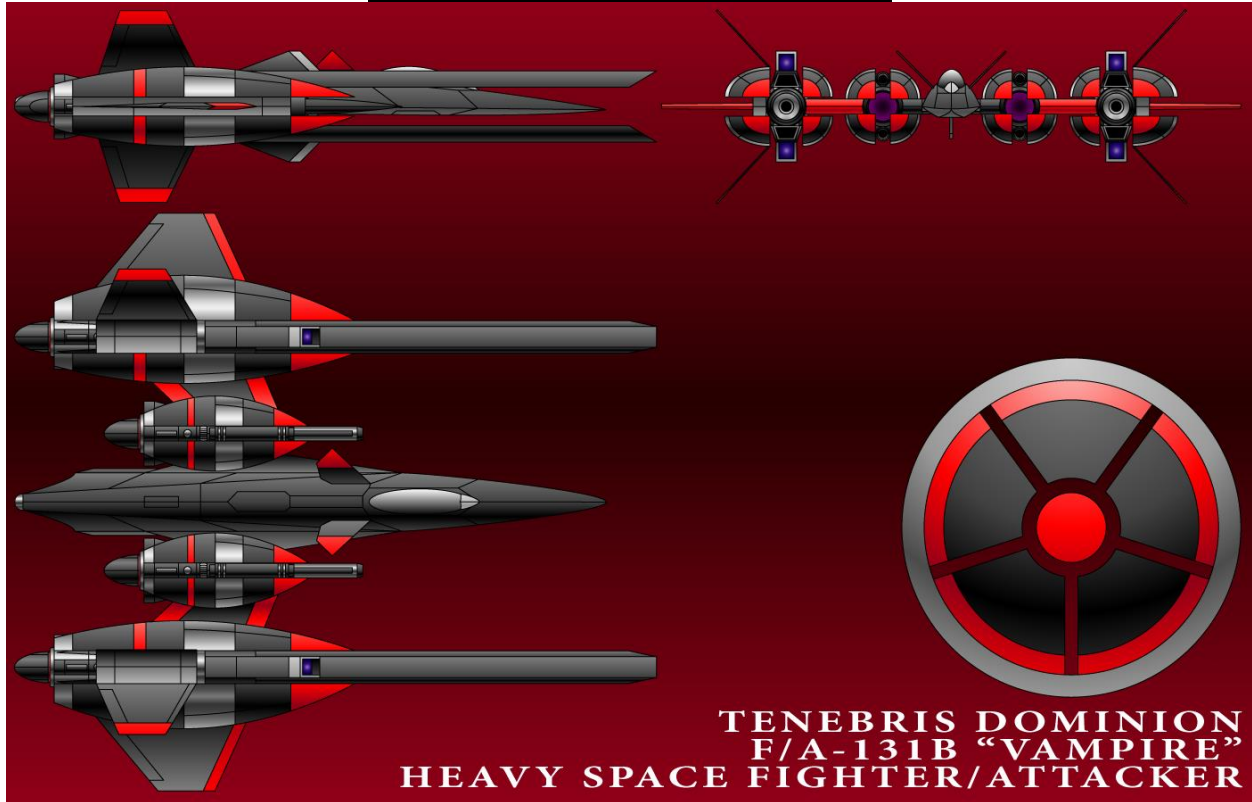


Warring Factions: The Novus Initium Saga
Episode VII: The Tiger and the Dragon



PART 2

*Tribal Council Chamber, Central Tower, City of Plena Tenebris, Capital of Tenebris Dominion
Planet Tenebris Prime, Tenebris System, Southwestern Region
11:05am, October 26, 5434 A.D. (The Next Day)*

“I would like to present you all with a proposal today.”

Miya hasn't been as nervous as she was ever since she first became the Tigris Tribe's Chief. She and her grandmother spent the better part of the evening last night putting together the proposal to establish peace with the Draco Federation. If they accept the proposal, then they can focus their attention on the possible invasion by the Novus Initium Republic. Miya's biggest concern was whether the other Chiefs will accept the proposal along with Armani, the one person who has been absent for the past week only appearing for services daily.

As the meeting started once again without Armani, Miya's fears and concerns began to creep into her mind. However, she knew this proposal was important and needed to present it, even if everyone was not present to hear it right now.

When Miya made her announcement, all of the Chiefs looked her way with curious expressions on their faces. Miya has addressed the Chiefs multiple times before but their stare this time made her even more nervous than she has ever been before.

“What do you have to propose now?” Chief Nicola of the Aquilam Tribe asked. “Is it for us to calm down and think rationally about our next move like you have for the past week?”

“Not this time,” Miya said. “I have a different proposal that I want to present to you all.”

“What is this proposal in relation to?” Chief Beverly of the Lupus Tribe asked.

“We have been arguing over what to do with the Republic for the past week, but the one thing we have not addressed is what to do about the current war we are in. We have been at war with the Federation for so long that we have dedicated massive amounts of resources and manpower to reclaiming our misguided brethren from the lost Draco Tribe. However, for more than five weeks, the Federation has managed to stop our forces with their newest line of vessels, namely their dreadnoughts and supercarriers. This has resulted in an increase in our losses against their new line of warships based on the records my Tribe has received. I’ve also noticed a record yesterday added to our archives after our meeting showing that the Federation has managed to reacquire one of their planets that we recently conquered. This happened while we were focused on what to do about the possible incursion of our capital by forces from the Novus Initium Republic.”

Ebony looked away from Miya, ashamed that her Tribe, the soldiers and officers who usually take up the bulk of the military, were not making any progress against the Federation forces. Miya pointing out that fact in their session no doubt embarrassed her which was not the point that Miya was trying to make. Miya decided to continue to talk about her proposal.

“The reason I have been advocating for us to remain reserved about taking sudden action against the Republic is that we are still at war with the Federation. If our forces are now being pushed back by the Federation and we launch our forces against the Republic at the same time without knowing what they are capable of, we would see losses at an increased rate. We may even lose our nation and our way of life. Do any of you want to see the Dominion fall against the forces of both the Federation and the Republic?”

The other Chiefs looked at each other. Miya knew that her point was getting through based on their reactions and facial expressions. The Federation had the Dominion in a stalemate for weeks, but if it wasn’t for the Federation victory of “liberating” one of their former planets from the Dominion last night, her case may not have carried as much weight as it does now. She only received that notification from their records while she and her grandmother were working out the proposal. It was her grandmother’s suggestion to use this information to prove that the Dominion had reached its limit and that the Federation was starting to counter the Dominion’s forces. Miya was concerned that the information would have the opposite effect on the Chiefs but now she was glad to follow her grandmother’s advice in presenting it.

“Let me ask this then,” Chief Beverly of the Lupus Tribe said. “What is it that you are proposing to us to help us and our nation out of this situation?”

Miya took a deep breath. Now was the time for her to announce her proposal.

The hatch on the central podium suddenly opened, causing Miya to suddenly stop her words while the other Chiefs looked towards the center of the room. His Majesty Pope Armani suddenly rose from the opening, his hood on his garb off his head and his staff in hand. Miya’s confidence suddenly faded, replaced with fear. She took a deep breath as the platform under Armani’s feet came to a stop, his eyes looking straight into hers with a serious expression on his face. She wasn’t sure how much of the conversation Armani overheard, but if he did hear any of it, it must have upset him greatly for him to actually make an appearance in the meeting.

