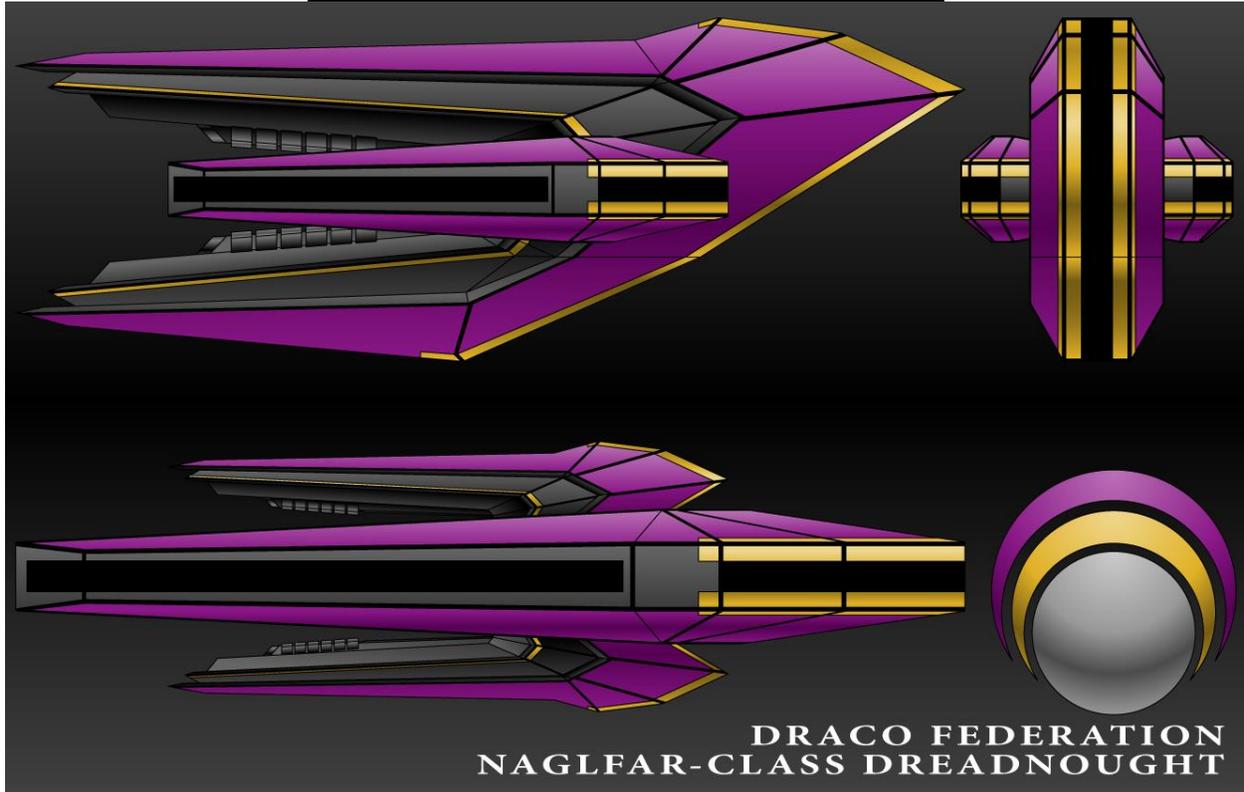


Warring Factions: The Novus Initium Saga
Episode VI: The Nations of Blood and Darkness



PART 10

*Bridge, Covert-Ops Stealth Warship Templar, Planet Propitius Esto Orbit
Capital of Draco Federation, Draconia System, Western Region
8:04pm, October 18, 5434 A.D.*

“What is taking them so long?”

Tora was starting to get very nervous. After being told by Benja that Amarria and Blair were being taken to see the Federation President once they were discovered, Tora was concerned how much of the “truth” Amarria was going to tell the President. After all, it was Amarria who revealed to local law enforcement that the two of them were from the Republic as part of her “backup” plan that Tora knew nothing about.

However, she also knew that Amarria was someone who specialized in history and would be able to explain to the President about the Republic’s history after the Tenebris cultists were exiled. She also knew that Amarria would be interested in the history of the Draco Federation and would either be listening or reading intently on their background. Tora began to wonder if that was the reason they were taking so long to get back in touch with Benja or Tora. This period of waiting for them to get back in touch was starting to become excruciatingly painful.

As she continued to wait, the communications station indicated an incoming transmission.

“Captain,” the communications officer said, “we are getting a transmission from Ghost Two. He is receiving a communication from Phantom One.”

Phantom One was the callsign that Amarria had picked. Tora was concerned that the transmission would be traced by the Federation at first, but she realized that the communications officer said Amarria's callsign and not her real name. Maybe the transmission was genuine.

"Go ahead and put the transmission through," Tora said. "Keep an eye out for any tracers in the transmission in case this is being used to find us by the Federation."

"Understood, Captain," the communications officer said.

A holographic screen appeared in front of the main screen with an image of Benja on it in the cockpit of the stealth shuttle, still hovering over the capital city.

"*Captain Tora,*" Benja said. "*I have a transmission from Ghost One and Phantom One they want me to relay to you.*"

"Where are they right now?" Tora asked, still suspicious of the transmission.

"*They are transmitting from the Federation President's Office right now. I have verified it is them and they are not captives.*"

Tora was still skeptical of the transmission but knew that she might as well see what is going on with those two.

"Put them through. Let's hope this is not some sort of trap."

Benja nodded and pressed a button on his end. The image on the screen changed to an image of Amarria in an office. Tora quickly looked around Amarria behind her and was quick to recognize the architecture as being like the Supreme Chancellor's office but in different colors. If that was the President's Office, it was obvious they were trying to be like the Republic in looks. The question is whether they were the same in terms of how they functioned as a government.

"Amarria," Tora said, knowing their conversation was being overheard, "what is your status?"

"*Captain,*" Tora said, "*we have met with President Shea of the Federation. My theories about the Federation were correct in terms of their origin.*"

"Is this based on what you were told or what you read while getting the information?"

"*Both of them, actually. The Federation was founded more than thirty years after the Draco Family managed to sneak away from the rest of the Tenebris cultists, choosing to go a different direction than the rest of the group. The Tenebris founder's son was responsible for their separation from the rest of the Tenebris.*"

"So, you were right about that theory, but how were they able to form a Federation in thirty years? There's no way they would have enough people to form such a nation?"

"*They utilized programs involving both high fertility, cloning, and test tube fertilizations to drastically increase their numbers during that time. They went from fifty or so people up to the thousands in those thirty years.*"

"From a woman's standpoint, that is highly disturbing."

"*It appears the Dominion by comparison used cloning for nearly their entire population. Only those who descended naturally are held aloft by the rest of the population.*"

"When did the Federation learn about or discover the Dominion?"

"*More than fifty years ago, but we are jumping too far ahead. I'm trying to give you a brief history of the Federation first.*"

"Very well, Amarria. Continue your report."

"*Once the Federation formed, they continued to reside on the planet and increase their population with as little impact to the planet's ecosystem or environment as possible. Two hundred years later, they chose to expand off their planet to the rest of the star system after accelerating their population growth once again.*"

“Wait, why did they accelerate their population growth again?”

