

***Warring Factions: The Novus Initium Saga***  
***Episode III: The Siege of the Light***



**PART 3**

*War Room, Republic Military Headquarters Station*  
*Planet Luminaire Orbit, Lumen System, Capital of Novus Initium Republic*  
*10:38am, September 2, 5433 A.D.*

“The Second Fleet has destroyed the ship with the viral agent.”

Mikey’s words brought some relief to the Joint Chiefs and to Drew. When they received word about the biological weapon from the *Templar*, they immediately ordered the Second Fleet the moment the enemy ships hit the warp disruption field to destroy the vessel with the viral payload first before targeting any other enemy vessel. The Second Fleet was attempting to destroy the remaining vessels before they could clear the field.

By now the First Fleet had reached the enemy star gate and activated a warp disruption field around the gate. The field would not stop further enemy ships coming through the gate but it will stop those that are arriving from instantly warping away towards Luminaire. The term for this type of strategy of waiting at a gate for an enemy force to come through to attack is called “gate camping” and, while deplorable when it comes to tactics, was necessary to prevent the Lykans from succeeding in their current Human extermination plans.

“What about the remaining enemy ships?” Drew asked. “While the Second Fleet has destroyed the ship with the viral agent, those are still enemy ships out there right now.”

“So far,” Mikey said, “the Second Fleet is focusing on the cruisers first. They are reporting that they have gone through their shields and are working on penetrating their hulls.”

“That means it could take a while.”

“The enemy fleet however seems to realize what is keeping them from warping away. They started firing on the warp disruption field generator but the battleship *Reynolds* has moved itself in front of the enemies’ fire. It appears to be acting as a shield to protect the generator.”

“While I would be concerned about that much firepower being directed at the *Reynolds*, if they are able to destroy the cruisers first, the ship can handle the firepower of so few destroyers. They just need to be destroyed before another fleet arrives.”

“We may be too late for that request. I’m getting a reading from the enemy star gate. It appears to be activating.”

“Be sure to let the First Fleet know their target is the unarmed ship first and foremost. That ship absolutely must not leave that disruption field.”

“Understood, sir.”

“What is taking the *Templar* so long to reach the gate that is sending these ships?”

“They should be there by now, sir.”

“I hope so. While we can handle small individual fleets like this, the First Fleet can only handle so many ships before they escape the field. The *Templar* needs to shut them down at the source before that happens.”

“We must believe in them, sir. They will get the job done. Here comes the second enemy fleet. I’m also getting word that the Second Fleet has destroyed one of the enemy cruisers and is already focusing on the second one.”

“Have the battleships and cruisers focus on the enemy cruisers. Have our destroyers focus on the enemy destroyers. Let’s try to take them out as fast as possible.”

“Understood. Issuing the orders now.”

“Come on, Trent. Don’t let us down.”

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*Bridge, Covert-Ops Stealth Warship Templar, Republic Stealth Warship #1  
Lumen Star Gate, Dellino System, Royal Lykan Kingdom, Eastern Region  
10:40am, September 2, 5433 A.D.*

“Dang it! Another fleet got through!”

Trent was not too thrilled to see that another Lykan fleet went through the gate not too long after the *Templar* arrived at its destination. This either means that the Republic fleets in Lumen have managed to stop the first fleet or the Lykans were sending another fleet to increase their chances of success. Of course, it could be both.

“I would suggest not worrying about the enemy fleet that went through,” Tora said. “We need to get the infiltration team on that gate without being detected.”

“You’re right,” Trent said. “Rei, get us close to the enemy star gate as you can.”

“Yes, sir!” Rei said. “ETA: thirty seconds.”

“Usatame, inform Colonel Blair that we are deploying him and his team as soon as we are in range of the star gate.”

“Understood, sir,” Usatame said.

“Tora, have you and Sheryl picked up any transmissions from the enemy fleet to their capital yet?”

“Not yet, sir,” Sheryl said. “That battleship has not sent or received any messages yet from outside the system except for those through the star gate that is connected to Lumen.”

“Most likely reports from the ships they had sent in so far and their progress. If we are

lucky, that battleship will report to their superiors for instructions if the invasion is not going well. Keep an ear out and hopefully that ship will transmit something soon.”

“We are within a kilometer of the target,” Rei said. “We are in position to launch the SAGATs.”

“Colonel Blair reports that they are ready for deployment,” Usatame said.

“Tell him he is cleared to launch,” Trent said. “Tell him it’s crucial they seize the gate.”

“Understood, sir.”

Trent looked at the screen which was focused on the eight remaining fleets the Lykans had in front of the star gate. They needed to make sure those ships were not able to go through the gate, especially the ships carrying the viral agent. Then he had a thought.

“Natalie,” Trent said, “I have a question for you.”

“What is it?” Natalie asked.

“As I am looking at the ships that are unarmed, would you say that they are in a straight line to each other in the respective fleets they are in?”

Natalie looked at the main screen as well as her tactical screens on her console for a moment.

“They appear to be so,” she said. “Why do you ask?”

“If we were to get behind them,” Trent said, “how likely would it be for the heavy railgun to shoot a round through all of them in one shot?”

“You want to gut eight destroyers in one shot? I’m not sure if that is even possible.”

“Why is that?”

“Even though the first round can go through a destroyer easily, the velocity of the round would start to diminish greatly. Even if there is enough velocity for it to go through a second ship, it would only impact the third and not likely go straight through it.”

“So, based on that assumption, it would take about roughly four rounds to do so but would that be at the maximum voltage for the heavy railgun?”

“What do you mean at the maximum voltage? I’ve been using the default settings on the weapon this entire time. Are you saying the power level can go higher than that?”

“When I designed the weapon, I realized that while we can use more power in the heavy railgun, even the cloak and ECM’s would not prevent enemy sensors from detecting a massive energy buildup of that nature. The default setting was determined to be powerful enough to fire the round at the desired speed while keeping the energy buildup under the limit that the cloak and ECM can hide it.”

“How high in the voltage can the railgun actually get?”

“It can go as high as just over twice the current default setting.”

“It can be more than double the amount?! At that setting, a single round should definitely go through that many ships!”

“However,” Tora said, “once we start to power up the gun to that level, the enemy ships will start to detect the power buildup. Even if we manage to fire the round before they disperse the fleet and destroy those eight ships, we will be detected and we will be outnumbered seventy-three to one.”

“Which is why I have an idea concerning that issue,” Trent said.

“And what would that idea be?”

“You may not like it, Tora, but it is the best idea I can come up with under the situation.”

