

# Jupiter's Storm



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## Jupiter's Storm

### Chapter 1 - Jupiter's Storm



“Changing patterns of symmetrical shapes made up of misty greys slowly focused before my eyes. I blinked several times trying to focus them. Strapped into the seat, still not quite sure whether I was dreaming or awake; I watched transparent cavernous walls sail by. The ship was moving at speeds beyond what I could have thought possible or was it by head? Oh, the spinning sensation, my head felt like it would drop off. “

As thoughts formed through my mind, I felt pain in my upper shoulders and waist again. Yes, I then remembered, we had entered an approach for Ganymede science base. Another pain ripped through my body. Patches of burning lights and shadows crossed my face. The ship shook throughout. I saw a world on fire being bombarded from huge fortress type ships in space. I also heard screams inside my head and people giving commands, perhaps I was dreaming. I then stretched my head over toward the Captain and co-pilot. The voices in my head vanished. However, both the Captain and co-pilot, torn from their straps lay crumpled just out of reach in a foetal position yet floating just above the deck. Blood smeared the inside of their fractured helmets. I felt shock, fear, sadness and more pain, causing me to black out. I wasn't sure how long I was out before gaining consciousness again. However, this time the viewing window revealed a not so distance orange sun with an obvious family of planets. Our path brought us within close proximity of several but the first one held a dead and lifeless atmosphere. Great meteoritic craters covered it, but within minutes, we came closer to a second planet. At first, it too looked dead but then I could see a large dull city. Only one. This planet also looked as if it had been ransacked.

I grew tired of looking, so with my hand, I pushed against the strap release causing me to float free. Moving over to the Commander and the co-pilot, 'Commander Wayne, Captain Edwards,' I called out from my mike, but there was no answer. Neither of them responded nor made any moves. I then noticed that their health monitors were bright red; both were dead. Fighting down bile in my throat, I pulled away. I was then aware that the ship had lost air pressure.

'Is anyone alive?' I then experienced another stab of pain.

'Please help us,' I heard faint cries in my helmet.

'I'm coming,' I said grabbing a handle to open the cockpit hatch. Pulling myself through, a wave of pain forced me to double up within the confines of the passage. Again, I blacked out. After waking, I opened the secondary hatch and saw that the seating compartment was in mayhem. Bodies floated about, ripped off of their holding straps. Seats had even been pulled out of the decking with their fastening bolts still attached. Torn suits, fractured helmets and red health monitors told me all I needed to know of the twenty odd floating bodies. There were some who were still held in place. I caught movement from one of the floating bodies but before I could react, pain struck me again causing another momentary blackness. Regaining consciousness I pushed myself over to one person, one of the astronomers from Ganymede, her patch indicated the name, Sara Demesne.

'Sara, can you hear me?' putting my hand on the ladies shoulder.

She opened her eyes, 'I hear you but my head feels twice its size! What happened?'

'I'm not sure,' I replied, 'are you in any other pain?'

"No, I'm just not thinking straight,' Sara said taking in a breath also noticing the floating bodies about the compartment.



‘I need your help, Sara,’ I said. Sara’s head moved around taking in the chaos. I saw tears form in her eyes through the face plate, ‘Stay with me Sara,’ I spoke again, ‘I really need your help.’  
‘Okay, I’m all right,’ Sara then replied.

‘Good,’ but before I could continue speaking, pain once again ransacked my body. This time I screamed as I held onto the seat Sara was in.

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Brigette moved her head around the room looking deep into each of the watchers’ eyes. The strain on her face was evident having to tell the story again. She’d lost count the times she had told it. Being examined repeatedly was bad enough but having to go over it again was much worse. They wanted every single detail like they’ve never heard it before. All of it. And I wasn’t the only one experiencing pain of having to relive the nightmare, looking at the faces of Sara, Dr. Reeves, Lisa, and James. Phil, Joshua and Mi Sook had all been unconscious for the whole time and didn’t remember a thing.

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I then heard my name as a hand touched my arm. A male’s voice seemed to speak to me from beyond. Opening my eyes, I saw a figure floated nearby. ‘Doctor Reeves, you’re alive!’ I was now more alert and found myself strapped in a seat.

‘Yes, I seem to be one of the more fortunate ones,’ I heard him reply. ‘Other than the bomb that’s gone off in my head, I seem to be okay. Do you have any idea what happened to us?’ he asked.

