Distant Hope

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A science fiction piece looking into how you lose something and get it back.

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Distant Hope : Chapter 1

DISTANT HOPE BY SAMSON KING

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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

A decade of war against the Iquan had ravaged the galaxy. A vicious enemy capable of great cruelty and savagery. No one had emerged unscathed until their defeat thirty years ago at the Battle of Callisto where the Alliance fought for its very survival.

The Iquan were beaten back to there world of Iquos. Though the Iquan had not surrendered they had been severely weakened.

Thirty Earth years had passed since that time and the Alliance had rebuilt herself emerging stronger than before. The golden age of the Alliance was felt everywhere as new discoveries were made, new planets discovered and an era of stability brought trade and wealth to the citizens of the Alliance.

Chapter 2

CHAPTER 2 - PENTAYA

The green and yellow outline of Pentaya hung in the blackness of space. The citizens of Pentaya went about their business.

Then a large fleet so vast it blocked out the sun swarmed around Pentaya. Their sleek grey metallic hulls hovered menacingly above the planet.

The citizens of Pentaya went about their daily routines of going to work and seeing loved ones. Yet their thoughts were soon no more as large, metallic ships dropped a series of long thin projectiles which buried themselves deep inside the planet.

Then came a series of violent explosions tearing the planet apart.

The ships left, their work of destruction complete

Chapter 3

CHAPTER 3 - IQUAN MONITORING STATION

"Did you see the football last night?" Captain William Tebbit shouted to Lieutenant Izan Yulen a human from Earth.

The Lieutenant smiled I know Mars beat Earth again. Its the third time this year."

Captain Tebbit smiled "You still owe me twenty Peridima sagnets for the trouble."

The Lieutenant smiled and gave her cash "You win."

They both walked to the operations room an area of the station that monitored the Iquan there was only the two on board and it was a remote posting far from Alliance worlds.

The Lieutenant sat at her station to check the mornings activity she looked to the Captain "Their is still the Alliance world cup up over the next few months. Earth will win against Mars."

The Captain looked to her lieutenant and shook his head. Before he could say anything the lieutenant looked to her large glass screen "That's odd."

Captain Tebbitt looked to her with narrowed green eyes "Whats odd."

She looked back to him "Iquos is quiet. There is no energy spikes coming through at all."

The Captain looked to the lieutenant "Are you sure."

He wondered over to the lieutenants console and he ran a diagnostic thinking one of the sensors had malfunctioned, they weren't.

Izan looked to her Captain "I'll check through last nights records."

She quickly cycled through the logs and noticed that Iquos had gone quiet at 04:06 the previous night.

The Captain knew this was unusual and he knew what to do knowing from history that the Iquan were capable of great deception. As he walked over to the communications terminal an alarm pinged citing an incoming ship.

Izan checked the screen "Its a resupply ship the Avenger, a trading vessel owned by a Lisa Hanson of the Wovan Trading Syndicate. It is scheduled to dock in half an hour."

The Captain shook his head "Of course, of course the Avenger is due."

Then a second alarm sounded the fluorescent lights of the station dimmed and a loud klaxon sounded indicating there was an incoming ship with weapons.

The Captain looked to the sensors to see three fighters of an unknown alien design close to the station. The ships hovered for several minutes.

The Captain knew the station was armed with plasma cannons but they were not powerful enough to take on three fighters.

Lieutenant Izan looked to the screen "I can't make any sense of their ships our sensors cannot penetrate there hulls."

The alien fighters started to open fire. They where arranged in a triangular formation and within minutes the station was ablaze and the Captain had offered the stations surrender. Lieutenant Izan had died from an exploding console. Realising his imminent death he fired a probe into space containing the stations data.

Soon the station was of pile of metallic fragments and the three alien fighters disappeared towards hyperspace.

Chapter 4

CHAPTER 4 - AVENGER

Lisa looked to her screens and she had seen the destruction of the station. She was alone her crew where on Peridima city "This was supposed to be a routine mission" she muttered to herself.

Lisa scanned the debris and saw that no one was alive but the ships sensors had picked up the location of the stations probe.

She maneuvered the sapphire blue Avenger and launched grappling arms to pick up the data probe and it was soon on board.

Lisa knew she had to get Edenia home of the Intergalactic Alliance and also her next trade route dropping off vital building parts for a large construction project.

Lisa turned the ship towards the hypergate and headed for Edenia.

She studied carefully the data records of the station and it concerned her deeply to see that the Iquan had disappeared. The Alliances greatest enemy had disappeared.

Lisa knew that the Alliance was not strong enough to take on the Iquan as most of her fleet was over thirty years old with few new ships.

Yet she walked to her cabin from her bridge and she looked to herself in the mirror seeing her half Meon/half human heritage of golden eyes and blackened spots that crisscrossed her shoulders and she had her human mothers blackened hair. She pulled out of a top drawer a picture of her dad. She looked to him knowing how much she missed him and that he would be concerned that the Iquan had disappeared.

She dwelt on this thought as the ship automatically piloted itself towards Edenia.

Chapter 5

CHAPTER 5 - EDENIA

Eden home of the Intergalactic Alliance and home to millions of its citizens. Eden was a beautiful world of mountains and lakes with a temperate climate and no rain its water need provided by vast underground rivers.

Lisa landed the Avenger at a spaceport close to the capital city of Eragon. She was whisked by a mag train to the Intergalactic Alliances large parliament a large five hundred foot high tower with a curved top and square base dotted with hundreds of glass panels.

The mag train stopped and she made her way to Congressman Smiths office. Lisa walked into his office located close to the Parliament she had arrived quietly not announcing she was coming concerned who might be around. She was dressed in a casual light blue shirt and white jeans carrying a small red data crystal with the stations logs on them.

Lisa walked into the congressman's office and saw a Meon receptionist with blue skin, black hair and golden cat like eyes.

The receptionist looked to her "Can I help you" she smiled.

Lisa wasn't sure if the congressman was busy.

The receptionist nodded "Do you have an appointment?"

Lisa shook her head "Just say that Lisa's here."

The receptionist walked into the congressman's office and they talked for a few moments. Lisa sat briefly as a five foot seven Caucasian male walked out. Lisa looked to Congressman Smith with his wide set hazel eyes short nose and narrow mouth.

He smiled at her "By the sons of Mars is that really you, Lisa?"

He shook with a firm handshake "Its been what?"

Lisa continued "A decade or so."

Congressman Smith smiled as he saw his old flame "Lisa you came all this way to see me."

Lisa looked to him with a concerned look "We need to talk."

The Congressman shook his head "Come in, come in."

They both entered the congressman's office and Lisa sat on a fabric L-shaped sofa that lined two sides of the office. On another side was a pine wooden desk. The office was lined with a deep green carpet and a large window that looked out onto nearby tower blocks.

Lisa sat down continuing to admire the view "Your close to the Parliament building I see."

The Congressman nodded "I could got have gotten a bigger office down the street but here I get more light besides I am only five minutes from a mag train station."

Congressman Smith could see that she wasn't here by chance "What makes you come to Eden?"

Lisa took out a red data crystal from her shirt pocket "I was doing a resupply run taking foodstuffs to the station on the edge of Iquan space. I was about half an hour away when it was attacked."

The Congressman sat near her and looked into her eyes "What!"

Lisa continued "Thats not the worst of it. I recovered the data logs and they show the Iquan are gone."

Congressman Smith realised her visit had to be a surprise not knowing who might be listening "Have you told anyone this?"

Lisa shook her head "I haven't but I came to you first."

The Congressman nodded "Its appreciated. I can't believe the Iquan are gone."

He took the red data crystal and looked at the sensor information and video footage which confirmed Lisa's story.

Lisa look to him "What now?"

The Congressman looked to her "I need to speak with Senator Nireen who is responsible for this sort of thing".

Lisa stood still as the congressman got up "What do you want me to do?"

The Congressman threw her some keys "Go to my place and I will be there later. My receptionist knows where I live. Keep out of sight and speak to no one."

He walked out of the office to see the receptionist "Can you get hold of Senator Nireen please tell her I need to speak to her on an urgent matter."

The receptionist obliged and the arrangement was made Lisa however refused to be thrown aside and she looked to the congressman "Don't you need me to come with you."

Congressman Smith looked to her and said "Okay, okay. Sorry I wasn't thinking. Please bring the car round."

Congressman Smith and Lisa both entered a lift and descended to the waiting car. Lisa could see that the Congressman was tense.

Lisa stood silently as a black tinted air car was driven around. They both got in.

They sat silently and Lisa broke the tense atmosphere as the aircar drove down long winding streets past skyscrapers and pedestrians "Your worried."

Congressman Smith nodded "Yes I am for one thing we are not ready. Our military is half the size it was thirty years ago and most of our military ships are being rebuilt. This is the worst time for this kind of news."

Lisa looked to him realising that both of them had come a long way in ten years she had left the military to become a freighter captain and he had gone into politics. The two had been lovers during the Nonan incident where a rogue human commander alongside others used nuclear weapons to destroy New York and other large alien cities across several alien systems.

Within thirty minutes they had arrived at Senator Nireens office ascending quickly to the top floor of the glass and steel skyscraper.

The Senator stood waiting for them looking displeased she was a Donayan a bipedal race with a triangular head which housed sharper eyesight and hearing than a human. "You've pulled me out of a important budgetary meeting."

The Senator noticed the Congressman's friend "Who's she?"

Lisa did not like her condescending tone and said nothing as the congressman continued "Senator this is Lisa Hanson an old friend who has brought us some disturbing news."

The Senator ushered them into a small conference room furnished with a brown stone table and black leather chairs. All three sat and the congressman shared the news and information.

The Senator looked unhappy "This is serious. Look both of you go home. I will tell the Chief Elder we will meet again hopefully tomorrow."

With that the congressman and Lisa left awaiting the result of the next days meeting. Both realised they had time to fill.

Congressman Smith look to Lisa "What are you doing now?"

Lisa looked unsure "I was considering going back to the Avenger until I was summoned."

The congressman shook his head "No your not. Come back to mine I am sure you could use a good meal."

Lisa looked to him and knew it had been a while since she had a home cooked meal living on rations and often eating food in questionable restaurants "Sure, why not."

They walked together through the quiet city streets eventually stopping at a modest four storey apartment block located at the end of a narrow street.

The air was quiet a gentle breeze rustled distant trees. Lisa followed the congressman into his apartment up to the top floor.

Both had said little yet both were eager to talk.

Chapter 6

CHAPTER 6 - SENATOR NIREENS OFFICE

Chief Elder Qunoon, an ageing human of a hundred years narrowed his white thickly matted eyebrows "Senator I here what your saying about the Iquan. My own sources told me an hour before you did about the Iquan. Word hasn't got out yet but it soon will we have maybe twenty four hours on this before it explodes. I've instructed everyone to gather tomorrow all the senators will meet in the upper chamber at eleven o'clock for an emergency session."

Senator Nireen looked to him "I will be there."

The video screen ended and the senator folded her arms and looked to a series of photographs on her table all members of her family killed by the Iquan. The night was drawing in and she walked close to the photos and rested her finger on one of them her sister killed during an attack on the Meon home world.

Chapter 7

CHAPTER 7 - CONGRESSMAN SMITHS APARTMENT

The time had gone midnight wine and conversation of old stories and what each was doing mingled amidst a cacophony of laughter and tears.

John Smith turned to Lisa "Where are you traveling after your finished here?"

Lisa put down her glass as she sat on a low blue fabric sofa "After here I'm going back home to Sirenson and sail on Lake Vouchon."

He looked to her "Sounds nice I unfortunately have budgetary meetings booked for another few weeks. The Alliance is expanding so fast and we just do not have enough ships or pilots to catch up with what is going."

Lisa looked to him sensing he was holding something back "Your worried. You had the same look during the Nonan incident."

