

***Warring Factions: The Novus Initium Saga***  
***Episode VII: The Tiger and the Dragon***



**PART 4**

*Dominion Intelligence Room, Central Tower below ground level, Capital City of Plena Tenebris  
Planet Tenebris Prime, Tenebris System, Southwestern Region  
2:00pm, October 26, 5434 A.D.*

“Find out where they went to and fast!”

Alpha watched as a covert shuttle launched from Dreadnought AF-2312’s starboard side and quickly went through a small portal off its bow. Despite the order issued by Armani for no small craft to launch from the vessel until the investigation team arrived and finished their review surrounding the escape and supposed death of the Miya and the former Chief’s, that covert shuttle still launched and the crew allowed the ship to flee through that portal. Alpha knew that the entire bridge crew or at least the helmsman and the engineering team were not part of the Aspergillus Tribe. They would have not allowed them to leave after the ship had received that order from Armani.

The only explanation Alpha could think of as to why the shuttle was allowed to escape is if the bridge crew went rogue, following orders from the former Chiefs, or if the captain had managed to activate the portal on his own either manually or using the computer to do it. The only way to know is after the investigation team, who was about to land on the dreadnought, researches what happened and provides the results to the Intelligence Department.

His immediate focus right now is where that covert shuttle went to through that portal. Alpha didn't know when Armani would find out what has transpired, so he ordered Epsilon to quickly look over the information from nearby satellite scanners to determine where the portal led to even if it was open for a few seconds.

Alpha looked on the main screen at the dreadnought as the investigation team's shuttle landed on the vessel. They would soon find out what happened on that ship and provide a better picture as to what unfolded that Alpha and his team could only see from afar.

"I got it!" Epsilon yelled. "I managed to get the destination star system based on the readings during that time!"

"No need to yell," Alpha said. "Just tell us where they went so that our forces can go after them."

"That might not be a wise idea, sir. Their exit point is in the W-287 System."

Alpha looked in Epsilon's direction with a surprised look on his face.

"W-287?!" Alpha yelled. "That's inside Federation space in the Western Region!"

"Correct, sir. If we sent ships into that system without knowing the exact coordinates, they would find themselves possibly surrounded by Federation forces."

"The same would be said for that shuttle. No one would be that suicidal to just jump right into enemy territory like that!"

"I may be speaking out of line on this, but what if that is exactly the reason why they chose to jump there. Either they are trying to contact the Federation, or they know we would not so readily jump into that system after them, maybe both. We can't issue orders to Military High Command to follow them as we don't have the authority."

"Generally, they only answer to the Aspergillus Tribe Chief or to His Majesty Pope. If Chief Ebony has allowed Miya and the others to escape into Federation space, the only person our military will listen to is the Pope. I will contact him now to see what he wants to do about the situation."

Alpha walked over to his station to his right. This was one report he was not looking forward to giving Armani.

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*Inner Sanctuary of His Majesty Pope Armani, Central Tower, Capital City of Plena Tenebris  
Planet Tenebris Prime, Tenebris System, Southwestern Region  
2:09pm, October 26, 5434 A.D.*

"So, they managed to escape to the heretic's domain, did they?"

Armani was given the report by Alpha through the tablet on his altar about what had transpired recently involving the covert shuttle taking off from Dreadnought AF-2312 and going through a small portal into the Draco Federation's territory. Armani was not pleased with what had occurred, but he was trying to keep his temper in check. He needed to have a clear head about what to do next about this situation.

"Yes, sir," Alpha said. *"Their destination was in the W-287 System in the Western Region. We suspect that Chief Ebony instructed the captain of that vessel to let them escape based on transmissions between her residence and the dreadnought. If that is true, then the only one who can instruct our military to follow them if needed is you, sir."*

"However," Armani said, "as you have stated, going after them would lead to an attack by heretic forces if any are present in the system. However, the knowledge that those five holds

is enough for them to lead heretic forces in an assault on our capital if they so choose. That fact alone is enough to risk our forces jumping into heretic space to see that they are destroyed before they provide those heretics with any valuable knowledge. I will inform our Military High Command to send three dreadnoughts into that system to destroy that shuttle. If that shuttle is found on one of those heretics' ships, they will destroy it promptly. How goes the investigation on the rogue dreadnought captain?"

*"They only arrived a moment ago. We will know more once the team reports in."*

"What about Ebony? Any word on her?"

*"I was waiting until we have proof that she collaborated in Miya's escape. Should I send a team to address her on this matter?"*

"Yes. Notify me when she is in custody and have her brought to the Council Chamber to answer for herself."

*"You act as if she is already guilty, Your Majesty."*

"She is. No captain goes rogue on their own like this unless told to do so. Ebony was the only one who talked with him before their shuttle initially arrived on his ship. Therefore, it only makes sense that she ordered him to capture them and release them into heretic space. Now, send a team immediately. I have to order our forces to pursue before more time has elapsed."

*"Yes, sir."*

As the communication with Alpha terminated, Armani took a deep breath. He knew he was surrounded by incompetence and he had hoped that he would guide his Dominion to be better than they were, but it was quickly becoming obvious that this was not the case after Miya and her accomplices escaped the way that they did. As he punched in to establish a link with the Military High Command, he could only hope that they would be far more competent to get the job done in destroying Miya and those that helped her.

As the tablet on his altar attempted to establish contact, he assumed that they would answer immediately. However, after nearly thirty seconds, Armani was starting to become upset. Those in the Military High Command should already be aware that he was trying to contact them and that there was always someone on duty to answer his transmissions. After a minute with no response, Armani was furious. This should not be the way they would be treating their Pope. The entire senior staff of the High Command was made up of Aspergillus and he quickly began to wonder if Ebony has told them something to make them not respond to his calls. He tried to contact a few of the dreadnoughts in orbit to get them to respond and follow the shuttle, but just like with Military High Command, they also were not responding to his calls.

If Ebony has told the entire Aspergillus Tribe to no longer respect and honor his authority, they would no longer be of use to his Dominion. However, he was presented with a problem that he could not overlook. If he was to terminate the Aspergillus like he did to the Tigris, he would lose the bulk of his military's fighting force both in space and on the planets. He would have to rely on the other three Tribes to combat the heretics of the so-called Federation and the Republic if the latter suddenly invaded but none of them were trained as soldiers. Making it where the members of the Tribes could not cross-train to fulfill other roles has backfired in a manner he did not expect. While he could instantly kill the current Aspergillus and order the rush to clone more Aspergillus to fulfill their roles, there was no way to train a whole new batch of them to fill every current position they hold in a short amount of time.

