Chapter 151

A trip that would have taken nearly a month prior was only going to take us three days.  We were returning to the Tirani station where we had picked up the Tirani envoys to the Drusi so long ago.  Mozzie had been among those envoys as a guard.  The Tirani race were traders and mercenaries.  They loved a good fight but were more honorable than most humans I knew.  We did a deep scan of the massive station when we entered the system.  The Fateweaver was using its hologram projectors and appeared as a segmented trader.

The hologram technology had been my pet project over the decades, and the Fateweaver was the only ship equipped to disguise its hull. The other Fateweaver-class ships had additional weapons systems in place of the emitters. The density of the projection was enough to show up on standard sensors. Disguising our hull had come a long way since the Void Phoenix.

Mozzie was on the bridge and slightly nervous. Mozzie was going to tell his parents he had married a human.  They were completely incompatible physiology-wise, as Tirani had copper-based blood, not iron.  But Luna and Mozzie are probably the happiest couple on the ship.  My other goal in stopping here was to hire as many Tirani mercs as I could.  We needed the influx of Marines into our Navy.  Tirani did not accept Sol credits, so I brought along a fair amount of precious metals to trade.

I got an alert when logging into their system as Deven Wellspring.  My account was flagged, and the station administrator called me.  Concerned, I answered the call and put the crew on alert.  The Tirani on the call was very pleasant.  He was just calling to welcome me to his humble station and wanted me to have dinner with him that evening.  It was like he was sucking up to me.  Did the Fateweaver impress him?  It was an alien ship, and I doubted he knew how powerful it was under its disguise.

I accepted the invitation as maybe he could help get some leads for a large cohort of mercenaries that would be interested in relocating.  When I exited the shuttle, I had four Marine guards with me.  You were allowed to carry weapons in the station, so they had gecko armor and heavy stun rifle.  Mozzie went to take Luna to meet the parents, and five of my other Tirani Marines would check on the landscape for mercenaries.

I reached the dinner, and there were a lot of Tirani captains at the meeting.  Some merchant captains and some mercenary captains.  But I was confusingly the guest of honor.  I was a little on guard until I learned they wanted to meet the co-owner of Purple Grass Emporium.

Yes, the purple grass had taken off in the last fifteen years and was the hottest commodity throughout Tirani space. It took me a few verifications on my PerCom to access my holdings, and I suddenly understood the interest in me. The account was bursting. I explained that I had not been in communication with the Tirani, to whom I had licensed it.

The station commander smiled with his bare teeth. Just about every Tirani used the purple grass as a method to relax. There was an entire line of edibles and beverages with the purple grass. I was flashing through my PerCom to get the currency conversation rates. The station commander and administrator explained that nearly ten billion Tirani consumed the purple grass daily.

I looked up from PerCom at all the smiling Tirani and returned it. So, who here was a mercenary captain?

The Tirani had a clan system. Each clan had a head with an array of captains below him or her. These captains could run a small mercenary squad or trading company. Or they could run an entire ship, a heavy transport for mercs, or even a large trader. The Tirani favored the mercenary life over the trader’s life, though.

I had seven merc captains and five trader captains from some of the strongest Tirani clans in front of me. Even though the Tirani were known as honorable traders and mercs I assumed they were like every other race, and not everyone lived up to their expectations.

Still, the traders could help bring an influx of trade goods to the Bradbury. I was not aware of the civilian needs in the Bradbury system, but common luxury goods would be welcome. I knew the materials that the Navy and the Marines needed for the production of Slipstream fighters and combat power armor. The Fateweaver-class ships already had all the material needed for their construction.

The Tirani captains were eager to work with me. I started with the traders and contracted all of them with cargo. I put funds in escrow with the station administrator. They would be released on delivery of the goods. The mercenary captains were harder to work for after I told them what I wanted.

Tirani preferred their independence, and being locked down for a long-term contract was something they did not like to do. I would not take anything less than a twenty-year contract. With the seven merc captains, only two were interested in the long-term contract. They were both from the Bravados Clan—a young clan with only these two captains. They were an offshoot of the Preytorus Clan.

The two captains, Jaye and Lyle, were brothers. They had worked for their father before his element of the Preytorus Clan was destroyed when defending a planet from the quadrupeds seven years ago. When the clan did not seek support to get revenge, the brothers broke away and formed their new clan. They only recently came into possession of two small subspace transports, which allowed them to take missions in other star systems.

I sent a message on my PerCom for the five Tirani I had sent to hire Marines. The message was to check into the Bravados clan. As dinner finished, I had a stack of merchant contracts completed. No contract was completed yet for the mercenaries, so I returned to the Fateweaver.

At the staff meeting, I got to listen to the story of Mozzie introducing Luna to his parents. It did not go well for Mozzie. It was fine for Luna, who had a dozen stories about Mozzie’s adventures. The funniest of which was Mozzie getting married to a cat-like woman by challenging her to a wrestling match and winning. I remembered that I had to intercede on the behalf of Mozzie and get the marriage annulled. Mozzie’s mother loved Luna, and the Tirani dd did not weigh much on the children. Adoption was prevalent in their culture—especially since many Tirani mercenaries died in the line of duty.

After that, we started talking about the Bravados clan. I had the report from the Tirani Marines we sent. They had two terrible spacecraft with a few alien engineers. Jaye and Lyle had seventy-three mercenaries. The Tirani had an internal ranking system for the mercenary captains and companies; they were average at best. The brothers tended to take a lot of missions that would put them into conflict with the quadrupeds.

Still, seventy-three was an underwhelming number of Mercenaries. With my new wealth, I was hoping for something closer to five hundred and even enough civilians to seed a community in the Bradbury system.

I had other recommendations from the Tirani I sent out. There were dozens of independents and small teams of two to five Tirani. Still not enough to reach my goal. If I wanted to reach my goal, we would have to travel to the Tirani homeworld, Gladium. A five-day trip in subspace, taking us further away from the Bradbury system.

It was an unplanned trip, but I decided I might be able to convince some Tirani to relocate. The first thing I needed to do was work out a contract with the two brothers. I invited them to the Fateweaver with forty other Tirani my Marines had vetted. I was not involved in convincing them. Luna and Abby would show them what we had to offer and focus on our upcoming conflict with the quadrupeds.

It was three days before we added twenty-nine Tirani crew and the seventy-three Tirani from the Bravados clan. We also managed to convince a small number of their families to relocate. Fifty-two Tirani, we would have to pick on the planet Gladium with the Fateweaver. It was just another reason for us to travel there.

The Fateweaver ending spending seven days at the Tirani station. All the mercs were on the Bravados ships and heading toward the Bradbury system. Every evening, I was having dinner with Tirani merchants and making deals. It was impossible to even put a dent into my Tirani accounts. It would be good to meet my business partner as well. Obviously, he had been honorable in our transaction with the purple grass. I needed to turn all my Tirani credits into something I could use to help the Bradbury system. The best place to do that would be on the Tirani homeworld.

Even with our detour, we should still arrive in the Bradbury system before the Bravados ships.