

*Warring Factions: The Novus Initium Saga*  
*Episode I: Alone Yet Not*



**PART 4**

*Office of Anchorwoman Laura, National Broadcasting System Building, City of Luminous Planet Luminaire, Lumen (“Light”) System, Capital of Novus Initium Republic  
7:34pm, May 11, 5433 A.D.*

“What is going on in that star system?”

Laura normally goes home after the evening broadcast of NBS News. At that point she would have already had dinner and relaxed for the evening, most of the time with her husband Trent when he was not on assignment. This evening, however, her concern with recent events in the Tranquillus affected her to the point she only picked up something small to eat from a fast food place nearby as she was not very hungry. She was watching the live video feeds from the drone cameras located near the *Renaldo* to see if anything was going on. Most likely there has already been contact made between the *Renaldo* and the two alien fleets but the cameras could not pick up those transmissions. Even if they could, she would not understand what they were

saying. She wished Trent would call her but the situation obvious would not allow him to make such calls. This was an important event for the Republic and right now he needed to focus on what is happening in that star system much like she would need to focus on reporting the news.

She sent a message to Christina asking her if there have been any developments or news to report, but Christina told her that the command staff would not comment. This was about fifteen minutes ago.

As she stared at the screen, Matt knocked on her door frame, some of his items in his hand as he was ready to go home.

“You okay?” he asked.

Laura looked at him briefly before turning her attention back at the screen.

“I’m okay,” she said. “I’m just wondering what is going on out there right now. They are not telling Christina anything at the moment.”

“That’s no surprise,” Matt said as he leaned against the door frame. “They want to make sure that we are not reporting anything prematurely to the public until absolutely necessary.”

“Maybe so, but being in the news business I want to know all the details as they happen.”

“Don’t we all? The night crew is already here and will continue the news as it happens, Laura. I suggest you go home and get some rest. There is nothing more you can do right now and the boss made it clear that he is not paying overtime.”

Laura let out a sigh.

“I’ll leave in a moment,” she said. “I guess I’m just a bit worried about Trent and this whole alien situation. It’s the first time I’ve ever had to worry about him like this.”

“The military has only dealt with small issues in the history of the Republic. It never had to deal with a full-size fleet, much less two of them, though they train like they always do just in case. These alien fleets are the reason the military is even still around. The Republic government knew during the Expansion Era that we might run into such races and kept the military around for this exact reason. However, while they have trained for such an occasion, if things go wrong, their lives will be on the line for the first time. I don’t know what reasons those two races have to fight but I doubt either of them wants to make an enemy out of the Republic.”

“Maybe, but that depends on their situations.”

Laura’s phone suddenly started beeping and it showed Christina sent her a message. Laura looked at the message.

*I just got word that the Supreme Chancellor will be making a statement shortly about the two nations the alien fleets belong to, the text message said. The Vice Admiral also stated that there is a meeting between themselves and a representative from each faction that will happen shortly. Because there will be alien dialect involved and the translation devices used will be translating through the ship’s computers, recording the meeting is out of the question. However, they will allow me to record and broadcast the representatives as they arrive and make their way to the conference room. I’m sending a similar message to the Chief right now so that he can make the evening crew aware that I will be reporting suddenly. I’m getting the second interior camera drone ready and a spot that I can report from. The Vice Admiral did tell me the names of the nations the alien fleets are representing. The fleet to the left that is red and silver is called the Royal Lykan Kingdom and the fleet to the right in blue and gold is the United Vitam State. That is all they will tell me right now. They will tell me more as they arrive.*

Laura typed in her reply, thanking her for the info. She turned back to Matt.

“Let me guess,” he said. “That was from Christina?”

“Yes,” Laura said. “It appears they were able to establish a dialogue with the alien fleets and have scheduled a meeting with them shortly. The fleet to the left belongs to the Royal Lykan Kingdom and the fleet to the right belongs to the United Vitam State. She is allowed to record their representatives coming aboard the *Renaldo* and making their way towards the ship’s conference room but she is not allowed inside the conference room due to the fact she won’t have access to the translation program. She also stated that the Supreme Chancellor will be making a statement about the two nations shortly.”

“Well, that’s some progress. I suggest you get home then as soon as possible. Hopefully you can get there before the broadcast.”

“You’re right,” Laura said as she got up and grabbed her purse and phone, and then turned off her terminal. “I need to leave this in Trent’s hands. I know he will come through like he always does. Besides, I have a couple of calls to make as well.”

“Oh? To who?”

“My daughter Amarria and our friend Sheryl. Amarria called me earlier from the Central Library and Sheryl called me a moment ago before you walked. I talked with both and we shared our thoughts concerning this whole scenario today. They both asked me to let them know of anything that occurs whenever possible.”

“Wait, Sheryl, the idol? I did not know you two know each other.”

“It’s a long story,” Laura said as she turned off the lights in her office. “I’ll tell you about it some time.”

Matt moved out of the doorway to allow Laura to pass.

“I’ll see you tomorrow,” she said as she passed him.

“See you tomorrow,” he said.

Laura headed for the elevators and pressed the “call” button. The elevator arrived soon after and the doors opened up. She walked in and selected the “garage” level located underneath the building. The elevator quickly went down, though there were inertia dampeners in the elevator to prevent the feeling of quickly going up or down. It stopped at the “garage” level and the doors opened to reveal a large area with several cars and trucks lined in parking spaces. She stepped out of the elevator and walked in the direction of her car. She soon spotted the vehicle.

The 5427 Vorpal Motors Millennium SE Coupe was a remarkably sleek and elegant vehicle, streamlined for minimal drag. A powerful electric motor allowed the vehicle to go hundreds of kilometers before needing to recharge. The best part is that the car was also self-driving while in a city, a feature that has been on cars since the formation of the Republic. Once the vehicle is outside the city, the driver has full control of the vehicle. For safety purposes, the vehicle also possesses a shield system that activates the moment the vehicle detects an imminent impact situation to prevent damage. Tires on the vehicle are made of a type of rubber that is recyclable much like the rest of the car. Laura got the vehicle in pink, her favorite color. The two-door vehicle had vertical rising doors.

