

"Oh your finally awake, Billiam, came a familiar voice. "Let me update you on where we are with everything. Billiam was shouting as loud as he could to get Milton's attention, however, Milton was unable to hear him.

"I hope you're well rested because we're about to jump out of the frying pan and into the fire."

"I'm ready," he stated.

"Good, because I'm going to need that adventurous spirit of yours."

"Of course," Billiam's body replied.

"I'm not going to let you do what you're going to do! I'm gonna fight you at every turn."

How he was, he was not sure. How does one retake a body from a force one doesn't understand?

"The Revenant will be here in about an hour," Milton went on. "From what I can calculate, assuming she is getting accurate updates on the situation here...."

Milton went on with his plan of action.

"Why do you want to do this? I hate the Empire as much as anyone, but this is insane."

His questions remained unanswered.

"Come one Bill, we can do this! This isn't your first alien possession. Remember the Knifra? There's always a weakness."

With Knifra the weakness was distance. The further away you got from your controller the weaker the control. At least he had a crew who knew what was going on. Milton didn't have a clue. Besides, he'd travelled a dozen light years in the past few days. Distance was not a key issue.

"That's a risky plan," his body continued.

“We have no other choice,” Milton replied solemnly. “But this way we can rescue the Commander and stop the Empress from destroying the planet, if that is what she’s planning.”

“Well, at least the guy has come to his senses,” the real Billiam said. He knew that his only hope would be Milton to recognise his strange behaviour and to know what to do about it. He should have said something before he tried to communicate with his patrons, however, something told him that if he had tried they would have acted sooner. They, Milton called them Chaos, had been monitoring him the entire time, pushing him in the right direction. For what purpose? Surely, they had an agenda. Or was it just simply their namesake; CHAOS.

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“How certain are you of this plan?” Lilianna asked curiously.

“Do you really want to know that?” the Empress replied.

“Perhaps not,” she sighed. “You’ve based this on ancient legends and heresy. This is not going to go well.”

“Will you help me?” the Empress asked her. It was a difficult question for the Empress to ask, as was the answer for the Commander.

“Well, I don’t think I have much of a choice,” she lamented. “Even if there is a tiny chance you’re right we need to nip this in the bud before it blooms into an all out war.”

“If there is a war between our people it should be on our terms, not someone else’s.”

“Or perhaps we don’t have to go to war at all. There’s a crazy thought.”

“Perhaps, but that is a debate for another time, today we make sure we have that time to decide,” the Empress swore.

“Fair enough,” was Lilianna only response.

Chapter 23

And then all hell broke loose.

They say that a plan doesn't last when it makes contact with the enemy. That is the understatement of the Millenia.

Milton was correct about his calculations. The Revenant popped out of FTL where he expected it to be. As expected the militia ships responded by reorganising themselves to make an attack run on the Empress's ship. They had seen the footage. Their best hope would be destroy the ship, or at the very least the delivery system before they had a chance to launch. Which meant they weren't looking out for any unusual blips on their sensors. They would have been able to outrun them easily but why take the chance?

Milton's plan was to latch the ITU corvette onto the Command ship and cut a small access hole. From there he would disable the internal security system by bonding with the nearest computer terminal. He would access the location of the weapon and the Commander, at this time the Captain was to watch his back. Milton was immune to most weapons but the bonding process was a lot easier if there wasn't someone shooting at you. When they learned the locations, the Captain would go to rescue the commander while Milton disabled the system. He knew that the weapon was on the scout ship Widow Maker and he suspected that this particular system would be an independent system to prevent accessing it remotely. Most weapons of mass destruction worked that way. You wouldn't want someone to randomly hack the most powerful weapon in existence. He would have to go there himself in order to disable the system manually.

If all had gone to plan, they would have met up back at the access port and spirit away, letting them fight the old fashion way. There was no need to interfere with Empire internal politics more than they had to.