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*Bridge, R.N.S. Grange, Paladin-Class Battleship  
Planet Poni IV Orbit, Poni System (Contested), Eastern Region  
10:45am, September 2, 5433 A.D.*

“They are attacking Lumen?!”

Nora could not believe what she was hearing. In the middle of a battle with Kingdom forces that engaged her forces again to push her fleet back, word from military headquarters came in about the situation in the Lumen System. Everyone on the bridge was stunned, the communications officer even more so since she was telling everyone about the invasion.

“I’ve got confirmation,” the communications officer said. “Enemy forces have appeared in the Lumen System via a mobile star gate and have been sending fleets from another star gate deep within Kingdom space!”

“How in the cluster did they manage to even get a star gate into our space, much less THAT deep without detection?” Nora asked.

“According to headquarters, the gate was using portions of Salire Purpura crystals to jump from Kingdom space to Lumen. It appears that its jumps placed it just outside the systems that it was close to. Most likely they were trying to avoid detection but may have underestimated the range of our sensors.”

“They used crystals to make that many jumps? Where could they have gotten that many crystal after we seized their mines? I didn’t think they had that many functional crystal mining operations left on their side of their defensive line.”

“Whatever means they used to get it there, they managed to do it,” Dennise said. “The fact is that the Kingdom’s invasion into our space either means that they are either desperate or trying to get our forces to withdraw from the frontlines. What does headquarters want us to do?”

“They want us to hold our position,” the communications officer said. “Right now, the enemy is only launching destroyers and cruisers in waves of ten. The First Fleet is on site at the enemy star gate to prevent them from progressing any further towards any of the planets.”

“The Lykans are only deploying in destroyers and cruisers?” Nora asked. “They haven’t deployed any battleships to Lumen?”

“No, ma’am, but according to headquarters, the enemy forces are attempting to deploy unarmed destroyers that are loaded with a viral agent designed to exterminate Humans only against Luminaire!”

“They are doing WHAT?!”

“The Lykans have developed a biological weapon designed to dissolve Human DNA at the molecular level. If even one ship gets through to Luminaire’s atmosphere, the whole planet could get infected.”

“I can only hope the First Fleet can stop them before they attempt to warp away.”

“They are saying that the First and Second Fleets have deployed warp field disruptors on site to prevent them from warping away immediately.”

“Warp field disruptors? This is the first time I’ve heard of them.”

“Only the first three Main Fleets have them. They are looking at deploying them to the frontlines after sufficient numbers of them have been made.”

“Wait one minute, though,” Dennise said. “How is it that headquarters knew about the viral agent on those ships?”

“You have a point,” Nora said. “If the ship with the viral agent was destroyed, the virus would have been destroyed or burned up in the explosion. How DID they know about the viral

agent?”

“Do you want me to inquire about it?” the communications officer asked.

“Please do so. I want to know how they know about the viral agent.”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“This seems rather odd, doesn’t it?” Dennise asked.

“You mean about how headquarters knew about the viral agent?” Nora asked.

“Yes. I am beginning to think they really did deploy a covert ops unit within Kingdom space. That is the only reason I can think of to how we got that information.”

“So regardless of what headquarters may say, they may be covering up the fact that such a team exists behind enemy lines.”

“You and I did talk about earlier how we were able to get this far into Kingdom space even though enemy forces locked the gates. It seems we do have allies in Kingdom space but are they going to do anything about the enemy on the other side of that gate?”

“I hope they do so and soon. I do not doubt the First Fleet can’t handle the ships that have come through so far, but I would feel a lot better if no more enemy ships came through that gate. Right now, we have our own fight in front of us and we need to push these guys back as well.”

“Understood, ma’am.”

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*Bridge, R.K.S. Gorulia, Thrasher-Class Battleship  
Lumen Star Gate, Dellino System, Royal Lykan Kingdom, Eastern Region  
10:47am, September 2, 5433 A.D.*

“They took out another one?!”

Head Scientist Jyinuuro was on board the *Gorulia*, the battleship in charge of the fleet in the Dellino System that was being sent to the Lumen System to deliver their viral payloads. The two fleets that had been sent already both reported back saying that the ships with the payloads were destroyed first after being stopped by some sort of warp drive inhibitor field. One of those fields was now on top of the mobile jump gate at the opposite end preventing any ship from leaving the field at warp speed the moment they arrive.

Jyinuuro was starting to get worried. Somehow, the Republic forces were alerted to the presence of the gate but he did not know how. The warp field inhibitors that the Republic was using were also new or unknown when planning this assault. He needed to contact Head Advisor Forneido to see what they should do concerning this matter, though he hated to be the bearer of bad news in this situation.

“Communications,” he said, “get me in touch with Head Advisor Forneido’s office at once.”

“Yes, sir,” the communications officer said. “Contacting him now.”

After a minute or so, a communications window appeared on the main screen at the front of the bridge. Forneido appeared on the screen, though the expression on his face made it look like he was under a great deal of stress. This came as no surprise to Jyinuuro due to the importance of this mission but he knew this report might send him over the edge. Jyinuuro was also concerned for his life as he knew what Forneido would do to him over how this mission was turning out.

“Report, Jyinuuro,” Forneido said. “How goes the project?”

“Sir,” Jyinuuro said, “we have a problem.”

Forneido's expression turned to anger and Jyinuro knew to expect this reaction.

*"What kind of a problem are you talking about?"* Forneido said.

"The enemy forces in the Lumen System were already on alert and ready for the mobile jump gate when it appeared in their capital system."

*"I thought the route to their capital would put the jump gate out of the sensor range of any Republic-controlled star system?"*

"It would seem that their sensor range is further than we were led to believe."

*"So, the element of surprise was lost from the start."*

"There is more. The Republic appears to have deployed some sort of warp disruption field. They deployed one on route from the gate to their capital and trapped the first fleet we sent while the second one was deployed on top of the mobile gate. Their Second Fleet has already engaged the first fleet we sent while their First Fleet is at the gate engaging the second fleet we sent."

*"Are you telling me that NONE of our ships can reach their capital world upon jumping there?!"*

"Neither fleet has been able to clear the field yet as it seems to expand quite a distance. I had ordered the fleets to target the generators creating the fields at each location but their battleships are acting as shields for the incoming fire. They have yet to destroy the generators."

Forneido looked like he was frustrated upon hearing the news.

*"What about the ships carrying the virus?"*

"That is the oddest part. Both enemy fleets targeted those ships first."

*"They were targeted first?"* Forneido said in shock.