Laura scanned her key on the driver side door and it unlocked, slowly moving upward to allow her inside. Once it, the door automatically came down and locked in place.

“Start car,” she said.

The electric engine came to life as well as her dash. The outside lights also turned on.  
“Destination: home,” she said.

The car gave a confirmation noise and started driving on its own out of its parking space and headed for the exit of the garage. The garage door opened as she approached and the vehicle waited till traffic allowed for it to exit. Once it left the garage and started driving itself down the streets to her residence which was less than an hour or so, she picked up her phone and inserted it into a port on the dash.

“Call Sheryl,” she said, figuring to call her first.

The phone began to ring through the car speakers. After a few rings, someone answered the call.

“Hey, Laura,” Sheryl said over the phone.

“Hey, Sheryl,” Laura said. “Sorry to keep you waiting.”

“I take it you finally left work?”

“Yes, but only after our field reporter managed to get in touch with me once she had an update. It wasn’t much though.”

“Any news is better than none. So what did she say?”

“She said that the Supreme Chancellor will be making an announcement shortly but from what she said, the two nations are the Royal Lykan Kingdom and the United Vitam State. The Kingdom ships are the red and silver ones while the State ships are the blue and gold ships.”

“Well that’s more information than we have been given so far. So what are they going to do about them?”

“They are apparently going to have a meeting with a representative from each nation on the *Renaldo*. This meeting is supposed to take place in a little while. She was not given a timeframe yet but it may be in the next thirty minutes or so.”

“I see. This news about the aliens seems to be affecting everyone from what I’ve been seeing. There are a lot of people glued to their feeds waiting for more information about the aliens.”

“I’m not surprised. There is a live feed that is going on from some of the camera drones we have there on our all-news sister station. I noticed the reporters on that station are talking about their assumptions and opinions concerning relations with these races without so much as information about each alien nation.”

“The biggest problem with assumptions and opinions is that people who watch and listen will take them to heart. That is what concerns me.”

“That’s bothers me if anything. That’s part of the reason I prefer to report the truth and the facts that are presented to me. It makes me feel a lot better.”

“I can understand that. Hopefully this address of the Supreme Chancellor will also be truthful.”

“You and me both. Lying to the public is not something anyone should be doing right now concerning these aliens.”

“Well, thanks for keeping me in the loop. What about Trent? Any word from him directly?”

“No but that does not surprise me. He has his hands full with the situation as is.”

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*Ready Room, R.N.S. Renaldo, Paladin-Class Battleship*  
*“First Contact” Point Alpha, Planet Tranquillus VIII Orbit, Tranquillus System*  
*7:39pm, May 11, 5433 A.D.*

“A cloaked recon drone?”

Trent sat in the Ready Room with everyone still present. They had concluded their conference call with the Supreme Chancellor and the others when Tora brought up an idea. The main concern that everyone has is the possible attack of Kingdom forces against State defenses which were being stretched thin. They needed information as to how far the Kingdom has resorted to automation to know whether they could really mount a serious offensive against the State or not. However, actively scanning one of the Kingdom’s ships would not have been advised as it would look bad.

However, it appeared that Tora had a trick up her sleeve, which did not surprise Trent or Blair in that regards. The trick itself, however, was what did surprise them.

“Yes,” Tora said. “You all are some of the rare few outside the RCIA to know about them. They are small enough to not get detected so easily by ships yet efficient enough to go long distances while using an optical cloak. It is given a task and it performs it without fail. It is in one of the bags I brought onto the ship and I have already prepped it for active use. All we need to do is somehow deploy it without anyone seeing it.”

“But I thought there was an issue about using drones?” Wade asked.

“In combat, yes,” Tora said. “However, when it comes to covert ops and hacking, they are exceptional in that field.”

Most of the people in the room were not too thrilled to hear the word “hacking.” The term is still around but after Luna came to the star cluster, it was one of the things their ancestors did away with. However, the art of espionage required the harmful art when the RCIA was founded. No one outside of the RCIA knows how to hack systems and anyone who does and uses them without authorization is subject to arrest. Of course many would argue that the RCIA should not have those abilities either but their charter authorizes them to do so once it was approved by the government.

“Are you certain that the drone can not only hack an alien system,” Trent said, “but it can do so without being detected by their systems?”

“We programmed the drone with the same algorithms that was found in the dictionary file we were given. Using those, it should have no problem negotiating with the host system to get access. Hopefully, both the Kingdom and the State have never fully developed the art of hacking each other’s systems.”

Trent raised an eyebrow.

“Did you not read the history we were provided by the Vitams? They managed to gain control of the Lykans’ ships and no doubt they did some hacking to make that happen. The Lykans have probably since made it to where they have anti-hacking capabilities.”

“Maybe so, but the Vitams’ skills are amateurish at best. Neither party has had to deal with an agency that has been doing it for a couple of millennia. When it comes to comparing our abilities to theirs, we are the masters in this field.”

“I hope that arrogance is well founded. As far as deploying the drone, doing it through the hangar bays is out of the question. They will notice the doors opening and I am assuming that the optical cloak cannot be engaged until after it passes the atmospheric barrier?”

“I already have a solution for that. We can use an airlock to deploy it. We just set it in one, depressurize it, open the doors, and it can cloak before it leaves the airlock. Once it leaves, we just close the airlock before the Lykans even notice while the drone flies towards the closest destroyer.”

“And all of this is supposed to happen just before the representatives from both groups arrive?”

“That is correct.”

Trent looked at Blair who shared the same expression of concern. There was already the possibility that they were going to have to deal with hostilities with the Lykans once they knew about the history of the Republic based on what the Vitams had said. However, whether or not that is the case has not been determined. On the other hand, any information on the capabilities of the alien ships would be vital.

“While it is against my better judgement,” Trent said, “I will allow this. I just hope it does not get detected by the Lykans. The only other issue you would have to deal with is that the Lykans still have their shields up right now. How do you propose to get through that?”

“We have our ways, Vice Admiral,” Tora said. “However, these ways I cannot share with you as there are some RCIA secrets you are not privileged to.”

