the Northwest Region during our war with the Tenebris Dominion,” Shea said. “Once the transmissions were discovered, we put up jammers to prevent the sending and receiving of further signals from our nations until we could investigate further once our war with the Dominion was over. However, because the Novus Initium Republic discovered us and helped end our war, it was better for them to investigate and attempt to contact the nation that was in the Northwest Region.”

“Why did you want them to investigate the region when your Federation first discovered the transmissions?”

“Because those transmissions they discovered were in English,” Assefa said. “The Draco Federation thought we were another Human-based colony or faction and wanted the primary Human-based nation to make contact. Even though it has been four days since the Chancellor had first discovered the New Unity Government, you don’t find it odd that I am speaking perfect English when it either took a while for you all to learn or use some form of artificial translation device to understand me?”

Veonis and the rest of the foreign leaders were perplexed by Assefa’s words.

“Why are you and your people in your nation able to speak the Human language of English so fluently?” Veonis asked.

Drew’s anxiety began to increase as he knew that the truth of their actual origins was about to be revealed or was fast approaching. Drew also knew that the remainder of Assefa’s delegation who Drew had asked for were no doubt waiting inside the shuttle for Assefa to call or summon from inside. Once they and the truth come out, things were going to go badly. Drew looked again at the security detail lined up around the bay to make sure they were ready.

“What if I told you that everyone in the New Unity Government were descendants of what was known as animals from the Humans’ ancestral home planet of Earth?” Assefa said. “However, our ancestors did not arrive here in the star cluster like Humanity did.”

“Humanity in the star cluster has never brought up another intelligent species from their ancient home planet,” Veonis said. “Why is that and how did your kind get here?”

“The reason that Humanity here in the star cluster have never mentioned of another sentient lifeform from their ancestral home planet is because there was not any at the time the moon Luna came to the star cluster over three thousand years ago. Earth suffered many catastrophic changes after Luna left that made Earth no longer capable of supporting life the way it has been for billions of years, such as having six-hour days instead of twenty-four. These changes forced Humanity and any animals they could bring with them to the neighboring planet of Mars in the same star system. Mars was terraformed in the same manner as Luna was, but moving an entire population of one planet to another that was smaller resulted in issues of living conditions. While Humans could adapt to these changes, animals were not as quick to do so. To allow these animals they brought with them the means to survive and adapt to their changes more rapidly, Humans created the first Human/Animal hybrids. These hybrids were just as smart and intelligent as Humans. They were able to adapt quickly, and they possessed the same immunities as Humans did for various diseases.”

Drew suddenly heard whispers coming from behind him. We could tell that the whispers were coming from the United Vitam State Councilors. The Councilors were already aware that when the Republic and the State first met more than two years ago, there was a sense of surprise at the fact that Humans and all five races in the State shared the same immunities to diseases. It was obvious to them already that something was amiss to find another nation of different races with those same immunities but this time it was explained. He couldn’t hear what they were saying but he began to wonder if they were beginning to piece together the possibility that their ancestors had come from the Union rather than their “home planets” where they were originally thought to have come from. What he could tell was that they were becoming concerned with Assefa’s explanation thus far, and that this may escalate soon once the truth does come out.

“Humanity and Hybrids eventually ventured into other star systems,” Assefa continued, “thanks to the development of a sustainable warp drive. Once our ancestors were able to move and colonize other worlds in other star systems, a new government was created: the original New Unity Government. Almost three hundred years after Luna had disappeared, a Human scientist who was researching Luna’s disappearance despite the amount of time that had passed since then wanted to find a way to locate Luna and bring it back from where it was transported to. He found out that there were samples of the same type of crystals used to transport Luna to the star cluster stored in the nation’s capital in a star system called Vega. He managed to get access to those crystals as they were the only ones that remained.”

“Wait,” Emperor Dicarin of the Camino Star Empire said. “You said ‘they were the only ones that remained.’ What did you mean by that? Were there no other crystals to be found?”

