Chapter 145

I was trapped in my body.  Even my vision felt obscured.  I could not control where I looked.  I heard my voice request to shackle Rae’Ver and escort him to my ship.  I was screaming no as loudly as I could in my mind, and the invading presence in my mind was slowly laughing at me.  He was very compliant with the guards as they prepared him for transport.  The guard asked me if he should bring the female, Sha’Lua, in the adjacent cell.

My body paused as it stared at the elf woman.  It then voiced that maybe later if Rae’Ver was useful.  We walked to the shuttle, and I fought for control, but the harder I fought, the tighter Rae’Ver’s authority over me became.  I was not going to give in.  We boarded the shuttle, and Rae’Ver sat across from me, a slight smile on his face—all the technology I had, and I was done in by mind control.

The shuttle lifted off to take us to my ship orbiting the asteroid.  My PerCom beeped with numerous requests, and my body moved to look at it.  Rae’Ver controlled the PerCom and dug deep into my mind to respond to the three alerts.  I laughed at him.  He was taking a few long minutes to respond to each request.  I got over a hundred submissions daily that needed to be responded to.  It took me a few seconds for each, which still annoyed me.  At this rate, Rae’Ver would take his entire day to respond to requests.

He was going through my contacts now.  And he was setting up a filtering system.  The filtering system was auto-forwarding the requests to a person with the skills to handle the issue. He was delegating many of my daily decisions to others.  I was slightly angry at how easily he was not doing my job.  Zoe from the cockpit said we were being diverted to mining station Gamma-Six.  There was a ship in the outer system, and it might be the Brotherhood returning.  Rae’Ver used my body to use my PerCom to look at the system’s navigation data.  There was a ship out there.  A cruiser, and it had already been boarded hours ago.

Across from me, I could see and feel Rae’Ver growing angry.  He started to flick through my PerCom and was studying the scans from the alien sensor device.  He was shocked at first by the amount of detail and then smug in knowing the technology would be his soon.  I could tell he planned to squeeze everything valuable he could out of the technology I had compiled over the last few years. I was still just a passenger in my body and hoped Celeste would be safe from whatever happened next.

Zoe radioed from the cabin that an inspection was due for the ore pulverizers.  I also had to meet with Suruchi in the habitat for the miners.  I was confused.  Why was Suruchi on an asteroid?  I have never inspected an ore pulverizer before, either.  We landed, and my body indicated to my guards that Rae’Ver was coming.  We descended the ramp, and everything went white.

I woke strapped to a table with Edmund standing over me.  His eyes narrowed as he asked someone behind him if I was still under the influence of the space elf.  An unfamiliar female voice said a thread still controlled me, but she could cut it.  A negotiation ensued between Edmund and the woman.  Finally, the woman agreed to free me for her freedom, but Edmund would not let her leave the system.  I felt a pressure in the back of my mind build to a crescendo and then abruptly end.  It was like being trapped inside a foggy room and suddenly being outside under the sun.

The woman announced it was done, and Edmund released my restraints.  I sat up, and the truth of the situation was revealed to me.

Rae’Ver had taken over the Brotherhood fleet.  He was directing it, and this woman was Desdemona Rouse, a Brotherhood Diamond agent.  She had been influenced by Rae’Ver but developed resistance to his mind control.  She had been exiled from the Brotherhood by his machinations and returned to the system to get revenge on the First Citizen elf to find us in the system setting up defenses.  She was spying on us when Julie detected her attempts and traced them to her ship.  The fast-response teams quickly engaged and took her ship. She scowled at how nonchalant Edmund showed the effort of taking her ship was to him.

After being captured, Desdemona revealed Rae’Ver’s power of mind control, and they set up a safe area on an asteroid where we would both be stunned so I could be separated from him. The plan worked. I asked about Rae’Ver now.  Edmund said he was sedated and under guard by security bots.  No one was allowed within 100 meters of him.  Desdemona said the range of his mind influence ability was about ten meters, but once he had established a foothold, he could establish a connection at a much greater range.

