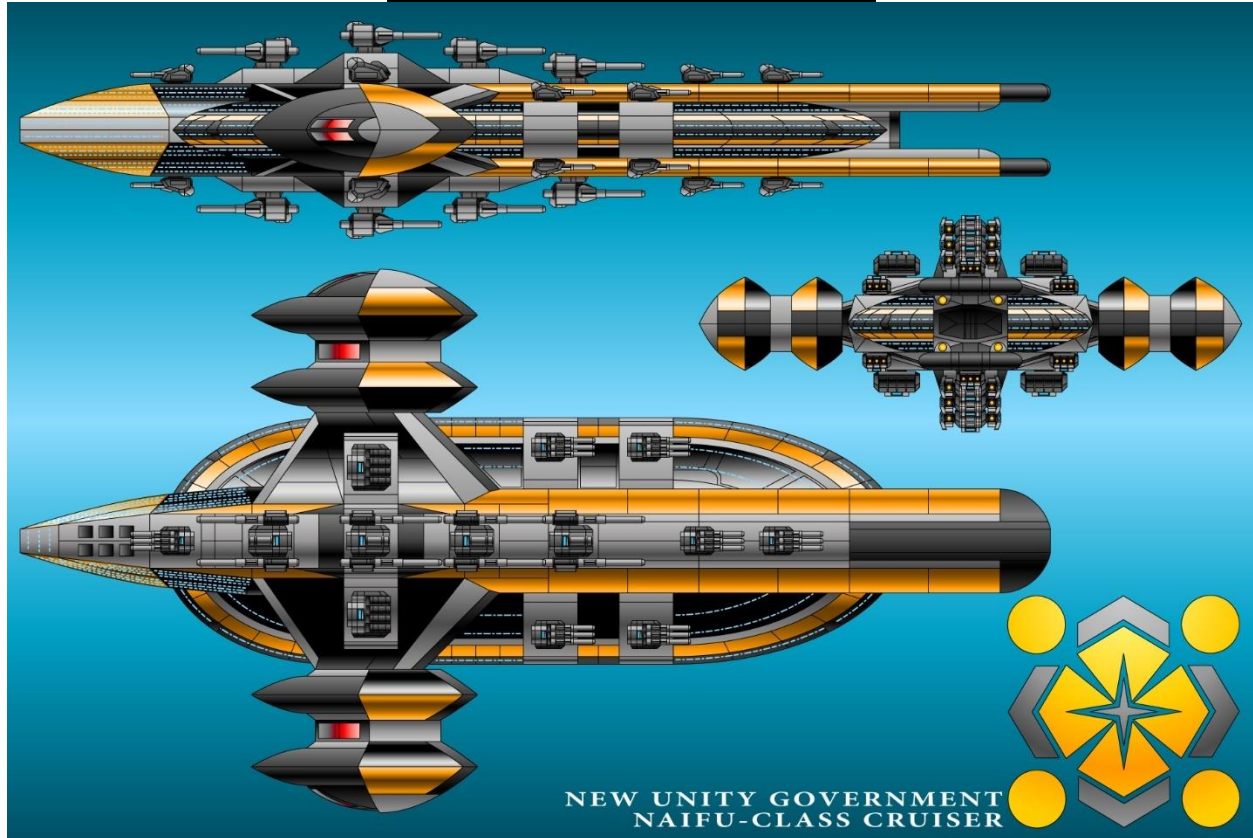


Warring Factions: The Novus Initium Saga
Episode VIII: What Was Left Behind



PART 3

*Private Residence of Trent, Tacoma Suburb District, North of Luminous Planet Luminaire, Lumen System, Capital of Novus Initium Republic
1:27pm, November 15, 5434 A.D. (2 Days Later)*

“Seems like this is my week for being popular.”

Trent was upstairs in his office going over future payments he would have to make automatically while he was away on duty again. He needed to get his affairs in order as well as start working out again to get back in shape. The divorce had left him out of shape both mentally and physically more than he had expected. He did not want his crew to see him in that shape once he returned to duty in five days.

Two days ago, he had gotten an unexpected call from Rear Admiral Shannon, his former Commanding Officer on the *Renaldo* before he was transferred to the *Marshal* and promoted her to her current rank. She came to visit him and told him everything that she had discovered in the Northwest Region. Trent was quite shocked at the revelation that the Lykans, the Caminos, the races that form the State and most of the Federation came from the same nation called the New Unity Government. The knowledge that the citizens of the Union as it was called in short were Human/Animal hybrids made by Humans in the Milky Way Galaxy after Luna came to the star cluster was hard to believe. Their ancestors were victims of some insane scientist that wanted to try to get Luna back and make a name for themselves. That led to the scientist’s death when they

arrived in the star cluster and there was no way to return. Still, this revelation not only explained what had happened to Humanity in the centuries after Luna left, but now there was the issue of what will happen once the other nations find out about their true origins, knowing the past they have been told their entire lives was a lie. Trent could only hope that their citizens will remain calm once the truth gets out, but that may be more than what he would be asking for.

As Trent looked over his financial records to prepare for his return to service, his doorbell rang. Trent was not expecting anyone to show up right now, so he began to wonder who it was as he made his way out of his office and down the stairs towards the door. As Trent reached the front door, he looked through the peephole to see who was outside. He was quite surprised to see the familiar face of Grand Admiral Mikey in unfamiliar civilian clothes outside his door. Trent unlocked the door and opened it with a puzzled look on his face.

“Sir?” Trent said. “What are you doing here?”

“May I come in?” Mikey asked.

Trent knew what that usually meant, given the track record of his “guests” for the past several days when they visited.

“I see it is one of those visits,” Trent said as he moved out of the way to let Mikey in. “Come on in, sir.”

“Thank you,” Mikey said as he walked inside.

Trent closed the door and locked it after Mikey entered. He turned and noticed Mikey was looking around the house, no doubt observing the changes that were made after some pieces of furniture was missing after Laura left.

“I know it has been a while since you have been here,” Trent said as he walked up to Mikey. “I also know this isn’t just a social call.”

Mikey turned to Trent with a slight smile on his face.

“I also know that you have been rather busy with a few visits the past few days as well,” Mikey said. “I’ve heard that Captain Dani, Rear Admiral Shannon, Colonel Blair, and your daughter Amarria have made trips out here during those days.”

Trent raised his right eyebrow.

“My daughter should be rather self-explanatory,” Trent said. “Except for Colonel Blair, the others told me they were coming but did not explain why until they arrived.”

“Shannon has also visited you twice, the second time right after her mission.”

“I would ask how you know all of this, but something tells me you have eyes on this house somewhere, if not the RCIA.”

“I can’t say, or I would jeopardize them. They are good at what they do, but I was more concerned of your involvement with things when you are currently not on active duty.”

“How thoughtful of you. Are you here to address what Shannon and I discussed?”

“I can only guess that she was informing you what she found in the Northwest Region, even though her findings were not supposed to be discussed with anyone outside of her fleet.”

“Maybe she felt confident that due to my previous position as the Eleventh Fleet’s former flag officer that she needed some advice on how to handle the situation, given my background and experience in covert and classified operations.”

“It would be a reasonable explanation, to be sure. Somehow, though, I think she was wanting to warn you about what was coming out of respect once you are back on active duty.”