“The only ones that existed in the Milky Way Galaxy by that point were the ones found on Luna. There were none located anywhere else. That is why this scientist was looking for any remaining samples. It was not much, but they were taken off Luna long before the moon was transported to this star cluster. Once he managed to secure the samples, he snuck aboard a colony ship that was bound to a new world that was recently terraformed. This colony vessel had over a million Hybrids on board. It was going to be a world of their own. However, the scientist energized the crystals, opening a wormhole that sucked the colony vessel from the Milky Way

Galaxy and landed it in the Northwest Region of this star cluster. The crystals disintegrated afterwards and the colonists, my ancestors, were stuck in this star cluster. As punishment for his actions, the scientist and any associates he had were spaced. My ancestors were fortunate to find that there was a habitable world located in the system they arrived in and they settled there. The colony ship was converted into an artificial island and remains that way even today as the capital of our nation. We recreated the New Unity Government here in the star cluster, but we did not start exploring other star systems until several centuries later when we needed to. We have yet to venture out of the region as the use of the crystals that are found in that region are illegal to use. However, that did not stop certain parties two thousand years ago from using them.”

“What do you mean by that statement?” Vitam Councilor Glislar of the United Vitam State asked. “Are you saying that there are those from your nation two thousand years ago that could be residing somewhere else in the star cluster?”

Drew knew what was coming as he looked over at Mikey and Shea. They knew that things were about to escalate at this point once Assefa reveals the other nations’ origins. Mikey looked over at the head of the security detail over to his left and slowly nodded his head so that he would not draw attention. The lead security guard nodded in acknowledgement to be ready. Mikey looked back over at Assefa. This time, Assefa looked at Drew as he could tell that things could get bad from this point. Drew nodded his head to let Assefa know they were ready if the need arose to call the present security in for protection.

Assefa looked over the other foreign leaders, took a deep breath, and decided to continue.

“Because the crystals were responsible for our ancestors coming to the star cluster,” Assefa continued, “my government labeled them as illegal to use. However, they could not be destroyed or disintegrated, and thus were stored securely when found. We would rely on the warp drive exclusively to travel between the star systems of our nation. However, there were those among our citizens that were unhappy with the status quo of our nation. Their reasons varied but they all had the same idea: find as many crystals as they can and use them to jump away to remote locations in the star cluster to start anew. Their whereabouts at that time after they jumped were unknown to us. We called these groups the ‘Lost Ten’ based on the number of groups that disappeared.”

“So,” Veonis said, “going back to my previous question, you are saying that these ten groups of citizens from your nation are somewhere in the star cluster? There are not many places left for them to hide considering how much of the cluster has been explored at this point.”

“That is true, but thanks to both the Novus Initium Republic and the Draco Federation, all ten of the groups have already been found. Answer me this, Prime Minister Veonis: aside from myself and the Humans who are present, how many individual species are present in this bay including yourself?”

Drew noticed that Veonis was puzzled by Assefa’s question, until a look of shock began to show on his face along with the other foreign leaders. Only the Gafran, Zeydra, and Baqto representatives from the Draco Federation did not share the same level of initial shock of the other dignitaries as they were already told about their true origins. Veonis looked at everyone else in the delegation and began counting the individual species that were present in the bay excluding the Humans and Assefa. Drew could see that when he counted everyone leaving himself for last, the look of shock was quickly being overtaken by the look of dread on his face. The other foreign leaders counted as well along with Veonis, and quickly shared the same look of shock followed by dread on their faces when they counted ten individual species as well. The realization of their true origins was starting to set in, and it was not going to be pretty.

Everyone looked over at Assefa, and it was obvious to Drew that the foreign leaders did not know what to think of this development and its implications to their societies.

“This cannot be true,” Veonis said. “This has to be some form of trickery.”

“Is it?” Assefa said. “I know it is hard to accept, but there are two pieces of proof that I speak the truth about this matter. First, and this is for all of you, but do any of you have any historical records more than two thousand years old? I am not talking about religious or any mythological texts. I am talking about actual historical records of a non-religious figure.”