Once raised his staff up and brought the metal ball end at the bottom of the staff against the platform to make sure they gave him their full attention.

“Chief Miya of the Tigris Tribe,” Armani said. “If you value your position and your fellow Tribe, you will refrain from speaking any form of heresy in this chamber!”

Miya was suddenly confused. Was Armani referring to what Miya was saying about the

Dominion forces losing a Federation world? As far as she knew, that was the only thing that she brought up thus far in this meeting. She and her grandmother spent all night working on this proposal for her, and she wasn't about to just suddenly stop short of presenting it to everyone, especially now that Armani was present.

That thought alone caused the fear that Miya had felt to give way to anger. She had something meaningful and significant to present for the first time as Chief and she was not about to let her work go to waste.

"To what 'heresy' are you referring to, Your Majesty Pope?" Miya asked in an angry tone. "I was only mentioning the facts that I was given concerning our forces losing a planet that once belonged to the Federation and was reacquired by them. How is that heresy?"

"That isn't the heresy that you were about to speak, child!" Armani said in an angry tone.

He suddenly pointed his finger at Miya.

"I received a vision last night," he continued. "In that vision, you were about to make a proposal that would be considered an insult and an upfront to both our nation and our faith!"

Miya was suddenly curious as to what Armani was talking about. Surely, there was no way for him to know what she was about to propose. No "vision" would have shown him that.

"I'm curious to know what my proposal was in this vision you had, sir," Miya asked, thinking Armani had some weird dream.

"You know exactly what I am talking about!" Armani said, still pointing at Miya. "You were about to propose a grave sin in wanting to strive for peace with the sullied Federation and the sinful Republic afterwards!"

Miya's anger suddenly faded, replaced with shock and confusion. There was no way Armani could have found that out! Miya's faith had waned heavily when she found out the truth about the Dominion's true origins, believing that whatever initial vision Armani had was some form of delusion and bringing everything she knew into question. If that was true, then how did Armani know about Miya's proposal?!

"You were about to bring shame and destruction on the Dominion by thinking we, the chosen people of our god, could coexist with those sinful nations!" Armani continued. "Admit to this heresy and beg for forgiveness!"

Miya's anger suddenly returned. Armani's "vision" was no doubt in the form of some sort of observation of the Tigris Tribe's residence. He must have had one of the investigators plant an observation device discreetly when they tried to get the records from their residence. That was the only possibility outside of any form of divinity.

Miya held the proposal in her right hand and clenched her left hand into a fist. The only "heretic" Miya suddenly saw in front of her was the one pointing at her accusing her of "heresy."

"I will admit that what you state about my proposal is true," Miya said, looking Armani squarely in the eyes. "However, I do not consider it 'heresy' as you want to call it when I have the best interests of the Dominion and my Tribe in mind to prevent the loss of either one."

"Peace with any sinners is an affront to our faith," Armani said. "I will not condone such thoughts in my presence!"

"Funny you should mention the word 'presence.' Where was your 'presence' to help guide us in our meetings that descended into quarrels amongst ourselves where my proposal may not have been needed to begin with? Why is it that the mere mention of the Republic caused you to suddenly disappear from our sight only to reappear when your 'vision' brought you back to prevent even a possibility of peace with them or the Federation?"

Armani brought his arm down, but his anger was still very apparent in his face.

“How DARE you question my actions, little one! You were informed that I was in meditation except during services to seek answers as to how to deal with the sinful Republic!”

“You were meditating when we needed your guidance the most! Tell me something: were you REALLY in meditation or were you merely hiding out of fear of what the Republic would do if they knew you were leading the Dominion still?”

Armani’s fear suddenly gave way to shock for a brief moment before his anger returned.

“You better consider your next words VERY carefully, Miya,” Armani said. “You are dangerously close to being excommunicated and your position stripped for your insults and outbursts.”

“My words don’t speak as loudly as your silence for the past week, sir. If you think my proposal is bad, then what do you have in mind? Surely you had visions or thoughts on how to handle the Federation and the Republic by now.”

Miya could tell that Armani was suddenly put on the spot with her question. He looked around at the other Chiefs who stared at him waiting for his response. He looked back at Miya, still angry.

“You want to know what my answer is?” he asked. “I have spent the last week having listening posts deployed along our border to gather information from Republic channels to see what has changed over the past six hundred years while you all squabbled with each other. So far, I have found that they like the Federation have encountered other alien nations. Unlike the Federation, however, these nations are still independent and are on friendly terms but only after the Republic fought a war with one of them. The Republic has expanded to fill the entirety of the Central Region and is home to a few trillion Humans.”

“That makes them larger and more populated than us!” Ebony said.

“Correct,” Armani continued. “Their sin and corruption now consumes the heart of the star cluster, a cancer that continues to grow and fester! We need to remove their corruption from the heart of our star cluster by painting the planets with their blood for the glory of our god! Only then will our cluster be purified for our god to be pleased with Humanity!”

Whatever remained of Miya’s faith at that point disappeared. In front of her was no longer the religious leader of the Tenebris faith, but a crazed madman whose original vision may have only been a psychotic dream of a depressed scientist! If Miya hadn’t been told of the true history of the Tenebris, these thoughts would not be going through her mind right now. However, those thoughts were present now and Miya was seeing Armani’s true nature in front of her.

She tried to temper her anger. She was the one that was supposed to be presenting a peaceful resolution to their current war with the Federation and to try to prevent war with the Republic. She did not need to lower herself to the madness that Armani had descended into.

She took a deep breath. She knew what needed to be said.

“Armani Draco,” Miya said as calm as she could be, “you need to forgive the Republic for what they have done to you.”

Armani looked shocked at Miya’s words while the Chiefs looked her way with puzzled expressions.

“What do you mean by that?” Chief Gisselle of the Pistris Tribe asked. “What is it the Republic did to His Majesty Pope? Has the Republic visited us once before in recent years that we are unaware of?”

“No, they haven’t,” Miya said. “I’m talking about what they did six hundred and fifty years ago before the formation of our Dominion when the Armani Draco in front of us was in his original body.”

All of the Chiefs' eyes were wide before they all looked at Armani who was still in shock at the knowledge that Miya had obviously possessed.

"What do you mean 'in his original body'?" Ebony asked. "Who is this that is in front of us, then?"

"I will send you each a copy of the real history behind the Tenebris Dominion," Miya said. "This will answer all of your questions."

"No, you will not!" Armani said as he angrily hit his podium with the bottom of his staff.

A force field suddenly appeared around the entire Tigris Tribe podium going from the ceiling to the floor, leaving only the back wall of the podium where the exit was located. Miya looked around her in surprise.

"What is this?" Miya asked.

As Miya's words left her lips, she noticed that the acoustics within the field sounded almost as if her voice was being absorbed like she was in a soundproof chamber. Her console was also turned off except for a pair of speakers that were on either side of the terminal. The speakers became active shortly after the Miya spoke.

"Miya of the Tigris Tribe," Armani said through the speakers. "You have spoken enough heresy in this chamber that it can no longer be tolerated."

"This is not heresy that I..."