And just like that, Tora was suddenly feeling in control of the situation which began to bother both Trent and Blair again. Regardless, this solution of hers to find out more about the Lykan ships was needed and she had the means to do so.

“Very well,” Trent said trying not to sound defeated. “You may proceed. Make sure you let my operations officer know so that there are no surprises or alarms raised.”

“Alright then,” Tora said as she got up from her chair. “I need to get started right away as our guests will be here in a little while.”

Tora walked out of the Ready Room. When the doors closed, Trent looked at Wade and Autumn.

“While I am not in a position to give orders,” Trent said, “you two may want to go ahead and head to the conference room. Colonel Blair, please have your SAGATs ready for security duty. I would like them lined up from the doors of Hangar Bays One and Three to the conference room so that the representatives know where to go. I’ll be sending a message to both fleets about their atmospheric requirements in order to ensure they are able to breathe our atmosphere or not. It would appear though that both the Lykans and the Vitams have the same requirements since I did not see any breathing apparatuses on either one of them in that one picture.”

“You’re talking about the one where the Vitams were slaves to the Lykans?” Blair asked.

“Yes, that one. We already know all of the races in the State have the same atmospheric requirements based on that one picture where they were together. Hopefully they are also the same as us.”

What about when they get to the conference room? Remember, they are at war with each other and it would be bad if they either entered together or sat side-by-side.”

“The conference room has two doors in and out. We will have them sit at opposite ends of the table to reduce hostilities. A force field can be deployed to separate them from each other as well.”

“Alright,” Blair said as he got up from his seat. “We’ll go make the necessary preparations. You check up on their environmental needs before they get here.”

“I will.”

Blair nodded his head before he headed for the door. Wade and Autumn also got up and headed out the door as well. Trent turned to his terminal and activated it.

“Communications, please get a hold of both fleets. We need to know what they breathe before they get here.”

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*Backstage, Press Conference Room, Republic Parliament Building, Capital City of Luminous Planet Luminaire, Lumen System, Capital of Novus Initium Republic  
7:59pm, May 11, 5433 A.D.*

“Here we go.”

Drew took a deep breath. Addressing a nation that was the size of the Republic was nerve racking because he always had to look like he knew what he was doing and not show any weakness unless absolutely needed. He was about to tell the nation as a whole what was known about the two alien races from the messages that were being communicated earlier with the *Renaldo*. He was hoping that this news may calm the population, but considering how Humanity looks down upon slavery, they may not take to the Kingdom very well. Regardless, the public needed to know the truth.

On the other side of the wall is the Press Conference Room designed to allow reporters and journalists from various news stations and internet news sites to record, report, and ask questions involving any statement from the Supreme Chancellor or a member of his staff. This can also be used by the Senators but only with the Chancellor’s permission.

Drew heard a male voice introducing him over the speakers in the room.

*“Ladies and Gentlemen of the Republic, the Supreme Chancellor.”*

Drew walked around the wall. There were two columns of seats with up to fifteen rows filled with reporters and photographers who already began to take photos with their holo-cameras. The podium was made of transparent material and was on a raised stage on blue carpet. Behind it was a blue curtain with a large seal of the Republic attached as well as a Republic flag flanking each side of the seal.

Drew walked onto the stage and up to the podium. He gripped the sides of the inclined surface. A microphone extended from the top of the podium.

“Good evening,” Drew said, trying not to show any nervousness on his face. “As many who are watching this right now have no doubt heard, at 6:12 PM Luminaire Standard Time, the Republic battleship R.N.S. *Renaldo* along with the rest of the Eleventh Fleet currently on assignment in the Tranquillus System located near the Southeast Region during training exercises had made initial contact with two alien fleets that appeared near the eighth planet of that system. The *Renaldo*, under the command of Vice Admiral Trent, transmitted our language to both fleets. After over thirty minutes, one of these fleets responded by text message only stating who they

are as well as why they are in the Tranquillus System. Before I continue, please hold any and all questions you may have till the very end.”

Drew briefly paused as he looked at the tablet that was on the podium. A member of his staff had placed it there for him with the transmissions that went back and forth between the *Renaldo* and the alien fleets. As he did so, a few holographic screens appeared which showed ships of the State.

“The fleet that responded was the ships that were painted blue and gold. This race calls itself the United Vitam State.”

The images then changed to the ships from the Kingdom.

“These ships according to the State belong to the Royal Lykan Kingdom which the State is currently at war with.”

The images changed again, this time only two screens appeared. To the right of Drew was an image of the Lykans that was transmitted to the *Renaldo*, but this image was the one without the slaves as the image may not have been good to show first if at all. The image to the left of Drew was showing the five founding races of the State.

“To my right is an image of the Lykans. As you can see, they resemble what looks like bipedal wolves. They are currently ruled by a king whose name has not been disclosed as of yet. Based on the brief history that we were given, the Lykans home system is on the absolute edge of the star cluster in the Eastern Region, which means that almost half of their calendar year they can’t see the star cluster hardly at all at night. They warred with each other until several hundred years ago when a prophet of their deity stated that they were called to claim the star cluster in the name of their god. This drove the Lykans to unite and eventually develop to the point of going into space. They eventually found the Salire Purpura Crystals in their system, what they have designated as ‘jump’ crystals, and used them in the same fashion as the Republic and making what they would call ‘jump’ gates similar to our star gates. After a while, they ended up finding other alien races within the Eastern Region.”

Drew pointed to the image of the five races that made up the State.

“These races were eventually found by the Kingdom and enslaved by their superior numbers and technology all in the name of their god to serve their deity.”

The moment Drew said that, the crowd began to murmur amongst themselves at the thought that there was a race that uses slavery. Slavery has been illegal in the Republic since Luna first came to the star cluster and was a detestable form of having a workforce. Thankfully no one has ever attempted to use slavery to have a cheap workforce but that term hits a few cords with certain ethnic groups involving their ancestors. This was why there were such laws against slavery in the Republic to begin with.

Drew raised his hands to show he wanted them to be silent again. The murmurs slowly went away.

“I am aware of everyone’s feelings towards slavery but I must press on with what we know about these aliens. For a few centuries these races served the Lykans. However...”