"Yes, they were. It's as if they knew what those ships were carrying."

Forneido began to ponder this news. It did not take him long to figure it out.

*"There is only one explanation for this,"* Forneido said. *"What I am about to tell you is only speculation but it happens to fit the facts as to what has been happening lately."*

"What do you mean?"

*"I've speculated that the reason why enemy forces had been easily able to access our space and the recent destruction of installations deep in our territory is that the Republic, with or without the assistance of the State and/or the Empire, has managed to develop a stealth vessel capable of hiding from our sensors and has a sustainable warp drive system that allows it to bypass our jump gates and defenses."*

"A stealth vessel capable of entering our space without the need of a jump gate or jump drive? Is there proof behind this?"

*"Nothing concrete, only that there is no other explanation as to how the enemy managed to access our end of locked-down gates and the destruction of stations including the recently destroyed station over Vita three days ago."*

"Wait, the station over Vita and other key slave worlds were destroyed?"

*"Yes, they were."*

"Did you ever read my reports on those stations a few years ago?"

*"I remember you stating some sort of experiment involving them but I don't recall what the specifics of them are, but right now we have more important matters to attend to than that."*

Jyinuro knew he needed to say something about those stations and the implications of their losses would bring but now was not the time to bring it up during the current operation.

*"The only way,"* Forneido continued, *"the Republic could know to take out the ships with the viral agent is if they..."*

Forneido stopped in midsentence when whatever thought he had caused him to have a shocked expression on his face.

*“...if they were either on the planet where the research facility is or they managed to scan the fleet! They are in the Dellino System!”*

“You’re saying an enemy ship is here? We haven’t detected anything.”

*“What part of ‘stealth’ do you not understand?! Contact the jump gate controllers and the research lab! Put everything on lockdown!”*

“What about the project? We still have eight fleets ready for deployment.”

*“You also have the Republic’s two largest fleets ready to gun them down the moment they go through! The project is a failure! If you can find and destroy the trespassing vessel, then I will reconsider your termination! Is that clear?!”*

“Yes, sir.”

With that, the transmission with Forneido disconnected. Jyinuro began to get concerned that now his life depended on the finding of an invisible enemy. He did not know if Forneido had lost his mind or if he was serious. At this point, it may be both. While he was still concerned about those stations being lost that Forneido had mentioned earlier, now was not the time to ponder the results of that matter.

“Contact the jump gate controllers and the research lab on Dellino III,” Jyinuro said. “We are putting the jump gate and the facility on lockdown.”

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*Bridge, Covert-Ops Stealth Warship Templar, Republic Stealth Warship #1  
Lumen Star Gate, Dellino System, Royal Lykan Kingdom, Eastern Region  
10:52am, September 2, 5433 A.D.*

“Did you get it?”

Trent was on the edge of his seat in anticipation. Sheryl had detected a transmission from the enemy battleship and attempted to trace the signal once it showed it was directed out of the system. Everyone on the bridge appeared to have held their breath waiting on her results.

“I’ve got good news,” Sheryl finally said. “We have the location of the Lykans’ home system of Heronia.”

“Are you certain?” Tora asked. “The last thing we need is to go off on a chase that would lead us away from our objective.”

“I’m certain. The transmission was a communication between someone named Jyinuro who appears to be aboard the battleship and Advisor Forneido.”

“Forneido?!” Trent said. “That jerk is nearby?!”

“Based on what I can tell, he is two jumps away from here. I’m bringing up the local map now.”

A map of the local star systems appeared on the screen indicating where they were and roughly fifteen Light-years around. Two glowing lines soon appeared on the map. One connecting the Dellino System pointed southeast towards a system called Ciscio. From there, it pointed east towards a star just beyond the edge of the star cluster. This star system was quickly marked as the Heronia System.

“From what I can see,” Trent said, “it does fit the description of it being on the edge of the star cluster and it is the eastern-most point based on the map.”

“While I remain skeptical,” Tora said, “I will admit that it does fit the location of where it

may be located. I will make its location known in our report after this mission is done.”

“Alright, then all we need is an update to the progress of both Blair and Benja before we can proceed.”

“Wait a moment, sir,” Sheryl said as her console indicated it had detected something.

“What is it?” Trent asked.

“I’m detecting two transmissions coming from the battleship. I’m attempting to see what the messages are saying and where they are going.”

Sheryl’s console was full of activity as it recorded and translated the messages. After several seconds, it displayed two messages and their destinations.

“Oh, no,” Sheryl said. “Sir, the messages are being sent to the jump gate and the research facility on Dellino III. They are being ordered on lockdown!”

“They’re what?!” Trent said in shock. “Are you certain of this?”

“Confirmed, sir. I sent it through the translator twice. Both locations are being ordered to lock themselves down.”

“This is not good. Neither Blair’s team nor Benja’s will be able to covertly escape if they are on lockdown.”

“Do they have a ‘Plan B’ in such situations?” Tora asked.

“Yes, they do,” Trent said with a slight laugh.

“Wait, why did you give a slight laugh?”

“I laughed because their ‘Plan B’ in such a situation is to escape in the least covert way possible. I know Blair’s team will not need to worry once they gain control of the star gate, but Benja’s team will be a different story.”

“Don’t tell me that they are going to make a ruckus at that lab, now are they?”

“Well the best way to get out when you can’t do it covertly is to through everyone who is in a panic and slip away in the confusion. At this point, they don’t have any other choice now do they?”

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*Hallway 3-D, 100 Meters from Lumen Star Gate Air Traffic Control Room  
Lumen Star Gate, Dellino System, Royal Lykan Kingdom, Eastern Region  
10:54am, September 2, 5433 A.D.*

“What was that?”

Blair looked around and whispered those words into his helmet’s microphone as sounds of what sounded like bulkheads closing rang throughout the halls. He and his team were already optically camouflaged to avoid detection so the sounds surprised him. The microphone he spoke into transmitted his voice into the headsets of the rest of his team who he could only see inside the visor of his helmet.

As he and his team looked around, a few bulkheads started to come down from the ceiling behind them rather quickly to close off the hallway. The whole team looked that way in surprise.

“Oh crud!” Blair said. “They are locking down! Head towards the control room now!”

Blair and his team suddenly ran the hundred meters as quickly as they could as the bulkheads continued to come down behind them. Just as they were about to reach the door to the control room, a bulkhead came down just in front of the door. Blair and his team had to stop as another came down just behind them. Blair could clearly see that they are trapped.