The congressman looked to her and got up "You've got me. I'm thinking of tomorrows meeting. Most won't do anything about the Iquan. They will think it a good thing and leave at that."

Lisa "They can't."

John turned and began to see her eyes and wondered about the things they had seen "You and I live in different worlds. Your out there in space, here we debate minutia over borders and things. Many of our leaders were soldiers or generals in the last war and are not eager to start a new one."

Lisa got up and walked over to him "Our worlds are not so distant. Routinely in my travel you have to negotiate, present an argument and make sure the job is done on time."

John looked to her deep orange eyes with a large black iris at is centre. Johns attention turned to more physical things.

A moment of silence passed and they both got closer. Lisa raised her hand placing it on his cheek "Do you remember that night we spent on Metropolis?"

John nodded "How could I forget."

The two soon were as one in the mild Edenia night.

Chapter 8

CHAPTER 8 - INTERGALACTIC ALLIANCES PARLIAMENT

Chief Elder Qunoon got up and walked to a raised podium he raised his hands as was tradition when he was speaking. He looked to the senators who represented over a dozen species and hundreds of planets. His red and gold robe shone in the sun lit room.

"Ladies and gentleman this emergency session has been brought to you today and some of you will already know. Our greatest enemy has disappeared, where we don't know but they have destroyed the Punan homeworld."

Chief Elder Qunoon carried on speaking passionately observed by Congressman Smith and Lisa standing high up on an observation window.

The congressman turned to Lisa his thoughts were split on the speech and their night together "We had a good time last night."

Lisa nodded "Whatever happened to you after Metropolis I never saw you until yesterday?"

Congressman Smith looked to her "I got called by the Alliance to do some undercover work before I got into politics."

Lisa was quiet for a moment thinking over what had been said "Its alright I forgive you."

The congressman turned to her "I've got some free time coming up in a few weeks . Perhaps I could come and see you on Sirenson I here its a beautiful planet."

Lisa's eyes widened "Tempting."

As she finished the speech was finished. The debate started and ended with many concerned over the Iquan disappearing but the congressman knew many had little appetite to do anything.

Congressman Smith was not pleased and neither was Lisa both walked to a nearby canteen serving coffee both remained silent and dumbstruck over what they had just seen.

Senator Nireen saw them in the distance and walked over with a coffee in her hand and sat next to them and looked towards Lisa "I'm sorry you've come all this way for nothing. The feeling is that the disappearance of the Iquan is a good thing and they have left us alone."

Lisa welled up with anger "They weren't there. I saw those ships with my own eyes."

The senator looked to the congressman and sighed "Some however are concerned enough to want to see if there is a new threat then we need to know more."

Then emergency air raid sirens started to whine. All of the people in the canteen looked around.

Congressman Smith asked "Whats that?"

The Senator rang on her communicator to a private number. She put the communicator down "By the Gods of Andulas. We're under attack."

Lisa shook her head "Attack?"

The senator continued "We have a fleet over five hundred ships that have just the entered Edenias system and are on their way here. They've destroyed half our fleet here in this sector. Word has been sent out but we think they are jamming us."

Senator Nireen turned to Lisa "Its the Iquan isn't it?"

Lisa nodded the sirens continued blaring and all three made there way to a bunker located deep under the city.

Chapter 9

CHAPTER 9 - THE BUNKER

The enemy fleet of a hundred circular grey metallic ships approached Edenia and soon began to bomb the planet. Within a half hour the planet was in smoldering ruins and any military opposition was now debris floating in the voids of space.

Below Eragon city senators and congressman huddled together. The bunker shook as the bombing continued then it stopped.

Senator Nireen looked to a display "They're landing hundreds of ships."

Then she saw from a remote camera the face of the enemy. The aliens were tall, grey headed aliens with beady eyes and spindly bodies armed with disruptors.

One enemy ship landed its rear doors opened and a platoon of alien soldiers descended down a long ramp accompanied by a large procession of robots. The senator could only guess their function this scene was repeated over a mile in width as hundreds of ships landed and enemy forces began to take formation.

Congressman Smith looked on in horror "Its an invasion."

The Senator turned to Lisa knowing that things were lost.

"You must both return to the Avenger at once. Go to Zantaya and there you will find help. There is a series of tunnels under the city when this place was being built the Avenger is located at the far end of one of these tunnels. Please go both of you. Warn the Alliance of the invasion and that the Chief Elder is dead."

They both left together.

Both nodded and hurried walking for a mile through winding concrete tunnels that were cold and damp. Both were wary of enemy soldiers.

Yet soon they where at the tunnel as the congressman had said and Lisa got to the Avenger.

They both looked around the enemy could be seen far in the distance yet they did not hesitate. Lisa knew she would not make it to the Avenger and she looked at John.

John understood and seeing the enemy soldiers quickly flew the Avenger into orbit and it flew as fast as it could from Edenia yet it was pursued by two warships and half a dozen fighters. John knew he had to get to hyperspace to warn the Alliance of the invasion.

The enemy fired at him using long rang high speed missiles that detonated around the ship.

The Avenger sustained damage its advance towards hyperspace stopped. The enemy fleet lingered closer and John was unsure what to do.

He looked to the ships systems and they weren't to badly damaged but he needed to make repairs.

Seeing a nearby moon he pitched the ship hard and fast hoping the enemy thought he was destroyed by the exploding missile barrage. The grey brooding moon approached yet for John it would be home for a few days.

He landed on the ship in a deep concaved crater that would shield the Avenger from the enemy's sensors.

Yet Lisa also knew that there was a chance they would come looking for her. The Avengers thrusters hissed and the ship was powered down and John began repairing the damaged engines and replacing fried computer circuitry.

Yet hours took days the damage was more extensive then he had at first thought and had repaired most of the ships systems.

The ship ascended but there was no sign of the enemy eager to avoid trouble John opened a tunnel and entered into hyperspace. He knew that the journey to Zantaya would take weeks as her main thrusters were at half strength.

Chapter 10

CHAPTER 10 - PARLIAMENT BUILDING

Enemy forces entered the bunker quickly and brutally killed anyone trying to stand in their way. All the politicians and staff huddled were hustled back to the Parliament building.

Many feared their fate not knowing what was to come.

Lisa returned to the parliament building with Senator Nireen both stood near each other as a tall grey alien walked in surrounded by soldiers bristling with guns.

The alien looked to the room defiantly knowing he had won. Around him stood other aliens dressed in different colours.

Lisa looked to the room most of them were terrified. Then more soldiers appeared surrounding the chamber.

The alien spoke briefly in a high pitched tone "You are now under the rule of the Iquan we claim this world for our people. The Alliance as you know it is over. Any opposition will be crushed."

As a demonstration several politicians were shot.

Fear soon gripped the room as Lisa looked around the sight of human and alien blood oozing on the carpet reminded her of her military days. She thought he had put that time behind him.

However she knew that Edenia had been conquered. She also knew that the Alliance would fight on despite losing the capital.

For hours the aliens circled. Eventually some were allowed to leave. Lisa headed back to Johns apartment alone. As she walked she saw alien troops on the ground heavily armed.

She walked into his apartment and looked into his wardrobe that housed his old military uniform. She looked at it as memories flooded back of her time with old colleagues and the battles they had fought.

The sight of the politicians being shot angered Lisa and she knew a lot of them were peaceful people.

She briefly thought of Lisa wondering were she was hoping she was safe and the message would get out. Yet that was not going to be enough thought Lisa.

She muttered to himself "I need to leave this planet."

She knew that he couldn't do anything on Edenia the planet was already taken she had to mobilise the opposition.

She turned on the TV to see that a number of senators and congressman had been executed since the Iquan invasion. On the news it was announced that military governors were now in charge of different parts of the planet and any opposition would be severely dealt with showing how a Meon family had resisted and had been executed.

There was a knock on the door. Lisa was wary and she had not been expecting anyone.

As he opened the door he was surprised to see Senator Nireen "Senator."

The Senator walked in and Lisa was surprised to see her it was the first time she had come to his place.

Lisa looked to her and could see that she was distressed as she sat on a blue fabric sofa "Lisa everything has gone to pieces out there."

Lisa emerged from the kitchen with an earl grey tea.

"Thanks" she said appreciatively as she took the hot drink.

"Lisa its really bad out there."

Lisa nodded "I know I've been hearing reports all day. It seems they any opposition is quickly crushed."

Senator Nireen looked to him "I watched you in the chamber. You were calm almost unafraid of what was happening around you."

Lisa nodded "I've seen death too many times. You know I served in the military before working as a freighter captain. I had hoped all that was behind me."

The Senator nodded "Can we drop formalities for a moment I am not a senator. I am speaking to you as a friend."

Lisa nodded "Whats on your mind?"

Nireen continued "At some point the Iquan are going to come after me. I am far to dangerous to be kept around. At the moment they are being careful. Many people have gone over to their side."

Lisa listened intently "There is little we can do here."

Nireen shook her head "There are a few things you can do. I need you to leave Edenia and go and meet my brother General Nireen."

Lisa looked to her curiously "Me leave, how all our ships are impounded."

Nireen smiled "Come on you and I have worked closely together. We fought hard to make the Alliance work. I do not want to see all that work gone. Yes our planet is occupied but the Alliance must continue. I have a ship located about thirty miles from here. Its a private ship under my name. Only I and my staff know of it."

Lisa looked to her "I am not abandoning this planet."

Nireen nodded "You are the only person I trust. Edenia is gone as I have said the Alliance needs to survive."

The Senator got up holding her half drunk cup of tea "Your are our best hope. The Alliance I fear is not strong enough to defeat the Iquan we will fight yes but there will come a day when we can't. I need you take my ship and get out of here fly to Zantaya use your military experience tell them of what has happened here today. Leave now. A car is waiting to take you to the ship. Thirty minutes from now the Iquan are going to come and kill me. They know I am here."

Lisa shook her head and looked at her before going to the Senators car.

Yet there was no driver just an empty air car with a route to the ship on the cars internal satellite navigation system. Lisa got in and started to drive.

Up above Johns apartment exploded in a large fireball that sent shards of glass and debris to the ground. Lisa knew the Senator was dead and she had been killed because she knew too much.

She drove for miles her mind whirring with the conversation she just had with Senator Nireen. She arrived at the ship it was a small shuttle.

The shuttle was small, square and grey metallic. Inside where two long benches with a single seat for the pilot controls. As she walked over to the pilot controls she saw a note written by Senator Nireen "Best of luck."

Lisa looked around and settled in closing the shuttle bay doors she quickly powered up the shuttle and noticed it was equipped with a hypergate engine.

She flew the shuttle high above Edenia and out of the atmosphere. Yet she was surprised at the lack of attention but wondered if the shuttle had some kind of masking technology that hid it from the enemy.

She opened up the hypergate heading for Zantaya.

Chapter 11

CHAPTER 11 - ZANTAYA

John emerged into the Zantayan system a week later. He docked at an orbiting spacestation and spoke to General Nireen as requested. The Avenger was placed in dry dock above Zantaya.

News of the invasion had reached everyones homes and Johns story of survival got wide spread attention and he was seen as a hero.

John Smith gave up his political ambitions and he reenlisted as a naval officer and was given the rank of Captain and given command of the Nosan the newest of the Alliances warships it was crescent shape and painted in black. It was over five hundred metres in height with weaponry capable of leveling a planet.

Captain John Smith took command of the vessel after war had been declared against the Iquan.

The Nosan crew were a mixture of humans, cat like Meons, aggressive Zantanyans and triangular headed Donayans.

The crew consisted of over two thousand a mixture of young and experienced crew. This was also Johns first command of a warship and whilst he had some experience commanding during a night shift during his previous military career this was still new.

He was still nervous gripping tightly his captains chair next to him Kotan Pulev daughter of the famous Andrea Pulev who had died during the opening days of the first Iquan conflict. Andrea was a trader in her time but learned of the Iquan attack that was to consume the known galaxy in blood and broken dreams.