“If that were the only reason, I would appreciate the gesture. However, it was not the only thing she informed me of, and I think you know that fact all too well.”

“She told you about the Portal Drive not being hindered by the gravity fields, right?”

“She did tell me about that, yes. I assume that the Chancellor will be sending an expeditionary fleet to the Southern Region as soon as possible.”

“Yes, he does plan to send one after this whole situation with the New Unity Government is settled.”

Trent narrowed his eyes when he knew where this was going.

“Let me guess,” Trent said, “he selected me for that expedition.”

“Only if you want it,” Mikey said.

Trent was suddenly surprised by Mikey’s response.

“Are you saying it’s voluntary?” Trent asked.

“The Chancellor knows your history of such missions and that it led to with your recent divorce with your now ex-wife. He understands if you do not want to accept this mission, considering the recent circumstances and will select someone else if you decline. You will not be penalized for turning it down.”

Trent thought about it for a moment. He was quite surprised that he was offered the mission rather than being ordered to do it. While he appreciated that the Chancellor was quite considerate of the circumstances Trent was in due to such missions resulting in his recent divorce, Trent began to both wonder and fear what would happen if another fleet with an unexperienced flag officer when it comes to exploring the unknown would do if they suddenly panicked in a situation they were not prepared for. Trent didn’t want to say that any of the other admirals in the fleet are lacking experience which would belittle them, but he had more experience in the matter throughout the First Interstellar War, the Yintaka Incident, and the Dominion battle from over a week ago. Trent’s experiences in those situations made him more qualified for this mission into the Southern Region than anyone else, and Trent knew it.

Both Mikey and the Chancellor knew this, too. That is why Mikey was here.

“There is no need to answer right away,” Mikey said, breaking Trent out of his train of thought. “This situation with the New Unity Government won’t resolve itself overnight and you still have five days before your scheduled return. Take time to think it over. You have until you report back to your post to let us know what you decide, okay?”

Trent almost let out a sigh of relief knowing he did not have to make the decision right now, and it would be better that he gave it time to think it over as it wasn’t a mission to be taken lightly. The Southern Region has been left unexplored by all known nations for over three thousand years. The only observations that can be made are what can be seen through the gravitational field and even those cannot be entirely reliable.

However, he had the same issues as Shannon when she met him two days ago. Whoever it was that manipulated Armani Draco for centuries allowed the development of a drive unhindered by those same gravitational fields that protect the Southern Region. Whoever it was that resides there had plans that remain unseen by the rest of the star cluster at large. They needed to be found and their plans either foiled or explained, preferably both.

Trent needed answers and he was the most experienced person for the mission. There was but one choice for him and it was better to make it now before he second-guessed himself.

“No need to wait, sir,” Trent said. “I will take the mission.”

Mikey nodded, acknowledging Trent’s answer.

“Very well,” Mikey said. “I’m curious to know. Why are you accepting the mission?”

“If you wanted to know why,” Trent said, “you would not have offered me this mission to begin with, now would you?”

“I guess I wouldn’t,” Mikey said, almost laughing, “I guess I will see you in five days.”

“Of course, sir. Was there anything else?”

“In case you are wondering, Shannon’s fleet is returning to Union space later today as a representative of the Republic to begin talks with their President. Depending on how things go, the Union will be sending either an ambassador or a team that consists of a member of each of the races that we know of. The latter is what we will be requesting under the circumstances so that the other races know the truth of their origins and are not excluded.”

“How long do you think that will take before they come here?”

“The Chancellor can only estimate based on how well the talks go, but he is hoping it will take two days. The Chancellor has certain...ideas that he wants to present to all parties, but he needs the initial shock to die down first before presenting them.”

Trent’s curiosity piqued at Mikey’s hesitation when it came to the ideas that the Chancellor had. It seemed as if Mikey had his doubts to these ideas, but Trent did not want to start asking about them as it was best not to bring up whatever it was that was troubling Mikey.

“I see,” Trent said. “I have to ask, but if they do come here, will there be an Honor Guard detail for their arrival?”

Mikey looked at Trent with a surprised look on his face. Trent knew why Mikey was surprised. An Honor Guard formation was a rare event for the Republic fleet, generally reserved for the arrival of an esteemed guest or VIP to a destination. One such example was the arrival of a Supreme Chancellor elect coming from one of the Republic star systems for their first day in their position. This alone does not happen often, especially if the Chancellor elect is on Luminaire from the start and serves up to two terms. The ambassadors did not receive such a greeting when they arrived on Luminaire at all, so it comes as no surprise for Mikey to be shocked that Trent had made his inquiry.

“Why do you think there will be an Honor Guard for their arrival?” Mikey asked.

“Unlike the arrival of the ambassadors from the other nations, their arrival would be a very momentous one,” Trent said. “The Union has given us answers to questions we were not expecting or anticipating. It also allows their kind to reconnect with those that have disappeared, knowing they have more of their kin among the stars of the cluster. Yes, there will be a lot of issues that have to be addressed at the time but knowing that we all come from the same ancient home planet means we are all more connected than we had ever thought possible. It may even bring us closer together than before.”

Mikey gave a small laugh at Trent’s words. Trent was taken back a little by Mikey’s reaction to what Trent had said.

“What is so funny?” Trent asked, feeling insulted.

“It’s amusing,” Mikey said. “You and the Chancellor appear to have similar thoughts on the matter when it comes to the origins of everyone in the star cluster.”

Trent was surprised by what Mikey had said.

“What do you mean?” Trent asked.

“The Chancellor believes that once the origins of the Union are known that a summit should be held regarding the fates of all of the known nations in the star cluster,” Mikey said. “There is a notion that he wants to put out there for all known nations to consider.”

“What notion is that?”

“As you said, we all came from the same planet. He wants to model a new government, based on the ideals the New Unity Government of the Milky Way Galaxy was formed on while considering how each nation would be included and governed in their own way.”

“Wait, are you telling me that he is suggesting the creation of a single nation?”

“I am. He wants to propose a single nation, a federation, where each nation is a ‘state’ of this federation. The ‘states’ would keep their existing laws but is respectful of the laws of the other ‘states.’ A national set of laws would be created and followed, but there would be no division of citizens based on former national lines. There would be a president instead of a chancellor, but Drew does not seek that position.”

“A future where there would be no wars between the former nations, and we would be able to relay on each other’s strength for a better tomorrow. Sounds very intriguing.”

“I thought it more of a pipe dream myself. It would allow citizens to freely travel between the ‘states.’ He is even considering making the NRZ a ‘state’ if you can believe that.”

“Well, it means that the clones would become citizens in that regards, which hopefully will eliminate any hostility among them. I hear they are getting a lot of problems from the Federation fleet that is stationed there.”

“They are from what I have heard, but the possibility of a near cluster-wide nation? That’s going to be a sight to see if ever.”

“Think of it this way. Those that used the MAR whether directly or indirectly not only managed to make us find these other nations, but possibly unite us against those responsible.”

Trent stopped for a moment when a thought hit him after thinking about his own words.

“Wait a moment,” Trent said.

“What is it?” Mikey said, puzzled that Trent had some revelation.

“What if that was the goal this whole time?”

“What was?”

