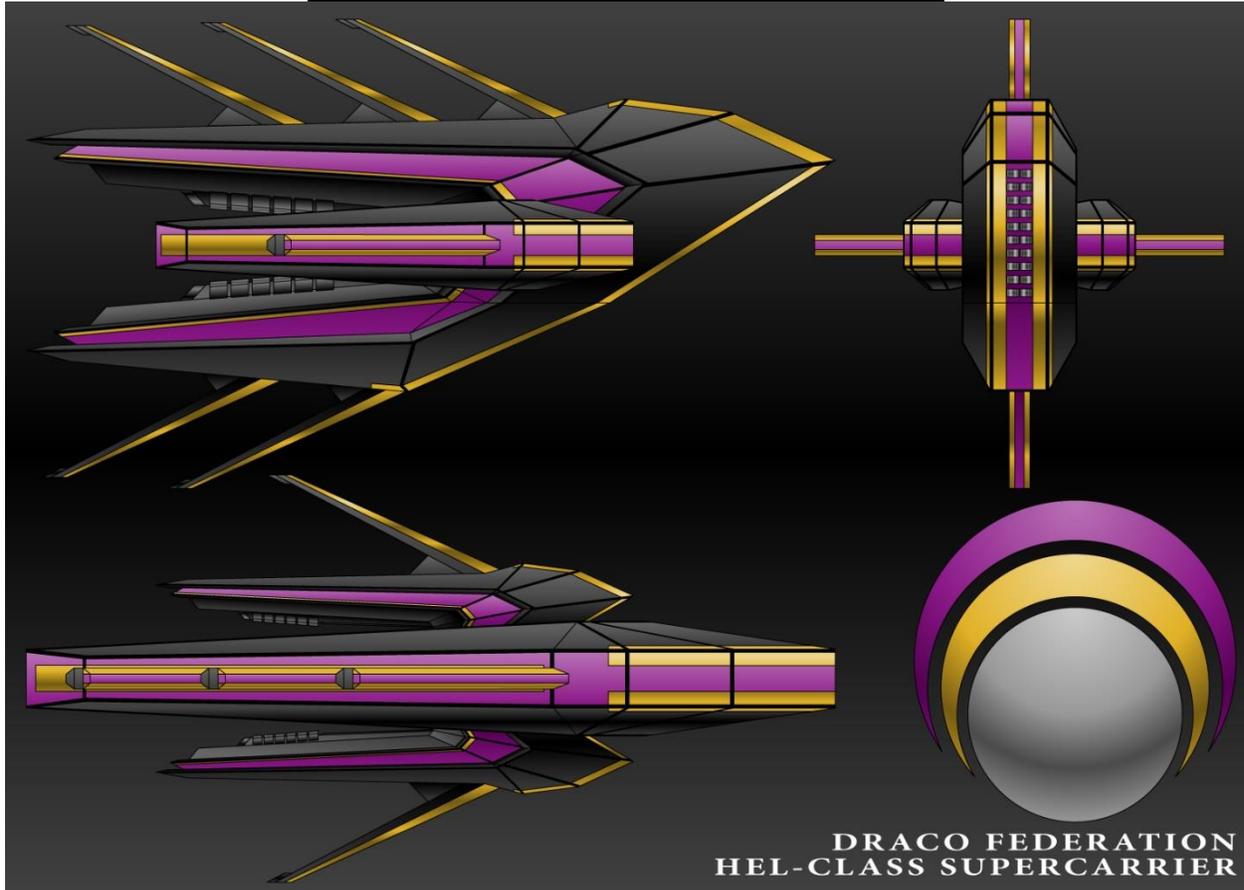


Warring Factions: The Novus Initium Saga
Episode VI: The Nations of Blood and Darkness



PART 8

*Bridge, Covert-Ops Stealth Warship Cavalier, Tenebris Prime Airspace, Dominion Capital Tenebris System, Southwestern Region, 119 Light-Years from Ruber System
1:14pm, October 18, 5434 A.D. (One Week Later)*

“Great Maker, I was not expecting to see this...”

The *Cavalier* finally arrived at its destination at the heart of the Tenebris Dominion, the planet known as Tenebris Prime in the Tenebris System. Tenebris Prime was the third planet out of seven orbiting a medium yellow star. The planet was roughly the size of Luminaire but had a thin asteroid belt around the planet. Tenebris Prime also had a single moon that orbits the planet. On the dark side of both the planet and the moon were several lights covering almost half of both indicating large scale industrial development and urbanization on both. The moon even from a distance shows large scale strip-mining based on the multitude of crevasses that can be seen. A few rather large stations could also be seen in orbit of both the planet and the moon ranging from spaceports and docks around Tenebris Prime to industrial and development platforms orbiting its moon. Captain Luke had figured that such developments would have occurred in the span of six hundred years, but that was not what surprised him when they arrived near the planet.

What surprised him was the number of *Mammoth*-Class Dreadnoughts that were in the

immediate airspace around the planet. The sensors were detecting no less than two hundred dreadnoughts around the planet, though the highest numbers were around the stations. Luke had no idea that so many vessels would even have been built by the Dominion, not to mention be fully crewed based on their sizes.

While he was confident the optical cloaking device on the *Cavalier* would keep them from being detected, he did not want to risk one of those ships suddenly jumping in or out close to the *Cavalier* that could affect their cloak. There was also the possibility that if those ships were to coordinate their scanners, they could overpower the cloak as well.

He looked around the bridge and he could see everyone else had the same shocked expressions on their faces. Luke cleared his throat.

"I want both Specter One and Revenant One brought to the bridge," Luke said. "They need to see this."

"Yes, sir," the Communications officer said.

"Yuki, what do you think the chances are of us being detected with these many ships around if we approach?"

"Even if the cloak is state-of-the-art among Republic technology," Yuki said, "I would be weary of trying to approach while still hiding from all those ships. If we get too close, the likelihood of being detected goes up significantly. We still don't know how sophisticated their sensors are or what would happen if they ended up concentrating their sensors on our location if they managed to detect the gravitational disturbance from our cloak."

"I know we remained undetected in the Miranda System, but that was only when there were up to four dreadnoughts and they were more focused on the Federation fleet at the time. Two hundred dreadnoughts on the other hand may be a different story if they did decide to concentrate their scans on our position. What do you think the likelihood would be if something much smaller tried to go through all of those ships?"

"Smaller? You mean like the stealth shuttle?"

"That is correct. Unlike this ship which would put out a rather large gravitational disturbance signature, the shuttle is far smaller and would be able to slip by while remaining undetected. Am I right?"

Yuki looked over her instruments to analyze the sensor strength of all the dreadnoughts within a projected flight path. After a couple of moments, she looked back at Luke.

"Depending on the flight paths of the dreadnoughts," Yuki said, "they have less than a five percent chance of being detected."

"I find those odds acceptable," Luke said. "Once we launch the stealth shuttle, I will have you recalculate the best route for them to avoid detection from their patrols."

"Understood, sir."