"Because of this, you are no longer allowed to speak in this chamber at all until you are cleansed of those thoughts. Your words can no longer reach us here and will remain that way until you have repented and have been cleansed of your sins. I don't know what this 'true history' is that you speak of or this notion that I had an 'original body' but the fact is there is no history but the one true history that we all know in our holy texts. Yes, the Republic was not mentioned as there was no need for it to be referenced and I will admit that it should have been to avoid any doubt in our texts. I knew this based on what my predecessor knew. I will also make it clear that our texts say that the original Armani Draco's 'soul' was saved in the form of his knowledge and teachings and that is it."

Miya quickly realized that her words would not reach through the barrier which Armani had all but confirmed was soundproof. She soon wondered what punishment Armani was already planning for her due to her actions. Whatever it is, she doubted it was going to be pleasant.

"Therefore, for the crime of heresy against the state and the faith, your mind will be cleansed of evil thoughts. Your grandmother who is responsible for retaining forbidden knowledge and instigating this act of heresy in our presence will be sentenced to spend the rest of her natural life as a servant to the people, her title and possessions stripped. I had hoped that this rebellious streak that your mother started when she first became Chief of the Tigris Tribe was not hereditary, but it appears that it just might be. I can only hope that you will take to the cleansing better than she did."

Miya was suddenly wide-eyed when Armani brought up her mother. She knew that even if she asked the question, no one in the chamber would hear her. She could see Ebony look her way with a concerned expression on her face before turning back to Armani.

"What happened to Miya's mother?" Ebony asked as her voice went through the speakers.

Armani looked in Ebony's direction with a stern look on his face.

"That is something you do not need to know," Armani said.

"I want to know that as well," Beverly said. "None of us were Chiefs at the time as our mothers would have held that position when Miya's mother was Chief, but mine never said

anything about Miya's mother stating any heresy. She only told me that Miya's grandmother had to take over as her mother was sick and died afterwards."

"I heard the same thing, too," Nicola said. "It seems we all were told this by our mothers, so we all want an answer as to why Miya's mother was removed from her position."

"You want an answer?" Armani asked. "Fine, then. This is not the first time this heresy has been spoken in front of this council. Her mother spoke the same thing about some falsehood in our history and for stating nonsense about my predecessors. I sentenced her to have her mind cleansed of such thoughts so that her heresy would never be spoken of again. However, the mind cleansing did not go as expected and it wiped her mind completely, leaving her brain dead."

Miya's eyes suddenly widened. The truth about her mother's death was now revealed to her, but the thought that she could suffer the same fate filled her with fear. However, she thought about Armani's words just now. Didn't he just say that he sentenced her and not his predecessor? She looked at Armani. He did not look old enough to have been in charge more than twenty years ago unless his clone bodies last longer than twenty years.

At this point, she knew he was responsible for her death, but she cannot say anything where the rest of the council can hear. She needed to warn her grandmother of what was about to happen, but her console was deactivated and her tablet with her proposal had nothing to connect to after the barrier was raised.

Ebony leaned forward, her hands on her console with an angry look on her face.

"Are you saying that you are subjecting Miya to the same fate?" Ebony asked.

"The process has been refined," Armani said, looking at Ebony. "Mistakes such as that are very slim with a high success rate. She'll be fine and there will be no more heresy from her."

"The possibility of you being a clone aside, why do you not want peace with the Federation when we could possibly have the Republic at our doorstep at any time? It's one thing if you don't want peace with the Republic, but if they attack and we are still at war with the Federation, we could be fighting a war on two fronts which would spread our forces too thin."

"I do not recognize the Federation, nor will I ever do so. They are nothing but rebels and heretics that need to be cleansed for the treachery of their ancestors."

"How are they being cleansed?" Miya asked aloud, but quickly remembering that her voice cannot be heard by them.

Ebony looked Miya's way when she saw that Miya was moving her mouth. Ebony looked back at Armani.

"How are they being cleansed, sir?" Ebony asked.

Miya looked at Ebony with a look of surprise on her face. Did Ebony read Miya's lips and decided to ask on her behalf or was Ebony just as curious by Armani's remark as Miya was? Armani looked at Ebony with a stern look on his face.

"How they are being cleansed is my concern, not yours or any other Chief," Armani said. "I'm going to say this now so that this debate is over. There will be no peace with heretics and traitors until they are all captured and cleansed of their transgressions. There will be no peace with the Republic until their sinful ways are completely eradicated from the star cluster. Any further talks about peace will be treated as heresy. Is that understood?"

The other four Chiefs looked at each other with concerned expressions on their faces. They turned their sights in Armani's direction and nodded in agreement. Miya was the only one who did not nod, though at this point she doubted her opinion mattered to the rest of the Council. She only knew that once the meeting has ended, she would be escorted to wherever the guards who are waiting outside for her to exit to have her so-called "heretic" thoughts purged. There

was a good chance that whatever they would be using would either be a memory wipe or some form of personality adjustor, possibly both.

Miya was not looking forward to having the same procedure done to her that ended up killing her mother, regardless of whether the procedure has improved since then or not. However, she had no escape route. The only way in or out were the doors behind her, leading to the guards that were waiting. There was no way for her to delay that.

She knew why Armani was afraid. She knew why he didn't want peace with either the Federation or the Republic. Either one of those nations would reveal the truth behind how the Dominion was founded if talks were initiated. That would undermine Armani's authority and cause many to lose their faith in him and the religion they all followed. If she revealed his true history here, the Chiefs would see Armani as a coward and a madman who is so afraid of death that he transfers his consciousness into a clone body every twenty to forty years. That may have been the way to help end the war with the Federation if the Chiefs were still willing to listen to her, but now that may no longer be possible.

Armani brought down his staff against his platform.

"This meeting will come to an end," he said looking at Miya. "This heretic has overstayed her presence. When your mind is cleansed of such thoughts, we will welcome you back into this chamber after your grandmother's sentence has been carried out. Your thoughts of her will also be wiped so that you won't be searching her out after her sentence. I hope that this will be the last time this heresy will ever be spoken in this room again."

Armani brought down his staff again. The lights went out, though the force field was still visible and illuminating the room, its red color providing an ominous ambient light throughout the room. The door behind her opened, and two Aspergillus Tribe guards quickly walked in behind Miya. They grabbed her arms before she had a chance to turn around. Miya struggled but they easily picked her up with their strength, lifting her off the ground. One of them managed to get restraining cuffs on her wrists, keeping her from moving her arms freely. The pain of the cuffs almost made her drop her tablet with the proposal on it. They put her back on the ground, grabbing her upper arms and lifting her off the floor again to reduce her struggling against them.

As she was escorted out of the room, she wanted to say things to the rest of the Council ranging from telling the truth to cursing the apparent fake "red god" that Armani was preaching about. She stopped herself, knowing that her words were never going to reach them. Once they were outside of the chamber, they turned to the right and began walking down the hallway which, much like her home, was dark grey with red lights running along the upper edges.

As the door closed behind them and they began to walk down the hallway, Miya suddenly heard what sounded like two deep thumps behind her. She quickly felt the grip of both guards letting go, dropping her to the floor. Both guards fell to the floor face first in front of her, and were knocked out. Miya turned around to look behind her to see who knocked out the guards.

