Chapter 80 Background Noise Rising

Rae’Ver looked over the progress on the repairs to the Heffnir, his city ship. It was a long way from being able to enter subspace again. The casualty reports had finally been completed, 16.9% of the Sylvan population had been lost between the battle and the damage from the planetoid. Thankfully the elves had been diligent in emergency preparation and many people had either been wearing or gotten their vacuum suits on quickly.

Still, he wasn’t proud of what had transpired. He had to fend off two more attempts to remove him from leadership and his personal attendants were growing thin. A pleb citizen had even attempted to awaken one of the prior First Citizens to challenge him! Absolutely ridiculous!

There was good news though. The salvage craft had brought back thousands of artifacts from the planetoid and debris that had been scattered into space. The most interesting were crystalline storage devices. His scientists were working to find a way to read the storage devices. They needed time, a lot more time. If only they had been able to find a device reader to reverse engineer.

His scientists gave him updates every day of all their theories on what they were finding. Most of the technology was equal to or eclipsed the Sylvan. It was frustrating beyond compare. They found a layered plating that was light, durable, and had dozens of properties for shielding and anti-scanning properties. Even he couldn’t penetrate it with his mental skills. The scientists assured him they could create a fabricator in a decade or so. The difficulty was stacking the molecules in the correct orientation which they could do…just at a ridiculously slow pace.

He wondered what the Void Phoenix took from this planetoid. What wealth of knowledge was on that ship.

He only had one scientist working on his other project. He wanted to know more about the wave that had drained him of his power. That may be the most valuable piece of information that could come from this catastrophe. If he could master this knowledge then he may have the weapon the Syvlan needed to combat the Malevolents. Thankfully a Malevolent ship had not been seen in this galaxy. The First Citizens knew they were still out there though. The more powerful First Citizens could contact others across any spacial distance…they confirmed the Malevolents were still active in other galaxies.

A young officer approached Rae’Ver cautiously and informed him another Syvlan city ship was responding to their distress call. It was the city ship Ponffir with First Citizen Jae’Tir in command. Rae’Ver knew Jae’Tir. He wasn’t as powerful as Rae’Ver but the city ship Ponffir was much larger than Heffnir, his own city ship.

He tried to recall the First Citizen Jae’Tir. If he remembered correctly the man hated humans. He hated the fact that the Sylvan traded openly with many of the human cultures. He had advocated for war with humans many times. Called them a virus on the galaxy. This meeting could go poorly if he didn’t present his case well.

It was another day before Ponfirr transitioned out of subspace. Rae’Ver had prepared enough of his discoveries so far to entice Jae’Tir to assist him. Forty-eight war chariots were launched from the Ponfirr as it settled into real space. A show of force…not a good sign.

Thankfully the war chariots just formed a defensive perimeter in the surrounding space. When comms opened Rae’Ver’s premonition tingled. There was no action he could take though. He was locked into his fate at this point. Jae’Tir came on screen and said he was relieved as the First Citizen. A council of five had voted and it was so. Any five First Citizens could vote to remove another.

He knew this could have been a possibility. He hadn’t been able to lock and monitor communications for nearly two days after the Heffnir had been damaged. Messages could have been sent. Now his only hope was that after Jae’Tir reviewed his data he would be willing to talk and compromise.

It was nearly five days before he was summoned from his cell. He could have resisted but knew it was pointless at this point. Jae’Tir would either put him in stasis or join him in his quest. After some questions, it was the latter. But the cautious First Citizen, Jae’Tir, had a stipulation. Rae’Ver could take one of his remaining War Chariots and dock on Ponffir. Jae’Tir was going to install a new First Citizen, one of his attendants, on the Heffnir.

One of his new converted pirates sent a comm a few days prior. The *Void Phoenix* was docked in the human system called Ragnhild. Jae’Tir was already making preparations to take his ship there in pursuit. Rae’Ver quickly selected his most trusted and loyal crew to man his War Chariot. They would be confined to their ship while on the Ponffir but at least Rae’Ver was still part of this momentous occasion.

He had a long road ahead of him. He planned to reach out with his ability and slowly turn the citizen's minds in Jae’Tir’s crew into allies. In time he would take command of this city ship and prepare the Sylvan to fight the Malevolants.

Lazarus had headed directly to his ship when he departed the *Void Phoenix* in the Ragnhild system. He held his anger in check at his crew’s failures. He prepared his message to the space elves and sent all the information he had on the *Void Phoenix* and its crew. And then he waited. After four days of not getting a reply, he got nervous as the *Void Pheonix* was already getting to depart.

Finally, Sha’Lua sent a response. Stay in pursuit of the *Void Phoenix* and send updates on its location. That was it? Stupid fucking space elves! He did as he was told and recruited more crew for his ship before following his prey to the Ederne system. Why the hell was the engineer going to this little system. He knew there must be a purpose but he didn’t know what it was.

All he could do now was train his crew from a bunch of mismatched misfits to a proper pirate crew. His navigator estimated they arrived a good 18 hours after the Void Phoenix. How was that old passenger liner so damn fast! No matter, he would dog the engineer until the space elves sent some support.

Katsu Oshiro stared at the display in front of him. His top agent from his branch had traveled out to the rim and had fallen off the grid. Where was Lydia Romasko (Jane Doe)? She had transmitted success in her mission to acquire the subspace research of Milo Dejarsdin. He had expected her to transmit the data when she reached one of the Brotherhood's deep space comms arrays. But nothing.

The data was supposedly novel and should help his think tank on Earth make progress into faster sub space travel. An enterprise that could be worth billions to the Brotherhood but Lydia was missing. She wouldn’t have betrayed the Brotherhood. If her shuttle had been destroyed it should have sent a ping out informing the Brotherhood of its demise. He swore. He would have to pull another agent to track her down.

He looked at his other diamond agents in the region. Just two, Hanson Gammon and Tommy Burke. Tommy was a specialist in seduction and infiltration. He was also on a mission to the Pleides system to infiltrate their alien gene-splicing program. If it looked promising it could help the Brotherhood’s members live longer. If it was deemed too dangerous then he was to steal the data and destroy everything on the way out.

Hanson Gammon. He hated that agent. It was Hanson who had fucked up obtaining Milo and his research in the first place. Ask Hanso to kill someone or blow something up and you were golden. Ask him to give a little girl a lollipop and most likely you would find the girl accidentally choked on the lollipop and perished. He didn’t have any other agents within two weeks of Lydia’s last known location.

He could ask the other branch puppeteers if they had agents in the region but that would admit his own ineptitude. He was going to have to use Hanson and his commandos. At least Hanson operated a stealth frigate so he had good mobility. He started the coded message to Hanson, pulling him from his mission to tilt the insurrection on Janson Prime in favor of the revolutionaries. He gave him the simple directive to find Lydia Romasko and retrieve the subspace data.

Hanson and his five agents were planting explosives along a massive dam that supplied power to two cities currently under the control of the ruling government. Losing this power grid and the precious metal mining along the river would be a huge boon for the insurrectionists.

His stealthed frigate, the *Harbinger*, in orbit relayed a new mission from command. Irritated he looked at the mission as it decoded on his PerCom. Then he smiled. So the great Lydia Romasko had gotten herself into some trouble. This should be fun! He couldn’t wait to run it in her face. He ordered his men to finish with the explosives before returning to the shuttle. A good explosion should never be left half-finished after all.

Five hours later his crew crowded on the shuttle and watched from the night air as the explosives rang in succession below. The dam collapsed, sending a wave of water that would wipe out dozens of towns and kill thousands. All in a day’s work.