Luke looked at the view screen again at the multitude of dreadnoughts that were in the local airspace. He wondered how those ships could have been built and fully crewed considering their size. Compared to the First through Third Fleets that were always stationed in the Republic capital System of Lumen, the Dominion fleet may have less in terms of the number of ships by comparison, but the size of the ships would put the Republic at a disadvantage. His other concern was the fact that this was by no means the entirety of their fleet as the rest of their forces were spread out within their territory across the Southwestern Region. He wondered how many of these dreadnoughts there were and would the Republic be able to defend itself should the Dominion come after them in full force? The only avenue in that regards would be diplomacy, but it is still unclear whether the Dominion harbors hostility towards the Republic or not.

Of course, that was the reason they travelled all the way here to begin with was to find those answers and learn more of the Dominion's history.

As if on cue with the timing of his thoughts, he began to hear the elevator come to a stop behind him. He turned his chair to his left halfway so that he could see the elevator doors as they opened. Brenda and Lokia were inside and stepped out of the elevator, the doors closing behind them.

"You called for us, Captain?" Lokia said, before she looked at the screen.

They both had shocked expressions as they looked at the view screen.

"That's the capital?!" Brenda said. "Look at all of those ships, and...what in the star cluster did they do to their moon?!"

"That, ladies," Luke said as he turned back forward, "is the result of strip-mining a planet or planetoid for natural resources to build ships like those. That's one of the reasons the Republic passed laws for recycling and reusing components to prevent such natural destruction. We haven't seen anything of that scale on the planet, but on the other hand, we cannot risk a scan to verify without being detected."

"Considering all of those ships, I don't blame you," Lokia said. "The question is how do we get past all of those vessels?"

"That's the problem. We can't get close to them without risking any of them jumping in or out within close proximity. That would either compromise our cloak in some way or we could find part of the *Cavalier* jumping without the rest of the ship. Also, we still don't know how sophisticated their sensors or scanners are. We went undetected in the Miranda System but that was due to the battle that was being fought. The Dominion ships were more focused in engaging the Federation fleet than looking for some unknown gravitational disturbance. However, that won't be the case here. If they can detect such disturbances, they could collectively use their sensors and pinpoint our location."

"Then what would you suggest, Captain?"

"We will be launching the stealth shuttle from here. Unlike the *Cavalier*, the stealth shuttle will be far smaller and won't be detected so easily. Our science officer estimated that there would be less than a five percent chance of detection. Also, if one of those ships either jumps in or out, the shuttle will be far more maneuverable to get out of the way."

"I see. That would be the best solution in this case."

"Do we have the location of their capital city?" Brenda asked.

"We haven't had a chance to investigate that since we just arrived, but that should be easy to find," Luke said. "Communications, track civilian communications going to and from the planet. Let's see if we can pinpoint their capital city that way."

"Yes, sir," the communications officer said.

"If there is any place that civilian communications would be the largest, it will be their capital between their political and news stations. Usually, such communications are being broadcasted in large amounts."

"How long do you think that will take?" Brenda asked.

"It shouldn't take too long," Luke said. "We should have it within minutes."

"Um, sir?" the communications officer said. "I'm unable to determine such broadcasts of that nature anywhere going to or from the planet."

Luke turned towards the communications officer with a puzzled expression on his face.

"What do you mean you cannot determine such broadcasts?" he asked.

"All of the communications are encrypted," the communications officer said. "I cannot

track them without detection.”

Luke pondered this information for a moment.

“Are they the same encrypted messages we saw in Oberth?” Luke asked.

The communications officer reviewed the messages for a moment.

“It is the same encryption, sir,” the communications officer said. “Whatever they are streaming, it is the same type of encryption we saw in Oberth.”

“So, it’s the same, huh?” Luke said, pondering further.

“What are you thinking, sir?” Brenda asked.

“It means either the information is sensitive in nature, such as military communications, or it was meant to be information that cannot be edited or modified by the general public.”

“I can understand the former,” Lokia said, “but if it is the latter, I would be wondering why that is?”

“It could be that the information is only meant for those who need to know or are privileged. Outside of that, without knowing what the content is, I don’t have the answer.”

“We can still find their capital by following the transmissions,” Yuki said, “but I have also been monitoring local traffic from shuttles going to and from the planet.”

“Why were you monitoring local traffic?” Luke asked.

“I was making sure of the routes the stealth shuttle would have to take to avoid detection. We don’t want our shuttle running into their shuttles, now do we?”

“You make a valid point. So, where do you see them going to and from the most?”

“They appear to be coming and going from the northern continent on the light side of the planet. I will pinpoint it on the screen.”

The planet on the screen was overlaid with a planetary grid system. A circle appeared on one of the northern continents still on the “day” side just above the planet’s equator. The view screen zoomed in on that location which showed a massive city despite some cloud coverage.

“I wonder,” Luke said, “didn’t the map we acquire from the Dominion wreckage not have their capital city on record?”

“For some reason, it didn’t,” Yuki said. “It may have been missing or omitted intentionally for the sake of security. Either that or the data was incomplete. Regardless, this location appears to be the best location. If it isn’t, there may be information at that location which may tell us where the actual capital is located on the planet.”

“I guess we have no other choice. Specter One, I want you to take your team to that location and research to make sure that is the capital. Also, make sure you get recordings of the local attire. I want you take interest in any different styles between the identities. We don’t know how they developed culturally so each identity group may have developed their own culture. Also, get footage of locations of interest including the library if that is located there. We need to make sure we know how to proceed once you and Brenda are on the ground later.”

“I understand, Captain,” Lokia said. “The only question I have is how do we return with the information without being detected? We cannot send a signal for guidance without it being detected.”

Luke thought about that problem for a moment. This matter was becoming more complicated than he had expected. He looked at the planet and the patrols to get any ideas. It was then that he spotted an area he noticed the dreadnoughts were not patrolling.

“Yuki,” he said, “have you spotted any dreadnoughts in either of the magnetic poles of the planet?”

“The poles, sir?” Yuki asked as she went back to her instruments. “Let me check.”

“What’s on your mind, sir?” Lokia asked.

“If I am right,” Luke said, “there is a chance that there are no dreadnoughts at either of the poles. While they are patrolling the orbit of the planet and the space stations, the magnetic fields of the poles may cause them some problems in communications and detection.”

“But wouldn’t that affect us as well?”

“Yes, but we would be blending in with the natural magnetic disturbances. It also means if the shuttle enters the atmosphere from the north, it won’t need to covertly go around the dreadnoughts as we had initially planned. The same can be said for when it comes back to the *Cavalier*. It may take longer since atmospheric flight is slower, but it will be the best way to remain undetected for both the shuttle and this ship.”

“I’ve surveyed the poles, sir,” Yuki said. “There are no dreadnoughts or any other artificial structures at either pole. Hiding there, we will have a less than one percent chance of being detected. So far, it would seem to be the best course of action.”

“Then I guess that is what we will have to do,” Lokia said. “I will go inform my team immediately.”

“Very good,” Luke said. “Revenant One, you will remain on standby until Specter Team returns with the information. Be prepared to make the appropriate attire.”

“Yes, sir,” Brenda said.

Brenda and Lokia headed back towards the elevator. Luke leaned back in his chair.

