

Chapter 24

Mistress Second had many brothers and sisters, however, most of them were from his father's dalliances with members of his staff and women of the evening. None of them were entitled to heir's of the throne as they weren't the union between the Emperor and his Empress, Master Prime and Mistress Se'Cond's mother; except for one; Master Tri'fek.

Se'Cond wasn't like her older and younger brothers. They seemed to be more focused on their creative and intellectual pursuits than learning the art of combat and strategy. She would always be able to kick their butts in combat training, however it always hurt to see her father praise their efforts and call them the future leaders of the Empire. It didn't seem fair. The Empire was a civilisation that praised strength, cunning and ruthless leadership. She was everything her society wanted from her, except one thing. She was a girl.

The humans of the Empire were taken from Earth for over a Millennium and were mostly used as slave labour across a dozen star systems. When their descendants freed themselves from oppression they united and became the Empire. They needed to look and sound strong so they wouldn't be used as alien slave labour again. Many had challenged it saying they would just become like their oppressors, however, the old human dividers returned. Those who had been descended from privilege wanted it restored and restore they did, at a very high cost.

Unfortunately, they didn't have the same social progress their cousins back on Earth had such as the Women's suffrage, racial and LGBTQIA+ equality movements. It took a very long time for them to stick but eventually, as they went to the stars humans from Earth were diverse but equal. The Empire never had that opportunity so for Mistress Se'Cond, no matter her efforts, in her father's eyes she would always be a mistress, never to rule.

Most of her time on T'Vi'Shion was waddling in mediocrity. Her brother's attended all the important meetings and ceremonies while she had to stay with the governess in the family wing of the estate. When she grew older, she was allowed to attend special functions as long as she was properly attired.

"Why do I have to wear this monstrosity?"

She was standing on a stool as the governess and sewing maids were adjusting the hem of her red and gold formal dress.

"You know very well, now be a good lady of the Empire and do as you are told. Stand up straight and close your mouth," the governess ordered.

She gave a teenage huff, but did as she was told. This was the first time she would attend a formal Empire function and she be damned if she was going to miss it, even if it meant wearing the most uncomfortable outfit she had ever worn.

“Your parent’s will be pleased to see what progress you have made in becoming a lady of the court. So, let’s not have a repeat of what happened last time they came here.”

“I just hope they’ll take me off this stinking planet. I need to be on Phoenix, I need to be with the council.”

“Political matters are not for ladies!” the governess replied. “Ad don’t roll your eyes at me. You need to learn your place.”

At that moment the crimson door busted open and a young private in a very dishevelled formal uniform ran in “Connie, your parents have landed.”

“Private, Lee’dur!” the Governess screeched. “How dare you enter the Mistress’s room without announcing your presence! And I’ve informed you many times that it’s inappropriate for a junior member of the royal guard to refer to a member of the royal family so colloquially.”

“Forgive me, governess. I meant no disrespect.” He bowed his head.

Se’Cond could see him blushing. “Of course you didn’t, private. Thank you for informing me of the news.”

“And you stop encouraging him young lady. It’s inappropriate to be affectionate towards your royal guards!”

It was Se’Cond turn to blush. “I wasn’t being affectionate. I was thanking him for his service.”

“His service is not to be thanked. His service is his duty and thanking him is a sign of weakness!”

“Sorry,” she apologised.

“And so is apologising!”

The two young adults stood there silently as they were berated by the governess for their inappropriate behaviour.

“I suggest you leave, Private. We will wait for the Emperors official messenger to retrieve us.”

The private turned around and started to shuffle out of the room.

“If you do this again, I’ll have to report this to your commanding officer. I don’t think you want to be put on on guard duty in the mines!”

Se’Cond knew that was an empty threat. She knew the Governess didn’t have the power to decided where soldiers were assigned and the Commander of the guard would never listen to a lowly governess.

He closed the door behind him.

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“Mistress, would you like anything to drink?” the Pilantian server asked. Their green skin contrasted with the red attire.

Se’Cond didn’t hear her. She was lost in thought about what her mother had asked of her. The gentleman next to her grabbed the two drinks that were on the tray.”

“But, sir these are for...”

“Don’t you dare talk to me in that tone,” boomed the Gentleman. “You don’t tell me what I can or can’t do.”

The Pilantian server bowed her head as a symbol of her humblest apologies. They waited for the order to dismiss.

“Here you go my lady, a drink,” he said politely as he waved the server off.

This was to be her husband in a few weeks, the son of the Governor of Pilantia, one of the original planets conquered in the human slave rebellion. Their family had a lot of power and influence over the Empire and the Emperor wanted to keep the governor in favour. This was the only reason why her parents came, the only reason why she was invited to this function with the council and military elite. She was to be married.

“My lady, your drink!” her husband to be ordered.

“Oh yes, thank you,” she said off-handedly.