Drew pointed out the Vitam in the picture among the other five races of the State.

“...the race in the middle of this picture, known as the Vitams, served as technicians and engineers of the Kingdom’s warships. During that time, the Vitams were able to come up with measures to ensure they could get control of the Kingdom’s ships at any point in time. That time

came over a hundred years ago. The Lykans began exploring the Northern Regions and eventually came across another nation. That nation is known as the Camino Star Empire. Not much information is known about this race or that nation, only that they were able to push back the Kingdom's forces for the first time in the Lykans' history. This defeat caused a bit of a panic among the military. This panic was enough for the slaves to suddenly revolt against their masters, seizing every ship they can to fight and flee their masters. The Vitams and their fellow slaves only managed to obtain enough military ships and freighters to get up to two-thirds of their populations off of their planets before the Lykan military managed to recover. These races managed to head south to avoid capture while the Lykans held off pursuing in order to regain control of their forces and remaining slaves."

Drew briefly checked his tablet. He was waiting for a message from the *Renaldo* letting him know that the representatives from those nations had arrived. So far, no such message has come through.

"The Vitams," he continued, "along with their fellow former slaves managed to jump far enough away and found several habitable worlds in the Southeast Region. For the next fifty years, they managed to develop a form of government, culture, and military. They called themselves the United Vitam State. After those fifty years, the Lykans who had started to resort to the use of automation after losing their slaves managed to find the State and thus started their war which has lasted to this day. I will now answer any questions you may have."

Several of the reporters and journalists raised their hands. Drew pointed towards a male journalist who was sitting to his left two rows back.

"Supreme Chancellor," the journalist started, "you said that only one of the races responded, namely the United Vitam State. Why has the Kingdom not responded and is this history provided by just the State?"

"From what I was told by Vice Admiral Trent, the fleet commander of the Kingdom fleet does not have the authority to speak with our forces on a political level and that there is a representative on their way from the Kingdom to speak with our ambassadors in an official capacity. As far as the history I spoke of here, this was provided to us by just the State. Until we speak with the Kingdom representative, we won't know whether this history is validated or not."

The crowd raised their hands again though a quarter of them did not raise their hands at this point. Drew pointed out a female news reporter to his right in the second row.

"Supreme Chancellor," she said, "you stated that there are ambassadors on board the *Renaldo*, but from what we heard from other Senators, the ambassadors were on board the battleship before it left Lumen to go to the Tranquillus System. Why were they on board the ship if it was going to engage in military exercises?"

Drew knew this question was coming but was hoping not to answer it at all. He was told by Head Agent Aja that if he should be asked this question, he should be truthful considering the circumstances.

"For a while now," Drew said, "the RCIA has been detecting transmissions from beyond our borders in the Southeast Region. To prevent panic among the general population in the area, they deployed listening posts that also doubled as jammers to prevent other Republic ships both military and civilian from detecting them. Recently, those transmissions continued to grow in strength to the point that the RCIA determined that whoever was generating those transmissions

would appear in the Tranquillus System soon. They informed me of their findings and that was when I decided to deploy the Eleventh Fleet under the guise of them doing training missions. The two ambassadors are on the *Renaldo* for that reason. We were hoping to establish contact privately to prevent any issues or panic but their appearance on a live broadcast of NBS News was not anticipated. I must apologize for the deception to those involved of the Eleventh Fleet's true mission including those in said fleet who were not aware of the true mission either. My concern was the appearance of these fleets in Republic space without being properly prepared for them."

The crowd looked at each other. The truth was now out there about the Eleventh Fleet's mission and they did not know how to take this newfound information.

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*Private Residence of Sheryl, Northgate District, City of Cisco  
Voluptas IV, Voluptas ("Pleasure") System, 6 Jumps Southeast of Lumen  
8:08pm, May 11, 5433 A.D.*

"I knew it."

Sheryl leaned back in her chair as she watch the broadcast of the Supreme Chancellor addressing the nation about the alien fleets that had appeared in Tranquillus. Her suspicions along with Laura's have now been answered about Trent's deployment. They can see why he didn't say anything about his true mission. Information such as attempting to make contact with one or two alien races would be considered classified under those circumstances.

There was a moment when she noticed the reporters and journalists who were there did not know what to make of this information to the point that there was not a single hand raised for another question.

"Are there any more questions?" Drew asked.

One of the journalists to Drew's right raised his hand. Drew pointed at him.

"You mentioned earlier about the Camino Star Empire," the journalist said. "If they inhabit the Northern Region, how close are they to our northern border and what are your plans involving them? Also, do we have any information involving them in any way?"

"As far as information as to who they are, what their military capabilities are, or how close they are to our northern border, we do not have answers to any of these questions. As for our course of action, we intended to strengthen our northern forces slightly over the next week or so. The Empire is obviously not an ally to the Kingdom based on historical events and from what we can tell they also want nothing to do with the State either. Our concern with the Empire is that their experience with the Kingdom left a bad impression for them involving other spacefaring nations to where they cannot trust another nation or race outside of their own. Our initial actions involving the Empire are to leave them alone for now but to eventually attempt to contact them once things have settled with our relations with the State and the Kingdom."

"What about the other borders or the rest of the star cluster?" the same journalist asked. "In light of the situation, would the Republic military be sending expeditions to the rest of the cluster to search out other sentient lifeforms or nations?"

*“My staff and I have not discussed that topic as of yet. Like I stated, we will look at both the Empire situation and then see about the other regions of the cluster after we have the situation with both the Kingdom and the State under control.”*

One reporter on Drew’s left, a woman from NBS News raised their hand. Drew pointed at her.

*“Supreme Chancellor,”* the reporter said, *“is there any possibility that there could be hostilities involving either of these races or both?”*

Sheryl leaned forward in her chair. This reporter asked a good question and she could tell Drew knew that as well. Drew looked down at his tablet and looked back up at the crowd who was eagerly awaiting his response.