“Helm, warp us to the planet’s northern magnetic pole. Communications, inform the port hangar bay to ready the shuttle for launch.”

“Yes, sir,” the helmsman and the communications officer said in unison.

The *Cavalier* began to point its bow at Tenebris Prime’s northern pole as Lokia and Brenda entered the elevator to leave the bridge. The warp drive activated for a total of ten seconds between speeding up and slowing down, but it was enough for the ship to suddenly be right over the planet’s northern magnetic pole. The ship soon came to a complete stop.

“How are we looking, Yuki?” Luke asked.

“The magnetic fields are a little strong,” Yuki said, “but they are not affecting our systems for the time being. The cloak appears to be diverting them away from the ship, which means we will be unaffected while the cloak is active.”

“Good, I figured as much. We will hold position here for now. Communications, keep an ear out for any communication broadcasts that might suddenly appear that we have not heard yet. Tactical, keep an eye out for any enemy ships that may decide to patrol this area for some reason. I want to make sure that we remain undetected in this location. Everyone else, keep on your toes. Treat this like it was enemy territory because this may very well be the case.”

“Yes, sir!” everyone yelled on the bridge.

Luke took a deep breath. All he had to do now is wait.

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*Bridge, Covert-Ops Stealth Warship Templar, Draconia-VII Airspace, Draco Federation
Draconia System, Western Region, 120 Light-Years from Ruber System
1:13pm, October 18, 5434 A.D.*

“We just barely made it into the system.”

Tora was beginning to feel worried when the alert that the capacitors were about to run out started going off only moments ago. They had just entered the Draconia System when the

Templar came out of warp. However, while they were in the system, they had not reached Propitius Esto, the capital world of the Draco Federation. The ship came out of warp close to the seventh planet in the system, a blue gas planet. The ship's sensors detected a station orbiting near one of the planet's moons with a couple of cruisers near it, but they were far away for there to be any concern. The *Templar* would only have to wait for ten minutes to ensure that there is enough energy to finish the warp and keep the optical cloak active. This would be a perfect opportunity for Blair and Amarria to get ready for deployment.

"Communications," Tora said, "ship-wide broadcast, please."

"Yes, ma'am," the communications officer said. "Ready."

"Attention, this is the Captain. We have arrived in the Draconia System just short of the target planet of Propitius Esto. This ship will be recharging its capacitors for ten minutes so that we have enough energy to finish the warp and maintain the cloak. We don't know what we will find once we reach the planet, so everyone is to remain alert at their stations. Ghost One and Phantom One, proceed to the port hangar bay in your disguises and prepare to launch. Further instructions will be given once we arrive at the planet. Out."

The communications officer cut off the transmission once Tora said "Out." She leaned back in her chair as a countdown timer appeared on the view screen counting down from ten minutes. There was nothing to do now but wait.

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*Amarria's Quarters, Covert-Ops Stealth Warship Templar, Draconia-VII Airspace
Draconia System, Western Region, 120 Light-Years from Ruber System
1:16pm, October 18, 5434 A.D.*

"Good thing I was already prepared."

After lunch earlier in the day, Amarria went back to her quarters to change into the Federation-based outfit that she had created a week ago. Since then, she had watched more of the recordings she had been given to observe any mannerisms she could spot in order to blend in better once they were on Propitius Esto. She also created a purse large enough to hold a tablet which would be used to copy and store any information she would obtain from the Federation's main library, depending on if they have one. She went further to make the tablet externally look like one she saw in a broadcast so that if she was searched or scanned while on the planet it would not immediately give raise to any suspicion or questions.

She picked up the purse once she was all dressed and headed out the door. As she walked out of the room, Blair was there in his disguise. He was wearing a brown coat and slacks with dark shoes. The collar and the end of the sleeves were also dark brown. Gold decorative accents separated the two shades of brown on the sleeves but the accents also ran down the middle of the front of the coat. The accents also ran down the sides of his slacks. He looked very distinguished for someone who in reality was a soldier. Granted, she saw this a week ago when he tried it on for the first time, but it still made him look very dignified and distinguished.

"Looks like you're also ready to go," Blair said.

"I knew we were arriving today," Amarria said. "I got dressed after lunch, just in case."

"I thought the same thing."

Blair looked at the purse.

"What's in there?" he asked. "Is that purse consistent with their fashion?"

"It is," Amarria said. "Right now, it has a tablet that will be used to get the information

we need. I even went so far as to disguise it to look like one I saw in the broadcasts.”

“Good thinking. The only thing I didn’t know if we will need is some form of identification. Nothing in the broadcasts showed if we need them or not.”

“I know. That concerns me as well, but if we are careful and they don’t need them for use to research their library, we should be able to get by without them.”

“What about currency?”

“I saw that they do use a form of currency both hard and electric, but I’m not about to risk counterfeiting it in either form. The last thing we need to do is be arrested on such a charge.”

“Good point. So, shall we head to the port hangar bay?”

Amarria took a deep breath.

“Yes, let’s go,” Amarria said as she began to walk towards the elevators.

Blair followed behind her.

“Are you okay?” he asked.

“Yes,” she said. “I’m just a bit nervous right now.”

“You’re nervous? After all of this time, effort, and preparation?”

“I know, but no amount of preparation would help calm my nerves in this situation. I’m both nervous and scared of being found out, that all that training and research would be wasted.”

“Take deep breaths. Imagine how the early explorers of the Republic felt leaving their homes for strange unknown worlds, not knowing what they would find once they arrive. They probably felt the same way as you do now.”

Amarria had read a lot of stories and history of the Expansion Era but she read it from the aspect of someone who was not there. She had never considered or felt how the colonists felt when they reached all of those new worlds so long ago. Thinking about it now and the fact that she always wished she was born during that era, the feelings she had now would have been the same under those circumstances.

She took a deep breath to calm herself. She would be one of the first Humans of the Republic to set foot on a new world. Granted, it was inhabited by other Humans who have made it their home, but the fact still remained that she would be the first Republic Human to walk among Humans of the Federation as if she was one of them. She would no doubt feel excited once she arrived to be there like a tourist.

Of course, being tourists was going to be part of their cover story if anyone asked. They looked over the map of the Federation to find a place where they could say they were from so that their wonderment, or their obvious lack of knowledge of the city layout, could easily be explained. It would also allow them to ask questions without anyone thinking they were anything other than fellow Federation citizens that were visiting the capital.

Amarria pressed the elevator call button, then looked at Blair.

“Thank you for that,” she said. “I’m a bit surprised about your use of such an insight. You make it sound like you’ve experienced such a situation before.”

“I have,” Blair said.

Amarria looked at Blair with a shocked expression on her face.

“You have?” Amarria asked. “When?”

“You have to remember that I was on the *Cavalier* for several months exploring the Southwestern Region. At times, when scans could only give us part of the picture about a planet such as its ecosystem, my team was sent down to those planets to get a better sense of the life that was there without interference. While my team were not there to colonize those planets, the fact remained that we were the first Humans on that planet as explorers. I got a sense of what you

wanted to experience during my time on that ship, so that is why I speak from experience. You are feeling some of that now, so I can relate to those feelings.”