She took an absent-minded sip.

“This isn’t you.”

“Who said that,” she replied.

She looked over her husband to be. He was too busy talking to the officer next to him. She looked over at the absent seat next to her.

“You’re the Mistress of the Empire. You not one to be married off!”

She looked around. No one appeared to be noticing her distress. She could see her older brother schmoozing with a group of high ranking military officials. Her younger brother was sitting by the Governess making sure he was on his best behaviour. Her parents were absent as always.

“You were born to rule, your eminence. You know that.”

Was the voice real, or was this coming from inside her? She wasn’t sure, but something about what it was saying felt right.

"You're not going to get your power here. The people here don't care about anything but themselves. But you? You care about the people of the Empire. You must win the people, they are your true power."

"How do I do that?" she asked into the abyss.

"Do what, my love?"

"Nothing," she bowed her head.

Her husband to be rolled his eyes and continued chatting to the person next to him.

"The people of the Empire respect power and strength. You must go to the source of it's power."

As 'she' thought this, she was looking straight at private Lee'dur who was standing guard at the entrance. She knew he too came from a well to do family, but decided to join the military to honour his grandfather a famous general of his time. That was it. The military.

"But father will not allow me, my fiancé will definitely no allow me," she whispered cautiously.

"Are you the Empress to be or not?"

That rallied her spirits. Her 'conscience' was right. She needed to win the respect of the people through the only thing they respected; strength.

"Excuse me, I must use the ladies," she told her new fiancé. He just grunted and waved his hand.

"Don't worry about him, he won't know a thing!"

And he didn't. A couple of days after Se'Cond Mulaned her way into the military, with the help of Lee'dur, she had found out that her husband to be had died during a break in. However, an investigation was never launched because people were trying to find the missing Mistress.

When it was found out she had joined the military, it was difficult to get her out. She was already loved by her people and to remove her would make the Emperor look weak. The Emperor never forgave her for this, but there was nothing he could do about it. Thankfully the Governor of Pilantia had a young daughter.

Chapter 25

Only a handful of the Empire loyal ships had managed to escape far enough from the system before they were caught in the anomaly. Most of them had been disabled by the radiation cloud being emitted by the ITU Corvette. The captains suspected that the ITU had sent the rebels a gift to aid in their fight against the Empire. Thankfully, the Empress had enough clout to prevent them from destroying the ship when the ship had joined them at the evacuation point. After that, the Corvette stayed close to the Revenant, just to be sure.

As they got a chance to catch their collective breath, Lillianna caught both Billiam and Milton up with the situation. Billiam did the same. For the first time in a very long time, he felt ashamed of his actions.

“Typical, you only thought of yourself,” Lillianna wasn’t afraid to show her disgust.

“That isn’t helping, Lilliana,” Milton interjected.

“You wanted to live out your glory days by committing genocide!” she continued.

“Hey, genocide was not in the agreement. I was told to persuade him to come here. That’s it!”

“Yeah, knowing full well what he could do!”

“Stop it! Just stop it!” Milton Yelled. “None of this would have happened if I were here. If anyone is responsible it’s me!”

Lillianna looked over to Milton slumped in the pilot’s chair.

“You were used,” Lilliana went on, “I guess we were all used in one way or another.”

They all paused for a moment of reflection, all realising the magnitude of their situation.

“So what, now?” Billiam broke the silence.

“You guys need to get home. I suggest you take this. I’ll need to get as far away from civilisation as possible and hide.”

“I’m not going to leave you Milton,” Lilliana interrupted.

“Besides, Chaos or whatever that was, probably still has a part of you. We need to stop it from doing anymore damage.”

They both looked at Billiam.

“Maybe you should lead with that next time!” she said pinching her nose.

They discussed back and forth what they should do. The problem was that there was not reasonable way to track whatever Chaos was, if it was anything. Most of the ships systems were corrupted and couldn’t get a clear reading. The particle, the stuff that Milton was supposedly made of, was virtually undetectable in it’s stable form as it could be anything, case in point like Milton.

“We need to inform the Empress,” Lilliana informed.

“Why?,” Billiam protested. “We should go back to PC controlled space and inform them of the situation. Coming from the both of us, it should sound at least plausible.”

“You two need to go, I will stay here. Chaos has designs here. He’ll want to keep this civil going.”

“But...”

Multiple flashes of light appeared into view.

“I have a feeling that those aren’t friendly,” Milton made a hunch.

“Empress Second!” came the announcement. “On behalf of the millions of lives you’ve slaughtered based on your ego and of the Union we demand your surrender. You are surround and out gunned.

“They think she did it,” Lillianna commented.

“It looks pretty damning. She was planning to do it herself!”

“She was only pretending, I already explained that.”

“You seem to be best buddies at the moment!”

“I wouldn’t go that far, however, I’m doing my job by maintaining a good relationship with the head of the Empire.”

