Chapter

With the quadruped fleets chasing the Fateweaver gave Cloud Jumper much greater freedom to make attack runs.  This was one of the scenarios we ran in VR, except that this time, the short-range fighters of the enemy could not form mass swarms to slowly damage the Fateweaver. They had no strategy other than to seek revenge against my ship.

We tore through their ships with Slipstream fighters over and over again.  After hours and hours of combat, the pilots were too exhausted to continue sorties.  The Federation fleet was sweeping the outer system of smaller stations and slower non-combat craft.  The disruptor missiles the enemy was firing began to slacken.  They required a lot of rare elements to make.

The enemy stopped firing the disruptors, and six hours later, their surviving ships started to flee.  They were all fleeing in just two vectors. The Admiral asked if we should continue sweeping the system as their warships were fleeing as well.  Their thirst for revenge against the Fateweaver slackened as they realized they could not catch us.

We spent two days sweeping the system and destroying factories on the planet from a distance.  The Admiral’s fleet did most of the planetary bombing as they had the ordinance for it.  We crippled the quadruped’s ability to produce ships and munitions in this system.

After doing as much damage as possible, we regrouped at the system’s edge.  The Admiral and all the navigators worked on the vector information we gathered.  We tracked the fleeing and arriving ships to three different stars.  We needed to leave and rendezvous with Samantha and Desdemona’s fleet.  I sent the Cloud Jumper ahead in order to make the predetermined time.  The Fateweaver was going to stay at the lower bands and travel through subspace at the same rate as the Federation fleet.

In subspace, I got the compiled reports from our attacks on the shipyard system. Five shipyards, thirty-eight space stations, twenty-nine battleships, two hundred cruisers, seven hundred frigates and destroyers, and over fifteen hundred support ships. The number of fighters was in the thousands, but with the disruption of our sensors, we could not calculate an accurate number.

The figure at the bottom was also an estimate. An estimate that sent chills through me. Eight-two million—the number of lives we had reaped in the system. Of that number, ninety-nine percent were the quadrupeds, and the other one percent were the aquatic subservient species that ran their shipyards.

We had detected other alien species in the system, but they were all contained on the battleships, and we could not risk rescuing them. During the transit, I sat with Admiral LaRoche to review the battle details. I had lost two Slipstream fighters and one pilot of the heavy fighters. He had lost twenty-seven gunships and thirty-eight crew. It was a lopsided victory.

He was focused on what the Federation needed to do to get the technology from us. He knew my concerns about the technology leaking back to the Brotherhood and Godfather organizations. All of his assurances would not sway me. My compromise was he could send materials to build a fleet of twelve Fateweaver-class cruisers. The crews would be a mix of Federation and Arcadian crews, with the Marines, engineers and Slipstream pilots on board, all coming from our training program. The Fateweavers would operate in pairs to help the Federation keep its borders safe and would not participate in expansionist wars.

I knew it would only take them a few decades to start to assimilate the technology, even if I put enough safeguards in place. We were creating a joint police force. I also did not see the first pair of Fateweavers being turned over to his command in less than five years. He was willing to take what he could get, and the Squirrel were already working on planetary gravimetric sensors that could be manned by my people and self-detonated if needed. This would allow us to send messages instantly across lightyears.

The problem the scientists were having was sensors placed on a planet with its own massive gravity had difficulty causing enough differentiation to effectively transmit reliable signals. Putting them on a space station or ship was out of the question at this point, as both were easily compromised.

I did not have any updates on the Void Phoenix or its crew. I was expecting to hear from the New Horizon soon. I hoped they had been able to destroy the pod that Broderick sent. They were going to get the message telling them where to find Rae’Ver. On one hand if we had killed the First Citizen elf, he would not have been able to send the signal. On the other side of the argument, he was alive and gave us a bargaining chip.

The discussions with the Admiral were pleasant. He mostly wanted to talk about politics, regions of space, and trade. I humored him with the conversation but was thankful when we emerged at the rally point. Desdemona and Samantha’s fleet were present. Both Admirals came to the Fateweaver for the debriefing of the joint action.

I was reviewing the details and listening as Desdemona revealed her success. The first system they attacked was dedicated to mining throughout the system, using mostly captured labor. They swept the system together, and when the quadrupeds understood they were outmatched, they started destroying the mining stations and ships in the system. They still managed to liberate a little over two million beings from eighteen different species. Twice that number had been killed.

The passenger ships and supply ships could only evacuate one hundred thousand at a time. Meaning they needed more ships or twenty trips. The Federation was in the process of sending two colony stasis ships, which could each handle two hundred thousand people at a time. The city of Acradian was expecting an influx of half a million alien species over the next four months.

They were confident the quadrupeds were not coming to the system because they hit the shipyards in the next system they entered. Their shipyards were even larger than the system I had obliterated. They destroyed nine shipyards, but five of them had been focused on smaller ships. The system also did not have any habitable planets. The only major issue was one of her Slipstream fighters crashed into a battleship, and that battleship escaped into subspace.

This detail had everyone concerned. We could not let the technology be reverse-engineered. The good news was the scanner data showed the Slipstream fighter that crashed was over ninety percent destroyed. It was not much of a debate that we had to push the attack. They had tracked the fleeing ships to two different systems from our data. That gave us four target systems.

All ships in both fleets also needed to be resupplied. Desdemona’s resupply ships were all focused on carrying passengers. It would take months to resupply and get the fleets positioned to press further in the quadruped territory. I shifted all supplies to the Cloud Jumper and ordered Captain Kenji to the system to protect the evacuation of the miners. It should be months before any type of reprisal came, but I wanted to be safe.

The number of refugees was going to give Surchi a headache, especially with all the Tirani we were already immigrating to the Bradbury system. Admiral LaRoche followed my order, transferred supplies to Samantha’s Battleship, and attached two gunship cruisers to it to support the Cloud Jumper.

Desdemona was not happy when Admiral LaRoche let slip our negotiations for twelve Fateweaver-class cruisers. She was adamantly opposed, no matter how many safeguards were in place. She used my quick assimilation of technology as an example. I could tell she did not like the power I held to make decisions. There was a formal government on the planet, but I essentially had an entire workforce of Squirrel scientists, engineers, and shipwrights working at my behest and loyal to me. That did not include my army of engineering and manufacturing bots.

I knew she thought I controlled too much power, especially when it came to making decisions. She would try to reason with me in private later on when things settled down. It was five days of maintenance and discussions before we were headed back to the Bradbury system.

The plan was we would resupply. Then Desdemona would take her ship, the Excalibur, and the newly finished Nebula Hunter with four support ships to meet with Kenji on the Cloud Jumper. Those three ships would attack another quadruped system on their own. With its slower ships, the Federation would take three months to get its not assault fleet back to this region of space. I planned to find the Void Phoenix. But not everything goes according to plan.

When we arrived in Bradbury, I got a slight shock. All Abby could say was I told you so. Mozzie and Gabby had purchased over two hundred ships using my funds from the purple grass and had established their own clan, the Chaotica Clan. The numbers were staggering as well, one hundred forty-two thousand Tirani. Chaos was the best word for it.

Suruchi was screaming for the bloody mess I had created, Tirani Merchants, refugees, and now an entire city’s population of Tirani on top of it. I was not going anywhere for some time to help sort out the chaos in the system.