However, it did not take long for him to notice the bulkhead that covered the door did not cover the adjacent wall and that there was a control panel located there. However, the language was in Lykan and could not normally be read would it not be for their visors translating it for them. The panel was in red and part of it said "Locked" on the display. The question is whether it was the door or the panel that was locked.

"Sanders," Blair whispered through his microphone looking at one of his fellow cloaked SAGAT. "Check that panel. See if you can hack into that panel and unlock the door."

*"Yes, sir,"* Sanders voice said through Blair's helmet.

Sanders moved up to the panel and pulled out what looked like a small disk with a cable attached. The device was designed to interface with any system on contact and access its systems. The user would see the system via a graphic user interface in their visor and move their free hand like it was using a motion sensor to navigate through the system. This system that Sanders had was designed to hack into an enemy system in order to provide access for the SAGATs to complete their mission objectives, whether that was information gathering or access to secure facilities. Sometimes, it might be both of those. This equipment was essential to the *Templar's* mission and every team of SAGATs sent on such a mission had at least one person with that equipment. That means that Benja's team on Dellino III also had that equipment to assist them in their mission.

Once Sanders connected his device to the panel, it started to hack its way into the system without trying to set off any alarms.

*"This is going to take a moment,"* Sanders said. *"It appears the panel is locked for access. I'm trying to see if I can bypass the lock to gain access."*

"Don't take too long," Blair said. "We don't know if they are using that bio-weapon as an anti-personnel weapon in here and I don't know if our suits will filter out that stuff."

*"It should only take a minute. While this gate is rather new, their security system is still just like every other one I have seen but this is the first time I have had to bypass a locked panel like this."*

Blair looked at the other members of this six-man team. While all he can see are their silhouettes, they got down on one knee with their rifles in the ready. He trained this team personally as did Benja and his team. They needed to be cool and collective in situations like this and so far, they are doing just that.

*"I'm in,"* Sanders said. *"I'm first checking to see if they have that virus on board as an anti-personnel weapon. We don't want someone to trigger that the moment we enter."*

"Good call," Blair said.

*"We are in luck. Per their records, only the ships that are unarmed in those fleets right outside have them. They had just loaded the last ship just before they started this operation."*

"So, they might not have had enough time to make more. That's good news. What about the door?"

*"I'm still working on it. I'll have it open in a moment."*

"Team," Blair said as he turned towards his fellow SAGATs, "get ready. Since we are about to enter the control room, I want you all to make sure that your shots are not facing towards any windows. While we can survive in space for a little while, being sucked out into space does not allow us to gain control of this star gate. Aim low and make sure you do not miss."

*"Yes, sir,"* they said in unison through his helmet.

Blair readied himself and got his weapon ready as he waited for Sanders to get the door

open. After a couple of minutes of waiting, Sanders came in on Blair's helmet.

*"I have it," he said. "Opening the door in three seconds. Get ready."*

Everyone else including Blair pointed their rifles at the door. After three seconds, the panel made a beeping sound and the word "Locked" suddenly disappeared. The bulkhead quickly moved back up into the ceiling and the doors behind it slip open. There was a rather large control room inside with a couple of Lykans operating the control panel at the far end of the room. There were windows looking outside so Blair and his team knew they had to fire low. The two Lykans turned around to look at the door, drawing their guns from their holsters. They looked bewildered as they could clearly not see Blair and his team.

This gave Blair the chance to signal two on his team to each fire at one of the legs of the Lykans. The two SAGATs did so and quickly hit their mark. The Lykans were shocked by the sudden shots of tranquilizer darts at their legs but were knocked unconscious in less than two seconds from impact. They fell out of their seats and onto the floor.

"Secure the control room," Blair said.

His team quickly went in to make sure there was no one else in the control room as Sanders disconnected his equipment from the panel. Both Blair and Sanders waited in the hall just in case there was another surprise waiting inside.

*"We're clear,"* one of the SAGATs said.

Blair and Sanders walked into the room and Blair confirmed that there were no other Lykans in the room. He lowered his weapon.

"Sanders," Blair said, "do you think you can override the command codes to only respond to Republic personnel in the next few minutes?"

*"I'll accept it as a challenge. You want to make sure they don't send another fleet through while we are doing this, correct?"*

"Exactly. We've been in similar situations but this time we need to make sure no more of those ships will go through even if the battleship attempts to use the gate remotely."

*"Understood. I'll get right on it."*

"Good. Now I can only hope that Benja's team is doing just as well."

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*Lykan Research Facility Number Twenty-Two, Northern Continent of Fortiudia  
Planet Dellino III, Dellino System, Royal Lykan Kingdom, Eastern Region  
10:54am, September 2, 5433 A.D.*

"What in the world?"

Benja was dumbstruck when the alarms started to go off within the research facility. He knew no one in his team had done something to reveal their presence, so why were the alarms going off?

He and his team had only managed to investigate a few rooms within the facility, but those rooms and their data only suggest agricultural advancements so far. If there was anything involving cloning or the means to create a viral agent, it wasn't in this part of the building. They were able to get a layout of the building from one of the computers in one of the rooms but the information infiltration and extraction was clean without any trace that they had accessed the data. The alarms going off didn't make any sense.

The audio system soon activated throughout the building as a male Lykan said a few things in their native language. The earpiece in Benja's helmet soon translated.

*“Attention! By order of Head Director Jyinuuro, this facility is on lockdown. There is reason to believe that enemy forces from the Republic are covertly in this star system and maybe either close to or within the facility. Stay in your assigned research rooms until a security detail makes sure that there are no infiltrators on or near the premise. That is all.”*

“You’ve got to be kidding,” Benja whispered. “Something we did, Blair did, or the *Templar* itself made them aware of our presence. The question is what was it?”

*“Does it really matter?”* one of the SAGATs said through the earpiece. *“We still have a mission to complete. This only makes it harder but not impossible.”*

“Valid point. Alright, we cannot stay grouped together like this, though. They will find us more easily just by bumping into us if we stick together. Here is the plan. There are ten of us here, though two of you have the means to hack the system. You two remain here. The rest of us will split into two-person teams and spread out to look through the facility. You are not to engage the enemy unless necessary. Map out where you have been. If you find the cloning facility and/or the viral agent, let the rest of us know and we will send one or both of our hackers to that point. Carlos, you’re with me. Let’s go.”

In silent agreement, the group split into their teams and started to spread out through the compound in areas they had not been to yet. Carlos stuck to Benja’s right side as they turned left down a hallway with their onboard computer guidance systems in their helmets mapping their path as they go.