“Concerns arose about the Tenebris cultists growing exponentially to the point the Federation could be found by them. To that end, they chose to expand their population, their territory, and their military capabilities. However, their military capabilities were only marginally better than the Republic’s at the time.”

“When did their military get to be as we are seeing it presently?”

“I’ll get to that momentarily. They used their version of the sustainable warp drive to reach and colonize other planets, building and using star gates when the colonies were established. After almost a hundred years, the Federation found the first of the three alien races we are aware of. It was the avian-like race that are called the Gafran. They were not as advanced as the Federation since they were in their Post-Industrial Age. For that matter, none of them were as advanced as the Federation when discovered. However, the Gafran were highly advanced in the field of nanomachines which they used for a variety of tasks. Their combination of nanomachines and molecular-bonding is what led to their current ship defenses similar to our own armor repairer systems.”

“I take it the Gafran were forced to join the Federation because of their nanomachines?”

“None of the alien races were forced to join. They joined willingly with their own reasons as equal members or citizens.”

“They joined willingly? What were their reasons?”

“For the Gafran, it was to explore the stars and mutual defense. They also wanted to learn more about each other since they were the first alien races to discover each other.”

“At least in this region of space.”

“There was a third reason but this is one that is shared between them all, so I will wait till I reach that point. As the Federation expanded with both races cooperation, they discovered another race fourteen years later. That race was the Zeydra. They are the insectoid race that we know of. While the Gafran are the masters of nanotechnology, the Zeydra are masters of cybernetics. Thanks to the Zeydra, Federation ships use cybernetics like the Empire to reduce the size of the crew by having a single person linked to the ship’s control systems. They joined the Federation to explore the stars and to further develop their cybernetic technology. The Federation’s combat drones are one of the results of the Zeydra’s choice to join the Federation.”

“That just leaves the boney-scaled race. What’s their story?”

“They are called the Baqto. They were discovered forty-one years after the Zeydra, but unlike the others, they were at war with each other to the point that their technological development was hardly existent. They were at the same level of development as the Earth’s Medieval Period or the Lykans’ pre-Kingdom years.”

“A race at that level of development would find the Federation’s advance technology similar to what our kind would have called ‘magic’ or ‘sorcery.’ They would even take it as something ‘demonic’ if it came to that. How did the Federation approach them?”

“The Federation studied the Baqto for a few years before they chose to approach them. When they did so, they presented the Baqto with the one thing those aliens were lacking: faith. When the Baqto were presented with the Draco National Faith as it is called, they realized there was a higher calling to better themselves. Surprisingly, they are fast-learners and highly intelligent. They took to the Federation’s technology and culture within months rather than years! However, their physical capabilities could not be ignored, and they currently serve in the Federation military as soldiers and shock troopers. They also serve in law enforcement as we discovered. I also wanted to point out that the Draco’s faith was what the Federation presented

to all of the alien races that made them join as well.”

“Wait, are saying that all three alien races worship the same faith as the Draco?”

“Yes. It would appear that the Draco Federation is a theocracy, a nation ruled or governed by religion. I have been told the Tenebris Dominion is the same way, but is ruled by the heads of the Five Tribes of the Tenebris.”

“Wait, did you say ‘tribes’?”

“Apparently, the five families of the Tenebris are now known as the Five Tribes. The Federation and the Dominion finally encountered each other almost fifty years ago. Initial encounters with each other was filled with excitement for the Dominion and dread for the Federation. Apparently, the Dominion thought the Draco ‘tribe’ as they called them were lost or destroyed while in flight during their exile. When the Dominion found out the truth about the Draco founder’s son deliberately separating the family from the rest of the Tenebris, they were initially willing to forgive the Draco for the ‘disillusion’ of one person causing their separation. However, the rest of the Federation was under the same mindset that they don’t want anything to do with the Dominion, especially after they found out that the Dominion were using ‘livestock’ clones to harvest blood as a food source. This angered the heads of the Dominion to the point that they began their ‘crusade’ of bringing the Draco ‘back into the fold’ where they belong.”

Tora became wide-eyed and disgusted at what Amarria just said.

“Did you just say that the Dominion harvests clone blood as a food source?” Tora asked.

“Yes,” Amarria said. “Clone blood is apparently pure of toxins, so they infuse it with nutrients and supplements for general consumption. That is their only food source based on the Federation’s initial information exchange they had received when the two nations first met.”

“That’s disgusting! No wonder the Federation refuses to be a part of the Dominion! Is this what led to the cause of the war?”

“It is for the most part. The Dominion is trying to abduct the Humans of the Federation, namely the civilians. The alien races were already aware of the Draco’s past and their association with the rest of the Tenebris when they joined and are fighting alongside the Draco to prevent those abductions. However, the Tenebris has labeled those alien races, regardless if they are soldiers or civilians, as ‘kill on sight.’ They have also labeled Humans in the Federation military in the same regards knowing they are trained in combat and could cause problems if abducted.”

“I wondered how the Tenebris viewed the aliens. I take it the Tenebris doesn’t want their blood at all?”

“Alien blood would ‘taint’ their food chain as the Tenebris would call it. However, if that is the case involving aliens in the Federation, it does make me wonder if the Tenebris has come across and exterminated any alien life within their domain. The Federation is not aware if the Dominion has or not based on their initial exchange of history when they first met.”

“Was this initial exchange also involving technology such as the rift engine?”

“No, it did not, though the drive’s official name is called the Portal Engine. This was created by the Dominion. The Federation managed to salvage a complete drive during a battle a few months ago and began working on implementing the drive into a new line of ships. Our initial impressions on the size of the ships that use this drive were accurate. They need a lot of power and thus need ships with enough reactors and capacitors to make the jump possible.”

“Then there is a possibility that our current line of ships might not be able to use it. Tell me something, though. You have reported all of this to me, but it appears you are still in the President’s office, correct?”

“That is correct. The President is present and can hear this conversation along with the Fleet Admiral of their defense forces and the High Bishops of their national faith.”

“So, we have eavesdroppers in this conversation. If they are allowing you to converse with us, there must be a reason or there is something they want in return. What is it?”

“The President actually wants to speak with you in exchange for allowing me to contact you and report what we have found thus far.”

“I see. Very well. I will speak with the President.”

Amarria set the tablet on her end on a table or desk and turned it around. Tora saw a woman in a chair wearing a purple button-down shirt and black blazer with purple hair. The woman’s arms were on the desk, her hands together and her fingers intertwined. The outfit surprised Tora as it was more like a business suit compared to the outfit that Amarria wore.

“Greetings, Captain Tora,” the woman said. *“I am President Shea.”*

Tora nodded.

“Madam President,” Tora said. “What did you wish to talk to me about?”

“First and foremost, my forces have been made aware that you are in the system. You no longer need to remain cloaked. I have ordered them to only approach you. They will not detain or attack your ship. This is just to make sure that the civilians don’t know about you until we make such an announcement.”

“I hope you can understand my reluctance to disengage the cloaking device at this time.”