“Of course, the difference here is that there are already Humans on the planet we are going to, but we would be ‘aliens’ in a sense that we were not born in the Federation, attempting to get information on them.”

“Yes, we would be hiding in plain sight and unless we say or do something outside of the norm, they would not even know we are ‘outsiders’ to them.”

The elevator arrived at that moment. A couple of officers were inside but were getting off on that deck. Amarria and Blair stepped aside to allow the officers off of the elevator. Once they were off, Amarria and Blair stepped into the elevator and pressed their destination into the elevator’s control panel. Before the doors closed, the two of them noticed that the officers that had gotten off the elevator had turned to salute them. Blair saluted back, with Amarria doing the same the moment she noticed his salute. The doors soon closed and the elevator was on its way. Both of them lowered their arms.

“I guess they were wishing us luck,” Blair said.

“Believe me,” Amarria said, “we may need it.”

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*Bridge, Covert-Ops Stealth Warship Templar, Draconia-VII Airspace, Draco Federation
Draconia System, Western Region, 120 Light-Years from Ruber System
1:24pm, October 18, 5434 A.D.*

“Specter One and Phantom One’s shuttle is ready for departure.”

The communications officer’s announcement that Blair and Amarria were ready in the shuttle to depart could not come at a better time. The timer on the bridge was only a few seconds away from reaching “zero,” indicating that the *Cavalier* would continue to warp towards the Federation capital of Propitius Esto once the countdown was completed. Captain Tora leaned back in her chair.

“Good timing,” Tora said as the timer concluded. “Helm, engage the warp and conclude our trip to Propitius Esto.”

“Yes, ma’am,” the helmsman said.

The *Templar* began to accelerate towards the direction of Propitius Esto as the warp drive engaged. The waves and fluctuations around the ship from the warp drive began to appear as Draconia-VII began to move away quickly. The ship remained at warp for about a minute before the ship began to slow down again. A terrestrial planet was soon coming into view on the screen as the fluctuations began to disappear. Once the ship came to a stop at a distance from the planet, the bridge crew got a bit of a surprise.

The planet had several ships in orbit totaling just over one hundred ships ranging from cruisers to carriers with only a dozen dreadnoughts and supercarriers, but they were mostly concentrated around three visible stations in orbit. Two moons appear to orbit the planet, but there were only a few cities and planetary stations on them from what could be seen visually. There were definitely cities on the planet, but they were centralized in areas by lakes and oceans.

Tora was a bit surprised. Based on the population of the Federation, she had assumed that the capital was going to be more industrialized and more inhabited than what she was seeing. Either the population is more spread out than she initially thought or there was something wrong with the numbers. She also assumed that there would be more ships to protect the capital, but

there was a chance that their ships were also spread out or they were being deployed on the frontlines against the Dominion dreadnoughts. However, the fact that there were fewer ships also meant that it would be easier for the stealth shuttle to slip by without coming close to the Federation ships.

“Communications,” Tora said, “can we determine the location of the capital city of the Federation based on public communications such as political channels?”

“Just a moment, ma’am,” the communications officer said. “Checking the public broadcast channels now.”

The communications officer tapped away at their station, looking and tracking any broadcasts she could find that related to anything political in nature. After a few moments, her console indicated it had found the source of those transmissions.

“I found it, sir,” the communications officer said. “I’ll put it up on the main screen.”

The screen focused on the day side of the planet on one of the southern continents at the edge of a large sea. There was heavy urbanization indicating a city that has been there for a long while. Surprisingly, it appeared to have stopped at a certain point and, aside from possible land roads leading in and out, the rest of the area was all forests. It reminded her of reports she had read involving the new Lykan capital city that was built on their home planet. If the capital was built in that fashion, then it would be safe to assume that all the cities on the planet were built the same way so as to not impede upon the planet’s ecosystem. It was a thoughtful approach to not have a negative effect on the planet’s natural beauty and wildlife, but not that much of an original concept. Several Republic worlds have done the same thing, a testament to the lessons learned from their ancestors after what had been done to ancestral Earth.

“So,” Tora said, “is that is their capital?”

“Yes, ma’am,” the communications officer said. “All of the political broadcasts I’ve detected are coming from that city.”

“Good. Have this information sent to Specter One’s shuttle. I’ll leave it to him on how and where he can land. Inform him that landing outside of the city may not be a good idea. Approaching a city on foot would raise a lot of questions we don’t have viable answers for.”

“Understood, ma’am,” the communications officer said.

“Now then, time to see what is going on with the Draco Federation.”

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*Stealth Shuttle One, Port Hangar Bay, Covert-Ops Stealth Warship Templar
Draconia System, Western Region, 120 Light-Years from Ruber System
1:27pm, October 18, 5434 A.D.*

“Looks like we have our destination.”

Blair primed the shuttle’s engines once the coordinates from the bridge communications officer were sent to his navigation computer. Amarria sat in the right seat but was there to watch their flight down towards the planet. As the engines came online, the hangar doors started to open once the atmospheric barrier activated.

“Are you ready?” Blair asked Amarria without looking away from the controls.

“As ready as I will ever be,” Amarria said without skipping a beat. “Shouldn’t we have a backup pilot, though, or someone to stay with the shuttle while we are around the city?”

“I already have that covered.”

As Blair said that, Amarria heard footsteps coming from behind her as if someone else

boarded the shuttle. Amarria tried to look behind her, but the seat harness she was fastened into made it difficult for her to do so. The footsteps approached them from behind until a head poked in. Amarria was stunned to see that the person who came on board was Ghost Two!

“Sorry I’m late,” Benja said. “It was hard to sneak aboard.”

“What do you mean ‘sneak’?” Amarria asked. “Are you telling me you’re not part of the mission?”

“At least not according to Tora,” Blair said. “I asked him to come along when I realized Tora would not assign a backup for us as well as someone to guard the shuttle. She may be good with intelligence gathering and cover-ups, but tactics and foresight are two things she tends to lack. I’m surprised she was even allowed in the captain’s chair.”

“So, you asked Ghost Two to come along just in case, huh? Did you want to get back at Tora in some fashion for the fact she wanted to see you in that outfit the other day?”

“Let us say that it is both of those and just leave it at that. Benja, you better strap in back there.”

“Got it,” Benja said as he stepped into the passenger area.

Amarria looked over at Blair.

“That’s his real name?” she asked.

“Yes,” Blair said, “and since we won’t be on the ship much longer, I can call him by his real name for the remainder of this part of the mission.”

Blair pressed the shuttle’s communications button.

“This is Shuttle One, taking off.”

Blair pulled back on the control stick, lifting the shuttle off of the hangar deck. Once it was up high enough, he increased the throttle, moving out of the hangar bay. Before he went through the cloak, he activated the shuttle’s cloaking device to insure that the shuttle would not be detected the moment it left the bay. Once he passed through the *Templar’s* cloak, the *Templar* disappeared completely from their sight. Amarria had never seen what the ship looked like when it was cloaked, so the sudden disappearance temporarily made her feel like they were the only ones in the system, alone and disconnected.