As they proceeded down the hallway, it was illuminated by not only the white lights in the ceiling but also red lights that indicated that the facility was on alert. They came across a couple of doors that were designed to slide open rather than swing in or out with terminals next to them. Both terminals showed that the doors were locked. However, there were small windows in the doors where someone could look inside. Carlos checked the door to the right and looked in the windows.

*“Looks like we found their break room,”* Carlos said through Benja’s helmet earpiece. *“There are a few Lykans inside.”*

“Are you sure that is the break room?” Benja asked. “It seems odd that it requires a terminal with some sort of access to get in.”

*“Maybe it is some sort of VIP room? There is a couple of tables, a fridge, and some of the staff appear to be eating their food despite the alert.”*

“Let me see.”

Carlos moved out of the way while Benja looked inside. Sure enough, Carlos was correct. A few Lykans were sitting and eating while conversing with each other. The room itself though looked rather fancy compared to the office breakrooms found in businesses in the Republic. Benja stepped back from the door for a moment to ponder.

“I wonder,” he said. “Is it possible that the reason the room needed a security system like the rest of the rooms is that there might be slaves that work here and that they don’t have access to rooms strictly meant for Lykans?”

*“That would make some sense, but what I don’t get is why those Lykans are not alarmed about the lockdown?”*

“I’m going to go on a hunch and bet that this gave them an excuse to not have to go back to work but rather view this as an extended break. Let’s move on and check this door opposite of the breakroom.”

Benja turned around and looked through the window of the door across from the breakroom they had just viewed. Benja smiled at what he saw. The room inside lacked overhead

lights but there were several monitors with a few Lykan soldiers or security personnel inside. This was apparently the security room for the entire facility.

“Jackpot,” Benja said. “This is their security room.”

“Are you serious?” Carlos asked. “*Directly across from the breakroom? I thought this would be in a more secure location?*”

“Most likely it was placed here so that they don’t have to go very far should they have to report back to work if needed. In other words, they are not too far if they need to respond to an emergency.”

“*Sounds like laziness to me. What can you see, sir?*”

“Inside the room are four Lykan guards wearing body armor and packing a sidearm. They are all sitting down at their stations looking at video feeds from practically every room in the facility.”

“*That makes four targets we have to disable. You said they were looking at feeds across the compound. Can you see if any of those feeds show our targets?*”

“That is what I am checking right now, but they have so many monitors that it is hard to figure out what is what. Also, it doesn’t help me when I don’t have a map.”

“*Well they have to have one in there to know where to go when needed, right?*”

“You have a point. Look through the window for yourself while I contact the rest of the team. I need one of the hackers here to help open this door.”

“*Yes, sir.*”

Benja moved towards his right while Carlos looked into the room to survey what they were going to deal with inside.

“Team, this is Benja,” he said as he transmitted through an encrypted channel. “I want everyone to stay where they are. Carlos and I have managed to find their security room. We can use that to download a map of the facility to help find our targets as well as remove the lockdown, but I need one of the hackers. Anthony, I want you to come to our location. I’m transmitting our position to you now. Hiiro, stay where you are for now until we get a map of this place. Somehow, I don’t think everything can be unlocked here and we may need you to hack into such areas. Understood?”

“*Yes, sir,*” everyone said in unison over the earpiece.

“*I’m on my way to your position,*” Anthony said.

“*Staying put for now,*” Hiiro said.

“*Something seems off,*” Carlos said.

“What is it?” Benja asked.

“*I’m looking at the four Lykans in the room but none of them seem to indicate to me that they are in charge.*”

“Are you sure?”

“*None of the uniforms appear to show a higher rank than the others. Either they are not in the room or they cannot be seen from this angle.*”

“That isn’t good. The moment we open the door, those four will turn around to see who or what opened it. We can disable them with the tranquilizer darts but if there is a fifth one and they see where the shots came from, they could either attack us or raise the alarm to confirm intruders in the facility.”

“*I recommend that once we get the door open, I will check our left flank to make sure no one is there.*”

“I will check the right, then. Once we confirm no one else is in the room, we will

neutralize the four guards quickly.”

*“Understood, sir.”*

*“There you two are,”* Anthony said as he came around the corner. *“So, is this it?”*

“Yes, Anthony. I need you to get to work. However, I need you to see if there is any way to find out if there is more than just the four guards in there.”

*“You think there is a fifth one out of view of the window?”*

“Exactly and we need to make sure there are no such surprises.”

*“With the system on lockdown the way it is, I don’t know if I can get such access to the system short of just the local terminal here or if the two are connected at all.”*

Anthony got the disk out of his suit and attached it to the terminal. He soon began to try and hack into the system to unlock and open the door.

*“This is going to take a moment. Hopefully, if there is a fifth guard, he is inside the room and not outside. If he tries to come up while the three of us are here, he could bump into us. Worst case is if he sees something wrong with the terminal and knows it is being accessed even if he cannot see us.”*

“You cannot do a quick disconnect in such an event?”

*“If I did so without properly covering my tracks, their system will alert the guards of the hack and they will know we are here whether they can see us or not.”*

“I understand. Carlos, check down the northern part of the hall. I’ll check the way we came to make sure no one else is coming.”

*“Yes, sir,”* Carlos said as he turned and walked down the hall.

Benja turned back the other way to the “T” intersection they hit before making their way to the security room. As Benja checked down the halls, he could hear heavy footsteps starting to head their way. It sounded like two people were coming. Benja knew that the padding on their shoes would not make that sound so he guessed those steps were from others who worked in the facility, probably the guards. This was not good. If they head for the security room, they will notice the terminal acting up due to Anthony’s hack and warn the others inside.

“Carlos, Anthony, I got two possible hostiles heading this way. I haven’t identified them yet if they are guards, researchers, or other civilians. How is that hack coming?”

*“Less than two minutes,”* Anthony said. *“Do you want me to abort? There is enough time for me to do so.”*

“No, I want you to continue. Team Bravo, head to the security control room and be ready to enter the moment Anthony opens the door. I’m going to see who this is coming our way and if I need to stop them or slow them down.”

*“Sir,”* Carlos said, *“there is a chance that anything you do may get picked up by the security feed if you engage the targets.”*

“That is why I’m going to slow them down by other means. Benja, out.”

Benja pressed against the wall behind him. The hall he was in ended at the junction and the adjacent hall was the one that went straight through. He was leaning against the wall to the right close to the junction and the steps were coming from the right hallway. As they started to get closer, he could hear voices down the hall in languages he could not understand.