Two women stood there, one from the Aspergillus Tribe and the other from the Pistris Tribe. Both of them were older women who looked to be twice Miya's age. They were smiling as they held wooden cylinders in their hands. It was obvious they knocked out the guards but Miya began to wonder why. The Aspergillus woman came up to Miya who was scared thinking she was next to get knocked out, instead unlocking her restraining cuffs.

As the cuffs hit the floor, Miya looked at the two women in confusion. The Aspergillus woman smiled at Miya.

"It is good to see that we got to you in time," she said. "I guess Carol was right about what would happen to you in that meeting."

“Carol?” Miya said in confusion. “You mean my grandmother?”

“Yes. I doubt you recognize either of us, but I’m Ebony’s mother. My name is Tonya.”

Tonya turned and looked at the Pistris woman who was looking down the hall in the opposite direction for anybody approaching.

“This woman is Mary, Gisselle’s mother,” Tonya said.

“Wait,” Miya said, “if you two are their mothers that means you are the former Chiefs that preceded them!”

“Yes, but we can’t wait around here. Come with us.”

Tonya turned Miya around and walked down the hallway. Mary followed behind them.

“Why are you doing this?” Miya asked. “How did you know that they were escorting me away from the Council chamber?”

“You can thank your grandmother for that,” Tonya said. “She made sure that the tablet you had with the proposal was equipped with a camera with audio live streaming the meeting connected remotely separate of your podium’s connection. She wanted us to watch the feed to see what the response will be from the Council and from Armani if he showed up. We saw everything that transpired. Carol also provided us with our nation’s true history that she wanted us to read before the Council meeting without our daughters finding out.”

“Then, you know the truth and what Armani really is?”

“Yes, we know he is a clone with the original Armani’s consciousness inside. His reaction to your proposal confirms that he ran from the Republic knowing he along with our ancestors were responsible for kidnapping and killing innocent people in the name of our current religion. He’s afraid that peace with either nation would make this history known to the rest of the Dominion. Of course, Carol could have done that on her own if she wanted to but she wanted to see if Armani would change his mind before she even considered pulling such a stunt.”

“Was peace what my mother was trying to promote before she died?”

“She was trying to promote peace with the Federation, knowing that conflict was not the best course of action to take with them. Instead, Armani turned it down, stating that the Federation was an affront to the principles of our faith. His belief was that subjugation and rehabilitation was the best course to take with those he considered ‘descendants of traitors.’ We as Chiefs believed his words since we believed he was speaking with the word of our red god. We had no idea what would happen to her when she was ordered to be ‘cleansed.’ All we knew was that we dare not speak heresy towards Armani. When your grandmother took over for your mother, we felt ashamed that we allowed your mother to die. We couldn’t tell her how sorry we all felt that her daughter died unjustly. Those years of service as Chief were not good years for any of us.”

“Was that why you all were so open to reading the Dominion’s true history?”

“Carol mentioned to us before sending it last night that she forgives us for what happened to your mother. She knew that none of us were going to predict that she would die from that procedure. The only person she cannot forgive is Armani who sentenced her to that procedure. The moment we saw and heard Armani was sentencing you to the same procedure, we all took action to prevent a repeat of what happened to your mother regardless of whether the procedure has improved over the years or not.”

“You all took action? Aside from freeing me, what actions were you all taking?”

“You’ll find out soon enough. Right now, we need to get you out of here fast.”

Miya was silent for a moment as they ran down the hallway, trying to comprehend what was transpiring around her. She then started to feel sad as some thoughts came to mind.

“You shouldn’t be doing this for me,” she said, her voice full of sadness as she started to cry. “You shouldn’t be risking your positions for me like this. What about your daughters that are the current Chiefs? What do you think will happen when they find out?”

“You let us deal with our daughters,” Mary said. “We are doing this because it is the right thing to do and to make up for the mistake we made with your mother. Our nation’s foundation is made of nothing but lies and deceit. It’s no wonder Armani had our history changed. He knew that if the truth got out, it would topple his ‘empire’.”

“You all are okay with that?” Miya asked. “I only wanted to establish peace with the Federation to preserve our people and our nation. I’m not trying to stage a revolution.”

“We know that wasn’t your intent,” Tonya said. “However, if our religion was built on the lives of innocents being sacrificed for their blood against their will by murderers, I cannot in good conscious keep believing what Armani is saying. I’m beginning to see why the Federation exists the way they do. Armani’s son centuries ago wasn’t a traitor. He was that family’s savior.”

“Then the only question that remains is what happened to those Federation citizens that were taken?”

“Even I do not know what happened to them. I’m sure there are clues within the data that your Tribe collects but for now, it will have to wait. We need to get you to a shuttle quickly. We’ll need to keep quiet while we make our way there.”

“Will my grandmother be waiting for me there?”

“While we have a transmitter to contact her, she didn’t tell us anything about her plans. All she told us was that she has her own idea about how to achieve her revenge.”

“Revenge? For my mother’s death?”

“Yes, though I do wonder what she has in mind.”

* * * * *

*Central Database, City of Plena Tenebris, Capital of Tenebris Dominion
Planet Tenebris Prime, Tenebris System, Southwestern Region
11:22am, October 26, 5434 A.D.*

“I guess word hasn’t reached here yet.”

Carol managed to enter the Central Database found on the grounds of the central complex through the back entrance reserved specifically for the head families of the five Tribes. While anyone from the head families can enter the Central Database, it is usually those of the Tigris Tribe that enter as they are the Tribe responsible for managing the data and information pouring in from across the Dominion. Carol has only been in the Central Database once before but she was a little girl at the time as her own mother brought her inside the structure during an inspection. Of course, the Central Database looked far larger back then.

However, she knew where the central hub was located and it was there that she needed to go. Thankfully for her, the clone population is usually unaware of the events that take place inside the Council meetings as they are not generally broadcasted unless it is something major, such as the inauguration of new Chiefs or the start of the war with the Federation. Situations such as Miya’s “heretic” proposal are not usually transmitted, meaning the general population outside the Council chamber don’t know about the fact that she was sentenced to have her mind “cleansed” of such thoughts.

For those Tigris clones that work inside this building and soon beyond, they were about to get a wake-up call about their nation. She was there to make that happen.

The rear entryway was located on the same floor as the central hub. Carol started walking towards the hub and spotted an empty station. As Carol approached, one of the clones almost halfway around her left side of the hub spotted Carol and was surprised to see her approaching the hub. The clone nudged her fellow clones on each side telling them Carol was approaching. In seconds, the clones all turned and looked at Carol in shock.

“Former Chief Carol,” the closest clone said to her left. “To what do we owe this honor of having you here?”

“I wish I was here to give you all some good news,” Carol said. “Sadly, there is a great darkness that has enveloped the Tribal Council.”

“A great darkness? What has happened?”

“I know you all are not privy to what occurs in the Tribal Council meetings, but I am sure you all have heard about the death of my daughter Rosa almost twenty years ago, correct?”

“Yes, ma’am. It was a great sadness among our Tribe, but we were told that she had unclean thoughts and subjected herself to have her mind purged of those thoughts.”

“That was what you all were told, but the reality is not as subtle. His Majesty Pope Armani was the one who ordered her mind to be wiped when the technology for such a procedure was still experimental. He was the one responsible for her death.”

The clones were in shock over this news. They looked like they didn’t know what to make of this information.