“Think about it. Those responsible for the MAR made us fight between the nations, to make us stronger in terms of military strength, establish political bonds with other nations, and in some cases invigorate us spiritually. What if their goals were not for us to rip each other apart, but to unite us in the end after we have found a goal or a purpose for the battles?”

“Are you saying the enslavement of races by the Lykans, the battle between the Lykans and the Caminos, the Slave Revolt, the First Interstellar War, the Dominion-Federation War, and the Dominion’s assault on the Republic was all planned out? Do you know how ridiculous any of that sounds?”

“Think about what came out of those conflicts: technological development, military power, spiritual growth, innovations we have never developed before, and star systems explored by others that would take us centuries otherwise. There are also key similarities in a lot of those situations. Wait. I take that back. There was one thing that binds them all together: religion.”

“Religion? I get that aspect from the view of the Lykans and the former Dominion, but that is not the source of all the conflicts. What about the Yintaka battle you were involved in?”

“Religion doesn’t have to be the cause if the aggressor isn’t religious. In that situation, the Lykans’ religion which led to the State’s races being enslaved so long ago was the reason for the State’s Councilors while under MAR influence to attack the Lykans. For whatever reason, the MAR’s creators are using religion as both an enabler and the target of aggression between all of us. The question is why they feel they should use it as such. Is there something about religion in general that these beings feel the need to have us fight about? I wish I had an answer to that question because it would make a great deal of sense to all of us as to their motives.”

“What about having Ghost Two killing Armani once he was in custody? Do you have an explanation for that?”

“Maybe Armani served his purpose to those beings who used the MAR. What those purposes were is, once again, another enigma.”

“Regardless, your theories may have merit and the circumstances behind those theories cannot be ignored if they are true. Is that why you decided to take this mission, to get those answers directly from those responsible before they are brought to justice?”

“Even if they were arrested, they were preparing us for some purpose for centuries. I feel that there may be more going on in the Southern Region that we are not aware of, and the thought of that is beginning to frighten me a little.”

“You are not about to tell me that there is a possible war going on this entire time in the Southern Region that we don’t know about, are you?”

“Not without evidence, obviously, but when I take my fleet there, I need to be prepared for that possibility upon our arrival. In the meantime, we have our own matters to attend to.”

“And on that note, I need to go ahead and take my leave. I am supposed to report back to the Chancellor in a couple of hours. I will tell him you have made your decision concerning the mission into the Southern Region.”

“Maybe you should also recommend to him about the Honor Guard as well. If I need to come back early for that since the Seventh Fleet is in the system, let me know.”

“I’ll suggest it and let you know about his decision. Since the relays are operational, we will get a heads up on when Shannon’s fleet will return once they arrive in Union space. Until then, I need to get going. I’ll be seeing you again soon, Trent.”

“It will be interesting when that happens, I have no doubt.”

Trent headed back to the front door to open it for Mikey.

“Until then, sir,” Trent said.

“Until then, Trent,” Mikey said as he headed out the door.

After Mikey went through the front door, Trent closed the door and locked it. He took a deep breath. The thought that whoever is responsible for the MAR may have been preparing the nations of the star cluster for a war that might be religious in nature was not a very reassuring thought. Throughout Human history on Earth along with the recent war and battles that have occurred based on religious principles and beliefs, those who believe a higher authority or power and can justify their actions based on the “word” of said deity are dangerous people. The ancient Christian Crusades of Israel, the ancient Nazi leader Adolf Hitler’s campaign against Jewish people, the radical Islam terrorists’ conflict including their use of suicide bombings, the Human sacrificial rituals of the Tenebris cult and subsequent attacks against the Republic, the Lykans “holy war” of the First Interstellar War, and the United Vitam State’s war against the Lykan faith are all prime examples of religion-based conflicts. If something similar is happening in the Southern Region between two nations or if a civil war is occurring based on that principle, whoever is the aggressor would be very pious of their actions and would not give a second thought on the matter if they are acting in accordance with their deity.

Was that a war that the nations of the star cluster really need to fight?

* * * * *

*Office of the Supreme Chancellor, Republic Parliament Building, Capital City of Luminous Planet Luminaire, Lumen System, Capital of Novus Initium Republic
4:39pm, November 15, 5434 A.D.*

“That is a very interesting suggestion.”

Mikey had just gone over Trent’s acceptance of the mission to the Southern Region, but he also just mentioned about the Honor Guard detail for when the ambassadorial delegation from

the New Unity Government arrives in Republic space. It would be rare for even Drew to see such a detail be put into action as he was never given such an honor as he was born and raised on Luminaire. Drew began to consider it due to the detail being a rather ceremonious event but also to say that he finally saw such a detail being in use while he was in office. The First through Third fleets along with the Fifth, Seventh, and Eighth Fleets were currently in the system. Those fleets would be enough to organize such a detail.

“You look like you are considering it,” Mikey said, staring at Drew from across the desk. Drew looked back at Mikey after pondering the proposal.

“I just might be,” Drew said. “I’ve never seen an Honor Guard detail take place in my years, either because I was too young to remember it or because I never had an interest in it. When I became Chancellor, I was already on Luminaire since I was born and raised here, so such a detail was never provided when I was sworn into office.”

“So, you are considering it because you want to say that you have at least seen it once in your life while you are Chancellor, am I right?”

Drew laughed slightly.

“Looks like you found me out,” Drew said. “Can you blame me for wanting to witness such an event while in office?”

“I guess not. It has been a while since such a detail is organized, but if you haven’t seen it before, do you know what an Honor Guard detail generally involves?”

“I’ve heard a few things, but could you please elaborate on the details?”

“We are talking about splitting the fleets into two even groups with an opening in the middle. The ships’ bows would be facing away from the planet with the battleships lining the middle of the opening. Spanning out from there away from the opening would be the cruisers and destroyers of each fleet. The newest element we must consider since their introduction are the frigates which would be the farthest from the middle. The ships would be assorted into a flat grid-like formation, perfectly lined up with the other ships around it. It is meant to show the strength in numbers of the fleets that now serve to protect the capital of the Republic including the Chancellor from those that would harm them. Once the detail is finished, the ships would depart one fleet at a time. While this is symbolic of their return to the duty they have been entrusted, it is also meant to keep the ships from running into each other once they disperse.”

“That sounds rather complicated and time consuming to set up.”

“That is one of the reasons it is rarely done. While a difference of several centimeters is acceptable due to the size of the ships, if they are more than one meter off in any direction, the crew is generally penalized for not being in formation.”

“Wow. I had no idea all of that was so strict.”

“That is why if you consider doing the Honor Guard detail for the ambassadorial delegation from the New Unity Government, we need to know so that we have enough time to prepare. This includes those who are on shore leave from any of the fleets in the system.”

“That would include Trent’s fleet. Would they be able to return to shore leave once the detail is completed?”

“Well, the Seventh Fleet still has five days left, but will need to return by tomorrow to have enough time to get their fleet into the formation. They can return to shore leave to use the rest of their remaining three days before completely returning to active duty.”

“Good. The sooner they know about the detail, the sooner they can prepare. I know that Shannon’s fleet is about to depart. Please let her know what we are preparing and to wait two days to return so that we will have everything ready by then.”