Kotan Pulev was human, medium height, athletic build but quiet focused and smart with black hair and carried the respect of her crew.

Captain John Smith ordered for the ship to get on its way and it was to meet the second fleet a large mixture of ships that were going to try to retake Edenia.

The Nosan entered hyperspace gracefully its sleek black hull reflecting bathed in the starlight of the Zantayan system.

Soon she joined the fleet consisting of three hundred ships a mixture of fighters, cruisers and destroyers.

He saw half a dozen Klevet class ships, the largest of the Alliances ships and they were similar in design to the Nosan but were over eight times the size with a crew of twenty thousand and weaponry capable of destroying fleets of ships.

They were black hulled and menacing dwarfing the fleet and they led in front. One of them was commanded by Admiral Inen a large Quinon known for being brash and loud but someone you would not want to be up against in a fight.

The fleet of three hundred met on the edge of Edenia the star system and they came out of hyperspace. The large fleet emerged silently into the Edenia system but the Iquan were ready.

A large contingent of Iquan warships approached their large saucer ships numbering hundreds alongside a large mother ship John thought. The mothership had a curved front and back and two triangular points jutting at towards the rear half of the ship. It was dark green and the ships skin shimmered.

John wondered what the shimmering was about before he looked to the fleet and hope welled within him to avenge Edenia and to take it back.

Commander Kotan looked to the Captain "We have the numbers."

John nodded "Maybe so I've never seen there ships before. I've only seen them on the ground. But we should not get to overconfident we have greater numbers but we do not know what their ships can do."

The two large fleets merged closer. The Iquan opened fired their large circular ships firing a rapid pulse of red plasma fire towards the ships in front of them.

The Alliance ships responded in kind firing blue bolts of energy in a ferocious volley all landing squarely on the enemy. Yet despite the volley the Iquan continued firing only a few ships destroyed by the Alliance assault.

Two large Klevet ships broke off to destroy the mothership and soon were engaging firing missiles and unleashing a barrage of plasma fire.

The mothership returned firing simultaneously at the two ships. Soon the Klevet ships and mothership where engaged in a dance of blue and red light.

As they where fighting smaller fighters of the Iquan broke to attack the large destroyers and smaller cruisers.

Then out of nowhere from a distant sun a large fleet of Iquan ships emerged from hyperspace numbering several hundred ships and the Alliance fleet was surrounded.

The two large Klevet ships where destroyed. The Iquan mothership was spitting flames into space but it was still functional.

Captain John Smith looked on in disbelief as the Iquan emerged with their new fleet "We're not going to win this. Signal the fleet to retreat."

The Commander looked to him "You don't have the authority."

The Nosan shook as an Iquan fighter rammed into it taking out one of the fighter bays.

Captain John Smith looked to her "If we don't we will be dead."

A distant crewmen dressed in an Alliance uniform shouted "We've just been hit fighter bay one is down. We've got fires on decks thirty three through forty four."

The Commander realised they had to leave and signaled a retreat back to Zantaya.

Around him Alliance ships continued to be destroyed only a few Iquan ships where destroyed. The Iquan ships bombarded the doomed fleet with weapons fire.

Soon the Nosan was away with twenty ships into hyperspace.

Captain John Smith looked to the screen "Is that all?"

The Commander nodded "That's all of it."

The Captain shook his head "We've just lost over a hundred thousand people. Over two hundred and seventy ships. Are they pursuing us?"

The Commander shook her head "No I think they're to busy with the fleet."

Soon the fleet emerged into the Zantayan homeworld.

Captain John Smith looked around and walked to the space station that he had emerged into only weeks earlier hailed as a hero now a casualty of the war.

He left the Nosan to meet with senior military people for a debrief and explained to them with his commander what had happened.

The senior military personnel looked to him. Admiral Gothan a large human looked to him "We've taken a serious loss."

In a corner of the plainly coloured room a general from the Alliances army looked to John "Is there no word from what happened to the remainder of the fleet?"

John shook his head "I don't know."

The meeting broke up. As he returned to his quarters on the Nosan he radioed a video message to Lisa "Lisa I'm okay I've just lost a major battle that you will hear of soon. I can't say more for now but the enemy is ruthless and tough. We threw everything we had and we were badly beaten.

Anyway I hope your okay and I will try to catch up with you soon."

The message was broadcast to Lisas home on Sirenson and he had hoped that she would receive it if she had survived.

Chapter 12

CHAPTER 12 - ABOVE UVONIA

The war deepened and the Alliance was involved Captain John Smith awaited his next mission having heard the latest reports from the front lines.

He read his latest mission to escort the Earth President, now made Alliance President, to Laquain.

Captain Smith walked onto the Nosan the ship was quieter with out its full complement of crew even though there was people on board. He emerged onto the bridge and saw his commander who smiled at him.

"Good to see you again" she said.

John responded "Likewise I trust the Presidents tucked away."

The commander nodded "You have no idea of what the mission is?"

Captain John Smith shrug his shoulders as he sat on his leather captains chair "No idea we're just a very grand taxi service."

The commander nodded saying nothing more as the Nosan left the orbit of Uvonia towards Laquain.

Chapter 13

CHAPTER 13 - LAQUAIN

The Nosan orbited the water world of Laquain the aliens who inhabited where green skinned with flippers instead of feet and walked on land through environmental suits.

The President was in the planets capital but Captain Smith remained in orbit waiting for him to return yet he was a world away immersed in the discoveries made about the Iquan.

The Iquan were a military driven culture and the civilian population was controlled by senior military governors who ruled harshly not tolerating descent.

He learned that the Iquan had remerged with a desire to conquer and dominate. However he read some of the poetry and artistry from prominent artists from names which he could not translate and realised that they were not all cold and savage. He also learned that a lot of their ships were automated and piloted by advanced computers.

The Captain knew this was a weakness. He thought that if he could plant a virus that you could possibly disrupt a ship. Eager to share this he walked to his engineer Jogan an insectoid Pyreen that looked liked a red lady bug having six limbs walking on two the other four John wasn't sure but he knew Jogan was a marvel.

Jogan jiggled his arms and he wore a suit that contained a translator that converted his insectoid gurglings into speech. Jogan was intrigued and gurgled "It is an interesting discovery. I have looked into their code it is highly complex with many layers of security. Your theory is right I'll continue to dig into it."

The meeting broke up and the President reemerged and the Nosan reentered hyperspace. Both John and Kotan sat together in Johns quarters talking casually.

Kotan was the first to speak "I've heard rumours about the Presidents visit."

John looked to her as they both sat and ate steak and steamed veg with a bottle of French Chardonnay 2570 a good vintage he thought putting down his drink "What rumours?"

Kotan continued smiling both had grown easier with each other during their tour to Laquain "Rumour has it that the President was holding talks with the Laquain to secure an alliance against the Iquan."

John nodded "Maybe that is to be expected we've lost a third of our ships. Just this morning I heard of more losses."

Kotan looked to him and had grown fond of him. The two finished their meal and settled on nearby low chairs softly padded and sat across from each other.

Kotan looked to her "I've served for many years with this crew. They're scared. I mean real scared that we're not going to win this."

John looked to her "I see the same eyes of fear and concern. I am not sure we can win. We are losing ships faster than we can replace them. The virus I am hoping to build maybe too late."

Kotan sat closer to John on a nearby sofa her green eyes twinkled in softened light "So am I."

She placed her hand on his cheek but John pulled away and held her hand "I can't sorry."

The commander replied "I'm sorry."

Feeling embarrassed she left.

John sighed and he sat back down shaking his head in disbelief he knew that it was not wise to sleep with the ships commander.

Chapter 14

CHAPTER 14 - LAVAN SYSTEM

The Nosan maneuvered to a nearby asteroid in the Lavan system. John knew that the system was quiet and he knew it was risky being so close to Punan space but he had little choice the Nosan was running low on key minerals needed to run the ship.

Commander Kotan looked to a distant crewman and said "Collect what you need you have ten hours before we leave" she was aware of the ship being vulnerable and close to enemy space.

A distant crewman shouted "We've picked up a good supply of hydrogen and the materials we need."

She and the Captain had been tense for days and needed to speak to him.

Apart of her kicked herself thinking she was stupid and she had never done that before in her fifteen years serving on different ships.

She shook her head as she saw shuttles emerge towards the large cluster of asteroids.

Things were tense on the ship but the crew carried on as normal John was working with Jogan on a virus. So far they had a difficult job trying to decrypt Iquan computer language.

But they had succeeded and were planning to plant a virus using a distress beacon as a ploy using a probe broadcasting an Iquan distress signal. The probe would use a powerful laser to broadcast the virus which would disable enemy ships.

The Nosans klaxons began to wail as the enemy approached.

The Captain quickly emerged onto the bridge to see three large enemy destroyers in front of them emerging from hyperspace.

"Have they seen us?"

Commander Kotan replied "Yes they are en route and they'll be on us in four hours."

The Captain was concerned knowing they were taking on supplies "Tell our ships to finish up and to get back here."

The commander looked to him "We've got a problem."

"What?"

"Because of the strong gravity of the gas giants the hyperspace engines are unable to work. It would take us six hours to be clear of it but the only place close enough is past those enemy destroyers."

The captain said "That's not good."

Chapter 15

CHAPTER 15 - SIX HOURS LATER The enemy destroyers divided into a triangular formation cutting off the Nosans escape. They were closing in from three sides. The Captain looked to the three ships knowing this was a classic Iquan tactic. He realised this was a great opportunity to test the virus. It was ready but untested and in need of further development but there was little time for anything else. The Nosan broadcast the virus using powerful lasers. However only one of the ships stuttered the other two were unaffected. The Captain was unsure why the virus was not working however he was grateful he only had two ships to deal instead of three. The two ships emerged at firing range and they began to open fire. The Nosan returned fire firing missiles on both ships. The missile hit a warship and it disabled the engines of one of the destroyers and damaging the weapons systems on the other. Yet still they advanced undeterred and now being in cannon range they opened fire quickly searing the Nosans hull. The Nosan fought on valiantly despite the loss of so much crew the Captain ordered an evacuation and emerged out of large escape shuttles quickly running away from the Nosan. The enemy ceased their attack and reentered hyperspace with the disabled destroyer. However the Captain realised that he had left the President and did not know if he was dead or alive he had to go save his crew and he did not have the time to look. The small fleet of emergency shuttles entered hyperspace towards the Wytan system.

Chapter 16

CHAPTER 16 - WYTAN SYSTEM

The shuttles emerged out of hyperspace and they docked at a space station owned by the large Mars Corporation one of the Alliances biggest companies who owned whole planets, ships and space stations.

The crew were debriefed. The Commander and Captain sat together in guest quarters provided as they were both were waiting to be reassigned. They had received criticism for leaving the President behind.

Chapter 17

CHAPTER 17 - LISA

Weeks had passed and Lisa had made it to Zantaya and had got her old ship the Avenger. Yet news of the Iquan invasion was already under way.

Onboard the ship was a message from General Nireen for Lisa to goto urgently for a mission to Earth that could not be sent over radio in case somebody was listening.

Lisa nodded and understood ship emerging in the Terran system weeks later and she approached Earth and landed at Tokyo spaceport.

Lisa got the magtrain and she headed to a tall rectangular skyscraper with the top quarter covered in a thick nimbostratus cloud that loomed over the Tokyo skyline. It was home to this part of the Alliance and was officially known as sector five and it controlled other nearby star systems.

As she entered the building she noticed the opulence of marble flooring and in front of her was a large reception desk manned by a petite black African woman who was talking through a headset "Hold please, line 1" Lisa heard as she saw the receptionist and smiled.

In Lisas left hand was a box of data crystals containing information on the Iquan she wasn't sure who to talk to.

