Chapter 160

The Bradbury system had suddenly become highly overcrowded based on our available resources.  The city of Arcadian was overrun with a dozen new species of aliens and Tirani.  We could not feed the influx of population, much less house them.  And we would get one hundred thousand new arrivals every four weeks.  We needed people, but they also needed them to be productive and contribute.

My Tirani merchants had just settled into their new accommodations and were just starting to cultivate the purple grass in new agricultural domes.  The luxury good was to be shipped back to Tirani worlds for massive profits.  The Tirani merchants were slightly selfish, as they were not willing to give up any space to the refugees.

Suruchi wanted resources from the Tirani transports to expand the city of Arcadian and was seeking help from the other cities on the planet.  She had a loose senate on the planet represented by leaders of each independent city.  Bradbury was a planet of individual populations that was only beginning to work together as a government guided by Suruchi.

To this point, we had not taken anything from the alien races that had inhabited the planet before we arrived.  They had been trapped in the subspace shadow, survived for thousands of years, and not killed each other.  The land we had bartered for to construct the city of Arcadian was a massive jungle plateau that was inhospitable.  We had created massive domes for food production in a circular pattern.  The enormous city of Arcadian was in the center of the agricultural domes and served as our university for training scientists and engineers.  We simply did not have the space in the Acrcadian dome for so many new arrivals.

At least some of the independent cities on the planet volunteered to host our guests.  A few refugees were even distantly related.  There was some genetic drift, but not enough to prevent reproduction—at least according to our scientists.  That was only a small fraction of the nearly half-a-million rescued population coming to Bradbury.

The human Federation had taken all the freed humans and would take another million with their colony stasis ships.  I think their plan was to allow the aliens to colonize a planet within their controlled space.  We were left with half a million, but the Federation had promised to help with resources to support our portion of the refugees.  We found a few dozen Tirani and a few hundred Squirrel in the mix.  They were immediately adopted into families on the planet and our asteroid bases.  But that still left hundreds of thousands of aliens.

Our goal was to return those refugees home as we could and establish diplomatic relations.  This was going to be a monumental task and meant we needed to transport thousands of beings across vast distances.  The quadrupeds usually committed genocide on the planets they conquered.  So it was taking some research to find out if there was somewhere to return them.

Suruchi was working on updating the language translator.  Of the eighteen species rescued, we had five unknown races with small populations of under two hundred, probably from captured interstellar starships.  Each of these groups needed to have their languages cataloged. The good news was all the various races breathed an atmosphere similar to humans.  We assumed taking captive races that could not work in the same environment was too difficult.

I had ordered hundreds of thousands of metric tons of raw materials from the Tirani to build cruisers and munitions for the navy.  Those materials were being funneled into building additional satellite habitation domes around Arcadian and rushing to complete the agricultural domes to sustain our refugees.  Our Marines in training were also being used as our ad hoc police force as my brother Silas’ forces could not manage the rapid population surge.

Astrophysicists were trying to locate population centers of these races so we could return them home.  That was why we were burdened with many alien races instead of the Human Federation.  We had much faster ships to return them. The problem was we did not have the capacity.  We decided to convert six medium transports under construction to passenger ships.  It meant adding significant life support and systems to destroy the advanced subspace drives if captured.  We could not risk our technology getting out.  But making contact with new races and establishing diplomatic channels was important to our ultimate goal of being able to fight the Malevolents.

The new passenger liners were scaled for nine hundred beings and had larger fuel tanks for trips of twenty days in subspace.  The life support systems were also adaptable to accommodate a range of gas-breathing species.  They would still take months to finish, but it gave us a method to return home many of the aliens.

We were also trying to recruit the brightest minds from these refugees.  We needed technicians, scientists, engineers, fleet officers, and Marines.  This brought Desdemona to my office again for another argument.  She was concerned about our technology edge eroding too fast over time.  If we trained a subspace scientist and they fled with their knowledge, we would essentially be handing them our technology.  She was also still angry with me for my deal with Admiral LaRoche.  I had promised to supply him with twelve Fateweaver-class cruisers.  Most of the crew would be from Bradbury, but that did not alleviate her concerns.