There was only one viable solution that Armani could use: killing the Aspergillus and relying on automation and computers to fill the gap until they can clone enough Aspergillus to fill the positions again. While this would put them at a disadvantage in ground combat as there

were no robotic soldiers for use on the ground, it would be a viable temporary solution in space combat for the crew to use the ship's computer to assist in combat until a new batch of Aspergillus, ones loyal to his will, is bred to fill the place of those who no longer obey their one true master. Combat performance would be affected and fighters along with bombers could not be used, but he deemed it acceptable until those Aspergillus loyal to his commands filled those positions again.

That was one aspect about clones that the rest of the population seemed to not realize. The device used to kill all the Tigris was only introduced into them in the late trimester stage of their cultivation. Any clone in development prior to that stage would not have been killed and once they emerged from their cloning chambers, they will only know to follow and obey Armani's word. There will be no Chief to guide the actions of future Tigris and Aspergillus clones. They will only know and obey his word, no one else's.

As he brought up the system that he used to terminate the Tigris clones and brought up those that belonged to the Aspergillus, he was receiving a transmission from Alpha again. Armani thought it was odd that Alpha would be contacting him at this time when he was about to terminate the Aspergillus Tribe's clones.

Armani set the termination system to the side on the tablet and answered Alpha's transmission. Armani could only hope this was good news.

*"Your Majesty Pope,"* Alpha said with a distraught look on his face. *"I have received word that the investigation team is being held by the Aspergillus on board the dreadnought. The execution team sent along with them who are also Aspergillus assisted in their detainment. Have you heard anything from the Military High Command?"*

"Neither they nor any dreadnought captain in the facility are responding to my calls. Whatever Ebony has begun among her Tribe, I will end it promptly just like the Tigris. I will be performing the ceremony here in the next few..."

Before Armani could finish his sentence, the power suddenly went out. The tablet and all of the lights went dark, leaving Armani in complete darkness.

"What is going on?!" he yelled as he tried to find anything that was producing some illumination.

Seconds later, the backup power supply came on, activating some of the lights in the room. Armani tried to power on the tablet, but it failed to activate. He got out his portable communication device, a curved phone that extended vertically to display a touch screen when being used and had its own power supply. He attempted to contact Alpha by audio.

After a couple of rings, Alpha answered.

*"Your Majesty Pope?"* Alpha asked.

"What in the world is going on?!" Armani yelled.

*"We're not sure. We were taken by surprise by the power outage as well."*

"I know this was not an accident. Can we contact any repair teams to have them look at the power generators?"

*"We're contacting them now for them to look and see what happened. However, while on emergency power, we only have lights and doors available for use. Everything else is offline. Thankfully, it appears our phones are still functional."*

"Ebony must have had something to do with this. She knew this would prevent me from activating the termination protocol for the Aspergillus. I want the repair teams to get the main power restored without delay. If it is not restored within three hours, I will find another team that will after the first team is executed for not fulfilling the will of our god. Is that understood?"

*“Yes, sir, but why three hours?”*

“If Miya manages to get help from the heretics, it would take them about that long to bring their forces here at the earliest. With the Aspergillus in control of our dreadnoughts, if I cannot bring divine punishment upon them, we will have no control of our defensive forces if a heretic fleet arrives. Besides, I have a hard time believing that Miya will convince the heretics’ President of their ‘good intentions.’ Now, have them get to work immediately. I need to pray and see what needs to be done.”

*“Understood, sir.”*

As the call with Alpha ended, Armani put his phone in one of the pockets of his robe. He then bent down and opened a compartment inside the altar, pulling out the artifact inside. He brought the artifact up and placed it on the altar. He took a deep breath, closed his eyes, and put his hands together to pray.

“Oh, red god,” Armani said aloud. “My enemies who hinder my guidance of your will are increasing even among your Dominion. I have eliminated the Tigris as you have guided me to do, but now the Aspergillus are revolting against your divine guidance and I have lost the means to enact your divine punishment against them. If Miya manages to get aid from the heretics before I can remove the Aspergillus of their hold on our ability to defend ourselves, your Dominion will suffer from their actions. I need guidance on how to fix this and preserve our Dominion. Please lend me your divine grace once again for a solution.”

After Armani spoke those words, the black line that encircled near the top of the rounded cone of the artifact glowed red, pulsing the light throughout the room. After a few seconds, the pulsing stopped. Armani slowly opened his eyes, as if he was given clarity over what to do next.

“Yes,” he said out loud. “That is the best course of action. It’s all so clear to me now. Thank you, oh red god, for your guidance. Your will be done.”

Armani grabbed the artifact and put it back in the altar’s compartment, closing the doors. He reached for his phone again and dialed Alpha again. He answered the phone after a few rings.

*“Your Majesty Pope,”* Alpha said, sounding frustrated. *“The repair team is already on the way to the reactor room right now. I’ll have an update for you shortly about their progress.”*

“Is the Central Tower the only building affected?” Armani asked.

Alpha was silent for a couple of seconds.

*“As far as I know, it is. The residential buildings of the five Tribes have their own reactor powering them so that if a power outage occurs, it only affects one building and not all.”*

“Good. I will contact Chief Beverly and have her Tribe’s engineers connect power from the Tigris and Aspergillus Tribes’ reactors into our own. That will provide us power while our reactor is being repaired.”

*“Both of them, sir? Don’t we need just one to operate?”*

“Yes, but I know Ebony may try to sabotage one of them at least. Once we have power, I will enact divine punishment on her Tribe, and we will regain control of our armed forces.”

*“Understood, sir.”*

Armani terminated the call with Alpha and called Chief Beverly. She answered after a couple of rings.

*“Your Highness Pope?”* Beverly asked over the phone. *“Why are you calling via audio like this?”*

“It appears you are unaware of what is happening right now. The Aspergillus Tribe has turned against the Dominion, your mother along with the other Chiefs’ mothers and Miya have fled to heretic space, and this occurred thanks to one of the captains of our dreadnoughts at

Ebony's request. I tried to bring divine punishment to the Aspergillus like I did to the Tigris for their blatant disobedience of our god's will, but it appears that Ebony managed to disable the Central Tower's reactor, disabling the entire structure. We are on backup power, but the only things that works are the lights and the doors right now. I need as many of your technicians as you have available right now to connect the reactors of the residential buildings of the Tigris and the Aspergillus to the Central Tower now."

*"Understood, sir. This should not take long. The wiring is already in place and should only take us five minutes to get the Central Tower operational. However, you should only need one reactor."*

"I know, but I don't want to give the Aspergillus the chance to strike only one target when there are two. Once power is restored, I only need two minutes to enact divine punishment against their Tribe. Get to it."

*"Yes, sir."*

Armani disconnected the call and put the device back into his pocket. He put his hands on the altar next to the tablet. The moment power would be restored, the Aspergillus would pay for their transgressions with their lives.

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*Eastern Wall Access Gate, Central Complex Grounds, Capital City of Plena Tenebris  
Planet Tenebris Prime, Tenebris System, Southwestern Region  
2:18pm, October 26, 5434 A.D.*

"Looks like they haven't gotten the word out yet."