“I understand that reluctance, but you must also understand that you and your ship are sneaking around our territory. Amarria has been very good at telling the truth to us concerning your mission, why you are here, and what has transpired in the Republic since our ancestors were exiled. I would like to think that some of that honesty is not a rare commodity among you all. It isn’t, right?”

Tora knew the President was calling her out. Tora began to regret Amarria ever being assigned to this mission as other RCIA agents would have found a way of not getting caught before this point. However, now the President is asking in good faith, literally when one thinks about this society, for Tora to expose herself to the Federation’s military. There were no orders to follow if something like this was to happen because no one thought this WOULD happen!

Tora took a deep breath. Considering the President now knows about the ship and even informed her military about it, there was no reason for stealth anymore. She could only hope she was making the right decision.

“Tactical,” Tora said, “drop the cloak.”

“Yes, ma’am,” the tactical officer said.

The blue lights on the bridge that indicated that the ship was cloaked changed to white as an audible sound like something was powering down was heard throughout the ship.

“Cloak is deactivated,” the tactical officer said. “We are now visible to the Federation forces.”

“Captain,” the science officer said, “we have a Federation fleet approaching our current location.”

“As I told you,” Shea said, *“they are not there to fight or detain your vessel. They are there for your own protection from civilians who are not aware of your presence in our territory yet. I will be making an announcement to that nature later, but for now, I would like your assistance with something at this time.”*

“You need my assistance?” Tora said. “If you are about to ask my ship to engage Dominion forces, then my answer is no.”

"I am not about to ask you to do something as dangerous as that. What I am about to ask you has nothing to do with combat."

"Then what is it?"

"I would like to establish a line of communication with the Supreme Chancellor of the Novus Initium Republic."

"You want to talk to the Supreme Chancellor? For what purpose?"

"The Draco Family and its descendants have had over six centuries to make up for the mistake we made concerning the actions of Armani Draco, the founder of the twisted Tenebris cult. However, we also know that our culture and our nation are not like the Republic's. The reason I want to talk to the Supreme Chancellor is to request for the Draco Federation to be recognized as a separate autonomous nation."

"I can't speak for the Supreme Chancellor, but you should be aware of the Republic Charter concerning the creation of a Human-based nation outside of the Republic and how it is illegal to do so. Are you familiar with the Charter?"

"I am, but while Humans initially created the Federation, it is no longer entirely governed or consisting solely of Humans. As Amarria has told you, Gafran, Zeydra, and Baqto live, work, play, govern, and serve in the Federation. In other words, it no longer is an issue in concern to the Charter. We had quite some time to prepare and present a compelling argument to be officially recognized."

"What about the jammers? We cannot send transmissions past your borders with them active."

"If you agree to allow me to speak with him, I will turn off the jammers to allow your transmissions to get through."

Tora thought about it for a moment. Tora may not be a politician, but President Shea made a valid point. The Draco Federation may have started as a Human-based nation, but three alien races are member races of the Federation, so it no longer is just a Human-based nation. Thus, it may not be affected by the Charter.

That just leaves the other "nation" to ask about.

"Let me ask this before I consider your request," Tora said. "Do you know if the Tenebris Dominion is still a Human-based nation?"

"The Dominion has not come across any sentient alien race within their domain. As Amarria has told you, they also seem intent on exterminating any alien Federation citizen they find on worlds they have captured from the Federation. So, to answer your question, they are still Human-based and are a violation to the Charter."

"Alright, then. As this is more of a political matter now, I will agree to your request to speak to the Supreme Chancellor. However, I along with Amarria will need to provide our report to the Supreme Chancellor so that he is not surprised by your sudden call."

"Very well, Captain Tora. I will order the jammers to be deactivated so that you can make your report."

"Thank you. We will keep this channel open to relay your transmissions to the Supreme Chancellor once we give our report."

"I look forward to talking to him."

Amarria turned her tablet around on her end, facing herself again.

"Amarria," Tora said, "we are going to have a little talk when you get back to the ship."

"I figured as much, Captain," Amarria said.

"Standby while we establish contact with the Supreme Chancellor."

Tora gestured to the communications officer to put the transmission on hold. Tora pinched and rubbed the top of her nose between her eyes.

“Amarria obviously inherited Trent’s insubordinate nature,” Tora said. “At least, when it comes to myself and the RCIA. Communications, get in touch with the Ruber Station to relay our transmissions back to Lumen, namely the RCIA headquarters first before the Supreme Chancellor’s office. Aja needs to hear this...”

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*Ready Room, Covert-Ops Stealth Warship Cavalier, In Transit to Ruber System
Tenebris Dominion Space, Southwestern Region, 118 Light-Years from Ruber System
8:28pm, October 18, 5434 A.D.*

“This is a lot less than what I expected them to recover.”

Luke was looking over the remainder of the data that Brenda and Lokia had brought back with them a couple of hours ago from the Dominion archives, namely the historical files. The only moments the Dominion recorded in their files were key moments in their nation’s history. Those moments included the foundation of the nation and their faith, the expansion into space, the creation of the rift engine, the discovery of the Draco Federation, and others. If it were all printed like the books of old, it would fill only a single textbook!

Luke could not figure out why there was so little history recorded by the Dominion. There were more records that were recorded for one day in the “cultivation” folder than there were for more than a century’s worth of history!

Speaking of the “cultivation” folder, Luke had looked over one of the records briefly. It disgusted him to see such records, but the fact that the ration box that was brought aboard showed it contained packets of enriched blood, confirmed by the *Cavalier’s* doctor upon examination, was irrefutable proof the Dominion still used blood. He expected it to be used in rituals though, not something they would consume as a form of nourishment! Luke heard of some fictional beings called “nosferatu” or “vampires” who drank the blood of Humans, but this is now a reality were a whole nation full of “vampires” existed. The worst part is the fact the Dominion’s entire society does not or may not view their consumption of blood as morally “wrong” like those in the Republic would view it. To them, it was as routine as anyone eating a meal or at the very least is like those on a liquid diet.

The one piece of information that Luke was still trying to understand was the need for the Tenebris families to become “tribes.” There was no explanation for this transition in the historical records, only that the term was in place when the “tribes” began to resort to cloning to increase its population. It did state in the records that those naturally born among the descendants of the original Tenebris family members were held in high status, living separately from the rest and governing regions of space in councils of five, one from each of the families. There appeared to be a “chief” to each of the five tribes that governs the entirety of their respective tribe. There is no interaction between the tribes outside of a professional or political interaction between them, such as a meeting between the chiefs.

The records also showed times for services for everyone in the Dominion to attend daily on a rotating schedule designed were a portion of the population went at a time instead of everyone. Most likely, this kept the cathedrals from being overcrowded and to keep the Dominion running when some of its population had to attend. Based on this, it was obvious that the cathedrals that were spotted in the capital serve a much higher purpose for the Dominion than

just worship. Even though the chiefs govern their tribes, there was evidence that these chiefs answer to a central authority or figure relating to their faith. Who that is remains unknown as no records exist as to who this person or authority could be by name.