The receptionist looked to her and spoke with an American accent "How can I help you?"

Lisa looked to her and noticed in the distance armed guards and she knew that the Alliance was on high alert after the destruction of the Punan "I'm not sure, but I need speak to someone about the Punan."

Lisa showed her some footage of the Iquan and the receptionist nodded picking a phone and talking quietly.

Lisa sat on a low sofa that looked onto a large square with babbling fountains.

A distant voice spoke to her "I understand you have something for us?"

Lisa turned to see a human male wearing thin glasses and he was of medium height, white skinned with a Martian accent.

"Yes I do."

The gentlemen looked to her "I'm Gareth Juleny. I am assistant to the head of security for this part of the Alliance. Please follow me."

Lisa nodded and walked with Gareth in a glass elevator that ascended to a mid level office located just off a grey carpeted corridor. As she entered the room was equipped with a desk, computers and soft furnishings.

Sat in a distant chair was the head of security for sector five of the Alliance. Gareth left the room and Lisa was left alone with a man of oriental appearance and he was six foot tall and had a firm hand grip as Lisa shook his hand as she sat down.

"I'm Senator Green responsible for the Alliance in this part of the galaxy. You've caught us at a bad time. Our President is away on business at the moment."

Lisa handed him the data crystals and Senator Green pressed a holographic viewer showing information on the Iquan.

Senator Green looked to the screen "This is why you have come I see."

Lisa continued "They have invaded Edenia and killed the Punan."

Senator Green looked to her with a concerned look "We know your friend Congressman John Smith alerted us weeks ago but this is the first time we have seen invasion. The mission is that our President is only a few systems away from what was once the Punan homeworld. Unfortunately we only have enough ships to defend Earth but the rest are on maneuvers and are at least two weeks away. Your friend Congressman John Smith reenlisted in the military before being assigned the Nosan where he was on a secret mission to Laquain his ship barely survived an Iquan battle. In so doing our President was left behind the Congressman couldn't have known and his ship was on the verge of blowing up but we have learnt that it survived as we scoured the wreck weeks later with an automated probe".

Senator Green stroked his chin and looked at a copy of Lisa's file "I see you've got military experience."

Lisa responded "Some I was a navy pilot until ten years ago."

Senator Green looked up and continued "You where at the Nonan incident. Have taken courses in hand to hand combat. Your record says that you left the military and have had a successful career as a freighter captain and you have even rescued Quinon miners when they where trapped on an asteroid digging for Yopanite. It seems you can take care of yourself."

Lisa was wary as Senator Green smiled "I would like to hire you."

Lisa eyes narrowed "Hire me?"

Senator Green nodded "Let me be straight. The Iquan has got everyone scared. Our ships are stretched. What is left is protecting key planets and targets throughout the Alliance not to mention most of our ships are being refitted or new ones being built. In short we need your help. I want you to go and get our President back."

Lisa looked to him "When?"

Senator Green smiled "As soon as you can?"

Lisa nodded in agreement "I'll do it."

Senator Green handed her details of the mission and Lisa left the building.

Gareth emerged from a side room and looked to Senator Green "Do you think she can do it?"

Senator Green looked to him "If she can then no one can."

Lisa left Tokyo heading out of the city to the spaceport to her ship. As she got to her ship she walked onto the bridge and reviewed a secret file showing the Presidents position located on the edge of Punan space.

As she looked to the file and looked to a nearby screen with orange icons showing the location of the ship she knew that it was close to the Punan system. Lisa was aware that the enemy would be close by and had been operating in that area since defeating the Punan a few weeks earlier.

Yet she realised that she needed her crew who where stationed on Peridima station. She launched the Avenger through the blueness of Earths atmosphere entering the hyper gate on the far side of Earths moon.

Chapter 18

CHAPTER 18 - PERIDIMA CITY

Lisa arrived at Peridima city a week later. The city was built in a vast asteroid that was crisscrossed by large domes. The city was home to a million people located in the Wovan Trading Syndicate a group of worlds dedicated to profit and business.

Peridima was the territories heart and was the home of legitimate and illegitimate business for that region of space.

She landed the sapphire blue hull of the Avenger in a reserved hangar bay. Waiting for her was Priette her younger sister a Meon with blue skin, short height and athletic build.

Priette smiled at her "It is good to see you. I thought you were a gonner on Eden."

Lisa could see that she was relieved "You heard then."

Priette looked to her "So has everyone. Word has spread of you escaping Eden. The words out about the Iquan. The Alliance is throwing its military against them."

Lisa looked to her "I had to keep quiet on my way back from Earth I've been tasked with a mission and I need the crew to meet me."

They both entered Dome One, the largest of nine domes. Lisa noticed many faces looking at her.

Lisa looked to her sister surprised "How do they know?"

Priette looked to her for a moment with her orange Meon eyes "It wasn't just you who got out. Congressman John Smith also got out as well. Its been running for weeks."

Johns name made Lisa smiled "He got out then."

Priette saw her sisters reaction as they walked towards a magtrain that would take them to Lisas apartment located on dome nine "You like him."

Lisa nodded as they both inside a long thing magtrain it whizzed quickly through rock and open starlight from the domes that it passed through "We met."

Her face reddened as she talked of him and was glad he had survived she turned to her sister "I've been purposefully out of contact for a reason keeping a low profile. I went to Earth to raise the alarm about the Iquan and I have been assigned a mission. One that pays well."

Intrigued Priette followed her sister into Lisas apartment which was a small one bedroomed apartment with an open planned kitchen and lounge with a small bedroom and bathroom down the side of a corridor.

Lisa explained to her sister about the mission to rescue the President. Priette nodded and was intrigued "The crew are all here on Peridima and they are eager to meet you."

Lisa nodded as she turned to a news channel intrigued about Johns interview. She listened as John spoke of his encounter with the Iquan, the sacrifice of Senator Nireen and of how Lisa escaped to warn the Alliance.

Lisas image appeared on the screen as the blonde human female talked more of the Alliances war and the ongoing battles with the Iquan.

Priette muted the TV "Who are these Iquan Lisa so many speak of them yet so little is known."

Lisa shook her head "I do not know Priette I've seen them they are not to be messed with they are vicious and their ships are vast."

Priette was defiant "But every alien has a weakness. The Iquan have one, once we find it they will be stopped."

Lisa nodded knowing her sister was right "Maybe but we will lose a lot of people before we find that weakness."

The following day Lisas crew assembled in her apartment and she was pleased to see them. Priette she had already met but she William Jenson a human born on Earth with a Liverpool accent. He was an engineer and Lisas confidant on the ship she embraced him as her other crewman a large Quinon entered.

"Natav" she smiled and they embraced.

Lisa looked to her crew as all three sat near to her "It is good to see you all again."

William looked to her "We are glad you are well. Priette tells us that you have an important mission."

Lisa looked to them both "It is but it is also perhaps our most dangerous. The Earth President is located close to Punan space and he is now the leader of the Alliance. The Alliance has few ships to spare at the moment but they also know the President is key to rally people against the Iquan. Our job is to find him and bring him back to Earth."

Natav turned to Lisa "That will not be easy. The Iquan have setup on the Punan home world. The Presidents location makes this very difficult. The Avenger is a great ship but it does not have the firepower to take on the enemy."

Lisa nodded and she looked to her crew "Let me lay it straight to you. The Alliance has a good chance of losing this war. The military does not have enough ships. Neighbouring territories are reluctant to get involved."

Priette looked to her sister folding her arms "We're a crew a four, with a small freighter. We make money selling goods. This is completely different we are not a rescue service for when things get tough. This is the Alliances battle."

Lisa heard her sisters skepticism and looked to her crew "I know we move freight. But we all have experience of this sort of thing. We have run refugee missions in the past and have been rewarded. Sometimes though things are not about the money. The Iquan are not going to stop with the Alliance at some point they will probably attack Peridima city as we are close to Alliance space and a crossroads to other alien worlds."

William and Natav looked at each other both saying "We're in."

Lisa looked to her sister and nodded "I'm in."

Lisa smiled "Thanks. Now lets get ready. The President will not last long. We need to have the ship ready in twenty four hours."

With that the crew left to prepare the Avenger for her mission.

Chapter 19

CHAPTER 19 - THE PRESIDENTS SHIP

Within twenty four hours the Avenger was ready and she left Peridima. The ship entered hyperspace and flew at near top speed.

The damage sustained during Lisas trip to Earth had been repaired enough for the ship to work but she knew the ship was needing an overhaul and had been worked hard over the past two years frequently doing long distances.

Priette stood at her station keeping an eye on the ships course she was taking watch as Lisa rested below.

Lisa looked to the mission more closely and read that the President was located in the Latav system located only a few light years from the Punan world. The mission report commented on Johns mission and how he had to abandon ship however the ship had survived and that the President might still be alive.

She turned to her archives and had been studying the Iquan having purchased information from a trader on Peridima who specialised in archeology. She studied carefully the various stories from different cultures.

From what she gathered the Iquan ruled from their homeworld Iquos ruling over a vast empire three times the size of the Alliance and they ruled with an iron fist.

The records talked of the grey aliens being brutal but also not all the Iquan were terrible some ruled their planets with compassion allowing the resident population to live freely.

Lisa put down her data pad the records were vast and she believed that within them contained a secret to defeat them. But she also knew that she did not have the time to investigate she was in a war her crew drafted into help and she suspected this would not be their last mission they would be asked to perform.

There was a distant ping. Lisa looked to her screen and the ship was approaching the coordinates of where the Presidents ship was.

She walked to the bridge as Priette sat on the Captains chair "We've arrived at the coordinates but I can not see anything."

Lisa walked to a console that housed the ships sensor information "The ship is not picking up anything. She looked to the system and it was nothing remarkable several large gas giants and an ice field and a single red giant.

Priette sat close to her sister "What do you think?"

William and Natav entered the bridge and looked to Lisa. Lisa looked to them and explained that the President was no where to be seen.

Lisa looked to Natav "Launch some probes lets see where they are. This may take a few hours."

Natav fired the probes into the Latav system as they began to scan for the Presidents ship.

Natav smiled as the probes information came through "I've got them and they are located in a large gas giant closest to the sun and they are on the southern pole."

Lisa nodded "Got it."

She maneuvered the Avenger its sapphire blue hull glowing in the red glow of the red giant. In front of the ship stood the warship Nosan a crescent shaped Alliance warship.

The ship was pockmarked by burn marks and evidence of recent fires.

Priette looked to the ship "Its taken a beating. I am seeing evidence of extensive weapons fire and multiple hull breaches and few life signs."

Intrigued Lisa saw a docking port located on the starboard side of the ship "Lets dock here."

Lisa maneuvered the ship and docked with the Nosan and went aboard the ship with Natav as Priette stayed onboard the Avenger.

Lisa walked on board and there was the smell of smoke, burnt circuits and death. The ship was quiet and smoky the once plush carpets stained.

Lisa was armed with a plasma rifle followed by Natav who was also armed with a portable scanning device.

"I'm picking up evidence of life signs located two decks up."

They walked to a lift. Natav saw a distant panel which he opened and he saw a crawl space that went up several decks.

They both ascended at speed to the level. The deck had suffered little damaged compared to what they had seen already.

They walked slowly down the corridor which was quiet and still. Lisa looked around her senses heightened wary of what maybe around the corner.

They both approached carefully a room that appeared to be quarters. Lisa tried to open the door but it was locked. The door was forced open by Natav who used his large mass to open the door.

Inside was the Earth president and his staff alive and breathing. All were human with a mixture of cuts and bruises.

The presidents bodyguard walked towards them armed and wary "Identify yourself."

Lisa looked to him "We are here to get the President and the rest of you out of here. We were sent by Ho Yuan."

A distant voice shouted "Let them through."