“His Majesty Pope Armani was responsible for her death?” one of the clones to Carol’s right finally said. “Why would he do that to her? What thoughts did she have to force such action against her?”

“She was trying to propose a peaceful resolution involving the Draco Federation situation,” Carol said. “That was the only thing she was doing.”

“That’s it?” the closest clone to Carol’s left said. “That’s all she was trying to do?”

“Yes.”

“How is that considered heresy?”

“To Armani, any peace with those who shared his bloodline who live in the Federation are considered traitors.”

“But they are the Lost Tribe of the Draco Family! His family! Wasn’t he happy to see them thriving when they were first discovered?”

“Here is a little bit of history you do not know. His son betrayed him and intentionally left the Tenebris families when the exodus occurred.”

“Wait, are you talking about Armani’s ancestor?”

“Here is some shocking news for you. The Armani we know is a clone physically but the original Armani’s mind is in that body. He has been transferring his consciousness from one clone body to another for centuries.”

“What?! You’re telling us that he has been cheating death, to not be with our red god for centuries?! How do you know this is true?”

“I have seen his face during one of those transitions. It was a younger face, but the mannerisms and personality were exactly the same. Also, he appears to be the only Draco not part of the Federation that resides in the Dominion.”

“This is hard to take in. If this is true, then it is no wonder he doesn’t want peace with the Federation. They are descendants of his treacherous son and those that followed him.”

“Let me ask this before I explain why I came here as I am pressed for time. Do we have any records as to what happened to the Draco Federation citizens when they are captured?”

“I don’t know if any of us really looked, but I do recall seeing an anomaly after a world was captured.”

“What is the anomaly?”

“After a Federation world was captured, I noticed an increase in the supply of available blood from the closest blood farms to that captured world. I never bothered to report it or bring it to anyone’s attention as I thought more clones for the farms were suddenly available.”

Carol’s eyes were suddenly wide. Those were not clones they were adding to those farms. If this information is true, that means that the Federation citizens were not being “rehabilitated,” they were being processed to provide blood for the Dominion only! Anyone who is attached to the equipment at the blood farms won’t survive being separated as the equipment is their live support for the rest of their lives!

“If what you say is true,” Carol said, “Armani wasn’t looking at converting those who descended from his son to our religion. He wants them to pay with their lives for not following the religion he started to begin with! Armani is no holy figure, he is a devil! Now he’s going so far as to sentence my granddaughter to the same fate as my daughter for promoting peace again in front of the Tribal Council!”

“What?!” all of the clones yelled at once.

The clones looked at each other in utter shock at this news.

“Don’t worry,” Carol said. “Measures are being taken to prevent this from happening to Chief Miya, but I’m here to make Armani pay for what he has done to our Tribe.”

“Is there anything we can do to help?” the closest clone to Carol’s right asked.

Carol thought about it for a moment. What she was about to do would raise alarms with the other Tribes as well as Armani, but she needed to teach them a lesson and to bring the truth to light about Armani and his past to the entire Dominion.

“I should not ask anything of you if I can avoid it,” Carol said. “If I do, you all will be just as responsible as me and our whole Tribe will suffer the consequences.”

“Former Chief Carol, if an injustice has been done to our Tribe, we need to take action for the injustice to be corrected. What do you want us to do?”

“Very well. If you want to know, I plan on deleting the ENTIRE database.”

“The entire database? Are you saying every single record we have will be wiped?”

“Everything except for one record. Your job once I wipe the database is to prevent any new information from going in without my credentials and to keep this record I’m about to upload from being deleted or edited without my permission or Miya’s.”

“What is the record you are going to upload?”

“The Dominion’s true history. It’s about time everyone knew the truth about where we originated from. Once the database is wiped and this information is uploaded, I am going to leave here to join my granddaughter hopefully and leave the planet. I won’t say where we are going as I do not wish for us to be followed.”

“We understand, ma’am. I have to say, I’m feeling really excited about doing this.”

“Glad to hear. Now, let’s get started.”

Carol approached the station in front of her, pulling out a cylindrical object from a pocket on the right side of her skirt. She inserted the cylinder into the data port on the right side of the station. Once the cylinder was inserted, the screens at her station changed color to a dark red, indicating a status similar to “administrative” privileges from a technical standpoint. She accessed options from a dropdown menu for those with the highest access and looked for anything to clear the database all at once. She finally found the option to format the drive which

would wipe all of the data from the Central Database. As she selected it, it asked if she really wanted to wipe the core as a precaution should someone have selected it accidentally. In Carol's case, this was not selected accidentally. She selected the "Yes" option to wipe the core.

The screen showed a status indicator as it went through and began wiping all of the data on the core. It also indicated that it had disconnected external connections while the core was being wiped. If anyone was trying to access the core whether to input or retrieve data, they will notice this disconnection and may send messages asking why they cannot connect to the core.

As the core continued to be wiped, she received a message on her transmitter located in the left pocket of her skirt. She pulled it out and activated the screen. The message was from Tonya telling her that Miya is safe and standing by in the shuttle they were going to use to leave the planet. Carol needed to let them know about the Federation citizens being used for the blood farms. She quickly typed her response to Tonya, making it clear to tell Miya about what was discovered, and that she was in the middle of wiping the core.

After she sent the message, the terminal indicated that the core was wiped and ready to restore from the backup data.

"Oh, great," Carol said. "I forgot about the backup. This will take longer than expected."

Messages started to pop in on the other terminals. The clones went to their respective terminals to access the messages that were coming in.

"People are starting to take notice," the closest clone to Carol's left said. "They are expecting a response. Should we tell them the database is undergoing extended unscheduled maintenance at this time?"

"Do it," Carol said. "Send a message to our entire Tribe to expect this maintenance to last a while. Afterwards, you can inform them what is going on in truth but to act like everything is status quo."

"Yes, ma'am. We'll send the responses now, but how long do you think it will take before the other Tribes realize something is amiss?"

"Hopefully, it will take a few days for them to realize something is wrong. However, I know it won't take long before someone like Armani realizes that Miya is missing. If he notices the maintenance is coinciding with her disappearance, than the ruse won't last long at all."

The status of the backup data being erased showed it was nearing completion. Carol looked at the time on the terminal. It was going to take her several minutes to get to the shuttle on the opposite side of the complex and she would have to pass through the central tower in order to reach it. At her age, running may not be a good option for her, but she knew she had to in order to make it. If the backup data did not have to be erased, she would already be on her way there now.

As soon as the backup data was completely erased, she accessed the information on the cylinder and uploaded the file on the Dominion's true history onto the primary and backup server. To ensure that the information was not edited or deleted, she encrypted it with a password, only allowing it to be accessed and read but not altered or removed.

After completing her task, Carol shutdown her access and removed the cylinder from the terminal, putting it back in her pocket.

"I must take my leave immediately," Carol said. "I trust you all to make sure that our true history will be distributed to the rest of the Dominion. Whatever happens afterwards, rest assured that this will lead to the betterment of our nation. If fate permits, I hope to see you all again."

The clones looked her way and bowed in respect. Carol returned their bow and quickly turned back towards the back entrance at the far end of the catwalk where she came in. She

walked as fast as she could towards the door, knowing that she may only have minutes before Armani finds out Miya didn't reach where her mind was going to be "cleansed."