All the leaders began to think about their histories or in the State Councilor’s case what history that had left and retained. After a moment, dread began to show on their faces once again, providing Assefa with his answer.

“I figured not,” Assefa said. “As I said earlier, the ‘Lost Ten’ disappeared from our sovereign space at the same time more than two thousand years ago. The records and knowledge of the New Unity Government, or the Union as we call it for short, was intentionally lost among those ten along with the advanced technology. For what reason is dependent on those that led those members of their kind who was likeminded as their leader. The records I have looked over concerning these ‘Lost Ten’ show that their possible reasons for their disappearance ranged from conflicting religious views against the Union’s national religion to xenophobia of other species to not wanting anything to do with the Union at all for personal or petty reasons.”

“That is only circumstantial at best,” Dicarín said. “I’m still waiting to see concrete proof that says that our ancestors are these ‘Lost Ten’ from your nation.”

“I knew you and everyone else would,” Assefa said. “Thankfully, I have asked for said proof to accompany me today.”

Assefa turned and looked back at the shuttle.

“You all may join us now,” he said. “Your fellow kin wish to see the ‘concrete’ proof that I brought with me today.”

As if waiting for Assefa to call them, the rest of the Union delegation began to depart the shuttle. A member of each of the races that Drew had asked for came out: a female Wolf, a female Salamander, a female Fox, a male Snake, a male Horse, a male Cat, a female Reptile, a male Bird, a male Insect, and a female Warthog. Drew had noticed that all ten of Assefa’s delegation were the opposite gender of the other foreign dignitaries that were present. Either Assefa did that intentionally as he thought it was easier to hear the truth from the opposite gender of each species, or it was by some strange coincidence that this was the case.

Drew looked at all the foreign leaders, not bothering to look at those in the Federation delegation as they would not be in shock as Assefa’s delegation came out of the shuttle. Shock and anger began to appear on the foreign leaders’ faces. The better word that Drew could think of was utter disbelief as it looked like they did not or could not believe what they were seeing right in front of them.

The Union delegation lined up shoulder-to-shoulder behind Assefa, who turned and faced back towards Drew and the foreign leaders. Assefa could see the looks on the other leaders’ faces, but he decided to continue.

“These people,” he said, “are the same races as you are, but are called by the names of their original species that were provided by Humans thousands of years ago. From left to right, we have Wolf, Salamander, Fox, Snake, Horse, Cat, Reptile, Bird, Insect, and Warthog. These people and their ancestors have histories and records from before we ever arrived in the star cluster, further back than your own records. They can tell you more about your species original culture and heritage that you all have long since forgotten.”

“This is blasphemy!” Veonis said. “Do not try to deceive us! You took members of our races and brainwashed them into thinking that they are members of your nation! I demand you give us back our fellow Lykans!”

“You know, I wondered where that name came from when I was provided with the history of the Novus Initium Republic. It was not until I looked up the files involving the ‘Lost Ten’ that you all are named after your ancestors who led each of the groups away from the Union, primarily their last names. In the case of the Lykans, you all took on the name of Carl Lykan, your culture’s founder.”

Veonis’ eyes suddenly widened.

“How do you know the name of the first Lykan among my people?” Veonis asked. “We have never told anyone outside our race his name.”

The female Wolf among Assefa’s delegation stepped forward and towards Veonis, pulling out a small glass tablet the size of a six-inch phone with a metal grip piece at the bottom. She came within two meters of Veonis and pressed down on the metal piece. A holographic screen appeared just above the glass with a picture of a male Wolf and some texts to the right and below the picture. It appeared to be a profile report of that Wolf. Drew could see that the name on the screen was Carl Lykan.

“Prime Minister Veonis,” the female Wolf said. “My name is Samantha Lykan. I am a descendant of Carl Lykan, the Wolf you call your ‘first one.’ I am one of many descendants of his lineage, which is why I came here to address you.”

“That is not possible,” Veonis said. “While we are all descendants of the First One, no one dares make the Lykan name their own. It is taboo among my people.”

“Why does this not surprise me that our common ancestor mated with another female after leaving two of his other mistresses behind?”