*“I was hoping this question would not be brought up,”* Drew said. *“Based on commentary from the Vitams, there is a possibility of hostilities involving the Kingdom and our Republic. According to the Vitams, the deity of whom the Lykans worship stated that everything of the star cluster would be theirs to rule. As everyone in the Republic is aware, Humans are not originally from this star cluster. The Vitams were surprised upon reading a brief history we provided for them that our ancestors came from another galaxy but they understood that their migration to the star cluster was accidental rather than intentional and thus they view us as displaced from our ancient home world as they are from theirs. The State has so far been very open to being friends with the Republic. The Vitams though fear that because of our history the Lykans will view our kind as, and I quote, a ‘pestilence’ in the star cluster and that our claims to our existing systems will be void in the name of their deity. So far the Lykans have not been given our history because they want us to give it to their representative when they arrive on the Renaldo. Despite some objections from my staff, I do not want to lie to the Lykan representative about our history and so we will give them the truth. It will be up to our ambassadors from that point forward to try to convince the Lykans that we have as much right to be in the star cluster despite how we got here.”*

A look of worry started to show over the crowd and for good reason. The last thing anyone wants to be involved in is a war. Ever since Humanity came to the star cluster, there has not been a war in the history of the Republic despite the size of the military. However, the government knew not to be a fool without a military and it was for this exact reason why a military was created to begin with. However, despite the harsh training of some of the personnel, the soldiers and officers have started to become complacent during peacetime. Being told that there was the possibility of hostilities with another nation obviously would knock reality into everyone that they may lose some of those people should war erupt between the Republic and the Kingdom.

Sheryl may not have been in the military, but even she was a bit worried. She had friends in the military aside from Trent and if they get involved in a war, she may not see them ever again. She knew quite well that this fear is present for every single person in the Republic who either has family or friends in the military. She’s hoping that the Lykans would not fight the Republic but with the Supreme Chancellor saying earlier about the Lykans being told to claim the star cluster in the name of their deity would make her think otherwise. That claim would be the Lykans’ ultimate goal for the cluster and would lead them into war with not only the State currently, but the Republic and the Empire as well as any other race in the cluster. The way things were looking, war was inevitable and Sheryl doubted she was the only one in the entire

Republic who thought so.

Drew at that point suddenly looked down at the tablet. It looked like he got some sort of message.

*“I’m afraid that is all of the questions I can answer for now,” he said. “I just got word from the Renaldo that the Lykan representative has just appeared in Tranquillus.”*

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*Bridge, R.N.S. Renaldo, Paladin-Class Battleship  
Planet Tranquillus VIII Orbit, Tranquillus System  
8:15pm, May 11, 5433 A.D.*

“Looks like they finally arrived.”

Trent had just sent the message to the Supreme Chancellor prior to walking onto the bridge. He was just informed by Chrystal at the tactical station that a shuttle of Lykan construction had just appeared via a jump drive near the Lykan fleet. The shuttle started moving towards the *Renaldo*.

“Do we have the audio translations completed?” Trent asked.

“We just finished a few moments ago,” Ro said from the communications station. “We can now communicate with both fleets verbally.”

“Good. Inform the Lykan shuttle to make for our ship’s left side front hangar bay. That will be Bay One. Let the Vitams know that we are ready to receive them in Bay Three on the opposite side.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Captain Shannon,” Trent said as he turned to face her, “have we found out their atmospheric needs as well as any diseases that we are not immune to?”

“Surprisingly enough,” Shannon said, “all races in both nations breathe the same kind of atmosphere as our own so there will be no need to change the atmosphere. The thing that surprises me the most is that they have the same diseases we do so there is no additional immunization involved.”

Trent raised an eyebrow.

“How is that possible?” Trent asked. “Diseases from species we have never met or on other worlds should always have at least one thing that we have never encountered before. Historically that has been the case during the Expansion Era.”

“I’m aware of that, sir, but the fact is they have gone through the same diseases we have and the same immunizations as well.”

This did not make any sense to Trent. Something was not right here. How can species who they have never met have the same diseases and cures as Humans? More to the point, how can species that don’t have the same DNA as Humans affect the aliens in the same the same way? This is something biologists and scientists will have to uncover later. For now, it was probably just a blessing that they did not have to worry about such things when the representatives come on board. They had more important things to worry about.

“Very well,” Trent said. “Do we have the translator headsets ready for our use?”

“Yes, sir. We handed a few to the SAGATs that will be escorting the representatives to the conference room. We have additional headsets in the conference room for you and the ambassadors.”

“Very good. I’ll head down there right now. You have the bridge.”

“Yes, sir.”

Trent headed for the elevator at the back of the bridge. The elevator arrived a few moments after Trent hit the call button. Trent stepped in once the doors opened and closed behind him.

“Conference room,” Trent said.

The elevator gave an acknowledgement chirp before it started to move. This gave time for Trent to think on his own. He had heard that the Supreme Chancellor gave his address to the nation a moment ago and someone asked him the one difficult question that he did not want to answer concerning hostilities. Trent hoped that there won’t be any but the fact that the Lykans did not want the Republic history until their representative arrived on the ship is making everyone nervous as they were afraid of what might happen on they have it. It is a feeling that no one wants to have lingering for too long.

The elevator soon stopped on the level where the conference room was and the doors opened. The sight of several SAGATs in full armor lining the hallways between the elevator, the conference room, and the adjacent hallways was new to him but he did request Blair to line them up as such after all.

The SAGATs closest to the elevator noticed Trent and stiffened their posture. Trent walked out of the elevator and headed straight for the conference room. Once he reached the doors, he pressed the button on the side opening the doors. The conference room was rather large consisting of a rectangular table with seven chairs lining each of the long sides and a single chair at each end. Large screens were built into the walls behind the chairs in case they needed to display important facts or show the outside scenery. A holographic screen generator was mounted in the middle of the table for other important purposes. There were already four SAGATs in the room, one at each corner.

Trent saw Autumn, Wade, and Tora sitting on the side to his left looking over a few documents on tablets, though Tora looked like she was checking readings on the small drone she sent out. Trent came up on the right side of the table to one of the consoles and pressed a couple of buttons. Both screens on the walls displayed the outside of the ship on the port and starboard sides which showed the rest of the Eleventh Fleet.

The three people on the other side of the table looked up when they noticed the change in lighting in the room from the view outside.