However, one thing was evident from the records: The Dominion consisted solely of Humans. Luke knew of the Republic Charter and the clause that there were to be no other Human-based nations outside of the Republic. While the Supreme Chancellor doubts that the Republic could do anything like “arresting” an entire nation, the evidence of using Human blood and the lack of basic Human rights may make the Supreme Chancellor think otherwise about acting against the Dominion, namely its leadership. How he would proceed is something the Chancellor and the Senate would decide once they return to Ruber in two weeks.

Luke was still unhappy about Brenda and Lakia not getting information on the rift engine or the “portal drive” as it was labeled in the Dominion archives. He understood this was a covert operation, but the information would have been crucial to the Republic to revolutionize space travel. He could only hope that the team from the *Templar* would be able to get that information from the Federation.

Luke was also surprised about the lack of information concerning the Draco Federation. It was obvious they met each other and didn’t go to war until sometime after their initial encounter based on their history, as limited as that was. The Dominion had marked the Federation as “traitors of the faith,” a term that seems to drive the Dominion to “reclaim their lost brethren.” The Dominion considers this some form of “holy crusade.” However, any information on the Federation’s history, culture, and religion was absent from the records. It is unknown if the information was not present to keep those in the Dominion from learning the ideals or culture of the Federation as it would challenge the culture and the society of the Dominion. If that is the case, then the Dominion must find the Federation’s way-of-life threatening to their own. Whether this “reclaiming” includes the aliens that are known to reside in the Federation or not is unknown from their records. How the Dominion military treats those aliens if captured is something that was not able to be recovered because Brenda and Lakia were not looking for such information. Again, this was something he hoped the *Templar’s* team was able to recover from the Federation.

The only issue he had remaining was the fact that Brenda and Lakia were not as “discreet” as they should have been when they were trying to leave the facility. They raised alarms when they left due to having both sets of doors for the archives and the building’s front doors opened at the same time with no one visually present for the guards to see. It would seem that usually one set of doors are open at a time, so having both open at once was something that is not usual or routine at all. The suits that both Lakia and Brenda wore recorded the entire operation, so when one of the guards heard footsteps pass by them, it was most likely the reason the alarm was raised. The question is whether or not the Dominion in general will think it was Federation operatives or someone else. His concern is if they think that “someone else” is the Republic. If they think that, the Dominion may look at concentrating their efforts into a possible war with the Republic. Of course, evidence or proof would have to be left behind for them to think that was the case. So far, no such thing was left behind at the scene for them to believe it was either nation based on those recordings.

Luke leaned back in his chair and took a deep breath. Maybe he was stressing out over nothing at all.

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*Tribal Council Chamber; Central Tower; City of Plena Tenebris, Capital of Tenebris Dominion
Planet Tenebris Prime, Tenebris System, Southwestern Region
8:35pm, October 18, 5434 A.D.*

“I hope this is worth having us here this late at night.”

Ebony, the Aspergillus Tribe’s Chief, walked onto her platform inside the Tribal Council Chamber. Five platforms, isolated from each other with the only way in and out being through a back door, were positioned at equal distance from each other in a large circular room. They were raised to be more than eight meters off of the floor. The room was only lit at the platforms and the center of the room. In the center of the room was a raised platform that was also eight meters high from the floor. A hatch was in the center of the platform that was currently closed. All of the platforms had smooth sides so no one could climb up onto them if someone was on the floor.

As Ebony took her seat at her platform, she looked around and saw the other Chiefs entering the room. To her right was Beverly, the Chief of the Lupis Tribe. She was older than Ebony by more than ten years, but her age and experience have served her well as Chief of the Tribe. She had a decade before she would reach the age of retirement and select another from her family to serve as chief.

To Beverly’s right going counter-clockwise was Nicola, the Chief of the Aquilam Tribe. She was the same age as Beverly, but unlike Beverly, she was a bit more laid back on matters that concerned her tribe. She at one point stated that her way of handling things was to help her reduce the stress of the role. Ebony thinks she is a bit too laid back in her responsibilities to effectively lead but knows it is not her place to make such an argument.

Continuing counter-clockwise around the room, she saw Gisselle, the Chief of the Pistris Tribe. Gisselle was only a few years older than Ebony, but she takes her role very seriously much like Beverly. There are times Ebony thinks that Gisselle may be inspired by Beverly and her aura of professionalism that she has around her. Ebony can easily understand that admiration, but Ebony’s inspiration came from her mother rather than someone else from a different tribe.

The only person remaining was to Ebony’s left. That remaining person was Miya, the Chief of the Tigris Tribe. She was the youngest of the Chiefs among the Five Great Tribes, and she only recently was put into that position by her grandmother who retired a few months ago. Miya’s inexperience has been evident ever since she became Chief based on Miya’s nervousness and indecisiveness to act on important issues.

Usually, those that become Chiefs are trained for the role before they take the position. However, Miya’s mother died after from what was reported as an “accident.” The details of how she died was not available for the rest of the Chiefs as the matter was an internal one within the Tigris Tribe. Ebony continued to wonder if it was an accident or if she was killed intentionally, the latter considered a grave sin against those that are naturally born. Regardless, it was the Tigris Tribe’s matter and is under their jurisdiction. In Ebony’s opinion, Miya’s grandmother should have waited to retire until Miya was properly trained for the position.

Ebony was a bit cranky to be called back to this room after being dismissed for the day more than five hours ago, but apparently there were developments that had occurred that required their attention. What those developments were remained unknown to her and the rest of the Chiefs.

Ebony placed her hand on the console in front of her, confirming her attendance to this meeting, as did the other Chiefs. A chime was heard from each of their platforms in different pitches. Once all five chimes sounded, the hatch on the center platform opened up and a deeper

chime sounded as a figure began to emerge from the open hatch.

The person being raised through the hatch was a man wearing very ornate robes much like someone who was a member of their faith. However, this man was more than that as he was the leader of the faith and of the Dominion. The base color of the robes was a deep crimson red with several silver accents adorning his robes and sash. This color scheme continued to his tall hat which had the emblem of the Dominion embroidered on it. The silver staff he held in his right hand had the Dominion's emblem on the top of it and shined in the light from above while the other end had a bulb-shaped knob that was scratched and dented from centuries of use. The pale skinned man appeared to be in his late forties with gray streaks of hair on the sides of his head. His eyes were closed as he rose onto the platform.

When the platform under his feet that lifted him up came to a stop, he opened his eyes and slowly looked around at all the platforms the Chiefs were at. Once he looked at all five women, he raised the staff a few feet off the ground and brought it down. The knob of the staff clanged with the metal of the platform and echoed throughout the chamber.

“My apologies for calling you all back here after we dismissed for the day,” the man said. “It has come to my attention that covert operatives have managed to infiltrate the Central Archive here in the capital.”

Ebony along with the other Chiefs were in shock of this news. They heard an alarm earlier, but it was silenced quickly and they were informed it was a false alarm. Was the alarm genuine after all?

“Over three hours ago,” the man continued, “guards at the entrance noticed the doors to the entrance of the building and the doors to the archives were both open at the same time. Shortly after, they heard footsteps that sounded like running going past them and down the front stairs of the building. This was when they raised the alarm. I personally requested for the alarm to be silenced until the infiltration could be investigated and confirmed. I can now say that there is evidence to confirm this infiltration.”