“Will that also include the ambassadors from the other nations including the Federation so that they know to be prepared for the surprise they are about to receive?”

“Yes, but I will obviously handle that matter. I will not tell them anything yet, only that we did discover another nation in the Northwest Region that we are inviting to Luminaire to introduce themselves. Make sure that Shannon makes it clear that we need for members of each of the races that our allies originally came from, or they will not believe us or the Union about their origins. We need them to know where they came from.”

“Is knowing their true origins really that important? There is bliss in ignorance, after all.”

“Being blissfully ignorant is what led nations like the Lykans, the Caminos, and the State to fight one another. We don’t need that to happen again, especially once Trent starts exploring the Southern Region for those responsible for the MAR.”

“While we are talking about the Southern Region and the MAR, Trent had an interesting theory that you might want to hear.”

“Oh, and what would that theory involve?”

“Based on events that relate to the MAR, he has found that every instance and conflict was related to religion in some form or fashion. His theory is that the MAR’s creators seem to be preparing us all for a religious war of sorts. When one looks at the history of the MAR’s use that is explained in those situations, I’m leaning more towards agreeing with his theories.”

Drew looked at Mikey with a puzzled expression on his face.

“So,” Drew said, “Trent believes, or he thinks, that the MAR’s creators are involved in some religious conflict that they are preparing us for?”

“It fits with what we have seen thus far in the MAR’s use.”

“Maybe so, but the MAR has been in use as far back as more than six hundred years ago when Armani Draco was originally subjected to the radiation. Could the species who created the MAR still be in a religious war for that long?”

“Maybe. Maybe not. For all we know, they could have been preparing us for one that would take place hundreds of years later. If they were wanting us to prepare for that war, it would fit in with why the Dominion, being advised through the device Armani had, was allowed to create the Portal Drive. They may have wanted us to jump to the Southern Region to help fight for them.”

“And yet, we don’t know who ‘they’ are or if their war is still going on. For all we know, the victors of their war, whether they were the ones who created the MAR or not, were the ones who were responsible for having Armani Draco killed because they don’t want us to interfere at all in their conflict. I’m still concerned with this change in their motives from the established norm that we have seen thus far.”

“I have my reservations as well, but if the MAR’s creators are no longer at war, whether they are the victors or not, we still need answers to questions about why they were using it on several people over the centuries. We at least have to try and establish contact with them.”

Drew sighed.

“I know we do,” Drew said. “I just hope that we are not about to become part of or start a war with these unknown people for either intruding into their space or becoming involved in their current conflict. Let us hope we are making the right decision involving this.”

“I understand your reservations,” Mikey said. “However, we have more immediate matters to attend to. I will get the word out to the fleets that are in the system, including Trent and his fleet. I’ll also let Shannon know what our plans are involving the Honor Guard and for her to request a representative from each race we know.”

“Very well. I will leave those details in your hands. Make sure that no one else other than those that are aware of the true nature of the Union’s citizens notice who they are. We need to keep their identities a secret until they land here at the capital.”

“Understood, Chancellor. Is there anything else?”

“That will be all for now. You are dismissed.”

Mikey stood at attention, saluted, and then proceeded to walk out the door of Drew’s office. After the doors closed from Mikey’s departure, Drew leaned back in his chair. He began to ponder how things will go when the Union ambassadorial delegation arrives.

In his mind, he had a feeling that there was going to be a need for more security.

* * * * *

*Private Residence of Trent, Tacoma Suburb District, North of Luminous Planet Luminaire, Lumen System, Capital of Novus Initium Republic
4:57pm, November 15, 5434 A.D.*

“So, he approved the Honor Guard detail after all.”

Trent was relaxing in one of the chairs in the den of his house watching a comedy program on the monitor to unwind when he received a call from Mikey. Mikey had just informed him that the Chancellor approved of his plan for an Honor Guard detail. Trent smiled, knowing Drew would not resist the opportunity to see such an event take place.

“*Yes, he did,*” Mikey said over the phone. “*You sound like you knew he was going to approve of the detail.*”

“The Honor Guard detail is both an honor and a privilege to behold,” Trent said. “As we discussed, only a Chancellor elect from outside of Lumen gets that honor, but most Chancellors seldom come from another Republic system due to the cultural shock most experience when they arrive on Luminaire compared to the planet they come from. Now he has a reason to prepare a detail and I knew he would take the opportunity to have it done so he could witness it himself.”

“*Sneaky, but you already knew he would request for you and your fleet to take part in the detail as well, didn’t you?*”

“I knew he would request that since my fleet was in the system as I told you earlier. If I did not want him to do so, I would never had requested it. So, when do I have to report in?”

“*Due to the evening traffic possibly delaying you now from reaching the space port and the short notice, I have ordered that all ships must report by noon tomorrow at the latest.*”

“Understood. I need that time to notify my fleet to bring people back from shore leave and for them to return. Speaking of which, if we are expecting this group from the Union in two days, what happens to the last three days of shore leave my fleet has?”

“*You and your fleet’s crew may return to shore leave after the detail is complete to get your remaining affairs in order. The Chancellor knew you would ask that and approve the remaining shore leave time.*”

“Understood. I will get in touch with Captain Dani immediately so that she can get the word out quickly for everyone to report for Honor Guard detail tomorrow by noon. Which of the other fleets are also involved in the detail?”

“*First through Third as well as the Fifth and Eighth Fleets. We will have six fleets for the Honor Guard detail.*”

“That’s going to be a lot of ships and we have to take the new frigates into account. Alright, then. I will let Dani and the rest of my fleet know.”

“Before I forget, Trent, please be aware that only you and the Eleventh Fleet knows what was found in the Northwest Region. If you are asked why a detail is being assembled, please inform them that we are expecting a VIP to show up at Luminaire and that due to confidentiality, we cannot reveal who this person or persons are to the public for their safety.”

“I assume this goes for any civilian traffic that sees this detail being assembled as well?”

“Yes, but we will take precautions to limit the number of civilian vessels in the vicinity of the detail. Obviously, the media will notice this detail being assembled with so many ships and will have news reporters in the area to monitor and record the event.”

“And the Supreme Chancellor cannot do anything about it other than order them to stay out of the flight path that is down the middle of the detail, right?”

“I have to grudgingly agree that he cannot, but they know that any craft flying or interrupting anything flying down the middle will be arrested and detained with the company paying for the release of the vessel and the hefty fine for interrupting the proceedings. Of course, there are no news agency employees that want to risk having that on their employment record or rather their resume as I would doubt that they would remain employed after such an incident.”

“That’s true. Let me get the word out before it gets any later. I will make it clear this is only for two days, so the fleet’s crew will not have to pack much right now. I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“See you tomorrow. Have a good evening.”

“You, too. Goodbye.”

Trent disconnected the call and put the phone on the right arm of the chair. He took a deep breath and began to regret ever bringing up the Honor Guard detail to Mikey. However, it is happening now, and he had to be a part of it. He picked the phone back up, found Dani’s number, and called it. After a couple of rings, there was an answer.

“Admiral?” Dani said over the phone. “Is there something I can help you with?”

“I hate to be the bearer of bad news,” Trent said, “but we have been ordered to report for duty tomorrow.”

“Tomorrow?! That is not enough time for me to pack! Why are they calling us back five days early?”