She shook off that feeling as Blair increased the speed of the shuttle to head towards the planet. He noticed she looked disturbed by her body language.

“Everything okay, Amarria?” he asked.

“Yeah,” she said. “I’ve never seen how the cloak looks outside of the ship, so when it disappeared from sight the moment we went through the cloak, it was a little disconcerting.”

“Believe me, I know how that feels. Prior to this mission, when I was on the *Cavalier*, my team and Benja’s were disconnected from the ship when we first stumbled upon the battle between the Dominion and the Federation. We had to recover data from the wreckage of the ships from both sides, but we had no means of communication with the ship to know when the Federation would start to destroy the wreckage to prevent it from impacting onto the planet. We barely made it out when the Federation opened fire.”

“I see. That lack of support in unknown space can make anyone feel nervous. You didn’t lose anyone on that mission, did you?”

“Thankfully, no. We all made it back without any issues. However, part of me wished we grabbed that historical data now or we wouldn’t even be doing this.”

“I’m guessing you prioritized the extraction of the navigational charts over the history, didn’t you?”

“That is correct. I figured that the navigational charts were more important than the

history to get a better understanding of the Dominion and Federation's holdings."

"I'm willing to bet that if you knew where the capitals were, that a team could be sent to get information from their libraries involving their history. If that is correct, then that explains our current situation."

"I did and that is correct."

"If anything, I'm glad you made that choice. It allows me to be here and to see a nation whose government and culture are uninfluenced by the Republic over the last six hundred years."

"Well, at least it made one person happy. We will be entering the atmosphere very soon. I have to slowly descend into the atmosphere or the effects of reentry will be noticed even with the cloak on."

As the shuttle closed in on the planet, Amarria looked around at the ships in the distance, the stations in orbit, and areas on the planet that she could identify cities based on the color. The night side of the planet was opposite of their location as they approached the location of the capital on the planet. How those cities looked at night is hard to see now for them but thankfully it meant that they had some time before it becomes night at the capital.

As the shuttle approached the upper atmosphere, Blair pulled back on the control stick pointing the nose upward and leveling the shuttle while decreasing the speed. It meant that they would be slow to descend onto the planet, but when one was sneaking in, it was best to take one's time so to be thorough. After several minutes, the shuttle was at an altitude where Blair felt confident that that he could resume normal flight. He pointed the nose of the shuttle in the direction of the capital.

Once they were heading in that direction, Amarria looked around at the planet below. They were flying over the forests and mountains to the east of the city, and they were vast but also untouched.

"Humans have been on this planet for over six hundred years and have not messed with nature at all," she said.

"It may be that they don't need to," Blair said. "I would say there are creatures down there that would be very harmful to them but if there are roads that lead to and from each city, I guess that isn't entirely true. Either that, or there is something lining the roads that scares them off. Who knows?"

"Considering the roads are few and far apart, it would be hard to tell. I wonder what kind of wildlife lives down there?"

"Most likely there are records in the Federation Library but bear in mind why we are here and what we came for."

"I know, believe me. I'm trying to get my mind off that fact, but it hasn't been easy. That's why I'm trying to talk about something else."

"I see. Oh, I can see the capital now."

Amarria looked ahead of the shuttle and was almost stunned by what she saw. There ahead of them was a massive city at the edge of the sea, with grey and gold colored skyscrapers that were angular in design much like the ships they had seen, but these buildings were tall near the center of the city and only grew shorter the further from the center you go. There were some buildings that looked like cathedrals in their fashion and architectural layout, but it was hard to tell from just looking at them at a distance. For all she knew, they could just be office or municipal buildings. One of them may even be the library she was looking for.

The biggest problem that they had to contend with was finding a flat surface to land, and the way the buildings were designed made that very hard to come by.

“It may be difficult to find a landing point,” Blair said as he looked around.

“It appears that they don’t believe in landing zones inside the city,” Amarria said.

She noticed near the water that there was a spaceport or some landing zones in that direction. However, landing there would not be advised as they needed to be discreet.

“I see a landing zone by the water,” she said, “but I doubt we want to land there for obvious reasons.”

Benja came up to the cockpit from the passenger area when he heard the conversation.

“There may be an alternative if we cannot find an LZ,” Benja said. “This shuttle has a drop bay with cables. If we can find a spot away from prying eyes and any surveillance, I can take over the shuttle and lower the two of you into a secure location.”

“Wouldn’t the shuttle be noticed if we did that?” Amarria asked.

“Only once you two go through the cloak. However, the shuttle is also equipped with a holographic projector below. I can simulate the surrounding buildings and drop you two within the projection. Once it is safe to proceed without being spotted, I will give you the signal to go out of the projection. I will wait in the same spot until your return.”

“That may be our best course of action,” Blair said. “We have to get to that library before they close for the day and we don’t have any currency to stay at a hotel, if they have any. We can’t get close to the center of the city as it looks to be too crowded.”

“I have an idea,” Amarria said. “Before we are dropped off anywhere, let’s see if we can spot the library by flying around. Once we know where it is, we can scout a nearby drop point for us to reach the library in the shortest amount of time.”

“Sounds like a good idea. Let’s look and see if we can spot it.”

Blair moved the shuttle west towards the sea along the south side of the central buildings. As they flew around what looked to be the government offices, Amarria could not help but notice how the buildings were centered around a circular driveway, but what surprised her the most when she looked down at the road was how odd it looked.

The roads were black with what appeared to be a barrier separating the road from the sidewalks. The vehicles below did not have tires at all but were hovering above the road. From where she was looking, she could not tell how they were hovering over the street whether it was some form of propulsion, anti-gravity, or some other unseen force. She also spotted other Humans but also members of the aliens that were shown during the briefing back at the RCIA headquarters. She could see that they were conversing with each other, but she could not see whether they were using translators or not.

As they came around to the west side of the government complex, Amarria spotted a building that looked out of place and was smaller than the rest of the buildings. After a few seconds, the building suddenly became quite familiar to her.

“I cannot believe what I am seeing!”

She was dumbfounded by what she saw. The building’s overall exterior structure looked exactly like the Central Library in Luminous! Granted, the Central Library was quite old as it was built at the time the Republic was founded and has gone through renovations and upgrades over the centuries, but the building here was almost an exact replica. The only difference was the colors which were closer to the surrounding structures with purple, dark gray, and gold accents as well as elements of the Federation’s architectural preference being present on parts of the building.

Blair and Benja, however, were not familiar with the Central Library at the Republic capital and could not relate as to why Amarria was so surprised.

“What is it?” Blair said, looking at Amarria and then at the building she was looking at. Amarria turned back towards Blair.

“This library is practically an exact duplicate of the Central Library in Luminous,” she said. “Only the colors and parts of the Federation’s architectural design tend to set it apart from that one.”

“Seriously?” Blair said as he looked at the building again. “Are you sure?”

“I work at the Central Library, Blair. Of course, I’m sure.”

“Why would they model this library after the one in Luminous?” Benja asked.

“Maybe it was one of the few, if any, aspects of Republic society that they liked and admired. Can’t say that I blame them, though. However, this will make things easier.”

“How so?” Blair asked.