“Mistresses?! How dare you! No Lykan would dare speak that way about the First One!”

“That is because I am a Wolf and it is time you know the truth of the man you hold in great reverence, though I can tell you now that the family he left behind do not view him in such a revered light. Tell me something, Prime Minister: are there any pictures that exist of Carl Lykan at all? Amidst the feudal wars that erupted over your adopted home planet before the Royal Lykan Kingdom was established and later the Holy Lykan Republic, I wonder if any texts or pictures of the man exist at all?”

“There are a couple of portrait paintings that still exist, though they are preserved in the Lykan History Museum. My ancestors may have been fighting in feudal wars, but any pictures of the First One was considered sacred.”

“I ask that question for two reasons. The first is if he is considered the ‘First One,’ who painted the picture and was taught to paint? The second is if he looked like this.”

Samantha turned the device around to show Veonis the picture of Carl Lykan. Veonis looked at the picture in disbelief, as if he were seeing a ghost.

“The picture looks exactly like him,” Veonis said. “How is that possible? How long ago was that picture taken?”

“It was taken in the year 3099 A.D., three years before he disappeared. The picture is two thousand three hundred thirty-five years old. This file was created a month after he disappeared. As you can see, if no one outside of the Lykan nation knew the name much less what Carl Lykan looked like, we would not have a file like this, would we?”

“I suppose not. As to who painted the pictures, I never thought about who painted them. I am...a little scared to ask this, but what does his file say that you are showing me?”

Samantha turned the device back around to read the text on the profile. Drew was not surprised that Veonis asked that question. While the foreign leaders are using translators or have taken the time to study English, reading it can still be difficult at times for them.

“Carl Lykan was a known polygamist,” Samantha said as she began reading aloud. “By the time of his disappearance, he had children with three female Wolves with reports of a fourth mistress who disappeared at the same time as Carl Lykan and two other Wolf families. The three he mated with reported his displeasure with the nation’s government and official religion that prevented him from having multiple wives legally and religiously. He made it clear two days prior to his disappearance that he wanted to start his own religion outside of Union space to make his lifestyle legal. He and his group were one of ten confirmed groups of Animality that had disappeared at the same time from Union space. Those that bear the Lykan name or lineage have disowned him, his lifestyle, and his beliefs, instead adopting and promoting the lifestyle and religion of the Union. It is believed by many that they are making penance for Carl Lykan’s actions and the embarrassment he brought to his family he left behind. Initial date of report, July 8, 3102 A.D.”

Samantha deactivated the device and put it back in her pocket. Veonis was speechless. Drew did not know if he was in complete shock or he was dumbfounded by the report.

“That report was accurate to a point,” Samantha continued. “The first few generations of those that bear the Lykan name or lineage became politicians and religious figures in the Union. Afterwards, they sought out other professions like everyone else. By then, the ‘Lost Ten’ were only brought up when needed by word of mouth. It was rarely taught in history classes unless necessary as there was always the chance of running into them as the Union continued to expand slowly. I never expected that day would be today. However, as you just heard, Carl Lykan was not the ‘First One’ in the sense that you know. Two other families arrived with him along with his fourth mistress. He may have been the ‘First One’ to use his last name as the name of his new nation or species, but at least from what I hear, you all do not adopt his lifestyle that he fled the Union for.”

“As much as you may not want to believe her based on that report alone,” Shea said, “we also took the liberty of testing the DNA of the Gafran, the Zeydra, and the Baqto in our nation against Human DNA. We confirmed that Human DNA was present in their genetic makeup. This confirms the report about the Human/Animal hybrids and that these three species are originally from the Union.”

The foreign leaders looked over at President Shea.

“You knew about all of this before today?!” Dicarín yelled.

“I told her about it when we discovered the Union and its history,” Drew said. “Before we brought up your existence, Rear Admiral Shannon of the *Renaldo* met a Wolf in command of a Union cruiser and called him a Lykan. He said that he called himself a Wolf and that is when they traded histories to explain each other’s existence in the star cluster. The Wolf provided us with a list and pictures of those species from the ‘Lost Ten’ that disappeared. Those ‘Lost Ten’ are confirmed to be you all that are present.”