“The Chancellor is expecting a VIP to arrive at Luminaire in two days and he wants to form an Honor Guard in their honor.”

“Wait, an Honor Guard? Who is this VIP?”

“All I was told was that it was either a person or persons from another nation. Due to the level of confidentiality involved, I was not told who it was or where they were coming from. What I do know is that you do not have to pack for more than two days. After the detail is over, we can spend the last three days of our shore leave as we want before permanently returning to active duty.”

“So, this is a temporary return to duty. I take it that because our fleet is here in Lumen that we were called to report for this detail?”

“You guessed correctly.”

“I figured as much. We have more than half of the crew on shore leave outside the system. As late as it is, it will take some time for them to get back here.”

“I know, but the Grand Admiral said that all ships have to report for the detail by noon tomorrow due to the short notice and the time it will take to get all of our ships in a formation. If they can be ready to depart no later than five o’clock in the morning, Luminous time, they should

arrive with time to spare to report for duty. Do not forget to tell them that they are only going to be gone for two days and return to shore leave afterwards. They don't need to pack much either."

"Got it. I will go ahead and get the word out now so that they have time to prepare.

Thank goodness there are transports that allow for express transportation for military personnel through the star gates or this would get messy. Is there anything else I should know of?"

"Only that our fleet is one of six doing this detail. We will know our placement once we arrive at the coordinates. This is going to be the first Honor Guard detail to not only be done for a foreign dignitary but also the first to incorporate the new frigates. This is going to make the formation interesting, to say the least."

"That it will indeed. Alright. Let me go ahead and let you go. There are going to be a good number of upset crew members, but hopefully their anger will be tempered when they know that this is only temporary for two days."

"I hope so, too. Call me if there are any problems."

"Yes, sir. If you do not hear from me again tonight, I will see you tomorrow."

"See you tomorrow, Captain."

Trent hung up the phone and rested it back on the right arm of the chair again. He took a deep breath and let it out. He knew this was rather short notice for the crews of his fleet, but he would dare not tell Dani that this Honor Guard detail was his idea. Not only would she be upset that he practically offered the idea, but that it was obvious he knew who this detail was for and why. That was something he did not want to discuss with her under the circumstances.

As he tilted his head back to look at the ceiling for a moment, he began to recall his conversation with Mikey earlier about his theories involving the MAR's creators and how they were possibly preparing the known nations for some form of conflict involving religion based on what had happened thus far. He had questions and only going to the Southern Region would he be able to find the answers he seeks.

As he sat there pondering his thoughts, he suddenly heard a sound, like something with some weight being put on a table. Trent brought his head up and began to look around the room, wondering if something he had put up somewhere had fallen but did not break. As his eyes looked around, he suddenly noticed something on the table in front of him, something that was not there a moment ago. Trent's eyes widened when he quickly recognized what the item was.

It was the same type of device that was recorded to be in the possession of Armani Draco. It was the MAR device like the one that influenced Armani.

Out of reflex, Trent jumped out of the chair and ran behind it, hiding from what he could only assume was the coming effect of the MAR that the device was responsible for. It did not take much for Trent to figure out how this device was suddenly in his house. When the Ghost Team who apprehended Armani tried to detain the device on Tenebris Prime, it managed to create a wormhole on its own and disappeared to an unknown location. It was obvious that the device was capable of transporting into the target location in the same manner.

Trent was trying to figure out how to handle this matter as this was not something he never expected to happen. If he moved from behind the chair, the device could hit him with the MAR and subject him to the will of its creators. Any weapons in the house were primarily stored in his office upstairs which did him no good where he was at. He also did not have radiation protection gear in the house, again something he never considered he needed and was usually in the hands of professionals.

As Trent sat behind the chair pondering his next move, he heard a mechanical noise from the device as if it were activating or moving something. The next thing he heard was something

that sounded like someone speaking in a foreign unknown dialect coming from the direction of the device. This was quickly replaced with a mechanical male robotic voice, though soft in tone.

“Is this the habitat of the Human known by his species as ‘Admiral Trent’ on the planet designated as Luminaire by his species?” the device said.

Trent did not want to take the risk of making himself visually known to the device as it was obvious that it either did not have any visual receptors or they were not activated prior to him ducking behind the chair. He was surprised that it was speaking in his language, but he knew this had to be someone in relation to those who created the MAR. Trent realized he still had his phone on hand and set it to record any audio before answering.

“I am,” Trent said from behind the chair.

The device spoke in a foreign dialect again. It was possible that the voice speaking in some alien tongue was speaking their native dialect with the device translating for them to communicate with him. The beings who created this device had a similar one, if not the same one, with Armani for more than six centuries. The English language would not be new to them to translate. Another set of sounds from the alien tongue came through as the device translated it.

“I must sincerely apologize for this sudden and abrupt intrusion into your habitat, Admiral Trent. I also know that you are protecting yourself from this device’s normal function that your species is aware it is capable of emitting. However, that method serves us no purpose in this matter or conversation.”

“What you’re trying to say is for me to show myself since the device would have no reason to use what we call the mind-altering radiation or MAR for short against me. You’ll forgive me if I find such a notion of revealing myself rather hard to trust.”

“We do not blame you for your reflex and decision to hide due to you and your species’ experience in our endeavors. We needed your species to be prepared for what is about to transpire. We know that you have discovered the last remnant of your fellow species from your ancient home planet in an area you call the ‘Northwest Region.’ Long has my kind waited for you all to find each other.”

“Either you have other agents working on your behalf, knowingly or not, or you have other means of surveillance we have yet to detect.”

“Our method of information gathering is our own, though your response is more than sufficient to acknowledge what we have gathered.”

“As you seem to know a great deal of my species and even my name, may I have the honor of asking who it is that I am speaking with and the name of your species?”

“I will only provide that to you if you are willing to trust that I am only wanting to speak to you and nothing more. I have no desire to manipulate you as that would serve no purpose. I have sent this device to you as I know that you are being requested by your leader to send your group of vessels to the region of space you call the ‘Southern Region.’ You are correct in your assumptions that those who created what you call the MAR are in that region. I am from that same species.”

“Considering that we now have the means to detect the MAR and there are very few who know about my decision to investigate the Southern Region, it is now obvious that you have a means of surveillance that we cannot detect rather than using an individual. This may also explain how you were able to precisely send the device to my home directly on the table it rests on right now. As for the fact that you are a member of that same species, maybe you can answer some questions as to the actions taken by your species against the other species that currently reside in the star cluster?”

“Very astute about the observation method, to say the least. I would be more than willing to answer your questions, but only if we are speaking to each other without an intermediate such as what we are using now. I will even provide you with spatial location digits to come meet with me based on your location mapping system.”

“The word we use are called ‘coordinates,’ but I understand what you mean. What you are saying is that you want a meeting, but is this meeting a surrender for your species’ actions or a social visit?”

“Once we can converse without an intermediate, I will leave that up to your judgement to decide the next course of action for your species and the others that reside in the star cluster to take. I know that it will be five of your planet’s rotation cycle before you come to my species’ region of space, so I look forward to your arrival. The ‘coordinates’ as you call them are, in your language: S-Zero-Three-Five-Six, Seven-Zero-Zero-Two, Three-Two-Zero-Five. When you arrive, transmit with only one word: Bilartini. That is my name.”