Ebony walked from the Aspergillus Residence Building to the Eastern Wall's Access Gate wearing a hooded cloak. It was rare sight for someone of her stature to walk out of the Central Complex without departing via shuttle. Because of that, she had to hide her face so that no one except the Aspergillus guards would recognize her. By now, all Aspergillus have been informed of the two-finger salute and will only listen to her.

She was no fool, though. She knew that the moment Armani could no longer reach or command the armed forces that he would terminate every Aspergillus clone in one swift action like he did with the Tigris Tribe. To that end, she had some of the guards in the Central Tower disable the power reactor. She did not know how they did it or their methods so long as those methods would not cause a meltdown and it would be disabled for hours. That should be enough time for her to get away from the capital in a hover car that was awaiting her and for Miya to bring aide in the form of the Federation to deal with Armani.

As she approached the guards at the gate, they knew it was Ebony without asking for identification. She provided them her description and her attire to not raise suspicion. As she passed through the gate, she heard a small hum coming from behind her that started to increase in volume. She stopped just outside the gate and continued to listen. She became wide-eyed as she recognized what she was hearing.

"No," Ebony said as she turned around. "There is no way!"

Ebony looked at the Central Tower. The lights in and on the building suddenly came to life. At the same time, the lights in the Tigris and Aspergillus buildings went dark.

"I didn't think that was possible!" Ebony said, her voice suddenly filled with fear.

"Does that mean what I think that means?" one of the guards said in fear as he looked at the Central Tower.

“It means that Armani will soon kill all Aspergillus clones, including you all,” she said without taking her eyes off the building. “I need to get out of here quick, but now my plans are going to be in jeopardy.”

“Maybe they are,” the same guard said, this time looking at Ebony, “but know that while we may die today, we did so by choosing to follow you who believe in a better future. For that, I find myself and everyone else who serves you proud of that fact.”

“Thank you. I just hope that the other Tribes don’t get a crash course in learning how to fight or any help we receive will be jumping into a trap. I must go before Armani enacts his punishment on you all. I will have to drive myself out of town fast.”

“Go, quickly. Don’t look back and don’t have any regrets for your actions. We believe in you till the very end.”

Ebony bowed her head and closed her eyes.

“May the Great Maker who the Draco Federation believe in have mercy on your souls for our transgressions and find solace that your eyes were opened this day to the evil that is this Dominion. Goodbye.”

Ebony opened her eyes and ran for the hover car parked close by. When she got to the driver’s side door, she heard what sounded like several bodies suddenly dropping to the ground nearby. She wanted to look back and see what her actions have done, to cry for their loss. However, she steadied her nerves and her emotions, focusing on what needed to be done. She got in the car, activated the engines, and hit the accelerator, driving as far away from the Central Complex as she could get.

She was now wanted, and once Armani announced it, the whole Dominion will be looking for her. She quickly realized that this was how Miya felt when Armani sentenced her earlier today. The fear was real and the only person responsible for it all was Armani.

She could only hope that Miya can convince the Federation to intervene before Armani’s warmongering leads the rest of those in the Dominion to ruin and death.

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*President’s Office, Federation Capital Tower, City of Sanctus Draco  
Planet Propitius Esto, Capital of Draco Federation, Draconia System, Western Region  
2:28pm, October 26, 5434 A.D.*

“Is this confirmed?”

President Shea was meeting with the different Secretaries of the Federation who oversee different aspects and departments of the nation, both civilian and military, for their weekly meeting. As they were about to conclude for the day after looking over the budget for the different programs the Federation uses to continue to enhance the way of life for the nation, Fleet Admiral Tara walked into the office unexpectedly.

She informed Shea that the Dominion forces were suddenly in retreat in every system that were being contested.

Shea along with the Secretaries looked at Tara with stunned expressions on their faces before Shea asked her question.

“It is, Madam President,” Tara said. “We’re not sure what is going on, but our space forces are reporting that the Dominion fighters and bombers suddenly stopped functioning along with the weapons of their dreadnoughts. Those ships are in retreat back to Dominion-controlled space.”

“Did they leave without collecting their ground forces where fighting is still taking place?” Shea asked.

“That’s the oddest part. Our ground forces reported that the Dominion troops stopped firing. After our forces moved in to investigate, they found members of the Aspergillus Tribe dead, their heads fried and hot to the touch. Our space forces upon inspecting a couple of the Dominion fighters have confirmed the same conditions among the Aspergillus pilots.”

“Is it possible that the Aspergillus of the Dominion have been killed all at once for some reason?”

“It seems that way, but we’re not sure how. I’ve ordered for both space and ground forces to collect their bodies for autopsies to investigate the cause of death for all of them.”

“I’m just trying to understand more along the lines of *why* this happened rather than *how*. It isn’t like the Dominion to suddenly wipe out...”

Shea stopped herself before completing her sentence when she realized what she was about to say and the scope of those words.

“Secretaries,” she finally said, “I need you all to clear the room, please. I need to have this conversation in private with the Fleet Admiral.”

The Secretaries looked at each other and realized this matter was both serious and not for their ears. They stood up from their seats on the couches, turned and bowed in Shea’s direction, and proceeded to walk out of the office passing Tara on their way out. After the doors closed, Tara took a seat at one of the chairs in front of Shea’s desk.

“I know why you stopped your sentence,” Tara said. “If what has happened to the Aspergillus has in fact happened to ALL of them, it means that more than a fifth of the entire Dominion population was suddenly killed.”

“Mass genocide on an unprecedented scale,” Shea said. “I’m still trying to fathom this turn of events. What Amarria said was true. The leader must be from the Draco family. There is no single Tribe in their nation that would wield that much power that everyone would respect or follow.”

“Amarria believes that some Draco went with the rest of the families to form the Dominion centuries ago?”

“She did some research and found out that the ancient manifest of our ancestors was missing three people that were from the Draco family back then. There is a strong possibility that they went with one of the other families instead of our ancestors at the beginning of the Exodus.”

“That would explain a few things including the aggressive nature of the Dominion towards us, but there is only one group of people who could better explain that fact.”

“You’re talking about the Chiefs of the Dominion?”

“Yes, and that leads me to bring up something I did not want the Secretaries to hear. Our fleet in the W-287 System picked up some trespassers from the Dominion in a covert ops shuttle before the Aspergillus were killed.”

Shea raised her right eyebrow.

“That seems odd that they would have been so easily found like that,” Shea said. “However, it seems even more odd that I mentioned the Chiefs of the Dominion and you decided to lead into this topic after I brought them up.”