* * * * *

*Dominion Intelligence Room, Central Tower below ground level, Capital City of Plena Tenebris
Planet Tenebris Prime, Tenebris System, Southwestern Region
11:31am, October 26, 5434 A.D.*

"Please tell me you have some good news for me?"

Armani entered the Intelligence Room immediately after the Tribal Council meeting concluded. His head began to hurt after that meeting because of his frustrations in dealing with the same heresy twice from the Tigris Tribe. The cause of both heresies being spoken by Miya and Rosa in the Tribal Council meetings were due to the same source: the Tigris Tribe held on to the Dominion's "true history" as it was being called. He was hoping that after Rosa spoke such heresy about peace with the Federation that the Tigris Tribe wouldn't bring it up again.

How surprised he was when Miya spoke about that topic again.

However, by his orders, Miya's mind will be wiped of her treacherous thoughts. He will never consider peace with the Federation or the Republic for that matter. Her grandmother Carol has caused enough trouble for one lifetime or, in Armani's case, a few lifetimes. Carol being removed from power will be one of the best decisions he had ever made. With one out of the way and the other being obedient again to his will, he can have his investigators retrieve the historical records from the Tigris residence and have it disposed of. There will be no more talk about a "true history," only the history and the teaching he has put forth, and total obedience to his rule. Only his word is truth, not historians that have long since been dead.

As he trusts his guards and investigators to get the job done without his guidance or supervision, he wanted to focus on anything new involving the Republic. His aggression began to rise as the thought of the Republic and its subsequent end began to flood into his mind. His head was still hurting but he dealt with it as he entered the room and asked his question.

Alpha turned from his station to look at Armani, a somber look on his face.

"We haven't collected any new information, sir," Alpha said. "There is still no word about us or the Federation in the broadcasts we've intercepted."

"This is starting to become an issue," Armani said. "If they are transmitting on encrypted channels that we have yet to crack, we will never know whether they know about us or are deploying their forces against us. Has there been no progress in breaking their encryptions?"

"No, sir. As far as we can tell, the Republic has undergone technological development in their field of communications at a rate much faster than our own. This makes breaking those encryptions incredibly hard if not near impossible."

"NOTHING is impossible! If our red god permits it, it will be done! Those encryptions will be cracked or I will find a better team among your Tribe to do the job!"

"Understood, sir."

"Now then, I have ordered the retrieval of classified information from the Tigris Tribe's residence and for Carol to be forced into manual labor. Miya has spoken heresy in the meeting a moment ago. Please tell me those have been taken care of?"

"Let me have Delta report on that progress," Alpha said as he turned towards Delta. "Delta, can you verify the status of the Tigris Tribe's Miya and Carol as well as the retrieval of some classified information from their residence?"

“Give me one moment to look at their status,” Delta said as he began surveilling the observation feeds.

Delta stopped when one of the feeds showed the hallway just outside the entry into the Tigris Tribe’s platform of the Tribal Council chamber. He noticed two guards lying unconscious with a pair of retraining cuffs on the ground.

“Alpha,” Delta said, “you may want to see this.”

Delta pressed a couple of buttons on his terminal. The image on his display was placed on the large screen in the front of the room. Armani and Alpha looked at the image with Alpha being shocked and Armani getting upset.

“Where is that located?” Armani asked, trying to keep his composure.

“This is a live feed from in front of the entrance to the Tigris Tribe’s podium to the Tribal Council chamber,” Delta said.

“Rewind the feed to just before they exited the podium. I want to see what happened and who was responsible.”

Delta tapped a few buttons on his console to try and get the feed of the requested time.

“Huh?” Delta said in a curious tone.

“What is it?” Alpha asked.

“I’m trying to get the feed from that time, but I am getting errors saying that the feed is not found.”

“Not found?” Armani asked, his anger starting to seep through his composure. “What do you mean it’s not found?”

“The feed is stored in the Central Database for security purposes,” Delta said. “I’m getting a message that the Central Database is down for maintenance at this time.”

Armani’s anger was very visible on his face and the headache he had earlier started to increase in intensity.

“This is not maintenance,” Armani said. “I’m informed when there is maintenance done on the Central Database and this is NOT one of those times. This must be sabotage and I’m willing to bet Carol has something to do with it. I’m also willing to bet she was responsible for releasing Miya from the guards.”

“With all due respect, sir,” Alpha said, “Carol is in her sixties. She may still be strong, but there is no way for her to overpower both guards, especially Aspergillus ones, at the same time. The moment she hits one of them, the other would react and overpower her easily.”

“Then what do you suggest? That she had an accomplice?”

“Maybe more than one. If she has released Miya, she wouldn’t head towards the Central Database just to erase it. She would be trying to flee the area with Miya as soon as possible.”

“If that is the case, whoever is helping her would be getting Miya out of here while Carol is sabotaging the Database. Do we have a live feed of the shuttle bay?”

Delta pressed a few buttons at his terminal, but he looked like he was getting an error message on his screen.

“The feed is disabled,” Delta said. “I can’t get a visual on the shuttle bay.”

“Then that is where they are heading. I’m taking a team of Aspergillus guards to intercept Carol. Make sure that the current Chiefs do not know about the situation that is unfolding.”

“You’re going to intercept Carol?” Alpha asked. “To my knowledge, you and your predecessors have never left the sanctuary area of this tower.”

“Maybe it’s time I started to see more of what is going on within my Dominion firsthand because it is obvious that things are happening without my supervision that is without my

approval or guidance. This latest act of defiance is a clear example of that. Now, keep an eye on any hallways between the Central Database and the shuttle bay. If you spot Carol heading towards the shuttle bay, inform me and I'll have the guards detain her. I will deal with her punishment later for her actions. Miya won't leave without her grandmother."

"Understood, sir."

Armani turned and headed for the exit. He needed to get this situation under control or his rule could be undermined. Before he exited the room, Delta turned towards Armani.

"Sir," Delta said, "I have access to the database, but there is one problem."

Armani stopped and turned to face Delta.

"What is this 'one problem' you have to report out of all the problems we are having right now?" Armani asked.

"There is only one file in the database, sir, and it is a file that I believe you don't want to be in there for all to access and see."

Armani's anger started to intensify on his face. If it was the "one file" he thinks it is, then Carol had gone too far with this little "insurgency" that she was instigating.

"What is the title of the file?" Armani asked.

"It is titled 'The True History of the Tenebris Dominion: Our History of Blood,'" Delta said. "There are already over a thousand downloads of the file and increasing rapidly."

"Then take it off! Remove and purge the file from the database!"

"I cannot, sir. It requires a password to remove or edit the file. I'll try to see if I can crack the password to get the file removed but it may take a while. By the time we are able to crack the password, who knows how many in the population would have downloaded and read the file."

Armani's anger intensified to the point he was about to see red. At this point, Carol had crossed the line. There was only one punishment he can think of for her actions and if she is caught, that punishment will be enacted on the spot.

On this day, Carol will die.

* * * * *

*Western Hallway 2-5, Central Tower, Capital City of Plena Tenebris
Planet Tenebris Prime, Tenebris System, Southwestern Region
11:39am, October 26, 5434 A.D.*

"I wish I was twenty years younger."