He raised his staff again and struck it on the platform. Five holographic screens appeared, one in front of each Chief. On the screen was a log showing the time something or someone accessed the system, where it was accessed, what was copied, and when the access was terminated. Ebony looked over the log, but analyzing such a log was not something she was accustomed of doing.

“Are there any pictures or footage of where this was accessed?” Miya asked.

Everyone in the room looked in Miya's direction. Normally, the religious leader presents all the facts before opening the discussion up to the Chiefs. For Miya to speak before discussion was allowed was rude and unsightly, a clear sign she should not be Chief of her tribe. The leader of the faith laughed slightly.

“The innocence and inexperience of youth,” he said. “To answer your question, we do have such recordings on hand.”

The man pounded his staff into the platform again. A picture appeared next to all five of the presented logs showing one of the stations in the central area of the Central Archive. The station was unoccupied at the time it showed it was accessed, but an indicator near the access port showed something was connected.

“Something was physically connected in that port,” he continued. “From here, the operatives copied our history, our cultivation logs from yesterday, and they attempted to access the plans for the portal drive. They were stopped by the need for a passcode to access the last item. They did not attempt to bypass or hack the code. It appears they decided to be cautious so

they would not set off any alarms, despite the fact that they did so in the end.”

He struck his staff against the platform again. The logs and the footage disappeared.

“We also received a report that one of the ration packs from a shipment went missing or was unaccounted for here in the capital,” he continued. “Here is the footage at the time.”

He struck the platform with the bulb of his staff once more. A screen appeared in front of each Chief of the back of a delivery transport near one of the distribution centers in the city. As the footage played, the delivery personnel had turned away to grab another shipment to unload. The moment they turned away, one of the rations that were unloaded lifted off one of the stacks on its own. Within a second, it disappeared from sight. The moment it did so, all five Chiefs were shocked at what they witnessed. In Ebony’s mind, the question soon arose as to why someone would want that information and one of the ration packs?

“Whoever it was that infiltrated the capital to get the information and the ration pack, one thing is for certain,” he said. “This infiltration is not the work of the Draco Federation.”

Ebony along with the other four Chiefs looked at their leader with bewildered expressions on their faces. Ebony began to ponder who it was. She heard Miya gasp.

“You don’t mean the Novus Initium Republic, do you?” Miya asked.

Everyone looked over at Miya again. Ebony had never heard of the Republic that Miya was referring to. Ebony looked around and noticed that no one else knew of the Republic either. Their leader raised his right eyebrow as he looked over at Miya.

“I’m surprised you know of them,” he said. “How do you know of the Republic?”

Miya’s expression was that of fear as she realized that she was put on the spot. It appeared to Ebony as if Miya said something she should not have said. Miya steadied herself to answer.

“While we have historical files in the Central Archive,” Miya said, “the Tigris Tribe has a more extensive historical archive from even before the Dominion was established.”

The leader suddenly gave her a very serious look.

“This is the first time I have heard of this,” he said. “You realize that it is forbidden to possess knowledge of times before the Dominion was formed, right?”

“We all know that our ancestors ventured into this region from their ancient home planet, but only the Tigris possess the reasons for why that happened. Considering the circumstances of this infiltration that you have presented to us, it is only right to explain why we are in this region and what this would mean to the Dominion if the infiltrators are from the Novus Initium Republic.”

The leader took a deep breath.

“Very well, Chief Miya,” he said. “I can see you have read those archives and you’re knowledgeable about the subject at hand. I’m beginning to think your knowledge of detailed history may provide the merit as to why you were selected as the Chief of the Tigris Tribe.”

The leader looked at the rest of the Chiefs.

“I will now open the matter up for discussion so that Chief Miya can explain why the Dominion was formed in this region, who the Novus Initium Republic is, and why we must fear them if they infiltrated our capital.”

“How do you know about them, Your Grace?” Ebony asked.

Their leader looked at Ebony with a slight smile.

“I may be cloned,” he said, “but my memories are still intact the day we fled the Republic’s so-called ‘justice’ for our faith. I am His Majesty Pope Armani Draco, after all.”

* * * * *

Drew's Private Office, Supreme Chancellor's Residence, Capital City of Luminous Planet Luminaire, Lumen System, Capital of Novus Initium Republic
9:13pm, October 18, 5434 A.D.

“I was not expecting to have this conversation this late at night.”

Supreme Chancellor Drew was at the residence of the Supreme Chancellor, a building only a few blocks away from the Republic Parliament Building. It was a three-story white majestic mansion surrounded by fields that took up nine square blocks within the city and surrounded by a security fence with only two entrances on the ground. Republic Secret Service agents patrolled the grounds. A private transport subway system linked the residence with the Republic Parliament Building for direct access.

He came home after seven o'clock to have dinner with his wife and figured he would not have to deal with anything political for the rest of the evening. More than forty-five minutes ago, he received a transmission from Head Agent Aja he was not expecting to get. Apparently, the *Templar's* team of Colonel Blair and Trent's daughter Amarria were discovered by Federation law enforcement. The tablet they were using did not have a federally-approved access code to download from their library. Law enforcement waited until Blair and Amarria finished their download before being confronted. Much to Drew's surprise, Amarria told the truth about their mission and where they are from to law enforcement, using her wallet she had on hand as proof. He could tell that Aja was not happy that this was Amarria's "backup" plan if they were discovered, but in Drew's opinion, telling the truth rather than lying appeared to be the best option so that there was a sense of trust when it came to opening negotiations with the Federation.

Of course, he wasn't expecting to do that now at this time of night. He was provided the history of the Federation by the RCIA from Amarria, namely the important parts. This included the formation of the Federation, the population growth, the formation of the national faith, the discovery of the three alien races, and their first encounter with the Tenebris Dominion. He was also provided the history of the Dominion that the Federation was given and how they developed including their use of blood as a food source. Of course, this made the *Cavalier's* mission redundant but there was no way to know they would have known that the Federation possessed this knowledge or the fact that the Federation willingly provided this information. Whether this was all of the Dominion's history or not could not be determined.

Drew was also told that the current leader of the Federation, President Shea, was waiting to talk to him once he read the Federation and Dominion's history. He would have said to wait until the following morning, but he was informed that Blair and Amarria were waiting in her office along with key members of their defense forces and their national faith for him to begin talks. While he dressed down to only his button-down shirt and pants with the tie gone and the top button undone, he should still be presentable in his office to at least start a casual or laidback conversation with Shea. A direct line to the Federation President was established and was on hold to his terminal at his desk.

Drew took a deep breath and relaxed as he activated the connection. As the line was established, a woman appeared on the screen with purple hair and a button-down shirt wearing a black blazer on. She was suddenly shocked about Drew appearing on the screen at her end, but that was to be expected.

“President Shea, I assume?” Drew asked. “I am Supreme Chancellor Drew of the Novus Initium Republic.”