Desdemona thought it would be better to have the crew one hundred percent from Bradbury and then just loan the squadron to be commanded by Admiral LaRoche.  The problem was with our high standards, I was not sure we would be able to crew twelve additional cruisers. Admiral LaRoche was sending five hundred of his top men and women to train in just over a year’s time. I had promised him the first pair of cruisers in five years to let the Human Federation officers be immersed in our training for four years. Desdemona was not happy and left my office.

My only firewall was Edmond’s network of spies and Julie’s oversight.  They tracked every person in the system.  Edmond actually enjoyed the challenge with the influx of aliens and now the Federation trainees coming.  It kept him on his toes and prepared him to be more effective in countering the Brotherhood when they found us.

In order to get the brightest minds from the refugees to stay, we needed to tempt them with our technology by training them.  So, how were we going to expose and train so many aliens?  Full immersion VR.  This meant adapting neural links to all the species’ different physiology.  If they passed and earned enough certifications, they could become Arcadia citizens and hopefully enroll in our Naval Academy.

My other headache was Mozzie’s new clan, Chaotica.  He had spent almost every Tirani credit I had earned from the purple grass.  Even though I was extremely angry with Mozzie and Luna, I listened to them and let them explain.  Luna explained all the money I had earned was being held in an account and not circulating in the Tirani economy.  Their economy was slowly nose-diving so Luna ran a simulation, and the best way to help was to spend all the credits.  The Tirani credits would accumulate again over time as almost every Tirani used the grass.

Mozzie took over and explained how he had so many Tirani join his clan.  There were millions of clanless Tirani.  Many of them wanted to join a clan but were denied because they lacked a sponsor.  A sponsor needed to vouch for you to apply to a clan.  What Mozzie did was set up a series of physical challenges from his Marine training.  Any Tirani who passed and wanted to join his clan was welcome.  He had not expected such a turnout.  One hundred and twenty thousand!

He was devastated when I told him they could not be settled on the planet.  He told his clan then would be planet-bound.  He could negotiate with one of the independent cities to land his clan if he wanted to.  Otherwise, we would have to build him a massive space station to house everyone.  The good news was Mozzie did have ten thousand Tirani ready to enter the Marine Academy.  Of course, we could not accommodate ten thousand at this moment.

I was worried Mozzie’s clan might leave us if I could not make good on my promises.  Since all the ships he purchased were technically mine, I planned to scrap them and build his station from them.  Tirani spacecraft were robust but inferior, so they would not be integrated into our fleet.  This new station would serve a dual purpose.  It would be housing for his clan but also serve as our space marine training facility.  His clan would be responsible for maintaining the facility.

The Marine training facility on the planet in Arcadian could house twelve hundred Marines.  And we had one military station over Bradbury built from a Brotherhood battleship that could house another twelve hundred.  This new station was going to be designed for two hundred and fifty thousand.  It would take years to build, but as each stage was complete, we could add more and more people to it.

Every day was filled with more and more negotiations, approvals, and paperwork.  There were not enough hours in the day, and I was still worried about my daughter on the Void Phoenix.  Although upset with me for not consulting with her, Desdemona was focused on getting her fleet ready.  She was taking the newest finished cruiser, Nebula Hunter, and support ships to press the attack on the four quadruped systems.

The New Horizon returned before she left.  That cruiser had been responsible for tracking the probe Broderick sent.  The probe had transmitted, but they did not get the technology as the New Horizon sent a Slipstream fighter to destroy the probe.   The cruiser attempted to negotiate, but the two city ships in the system launched more than thirty War Chariots, their primary warship, in an attempt to capture them.

So the Sylvan knew where we were and that we had one of their First Citizens captive.  Hopefully, the Tirani delegation could open a line of communication.  The Sylvan were powerful and knew more about the Malevolents than any other race.  Desdemona did not want me to interact with them unless she was present, and I agreed.  Either it would be through vids or with some oversight.  It was a problem I would deal with when it arrived on my doorstep.  We were not helpless.

Desdemona took the New Horizon and Nebula Hunter with her when she left with the Excaliber. She also had seven resupply ships designed specifically to support the Fateweaver-class cruisers. They would join the Cloud Jumper and continue to dismantle the quadruped infrastructure. The next Fateweaver cruiser, the Indomitable, would be complete in one month. Until then, I was the primary defense cruiser in the Bradbury system.