Carol tried to run down the hallway towards the shuttle bay located on the opposite side of the Central Tower from the Central Database on the northwestern side. However, despite how enriched blood has helped the stamina of the Tenebris, the aging process has only slowed down slightly. With the exception of the Aspergillus Tribe, most of the head families of the other tribes usually don't stay in great physical shape. Carol was no exception to this fact.

She did not know how much time she had before her ruse would be discovered by Armani, the Chiefs, or others who would report it. She knew that it was only a matter of time and if fate is on her side, she and Miya will be off the planet before they realize it.

As she ran as best as she good down the hall, an alarm started to go off throughout the building. To her, that means that her time had run out. It would not take long for Armani or someone just as high up to start locking shuttles down preventing them from leaving.

Carol couldn't let that happen to Miya or those that helped her. Before she went any further, she reached into her left pocket and pulled out the transmitter, bringing it to her mouth.

“T-One to A-One,” Carol said. “Take off without me. I won’t be able to make it if they lockdown your escape route.”

“Are you sure?” Tonya said through the transmitter. *“We don’t need to be losing you at this critical moment. I know the target doesn’t want to lose you, either.”*

“Can she hear me right now?”

“Yes. Do you want me to put her on?”

“No. She knows I love her and I know she loves me in return. It is best for her voice not to be heard through the transmitter right now. I will leave the channel open but mute your end for now. I want you all to hear what happens to me for as long as you are in range. I know he is coming to see me personally.”

“Wait, you don’t mean HIM, do you? He has never been outside his personal sanctuary of the tower!”

“I know, but if he has discovered that the file has been uploaded to the database, his anger and rage will be directed solely at me. If that is the case, I already have a plan ready. This will also give you a chance to escape. Now, leave here immediately or you won’t be able to at all.”

“Very well. I wish for your success in your plans, Carol.”

While Tonya went silent on the other end of the transmission, Carol can see that the channel was still open and they could hear what was going on at her end. Carol decided to run again, but this time back towards the Tigris Tribe’s residence. If Armani was indeed coming after her, she wanted to make one last act of defiance, one more memorable and significant than the upload of the Dominion’s true history.

Provided she reaches the residence in time.

As she ran back towards entrance to the Tigris Tribe residence, she started to hear footsteps other than her own coming from adjacent hallways. While those footsteps did not sound like they were running, she could tell they were heading her direction. It appeared that they knew that she was responsible or someone was keeping tabs on her movements through the live security feeds which she could not disable from the Central Database.

Thankfully, her “associates” were able to disable the feed in the shuttle bay and reported it to her before she went to the Central Database. She wished she had such skills but that would not have been allowed due to the roles each Tribe was assigned. Of course, this was only based on what their ancestors were good at. Because of Armani’s strict policies, none of the Tribes were able to explore other avenues of work or have the freedom to choose the roles they wanted to fulfill.

The more she thought about it, the more she realized that the Republic was not the “sinful” nation that Armani’s twisted view of history made it out to be. It was the Dominion that was twisted and “sinful,” and this needed to be corrected.

She managed to reach the Tigris Tribe’s residential building entrance, keyed in the entry code, and entered with the door closing behind her. She walked down the hall towards the closest elevator that would take her up to the Family Living Room and pressed the call button. As the elevator arrived, she heard key presses from back down the hall near the entrance she just came in. The elevator doors opened and she stepped in just as the entrance down the hall opened. The elevator doors closed as she heard a man’s voice yell “There she is!”

There was no mistaking the voice of Armani Draco as the elevator ascended.

If Armani Draco was following Carol, then her plan was going to work the way she wanted it to. Within a minute, the elevator came to a stop and the doors opened. The door to the Family Living Room was right in front of her and she quickly got off the elevator to go through

them. She could hear the elevator go back down as she went through the doors and closed them, locking them for safe measure.

She looked to her right at the countertop. She found the observation device earlier after Miya had left for the Council meeting and disabled it. She grabbed it and reactivated it, changing the signal to a different frequency. She set it back down on the counter, grabbed a nearby tablet, and began to program it to sync with the device. She set it to record in thirty seconds and to stop recording when no one remained in the room. Once it was done recording, it was to store it with her credentials into the Central Database. Her credentials would allow it to be stored without her fellow Tigris Tribe members flagging it. From there, it will immediately transmit to all of the Dominion. Carol wanted what was about to transpire to be shown throughout the Dominion. This would be her last act of revenge against Armani.

Carol heard the elevator stop outside the doors. She put the tablet in one of the drawers of the countertop near the observation device so that it would not be found while it was recording. She closed the drawer and ran down into the sunken section of the room. While the holographic display in the middle of the table turned on the moment she got close, she pressed a button on the table and turned off the display. She took a seat on the couch opposite of the door she knew Armani along with his security detail would be going through.

She waited a few seconds, thinking there would be a knock on the door, and she would have to let them in with a verbal command. She was surprised to hear that the door automatically unlocked and was being opened. Normally, only a verbal command from those who are or were once Chiefs would be allowed to open the door. She heard no such command. It appeared as if Armani by some form of biometric scanning was allowed unrestricted access to any area of his choosing, and most likely this applied to the other Tribes' residences as well.

This was good to know. By now, the recording has already started. If the other Chiefs see this footage, they will know Armani can enter their residence any time he chooses. She doubted that they would appreciate knowing that their privacy could be invaded on a whim of his. Of course, these were the same Chiefs that didn't stop him from condemning Miya to having her memory or mind wiped.

As the doors slid open, Armani stood there with a security detail behind him. He was missing some of his garb, which surprised her. Either he thought it was easier to move around without them or he didn't want to be seen wearing them in front of her as the head religious figure of a nation. Whatever the case was, his black long-sleeved shirt, pants, and boots were quite the detached look he was always seen with.

Then she noticed a gun in his right hand and things quickly started to make sense as to why he was dressed like that. He wasn't here as the Pope. He was there as her executioner.

"Why, You Majesty Pope," Carol said, trying to keep her cool. "What a surprise to see you here in person outside of your sanctuary."

"You can cut the small talk, Carol," Armani said as he walked into the room.

The doors closed behind him leaving the security detail outside the room. Carol quickly surmised that he wanted to confront her by himself.

"Where is Miya?" Armani asked.

"Why do you want to know?" Carol asked, trying to be coy.

"You know why. Somehow, you knew what was going to happen when Miya was going to present her proposal in front of the Tribal Council and acted in case the same thing happened to her as it did with your daughter Rosa."

"Considering you know exactly what happened to Rosa, this further proves you are

nothing but a clone body of Armani, but the mind has been the same as the original for centuries, now hasn't it?"

"You knew that truth for a long time. Thankfully, no one else knows that truth outside of the keepers of my clone bodies."

"Then explain to me this: why go to such lengths to maintain your mind this whole time? Why are you unwilling to allow other Tribe members the chance to lead instead of you?"

"Doing so without having a clear successor to my legacy outside my treacherous son was not an option. No one could fill my role from the other five Tribes as they would not be respected by any of the others or recognize their authority and role. The Draco family were the only ones meant to fill that role and most of them went with my son."

"Most? So, you are saying not all of them went with him?"

"Only three did not follow his views of the cult I created, but those three are dead after they developed the means for my mind to be transferred to a clone body. After all, we needed proof for the Republic to believe they killed our families off."

"You went that far?! Then what happened to those Draco who were captured from the Federation?"