“Bilartini? Then I look forward to finally meeting you in five days.”

“As do I. We have much to discuss about the future of the star cluster you call home. I anticipate your arrival where we can see each other. Farewell.”

Trent soon heard some mechanical noises. He was not sure what the device was doing, but he was hoping it was shutting down. Once the sounds it was making stopped, another sound was suddenly heard as if an object were immediately suck into a vacuum. The sound disappeared quickly. Trent wondered if the coast was clear and looked over the back of the chair. The device was gone, most likely through a wormhole of its own creation like the device that disappeared on Tenebris Prime according to the reports.

Trent looked at his phone and stopped the recording. He scrolled the recording back to the point when he believed he was receiving the coordinates, but he also wanted to make sure it was able to record at all. He began the playback of the recording.

“... You call them are, in your language: S-Zero-Three-Five-Six, Seven-Zero-Zero-Two, Three-Two-Zero-Five. When you arrive, transmit with only one word: Bilartini...”

Trent stopped the playback. He was happy that he was able to record the conversation, but he began to wonder if this “Bilartini” as this alien was calling himself was his real name and if he knew he was being recorded. Trent wasn’t sure how he was being observed if this alien knew about his mission to the Southern Region which only a few people were aware of, but regardless, at least he has a name and can confirm someone was in the Southern Region who was also responsible for the radiation.

Trent went up to his office to research the coordinates that were provided to verify that they were within the Southern Region. Once he got up the stairs and into his office, he went straight to his desk and brought up a navigational chart on his computer. The letter at the very beginning of the numbers usually describes the direction. In this case, the “S” which meant south. The first set of numbers are coordinates that run east to west, the second set are coordinates that run north to south, and the last set is “elevation” or how high up or down an object is from the cluster’s central horizontal axis. Lumen is listed as zero, zero, zero with no direction and is used as a point of reference on Republic star charts.

Trent punched in the coordinates on the map to see where they were located. Once all the numbers were entered, the results were not that surprising to him. They pointed towards a star located in the Southern Region that was six Light-years behind the gravitational fields. Without more sophisticated equipment, he would not be able to trace if that were where the transmission was coming from. Of course, that is if they could be traced at all with Human technology.

This “Bilartini” took a very calculated risk talking to Trent directly in such a manner, revealing that they have a means of observation that the Republic has yet to detect. If something like an observation or listing outpost was in the Lumen System and has been around for a while, it meant that Humans and other species may have been under observation by Bilartini’s race for a while. How long was unknown, but they needed to find them as soon as possible.

The question is whether Trent reported this right now or not to Mikey or Drew. If their communications can be listened in on by Bilartini or his people, it may be that face-to-face communications would be required. Trent had to figure that Bilartini knew Trent would speak with them about this matter directly, but still chose to contact Trent. It may be possible that Bilartini wants Trent to speak with them about this communication, but to what end or for what purpose, Trent did not know.

What Trent did know is that due to the Honor Guard detail, he would have a difficult time speaking with the two of them in person until after the detail and the meeting was done. Having to keep this secret until then was going to be hard enough for him, especially considering there was a hidden observational outpost in the system somewhere. He needed to wait and be patient.

After all, this Bilartini was going to wait patiently for Trent and his fleet to arrive in five days. Trent can wait two days to talk to Drew and Mikey.

* * * * *

*Bridge, R.N.S. Renaldo, Paladin II-Class Battleship (refit)
Planet NW-035-5 Orbit, NW-035 System, Northwest Region
5:15pm, November 15, 5434 A.D.*

“That is why it took us so long to return.”

Rear Admiral Shannon and the Eleventh fleet had arrived in the Northwest Region once again fifteen minutes ago and got in contact with Commodore Sutherland, the commanding officer of the Union Navy Cruiser Mogami, using the frequency that they were provided. Sutherland’s fleet arrived not long afterwards. Shannon had apologized for taking so long as there were matters to put in place such as the relays for near-instant communications around the gravitational fields between the Central and Northwest Regions. The Senate had to approve of the relays first but were told about the Union for them to approve their deployment.

The Wolf’s expression was hard to read for Shannon, but it appeared that he understood why there was such a delay in their return.

“That is understandable,” Sutherland said, his image on a smaller holographic screen in front of the main screen. “I was beginning to wonder when you would be coming back. I have spoken to my superiors. Our President was quite shocked by the revelation that the descendants of both Luna and the Lost Ten are out among the rest of the star cluster. He is hoping to get a chance to meet you, but he knows that public knowledge of Humans and the Lost Ten so suddenly would be shocking, much like when your Republic and the other nations find out about us.”

“This is going to be difficult for all of us,” Shannon said. “The other nations don’t know about their true origins and the Supreme Chancellor is concerned about suddenly announcing the existence of your nation. He fears that there will be panic, rage, and utter chaos in those nations for be lied to throughout their lives. Granted, it won’t be the fault of the Union or the Republic that they were lied to, and those that first created the lie have long since passed away.”

“While they may have passed away, they look to have left some evidence behind as to why they left. While you were gone, the President began to research into the motives for why the Lost Ten left the Union more than two thousand years ago.”

“I thought there weren’t any records on them or their motives?”

“I thought so, too, but apparently our central intelligence division sealed their files to prevent any possible repeats of their disappearances. Once I reported about the existence of Humans and the possible descendants of Lost Ten, they released the files for the President to view. Based on the history of what your Republic has encountered with our other brethren, our President stated that a lot of things were making sense with their actions and development.”

“Did he tell you what those were?”

“Unfortunately, he did not give me all the details, but he at least told me that they all have one thing in common. They all had some form of mental breakdown or a psychological change that resulted in a distrust of the government, our culture, and/or our national religion. The fact that they all left at around the same time means that they all had this change of heart simultaneously. Why this happened at the same time was never determined after they used the ‘Purple Devils’ to jump away.”

The way they disappeared and their distrust of key aspects of Union life sounded far too familiar to Shannon. It sounded like this was the work of the MAR for them all to be affected at the same time. Finding any evidence on any of the worlds that the Lykans, Vitams, Caminos, and others would be next to impossible considering it was more than two thousand years ago. However, if it were true, it meant that the MAR was in use that long ago making the “Lost Ten” the first ones to be affected by it, long before Armani Draco was affected over six hundred and fifty years ago. Any evidence or information the Republic had on the MAR was not provided in the history records to the Union and its President as it was best to wait to speak about it privately.

Considering that each of the “Lost Ten” started over when it came to development as a species or culture, it seems that any technological innovations that were made by the Union did not exist or ceased to exist after they arrived. It was possible that their ships were destroyed before they even reached the planet, instead relying on some other means to get to the planet. It was also just as possible that their ships landed, the crew and passengers disembarked, and the ships were set to destroy themselves in space in some fashion. Regardless, there was no longer any evidence of the MAR’s influence if the “Lost Ten’s” leaders were affected.

“Do we know if your President wishes to speak with our Supreme Chancellor on the matter?” Shannon asked.

“I believe he intends to as well as with those that lead our lost brethren,” Sutherland said. “However, he also knows that not all of them are in charge in some fashion. We know the Lykans have a Prime Minister, the Caminos have an Empress, and the State is ruled by the five Councilors. The other three who are part of the Draco Federation are not part of the leadership of that nation.”