“Interesting change of scenery,” Tora said.

“I figured it might settle some nerves,” Trent said. “Hopefully this won’t be an issue with either representative. Anything from the drone yet?”

“It has managed to get past the shields of the closest destroyer. Looks like they were in lower-power mode. It has also successfully linked to the ship’s computer system, but the system is showing a lot of oddities.”

“What do you mean?”

“It’s almost like the system is alive. The flow of information is not constant, but it shows signs it is conscious like artificial intelligence. I’m having the probe look and do a scan of the ship to determine where the computer core is and how it was constructed. This is starting to fascinate me.”

“So I take it you are not participating in the talks?”

“I’m here primarily to observe and record which reminds me.”

Tora pointed at a device on Trent’s side of the table. It was an earpiece for the right ear.

“You may want to put that on,” Tora continued. “Remember, you’re here because you are the flag officer of the fleet but the commander of Vitam fleet will also be here to represent their government. It would put him at ease to see another military officer at these talks.”

“Very well,” Trent said.

He took his seat across from the trio and put on the earpiece, making sure it was activated. He pulled up video feeds from both hangar bays the representatives were to land in, the area around the battleship, and the corridors leading up to the conference room. The Lykan shuttle began to fly into Bay One on the port side as the Vitam shuttle finally launched from the State battleship heading for Bay Three. The Lykan shuttle landed in the bay and some SAGATs marched into the bay in two columns to show the direction the representative would go once he disembarked. A ramp dropped and extended from the bottom of the shuttle. Trent saw a figure starting to come down the ramp and got a good view of what was disembarking. He saw a Lykan male with dark brown fur dressed in rather regal attire, the kind that reminded him of advisors and top officials of royalty. Most of his clothes were red with silver accents and the only visible part of his anatomy was from his neck up. He was quite tall looking to be seven and a half feet tall. His shoes were only visible for a short time with each step under the long garb. Trent noticed Colonel Blair marching between the two columns of SAGATs toward the end. The Lykan saw Blair and walked over to him. Blair had one of the earpieces and Trent noticed the Lykan was already wearing something similar in one of his ears. Blair said a few things and the Lykan said something in return, none of which could be heard as it was just a video feed with no audio. Blair turned and started to head for the door of the hangar bay with the Lykan following him.

Trent looked over at the video feed for Bay Three and saw the State shuttle land in the bay. By contrast the State shuttle was very aerodynamic and was painted in shades of dark gray with navy accents to make it a bit harder to see. Trent could tell someone did their homework with the design. There were already two columns of SAGATs in the bay with Lieutenant Colonel Benja at the end waiting for Vice Admiral Bridneo Bur’Frounter who was supposed to be on board to disembark. Part of the panels on the starboard side of the shuttle opened up like a clamshell with the bottom part having steps that almost came down to the ground. The door behind them slid open and revealed the Vitam vice admiral. Unlike the Lykan that appeared in Bay One, the Vitam’s attire was very militaristic and rigid with quite a few decorations on a light gray suit with gold trim. He was also about the same height as a human standing at about just over six feet tall. His head, hands, and tail were the only parts of his anatomy that were not concealed by the uniform. His fur was auburn with the tip of his tail, ears, and snout being white. He stepped down from the shuttle and approached Benja. Both Benja and Bridneo had earpieces on and exchanged a few words. Benja saluted and said a few things. Bridneo put his right hand into a fist and put the side of his fist over his chest and said a few words as well. Trent could only

assume they were talking about how they salute in their culture. Benja then walked towards the doors with Bridneo right behind them.

“They are on their way,” Trent said. “The Lykan representative will be here first.”

“I noticed,” Tora said. “I’ve also been following their movements. The camera drones from that reporter on board is also following their movements and she’s broadcasting live right now.”

“I thought you were focusing on the drone that is accessing that Lykan destroyer?”

“It’s taking a moment for it to compile the information it’s finding from the scans. We won’t have the results for at least ten or so minutes.”

“Why is it taking that long?”

“It’s a small drone with limited processing. I would normally have it store the information and bring it back to process on a more powerful machine but since I am here I can’t step away to process the information. Therefore it is processing the information on its own using its hardware which is slower and will take longer.”

“I see.”

The door to Trent’s left opened and Blair along with the Lykan representative stood there. Trent and the rest of the group stood up from their chairs out of respect.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” Blair said, “may I introduce to you Representative Forneido Grandid Viranic, advisor to King Ronimier the Fourth, monarchy of the Royal Lykan Kingdom.”

Trent was wondering how Blair remembered the names he just said. Regardless, at least now they know the names of both the representative and their king. Forneido closed his eyes and gave a slight bow. Out of respect, Trent and the others also bowed slightly. Blair moved out of the way and stood just inside the door to the right. Forneido walked in towards the chair but stopped for a moment to survey the room and those in it.

“Greetings, Representative Forneido,” Autumn said. “I am Ambassador Autumn. Next to me is Ambassador Wade and our aide, Tora.”

Trent tried not to laugh at hearing Autumn call Tora their “aide.”

“Across the table,” Autumn continued, “is Vice Admiral Trent, flag officer of the battleship *Renaldo* and fleet commander of the Eleventh Fleet of the Novus Initium Republic Navy.”

Forneido said a few things and their translators in their ears translated what he said.

“It is good to meet you all,” he said through the translators. “I was surprised to hear from our fleet commander that our war with the so-called State managed to spill into the territories of your Republic. I’m here on behalf of His Majesty to explain our position and intentions with you and your people.”

Trent was not happy to hear the words “so-called” again. This proves that the position of the Kingdom is that they do not recognize the State or its sovereignty. So far this was not helping the position or the image of the Kingdom.

Before anyone could sit down, the other door opened to reveal Lieutenant Colonel Benja and Vice Admiral Bridneo Bur’Frounter. Forneido looked across the table at the door and narrowed his eyes with a slight scowl on his face. Benja walked in the door and stepped to the right.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” Benja said, “I would like to introduce Vice Admiral Bridneo Bur’Frounter of the United Vitam State battleship *Ve’Nir*. He is here to represent the State.”