He pressed a button on the left side of his helmet to activate the audio translator so that he could listen in as the voices started to approach.

*“I’m taking you to a secure location, Professor,”* a male voice said.

It was Lykan, no question as the translator showed on his heads-up display that it was that language being spoken. Other male voice spoke some words, but the translator took a moment to

convert it to English. After a moment, it came through.

*"Is this really necessary?"* the other male voice said.

Benja wondered why it took so long until the helmet displayed the language it translated. It was the Vita language!

Shocked, Benja looked around the corner and there was a Lykan security guard and a Vita scientist! Benja could not believe what he was seeing! He noticed that the guard's apparel was a bit more decorated than those in the security room leading him to believe this was the fifth security guard they were expecting to see. What he couldn't understand was why there was a Vita scientist here?

That was when he noticed the restraints on the scientist and the fact both were wearing translators. Benja turned back around the corner to ponder this as the two were still talking to each other while approaching Benja's position.

*"We have been tasked with protecting our prized catch and asset,"* the Lykan continued. *"Your ancestors were our servants and I will not be talked to in that fashion by the descendant of our slaves!"*

Did that guard just say "catch?" Also, he said the descendant of their "slaves?" If this Vita was not born in the Kingdom, he was somehow captured from the State! The slaves were taught the Lykan language to understand their "masters'" commands and were never taught their own languages. That was why the two needed translators! What Benja needed to know was what this scientist was doing for the Lykans. He continued to listen, knowing they would soon come around the corner.

*"You say that after I worked to perfect what the Head Advisor to the King had ordered!"* the scientist continued. *"I assumed that would give me some say as to how I am being treated."*

*"You assumed incorrectly,"* the Lykan bellowed. *"Forneido needed your expertise to create the virus we are deploying against the Humans. You did so in exchange for your freedom once the Humans were exterminated. However, the plan is not going as expected."*

Benja could hear one set of footprints stop. The other stopped soon after.

*"Why is it that you are making it sound like it is my fault the plan was not working out?"* the scientists said. *"I'm not responsible if your military cannot deploy the weapon against your enemies."*

*"Maybe not,"* the guard said. *"However, you ARE responsible for not making enough of the virus to be deployed to overwhelm our enemies!"*

*"You were jumping a few ships at a time right at the heart of the Republic! Do you really think they would leave their capital defenseless?"*

*"Wait, where did you hear that? Who told you all of this?! You were only to know about the virus and who it was for, not our deployment methods!"*

*"You have Lykans here with some rather big mouths. I overheard them talking about this 'Project Beta' that was being worked on and headed by Head Director Jyinuuro. You would use a mobile jump gate that could jump itself into the heart of the Republic and you would send ships loaded with the virus against Luminaire, the Republic capital. From the way things sound, it would seem that all is not going according to plan which leads me to believe that your forces underestimated their capital's defenses."*

*"Sir,"* Carlos said through the earpiece, *"we will have entry in less than thirty seconds and Bravo Team is standing by to enter. What is your status?"*

"The two people had stopped and are having an argument. One of them is the security chief of the facility. I would still be prepared for any other guards in the room once you enter. Let

me know when you have control of the room. I have a hostage to rescue and I would rather not alert the guards too soon.”

*“Did you just say ‘hostage,’ sir?”*

“I did and he is a VIP. The Lykans captured a Vita scientist. I don’t know how or when but it would appear he is the one responsible for the virus that they are deploying. They were heading for the security room when they stopped and are arguing right now.”

*“Understood. Entry in ten seconds. We’ll let you know when it is secure.”*

“Roger. Standing by.”

*“For someone who has a lot of intelligence,” the guard growled, “you sure are picking a bad time to say some rather dumb things.”*

*“Oh?” the scientist said. “Did I just hurt your pride as a Lykan, or what is left of it?”*

*“What did you just say?!” the guard said angrily. “What do you mean by that?”*

*“Do you need me to spell it out for you? Your nation is losing the war to the point you are resorting to biological weapons, your slaves have diminished to such extremes after converting them into living weapons, your losing ships faster than you can replace them, and through all of this you still consider yourselves ‘chosen’ by some deity through the mouth of a possibly deranged prophet? You all were prideful in your past before that decree was made, I will give that to you and your kind. However, how can you stand there and tell me that your ‘god’ wanted you to conquer the cluster but not lend you a single bit of help to make that possible?”*

Benja could barely make out the sound of the silencers from the rifles being used back at the control room down the hall and the bodies hitting the floor once the guards inside were incapacitated. These two were making their own diversion for Benja’s team to get the job done.

*“I am not about to have you lecture me about by religion or belittling my god!” the guard yelled. “If it wasn’t for the fact of how important you are, I would strike you dead here and now!”*

*“Sir,” Carlos came through the earpiece, “we have secured the control room. There was a fifth person but whatever yelling was going on down the hall didn’t alert them as much as when we just opened the door without it.”*

“Good,” Benja said. “Shut down the security feed. I want to make sure no outside party sees what is happening here or is about to happen. Also, get us that map and transmit to the rest of our team. We’re going to need it.”

*“Understood. We are shutting it down now. I’m also downloading the map but I take it you are bringing down the loud mouth we can hear from here?”*

*“He will be silent in less than five seconds.”*

Benja went around the corner and pointed his rifle at the Lykan guard’s neck. He quickly pulled the trigger as the dart from his gun quickly hit the guard. Suddenly shocked that he was hit by something to his neck, the guard felt the dart before he collapsed on the floor unconscious. The Vita scientist was suddenly shocked to not only see the dart but pondered where it came from. Benja soon deactivated his optical camouflage to reveal himself to the scientist. He also allowed sound to leave his helmet and activated his translator as the translator the Vitam was wearing no doubt did not have English in its programming.

*“I am Lieutenant Colonel Benja of the Republic Covert Operations Forces.”*

*“A Human? Here?! How is this possible?”*

“No time to explain the details. My team has infiltrated this facility to destroy any Human clones and data as well as the virus that was created. We took the security room just now and shut down the feeds. My team will keep the other Lykans in the facility from leaving their rooms

until we have accomplished this task. Will you help us in this task?"

*"If you can make sure to take me home back to the State, I will help you any way I can."*

"We can make that happen and keep you safe in the meantime. Now I have two teams awaiting orders and we've just received the map of the facility so we need to know where to go."

*"Very well. The cloning room and the computers for storing that data are in room B-Six but be advised there will be Lykans there numbering eight on average. They were responsible for making the clones which were used in testing the virus."*

"Any chance of contamination?"