‘No, not yet but if I can stop from passing out, I’ll fine out.’

‘You actually need to stay still. According to your health monitor, you have internal injuries. You’ll kill yourself if you keep going,’ Reeves replied.

‘Are either of the other two pilots alive?’ I asked finding it increasingly difficult to even think straight.

‘No. There are only eight of us alive, you and I, Sara Demesne, James Parks. Your crewmember Lisa Ford is still unconscious, along with three others. I don’t know who they are, possible tourist. Those three are in worse shape than you are,’ the doctor answered.

I thought about what the Doctor had said. I thought that maybe I should just rest a while but realized after looking into the worried face plate of the doctor, ‘if I don’t keep going, I’ll just give up, and then we will all be dead anyway.’ I released myself and pushed myself back toward navigation. ‘Sara? Can you come with me?’

Getting strapped into the cockpit seats, ‘Sara, try and see if you know any of these star patterns.’

I made sure that the ship’s recording was still on and before doing a play back to see what had happened. As our ship passed between Jupiter and Io an electrical discharge knocked the ship off course. That discharged almost destroyed us all. It pulled the ship down toward the Jupiter’s Storm. After a hundred kilometres into the cloud, they entered a narrow funnel.

‘That’s a worm hole,’ I heard Sara’s say.

‘Exactly where are we, Sara?’ I asked looking out through the viewers.

‘I have no idea. I can’t recognize any of these stars,’ Sara answered before I doubled over with pain again.”

According to Sara, hours had passed before I awoke. Reeves’ worried face was standing over me. Everybody’s helmet was off, including mine. Trying to get up, Reeves sort of order me to stay still.

‘Who restored the air pressure?’ I managed to say.



‘Miss Ford, your crewman, woke up just after you went under again. So, she and Mr Parks managed to fix it. Mr Parks is one of Ganymede’s Environmental Engineers,’ Reeves answered.

‘Are we still in the worm hole?’ I looked over to Sara.

‘Yes, seems like we’re taking the scenic cruise through the galaxy,’ She answered. ‘You’ve missed a lot. We flew right through a whole group of those star ships. They didn’t seem to notice us, but mine you we are going very fast.’ Sara replied.

‘Still have no idea where we are?’ I asked.

‘Well, it doesn’t seem that we are in our own galaxy, but I could be wrong,’ Sara said looking out of the viewer. ‘But wherever we are, the place is alive with activity, fleets of awesome looking ships going here and there. They’re the size of cities. We passed quite a few planet systems while you were out. They all looked heavily polluted or something. I only saw one planet that had the look of clear blue skies like Earth or any greenery or any greenery.’

Twenty-four hours had now passed. I was still in quite a bit of pain. The doctor gave me a shot or two to relieve as much of it as possible. Sara stayed with me up in the cockpit while the other straightened out the back. The bodies were put back in storage and the living area was cleaned up. I eventually checked the ship’s systems and realized that the engines were burning very little fuel. We were on an approach vector into Ganymede so the engines were naturally cut down. The fuel tanks were over half full so I decide to increase the fuel. I blacked out again but I wasn’t sure from what. According to Sara, the ship’s speed increased five fold and everything outside went bleary. Hours had passed as I went in and out of a coma. The doctor had done everything he could for me with the supplies we had. At one point I tried to move out of the cockpit but Reeves was immediately there telling me not to move.

‘Something’s happening. I see orange clouds up above,’ Sara woke me from my sleep.

I managed to straighten up but the dizziness was still there. ‘I didn’t really have time for that. Watching the orange glow strengthen at an alarming speed.’

It was then that we shot out through the clothes, out away from the Jupiter’s atmosphere. We saw the search and rescue ship from Ganymede instantly. As soon as I cleared the gravity well, I cut engines and that was the last thing I remembered until waking up in a medical lab.

## Chapter 2 - Transformed



That was six months ago and to this day I'm still not sure what exactly happened," Brigitte finished off.

There had been introductions but Brigitte had already forgotten the people's names. Two of them, a Dr Reat and a Dr Powers of whom she had gotten to know during the past six months.

"Comments, anyone?" The heavily decorated military man, who was earlier introduced as the Director of Interplanetary Exploration, asked looking at those who had held their silence listening attentively to the group's ordeal.