Lisa saw a man wearing casual clothes sitting with his left arm in a sling "I assume your the rescue party."

The ship started to creak Lisas radio crackled "The ships beginning to tear itself apart. You've got thirty minutes before it blows up."

Lisa nodded "Understood."

She looked to the people assembled who numbered ten in total "We need to go. Are you all fit to walk."

President Hwan Cho replied "We've got up a couple of injuries. A few have sprained ankles."

Lisa knew she couldn't leave them behind and radioed the Avenger "We're going to need William here."

Everyone moved to the lift quickly descending the lift and onto the Avenger. The warship rocked violently as it began to fall apart.

Lisa radioed Priette "We're aboard. Get us out of here."

The Presidents staff where taken to the medical bay and treated.

Hwan Cho looked to her and he had spoken little since meeting Lisa "Thanks for getting us out of there."

Lisa looked to him "What happened. The ship looked pretty beat up."

The President looked around "Can we talk in private?"

Lisa nodded and walked with the President to the bridge.

Lisa looked to Priette indicating she needed to speak in private. Priette nodded and went below to help the survivors.

In the distance the Nosan blew up in a bright orange ball that soon dissipated into nothing but debris that fell towards its grave the gravity well of the gas giant.

The President sat and looked to Lisa "We were attacked by the Iquan. We where coming back from a meeting with the Laquain on the home world of Ivlan. Our ship came into this system to get supplies. It was all fairly routine.

Then those ships appeared out of nowhere they must have been following us or hiding and we were attacked. The ship was easily overwhelmed and left us for dead."

Lisa looked to him "It seems you survived. What happened to the crew those type of ships can hold more than two thousand crew."

The President nodded "The meeting with the Laquain was private and unofficial for months we have been talking with them. They are suffering shortages of Pinatarium which is used for hypergate construction. Normally we would approve help but also they were looking to join the Alliance."

Lisa looked to him sensing there was more to the meeting than just hypergates but did not press "We have some quarters below decks."

The President nodded "Thanks again for saving our butts out there."

The Avenger arrived back at Earths solar system emerging out of hyperspace. Lisa noticed the system was too quiet she thought.

She approached Earth yet saw large circular ships orbiting the planet with fighters and ships of all configurations descending onto the planets surface below.

"The Iquan" Priette said.

Lisa nodded "Have they seen us?"

Natav looked to a screen "Yes I have two warships on a fast approach."

Lisa was worried and quickly turned the Avenger around and headed for the hypergate.

Yet there was as she whizzed by Earths moon as two Iquan destroyers lay in her way. Yet Lisa knew she was more agile.

As they approached closer she dived beneath them pulling up at the last minute before entering hyperspace.

As they entered Lisa "That was too close."

Lisa went to see the Earths President "Where do we go now that Earth has been invaded."

President Ho Yuan thought for a moment "Earth was our fall back. Take me to the Meon world we have a fleet there."

Lisa nodded and the ship headed for the Meon homeworld.

Chapter 20

CHAPTER 20 - SIRENSON

News of Earths capture quickly spread throughout the Alliance and its citizens feared what maybe next. However news that the President had survived and was rallying the remaining Alliance to fight on gave its citizens some hope but many knew that time was not on their side.

Away from war Lisa landed the Avenger and the crew disembarked weary and followed Lisa home to a modest single storey house that had a central hallway that had bedrooms and other rooms flowing off it.

The lounge looked onto the high mountains in the distance.

Natav looked to Lisa as she walked into the kitchen to make herself a drink "What do we do now."

Lisa turned to look at him "I don't know. The President said after we landed said to return home and rest and that he would be in contact."

Natav continued "I've catched up with the news. Your right and we have been fighting for months and rarely won. We don't have long and we need to prepare for the worst."

Lisa turned to him "I've been studying the Iquan and I do not want to be around when they take over. The records speak of their brutality. I do not want to live that way."

Natav looked to her "Your saying we run I thought you of all people would stay and fight"

Lisa smiled "I remember my father clearly saying to me when I was at home on Mars that you cannot win every battle. You have to choose your fights and that means sometimes you walk away until your ready."

Natav looked to her "Your saying we leave but go where. Territories close to the Alliance have signed non aggression treaties."

Lisa stroked her chin "Last night I was studying new star charts that I bought only a few months ago. On there are a few planets not claimed by anyone."

She walked to a duffell bag that contained the map and put it onto the table.

Natav looked to them impressed by their detail "These maps are really good. Where did you get them."

Lisa looked to him "Remember that Zantayan you know the one with four arms and a dodgy sense of humour. He hired us to carry some fertiliser to Obius."

Natav smiled "I remember."

Lisa continued "I got these maps off him. I exchanged a few tonnes of hydranium in return. I was looking at this place called the Trequan nebula. The scans say little about its interior but suggest a planet inside."

Natav smiled "You have a plan don't you."

Lisa looked to him "I do the Alliance will fall within months. The nebula will be a perfect place to escape to."

Natav frowned "Wheres the money in this. Wheres the deal?"

Lisa looked to him "I can't ignore whats happening out there. Yesterday I learnt that the Wovan Trading Syndicate had fallen."

Natav look to her "We're out of business then."

Lisa nodded "We're out of business and this is no longer about money but survival.

Natavs eyes lit up "Your right". "Does your sister or William know of what you've been planning?"

Lisa shook her head "No I've been planning this for a while ever since leaving Eden. I care about this crew."

Natav interrupted "We have worked and fought together over the past ten years. You want our help you have it but we need to tell the others."

Lisa nodded "Lets do it then."

The crew assembled on Lisas veranda looking out onto distant hills and Lake Vouchon a vast lake in the distance.

William and Priette reacted with little surprise and they had suffered at the hands of the Iquan and she had known of friends and family killed. Money was the furthest thing from their mind and realised that nothing would be the same any more.

Lisa left the house to see the governor who was an old family friend.

Lisa sat quietly with the Governor a triangular grey headed Venat who was of medium built with a reputation for wisdom and cunning.

Lisa sat in the Governors home a large opulent house made of grey granite, marble and exotic alien materials "Its a good plan. But there is a flaw."

Lisa was intrigued "How so?"

The Governor looked to Lisa both had been good friends for years "Sirenson is one of the few planets untouched by the Iquan. Besides not everyone can come with you. There are to few ships for so many people."

Lisa nodded "I sense your desire to protect your people. But we must survive. My plan gives us the best chance to do that."

The Governor smiled "You didn't allow me to finish. I saw the last Iquan war I was there as it destroyed our forces. I also knew your father well. I met him on and off when I was a politician and we talked during the time he came to Eden."

Lisa looked to distant views of open fields full of wheat "My father did speak of you fondly."

The Governor nodded and smiled his thin lips "Exactly he would be proud of you right now. You think like him and you care for others. But your also right we must be prepared for the worst. I am not the only person who thinks like this. Their are others in this part of space who will provide ships.

My suggestion is that you take as many people as you can and go. Give me a week or so. You will have the ships and the things you need. We will also begin evacuating soon. The rest of us will stay here."

Lisa looked to him "Genzet you can come we will need strong leadership."

Genzet smiled "My dear you flatter me but I can not leave our people. But you will be well equipped and you did not here this the Alliance are secretly planning to surrender within a few weeks the losses are too great to sustain."

Lisa looked to him "I thought we had a few months at most."

Genzet nodded "Things are worse than the media says. Meon has only just surrendered as has Zantaya. Sirenson and a few of us are holding out but the Iquan will soon be here and we need to act swiftly."

Lisa looked to Genzet who had been a surrogate father since her own fathers sacrifice at the Battle of Callisto which saw the Iquan defeated and pushed back to their own space.

Chapter 21

CHAPTER 21 - THE SHANNON

A few months later Captain John Smith was reassigned to protecting cargo supplies on a small warship on an old Earth cruiser called the Shannon an aging eighty year old ship that had recently been refitted.

He was with Commander Kyten both assigned away from the front lines and both felt it was a punishment. They had heard of Earths defeat by the Iquan and both knew that the war was not going well.

The Shannon slipped through the blackness of space its grey rectangular metallic hull protected a fleet of twenty ships of various sizes ferrying supplies to Vinon home to the Moomat race a race of four foot aliens that spoke through computers integrated into their bodies.

The fleet was halfway to Vinon the mission had been quiet with little sign of the Iquan on the ship the rest of the Alliance however was under severe strain with losses mounting and whole star systems falling.

The mood aboard the Shannon was quiet, downbeat its crew speaking only of defeat which had led to fights and scuffles in the first week of the three week journey to Vinon flying from Quintar the home of the Quinon.

Captain John Smith was in his quarters continuing to study the virus but had been struggling with the coding.

Commander Kyten was on the bridge the routine of ship life and the quietness of their run had been a welcome relief being away from the frontlines of the war with the Iquan.

However the quietness was soon to be shattered by a high priority message from a VIP coming in on a shuttle.

Captain John Smith dressed in his uniform walking to the docking hatch unsure of the VIP. Out of a small shuttle came Admiral Gothan walking with his stick and smiling.

Captain Smith stood to attention the Admiral looked to him and said "It is good to see a friendly face."

Captain Smith replied "I was not expecting your visit."

The Admiral nodded "With the way things are going we need to talk."

They both walked silently to a conference room located in the ships belly and it looked onto the view of the Missouri and Danube both of the same class as the Shannon.

The Admiral stood his hands behind his back looking at the view. The conference room he noted was much smaller then the newer crescent warships but it was simple with a long rectangular table with eight softly padded chairs with metal legs.

The Captain stood in the background the Admiral turned and sat.

The Admiral looked to him "Its not good John, its not good at all."

Captain Smith looked to him "How bad are things out there?"

The Admiral looked to him "Bad, very bad the Alliance has lost so many ships and planets with millions of casualties. We are a few weeks from surrender but we cannot continue to fight."

He paused before continuing "After the loss of the Nosan you were too harshly treated. You did everything you could to save your ship. You were punished for abandoning the President when he was still alive."

The Captain looked to him "I tried my best."

The Admiral nodded in agreement and got up returning to the view outside "We've lost John. I have lost so many friends in this war. But we must continue. This morning on my desk I got a proposal from the governor from Sirenson. It seems your friend Lisa Gwenta has proposed assembling a fleet and moving to the Trequan nebula on a planet located inside.

Few know of this plan but its being taken seriously. The Alliance has to continue and we are not throwing it away because of the Iquan."

Captain Smith replied "What do you want me to do?"

The Admiral looked to him "Survive. I know of the virus you have been working on and most of us took it as insignificant when you tried it but if it works then the Iquan could be defeated. The Shannon has a new mission if you decide on it. Once your at Vinon there will be some of our ships ready for you to take the Trequan nebula.

We have already begun to send out feelers to the Iquan to try and resolve this. By the time your at Vinon we will have surrendered to the Iquan.

Their rule will be harsh, brutal and unforgiving I've heard rumours of hundreds killed for opposing the Iquan despite pleas for restraint."

Captain Smith was stunned and stood by the Admiral seeing the weight of the burden that the Admiral was carrying "Why don't you join us at Vinon. We could use a few good leaders."

The Admiral smiled "Tempting, very tempting no I'm done here but my disappearance will indicate of what we have discussed."

The Captain looked to him "The crew will find this hard most are due for leave at Vinon."

The Admiral continued "You need to let your crew know. This is your ship and crew. Soon their won't be an Alliance and the purpose of this ship will be obsolete."

The Admiral looked somberly towards the Captain "I have to go my ship waits for me in hyperspace. But I want you to think this through the fleet is readying at Vinon if you decide not to lead then I have someone else in mind. But you are the best person for this."

The Captain nodded "Then my answer is yes."

The Admiral smiled "They will be waiting for you."

The Admiral walked with Captain Smith to his shuttle the Admiral turned to the Captain "Best of luck. I fear your our only hope."