*"No. Once the test subject was 'used,' the containment unit is flash heated to kill the virus for any new tests. There is not a shred of the virus here."*

"Good. What about the data from the virus? Where is that located?"

*"It is in my lab on this floor in A-Three. I can scrub the data and it is only stored locally here like the DNA data that was obtained."*

"Good. One moment while I contact my team. I'll get those cuffs off you in a moment."

*"Thank you. I'm feeling very relieved right now after all my time with the Lykans."*

"How did you get captured and how long have you been here for?"

*"Contact your team first and I'll tell you once we arrive at my lab. The longer we wait, the sooner the Lykans will know something is up."*

"You make a valid point."

Benja activated his transmitter.

"Team, this is Benja. I have the Vitam scientist. He was captured from the State but he has given us the locations of our targets. Team Charlie and Delta, head to Room Bravo-Six. The cloning information and remaining clones are in that room. Make sure you dispose of it all including any clones. Be advised there are about eight Lykans in that room, possibly more. Carlos, meet me at Room Alpha-Three. The virus information is stored there. The scientist will accompany me there. We are taking him with us after the mission is complete. Dispatch."

*"Yes, sir!"* they said through the earpiece.

Benja reached into his left thigh pocket and got a tool out meant to work on cuffs with electric locks. He took it to the scientist's cuffs and after a few well-placed surges, the cuffs unlocked and fell to the ground. The scientist rubbed his wrists.

*"Thank you,"* the scientist said. *"This way. I will take you to the lab."*

The Vitam started to run down the hallway as Benja followed close behind him.

"Is there any chance of us being spotted heading to the lab?" Benja asked.

*"You mean through windows? The Lykans believed that windows are a distraction to any of the researchers if they can look outside the room that they are working in. Only recreational facilities such as the breakrooms and the security room have windows in their doors."*

"That means we would have been on a blind chase not knowing where to go. That is good to know that we won't be spotted heading to the lab."

*"It is just around this corner."*

As they turned left around the corner, Benja was surprised to see a massive heavily reinforced door like an old-style bank vault in front of him. Carlos was waiting for them there as he uncloaked. Carlos activated his helmet's audio.

"You ran here uncloaked?" Carlos asked.

"Apparently we would not have been seen," Benja said. "This scientist stated that windows are a distraction to the researchers here. Only the security room and breakrooms have them."

“And who is this Vitam scientist? I’m curious to know your story and why you are here.”  
“I’ll tell you once we are inside. We need to hurry!”

The Vitam went up to the control panel right next to the door and entered in a code. As soon as he entered it, the heavily armored door began to unlock with loud “clangs” coming from the sides. After six or seven “clangs” came from the door, it started to slowly swing open.

“I have to ask,” Benja said, “but why in the world does your lab need a door like this? It can’t be to keep you inside if you have the code.”

*“The door can only be opened from the outside. We have to request to leave when we need it, but the primary reason is not to keep me from escaping but rather to keep the virus from escaping prematurely. In the early stages, the weapon could affect every known living organism until it was refined to only affect your DNA exclusively. This door was designed more along the line of quarantine than a prison, though in the end it was used for both. I’m only given the code to enter as they figured there was no reason for me to go back in if I wanted to escape.”*

“That makes sense, though it is still an impressive door.”

As the door swung open further, they could see inside the laboratory. There were a lot of containers and computers lining the side walls. A test chamber could be seen on the back wall with tubes the size of a full-size Human. There was no question that those chambers were used in the testing of the virus.

“Carlos,” Benja said, “did you get that code he put in?”

“I got it recorded on my helmet visual recorder.”

“Good. I want you to wait out here. I’m assuming this door closes automatically after a moment?”

*“Yes, it does. We need to get inside to delete the data and any samples that might remain.”*

“Alright. Carlos, I’ll contact you once we are done inside. Let’s go.”

Benja and the Vitam walked into the lab as the massive door began to close. Once inside, the scientist went up to one of the computers and activated the screen.

*“I’m going to begin formatting and wiping the drives on these computers,” he said. “You asked about me earlier and now that we are in a secure setting, I can tell you. My name is Vistorio and I came from one of the outlying colony worlds of the United Vitam State.”*

“How did you end up here?”

*“The Lykans came to that colony world about five years ago during one of their offenses. I was a scientist in the field of agricultural production.”*

“You are a botanist?”

*“Is that what people in that field are called in your language? I guess so, then.”*

“Why would they kidnap someone like you, though?”

*“At first, they needed my skills to work on growing food to give slaves that would put them in a highly medicated state that would allow them to be more open to commands. After that, they wanted me to work on a drug that, once it gets into a slave as an airborne substance, would require a subtle antidote to ebb the effects but not completely remove them. Any slave that was not converted into a living computer was subjected to this drug on each of the so-called slave worlds as a test for the past few months.”*

“Wait, does that include your original home planet of Vita?”

*“Yes, it does.”*

“How is this pseudo-antidote delivered and what happens if it is not administered in a timely manner?”

*“The pseudo-antidote as you call it has to be administered on a daily basis in the atmosphere by drone units that fly from the orbital station over each of the populated areas in the morning. That is why none of them can escape those towns because they won’t get the medication otherwise. It also means that everyone must leave and go outside at that time, forcing them to not only go to work immediately afterwards but the doors have been specially designed to lock after they leave at a certain time. No one is allowed back into their homes unless they complete their work. Anyone who is late is locked inside the house for their disobedience and subjected to the full effects of the drug.”*

Benja realized at that moment that the *Templar* took out the stations in question over each of the five original home worlds that make up the races involving the State. He had no idea that the stations were providing that sort of service and there were no records or reports from the stations’ computers concerning this delivery. There was a chance that those records were classified or confidential from the local Lykans stationed there and thus they had no knowledge or records of what they were being used for.

Vistorio continued his explanation while Benja feared what was going to happen.

*“If the person does not receive the pseudo-antidote after one day, they start to sharp pains in their nervous system, cold sweats, and hallucinations as well as involuntary ejection of their digestive systems at both ends. Hard breathing would soon follow. Most of the time, if they can get outside the next day to get the pseudo-antidote, they will return to normal within an hour or so.”*

“What happens if they go up to three days without the pseudo-antidote?” Benja asked, not knowing if he wanted to hear the answer or not.

*“Three days? No one has gone two days without the pseudo-antidote, much less three. The pain would be so severe that their nervous system shuts down followed by their muscles. In other words, it would be death by paralysis.”*

“Great Maker, no,” Benja said as he sat down in shock. “Did you ever create a complete antidote for the drug?”