“Greetings,” Wade said. “I am Ambassador Wade. With me are Ambassador Autumn and our aide Tora. Across the table is Vice Admiral Trent of the *Renaldo*, flag officer and fleet commander of the Novus Initium Republic Navy’s Eleventh Fleet.”

“Greetings to you all,” Bridneo said through the translator as he walked in. “It is good to finally meet you all. It is also good to see this ship’s flag officer face-to-face.”

“It is a pleasure to meet you as well,” Trent said.

Bridneo looked over at Forneido and narrowed his eyes. Trent looked between the two.

“Vice Admiral Bridneo,” Trent said. “This is Representative Forneido of the Royal Lykan Kingdom. He is here on behalf of his King.”

“I’m familiar with Representative Forneido,” Bridneo said. “I’m a bit surprised that the king would send his head advisor here for such talks.”

“He was concerned about the nonsense you and your kind would be spouting,” Forneido said. “We received the history you provided the Republic. I’m here to give our side of the ‘story’ you provided them.”

“That ‘story’ as you call it is fact!”

“Gentlemen,” Trent said. “Please remember that you two are representatives of your nations here. Please act in a more dignified manner.”

The two aliens looked at Trent, then each other, and then back at Trent.

“My apologies,” Bridneo said. “You are right.”

“I must apologize as well,” Forneido said. “I let my emotions get the better of me. All the two of us can provide is our version of the ‘truth’ that we have. It will be up to you what your interpretation will be. Before we begin, I must ask if you can provide me with a brief history of your race. I know you tried to send it through our fleet but they were under strict orders not to receive them so that they would not be altered or modified.”

“Why would they be altered?” Trent asked.

“The military in the past has tried to keep our minds at ease among the Royal Family and the advisors. They like to modify information for that reason. This way, I get it without any modification on their part.”

“I understand,” Trent said as he took his seat.

Everyone else sat down. Trent pulled up the brief history of the Republic that they had prepared, including the part about them originally coming from another galaxy. Trent knew that he could change it if he wanted to right now but the fact that the State knew the truth already would not look good right now. He looked over at Autumn, Wade, and Tora who knew what he was thinking about. Trent sent over the unmodified version to the terminal in front of Forneido. It was probably better for the Lykans to know the truth rather than lie about it.

As the terminal in front of Forneido confirmed receiving the history, Forneido looked at the screen which translated it into his language. Trent figured to ask a couple of questions before things start going bad.

“If I may ask before you read that,” Trent said, “we provided your forces with the history we were provided by the State. Have you had a chance to read it?”

Forneido looked over at Trent.

“I was given that and read that on the way here,” he said. “It does need some clarification, though.”

“Clarification?” Bridneo said. “What possible clarification could there possibly be?”

“I won’t deny the fact that we as a nation use slavery, but this is used as a means of enlightenment.”

Bridneo scoffed at what Forneido just said. Trent raised an eyebrow.

“What do you mean by enlightenment?” Trent asked.

“When we conquer a race, we have them work off the sins of their disobedience to our god until the time they have come to accept our faith and their place in the Kingdom.”

“And their place is what if I may ask?”

“To serve the Kingdom, the Lykans, and our god.”

That statement alone began to worry Trent. If what Forneido said was true and every Lykan believes this, then would any enslaved race be free? Trent figured it was time to ask one rather important question.

“If that is true,” Trent said, “then I have one question that I want you to answer honestly. Has any race you have enslaved met that criteria and became free?”

Forneido straighten his posture and looked over at Bridneo. Bridneo gave a small smirk knowing that Forneido was put on the spot.

“At this time,” Forneido said, “there have been none. The races have been reluctant to accept the true faith of our kind and secretly kept worshipping their false gods and goddesses. That is why they have not been released. We still consider the races within the so-called State to be armed slaves that have followed some unholy creed to fight against us and our god by demons. They are still slaves and the property of the Kingdom. Once we have removed those who have chosen to fight against our god, we will reclaim those who are lost and work to cleanse them of their unholy religions once and for all like what we did to those who remained within the Kingdom.”

Those words began to worry Trent, but not as much as he could see from Bridneo who went from having a smirk to a look of concern on his face.

“What do you mean by that?” Bridneo asked. “What have you done to those who were left?!”

“I am not at liberty to discuss our methods in that regards as it is an internal matter. I am here to discuss possible relations with the Republic, not our methods of how we handle you and your kind with you directly.”

Trent could see that Bridneo was fuming, but he then took a deep breath and regained his composure.

“You have a point,” Bridneo said. “We are both here for the same thing: to establish relations with the Novus Initium Republic. I have read the brief history we were given by them and I find their history intriguing. I have submitted it to my superiors for them to look it over as well.”

“So the long lost slaves are trying to look for allies to further their desertion of their duties to the Kingdom, huh?” Forneido asked.

“Separation is the word I use in that regards.”

“However you want to spin it is your concern, not mine. However, what makes you think that they will side with you and not with a legitimate government like the Kingdom? Not to insult the current company here, but do you really think this Republic has the means to help you and your kind in your desertion?”

“Whether they wish to ally with us or not is their choice, but I will say that I have a feeling they won’t ally with the Kingdom.”

“And what makes you say that?”

“Because based on the history of the Republic, you all would not allow it.”

Forneido was now curious by Bridneo’s words. He started reading the history he was presented and Trent could tell Forneido was reading every word carefully. Trent looked over at Wade, Autumn, and Tora who were looking a bit nervous and for good reason. They’re about to have to defend the Republic’s position and place in the star cluster against the Kingdom. Trent looked at Bridneo who realized he put them on the spot.

“I must apologize to you and your ambassadors, vice admiral,” Bridneo said. “I let my feelings get the better of me and put you on the spot.”

Trent took a deep breath.

“At least you recognized the possibility of whether or not we will be allies,” Trent said. “That outburst though might cause you some trouble later on.”

“I am aware of that.”

“WHAT IN THE NAME OF MY GOD IS THIS?!” Forneido shouted, standing up in disbelief as he stared at the words on the console.

Trent could tell he was either rereading that portion or continuing to read on from that point. Whichever he was doing, Trent knew that he read about how Humans had come to the star cluster. Forneido continued to read till the end before looking at everyone in the room. He then looked at Bridneo.