With the words ringing in the Captains ear the Admiral left on his shuttle.

Chapter 22

CHAPTER 22 - IQUOS CAPITAL CITY

Across the city the Iquan celebrated the defeat of the Alliance.

"The Alliance has fallen may all those who oppose us be crushed."

The crowd cheered and he waved "So we are going to expand going to continue to expand and conquer. The best days are in front of us."

The Iquan leader was full of adrenaline his vast empire expanding the thought of crushing worlds pleased him.

Chapter 23

CHAPTER 23 - THE EVACUATION

Lisa saw in the distant Lake Vouchon her favourite lake and a place where she routinely sailed when not working. Lisa drank in the view and wondered if she would ever see home again. She turned to the shuttle and left Sirenson seeing below its vast green expanse and high white peaks and numerous lakes.

The shuttle landed on the Avenger. In front of it was a large fleet of five hundred ships a mixture of civilian and military.

Lisa walked to the Avengers bridge and she was impressed by the sight.

The rest of the crew were below busy only Priette was by her sister "Thats a lot of ships."

Lisa nodded in agreement "It is."

Priette continued quietly as they both took their seats "The Alliance has just surrendered only a few minutes ago."

Lisa look to her sister "Not of all the ships are here yet."

Priette nodded "They should have been here nine hours ago."

Then in the distance a tunnel emerged with a golden glow inside of it. Out of the tunnel emerged vast circular ships that dotted in the hundreds surrounded by fighters.

Lisa looked on "We have to go now?"

Priette nodded and signaled for the fleet to move and approached a hyper gate that was close to Sirenson. Soon the vast fleet began to move however their was a problem.

The Avenger suddenly stopped its power gone. Emergency lights came on.

Priette ran to an engineering computer "Powers down on all decks."

Lisa shook her head "How can that be. We spent weeks repairing the ship."

William radioed through from the ships engineering level "I've found the problem one of the thrusters has failed. We've got back ups."

Lisa punched her chair "When can we move."

William continued "Thirty minutes I've begun work already, the radio's however are unaffected."

Priettes face lit up with concern "That fleet will be on top of us in twenty five minutes."

Lisa shook her head "Signal for them to continue."

Lisa looked on with concern as the Iquan advanced closer and closer. Her ship had been upgraded but it could not take on a vast fleet.

The Iquan fleet advanced rapidly. Lisa saw the ships hover in space as smaller ships descended onto Sirenson. The Iquan fleet paused uninterested in Lisas ship.

Soon the power was restored and piloted the ship into hyperspace catching up with the caravan of ships.

William walked onto the bridge.

Lisa turned to him "Thanks."

William smiled but quickly frowned "The thrusters been repaired."

Lisa "Thank you."

Chapter 24

CHAPTER 24 - VINON

The Shannon arrived at Vinon its last mission complete. Half of the crew remained with the rest returning home. News had reach of the Alliances surrender.

The Shannon was docked in a space station orbiting Vinon. Alongside the Shannon were over two hundred ships all a mixture of military and civilian ships.

They were a mixture of transporters and agriculture ships which were distinctive with their large glass domes.

John looked out onto the fleet and it was scheduled to depart. The Shannon was being equipped with provisions to the Trequan nebula and everything from weapons to shelters, everything a new colony would need to survive.

He sat alone his thoughts dwelling on the burden of responsibility now upon him and knew he had come along way.

Commander Kyten was now in charge of the Danube promoted to Captain and both had said farewell. They had developed a close friendship and trusted each other.

The Captains new commander was a Lieutenant Jenvet a Moomat.

He was tall for a Moomat at five foot but was considered a genius and efficient capable of dealing with complex tasks which made him perfect for what was ahead. John knew he was perfect because he had lost his brother during the invasion of Uvonia fighting on the Dqet a Moomat warship.

The Captain walked to the bridge and sat next to the Lieutenant and signaled the fleet to make its way to the Trequan nebula.

Chapter 25

CHAPTER 25 - TREQUAN NEBULA

The journey to the Trequan nebula had gone smoothly from Sirenson with no sign of pursuit by the Iquan. Once they arrived at the nebula a planet was discovered inside the nebula and a settlement had been established.

The planet was a paradise full of green vegetation its water needs provided by vast underground streams. Yet it also had a flaw. The nebula routinely whipped up severe electrical storms making it difficult for anyone to get on or away from the planet.

A settlement had been established near to a four mile long lake and prefabricated shelters where built and over thirty thousand people had settled.

Lisa had been made governor of the colony and she established her home close to the lake shore and it reminded her of Sirenson. Quickly she settled into a routine of sailing and helping to build the colony.

She looked across from her office and recently the colony had been called Oset from an old Meon dialect meaning hope. She wondered about John and word had reached her that he was on his way.

Yet apart of her also was worried that at some point the Iquan or her allies would come after them but she knew that though they had ships and weapons she wasn't sure if she was strong enough to repel an invading force.

"Lisa" a distant voice shouted and Lisa looked to see William walking towards him.

In his hand was a prickly looking object "We've found loads of these all around here."

Lisa looked intrigued "What is it?"

William continued "We think its some kind of spiny pear."

Lisa tasted it and it was sweet "That's good."

She looked to William "This planet is a haven. We have discovered so much."

William continued indicating that he had not finished with his surprises.

"What is it?"

William "We've found ruins."

Lisa looked intrigued "Ruins?"

William looked to her "Whilst mapping the planet we discovered a series of ruins about five hundred miles from here."

He showed Lisa the scans.

Lisa looked intrigued but was wary knowing that they could be booby trapped "We'll investigate but be careful."

William nodded "I understand."

As she was looking at the scans of ancient ruins her communicator pipped "We've got incoming ships they appear to be Captain Smiths fleet."

Chapter 26

CHAPTER 26 - ARRIVAL

The Shannon arrived at the nebula as Captain Smith walked to the engine room doing his rounds checking things were okay a computer console exploded nearby killing flying shrapnel and debris. The Captain took the full force and was heavily injured.

As Lisa was looking at the scans of ancient ruins her communicator pipped "We've got incoming ships they appear to be Captain Smiths fleet."

Lisa smiled and looked at William "Come on lets meet our new guests."

The Alliance ships hovered in orbit as different shuttles descended onto Oset.

Yet of the ships Lisa looked to one as it landed and she saw John on a stretcher.

"What happened?" she asked.

As he was rushed to the medical bay word came through of them arriving at the new colony. As there was a functioning hospital on the planet the Captain was rushed on a shuttle descending on the planet he briefly saw blurrily through effect of drugs Lisa rushing towards him.

The cause was found to be an accident and the computer had exploded due to the electrical surge of the Trequan nebula.

Hours passed by and John awoke dazed his torso covered in a bandage his blurry focus ending as he saw objects near to him the lights, nearby furniture and a form, a familiar shape.

He looked to see Lisa close by "Hello" she said.

John could see she was relieved and they talked catching up with each others stories.

Lisa was thankful he was alright but needed to see these ruins and had intrigued since they were first mentioned.

John fell asleep and Lisas radio pipped it was William "You've got to see this".

She left and got her shuttle traveling a few hundred miles whisking past a thick green canopy of tall elegant trees that jutted over three hundred feet in the air.

Soon the trees way to a clearing next to a sandstone ridge the shuttle and Lisa got out and saw Natav waiting for her. Both walked to the cave and where shown inside by an archaeologist.

As they walked in the cave turned to a large cavern hundreds of feet deep and over a half mile wide in it where symbols dotting every surface.

The human archaeologist talked in her in excited tones "It is the most incredible thing."

Lisa was more wary and had seen alien symbols yet she was intrigued "Its interesting."

Natav stood behind her and said "That's not all they discovered."

Intrigued all three walked down a wide tunnel to a small cavern which housed an ancient looking console which constructed of a dense alien metal brown in colour with a thick base with a wide top adorned with large rectangular panels housed in the same language as Lisa had seen in the previous cavern.

Stood in front of the console was a large circular door. Lisa was intrigued but cautious "What is it?"

The human archaeologist looked to her "We're not sure our scans reveal nothing on the other side and we're not sure what these symbols mean."

Lisa however knew from experience of the possibility of traps "I want some military personnel make sure they search for hidden traps."

Natav looked to her "Your thinking of our little expedition to Lizen Four."

Chapter 27

CHAPTER 27 - OSET

"We've taken off the supplies from the ships Captain John Smith provided."

Lisa sat in a meeting a mixture of civilian and military she was staring out of a window down the main street of the colony before returning her focus to the meeting "That's good. I understand the planets been mapped."

Excited the cartographer a female Quinon smaller than her male counterparts stood up showing printed maps of the planet "The planet is a paradise and it is self sufficient. Home to numerous plant species and we're discovering new minerals."

Lisa looked to her "Maybe do its a paradise but have we any greater understanding of the nebula."

Commander Kyten looked to Lisa "We've studied in great detail. The nebula provides a good defence the neighbouring solar winds of the red gas giant electrify the nebula with highly charged plasma. We got in through a lull in activity."

Lisa continued "That's good news. But lets not forget that the Iquan may one day come here. We need to be ready."

A civilian leader spoke next "You don't think they will. We're no threat to them."

Lisa looked at him "Maybe but I want to some warning buoys on the edge of the system just in case."

Commander Kyten continued "The next lull in the nebula is in three days."

Lisa nodded and the meeting broke up she was alone by herself she was conscious of the Iquan coming after her.

She looked to a printout of the latest report from the alien discovery other discoveries had been made throughout the planet of settlements long gone.

No booby traps had been discovered and in front of her in the conference room located in the colonies political building a large rectangular housing both the civilian and military.

In front of her was a small alien artifact it was a small box with intricate alien etchings. It was brown in colour, same as the console she had seen in the cavern. Intrigued she sat down and archeology had always a secret passion of hers intrigued by new discoveries.

As she picked up the box then a beam of golden light projected itself in front of her. There stood a holographic image of a large alien six foot tall, broad shouldered human features on its face yet had ridges on its nose.

The image stood in a long body length robe it looked at Lisa "We are the Onigh. If you have received this object then you are worthy to know of our secrets."

The image paused and looked at Lisa "You have been found worthy or are in trouble so we open our vault to you."

The projected ceased and Lisa was stunned looking to the object as she was reeling a distant phone chirped. She walked towards it was and heard the voice of Natav.

He spoke in a soft tone "You've got to see this the door has opened."

Lisa arrived at the cavern to see the door opened and in it contained a large bank of computer servers "Thats interesting."

As she entered the alien figure appeared again in front of her "The knowledge, history and culture of the Onigh are in these computers. They will translate themselves to your language."

Overhead lights lit up and long disused screens whirred into life.

A myriad of archaeologists and others moved in. Lisa looked to Natav "Make sure this room is secured. Restrict access to work personnel only and members of the political cabinet."

She left the cavern heading for home.

Chapter 28

CHAPTER 28 - EXPLORING THE CAVERN

The as the cavern had unofficially been called was poured over with scientists. Computer specialist Xjeg a Donayan was looking through the database and had been probing through the files.

He cycled through the cultural database learning all he could learning the Onigh were amongst the first of the races in the Milky Way alongside others. Soon he was looking at the races some familiar such as the Doneen who where ancestors of the Donayan but a familiar name stood out, Iquan.

He reread the text delving into information the story told of how there where once four major races built in the first formed planets of the Milky Way the Onigh, the Iquan and the Ventroth and the Doneen

All evolved and soon they discovered each other at first cooperating for millions of years then as younger races evolved the Iquan began to throw their weight around the Onigh and the Ventroth along with the younger races helped defeat the Iquan. The Doneen had wiped out by their sun going supernova.

Xjeg continued his study learning two of the ancient races had left the Milky Way the Onigh had left the planet but mentioned the Ventroth still behind.

The records stated that the Iquan were defeated and retreated to their homeworld of Iquos where they were driven and they fled never to been seen.