Before anyone else spoke, Vitam Councilor Glislar stepped forward and looked at the female Fox on Assefa’s delegation.

“I want to ask,” Glislar said, “who led my ancestors to our adopted home planet?”

Everyone looked at Glislar, most of them with surprised expressions on their faces. The female fox approached him, pulling out a similar tablet and activating it. The profile of a male Fox appeared, hovering over the device’s clear portion.



“His name was Hector Vitam,” the female Fox said. “He was a renowned scientist who studied chemical propulsion and looked into new engine designs to improve speed and reduce travel time between systems. When it was revealed that there was a major flaw in the engine design that led to his prototype being destroyed killing the crew on board, his funding and his project were terminated, and he was discredited from being able to work in the field of advance propulsion ever again. Prior to his disappearance, Vitam showed depression and suicidal tendencies before suddenly voicing and spreading anti-government propaganda. His family left him before his disappearance along with three other Fox families who shared his views on the government. This group was one of ten that disappeared at the same time. Any further reports or investigations had reached an end in both this case and related cases involving what some call the ‘Lost Ten.’ Initial date of report, July 8, 3102 A.D.”

Glislar was silent at first, before he let out a small laugh.

“So,” he said, “our ancient founder was nothing more than an egotistical depressed anti-government failure and a coward who decided to run away from his problems rather than find ways to fix it. Not the legacy I would have wanted us to follow, though we have been able to make our own advancements thanks to my compatriots and our cooperation in the State.”

Glislar looked at the female Fox in her eyes.

“Our kind have suffered greatly over the past century,” Glislar said. “There are only several million Vitams in our State. I have to ask, but how many of our kin are in the Union?”

“According to our last census almost five years ago,” she said, “there are currently almost two billion Foxes that live in the Union.”

Glislar’s eyes widen upon hearing that number.

“That’s several times more than our number!” he said. “If our ancestor wasn’t such a coward and a failure, we would be a part of that community, and we wouldn’t have suffered the way we have.”

Glislar looked over at Veonis before looking at everyone else.

“Some of us here may not like what we have heard thus far or have yet to hear about our ancestors,” Glislar said, “but I believe that everything they are telling and showing us is true. The evidence is stacked in their favor.”

“How can you believe them so readily?” Dicarín said. “Do you know how badly this would unravel our nations, our societies, if any of this is true?”

“Do you think the Union has anything to gain by telling us lies about our ancestors’ pasts? What would that get them?”

“Territory, jurisdiction, and technological advancements. Do you want me to list more?”

“We do not seek these things from you all,” Assefa said. “We have been made aware of the size and strength of each nation. You all would never allow us to suddenly take over any of your societies. There is no point for such actions when you realize the one very crucial detail that binds us all together.”

“Oh really? And what is this ‘crucial detail’ that you are referring to, huh?”

“That we are all the children of the same ancestral home planet of Earth,” Drew said. “We all came to this star cluster in different ways, but we all descended from species that are native of the same planet. Tests can be run, and investigations can be made. In the end, however, they will all say the same thing that we know right now.”

“If you think that I’m going to accept this...”

“Give it a rest, Dicarín,” Veonis said.

Everyone looked at the Prime Minister with surprised looks on their faces.

“Don’t tell me a proud Lykan is going to accept this at face value?” Dicarín asked. “Where is that Lykan pride and dignity that made your nation a major power in the Eastern Region? Oh, wait. I meant to say ‘was’ a major power in the Eastern Region.”

“We are still a major power to deal with,” Veonis said. “However, let us see how you handle the truth of your ancestor. I’m curious to see if your current attitude is the result of their actions when they left the Union.”

Veonis looked at the female Salamander among the Union delegation, pointing to her.

“You, there,” Veonis said. “I heard the term ‘xenophobia’ earlier. Was that the Camino ancestor’s issue or quirk back then?”