“That’s because of who was found on board that shuttle. The shuttle was brought aboard the supercarrier that was assigned to that system and the shuttle did not struggle. The crew on board the shuttle were also detained without struggle, even surrendering their weapons the moment they were ordered to leave the craft. When ordered to remove their helmets, that was

when the security troops noticed that five of them were not clones at all. Their faces and biology were different and on further examination was confirmed that they were not clones of anyone.”

“Are they naturally born? That means they’re members of their Head Families, right?”

“More than that. Four of them who are in their forties identified themselves as the previous generation of Chiefs and the mothers of the current Chiefs except for the Tigris. The youngest of the five is in fact the current Chief of the Tigris Tribe.”

Shea was wide-eyed when Tara told her that.

“One of the Chiefs is in our custody?!” Shea said. “Are you also telling me that we have a Chief being held on one of our supercarriers and the Dominion has not sent any ships to retrieve her?”

“Let’s bear in mind that all five of these women were in Special Ops armor when they were apprehended. Either they opted to be captured intentionally or they were exiled for other reasons. Either way, they made it clear that they wanted to speak with you as soon as possible. I told Admiral Halsey in command of that fleet that I would speak with you first before we decide to honor their request.”

“We have a Chief from the Dominion in custody and the Aspergillus were just murdered in mass genocide. Something is seriously wrong in the Dominion and if those five came here for help, they may also be able to answer questions that we have about their nation including any information on their leader. Order one of our dreadnoughts to jump to where that supercarrier is and retrieve them, then bring them to me. I’m going to contact Amarria and have her sit in on our conversation.”

“Is it wise for someone from the Republic to be present when you are meeting with these representatives of the Dominion?”

“They don’t know that the Republic has visited us, though we do know that the Republic sent a covert ops team to investigate the Dominion. Whether they were detected or not, we will soon know in our conversation. Right now, I want to focus on the reason for their visit and who their leader is. We need answers and those five are the only people who can answer them.”

“Understood. I will inform one of our available dreadnoughts rendezvous with Halsey’s supercarrier and bring them here as soon as possible.”

“By the way, you mentioned ‘five of them’ were on that shuttle, which means that there was more than them on board, correct? What happened to the rest of them?”

“There were four other people on board, and all four were Aspergillus. They died the same way as the other Aspergillus. The doctors on board will be performing autopsies on those four to determine what happened. Oddly enough, one of the older ladies who say they are one of the former Chiefs was Aspergillus in origin, but she didn’t die like the others who were clones.”

“So, only the clones were affected by whatever was done to them. Something must have been implanted in the clones to cause this event to happen, but we will get answers shortly. Please see to it and bring them here. Make sure that no one knows who they are until they get in this office. Find a way to make that happen. The last thing we need is for people to be in a panic with Dominion citizens being visible among us.”

“Yes, Madam President.”

Tara got up from the seat, bowed to Shea, then turned and headed for the door. Once Tara left the room, Shea turned to her terminal and typed a message for Amarria to report to her office as soon as possible.

This day just got a lot more interesting.

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*Brig, Supercarrier Divinity's Light, Twenty-First Heavy Defense Fleet  
Planet W-287-5 Orbit, W-287 System, Draco Federation, Western Region  
2:32pm, October 26, 5434 A.D.*

“I can't believe he killed my Tribe as well.”

While in a cell with accommodations that were aesthetically more pleasing in color, it did little to curb the mood inside the cell that Tonya found herself in along with Miya, Mary, Misty, and Sandra. They sat on the two benches across from each other with Miya and Tonya on one side and the other three sitting on the bench across from them. The four Special Ops personnel that accompanied them were originally in a cell across from theirs, but after a few minutes of being in the cell, they suddenly dropped to the floor. Their body language made it look like they were being electrocuted before they hit the floor.

This may have been the first time they had seen it, but Tonya knew what she had witnessed. It was the same method as how the Tigris Tribe clones perished, and now her Tribe suffered the same fate.

What Tonya couldn't understand is how Ebony allowed for this to happen. Surely Ebony knew that if Armani found out that the Aspergillus were no longer following his orders due to the two-finger salute code that he would terminate them all. She would not be so careless to allow him the opportunity to make that happen unless she tried something to stop him only for Armani to have a counter already in place.

Regardless, Armani has now killed more than forty percent of the Dominion population in just one day. Because the Dominion's history does not date any further back than the beginnings of the Tenebris despite the actual history the Tigris had, it was unknown whether a single person has killed billions of Humans in one day even if they were clones. However, Tonya doubted that so many were killed in an instant by the hands of one person in Humanity's past. Tonya did not know what Armani was thinking killing off the fighting strength of the Dominion like he did, but she knew that this means he had an alternative in place to overcome the loss of the Aspergillus if they were all killed off at once.

Her thoughts immediately focused on Ebony and what she was doing right now. She doubted that Ebony would have stuck around the Central Complex if she did act to deter Armani from killing the Aspergillus Tribe. The only thing she could hope for is that Ebony is safely out of harm's way by the time Armani enacted his punishment. With no Aspergillus clones to protect her, she was on her own when it comes to her safety. The sooner they can meet with the Federation President, the sooner they can remove Armani from power and guarantee her safety. They requested to speak with the President to one of the guards who brought them to their cell, but they don't know if that request has been relayed to the President or not.

As they waited, Miya looked at Tonya, putting her right hand that was closest to Tonya and placing it on Tonya's clenched left fist. Tonya looked at Miya with a surprised look on her face.

“That is the burden of being Chief,” Miya said. “My grandmother told me that fact when I became Chief. The actions you take to make sure that your Tribe is safe and prosperous will have consequences, and those consequences will affect the lives of your Tribe from the position of Chief down to the lowest position fulfilled by your Tribe. I never understood the weight of those words until today, and it seems you understand them now, too.”

Tonya took a deep breath.

“I will hand it to Carol,” Tonya said. “She raised you well.”

“I would like to think so, but after today, hearing her last words by audio as Armani killed her directly, I’ve wondered if she really did raise me well.”

Tonya laughed slightly.

“I wouldn’t fret too much if you didn’t learn everything from her,” Tonya said. “If you did, you wouldn’t be able to continue learning.”

“Maybe, but I didn’t learn from my mother’s mistake. All of this happened because I tried to reveal the truth about our origins and called for peace with the Draco Federation. He may have killed my grandmother and I will never forgive him for that, but I could have handled this whole situation better than this.”

“You didn’t know why your mother died and someone should have told you before you became Chief to avoid this scenario, I will give you that. However, if someone like the Pope is willing to killing so many because they refused to follow him, he is someone that needs to be removed from power. I know this may not have been ideal path, but it is the path we took that will allow us to remove the Pope from power.”

Prior to all of them being brought on board the supercarrier, they agreed not to speak of Armani’s name until they meet with the President. They knew that the Human crew of the vessel would recognize Armani’s name as the “demon” who forced those that followed the Tenebris faith into exile from the Republic, but the crew would be hard-pressed to believe that Armani was alive, or at least that his mind was in a clone body. This knowledge along with the location of the capital of Tenebris Prime were the only bargaining chips they had to enlist help from the Draco Federation.