The Ventroth stayed behind in case they ever returned and gave a star map of where they are located. Xjeg studied the map and their location the Ventroth where close by.

Xjeg reported his findings to Natav "You need to see this."

Natav looked at the information provided "This is good work Xjeg."

Xjeg returned to studying the computer records. Natav knew this was a major discovery a race that could face the Iquan and possibly defeat them.

Excited he left the complex of caverns to report to Lisa of the discovery.

Chapter 29

CHAPTER 29 - THE AVENGER

It felt good to be in space Lisa thought as she had taken her freighter to escape the stuffiness of her job as Governor. She was alone quiet on her ship feeling nostalgic for simpler times when she was running a ship running freight chasing the next pay check.

In front of her was the Trequan nebula which was quiet and resting. She flew the Avenger through the nebula which was vast enveloping the a large swathe of the Ergon system which was the home system of the colony. From orbit Lisa looked below on her colony and it had grown large numbering over two hundred thousand.

News had reached of the Iquans brutality and whole planets had been wiped out to make way for the Iquan then they would strip the planet bare.

The bliss and solitude was interrupted by a distant beeping Lisa looked and activated the screen it was Natav.

He shared of the discovery and the information was uploaded. Lisa was getting daily reports of new things discovered about the Onigh from their culture to the planet and how it worked. The discoveries had led to helping to resupply supplies for power and food.

Yet the discovery of the Ventroth intrigued her. Her maps only reached as far as this part of space. Yet the new information indicated they where close by and wondered if they where still around or extinct.

Lisa was aware the Iquan would soon come after them and had heard their fleet doubling and attacks on neighbouring empires. The Iquan where spreading and consuming all within their grasp yet the advance had slowed recently the Iquan began to settle and build on different worlds.

Intrigued she landed the Avenger close to the network of caverns now known to expand hundreds of miles containing dwellings from the Onigh lived.

Lisa walked to see her sister Priette talking to William Jensen both members of her crew who had been exploring and mapping the planet.

They exchanged hellos. John by now had joined by Natav.

All five stood by the caves Lisa looked to her friend and now ex lover, John, having both decided that they weren't right for each other.

Lisa showed them the map and were all excited at the prospect however John was more cautious.

"You want us to go and look for these Ventooth."

"Ventroth" William corrected John smiling excitedly.

The crew were excited and this is what they were good at working together doing a job. Lisa looked to John "I want you to run things here make sure the colony works."

John nodded in agreement.

Lisa looked to her crew "Lets see if these Ventroth exist."

Natav looked nodding "Do we have supplies?"

Lisa nodded "Got some before we came."

Priette looked to her sister both had grown distant on the colony "I will stay here helping John and the colony."

Lisa was disappointed but accepted leaving with Natav and William both walked to the Avenger leaving John and Priette on the surface. On a clear day the Avenger arose out of the atmosphere through the Trequan nebula towards the coordinates for the Ventroth.

Chapter 30

CHAPTER 30 - VENTROTH

The Avenger emerged out of hyperspace emerged on to a large metallic ball "Wheres Ventroth" Tim queried.

Lisa looked onto the scene in front of her the metallic ball was vast a hundred times the size of Earths sun.

Lisa had a hunch "I think its in there."

Tim queried "In that thing."

Lisa nodded "Take us in closer."

The Avenger was moved closer to the large ball. The metallic ball was smooth with no gaps on its surface.

There was a distant beep Tim looked back to Lisa "That thing is opening up."

Lisa looked on as large doors opened in front of them "Lets go in then."

The Avenger entered the metallic ball and travelled for thirty minutes down a long vast chasm soon emerging into a large cavern housing a sun and several smaller planets.

Lisa looked on astonished "That's impressive."

There was a radio beacon guiding them to an Earth sized planet.

Soon they where overhead the Avenger lingered was unsure of what was down there but knew she had to go down and looked to Tim "Take charge here until I get back."

Tim nodded as he took the ships control and Lisa with Natav descended to the planets surface the planet was essentially covered with a waters with a series of four large islands.

The radio beacon was coming from one of those islands and the shuttle descended emerging onto an island of yellow sand and thick jungle canopy. In the centre was a small village of wooden huts.

Lisa emerged and walked towards the centre of the village with Natav.

Natav was wary the village was far to quiet for his liking "Theres no one here."

Then emerged a man dressed in white robes and looked human holding a large staff and walked towards them "Lisa and Natav crew of the Avenger. We are the Ventroth. Come with me."

They all walked to the largest structure in the village a large circular structure that reminded Lisa of early iron age structures from Northern Europe on Earth.

As they entered where thirty Ventroth in a circle holding staffs all of them looked towards Lisa and emerging from them was a tall male Ventroth and his he walked closer "Come sit with us it has been so longer since we have had outsiders."

Lisa and Natav looked onto the assembled Ventroth and to their leader the man who just walked to them smiled "I am Lanoon Chief Leader of the Ventroth."

As they sat Lisa knew she in the presence of history. They were brought wooden cups of water and she was surprised at the lack of technology wondering if this was a facade or they had rejected technology.

Lanoon looked to them as the other Ventroth left "It is good to see you. We have been aware of you on what you call the Trequan Nevula for sometime."

Lisa looked to him as they sat onto simple dark wooden chairs "We learned of you from the Onigh."

Lanoon nodded "The Onigh how I remember them. They unfortunately died a thousand of your years ago as are the Doneen another great and proud race.

Let me you tell something in a time when your world was young four great races roamed this galaxy. You know of the other two gone the Iquan were however not apart of this we tried with other races to stop them but soon they became aggressive we fought against them with other worlds and soon we defeated them. But they have grown again in power."

Lisa nodded "That is why we are here."

Lanoon "I know why you have come. The Iquan will grow in power but you must understand that most Ventroth have moved onto the other side we few are left behind to protect the younger worlds."

Natav was intrigued "The other side?"

Lanoon nodded "The Ventroth now live in a layer of energy you call subspace. We feared that the Iquan would return one day. When we fought we defeated them but we lost a lot of us. We before you came discussed and we are willing to help but you are not yet ready. Their is another piece yet to come."

Lisa looked on "Another piece."

Lanoon smiled "Now that would be telling but lets just say you will need them. The Iquan are not to be underestimated they are ruthless and cunning. Defeating them will not be easy. Go now and return home. We will be there when you need us."

Lanoon got up and walked out and Lisa and Natav walked back to the shuttle ascending to the shuttle. Enroute they both looked to each other.

Natav was the first to speak "What did he mean another piece."

Lisa shrugged her shoulders "I am not sure but it will come we just have to wait. Besides we enough have to do with the colony."

Natav nodded returning to the Avenger.

Lanoon looked on as they ascended another Ventroth walked to the side of him "This will be our last battle."

Lanoon nodded "I know but we must get ready."

Chapter 31

CHAPTER 31 - THE COLONY

"Raiders you say" John looked to pictures of small freighters outfitted with weapons.

A pilot who photographed them continued "Theres about twenty of them heading for us."

John looked to him "How soon will they get here."

"They are due in the next four hours."

John nodded "Lets great ready the Shannon is in orbit."

The pilot left and John looked to the pictures and knew that this would be colonies first big test it had not come under attack until now.

The lead ship a large grey hulled freighter called the Razor loomed close to the Shannon and was three times her size.

John however was not intimidated for him it just made them easier to hit what worried where the other ships which where smaller and more maneuverable.

John looked and hailed the lead vessel "This is the Alliance ship Shannon please stand or we will be forced to attack."

The lead ship radioed back "This is the Razor part of the Syndicate your planet is now under our control I suggest you stand down and to let us continue."

John looked to his commander "The Syndicate?"

He shrugged his shoulders John reissuing his command for the ship to stand down. Soon the radio's went dead and the enemy fleet start to maneuver with enemy ships beginning to circle around the Shannon.

John barked "Battle stations. Attack the lead vessel try to disable her not destroy her."

Soon the blackness of space was illuminated by Alliance and enemy forces in blue and yellow pulses of plasma with missiles darting here and there hitting or missing their targets.

Other military vessels created a second line above Oset and the freighter Razor rammed through three ships. Soon however the Razor was setup upon by other military vessels and soon its metallic hulk was crashing towards the planet the only problem was that it was heading towards the main town of the colony.

Many fighters tried heroically to fight and break pieces off but it was to late a large piece of the Razor slammed into the edge of the main town leaving hundreds dead with broken buildings and smouldering ruins. There was a large crater where the Razor had crashed into the planet.

Above orbit John looked on in disbelief knowing they had won but at great cost he shook his head.

Chapter 32

CHAPTER 32 - Oset

Days later Lisa heard a radio message from the Ventroth requesting a visit from Lanoon and had been accepted.

Lanoon in a small circular ship less than ten metres in length. The ship was deep gold and it shimered in the sun as it powered down and a ramp descended onto the planet. Out came Lanoon and met Lisa who smiled at him.

"Welcome to Oset".

Lanoon was intrigued and had not been off his world for a thousand years "It is good to see you".

Lisa could tell what he wanted "Would you like a tour of the colony".

Lanoon nodded and Lisa accepted showing what they had built and the repairs from the Razor. Lanoon was warm and interested in what he saw.

Lanoon switched topics and he sat opposite Lisa a bond had formed between them"You have built an impressive colony here Lisa we are happy to call you friends."

Lisa sensed hesitation they both sat together under a tall shaded tree "Your holding back."

Lanoon "My people believe still that this is not the right time for us to help you to win. However I am not one of them the signs are all there it is time we help to fight the Iquan and for us to return home."

Lisa was intrigued "We are in no shape to fight Lanoon we barely defended this colony."

Lanoon smiled "My friend their are more of you out there."

Lisa was curious "What do you mean."

Her radio chirped and she answered it was from the Shannon "Governor you might want to see this."

She watched as a fleet of Alliance ships emerged numbering in the hundreds emerged from hyperspace. Lisa shook her head in disbelief.

"How can this be possible. I thought the Alliance had been wiped out."

A shuttle from the fleet descended on Oset and out emerged yet it was different and she had noticed that some of the she knew they where Alliance vessels but was not sure who they belonged to.

A shuttle landed on the planets surface and out came an old looking human six foot medium build with a greying moustache and narrow beady eyes. The man walked upto Lisa and Lanoon.

He was with two other people both Lieutenants from what Lisa could guess.

Both stood opposite other the older man spoke "I'm Fleet Commander Thomas Pentworth of the eighth fleet."

Lisa looked on in disbelief "The eighth fleet wow I thought that was destroyed over Meon."

He smiled "That's a long story."

Lisa introduced Lanoon and all three walked towards Lisa's office.

Commander Pentworth sat quietly opposite Lisa and Lanoon "We where on our way to Meon to retake the planet but we were to late the Alliance had surrender. We escaped into hyperspace took refuge in neutral space until we heard about this place from a passing trader who mentioned it in passing."

Lisa was intrigued "How many of you are?"

Commander Pentworth continued "Over eight hundred ships and two hundred thousand in our fleet."

Lanoon had been quiet "As I had said you would get help."

Commander Pentworth was taken "Help?"

Lisa explained the colony and the Ventroth.

The Commander nodded "True but there are a lot more of us out there. There are at least another two fleets totaling a half million. The Iquan did not destroy all of us and a lot of refused to surrender once we heard about the brutality."

Lanoon looked to them both and he said "The Ventroth are willing to help take back your home."

The Commander looked to him "My crew and fleet need a rest."

Lanoon nodded "Of course."

He got and left heading to his ship and left for home.

Commander Pentworth continued "He's a strange one".

Lisa smiled "You get used to it."

Chapter 33

CHAPTER 33 - EARTH - LIVERPOOL

The Iquan had setup a civilian government to oversee the day to day running of Earth.