“If this is indeed modelled after that library, I will know exactly where to go to get to their historical section. We may not even need to ask for directions at that point.”

“I see. That would make this task far easier and less time-consuming. Now we need to find a point close by for us to be dropped off.”

Blair looked around and spotted a perfect location that was two blocks from the library. It was alleyway away from the eyes of the people and close enough to a main road to follow it right to the library’s entrance. He moved the shuttle into position near the alley entrance and lowered it as far down as it could go.

Blair pressed a button on the console and put the craft on hover. He released the harness, while Amarria did the same. Benja moved away from the cockpit to allow them to exit. Once they passed by him, Benja went into the cockpit and fastened himself in. Blair looked up and noticed some cables with handles and footrests attached. He pressed a button on the wall and the cable the button was connected too lowered until it was close to the floor.

“We will use these to descend,” Blair said to Amarria as he stuck his right foot into the footrest and grabbed the handle. “Lower that one near you and grip it like I’ve done it.”

Amarria looked up at the cable closest to her and followed it back to the button used to lower it. She walked over and pressed the button, lowering the cable close to the floor. She went over and put her foot on the footrest and gripped the handle above her.

“When I give the signal to Benja,” Blair said, “the panels on the floor will retract and only the cables will support us. He will lower the cables till we reach the ground. Once we set foot on the ground, we will let go of the cables and he will retract them. He will then close the panels and we won’t be able to see the shuttle through the cloak. He will find someplace to land out of the way and he will wait for our signal to pick us up. Got all of that?”

“I got it,” Amarria said, though visibly frightened of the thought the floor was going to be removed from under her.

“Alright,” Blair continued, then looked towards the cockpit. “Benja, activate the holoprojector and prepare to retract the floor.”

“You got it,” Benja said. “Standby.”

Benja waited as he looked at the roadway and sidewalk near the alleyway entrance to make sure that no one would see the holoprojection being activated. As soon as it was clear, he activated the projector, closing off the alleyway and making it look like the two buildings at the entrance were connected.

“Hologram activated,” Benja said. “Opening the bay doors. I’ll send you a signal when you can exit the hologram.”

“Understood,” Blair said as he looked back at Amarria. “Amarria, once we get in the

hologram, don't say anything. Sound can still be heard through the hologram.”

“Understood,” Amarria said.

The floor started to split open between Amarria and Blair. Blair lifted his foot that was still on the floor to avoid being pulled back from the floor's retraction. Amarria quickly did the same, gripping the cable tightly. She noticed that the space beneath them was pitch black. It was obvious that the hologram was opaque, not letting any light through. Once the floor was retracted, the cables started to lower them down from the shuttle into the hologram. Once they passed through the cloak, they could no longer see the shuttle that was lowering them, surrounding the two in total darkness. As soon as they were close to the ground, Amarria held the cable stop. She got off the cable and felt the ground under her feet. She had no idea where Blair was in the pitch dark until she felt two hands on her shoulders. She suddenly felt his breath near her face.

“The way out is behind you,” he whispered. “Benja will send a signal to a bracelet I am wearing that will flash slightly when the coast is clear.”

Blair turned Amarria around and placed his hands again on her shoulders from behind. While it was dark, if the light on the bracelet Blair was wearing went off, it would be noticeable easily. After several seconds, a light appeared on Blair's right wrist. Both of them immediately walked out of the hologram into the blinding light of the local sun. Both of them waited a moment for their eyes to adjust and get their bearings.

Once their eyes adjusted, Amarria noticed the barrier that was taller than her separating the sidewalk they were on with the road. A car that was hovering off of the ground turned onto the street from their right and was heading their direction towards the library. As it passed, they noticed there was little to no sound coming from the vehicle. After it passed, Blair pulled out a scanner from his right pocket, as discreetly as possible.

“Let's head towards the library,” Blair said. “I want to take some scans to figure out how the vehicles are traveling on the roads here.”

The two of them started heading east towards the library two blocks away. They were coming up on a cross street and the barrier was ahead of them as well. Amarria looked around and saw a crosswalk activation post. She pressed the button to cross which gave an activation chime. While they waited for the light to change, Blair took some quick scans of the barrier while more vehicles passed by in front of them.

Once the light for the cross traffic changed to stop the flow of traffic, the barrier in front of them split open on both their side and the opposite side, but then extended to cut off traffic from the crosswalk. Blair and Amarria crossed the street while Blair held the scanner downward to his side, once again doing so discreetly. After they crossed, the barrier closed behind them and disappeared alongside the crosswalk.

As they continued towards the library, Blair looked at the display on the scanner.

“I see,” he said. “The barrier is a typical shield that works both ways, preventing anything from going through it. It offers protection for both pedestrians and drivers. However, what it is protecting pedestrians from is even more surprising.”

“And that is?” Amarria asked.

“The street is emitting an electromagnetic field. The vehicles are essentially using an opposing field underneath them to hover and move over the street. If someone with, say, something electric were to accidentally fall into the street, that device would suffer a short from the EM field. That may even include cybernetics if applicable.”

“I see, but wouldn't we be hearing the sound of the EM field as the vehicles pass?”

“Maybe, but there is a chance it was refined to reduce noise. Either way, it is an intriguing system. If the barrier exists on the streets outside the city and there is an audible hum that can be heard, this may explain why the local wildlife haven’t messed with them.”

As they continued walking towards the library, Amarria looked and spotted a few groups of aliens across the street walking the opposite direction. There were three or four members of each of the three races according to the briefing seen conversing with each other. What surprised them the most was that these aliens were all speaking English fluently!

Amarria looked at Blair who gestured to wait a moment before she said anything. Once the aliens had crossed the street that was behind them, Blair looked at Amarria.

“I didn’t want to risk them possibly hearing us,” he said. “We don’t know if any of them have a heightened sense of hearing.”

“I understand,” Amarria said, “but why were they speaking the same language as us? It usually takes translators for us to understand the alien races we know.”

“We only discovered the races we know recently. The Federation may have discovered them far earlier than that and managed to get them to learn our language at one point in the past several centuries.”

“I though religion and the military were the only things that they were unified under but language? It makes me wonder about their culture and if it was affected as well.”

“We’ll learn more about that once we reach the library. We only have one more street to cross before we reach it.”

Blair and Amarria looked up at the massive tower behind the library ahead of them. It was easily over a mile tall and highly decorated with gold accents down the sides of the building. There was no question that the building was the center of government for the Draco Federation. Amarria began to wonder kind of person or people govern the Federation in a building such as that one. Not even the Republic Senate building was as big or as decorative by comparison. She began to wonder where this design or for that matter the overall design of the Federation ships and buildings stem from. Only the library retained a familiar architectural design, albeit with elements of the surrounding buildings incorporated into it.

They approached the crosswalk activation post for the last street they needed to cross and Amarria pressed the button. After ten seconds, the traffic signal began to change until the barrier engaged to stop the cross-traffic, even though it was light traffic. Once the signal changed for them to walk across the street, the barrier changed to allow them to walk across like the previous street. Blair and Amarria crossed the street and were soon on the side where the library was. The barriers changed back to allow the cross traffic to continue unhindered. They were now at the base of the stairs to the library before noting a center podium with two words on it. It said “Grand Library” etched into the podium.