"Miss West, as Sara Demesne surmised, you were indeed in a worm hole. An electrical charge between Jupiter's storm and Io knocked you off course and sent the ship down into the red spot. Out of the sixty years we've been operating the science station on Ganymede nothing has ever happened like this. Congratulations, you have discovered an unknown phenomenon, if I may say, right in our own back yard, a startling discovery! After all our studies, we believe you were in another galaxy, if not another dimension," a military man from across the table answered.

Another person, this time in civilian clothes asked, "All of you experience this particular headache you mentioned and the hearing of these voices?"

Brigitte looked at the others, "seems that way," she said turning back to the others.

Doctor Powers, whom Brigitte new, "tests show that all of you have undergone some sort of change at the cell level. Your brains activity has increased. But don't get worried, your conditions are quite stable."

"In addition," this time a person of some age said, "the ship you were in and all the freight you were transporting underwent some sort of molecular change, again at the cell level. These changes, we think, occurred when you were actually struck by discharge.

"If we are fully recovered and healthy, we'd like to get back to our lives," Brigitte said with the others murmuring agreement.

"As we said, your conditions are quite stable but at the base level, you along with molecular structure of your ship show a certain amount of cell deterioration. Unfortunately in measuring that rate, we aren't sure how long you will stay that way. You may have as long as a year, maybe less to live. I'm truly sorry," Dr Reeves concluded.

Brigitte looked awestruck. Concern grew on the faces of the others. "And that's it, after six months of probing, testing and keeping us incarcerated, we find out that in one year we die?" Sara said raising her voice, looking, waiting some seconds without an answer and then bursting into tears.

"I've put up with this long enough. If it weren't for the pay you've been handing over to me, I'd have left long ago. I though this was nothing than some routine follow-up. Look, I have family which I could have been spending time with," Phil Laden replied.

"Again, I'm sorry; we just weren't sure but we did notice after sending a probe through that the rate of decay and length of time reset itself."

"What do you mean?" Bridget interrupted.

Interestingly, further tests show that material from your ship and yourselves can re-enter the wormhole. The probe we used was designed from material from some of the freight you were carrying. We now have extensive coverage of what you saw and experienced. We've sent the probe in several times and for each the decay

at the molecular level, both the craft and your own cells were, for a lack of another word, rejuvenated!" The Director continued, "but once returned, the probe began experiencing the same deterioration. Both the ship and all hardware and yourselves are experiencing the same rate of deterioration. We don't know why. You now know why we took so long in our testing."



There was a moment of silence around the table. Phil bent held his head in his hands propped on the table. Sara was looking off into a far distance. Dr Reeves had a look of sadness for those around him.

The Director stood up and looked around, finally directing his attention to the eight, "We want you to go back and try to find out what's causing this and more about what you discovered there. Our probe indicates planets under control of some sort of vast military machine along with an enormous number of desecrated worlds. We are in the process of rebuilding the ship, recycling the based elements into something better suited for your needs. Each of you will receive additional training to augment the positions you will hold within the team. Each of your abilities will be needed. Mr. Laden, you have degrees in mechanical engineering, Ion engines and metallurgy. Mi Sook has past experience in AI and computer engineering in the Joint Space Force. Joshua is in the security business and has some training in weaponry."

"Are you saying that we don't have a choice in any of this?" Raising his head, Phil asked the group across the table.

"Your choice is to stay here and die or return, find out what wrong with you and possibly live," Dr Towers responded. "If you decide to work with us, all expenses will be paid in regards to family or friends and all your needs will be met."

Brigette stood, "I need time to think about this. I'd also like to discuss it just with this group."

"I'm sorry to be so brackish but time is running out for all of you. We'll leave you to yourselves for now." The Director of Exploration answered. He looked at his colleagues, turned and left the room with them following. This left the eight looking strangely lost and bewilders.

Their silence reigned. What was there to say? They all looked toward Brigitte who had continued to stand. "I don't have the answers," she blurted out, "I'm only a 3rd class pilot of a long haul cargo ship. I liked by job. I liked the money; I was a clog who did what they were told. I was happy with that."

"I'm only twenty-five years of age. I have my whole life before me," Lisa replied argumentatively.

"There's no one arguing with you! Everyone is in the same boat and everyone makes up there own mind," Brigitte responded to Lisa's voice.

"I still don't understand, we have a choice but we don't have a choice. I'm fifty years old and am at the height of my career. I have a position here on Ganymede with my wife. We were hoping to return to Earth after this contract. I could have my pick of contract, anywhere," Phil replied.