*“No. The Lykans saw no reason for me to create a full antidote and any attempt I have done was met with the deletion of my work and going three days in solitary confinement in a sensory deprivation chamber. I’ve only attempted it once and that was the result.”*

“What have we done?”

*“What are you talking about?”*

“The ship my team came in is a stealth vessel capable of using a sustainable warp drive to avoid using the gates. We were responsible for allowing our nation along with the State and Empire forces to get as far as they did before the Lykans beefed up their defenses. We found each of the five home worlds of the State citizens, infiltrated those stations in question for any valuable information, and then...” Benja hesitated, “...we ended up destroying them in an effort to free those worlds.”

Vistorio’s face was in total shock from hearing that bit of news.

*“You...you destroyed them?! Do you have any idea what you have done?! How long ago was this?!”*

“Vita was the last one and it was three days ago that it happened. If what you say is true, then we were unknowingly responsible for the deaths of everyone on those worlds without even knowing the purpose of those stations.”

Vistorio sat down, not knowing how to react.

*“There was no information at the stations at all about their intended purpose?”*

“If we knew or if they had records, we would not have destroyed those stations. The local Lykans at those stations appeared to not know what they were there for either. Most likely they thought the drones were used for a daily survey of the planets.”

*“I want to blame you and your ship for their deaths but the only one to blame for this whole matter to begin with is me. I made that drug that was administered to those planets.”*

“Aside from those five worlds, do you know if the drug was used on any other planet?”

*“No because of the Lykans that would be on those planets who would equally be affected by the drug as well if administered in the same airborne fashion. Those five worlds were meant to test the drug and it worked. However, no one has been taken off of those planets since then as administering the pseudo-antidote would require a larger supply to distribute among several planets.”*

“So the only people affected are those on those planets. What am I going to tell Trent? How are we going to explain this to the State?”

*“Wait, did you say ‘Trent,’ as in the Republic Vice Admiral?”*

“Yes, why? Do you know that name?”

*“I know that is the name of one of the Humans whose DNA we had to use for both cloning and experiments. Why is he here?”*

“Since his DNA is needed for access to secure Republic facilities and that was how one of the clones we encountered managed to infiltrate and steal one of our ships, he wanted to personally see that his DNA is wiped from the Kingdom’s systems. He is leading this covert operation into Kingdom space specifically for that purpose, although we are also looking for the home world of the Lykans as well.”

*“Information on their home world is something that would not be stored here, unfortunately. The Lykans are very secretive of that kind of information, especially with me being here.”*

“Are you the only Vitam here or for that matter any other race other than the Lykans?”

*“No, there is not. They were quite hesitant to bring me here to begin with. Everyone else on the colony world I was on was taken to ‘reconditioning’ centers to make them slaves to the Lykans. I don’t know where they are now.”*

Benja had heard enough. The fact that the Lykans had gone to the extremes that they had went to was beyond measure in his mind. Not only did the Kingdom resort to not only enslaving those whose ancestors had fought for their freedom and were born free of the Kingdom, but also resorting to drugging their existing slaves so that they are more obedient to their “masters.” They have committed atrocities in the form of converting their slaves into living cores of their warships unable to be converted back to the people they once were.

These were more than just war crimes in the eyes of the Republic. They were now responsible at an attempt at genocide for those either in combat or were drugged and are now dead because of it. The one responsible for the latter though was in this room with him and even though he was forced to make it, he should have stood up for his people and refused to make the drug from the start.

*“I have a good guess what is on your mind right now based on how silent you are,”* Vistorio said. *“While the helmet makes it hard to see your face, you are breathing heavily enough to know you are not in the best frame of mind after hearing all of this. What the Lykans had done to my people, and my own contributions to their war and their control is unforgiveable. No matter how I look at it, I am ultimately responsible for dooming those on those worlds to death because I could not develop a permanent antidote.”*

“So what are you going to do about it?” Benja asked. “How do you atone for your actions?”

Vistorio stood up from his seat.

*“By making sure that NONE of the research here is ever used again.”*

“What do you mean?”

*“I was told that this building was equipped with a fusion detonation system in the event that the facility’s secrets were subject to possible theft or if any of the researchers were being kidnapped by outside forces. The security office has the means to set off the bomb manually with a countdown timer if needed. This place has the top minds of the Kingdom here. If you can get rid of them all at once, it would be a severe blow to the Kingdom.”*

“The purpose of our mission is to destroy military targets as well as the research done on cloning and the virus. We are against civilian casualties of those not involved in those projects if they can be avoided. That is why we the guards are only stunned.”

*“Then I will set off the bomb. This will keep your hands clean in that matter. I will make sure that none of the researchers are unable to escape. This will take care of all of your problems all at once.”*

“Are you serious? What about you?”

*“I must atone for my crimes against my people and yours. I don’t want to run the risk of my knowledge, whether on a computer or in my head, falling into the wrong hands.”*

“It sounds like you are taking the coward’s way out by committing suicide.”

*“What you call the ‘coward’s way,’ I call making sure you all don’t violate your directive. Besides, I want revenge against these religious zealots for what they did to my people and taking out there brightest minds for me sounds like a good start.”*

Benja sighed as he realized this Vitam wanted to be a patriot by taking out the facility.

“Very well. I’ll escort you to the security room, but first let me contact my team.”

Benja activated his communicator in his helmet.

“This is Benja to all team members; I want everyone to report back to the security room. Carlos, I need you to let us out.”

*“This is Charlie Team,”* a male voice said. *“We are just outside the cloning facility. Please confirm the order.”*

“Confirm. Return to the security room. There is a change of plans.”

*“Sir, this is Carlos. I’m putting in the code and opening the door, but could you please explain why we are changing the plans now?”*

As the door began to open slowly, Benja could see Carlos and peering in wondering if something happened inside that made Benja change his mind.

“I have just found out that there is a bomb capable of blowing up this entire facility along with the staff. This place houses the top minds of the Kingdom and its destruction would greatly hinder the Kingdom.”

Carlos no longer needed the communicator to talk to Benja once the door was open.

“Are you saying that we are about to kill off possibly innocent civilians?!” Carlos said. “I know some of them are responsible for atrocities but this is not what we were sent here to do.”

“I didn’t say that we would be the ones who were going to blow the place up.”

Benja looked at Vistorio after he said that.

“Our local Vitam has decided to make right the wrongs he has done by doing the honor himself.”

\* \* \* \* \*