“So that’s the name of the library, huh?” Amarria said. “Let’s go on in and find the history database before they close. Even if we find them, it may take some time to download the information.”

“Let’s head inside then and get to work.”

Amarria and Blair climbed the stairs that led up to the front of the library. The stairs were about as high as going up one floor. Once they got to the top of the stairs, they approached the main doors and opened them. Amarria was practically wide-eyed at what she saw once they walked in. The library’s layout was exactly the same as the Central Library in Luminous with three stories containing digital data archives on each floor with a massive front foyer, but the décor was more regal and refined than what she had anticipated. Where the Central Library’s

décor was modelled after the style of architecture found in government buildings back on ancient Earth, this library looked like a palace with white and gold accents. There were also paintings and artwork on the walls and the ceilings in the foyer depicting what appeared to be religious iconography as well as celestial backgrounds such as systems and galaxies. It looked more like a cross between a museum and a library.

Amarria couldn't stop looking at the decorations and the décor of the library. To her, it was like being home but at the same time it felt like she was either in a dream or a fantasy. Blair noticed she was heavily admiring the library and tapped her on the shoulder.

"Come on," he said. "If you stay here any longer, people will start to ask questions."

Amarria snapped out of her daze and realized she was admiring the architecture a bit too much. She slapped her face lightly with both hands against her cheeks.

"Sorry about that," Amarria said. "I guess I was admiring the artwork and architecture too deeply. The history section should be on the second floor on the right if the layout is the same."

Blair and Amarria headed towards a flight of stairs located in the middle of the library and towards the right. There were some Humans and aliens sitting at tables and looking between the data archives lined on the shelves. The shelves, much like the Central Library, are made of metal that contain heat sinks and cooling systems to keep the massive computer archives cool. The data archives contained massive amounts of texts and books in digital format for those who wanted to download them onto tablets to read either in the library or at home. How much of the archives contained fact versus fiction remained to be seen, but that was not the objective of Blair and Amarria's mission.

As they walked up the steps, there were not as many people on the second floor as there were downstairs. However, they still had to keep an eye out for anyone who would question any of their activities as they were getting the history of the Federation. They began to walk along the edge of the aisles of shelves that contained data archives near the center of the second floor, looking for the historical section. The data archives were generally separated by author by last name alphabetically, by series also alphabetically, or, in this case of history records, time periods. Amarria was quick to notice as they walked past each aisle that the historical archives were labeled on each aisle starting with the history of early Humankind back on Earth. She knew they had to walk down several aisles of data archives to reach the section with the time period they needed.

After several minutes, Amarria stopped when she found that section.

"Here is the section we are looking for," Amarria whispered to Blair to avoid being overheard by others.

The section she stopped at contained data archives in relation to the Expansion Era of the Republic. For the first time, she began to wonder about the fact that this section even existed in this library. The Draco Federation, or rather the Humans of the Draco family, were exiled from the Republic for reasons that were gruesome because of the Tenebris cult the original head of the family had created. Elements of such a low point and shameful aspect of their lives should have been either removed or glossed over considering the aliens that are among them would read about their acts and become weary of joining the Federation. Whether those alien races have read or downloaded the Draco's history yet is unclear. If they have read it and joined, she would be wondering why they joined the Federation if the truth was presented to them.

However, it was obvious that the Draco family never forgot their roots or where they came from. The fact that this section existed means they are not forgetting their past. The

question now is how much of it did they rewrite to appease the citizens of the Federation?

“Everything alright?” Blair whispered.

“Yeah,” Amarria said. “Just had some things on my mind.”

Amarria looked at the time period listed on the aisle and noticed something odd as she looked at the years. It showed that the Expansion Era ended six and a half centuries ago, but Amarria knew it ended sooner than that. She looked over at the next aisle and saw that the next section was labeled the “Early Federation Era.”

Amarria had a slight grin on her face. Of course, the Expansion Era ended over six hundred years ago for the Tenebris because that was when they were exiled. They had no idea when it really ended or if they even knew it ended at all.

Amarria looked over at Blair.

“Blair,” she whispered, “I want you to find a data station and research the current structure of the government. It will give you something to do and look busy.”

“Okay,” Blair whispered, “but what are you going to do?”

“I’m going to get the point in history when the Tenebris managed to sneak away from Republic Forces and founded the Federation. Based on the timeframe of the aisles that I am seeing, it would be my assumption that the Draco family separated from the rest of the Tenebris at the very beginning. I’ll try to get information on when this war started, but there could be a chance that the war only started recently.”

“I see. How long do you think that will take to get the information?”

“A few hours at least. We are talking about over six hundred years of history and development, not to mention alien involvement. I don’t know if the tablet can hold all of that information, but I will try what I can.”

“In case it is needed, you can transmit some of it to the shuttle’s computer and Benja can store it there to save you some room. I’m going back outside to let him to send him a signal to elsewhere and land to save power for the shuttle. The cloak and the hologram can be a huge drain on the shuttle, especially if he is only hovering there.”

“Understood, I will be down this aisle when you return.”

Blair nodded his head in acknowledgement and headed back towards the stairs to leave the library. Amarria walked down the aisle that indicated the end of the Expansion Era according to the Tenebris or the Draco depending on who was telling the history. When she reached the end of that era, she reached into her purse and pulled out her tablet. She activated the tablet, waiting until it was ready to retrieve information. She put it against the data archive, physically touching the back of the tablet against it. As soon as she did so, the archive activated, and the tablet started to download historical information from the last year the Tenebris or the Draco had information involving the Expansion Era. A percentage appeared as it began to download the copy and store it on the tablet.

Amarria was surprised for only for a short moment about the fact the tablet could even access the archives. However, the archives here were like the archives in the Central Library in terms of design and structure. Despite so many years passing, the process of information transfer by wireless or contact remained the same.

The tablet soon indicated that the information was copied in full. Amarria took the tablet away from the archive and walked over to the next archive dated the following year. This would be when the Federation was founded or at least its early years. This was definitely going to take a long time to download six hundred and fifty years of history.

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*Bridge, Covert-Ops Stealth Warship Cavalier, Planet Tenebris Prime Polar Orbit
Tenebris System, Southwestern Region, 119 Light-Years from Ruber System
4:02pm, October 18, 5434 A.D.*

“They are on their way back?”

Captain Luke was a little surprised to hear from the tactical officer that Specter Team was heading back to the *Cavalier*. They had been down on the planet for more than three hours, but it would appear they gathered the necessary information during that time.

“Yes, sir,” the tactical officer said. “I’ve detected the cloak signature of their transport. It shows it is heading our way.”

“Very well,” Luke asked. “Communications, once the shuttle lands, have Specter One report to the briefing room. I want Revenant One there as well.”

“Yes, sir,” the communications officer said.

“Yuki, you have the bridge.”

“Yes, captain,” Yuki said.

Luke got up and headed for the elevator. He began to wonder what the Specter Team found down there and what will be needed to get the information they came all this way to get.