“Greetings, Supreme Chancellor,” Shea said. “I’m sorry that we had to contact you at such a late hour, but I figured that the sooner this matter gets resolved, the sooner we could move forward.”

“Especially in light of the fact that two citizens of the Republic are still in your office, last I heard.”

“They still are here. We’ve been talking about the Republic and what all has transpired since our ancestors were exiled. We have been intrigued by the events that occurred resulting in the First Interstellar War as the Republic has label it. What I have been really surprised about is the transition involving the Royal Lykan Kingdom converting into the Holy Lykan Republic. I guess we are intrigued that we are no longer the only nation aside from the Dominion that puts religion at the forefront along with the Liberigi Mandate.”

“It appears you have been well-informed about what has transpired for the most part in our nation as I have learned about yours in that short amount of time. I have been informed that you are requesting for official recognition as an autonomous nation by the Novus Initium Republic, is that correct?”

“We are. While I understand that the Republic Charter has a specific clause of denying the creation of a Human-based nation outside of the Republic, the Draco Federation is no longer a Human-based nation as shown in the history you were provided and when one of your ships examined one of the wreckages of our fleet in the Miranda System.”

Drew was not happy to hear that they were informed about the fact that the wreckage of Federation and Dominion ships were examined by Republic operatives. He did not know if this was Amarria’s doing of telling more of the truth or if Blair mentioned it since his team was the one who examined the Federation carrier wreckage in Miranda. Regardless, they now know about that fact, but at least the President knows how the Republic found their capital that way if she asked.

“It is true that the Federation is no longer Human-based from what we have seen,” Drew continued. “However, the recognition of a nation in this sense is going to require more than my approval in this case. Because the Draco Federation started as a Human-based nation, that is where it tends to be sketchy when it comes to whether the Charter’s clause applies or not. I would have to call for a special session of the Senate and the Supreme Court to determine whether the clause applies or not. The problem I have is that neither branch of the government knows about the Tenebris Dominion or the Draco Federation. I have to fill them in on both groups. That will take some time to explain.”

“I understand. I heard that this investigation into both nations was primarily the work of the Republic Central Intelligence Agency with your approval. I’m guessing you wanted to wait on reporting to the Senate at least until you had more information, correct?”

“That is correct. However, there is something I have to ask and it is the reason why I approved of this investigation into the Tenebris cult before discovering either the Dominion or the Federation.”

Shea raised her right eyebrow and had a curious expression on her face.

“What would that be?” Shea asked.

“I want you to answer this question truthfully because this will affect any future relations the Republic has with your nation. Does the Dominion, the Federation, or both nations possess the means to manipulate the mind of a sentient being using a specialized form of electro-magnetic radiation?”

Shea was taken back by the question, almost dumbfounded by it. Drew began to wonder

if she knew anything about such a means at all.

“What do you mean by that? Could you please explain?”

“Are you telling me you have not heard of this before?”

“Neither the Federation nor the Dominion that we know of has such technology at their disposal. How and where was something like that used?”

“This was used on a Lykan king more than four centuries ago to promote slavery in the name of their faith. It was also used more recently against the Executive Council members of the United Vitam State more than six months ago.”

“We only became aware of those races through Amarria just a little while ago, and I doubt the Dominion is even aware of those nations at all. Both the Kingdom and the State are also on the other side of the star cluster. Unless the Dominion has used their portal drives to jump into those regions to bypass the Republic, neither nation would have been able to reach the Lykans nor the State. We were more focused on our own nations than others four centuries ago and our nations were at war with each other for less than fifty years.”

“So what you are telling me is that neither nation had the means or the motive to do such a thing?”

“The Tenebris focus on the properties of blood and how it helps their people while we focus on bettering ourselves with our faith. This mind control through EM radiation is something neither of us have developed as we don't have a reason to do so in our respective societies.”

“This is not good. I had assumed when this method of mind manipulation was discovered along with when the Tenebris cult was first brought to my attention that the two were connected somehow. It would seem that someone else is responsible for this manipulation, but now we have no leads to follow.”

Shea looked like she was in thought about the matter.

“I wonder if...” she started to say before she stopped herself.

Drew wondered if she knew who was responsible.

“Do you have a clue as to who may be responsible?” Drew asked.

“I don't have anything definite. I only have a hypothesis. Aside from the Northwest Region which is just as far from the Lykans and the State, the only region that would be close enough to them and that no one has explored is the Southern Region.”

“The only problem is that no one has been able to explore that region due to the gravimetric disturbances that surround it. I doubt anyone or anything could cross through those disturbances.”

“Unless those disturbances are artificial in nature and those who created it can pass through it with ease or bypass it.”

Drew was the one with a surprised look on his face.

“Are you suggesting those disturbances are artificial in origin?” Drew asked.

“It is only a theory, but unfortunately there is no evidence to support this theory.”

“If what you say is true and there are no other factions involved in the star cluster, that may be the only theory we have to go on. I just wish there was a way to prove that theory.”

“All I can say and reiterate is that neither we nor the Dominion have the means to do what you have asked when it comes to mind manipulation.”

Drew took a deep breath.

“Very well,” Drew said. *“If your belief in your faith is as strong as I believe it is, then I can trust that you speak the truth. Now, I am waiting for our other team to arrive from the Dominion capital to give their report, but that may take two weeks for them to arrive and report*

their findings much like the ship at your capital.”

“You’re wanting to make sure the information we have on the Dominion matches to what we have on record, correct?”

“Yes. While the Dominion may have provided you with their history, there are some things they may not have provided. If the information matches what you have provided, then we will proceed as needed when it comes to how to deal with the Dominion. I want to make sure we have all the of the facts before I present this to the Senate and the Supreme Court along with the other known nations.”

“So, you are saying that the official recognition by the Republic and its allies will take more than two weeks. I can understand the delay, though.”

“There is one question I wanted to ask you concerning the Dominion that I was not able to find in the information I was provided, though.”

“We provided all the information the Dominion gave us, so I’m curious to know what you want to know that you could not find within the documentation. What is your question?”

“The one piece of information that I could not find was who the leader of the Dominion is currently. Who is it?”

“The leader of the Dominion? There is not a single person who runs the Dominion as it is run by the Chiefs of the Five Tribes.”

“According to the information, there is a leader of the Tenebris faith that governs the Dominion’s religion. Which of the Chiefs fulfills that role?”

“None of them do as that would be too much power and authority for one person to have in a nation ruled by religion.”

“I ask because it stated in their history that when the Dominion was formed, the nation or its leaders would answer to the representative of the faith. That means the Chiefs answer to a person of the faith. So, I ask again: who is that?”

Shea had a puzzled expression on her face at what Drew had mentioned.

“Give me one moment,” Shea said as she turned to research on her terminal at her end.

As Shea researched, Drew looked over the information on the Dominion’s history at his terminal on his end to see if he missed the name. However, the fact that Shea did not readily know the name made him wonder if this position in the Dominion faith was overlooked by Federation political analysts because it related to religion and not politics. Shea was looking frantically on her end.

“I see where it states that the Chiefs would answer to a representative of the faith,” she said, sounding defeated, “but there is no mention of that person’s name in the records we were provided. How was this overlooked this entire time?”