I left to rest, but with the connection severed, I was now safe.  I was kept under observation for a week by Doc before being allowed to actually return to work and see Celeste.  First, I had to determine what to do with Desdemona and her crew. One particular man drew my attention.  Lazurus.  Dread Pirate Acton.  How he managed to end up with Desdemona was a story for another time.  He was Amos’ father but also a very dangerous man.  Even though he worked for Desdemona, she did not care what happened to him.  I sent him to the same prison asteroid as Rae’Ver.  He would be attended to by bots like Rae’Ver.  They would be the only two beings left on the asteroid, as everyone else was going to the planet as planned.  When Amos was old enough, I would introduce him to his father.  Unfortunately, under interrogation, Lazarus said Samantha had been killed in the Sapphire Empire.

The rest of Desdemona’s crew was not from the Brotherhood but an amalgamation of people she hired at Silver Stream Station.  Edmund and Francis would vet the crew, and they could enlist in the Squirrel fleet if they wanted to.  They could not leave the Bradbury system until we felt secure in our defenses, though.

Desdemona was another problem for me.  She had powers like Rae’Ver, so I considered her a threat.  But she also saved me and might be a good ally if the space elves found us—when they found us.  Almost two months after the incident, I sat down to talk with her.  She was the most intimidating person I had ever met. She radiated confidence and commanded the room.  I had Eve behind me and four other guards in Gecko suits nearby.

I started the conversation by asking for her help. She had been treated well since we captured her, so I hoped she would assist us.  Firstly, I wanted to use her ability to find a material to shield minds from the space elves mind-controlling ability.  Even if the ability was only limited to the First Citizens of their race, it was still too dangerous.  She agreed to that readily.

The second thing I wanted was for her to train Edmund as a Diamond Agent. We were going to confront the Brotherhood again, and I wanted to be better prepared with how they thought.  I couldn’t trust Desdemona when that situation arose, but I could trust Edmund.  I also had to make plans on how we would deal with the Godfather organization in human-controlled space and beyond. Even though JJ’s contribution to the battle was outstanding, he was confined to quarters.  He was too loyal to his organization.  I planned to use him as an intermediary, but for now, he was just Zoe’s husband and the father of their child.

Then Desdemona burst my bubble.  Everything that Rae’Ver had told me about the Malevalants while he was dominating my mind was true. I had to go back to the video and watch it over and over again. Planet-sized ships erased entire civilizations and enslaved a token amount of the species to breed and toy with inside their ships as they traveled.  It was a threat beyond the Brotherhood and other violent alien species we had encountered. The ships were on a mission for galactic genocide for life.

After talking with Desdemona and learning about the visions she observed in Rae’Ver’s mind when they were connected, I needed to rethink priorities. I needed help with it, so I brought in the people I trusted—Abby, Edmund, Suruchi, and Damian.  They all agreed we had the technology to maybe defeat something of the magnitude of the Malevanents.  We just needed to to turn it into viable weapons to do so.

Edmund suggested we copy the Brotherhood.  Establish a centralized research in the Bradbury system to develop the technology to combat the threat.  Instead of relying only on humans, we recruit the brightest minds from all races.  There was still a lot of technology we had not explored or maximized.

After that meeting, we met with the Squirrel.  They still held me and the Void Phoenix in god-like status.  I was essentially the savior of their race.  I found the Void Phoenix silhouette was now their Marines’ emblem.  They were more than willing to do whatever was asked of them to help the cause.  Doc said it was mostly due to their genetic predisposition to following a patriarchal leader, which was the role I was filling as their savior.

With the Squirrel on board, we began to make our grand plans.  We would start by sending out loyal ship crews to recruit the best minds within the nearest five hundred light years.  We would build a navy from scratch, incorporating the best technology we had on hand.   Finally, Suruchi would establish the planet in the Bradbury system as a place welcoming to all races. That last one seemed impossible.  Lofty goals for an engineer from a Persia IV harvester.