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*Briefing Room, Covert-Ops Stealth Warship Cavalier, Planet Tenebris Prime Polar Orbit
Tenebris System, Southwestern Region, 119 Light-Years from Ruber System
4:16pm, October 18, 5434 A.D.*

“THAT is what they wear?!”

Brenda could barely hold in her shock. Lakia brought up footage of her team’s recon on the screen in the briefing room to show both Brenda and Luke what they had recorded. Lakia managed to focus on the attire of ten specific people, namely a member of each gender of the five current families that make up the Tenebris Dominion. According to Lakia, every member of the same family and gender wore the same exact thing, so that was the reason for her focusing on only these ten people, whose footage showed their entire outfit as they walked around the city.

Lakia was not at all surprised at Brenda’s response. What the people of the Dominion wore was nothing less of a “uniform dress code.” This had only been heard of among the civilians of the Republic for private schools, but never among the public of the Republic.

“Yes, it is,” Lakia said. “Let me focus on each one as the attire fits the function of that family member. First, as you noticed in the pictures, the one thing they all have in common is that they don’t show any skin aside from their hands and their head except for one group which I will get to shortly. Let me start with the attire that you will end up wearing, Brenda.”

Lakia focused on a picture of a women whose identity was like Brenda, in this case, one of the Hispanic identity.

“This appears to be the attire of those from the Tigris family,” Lakia continued. “It is a one-piece dark orange dress with silver accents at the collar, the waist, and the bottom edge of the dress that is just above the ankles. There is a similarly colored coat worn over it with the silver accents on the collar and the end of the sleeves. They wear brown-colored boots as well. Their hair appears to be straight with no visible deviations of this style and color. In other words, their hair is naturally brown.”

Lakia focused on that fact specifically as Brenda's hair was colored blonde, meaning she would have to dye it to her natural color. Brenda wasn't too thrilled about this fact, but she knew it would need to be done. Brenda did see something in the picture that she was curious about.

"What about that necklace I am seeing in the picture?" Brenda asked.

There was a long necklace that was silver in color with a large tear-shaped pendant attached to it. She also noticed that everyone, even the men, were wearing this pendant.

"We are not sure what this necklace is," Lakia said. "We saw it on everyone. We thought it was an identification device of some kind in the shape of a pendant, but we detected no electronics when we got a close scan of it. As far as we can tell, it is some form of religious jewelry with a liquid inside. However, the scanner could not determine the liquid inside due to the metal used in the pendant. It is worn by everyone though, so that will have to be replicated somehow. We may have to put water in the pendant in case there is a reason for the liquid."

"I'm surprised the scanner could not determine what is inside," Luke said. "I'm also concerned that this liquid must be important for everyone to be wearing it around their necks and that our lack of info as to what is inside would prove to be an issue later."

"I'm aware, Captain," Lakia said, "but if we manage to get the historical information we need before that becomes a problem, then I would say the risk may be worth it."

"Very well, Specter One. Continue with your report."

Lakia changed the picture to a male with the same skin pigmentation and colored outfit.

"This is the attire for a male member of the Tigris family," Lakia said. "They wear a coat that is the same color and style as the women and wear it like a blazer as well. The shirt is a button up shirt that is silver in color with dark orange accents. The slacks are the reverse being dark orange in color with silver accents. They wear boots that are brown as well and the slacks are tucked into them. Both males and females have been spotted in areas involving art and culture."

"They were the family that specialized in the arts," Brenda said. "That comes as no surprise that they would be in such locations."

Lakia changed the display to show both another man and a woman who looked to have the much lighter skin tones but with the same facial features as the Tigris. Their outfits appeared to be one-piece jumpsuits of some fashion that were yellow with black vertical stripes down the sleeves and the sides of the legs.

"What group is this?" Luke asked.

"These are members of the Pistris family based on their accent and dialogue. These people were spotted in areas involving logistics and transportation. They appear to be always on the go. Those jumpsuits are a good indication that they may not even have permanent residence."

"From what I remember of the Pistris family," Brenda said, "they were nomadic in their lifestyle before they were even exiled. That not changed in that regards if what you say is true about their professions."

"It would explain the jobs they seem to be tasked with that we saw," Lakia said.

"That may be the only way to tell the difference at first glance," Luke said. "Is the uniform attire among them all is due to their family traditions from centuries ago?"

"That may be the case, but until we get more information, all we have are speculations."

"Very well. What other attire did you witness from the other families?"

"Well, going forward, the styles tend to be a bit more specialized and, in fact, very easy to identify. Let me show you this next set of attire."

The next pair of styles she showed were dressed in what looked like all-white uniforms

that looked like military uniforms but did not have any insignias. They did however have name tags on them.

“We have identified these as members of the Aquilam family,” Lokia said. “We noticed them near hospitals and law enforcement centers. That white is very easy to spot in a crowd. Also, we saw them near airports and spaceports, namely for civilian craft.”

“They are doctors, police officers, and pilots?” Luke asked. “It seems like they work for civilian services and agencies based on this information.”

“That was our assumption as well, though we don’t know why. We know these people are of British identity, though. I say that because the next set of attire are of the Lupus family who are of the German identity based on their accent, but their clothes are rather odd.”

Lokia changed the focused attire to two people who were in black outfits. There was a distinction in the attire between the men and the women of the Lupus family. The men were wearing what appeared to be one-piece suits similar to Pistris members but they had more pockets and gear on them. The women on the other hand wore attire that looked like what the female Aquilam members were wearing.

“Why are they wearing different attire from each other?” Luke asked. “The man in the picture looks like he is a technician, but the woman looks like a business woman or a politician.”

“Considering where we spotted these two,” Lokia said, “you are correct, though the woman in the picture and others like her have been seen near government-related offices. We’re not sure why there is a difference, but the Lupus members are not the only oddities we spotted.”

Lokia switched the pictures to the last pair of pictures, but the two in the picture, which were those of African identity, were both men in what appeared to be military combat attire, not in a casual or dress uniform. For that matter, they appeared to be the same person.

“Considering the remaining member of the Tenebris is the Aspergillus family,” Luke said, “I can tell that this person is part of that family and they still uphold the military tradition of their family. What I don’t get is why you took a picture of the same guy and not any of their women?”

“There are two reasons behind that,” Lokia said. “The first reason is that there were no women of that family that could be seen at all. We looked but could not find any. Either that family for whatever reason is all male or that the women have a different profession that would not require them to be in the city. Also, this picture is NOT of the same guy.”

“What are you talking about? They have the same face!”

“Sir, while we were there, we noticed a lot of people who looked like other fellow members of their families. Either everyone in the Tenebris are having multiple births such as twins or more, or we are looking at a society who is using cloning to increase their numbers. For that matter, it may be both. What I do know is that this means I cannot be seen hiding in plain sight with Revenant One. I will have to use optical camouflage and keep an eye on her. However, we are presented with other problems in getting information from their library outside of the attire issue.”

“How so?” Luke asked.

“We surveyed their capital for any buildings that looked like a library while checking the rest of the city out. You may want to see this, but let me brief you on where we are going to run into some difficulties...”

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