Dicarín looked over at the female Salamander with fear in his face as she got out her tablet to look up the profile.

“Don’t you dare answer that question!” Dicarín yelled.

“I am not yours to command, Emperor,” the female Salamander said. “To answer the Prime Minister’s question, yes it was. Amelia Camino, also known as Ailema Camino out of protest of her given name, was orphaned at the age of five years old after her parents were killed in a motor vehicle accident by a pair of drunk Tigers. While the Tigers were tried in court and convicted of DWI and animal slaughter, the event left her psychologically scarred. She was forced to live with relatives, but she became anti-social and distrustful of anyone that was not a fellow Salamander. This would later result in the festering and eventual hatred of other species after psychiatric appointments revealed these facts. Amelia studied Union society to understand the nation and the system, but all that did was disgust and distrusted others even more. Finding out that her parents’ murderers were released on parole instead of being executed for their crime, which was not the sentence handed down in the original trial, increased her distrust to the point that she began to rally support from other Salamanders about inequality. Garnering a fair amount of support, she eventually called for the creation of an independent Salamander state. Her and most of those that followed her suddenly disappeared two days later after her decree, along with nine other nonaffiliated groups. Those that once followed her that did not disappear with her lost all support and momentum after her disappearance as she and her group would become one of the ‘Lost Ten. Any further investigations into Amelia Camino will be halted but those that had followed her would be observed to prevent anti-government protests and rallies. Amelia’s family currently do not share her views and have stated her disappearance was more of a blessing as they did not want the attention of the government thinking they supported her.”

“An independent and xenophobic Salamander state,” Veonis said. “That fits the Camino Star Empire perfectly, does it not, Dicarín?”

Dicarín was in shock, unsure how he was to respond to this report. After several seconds, he managed to compose himself.

“I am a direct descendant of Empress Ailema the First,” Dicarín said. “I was never told this about my ancestor when I was growing up. I was told her parents were killed in a foreign land by beasts, but she found the strength to lead her people away to a new land, forming our Empire. This information fits much of what I was told, but I had no idea that the foreign land was the Union or that her reasons was out of revenge for the deaths of her parents.”

“She created a strong Empire,” Assefa said. “It may have been for petty reasons but your Empire, and for that matter all of the nations represented here, are extraordinarily strong in their own way. I highly doubt that any of you would have achieved the level of strength and power if your ancestors still resided in the Union.”

“Thank you, Mr. President,” Dicarín said.

The Emperor turned to look at Drew.

“You are right, Supreme Chancellor Drew,” he said. “We all came from the same source, but our paths have diverged greatly since then. Some of us had to struggle with our own path regardless of the reasons that brought our ancestors down those paths. However, now we are reunited, and while I believe that my fellow colleagues may need to here about their ancestors as well, I can only assume that you had more on your mind about this summit you called together than just having us hear the truth about our origins. Am I right?”

“As you all know,” Drew said, “our Republic had to face a similar situation when we found out about the existence of the Tenebris Dominion and the Draco Federation, who went into exile because of their ancestors’ cult-like views. While the Federation harbored no ill-will towards us and retained their knowledge of the Republic, the Tenebris Dominion was the opposite. Only their leadership knew about the Republic but kept that knowledge out of the hands of their cloned slaves. Armani Draco, leader of the Dominion wanted to build his forces to one day destroy the Republic that disowned him and his research. When we found the Union and knew what had occurred within their nation when it came to the ‘Lost Ten,’ we knew we were facing a similar situation. I did not want the same thing that had happened to us to happen to Animality as well.”

“Animality?” Veonis asked.

“It is the term we call our citizens collectively,” Assefa said. “We stopped calling ourselves ‘Hybrids’ when we came to the star cluster, much like how the citizens of the Novus Initium Republic are known as Humanity.”

While we have covered a great deal of information,” Drew said, “I suggest we proceed to the Republic Parliament Building to begin the summit in a more comfortable setting than a spaceport bay. Do you all agree?”