As Tonya finished her sentence, the main doors to the brig opened. A male Human who looked to be in his sixties in a high-ranking officer uniform along with four Baqto, the large muscular boney-skinned biped race that serve as the muscle of the Federation in ground combat. These four were in full armor gear with stun rifles at the ready. They were behind the officer as they walked into the brig, making their way to the cell Miya and the others were in. The officer stopped just short of the force field and looked over all five women.

“Greetings,” he said, putting his hands behind his back. “I am Admiral Halsey, commanding officer of the Supercarrier *Divinity’s Light* and flag officer of the Twenty-First Defense Fleet. Which of you is the current Chief of your Tribe?”

Miya stood up from her seat looking at Halsey.

“I am Chief Miya of the Tigris Tribe,” she said.

“You seem...rather young to be the Chief of your Tribe,” Halsey said with a puzzled expression on his face.

“A Chief’s term begins at the age of twenty and ends at the age of forty unless some circumstances prevent their daughter from fulfilling that role. These four with me have fulfilled their terms as Chief for their Tribes.”

“I see. I wanted to make sure I was addressing the one in charge of this group or at least someone with authority. I have been informed that the President has approved your request for an audience with her. The Dreadnought *Heaven’s Arrow* has arrived to take you directly to the capital on Propitius Esto to see her. These Baqto will be your escorts for the journey. There is one last detail that needs to be addressed, though.”

“What is it?”

“Considering you all are from different families and your skin color makes that apparent, it is recommended that you wear garbs that are prepared for you on the *Heaven’s Arrow*. They will hide your appearance completely and you will look like servants of our faith.”

“I assume this is to reduce any chance of panic among the people and keep anyone from questioning or stopping us?”

“Correct. It is for your safety in light of the war between our nations, especially among the alien races that reside in the Federation. They are aware of the slaughter of their kind on worlds your forces have conquered.”

Miya looked at the Baqto guards that were behind Halsey. They all had serious expressions on their faces, expressions she was concerned about.

“You say that and yet you are ordering such aliens be our guards?” Miya asked.

“I figured you would be concerned. However, I have told these Baqto that no harm is to come to you until you meet with the President. They have given me their word to honor that request and will uphold it. I trust them to uphold their word.”

“You requested them, not ordered them?”

“I’m not about to order troops to do something that they morally feel is wrong to do. That is why I requested volunteers to perform this duty. These four volunteered.”

“Then I have to ask this,” Miya said as she looked at the Baqto to her right just behind Halsey. “Why did you volunteer?”

“Am I free to answer, Admiral?” the Baqto asked.

Halsey turned to look at the Baqto.

“Of course, Corporal,” Halsey said. “I was going to bring it up anyway, but it might be better if it comes from you.”

“Thank you, sir,” the Baqto said as he looked at Miya. “Unless one of my comrades has a different reason, the four of us volunteered after hearing the results of the autopsy that was performed on the four Aspergillus you brought with you.”

Miya was wide-eyed and Tonya looked at the Baqto with curiosity.

“What was found?” Miya asked.

“It appears you do not know about the implants,” the Baqto said. “There were implants found at the base of their skulls that severed their nervous system followed by an electrical shock that fried their brains. A silent killer to say the least. There are reports that other Aspergillus on planets and fighter craft have died by the same method. I can only assume that someone with supreme power over your clones could do this, but it is a cowardly way for them to die.”

“They were not the only ones,” Miya said, anger starting to show on her face. “The Tigris Tribe, MY Tribe, suffered this same fate first today. Every Tigris clone is dead and now so are the Aspergillus clones, all at the hands of the Pope.”

Halsey and the four Baqto were suddenly shocked to hear that news.

“One man wields THAT much power?” Halsey asked. “Why was he allowed to have that ability to where those clones would die in an instant?”

“We didn’t even know he had that ability until today,” Miya said. “This is the first time we have heard about it. We don’t know if this was first implemented when the Dominion was founded or some time afterwards. We don’t even know who is responsible for implanting them, only that the Aquilam Tribe would be the only Tribe with the knowhow to implant them. Miss Misty, the former Chief of the Aquilam Tribe, is not aware of any members of her Tribe who would be performing the procedure to put those implants in the clones or when.”

“This is also the first time we are hearing about a ‘Pope’ in the Dominion, much less the fact that he is the one in charge. Who is this guy and why does he wield such power and the highest authority in the Dominion?”

“That information is strictly for our talk with the President.”

Halsey took a deep breath.

“Very well,” he said before looking at the male Baqto officer at the brig control station. “Lower the force field.”

“Yes, sir,” the Baqto said.

Halsey looked back at the cell as the force field turned off, no longer illuminating the cell’s doorway. The former Chiefs stood up from their seats as Halsey stepped to his right. The two front Baqto moved apart from each other, revealing the two behind them. The two front Baqto turned to look at each other.

“The two guards in back will lead you towards the shuttle bay,” Halsey said. “The other two will follow from behind. Please keep pace with them.”

“Understood,” Miya said as she stepped out of the cell.

The four former Chiefs followed behind her. When they went between the two Baqto guards who were facing each other, the two rear Baqto turned around and faced the opposite direction. They began walking towards the exit for the brig with Miya and the former Chiefs following behind them. The two Baqto that were facing each other turned and walked right behind the entourage.

As they walked out and into the hallway towards the shuttle bay, Halsey who remained in the room took another deep breath. The Baqto guard who was at the brig control station took notice of Halsey’s breathing.

“Is something wrong, sir?” the guard asked.

“I have my concerns about someone in such a position in the Dominion,” Halsey said. “Based on what I know from history before our exile, there was only one family that the other families followed and that was the Draco while Armani was alive.”

“The Human who started the Tenebris cult?”

“Yes, and the fact that there is a person who the current Tribes follow and yet has the ability to decimate those Tribes’ clones if they don’t obey leads me to think that there is a possibility that not all of my ancestors were on the vessel that carried them to the Western Region. Those five won’t say it as it may be a bargaining chip for them to talk to the President, but I have this strong feeling that there is a member of the Draco family leading the Dominion. We’ll have to wait and see what those five have to say once they talk with the President.”

\* \* \* \* \*

*President’s Office, Federation Capital Tower, City of Sanctus Draco  
Planet Propitius Esto, Capital of Draco Federation, Draconia System, Western Region  
3:03pm, October 26, 5434 A.D.*

“They are on their way here?!”

Amarria was in shock after arriving in President Shea’s office. Shea had told her the facts about the arrival of the Tigris Chief and the former Chiefs of the remaining Tribes in Federation space and that they requested an audience with the President. Amarria was further shocked that Shea agreed to their request to meet them in person in her office.