“That may be a good reason for me to wait till our other team returns from the Dominion capital. Hopefully they will have the answer to that question for us. In the meantime, I would like for my team that is in your nation to return for debriefing. I will have them leave a Republic communications relay for you to use for us to remain in contact with your nation.”

“Supreme Chancellor,” Amarria said from off-screen.

The view from the other end was rotated physically and was facing Amarria. It appeared that she was the one that turned the view around.

“I would like to stay and learn more about the Federation and its culture,” Amarria said.

“You want to stay there?” Drew asked. “Are you sure? Their customs will be different from ours and you would be easily identified as an outsider until official announcements are made in both nations. What would we tell your parents and your employer?”

“Both of my parents and my employer are expecting me back in over two weeks. Once the Federation is officially announced, you can inform them where I am at and they should be able to understand why I am here. This isn’t permanent, but two weeks would be enough for me to fully research the Federation.”

“You do realize it will take more than four weeks before the *Templar* or the *Cavalier*, depending on who is available, will be able to return on their own power, right?”

“I am. Hopefully, if things go well, more direct conduits between nations could be established.”

“We can only hope so. I just wanted to make sure you understood and hopefully they understand as well.”

“Supreme Chancellor?” a female voice unknown to Drew said off-screen.

A woman wearing a religious attire in black with purple and gold accents appeared behind Amarria. Drew read about the two leaders of the Draco National Faith and could only surmise that this woman was High Bishop Kait according to the documentation.

“High Bishop Kait, I assume?” Drew asked.

“Yes, Supreme Chancellor,” Kait said. *“If it is alright with you, I would like to take Amarria’s place on your ship’s return trip to your capital.”*

“For what purpose?”

“I would like to represent the Federation when you speak to your Senate and your Supreme Court. I figured that the best person to speak about the Federation is someone who was born and raised in the Federation. Miss Amarria would be the voice or the representative for the Republic when the Federation makes its announcement to its citizens. In her case, who better to explain the events in the Republic than a historian from the Central Library in Luminous?”

“You make a valid point. If you and Amarria understand the requests you both have made and are prepared for the consequences that come with those requests, both good and bad, then I will accept your requests. Amarria, be mindful of the customs and cultures of the Federation. You don’t want to make it apparent you are an ‘outsider’ while you’re staying there until any official announcements are made.”

“There are some Federation citizens who are already aware that people from the Republic are here at their capital,” Amarria said. *“What about those people?”*

“Let me deal with that,” Shea said off-screen. *“I will make it clear to those involved not to speak of this matter to anyone else to prevent panic until our official announce involving our contact with the Republic.”*

“If there is no other matters to discuss, I will inform Captain Tora to prepare to depart the system once Blair and High Bishop Kait are ready to depart. Blair will instructor her about how to get aboard the stealth shuttle since I’m sure we don’t need the general population seeing the shuttle without an explanation. Colonel Blair, please inform the pilot about the change of who is returning with you so that they are not surprised about seeing someone else other than Amarria joining you.”

“Yes, sir,” Blair said off-screen.

“Amarria, please give Blair the tablet with the Federation’s complete history on it. Since you will be there for a while, you will have a chance to read over their history in greater detail. The question I have now will be your accommodations.”

“We will accommodate her during her time here,” Shea said off-screen. *“Since she does not have local currency, we will provide for her food and a place to sleep. She will have access to the Grand Library, but anywhere else she goes will require an escort.”*

“We will provide the same hospitality to High Bishop Kait upon her arrival.”

“Thank you to you both,” Amarria said. “I’ll try to stay out of trouble while I am here.”

“I wish to thank you as well,” Kait said. “I will inform our congregation that I will be on a retreat for enlightenment and will be gone for a long time. It is still the truth, but I will not tell them where I will be going.”

“Your attire may be the only issue while you are here. There are no religions with the same attire. The Great Maker faith is close to the attire worn but the colors are the only issue. We will have to find a way for you to get around while you are here.”

“I understand,” Kait said. “I only need thirty minutes once we dismiss to get my affairs in order here before leaving. I only need a couple of things and I will be ready to depart.”

“Alright. It seems things are in order, then. Kait and Blair, I look forward to your arrival. Amarria, be safe and keep a low profile while you are there. President Shea, I will be in touch once I explain things to the Senate and the Courts along with their decision. I wish you all a good night.”

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*President’s Office, Federation Capital Tower, City of Sanctus Draco
Planet Propitius Esto, Capital of Draco Federation, Draconia System, Western Region
9:22pm, October 18, 5434 A.D.*

“Good night, Supreme Chancellor.”

After Shea gave her farewell for the night to Drew, she could hear the communications line on Amarria’s tablet that was used for the call disconnected, indicating the call was done. Amarria grabbed the tablet, retracted the kickstand used to hold the tablet upright, and gave the device to Blair.

“Make sure that both the Supreme Chancellor and the RCIA Head Agent review the Federation’s entire history,” Amarria said. “I know a great deal of the Republic’s history to give everyone here in detail if needed.”

“Understood,” Blair said as he grabbed the tablet. “I wish you good health.”

Blair got up from his seat and turned towards Kait.

“I’m going to contact the pilot who is waiting on us shortly,” he said. “I will wait in front of the Grand Library for you, most likely with a law enforcement escort. The shuttle is two blocks west and cloaked. I will have to direct you on how to enter the craft.”

“Very well,” Kait said, “I will meet you there.”

“Amarria,” Shea said, “if you can wait out in the receptionist’s area, I will message her to make the necessary accommodations for you stay. Is there any other business that needs to be discussed?”

“I have something to discuss with you,” Tara said, “but it is in private.”

Everyone in the room looked in Tara’s direction with puzzled expressions on their faces except Shea. Shea was curious why Tara wanted to talk to her in private, but Shea didn’t show it.

“Very well,” Shea said. “Everyone except for Tara is dismissed. I’ll message the receptionist real quick concerning Amarria’s accommodations.”

Everyone in the room except Tara got up and headed out of the room as Shea quickly typed a message on her terminal to the receptionist to take care of Amarria’s accommodations and privileges while she was here. Shea sent the message as the doors closed after everyone else left.

Shea turned to Tara, curious to know what she wanted to talk about.

“So, what did you want to talk about?” Shea asked.

“You do realize you almost exposed a very important secret a moment ago to the Supreme Chancellor of the Republic, right?” Tara asked.

Shea took a deep breath.

“I know,” Shea said. “Despite the fact that this is finally our chance to get official recognition by the Republic and possibly get support from them against the Dominion, the last thing we need is for them to discover what we found in the Northwest Region. This is a delicate time for the Federation and the Republic does not need to know what we found yet.”

“The thing I find odd is why the Republic hasn’t discovered that nation yet? The only reason we knew something was in that region was due to the transmissions we were getting, as faint as they were. It was thanks to the Portal Drive that we salvaged from the Dominion that we were finally able to investigate what was out there due to the sparse number of stars and their distance from one another. It could be that the Republic can’t jump out there due to the large expanse between them and that region.”