“No, but there are governors of those races who are. This actually leads me to a request that the Supreme Chancellor has asked me to relay.”

“A request? What is he requesting?”

“He is requesting some form of ambassadorial party that consists of a member of each race that are the same as the ‘Lost Ten’ as you call them. When it comes time to reveal the other nations’ origins, they need to see a member of their same species to know that this is not being made up or that it is fictional.”

“An understandable request. May I relay it to my superiors first?”

“Go ahead. We have plenty of time.”

“As you have told me. We have two days, correct?”

“That is correct.”

“Very well. Give me a moment to contact my superiors. I’ll contact you shortly.”

Shannon nodded in acknowledgement before the screen with Sutherland on it had disappeared. Shannon took a deep breath.

“Politics is more tiring than it is worth,” Shannon said aloud.

Captain Maeve turned and looked at Shannon with a puzzled expression on her face.

“I think we are serving more as the ‘middleman’ in this conversation,” Maeve said. “Is there a reason we cannot relay the communications directly between the Supreme Chancellor and the President? I heard it was done once before between Supreme Chancellor Drew and Draco Federation President Shea.”

“The difference there is that President Shea knew about the Republic while Drew did not know about the Federation. It was not as much of a culture shock between the nations. If anyone from either nation managed to intercept a communication between Drew and the Union President, it will be a massive shock to either nation before we formally reveal each other.”

“I see. So, neither of them wants to run the risk of that happening prematurely. However, what if the line is secure and encrypted?”

“Our encryption algorithms are not the same as the Union’s. There is too much of a difference on our technology with each other in the communications field for that to work. The only reason we can communicate with Commodore Sutherland is because we are using short-range open communications which cannot be made out or understood at long-range. Eventually that will change once each nation’s existence is public knowledge to the other, but not before.”

“Then may I present an alternative solution to the problem?”

“What did you have in mind?”

“It is my understanding that we are near the edge of known Union space. If we can connect to our communications relays here while Sutherland connects to his President, we can link their talks here. This does mean that we would be overhearing the conversation, but to the average person, it would look like the President is only speaking with Sutherland’s ship while the Chancellor would be speaking with our ship.”

Shannon thought about it for a moment.

“In other words,” Shannon said, “it wouldn’t look suspicious to any observers. Let us wait for Sutherland to reconnect before we present the idea and see what he thinks. Hopefully, it won’t be too late to get in touch with the Chancellor by that time.”

Shannon waited for several minutes for Sutherland to come back on the line. After more than seven minutes, the holographic screen with his face appeared in front of the main screen.

“I have spoken with my superiors,” Sutherland said.

“Before we go any further with this message tag,” Shannon said, “my Captain has brought up an interesting idea we could try to connect our Supreme Chancellor to your President directly.”

“But if we connect them, their call could be intercepted, right?”

“Not if we try the method I was advised. If you establish a line of connection with the President while we establish a line with the Chancellor, it will look like we are connecting the communications between our ships and our leaders only. We then have them talk screen-to-screen like what we are doing right now since this is short-range.”

Sutherland pondered the idea for a moment.

“It’s an interesting idea. It would look like a ‘ship-to-shore’ transmission which is not uncommon under the circumstances. This will keep us from being the messenger between them.”

“It will be better than what we are doing now, and it would go far more smoothly without any details being left out accidentally.”

“Alright, let us give this a try. I will get in contact with my President while you contact your Chancellor. Let me know when you are ready in case you get your Chancellor first. I’ll let you know when I have my President if I don’t hear from you before then.”

“Understood. Talk to you again shortly.”

Sutherland nodded in agreement this time as his screen disappeared. Shannon looked at Maeve who was looking a little dumbfounded.

“You seem surprised that we are trying your idea,” Shannon said.

“I wasn’t expecting you to actually take my advice this time,” Maeve said.

“Anytime someone has advice that is better than other alternatives that are presented, I will go along with that advice. It’s definitely better than what we are doing right now.”

Shannon turned to Ro at the Communications station. Before Shannon said anything, Ro was busy at her station.

“I’m already attempting to contact the Chancellor,” Ro said. “It will take a moment to connect through the relays, but I’m also sending a message as to what we are doing.”

“Understood,” Shannon said. “Let me know when you have him so that we can put him on through here.”

“Understood, Admiral.”

Shannon looked back at Maeve.

“I just hope that Sutherland can get through to his President so that we can stop this whole message tag that we have been playing,” Shannon said.

“I wholeheartedly agree,” Maeve said as she turned back around towards the view screen.

Shannon looked back at the screen as well. Sutherland’s cruiser and four of his destroyers were facing towards them from more than two kilometers away. When the Eleventh Fleet arrived in the system and waited for Sutherland’s fleet to arrive, they took a moment to briefly scan the system, enough to get some readings without raising alarms among the civilian population. Much of the history that Sutherland provided two days ago was accurate. This star system had no habitable planets at all, not even one in the star’s “habitable zone,” a specific distance from a star for planets to be able to support Earth-based life and conditions. However, two space stations were in orbit over the fourth planet in the system, large enough to hold sizable populations.

Shannon began to wonder what would happen to the Union once it joined the star cluster community at large. There were more catalogued worlds that can be inhabited in areas such as the NRZ and the unclaimed space in between the NRZ, the Draco Federation, and the Republic. If Union citizens chose to migrate to those planets, it may relieve the burden and pressure of the nation’s possible overpopulation, but the “land rush” would cause a lot of political pressure between the Union and the other nations over claims to those systems.

She soon began to wonder if that was what the “Lost Ten” were doing. It was not known how the first exploration of other star systems in the Northwest Region went or if the first star systems explored had habitable worlds or not. It could be that the “Lost Ten” decided to use the Salire Purpura crystals to jump elsewhere away from the Union for star systems with better prospects of life. While the Union President now has access to those records of those who left and can provide better answers, Shannon would not be surprised if she was right about their possible motives for leaving, eventually becoming the nations that are known today.

“Admiral,” Ro said, breaking Shannon’s deep thought, “I have the Chancellor for you.”

“Put him through,” Shannon said.

A small screen appeared in front of the main screen, this time with Drew’s face on it.

“Rear Admiral Shannon,” Drew said. *“I have been informed of what you wish to do, and I agree with this method. Speaking to the Union President directly in this manner may be better than being the messenger in this conversation.”*

“I figured the direct approach would be better so that there are no misunderstandings or if any messages were not conveyed correctly. We are currently waiting for Commodore Sutherland of the Union Navy to get back with us with his President on the line.”

“That reminds me. Do we have a name for the President or even the species?”

“I never asked specifically, and now I’m wishing I should have. When we convey the transmission, the screen you are on will be moved right next to me and flipped to where you can see our screen from my viewpoint. I will let you know in advance that Sutherland will also be on the screen, and while we have known his kind as Lykans, they are in fact called Wolves.”

“Got it. Thanks for the heads up with him at least. I have been researching ancient Earth animals the past few days based off the list that you provided. I can see a couple of possibilities as to what species the President could be that is leading the Union, but I will not know until we are connected. At least I will know the name of the species once I see the President.”

“You may have to fill me in on the species if it is one who I’m not familiar with.”