“That is correct, Miss Amarria,” Shea said. “Whatever the reasons are for them to come here to talk with me, it must be rather important. I know I haven’t told you this yet, but Fleet Admiral Tara was in here earlier informing me that members of the Aspergillus Tribe, namely those in their military that we have found thus far, were suddenly killed all at once.”

“All of them?” Amarria said with a shocked expression on her face.

“Yes. This includes fighter pilots and soldiers on planets that were being contested. After they were suddenly wiped out, their dreadnoughts retreated to systems that were fully under their control, leaving the soldiers along with the fighter craft behind. Our fleet commanders also noticed that the enemy dreadnoughts stopped firing at the same time, leading us to believe that the Aspergillus were also in charge of their weapons systems. We still have no clue why this happened, but I was informed as to how this happened. Some of our fleets performed autopsy scans on the dead Aspergillus that were recovered and found something inside their bodies.”

“What was it?”

“A device was embedded in the base of their skulls connected to their central nervous system. It’s small and would not be uncomfortable if placed at a very early age. However, this device when activated instantly severs the central nervous system, leading to instant paralysis. It then shocks the brain with a high voltage charge to fry it, resulting in burnt flesh and a scalp that is hot to the touch. Since the victim cannot scream as they no longer have control of their muscles below the neck, they die silently as if touched by an angel of death. We don’t know if this process is selective or is used against every clone in that Tribe, but either way, this is more power and control than one of those Tribes should have.”

“Then you think it is an individual outside of those Tribes as I hypothesized?”

“This supports the theory you presented along with the evidence that not every Draco was aboard our ancestral exile vessel. However, if a member of the Draco family is indeed in charge of the Dominion as the Pope based on what I heard from Admiral Halsey who first captured our ‘guests,’ I am inclined to ask why this Pope is so motivated to want to start a war with the Federation to begin with.”

“Do you think that this Pope feels that he is the true successor to Armani’s ideals and views the Federation as descendants of his traitorous son that need to be ‘reeducated’ possibly?”

“I would believe that line of thought if it wasn’t for one piece of evidence that our forces have noticed lately.”

“What’s that?”

“Every planet that was once a part of the Federation that we have reclaimed thus far in the past week did not have a single Human citizen of the Federation on those planets. It’s as if they were taken from those worlds and placed elsewhere within the Dominion. That’s a lot of time and effort to move them all for the sake of trying to reeducate them if that is the goal the Dominion has for them.”

“The only people who will have those answers will be here soon. My only question is how they will react to my presence considering where I am from.”

“On that you don’t have to worry. I will be introducing you to them as my councilor of history and culture. Even though you are a librarian, you have familiarized yourself this past week with our history and culture. That is how you found out about the possibility of there being Draco in the Dominion. You also know about the history of the Dominion, or at least what they gave us and their culture for the most part.”

“What if they bring up the Republic? I’m not sure if the team sent to their home planet managed to get the information without being detected, but if they did something to make their presence known, it may get brought up in discussion.”

“If it does get brought up, then we will make the truth known about your origins. I know you prefer to speak the truth, which is why I won’t tell them that you are from the Federation. I don’t have to be too truthful with your introduction. Now, go ahead and take a seat in the chair to your right for now. The ship that was sent to transport them arrived twenty minutes ago and the

shuttle that is bringing them here has already landed. Don't be surprised about the attire they are wearing, though. We don't need the general population to be concerned with seeing people from the Dominion here, so they are wearing attire to hide their identities. Besides, the only thing they had on was Special Ops gear and undergarments. They needed some sort of attire to walk around without suspicion."

"Did they only have Special Ops gear on? Don't you find that suspicious?"

"I do, but considering what else Admiral Halsey reported, there is a reason they may have resorted to wearing what they did to get to the Federation."

"What do you mean?"

"It appears that the Tigris Tribe clones were also terminated, and it occurred before the Aspergillus were killed."

"BOTH sets of clones were killed?! If this was all the clones for both Tribes, do you realize how many just died today?"

"Last I checked, there were over one hundred and fifty billion people in the Dominion due to their cloning rates over the last six centuries not including those Federation citizens they have captured. That means that whoever it was that has the ability to take so many lives just killed over sixty billion people in one day."

Amarria was suddenly in shock that she had to take a seat when that number hit her. It took her a moment to come back to her senses before she could say anything.

"Whoever it was that did that," she finally said, "that person has committed the largest genocide in the history of Humankind that we know of. It doesn't matter if they were clones, those were still Human lives that were instantly taken by the will of one Human!"

"I know," Shea said. "This massive loss of life is unforgivable. Anyone who is the head of a religion that is able to take life like that is detestable. Let me ask you this question before they arrive. If the Republic doesn't recognize the sovereignty of the Dominion, would that mean that the person who leads the Dominion be subject to Republic laws?"

"As the Republic in general is not aware of any nations created by Humans outside our nation, the laws that govern Humans within the star cluster does not account for those who are outside the Republic. I don't have a solid answer to that question."

Shea pondered Amarria's answer.

"I understand," Shea said. "It will be up to the Republic Senate to decide, but know this, if there is a Draco in charge of the Dominion, we will make him suffer for the billions he or she has killed today. Death is too quick of a release for such a person."

"Frankly, there are no laws in the Republic when it comes to genocide. We never had a reason to come up with them due to the size of the population. Last I checked, there are no such laws in the Federation, either. I had some free time and wanted to see how similar both Republic and Federation laws were."

"You would be correct. Genocide was something we never thought of or considered in our laws as well. Murder is already a grave sin, but sixty billion murders? Believe me when I say that we will come up with a punishment that will make him regret he was never born."

Shea's terminal sounded with a chime, indicating that she had a call from the receptionist. Shea pressed a button on the terminal to receive the call.

"*Miss President,*" the receptionist said, "*you have some guests here to see you.*"

Amarria could tell the receptionist seemed puzzled in her tone about the "guests" that were here. Amarria did not know what the garments were that they were wearing, but she was just as puzzled to see what they were wearing.

“Let them in,” Shea said.

Shea pressed the button to disconnect the call and stood up from her chair. Amarria stood up as well and looked at the entrance to the office. As the door opened, five ladies in purple-hooded robes with gold accents walked in, their faces completely covered in black veils. Amarria tried to hide her expression as she had not seen such attires during her stay in the past week. On the other hand, she has not been outside of the government complex since that time either due to her lack of knowledge on certain customs or behaviors when dealing with those among the public. She could only learn so much from reading the content in the library, but such interactions can never be learned from a book.

As the doors closed, the ladies removed their veils and pulled back their hoods. Amarria could instantly tell that these were ladies from the Dominion based on their complexions and skin pigments. She was surprised that one of them looked much younger than the other four.