“They would have still detected the transmissions nonetheless. Do you think there is some form of natural interference in that expanse that has never been explored or discovered?”

“Maybe but that expanse is just as far away as that nation we discovered, and we cannot risk one of our dreadnoughts or supercarriers jumping into the unknown that may result in their destruction if it is a cosmic event.”

“Very well. We’ll put the speculations on that matter to the side for now. Did you have any other questions or concerns?”

“Besides the lack of knowledge of the Republic’s military and weapons capabilities? They know ours as they have seen them in action in Miranda, and I highly doubt the Republic Navy consists of stealth vessels like the one in orbit over our planet.”

“I’m not surprised about your concerns on that matter, but we’ll find out eventually.”

“I only have one more thing on my mind. Are you thinking about using the Portal Drive design we salvaged as a bargaining chip to get official recognition from the Republic?”

“I have thought about it, and if it helps us get officially recognized by the Republic and the other known galactic powers in the star cluster, I will use it as such.”

Tara took a deep breath.

“There are times I don’t understand politics,” Tara said, “but if that’s how we secure the Federation’s future and get help in defeating the Dominion, then so be it.”

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*Admiral Trent’s Quarters, R.N.S. Marshal, Paladin-Class Battleship
Ruber IV Station, Planet Ruber IV Orbit, Ruber System, Novus Initium Republic
9:53pm, October 18, 5434 A.D.*

“So, that was what she decided to do, huh?”

Trent was unwinding for the evening in his quarters after a rather dull day patrolling the Ruber System. He had already taken off his uniform coat and boots but left the rest of his uniform attire on in case of emergency. As he was relaxing watching comedy programs on one of the civilian channels, he got a call from Supreme Chancellor Drew. It was a joint call that included Trent’s wife Laura. Drew had proceeded to tell them that the *Templar’s* ground team, namely Amarria and Blair, had been exposed and detained by Federation law enforcement.

However, Amarria's backup plan of telling their law enforcement the truth of who they were and why they were in the Federation kept them from being put into jail as supposed spies for the Dominion. He then told them that Amarria had requested to see the Federation President, and from there was able to establish communications between the President and the Supreme Chancellor after Drew got the preliminary history report on the Federation. Drew gave Trent and Laura the short version of that history before telling them that Amarria volunteered to stay behind to research their nation further.

Laura was understandably more upset in Amarria's decision, and Trent could understand why. However, Trent knew why Amarria made that decision and could respect her reasons why.

"That is correct," Drew said. "It appears you know about her reasons than I would as to why she remained at the Federation capital."

"She always loved to read about history," Trent said. "That was the reason she wanted to study in that field and became employed at the Central Library. In the Federation, there is over six hundred years of unknown history for her to read through. I can understand her excitement to stay behind and read all of it."

"She could have done that on the way back from their capital on the tablet she had stored it on," Laura said. "She didn't have to stay behind for that purpose!"

"I think she wanted us to have a reason to go back to the Federation capital. She must have determined that she was safe there and that she would be treated fairly. If anything, I feel better knowing that she wanted to stay at the Federation capital compared to the Dominion capital from what you have told us. She can eat actual food there versus having to ingest blood by comparison."

"Ugh, don't make me think about that. The thought that the Dominion does that disgusts me. You realize that when the other ship returns from the Dominion and I have to do the report, we have to use a parental advisory warning due to the nature of the content, right?"

"I am aware of that fact," Drew said. "However, the Republic along with the other known nations need to be aware of what we are going to deal with in the near future involving the Dominion and our relations with the Federation."

"As much as I wish we didn't have to inform any of the other nations about this 'mistake' in our nation's history, the Dominion and the Federation cannot be overlooked by any of us now. Do we know if either nation was responsible for what happened to the Lykan king four hundred years ago and the Executive Council almost seven months ago?"

"Oh, that's right. I asked President Shea directly concerning that matter and she told me truthfully and honestly that neither the Dominion nor the Federation have the means to use a specialized form of EM radiation for controlling minds."

"And you believe her?" Laura asked with a skeptical look on her face.

"I do. The Federation is a nation built on faith. Their history has shown that they have always told the truth. They told the truth about their history to all three of the alien races they have encountered, and they told the truth about why they and the rest of the Tenebris cult separated from each other, knowing that they could end up fighting each other. The Federation has nothing to gain by lying to us and the fact that they are on the opposite side of the star cluster from the Lykans and the State does make their possible involvement with those nations very unlikely."

"Even if the Dominion has the Portal Drive?"

"Even with the Portal drive, in hindsight, the fact that the Dominion and the Federation reside in the opposite direction of where the Lykans and the State are should have been our first

indicator that these nations could not have been involved with any form of mind manipulation with those nations' leaders. Add to the fact that neither of those nations didn't even know that the Lykans or any of the State's member races exist, and it is becoming increasingly apparent that we are blaming those two nations for something they could not possibly do. While the information on the Tenebris cult and the subsequent discovery of the Dominion and the Federation are both important on various levels, the fact is that we are back to square one as to who was involved with those mind manipulation cases. The President only had a hunch that it could involve someone or some race in the inaccessible Southern Region, but without proof, we may never know if that is really the case or not."

"Speculations are something we don't need, but if the Dominion and the Federation were not involved with those mind manipulation cases, this is a problem. However, that is the least of our concerns currently."

"What do you mean?" Laura asked.

"We now have in front of us two nations: The Federation that does not harbor hostilities towards us and is asking for official recognition, and the Dominion who still appears to continue using blood but as a source of sustenance while disregarding select Human rights by using clones as livestock to harvest said blood. If we get involved with their war, it may end up being bigger than the First Interstellar War and possibly be more devastating. We are talking about a war between Humans again, the very reason the Republic Charter was created to prevent such a scenario. Considering this, I've begun to wonder if there is someone manipulating events involving most if not all of the nations in the star cluster."

"Are you suggesting that Doctor Armani Draco all those centuries ago could have been manipulated just like the Lykan king and the Executive Council?" Drew asked.

"If he was, then someone wants to have us at each other's throats. If we make official contact with the Dominion, we need to proceed carefully and peacefully. I know that such a thing may be hard if not near impossible once the rest of the Republic finds out, but I suggest we try the diplomatic way and prevent another war from happening as much as possible. This way, whoever it is that is manipulating those involved won't get their way."

"Can Armani's remains be exanimated to determine if he was manipulated as well?" Laura asked.

"I don't think so," Drew said. *"The colony that is there now has been there for a long time but there are no records of bodies buried at that location. Either they cremated him or they preserved his body after he passed. There is no way to know for sure and as far as I know, the Federation doesn't have any records on the matter either for obvious reasons. I won't know till I get the full Federation history report from the Templar and there is still the report from the Cavalier from their investigation into the Dominion. We will see what those ships have to report once they return and I will let you know at that time."*

"I just hope we find out something soon. The fact that we don't know who is responsible for the mind manipulations is starting to bother me. Whoever is toying with us is doing so for some unforeseen reason and it needs to be stopped. Whoever it is, the sooner we deal with them, the better and safer everyone in the star cluster will be."

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To be continued...
END OF EPISODE VI