"They are now part of our blood farms forever more. THAT is their punishment for following my son."

Carol could not believe what she was hearing. Armani was more sadistic and twisted than she originally thought!

"Speaking of punishment," Armani continued, "I saw what you did to the Central Database. You wiped everything clean and put in the history your Tribe has kept secret for all this time. What is it you were trying to do?"

"I wanted the whole Dominion to know the truth about our past," Carol said. "I lost Rosa when she tried to make amends with the Federation knowing how we all started, and Miya was trying to do the same with the inclusion of the Republic if they indeed invaded our planet over a week ago. You saw to both sentencings and I will not standby while I let it happen again."

"So, it is revenge, is it? That is rather unbecoming of you, Carol. Your actions have shown that I can no longer trust the Tigris Tribe with sensitive information. I will need to delegate the task to the other tribes and wipe the Tigris clean from the Dominion."

Carol's eyes suddenly widened at the shock of what Armani just said.

"You would commit genocide against one-fifth of the population for the actions I along with Rosa and Miya have committed?" she asked. "That is insane!"

"You're right," Armani said. "Maybe I have gone insane with what you have done. After all, you DID wipe away all our records and history I have put forth for all to read. This so-called 'true' history you put up will soon be marked as nothing but the words of a delusional former Tigris Chief whose loss of her daughter and granddaughter caused her to go insane. With no clear successor to the Tigris Chief position among the rest of your family, and because your actions show the Tribe can no longer be trusted, all the Tigris will be executed. That is what will be put forth for the Dominion to see and accept without question when I broadcast this decree."

"You are completely mad! It is no wonder we were driven from the Republic centuries ago! They are not the 'sinful' nation! We are under your leadership!"

"Say what you will, but I am the recognized authority to the billions that toil and work for the sake of my Dominion. Everyone recognizes my authority without question and your voice will no longer be heard outside of this room."

Armani pointed the gun he had towards Carol.

“Now,” he said, “I will ask you one more time. Where is Miya?”

“I’m surprised you would think that I would tell you, knowing what you are going to do with that gun. Tell me, how many people have you personally killed? Have you ever killed anyone with your own hands?”

“Only during our rituals centuries ago before our exile, but not since then.”

“I know that’s because if anyone ever heard you killing someone with your own hands, your position would be diminished. No ‘messenger of god’ would ever kill someone for an act that did not harm another physically. Add to the fact that I am unarmed, and it gets worse. What about your security detail outside those doors? If they hear that gun go off in here and see you holding it, they would be witnesses to your ‘unholy’ act and discredit your position.”

Armani suddenly laughed under his breath.

“Do you honestly believe all of that?” he said. “I told them that this act of defiance must be sentenced and punished by my hands as your actions have been detrimental to my Dominion as a whole. They are aware of this and will not take action to undermine my authority.”

“An authority you have forced on everyone within this nation. I wonder what would happen if they knew the Republic allowed everyone within their nation to be whatever they wanted to be with living conditions far better than what we have now. Admit it, you wanted to deprive everyone of the liberties Humans in the Republic were granted, stripping them away from everyone within the Dominion, didn’t you? For that matter, the Federation appears to have those same liberties, albeit with some differences because of its foundation.”

“I don’t want to hear anymore of the so-called liberties of a nation that rejected my ideals and forced me to take action to make my research a reality, nor do I want to hear you bring up a nation full of those who follow my son’s misguided ideals about my research forcing them to copy a similar structure to a sinful society! The Republic and the Federation are failing examples of societies that allow too much freedom to people who cannot see that my research would have bettered our species as a whole! This Dominion is mine and mine alone! No one is going to take this away from me. Not them and most certainly not you!”

Armani took aim at Carol’s head. Carol knew that her end was drawing near. The transmitter on her was broadcasting this discussion to Miya and her rescuers live while the camera on the countertop behind Armani was still recording. Everyone was going to know what happened here and if things go like she thinks they will, she will be a martyr on this day.

“I will ask you one last time,” Armani said, his anger reaching his limits. “You will tell me where Miya is right now! No more delays and no more excuses.”

“Like telling you would keep you from killing me whether I answer or not.”

“You’re right. I’ve had enough of you.”

With that, Armani pulled the trigger. The bullet went right through her head, exploding out the other side leaving blood, bone, and brain matter behind her. Her body went limp and her head tilted back against the top of the couch’s back. Her body started to slide off the couch and was on the floor, her blood smearing the back and seat of the couch.

The transmitter on her suddenly turned off afterwards and the camera stopped recording as Armani left the room the same way he came in. The tablet in the drawer took the recording that had completed and began to upload to the Central Database with Carol’s credentials.

Carol’s plan for revenge and martyrdom would soon begin and Armani was not aware that he was suddenly the pawn in her game even after her death.

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*Shuttle 658A, Northwestern Airspace over Capital City of Plena Tenebris
Planet Tenebris Prime, Tenebris System, Southwestern Region
12:11pm, October 26, 5434 A.D.*

“NOOOOO!”

Miya heard the gunshot through the transmitter her grandmother had. She along with the previous generation of Chiefs heard every word that was exchanged between Carol and Armani. Armani admitted to every suspicion that Carol had about him and his actions that resulted in the creation of the Dominion. He also admitted to what has been happening to the Federation citizens of the Draco, a detail that has been elusive to every Chief or citizen.

Miya was crying her eyes out, leaning forward in her seat with her face in her hands. She just lost her grandmother, her only mentor and remaining direct family member after her mother died while she was very young. Her tears were flowing freely and none of the former Chiefs knew how to console her in her time of need. Worse yet is the decree Armani was about to broadcast to exterminate ALL the Tigris Tribe for the actions Miya along with Carol and Rosa years prior had taken. Genocide was about to happen within the Dominion, and no one was going to question Armani because of his position of power.

Tonya who was sitting to Miya’s right looked at Miya who was still crying in her seat. Mary who was sitting to Miya’s left looked past Miya at Tonya.

“What do we do?” Mary asked. “Armani is about to order the execution of the Tigris Tribe and we are powerless to do anything about it?”

“Even if the citizens of the Dominion read our true history and watch the video of what just happened,” Tonya said, “there is no guarantee that any of them will act to save members of the Tigris Tribe. All of the clones will be too focused on their everyday tasks to do anything about the genocide that is about to happen.”

“So,” Miya said, bringing herself upright and looking at Tonya with tear-filled eyes, “you think they won’t do anything to stop this from happening, that they are incapable of insuring the safety of their fellow members of the Dominion?”

“I’m not saying that,” Tonya said. “It’s just that the clones who make up the vast majority of the population are so fixed on doing the roles they were made to do that doing anything else is not possible.”

Miya’s face went from sadness to anger.

“If that is the case,” Miya said, “then the only one’s who can take care of the Tigris Tribe is the Tigris Tribe itself.”

“What do you mean?” Mary asked. “Are you planning on having the Tigris protect themselves from Armani’s genocide? The Tigris are not fighters! They are bookkeepers and record managers at best!”

“That is what makes us so dangerous. The most powerful weapon is knowledge, not guns and blades. There are ways to fight and it is about time we did something about this Dominion that wants to destroy my Tribe. My grandmother taught me a lot, and I guess you can say some of her rubbed off on me. I know what I need to do, and I know exactly where to start...”

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