“Greetings, Madam President,” the youngest one said. “I am Miya, Chief of the Tigris Tribe of the Tenebris Dominion.”

Amarria was trying desperately to hide her shock. The youngest of these four was a Chief and one of the two Tribes whose clones were just killed today?

“Accompanying me are the mothers of the current Chiefs and former Chiefs themselves,” Miya continued. “Starting from my far left is Tonya of the Aspergillus Tribe, Mary of the Pistris Tribe, Misty of the Aquilam Tribe, and Sandra of the Lupus Tribe.”

The four ladies bowed briefly in Shea’s direction.

“Greetings, Miya and company,” Shea said. “I am President Shea. To my left is Amarria, my councilor and adviser in history and culture. I asked her to be present during these talks.”

Miya looked at Amarria with a strange expression on her face.

“Amarria?” Miya said. “That is an unusual name.”

“My parents wanted to give me a unique name,” Amarria said, trying to hide the fact that she was not a Draco like Miya was thinking. “They combined the names of the most influential person in each of their lives and created mine.”

“I see. I can respect and honor that.”

Amarria was happy that the explanation went well but was even happier that she did not lie about how she got her name. It was true that she was named after people that influenced her parents the most in their lives. She was glad Miya didn’t ask who they were at this point.

“Now then,” Shea said as she sat down, “the last time members of the six families that originally made the Tenebris were together, they were in talks about each other’s nations before the war began. Earlier today, I received reports from my Fleet Admiral that members or clones of the Aspergillus Tribe were found dead on battlefields along with pilots in fighters and bombers. Now I am hearing the same has happened to the Tigris Tribe, both for reasons unknown, though the method has been explained to me. If you are here, either something drastic has happened in the Dominion or members of these Tribes such as you and Miss Tonya have done something to warrant this action by who I have heard is your leader and the Pope of the Tenebris religion.”

“Maybe both,” Miya said as she approached one of the chairs in front of Shea. “May I take a seat?”

“All of you can have a seat.”

Miya sat in the chair to the left of Amarria as Amarria sat down. The four former Chiefs sat on the two couches behind them.

“As your Federation received the history of the Dominion that was written by the Pope,” Miya said, “the Tigris Tribe retained the original records of our origins, including the actions of

our ancestors before our exile. Only those who are or were former Chiefs of my Tribe had access to the information, but generally there has been no reason for us to access that information. That changed twenty years ago when my mother came across that information. After she read over the information, she wanted to discuss establishing peace with the Federation as both nations have a greater enemy to be concerned with.”

“The Novus Initium Republic?” Amarria said with a serious expression.

Miya looked in Amarria’s direction with a slight surprise on her face.

“Correct,” Miya said. “I figured the Federation would not have forgotten its origin.”

“Our ancestors didn’t gloss over the truth as the Dominion did,” Shea said. “If your mother tried to promote peace and we are still at war, what happened to her?”

Miya looked at Shea with a sad expression on her face.

“The Pope considered peace with the Federation a great heresy, condemning her to have her mind ‘cleansed’ of such thoughts. The process was still in its infancy and thus ended up making her brain dead instead. She was considered dead from that point on.”

Amarria and Shea were in shock over hearing this.

“I’m sorry to hear that,” Shea said. “What about the history your mother uncovered?”

“The Pope was not aware what my mother’s reasons were for wanting peace with the Federation and decided not to look into it any further. My grandmother took over as Chief until I was old enough to fulfill the role. I was still an infant at the time when my mother died.”

“So, I take it that you eventually took the position after your grandmother raised you, is that correct?”

“Yes. Once I took the position, my grandmother found the records my mother had read and read them herself. She didn’t tell me about it at the time. However, this all changed over a week ago.”

Amarria was quick to realize that this would be around the time the *Cavalier’s* team would have arrived at the Dominion capital much like herself and the *Templar’s* team. Amarria noticed that Shea looked briefly in her direction before the President looked back at Miya.

“What happened around that time?” Shea asked.

“We believe that our data was accessed by outsiders,” Miya said. “Log records and recordings show that something had downloaded information from our Central Database, but the recordings showed no one at the terminal, leading us to believe they were using optical cloaks. It did show that something was plugged into our system physically at the time. Also, while entry by following someone inside is possible, their exit from the Central Database was not as secretive or graceful. It is a two-stage exit and entrance where only one set of doors can be open at a time to keep the room clean of outside dust and air. Whoever the infiltrators were, they opened both sets of doors, which set off alarms and would lead to an investigation.”

Amarria began to wonder why the *Cavalier* team would make such a screw up unless something prompted them that remaining inside the Central Database was increasing the chances of being discovered and would compromise their mission if they are waiting any longer in there.

“We are not aware of any cloaking technology used by your Federation,” Miya continued, “nor do you know the location of our capital as your forces would have already attacked it by now. This led my grandmother to believe that the only ones who could have possibly infiltrated our database were members of the Novus Initium Republic.”

Amarria made no indication that she knew what Miya was talking about. Shea only raised her right eyebrow as she already knew that Republic operatives were involved since she was told about the group heading to the Dominion capital, so she wasn’t surprised about Miya’s comment.

“That’s a rather serious accusation to make,” Shea said. “Do you have anything concrete suggesting that the Republic was indeed involved?”

“As I said, if your Federation knew where our capital is located, your forces would have launched an assault immediately to decimate our infrastructure, correct? That is part of the reason why its location was never disclosed to your government. Who else could it be if not the Republic? They would be the only ones with the means and the motive considering...”

Miya stopped herself when she realized she was about to reveal something that should not be revealed yet. Amarria and Shea were both puzzled about her suddenly stopping what she was saying.

“Considering what?” Shea asked. “What were you about to say?”

Miya took a deep breath.

“I’m sorry,” she said. “It has been a very emotional day for me.”

“Considering that your Tribe’s clones were killed, I don’t blame you, but how about continuing to explain what happened afterwards. We’ll come back to the possible culprits later.”

“Very well. A debate occurred between the Chiefs and the Pope about who was involved. By this point, I read up on some of the same history my late mother had read and found out that the Republic was where we were exiled from. I am aware that the name of the Republic was lost due to the history written by the Pope at the time. What I did not expect was the reaction from both the Chiefs and the Pope.”

“What was the reaction?”

“Three of them wanted to go to war with the Republic while I and one other Chief were trying to find a peaceful resolution to the matter. The Pope who has the final say in such debates was surprisingly absent during the initial week once the Republic was mentioned.”

“That is an odd reaction for your Pope to make.”