“I know I do,” Assefa said with a small laugh. “I for one want to see the capital of this Republic than just the spaceport. Shall we go?”

Everyone agreed with the notion before they proceeded towards the bay’s exit. Assefa came up to Drew as they walked towards the exit.

“By the way, Chancellor,” Assefa said. “I have reviewed the proposal you sent. It is quite bold. I believe there may be opposition, but I feel that headway was made that may greatly reduce such opposition.”

“I hope so,” Drew said. “The Southern Region and those that divided us are there, and our unity against them will be our greatest strength. It needs to be achieved or we will lose.”

\* \* \* \* \*

*Ready Room, R.N.S. Marshal, Paladin II-Class Battleship (refit), On Route to Headquarters Planet Luminaire Orbit, Lumen System, Capital of Novus Initium Republic  
11:59am, November 17, 5434 A.D.*

“So, we are expected.”

Trent informed Dani of everything relating to what he knew about the New Unity Government and the meeting that was taken place between the known foreign leaders and the Union President. While the knowledge of what happened to Humanity in the Milky Way Galaxy after Luna disappeared was informative, it was not as surprising to Dani as the origins of Animality, their transition into the star cluster, and how the current “alien” nations are descendants of those from the Union. Knowing everyone in the cluster came from the same

ancient home planet was mind-blowing to Dani to say the least. Trent had also told her about the Chancellors plans to form an alliance or a federation between the nations to prevent any further wars from happening was also shocking to her, but at the same time she felt happy and relieved if such a proposal was accepted by all the nations.

However, when Trent told her about Bilartini and his visit using the same device that can emit the MAR in his house, she was greatly surprised. The fact that there was also an observation system in the Lumen System gave her cause for concern.

“That we are, Captain,” Trent said. “Our ‘host’ seems eager to meet us in person, though what has prompted them to talk with us now after so many centuries of influencing others have me rather concerned.”

“Do you think it has to do with our recent acquisition of the Portal Drive or the formation of a cluster-wise political entity between all known nations?”

“I wish I knew, but they have been preparing us for a war based on religion for some time now. If this war is in the Southern Region, they either need troops or allies. I can’t say for certain.”

“You know, something you told me earlier about Animality had been making me wonder about how both us and Animality ended up here.”

“Go on.”

“You remember when you said that the scientist that brought Animality here used crystals that were on Luna prior to its transition? That means that they did not find any crystals in the Milky Way except for those on Luna. They do not exist anywhere else from what they could tell in the Milky Way, but they exist in abundance here. You realize what that means, do you not?”

Trent thought about Dani’s words for a moment, and quickly realized what she was getting at. Why Trent did not see it before, he was not sure, but if Dani’s point was valid, it was not a good sign.

“Are you saying that Luna was possibly ‘seeded’ with the crystals intentionally, like the assumptions the Union was thinking?” Trent asked.

“I believe so,” Dani said. “If everyone in the known star cluster is a descendant from Earth and there is no other sentient life in the cluster except for those in the Southern Region, I believe we were led here for a purpose. Bilartini knows this and either he or his race have been grooming us for a purpose. Now that we know this is a possibility, the question becomes why our species was chosen to come here? What was the purpose of having us come here after more than three thousand years?”

“I do not know. The manipulations, the preparations, the secrecy, and the observations were a part of their plan for us, and frankly, it bothers me more now than I ever thought it would. If we are going to meet Bilartini, we will be doing it alone. Only the *Marshal* will jump to the Southern Region. I am not about to risk the rest of the fleet if the Southern Region is going to be a warzone that we may be forced to fight in. He had better have the answers to our questions about why we are here. If the manipulations and preparations served a purpose, we need to find out before whoever or whatever they have a conflict with affects everyone else in the cluster.”

“What about the Chancellor and the Grand Admiral? Don’t you want to talk to them about Bilartini’s visit?”

“At first, I did, but now it is best not to. They are going to be busy with the summit for a while and I cannot wait around for them to become available. Once we have all the answers, I will talk to them. Let us hope it is not bad news I will be reporting, or we are all in trouble.”

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