As for the Empress's plan, it was a total bluff. She had no means of destroying the planet, even if she wanted to. The Widow Maker had used up all the particle in the demonstration. She was hoping two things would happen. First would be to have the rebels capitulate. She was hoping that the awesome and terrible display would be enough of a warning to those who opposed her. As was seen by her entry in T'Vi'Shion, that was not the case. The second was to attract the attention of the parties behind the scene; Order and Chaos.

Now that the Empress had become defacto ruler of the Empire she had access to certain information. When the ship recognised the symbol on the ship they attacked, a top priority warning came up on her personal console. Apparently, the forces of Chaos and Order were key in the creation of the Empire, however it warned of the dangers of getting in between their battles, otherwise it would mean the destruction of all that they built. The Empress had little time to formulate a plan. The best she could come up with was to expose them to the galaxy. Was this a good plan? She wasn't sure, but it was better than getting in between the battle of order and chaos. All the science fiction stories told that you never get involved with ancient societies and their issues.

She hoped that both parties heard the message. The Order would come to stop her chaotic plan and Chaos would come over to stop them from stopping her. That was the plan in any case. Unfortunately, as stated earlier, no plan survives first contact with the enemy.

This is what actually happened.

Chapter 24

“We’re entering the T’Vi’Shion system. Scanners detect multiple ships in the region,” the Operations officer communicated.

“Which ships are friendly?” the Empress asked, knowing the answer already.

“We have no way of knowing, your eminence. Best guess is if they don’t shoot at us, they’re friendly, if they do, they’re not.”

“Well, that’s good to know,” she murmured. “Time to get this show on the road. Comm open up a communications channel to every ship and outpost that is willing to listen.”

“Online, your eminence.”

“To all Empire ships in the region, this is Your Empress speaking. Show me your loyalty and you will be rewarded. This Chaos has gone on long enough. It is time for Order.”

She gestured to end the hail.

“If they respond let me know, I doubt they will. Ahead until we’ve reached the fifth planet in the system. We’ll pause there and find out what their next move is. I’m not going in there guns blazing. Let’s give them a chance to surrender. The fewer ships destroyed, the stronger we will be in the future.”

That's what she told her crew. From their demeanour it seemed like a logical idea, albeit one that seemed a bit out of place for an Emperor or in this case Empress, however, these were unusual times.

"Inform the Widow Maker to wait outside the system. We'll feed them coordinates we need them."

The crew was on alert but focused on their task. If she could show it, she'd show pride. But there was also a bit of shame as well, as she could be leading them into a trap.

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Milton detected the ship heading towards the fifth planet and made a break for it. At high velocities it was more difficult for the camouflage systems to work effectively. Space travel left energy signatures, most could be mistaken for background radiation but if you detected a pattern speeding in a straight line, chances are it was a ship. Thankfully, everyone was preoccupied with the matter at hand.

"I don't see the Widow Maker," Milton pointed out to Billiam. "Perhaps, they're keeping it out of the system until it's absolutely required. Why bring your Trump card early?"

"Will that be a problem?" Billiam asked.

"A little, but perhaps it's a blessing in disguise. We have more time to get the Commander. Perhaps we can stop it from escalating it any further. This is my fault, I should fix it."

"I thought you said that this is an internal Empire matter?"

"It is but, I'm responsible for getting this started. If I hadn't killed the Emperor and the heir this wouldn't have happened. Even if it was an accident..."

"Yes, it was an accident as you said. You are not responsible for how they reacted to the news. Chaos happens."

That gave Milton pause. "Yes, it does," he said hesitantly. "The Empire was unstable," he added.

“Yes, if this is their reaction to an event they deserve to collapse. They’ve been the thorn to the Planetary Collective’s side for too long.”

Milton paused the ship. “Why are you back?!” he commanded.

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“A squadron of fighters are closing in, given that they have weapons charged. I don’t think they are friendly,” the comm officer reported. “We’ve also not heard from any other ships in the area.”

“How is that possible? There’s no way that the cruisers here were that easily defeated by a Militia group. How did they mobilise so quickly?” She paused. “Are there any other ships in the area?”

“Checking, there’s a lot of interference in the system.”

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