“Indeed. Last night, my grandmother and I worked out a proposal for peace with your Federation considering that there was an even greater threat found in the form of the Republic. Our Pope had ‘bugged’ our room and knew what we were trying to propose. As I was trying to make my proposal, the Pope suddenly stopped me and labeled me a heretic for making the same proposal much like my mother did. He sentenced me to get my mind wiped, but as I was being escorted to my fate, these four brave souls behind me rescued me as a debt to my grandmother. However, my grandmother confronted the Pope directly for who he was, and she paid the price with her life before sentencing all the clones of my Tribe to death and ordering the execution of all remaining Tigris Tribe members who were naturally born. We managed to get to a shuttle to try and escape the planet.”

“Your ships use portal drives to jump from one location to another but require a massive amount of power. How was your shuttle able to do it?”

“The shuttle we were on when we were captured was not the shuttle we used to escape,” Tonya said.

Miya and Shea looked in Tonya’s direction.

“My daughter,” Tonya continued, “Chief Ebony of the Aspergillus, saw the corruption in the Pope and his madness when he sentenced Miya. She quietly ordered our clan to support us and our escape. One of the dreadnoughts intercepted us and tried to fake our deaths so that we may disappear. However, the Pope saw through the deception and sent an investigative team. The captain of the ship managed to get us to safety by disguising us as Special Ops personnel and used the ship’s portal drive to get us into Federation space. The price my Tribe paid for their actions was their deaths. The Pope knows my Tribe forms the core of our armed forces, so why

he killed them without much hesitation is something I cannot understand. I do not know what happened to my daughter after the Aspergillus clones were killed. I can only hope that she managed to get away from the Central Compound, the heart of the Dominion government, before any of the authorities caught her. I haven't talked with her since Miya's sentencing, and rest of us haven't talked with their daughters either. As far as I know, Ebony was the only one who assisted us in our escape."

"Based on the total number of people in the Dominion," Shea said, "are you telling me that one person alone was responsible for the deaths of over sixty billion people in a single day?"

"Yes," Miya said. "The Pope on his own based on what I know has killed the most people in the history of Humankind."

"Then we have a few questions to ask based on the behavior of your Pope. Amarria has been researching our archives and found something very puzzling that needs to be addressed and you all are the only people who can answer them. Amarria?"

Amarria looked at Miya who returned her gaze.

"During my initial investigation into the possible leadership of the Dominion," Amarria said, "I noticed that the crew manifests of the Draco did not coincide with the names of all those present on the first Tenebris colony. There were three names who were supposed to be on that planet, but they were not accounted for among the passengers during the exile. I hypothesize that those three managed to make their way onto one of the other families' ships. Is this true?"

Miya raised her right eyebrow. Amarria was wondering why Miya did that unless Miya knew what Amarria was talking about.

"It's interesting that you brought that up," Miya said. "I found out today that there was three Draco who still followed Armani's ideals centuries ago and developed technology for him to use after his death, but those three died after their technology was created shortly before our exile and used their corpses to fool Republic sensors into thinking that their orbital strike succeeded. That ruse from what I could tell lasted for over six centuries."

"Those three were studying Human brain functions as well as cybernetics. What kind of technology did they develop and what do you mean that Armani could use it after his death?"

"They developed the means to map the Human mind and transfer the consciousness of a Human into a clone body, thus allowing them to effectively be immortal as long as they have a clone body to transfer their consciousness to."

"That sort of technology exists?" Amarria said, but then a thought suddenly came to her mind. "Wait a moment. WHO is the Pope within the Dominion?"

Miya narrowed her eyes and had a look of anger in her face.

"His name is Armani Draco," Miya said.

Amarria was suddenly in shock. The fact that the man responsible for creating the Tenebris cult is still among the living or at least his consciousness was completely unexpected! She was right that a Draco was running the Dominion, but she had no idea that it was the same man who created their religion in the first place!

Shea slammed her hands on her desk and stood up with anger on her face.

"Are you telling me that Armani Draco or at least his consciousness still exists in this world?!" Shea yelled.

Miya looked at Shea, a calm expression on her face.

"Yes," she said. "Your ancestor, the man responsible for our exile from the Republic, and the creator of the Tenebris faith, still exists in a mental state, and he oversees Dominion. He is also the murderer of over sixty billion clones in one day."

“So THAT’S the reason we were not informed of who the leader was of the Dominion when we got your history before the war! If we knew Armani was still alive, we would have fought harder than we have. We would be motivated to go after him for all he’s done!”

“Then I have to ask this question,” Amarria said. “What has happened to the Humans that are captured by the Dominion from Federation worlds?”

Miya looked back at Amarria, again raising her right eyebrow. Amarria still wondered why Miya was looking at her like that.

“Armani has decreed,” Miya said, “that any Draco that is taken from the Federation worlds regardless if they are civilian or military will immediately be installed and processed at one of the nearest blood farms and used as our sustenance. They can never be removed from the machines as their minds are wiped except for basic bodily functions to produce the blood.”

Shea’s face was red with anger. She did not know that this was what happened to those that were captured, that they can never be rescued in the state that they were in. Amarria was just as shocked as she did not know that Armani would order this sort of action against what would be considered his descendants. He must have a deep sense of anger to perform this method of revenge against them for the actions of his son who betrayed him and his ideals centuries ago.

“Now I have a question for you, Miss Amarria,” Miya said. “Where are you from?”

Amarria looked at Miya with wide-eyes, surprised that she would be asked this question.

“What do you mean?” Amarria asked.

“Earlier, you stated about the crew manifests of the Draco instead of saying of our ancestors.”

Amarria was starting to realize why Miya was giving her those looks earlier. She made comments as she if she was an outsider and Miya was quick to take notice.

“To add to that,” Miya continued, “you asked what we did to Humans that are captured by the Dominion from Federation worlds, not our fellow citizens from our worlds. You speak as if you were born outside of the Federation. So, I ask again: where are you from?”

Amarria looked at Shea.

“Just like I mentioned earlier that I couldn’t lie to you, Miss President,” Amarria said, “I cannot lie to her, either.”

“I remember and I understand,” Shea said as she sat back down to calm herself.

Amarria looked at Miya who was waiting for her answer, but now Miya had a puzzled expression on her face.

“You are correct, Miya,” Amarria said. “I am not from the Federation.”

“Then are you an Aquilam or a Lupus?” Miya asked. “I’m trying to see if I can identify you by your accent, but it is difficult.”

“Neither one of those. I am not from any family that formed the Tenebris.”

Miya looked puzzled at first, but quickly the look of realization came over her face.

“No,” Miya said. “There is no way that this is possible...”

Amarria raised her hand to stop Miya’s train of thought.

“I did not lie to you about my name,” Amarria said, “nor did the President lie to you about my role here. Instead, allow me to properly introduce myself this time.”

Amarria stood up from her chair and extended her right hand towards Miya as if to greet her.

“Allow me to reintroduce myself. I am Amarria, historical librarian and citizen of the Novus Initium Republic. It is a pleasure to meet you, Chief Miya.”

\* \* \* \* \*