Two of the rebel leaders met on the waterfront and they looked across the River Mersey.

Posen a human from the city looked to a slender Quinon female, Welon.

The two looked at each other "The Iquan must be stopped at all costs."

Welon nodded as she turned towards the River Mersey "I agree."

"We've got hit back some how."

Welon nodded "I agree but security is tight at the moment."

Posen turned to face the same direction as Welon "I hear the district governor is stopping off on Earth in the next couple of days."

Welon "I was thinking the same but he will be well protected."

Posen nodded maybe but I can get into the Iquan system and get us access as VIPs. The district governor will be a nice target."

Welon nodded "That will not be easy Iquan security is notoriously tight."

Posen handed her an ID badge "Don't worry go tonight the Iquan are holding a conference on the invasion. Some journalists have been invited and you are one of them going under the name Elandra Jenson a Quinon who is a political advisor there will be a package inside the building when you get there."

She nodded and their meeting broke up.

President Hwan Cho was now in charge of the government and was seen many as colluding with the enemy and their were rumours that he had executed his own citizens.

Prior to the ceremony Welon had looked around the area wondering where to attack the President but security was tight and she knew couldn't do anything.

Fuelled by her mission the proceedings began with the President saying that the Iquan were a force of peace and that life would be better than before.

Welon sat quietly she had a small darted weapon concealed under her sleeve having managed to bypass security. The material used was a tough ceramic that would not show under Iquan security scanners.

The dart itself was automated and computer guided allowing Welon to escape the second she fired it. Yet she knew it could possibly be a one way trip being so close to the President yet she had lost much she was willing to risk it.

The President spoke for another ten minutes as he did so Welon took out the small darted weapon and she pressed the dart and it released itself heading towards the President at great speed.

Yet the dart failed to it hit its target having hit an energy screen protecting the President.

The President was quickly whisked away by security. The crowd panicked and Welon tried to escape yet was captured by guards loyal to the Iquan.

She was hold away to an interrogating room on Earths moon. News soon spread on the state controlled TV station about the capture of a rebellious traitor.

Welon sat knowing her fate then came out an executioner she stood before a firing squad and was fired upon her body slumping and it was broadcast throughout Iquan empire.

Posen looked in disbelief both at Welons death and the failed attempt to kill the President.

Around stood other rebellion leaders.

Tinen a male Meon said "What now?"

Posen was unsure until now they had worked themselves working slowly gaining equipment and learning how to fight killing key people attacking infrastructure and this wasn't their first major setback.

Posen "Undoubtedly they will know it was us who tried to kill the President the best thing is to keep low."

Tinen continued "We are with you but our lives will be harder."

Posen continued "I know you all have families but daily I hear of other worlds rebelling against the Iquan but understood we do not fear death. Once we have overcome that we are they have no control of us."

Posen knew that they would need more than fine words to give them comfort. He needed a victory and something that would make the Iquan squirm.

Chapter 34

CHAPTER 34 - AFTER THE FLEET HAS RESTED

Within a few weeks the eighth fleet had been joined by remnants of the fifth and third fleets their crews were exhausted. The colony quickly swelled in numbers to over a million.

Located in a large enclosed room on the Oset stood Fleet Commander Pentworth, Captain John Smith and other captains gathered to meet.

They where looking at a map of Iquan territory.

Spread out in front of them where schematics of Iquan ships. Lisa was intrigued "How did you get these?"

Commander Pentworth "We found an abandoned destroyer damaged by a strong nebula we downloaded these schematics and learned a heck of lot.

The ships are pretty tough made of a hard metal and the Iquan themselves are strong and difficult to kill. But they like us are capable of being killed. Their weakness is that most of their fleet is automated.

We have successfully penetrated their defenses using a virus."

Captain Smith "We tried something like that but it failed to work."

Commander Pentworth "As did others but we managed it."

Lisa turned the conversation "Whats your plan of attack then?"

Captain Smith continued "We attack via the Mazan territory and open up a second front attacking via the Peridima asteroid."

Lanoon looked on "The Ventroth will join you we will open a third front attacking Laquain. Effectively we are moving on a large front our ships will join yours in a coordinated attack within a few days."

Lisa looked on "Sounds good. I wish I was going with you."

Lanoon looked to her "You have come far but for now we need you here. There will be casualties they will come here to be treated and we need a base."

Lisa nodded in agreement but was unhappy "Okay."

Chapter 35

CHAPTER 35 - THE ATTACK ON IQUAN SPACE

The attack against the Iquan had begun days earlier and major victories scored.

Iquan ships fell like dust as the fleets drove and had pushed them back. Other worlds had begun to attack the Iquan and pushed them deeper into their own territory.

Losses however had been light until now. Lisa knew that would change hearing rumours that the Iquan where regrouping.

It was night time on Oset Lisa sat underneath a tree looking onto distant mountains bathed in starlight.

Lanoons words of staying on the planet with her did not sit easily with her and had been wrestling with them since then. Apart of her wanted to be in space where she belonged she had done well as governor and for setting up the colony yet apart she was a freighter captain.

Was this nostalgia she wondered before returning home

Chapter 36

CHAPTER 36 - IQUAN LEADERSHIP - IQUOS

Several senior general leaders stood around the Iquan leader "The enemy is continuing to advance my lord we have tried to repel but they are disabling our ships with a virus."

One of the generals spoke next "We think there base is located in the Trequan nebula."

The Iquan leader was intrigued "That's good news. I will take a fleet and destroy it."

The generals nodded and one said "Very good my Lord."

Turning to the problem of Commander Pentworth the Iquan leader studied the map and he needed a way to make the enemy come together so that he could destroy them in a large single engagement.

He looked to a general and looked at the battle lines the forces where close to the Pentayan system if he could draw them in a large engagement he could crush them.

He looked to his generals "Bring them here and send false radio messages and chatter about a build up in the Pentayan for a certain time and date. The enemy will think we are about to launch a counteroffensive but what will do is attack their base at Peridima city."

The generals nodded and set about implementing the plan.

Chapter 37

CHAPTER 37 - FLEET COMMANDER PENTWORTH

The Fleet Commander sat on his new office located in Peridima city.

He was surprised by the place formally a trading area for Wovan Trading Syndicate members and had been built for commerce.

The Commander looked to battle plans and knew his forces were stretched. In came reports of radio traffic of a build up of forces in the Pentayan system.

The Commander was intrigued by the report but was wary knowing his supply lines were short and his forces heavily committed.

A distant buzzer alerted the Commander that it was time for his appointment with the Syndicate.

He buzzed and a member of the Syndicate entered and sat opposite the Commander after formal introductions.

The Commander smiled "We're willing to overlook the attack on our colony we want you to help us with food and water. In return from us you will get this asteroid and first trading rights when we defeat the Iquan".

Qovan was intrigued "This city?"

The human male Qovan Temple looked to the commander "Your proposal is interesting but the Iquan are not yet defeated. However we have access to food and supplies but whats in it for us the Alliance is how do I say it extinct."

The Commander continued "This war is going to end and we now have control of this space. The Alliance will rise up again we will to busy to rebuild and we will need allies to help us you could be useful to us."

Qovan continued "That's a lot ifs and promises commander. Yet you offer a good deal the Iquan have no nose for business things were better in the days of the Alliance we got a decent return. I accept the offer."

The commander him handed a list of requests "There is something else."

Qovan listened "What would that be."

The commander said "As a down payment we have two hundred tons of hydranium to give you now to show our good faith."

Qovan was surprised "You know how to do business commander."

He left the commanders office smiling.

Chapter 38

Chapter 39

CHAPTER 39 - BATTLE OF THE TREQUAN NEBULA

Above the electrical surges of the Trequan nebula a large and vast Iquan fleet emerged out of hyperspace.

Numbering a hundred vessels made up of fighters and destroyers the Iquan leader stood aboard one of the ships eager to crush this little planet that had caused him so many problems.

The ships maneuvered closer yet the rebels were ready and the colonies defenses held and opened fire on the Iquan fleet.

Soon there was a dance of blue and red energy weapons above Trequan. Below Lisa looked on hoping the defenses would hold but located nearby on several disused ships where placed and where full of explosive antimatter charges that were of a high yield and capable of causing havoc.

The Iquan fleet inched closed to the planet below yet the Iquan leader saw for the last time several large explosions. Several disused freighters exploded violently in a blinding white light that could be seen from the planet below.

The Iquan ships where destroyed and Lisa looked on and smiled "We did it".

She was glad they had survived their battle with the Iquan.

Yet her joy was short lived as a second larger Iquan fleet emerged.

Lisa was out of options all her plans now in ruins and she had little defenses. The Iquan ships numbered in their thousands.

Having been rallied by the destruction of their first leader the Iquan emerged closer to the planet yet soon however help was at hand as the Ventroth emerged out of hyperspace.

Numbering only fifty ships however they where vast and powerful and they decimated the second fleet of the Iquan within hours.

Lisa looked on and smiled relieved.

Chapter 40

CHAPTER 40 - EARTHS MOON

Ten damaged vessels where in orbit around Earths moon undergoing repairs from a battle against the rebel fleet.

Their crews where on Earth resting. Meanwhile automated robots and work personnel swarmed around the damaged ships setting busily to work.

Posen was alone working with several other cell members. The entrance to the docking ring had gone smoothly and the codes given worked.

"Now is the hard part" Posen said looking to his group and began punching in the codes.

The numbers whirred and within the long seconds the codes activated and the doors opened.

They entered quietly warily with schematics of the ships layout. The ships corridors where bare metal floors and hard plastic walls.

Soon they arrived at the ships command centre having already killed workers en route.

Posen stood on the bridge whilst his other cell leaders began to hack the computers "We're in shouted a distant voice. The ships all yours."

Posen wondered if it had gone to easily but knew that it happened and that the codes had come at great cost.

Soon there was a coded burst signaling the other ship had been successfully taken. The cover story planted in the computer was that the ships where needed to help protect Edenia.

Posen hoped it was routine enough so that no one would notice. The ships left the greyness of Earths moons soon entering into hyperspace where they rendezvoused with other ships and soon boarded the ships.

There numbers on board both ships swelled to over five hundred and where soon on there way to Edenia.

Chapter 42

CHAPTER 42 - THE END

The Ventroth rose in number driving the Iquan from their till they were so infuriated they committed their entire fleet above Edenia.

Below was the rebellion who were trying to take the parliament but struggling and where pinned down.

The allied worlds were united with thousands of ships ready to end the Iquan once and for all.

The Iquan leader stood on his flagship looking towards the vast fleet. His own forces had been forced out of the territory he held by the Ventroth whose ships where more powerful than his own.

He looked to a video screen of Lanoon "It is time for our races to end and let the younger races carry on."

The Iquan leader smiled "You talk of fairy tales old man there is no other side there is only now and death."

Lanoon ended the conversation knowing now that the Iquan would join him with the other races and leave the galaxy.

Soon the battle commenced the Iquan opened first destroying many allied ships.

Soon space was alight with missiles and energy blasts, space debris and alien bodies.

However the Alliance ships fought back with the overwhelming firepower of the Venroth.

The battle commenced for hours and the Iquan were losing heavily. Edenia was taken back.

The Iquan leader looked on knowing he was doomed his fleet gone his dreams now ashes.

He looked on refusing to surrender the Iquan were defeated their ships destroyed and their brutal tyranny was now at an end.

Captain John Smith punched the area in celebration and his crew were happy as they watch the Iquan fleet surrender.

Within weeks the Iquan were beaten back to their homeworld and went with the Ventroth to the other side.

The Alliance reestablished itself building burying the dead and repairing worlds.

The Oset colony was integrated into the Alliance its alien knowledge helping to shape a new destiny for the Alliance.

John returned home and Lisa was home on Sirenson on Lake Vouchon amidst clear blue skies sailing on a gentle breeze alone on a small yacht.

THE END

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