“Admiral,” Ro said. “Sutherland is on the line and he has the Union President as well.”

“Bring the screen of the Chancellor near me and flip it towards the main screen. Make sure that Sutherland’s transmission can see both me and the Chancellor at the same time.”

“Yes, Admiral.”

The screen with the Chancellor approached Shannon to her right until it was a couple of feet away over her right arm. It then turned around and had him facing the main screen. After his screen was in position, another screen appeared in front of the main screen, larger than before to allow not only Sutherland to be visible, but also a smaller screen on the lower right from Shannon’s viewpoint. The being in the smaller screen looked to be a male feline of sorts, though quite large based on his physical appearance. His face was hairy with light brown fur, but he had a lot more hair that was dark brown in color on and around his head. His hair was well groomed, though, as if this creature knew he would be speaking in public or with a VIP. Maybe he was more prepared to speak with the Chancellor than Shannon had initially thought.

“President Assefa,” Sutherland said, “may I present Rear Admiral Shannon of the Novus Initium Republic and the Supreme Chancellor of the Republic.”

Shannon was quick to realize that she never gave Sutherland Drew’s name either. It looks like she will have to introduce him as well.

“Supreme Chancellor Drew,” Shannon said. “Let me to introduce Commodore Sutherland of the Union Navy and President Assefa of the New Unity Government.”

“Greetings to you both,” Drew said. “When I was provided the list of species that resided in the Union, I had some thoughts as to which one would be in the position of President. It comes as no surprise that it would be a lion, the ‘king of the beasts’ as your kind was once called.”

“A term that really isn’t used among the Union,” Assefa said, “but nevertheless is familiar to me. I also noticed our officers had never provided our names before today.”

“I noticed that as well, but that is no longer important now that we have been formally introduced to each other.”

“Indeed. We do have quite a few things to talk about that takes precedence.”

"I agree. Where shall we begin?"

"I would like to start concerning your request for an ambassadorial assembly from the Union to meet at your capital of Luminaire."

"Is there a problem with the request?"

"No, there isn't from my standpoint. There are representatives in our Congress that can go as part of the assembly, but I have a request of my own to offer when the assembly is sent."

"Very well. What is your request?"

"I wish to travel with the assembly to represent my government."

"You wish to come to Luminaire as well?"

"I do. As I am traveling to your capital as a gesture of trust and mutual respect, I only ask for one thing in return."

"I'm listening."

"In order for the other nations to realize their true origins with the people I am sending as part of the assembly, I would like to request that the leaders of the other nations be present as well, including delegates of those races that are part of the 'Lost Ten' in the Draco Federation."

"You're requesting for a summit of the nations' leaders to meet at Luminaire?"

"Yes. I know this will be an odd thing to request from the leadership of the other nations, but if they hear about their origins directly from our assembly rather than through medians, there is less of a chance that the message would be modified if they heard it otherwise."

"I see. It will take some convincing to have them all here at Luminaire, but I will try to convince them to show up. I will tell them that there is another nation discovered in the Northwest Region and that I am calling for a 'Star Cluster Summit' of the leaders of the nations to discuss our future. That should be convincing enough to have them come."

"Sounds like a plan to me."

"I do have to ask. I was also informed that the records of those 'Lost Ten' as you called them became available to you by your nation's central intelligence agency. Do those records contain anything that would explain why they left to possibly help smooth things over when they find out the truth of their origins?"

"I'm still going over the records for each one, but they so far are saying the same thing: they all had the notion to jump away from the Union to start a new life elsewhere. I'm not sure what caused this change in their behavior, but for it to occur simultaneously leads me to believe that there was some form of coordination in their efforts to leave."

"There may be another explanation, one that does not appear to have affected your government the same way it has affected others, but still had an effect on others."

"Oh? What are you talking about?"

"Rear Admiral Shannon, can you transmit our information on the MAR to President Assefa via Commodore Sutherland's ship, please?"

While Shannon could not see Drew's face with the screen turned away from here, it was probably best as she was suddenly in shock at Drew's request.

"Chancellor are you sure?" Shannon asked. "Providing information on that subject may be potentially damaging this early into any talks."

"I am aware of the potential implications, Rear Admiral," Drew said. "However, if I am right about this, then this has affected them as well in a way they may not be aware of. Please transmit the files."

"Yes, sir."

Shannon looked over at Ro who was staring back at her upon hearing Drew's request. Shannon nodded towards Ro who nodded in acknowledgement of the order. Ro turned and began transmitting the file to Sutherland's ship. Sutherland looked off-screen towards his right and nodded to someone who was not visible before turning back towards Shannon and Drew.

"We have received the files, Mr. President," Sutherland said. "Transmitting them now."

"Very well," Assefa said. "I've just got them. Let me look these over for a moment."

Assefa looked slightly to his right and looked like he was reading something on a screen on his end. After several minutes and different expressions on his face ranging from shock to disgust, he looked back at Shannon and Drew.

"When I looked over your history," Assefa said, "there were a few things that struck me as odd with how events had played out. These files on this MAR you speak of answers those questions, but at the same time raises other questions in their place. However, if this MAR can change the minds of others so drastically such as the examples I'm seeing here, you believe that it is also responsible for affecting the ones who led the 'Lost Ten' to where they are right now?"

"It would certainly meet the criteria of such a change with as drastic as it happened, not to mention it occurring simultaneously as it did. However, as we do not know the fates of those leaders and their remains, there is no way to prove if this happened to them or not."

"And the one's responsible for the MAR? They haven't been found yet?"

"We've been searching but so far, all we ended up finding was the Draco Federation, the former Tenebris Dominion, and now your nation. It is obvious that none of your nations have the means to make the MAR, especially in the case of Armani Draco who formerly led the Dominion according to the files we sent. That leaves only one general location remaining."

"This 'impenetrable' Southern Region as you call it, am I right?"

"Yes, but it won't be for much longer. The Portal Drives we are now using are not hindered by the fields, so we will be sending a fleet in the next five days to investigate the region for the first time. However, there are other matters that must be settled before we proceed against a foe that has possibly affected all of us now."

"Indeed. You took a risk in trusting me with this information, and I greatly appreciate that vote of confidence. I will send this information on the MAR to my intelligence division to see if there have been other cases that may relate to its use in the Union. What I will do tomorrow is announce the existence of the Republic and the other nations to the Union citizens. As I would be gone for a while and my fastest mode of transportation is your battleship's Portal Drive, I must explain their presence before I visit in two days. It would be best if only the battleship comes to our capital to help transport our flagship that I will be on to your capital. A whole fleet would not look to well in the eyes of the public. We will provide the coordinates to you shortly."

"A valid concern and I will agree. Once you make the announcement, you may contact directly through the relays we have established in the direction of the Western Region. They will connect you with our nation and myself. Once you are ready, we will send Shannon's ship to meet with you at your capital in New Sol and to provide evidence of our existence to your Union. She will bring you to Luminaire from New Sol. I will contact the other leaders immediately so that they have time to prepare for transit here. I look forward to meeting you in person."

"As do I. Let us hope that our meeting will usher in a new era of peace and not of conflict. I fear the other nations will not take our news of their true origins very well."

"I know, and that is what worries me the most."

* * * * *