“Whatever,” William dismissed. He looked over to Milton. “We should get out of here before everything starts blowing up.”

“Unfortunately, I’m gonna have to agree with Billy here

Milton appeared to be on it. His body had begun to merge with the ship, creating a deep connection. From this point he would be able to modify and move the ship by sheer force of will. It was a sight to behold. Unlike last time, he didn’t appear to be in distress.

Outside the Empire loyal ships had started to come into formation. The Union ship had prepared for this move well, by covering them in a ever closing sphere of ships. There was no means of escape for the Revenant and the smattering of ships that were still partially disabled. The Empire ships had no chance of survival. The only course that the Empress had was surrender.

While that was the only course she had available to her, it wasn’t the only one. The ships weren’t moving under orders of the Empress. They were being piloted by an outside force. But as the ships drew closer together, so did the Union ships. They hadn’t fired yet, as they were still waiting for the Empress’s reply.

“Empress Se’Cond, I’ll repeat this one more time. I, Governor May’tel of the Union Forces demand your surrender. You have no hope of escape. Your fleet has been disabled, you will not be able to survive an attack. And if you use that weapon of yours, you’ll be destroying yourself along with us. Your only option is to surrender. No one else has to die today.”

"I'm surprised that she hasn't made a speech about the honour of the Empire and all that nonsense," Billiam pointed out. "How's the escape plan going Milton?"

Milton was too busy to answer.

"The Empire ship are coming in a little too tightly," Lillianna observed. "They're becoming one big target. I don't understand. That would just make it easier for the Union ship to destroy them."

A flash of blue lit up the front viewer of the corvette. From her viewpoint Lillianna could see it began to swirl just ahead of them.

"Looks like our escape is here," she said. "All right, Milton. I hate to leave the Empress here but we have no choice."

"No!" Milton strained. He looked in a bit of discomfort now. "We are not leaving them behind."

The blue swirly port increased in size exponentially. The Corvette started to move closer towards it. The Union ships outside had stopped, as if they were unsure on how to respond.

"Milton, we can't take them along with us!" Lilliana pointed out.

"Lily's right! What the hell are you doing mate?!"

Milton was not listening. The Empire ships in formation started to move towards the blue swirly wormhole in front of them. Carrying all the ships along with all the souls on board was a tremendous task. He had create a link with all the Empire ships through the Comm system and hacked into their navigational array and was now navigating remotely.

The Union ships began to realise what was happening and started to open fire on the cluster of ships. However, by that time it was too late. Within seconds the fleet was encompassed by the wormhole and they were on their way to somewhere.

Chapter 26 – Another Time

After centuries of being hunted by governments on Earth, he left. In the mid twenty-first century he travelled on one of the first interplanetary colony ships on Mars, not as a member. He had found a way to stow himself without being detected. It was an effort and a half but he managed, then he simply disembarked as he left the Earth's gravitational pull. He knew that he didn't need to breathe, eat or anything else human beings needed to survive, heat included. He still doesn't know why.

It was certainly a risk as there was so many unknown in a harsh and unfeeling galaxy, but at the point he didn't care. It was good to not be hunted anymore. He finally had the peace he had been searching for all this time. It wasn't the same peace he had with Derrick, but it was peace none the less. By the time he eventually reconnected with the people of Earth, the governments had forgotten about his existence and he was able to stay under the radar.

It took him a while to learn how to move in space. It felt more natural than anything he had done before. He wasn't particularly fast to begin with, a little faster than the colony ship. He had thought about pranking them by saying, 'what took you so long' but thought better of it. He was done spending time with humans.

However, as soon as he got familiar with his new reality, his new found freedom, responsibility came knocking on his door. A strange space vessel was passing by the system and noticed a strange anomaly 'flying' through space. When they came to check it out they found a strange looking being flying around in a style they would soon learn be called the 'Superman'.

They were the agents of Order; a secret society made up of intelligent life from across the galaxy. After spending some time with them, it was discovered that he was made up of the very material they sort. The 'particle' they called it wasn't quite matter and wasn't quite energy. The devices used by both agents of Order and Chaos ran on this. They had the ability to shift it between stable and unstable. They never learned the science behind it, that knowledge was lost when Chaos and Order left the Milky Way galaxy but they knew enough to keep things going and to keep fighting,

So here was Millie, a sentient energy source. She, they weren't feeling like remaining a man at this time, soon became a commodity highly sort by both parties. It was like what she had encountered on Earth, however, whoever had control of her would control the galaxy. Neither side, in her opinion had the moral high ground.

The agents of Chaos were about freedom, do what you want, when you want it. Grow was made through experience, yes, sometimes it was a risk and sometimes it went badly, but progress is made and those who live on are stronger. However, they didn't care who got hurt in the process. Those who did were weak.

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