“You knew about this already, didn’t you?!” Forneido said. “You knew that these...invaders...were not originally from the star cluster!”

“Yes, he did,” Trent said. “He told us your feelings towards this matter and we had a choice to make. We had to choose whether we told you the truth and risk hostilities between the Kingdom and the Republic or lie to you showing that we are not trustworthy and making us out to be fools if the State decided to reveal the truth instead.”

Forneido looked at Trent with narrowed eyes.

“At least you chose to be honest,” Forneido said. “I cannot fault you or your kind for that. However, the fact that your kind invaded our cluster to begin with is unacceptable!”

“In case you did not notice, Representative,” Autumn said, “the history we gave you shows that we arrived here by accident, not by choice. Our ancestors looked for ways to return home without success. As such, we had to learn to adapt to living here in the Novus Initium star cluster.”

“You gave our cluster a name?!”

“Yes, it means ‘new beginning.’ It was a fresh start for our kind. We have been in the cluster for over three thousand years and started to explore the cluster over a thousand years ago. All of us on board this ship as well as over five trillion people across hundreds of systems were

born and raised in this cluster. Our ancestors may not have been part of the star cluster when they got here, but the current generations of people in the Republic are.”

If Forneido had no hair on his face, one could tell that he was looking a bit pale.

“There are over five trillion of you Humans?!” he said. “Your infestation has spread that far?!”

“I was not aware there were that many of you,” Bridneo said. “You practically outnumber the population of the Kingdom and the State three-to-one. Considering though that you all have been in space nearly twice as long as we have, that would make some sense.”

“Regardless of our numbers,” Wade said, “the fact is that viewing us as some sort of ‘infestation’ is rather rude and demeaning, Representative Forneido. What was it you were trying to do here? I doubt you came all this way just to insult us and the Republic.”

“The intent for my visit,” Forneido said, “was to get information about your Republic and its capabilities. Your kind is the second interstellar race we have come across and after what happened against the Empire we did not want to risk a possible repeat of history. However, now that I know more about your kind and where they came from, it is our duty to wipe your kind from the cluster in the name of our god.”

“Where do you get off saying something like that?” Wade said as he stood up in disgust. “What right do you all have to label a race in such a manner as an ‘infestation’ that needs to be removed from the cluster?”

“It was a decree from our god. He said that we are to rule over the star cluster in his name. This meant anyone and everything that was from the star cluster itself. It was determined that should we come across a race who did not originate from the cluster to be an infection to the cluster that we were given dominion over. We considered the Empire to be a possible hurdle as well as our conflict with our long-lost slaves. Eventually both would fall to the ways of our might fueled by the will of our god. You and your ‘Republic’ though don’t fall in line with the will of our god. Therefore, it is our righteous duty to wipe your kind from the star cluster. Your kind may have come to the cluster by accident and I can feel sympathetic that your ancestors did not intend to come here. That is why we will reunite you with those you all left behind in death.”

“Are you seriously declaring war on the Republic, Representative?!” Autumn said angrily.

“No, Ambassador. I am declaring your extermination.”

“I suggest you rethink that proposal,” Tora said as she looked up from her console. “The State may have allies after we tell them what you have done to their kind.”

Everyone suddenly looked in Tora’s direction with curious looks on their face.

“What did you find?” Trent asked.

“Representative Forneido,” Tora continued, “is there a particular reason you haven’t said what has happened to those races that were left behind during the Slave Revolt?”

“I felt as though there was no reason to explain our methods to you or this rebellious slave in the room,” Forneido said. “What are you getting at?”

“We were told at one point that due to the sudden loss of slave labor, your Kingdom had to resort to the use of automation to make up for that loss. We had assumed that the crew requirements for your ships were reduced because of this.”

“Yes, that is right.”

“Tell me, how far did that automation go?”

Forneido was trying to hide it, but there was a look of fear starting to show on his face.

“Vice Admiral Bridneo,” Tora said as she turned to the State officer, “have your forces ever examined the wreckage of the ships you destroy?”

“Not after the first few times,” Bridneo said. “Every time we did a scan on a destroyer or cruiser, we did not detect any signs of live on board. We assumed that the ships were completely automated.”

“They are not, at least not entirely. The only reason you could not detect life afterwards was due to where they were located. They are located right next to the main reactor so when the ship’s reactor gets blown, they are killed along with the ship.”

“How do you know this?” Forneido asked.

“I have a small cloaked drone that has accessed the systems of one of your destroyers and is getting information on those ships. I’m willing to bet there is a reason you did not want the State to find out what you did to their people.”

“What have they been doing to them?” Bridneo asked.

“Stop!” Forneido yelled. “Do not tell them what you’ve discovered!”

“Or you’ll do what?” Tora asked. “You’re already threatening the Republic with extermination so why should I not tell them?”

“You don’t know what you will unleash if you tell them what we have done!”

“What are they doing to them?!” Bridneo asked, knowing now that the Lykan was hiding something. “What are they doing to my kind and the others?!”

“Vice Admiral Bridneo,” Tora said, “Representative Forneido stated earlier that they were cleansing the Vitams and the other races within the Kingdom of their unholy religions. Apparently they succeeded in a way we were not expecting. They are doing more than ‘cleansing’ your kind’s religion. They are going far beyond that. You see, there is only one occupant at least within the ship located near the core of the destroyers.”

“Why only one?”

“It is because that occupant is serving a particular purpose on board. The drone did a thorough scan of that section. It is located facing the bow from the reactor.”

“Facing the bow? But that’s where the computer core is located in the ship. Is the occupant responsible for managing and/or maintaining the computer core?”

“No, Vice Admiral Bridneo. That occupant has cybernetic implants at the base of their skull and is hooked into a life support system. We have also detected no brain activity aside from the functions of the ship, not even a stray thought. We also detected that they are connected by those implants directly into the ship’s system.”

“They are linked to the system with only ship functions as their only thoughts? Wait, you are not saying what I think you are saying, are you?”

“What I’m saying is that the occupant isn’t serving or servicing the computer. The occupant IS the computer!”

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