"The choices involve staying here and in six months to a year we're dead or going back through that worm hole into who knows what and finding out what's happened to us. I don't see that there is a choice, I don't want to die so I'll do it." Dr Reeves directed his speech to Phil.

Joshua took his turn, "Doesn't sound all that bad. I'm single and have no other responsibilities. I've been in the security business for quite a few years and lived a boring life and from what I understand, we'll certainly be looked after. Might be exciting."

Mi Sook stood up and looked at everyone. "I'm thirty eight years old. My husband left me for a job and woman on Mars because I couldn't have children. My family in Korea is ashamed of me. I consider myself a very



religious person. Even though I have my faith in God, I have become very confused. I came to Ganymede to think things over. It really doesn't matter to me at this point in time."

"This was supposed to be a one year contrast for me. It was supposed to enhance my career. I have a husband and three children waiting for me to return to Earth's Space Station. I'm returning. I don't believe what they're saying," Sara dropped her face into her hands and started crying again.

"Everything they said is true. They knew you wouldn't believe them so they included me in on all the medical tests," Dr Reeves replied. "Sara, it would be best if you joined us, have your family brought out here while you help us to solve this problem. We need to be in this together."

James only stared into the room refusing to speak.

Brigette paused, obviously thinking, "Well, good jobs never last long anyway. I'm in. I'll do their exploring."

### **Chapter 3 – Ganymede Science Station**

Brigette sat facing her wall monitor glaring at Ganymede's landscape with Jupiter's Storm using rising above the horizon. The red, brown, white and orange whirlpools were truly an incredible site. Their circular motions a mesmerizing force composing a devilish surreal atmosphere over me.

She broke away only so slightly, her mind drifting, thinking about how the group had settled into Science Base. Extra accommodations were being built for a sudden explosion of people. Many hated the confines of the place.

The storm now filled the entire background of her large screen. She watched eddies of darker oranges folding in on themselves trying without hope to counter the stronger currents.

She felt a chill then thought again about the base, thinking that it wasn't that bad. There were nearly five thousand people. That was large to still be considered a science station. Outside the settlements on Mars, Moon, and Titan, the Earth Space Station was the largest with nearly six thousand people. There were other smaller space stations orbiting Earth made up of Hotels, Resorts, Orbital Factories and what have you. The moon had over twenty thousands people but they were mostly made up of engineers from the iron ore facilities. Mars had some seventy thousand people, many were part of the terra-forming project; others were farmers and others worked for mining companies. There were scientist and general business people along with those who hoped to get rich just by going there. Oxygen regeneration plants were certainly doing the job of changing the planet. Food was already being shipped off planet. The deep underground oceans met everyone's water needs. Venus, Triton and Pluto had small science stations of fifty or so people. Venus was the toughest science station in the Solar System. Deep below the surface, a terra-forming project had been going on for almost twenty years still trying to figure out how to reverse the green house effect; so far, they've had very little success. A small space station orbits Uranus, which only conducts general studies of the system. Titan with its famous mixed water and chemical sea (about the size of the Caspian Sea) had now become the third settlement in the Solar System. About 8,000 people reside there. Warmish temperatures caused by deep thermal heating makes it a popular place along with its earth like atmosphere without the oxygen of course. But what I hear, the thick chemical smog drifts can last for months at a time. Don't think I would want to live there she pictured it in her mind. Meaningful expansion into the Solar System had only come about after development of new Ion drives and that was just thirty years ago. Before that, round trips to Ganymede



took three months, but now the same trip takes only two weeks. Brigitte had once make a trip out to Triton and Pluto and hoped to visit some of the other places but that was now overshadowed by what had now happened. She still wasn't sure that she was up to commanding an exploration trip through a wormhole to another galaxy.



With the rotations of both Jupiter and Ganymede, the menacing eye finally moved off the screen calming her nerves as she focussed once again on the landscape before her where she had just notice a supply ship zoom off into the space. She couldn't get over the amount of activity about, all caused by their little mishap.

Thinking of better things, she was glad that Sara and Dr. Reeves' family had arrived. John Demesne, Sara's husband caused an uproar at first; however, the Interplanetary Security Agency that was over seeing the project classed it as secret and so promptly convinced him to quieten down. Sara showed signs of being a little happier. Both, Sara and Phil had finally given in to the idea of going, realising that the ISA was only trying to make the best of a difficult situation. They had moved them into some very nice family accommodations. All eight to them make it a point to meet once a week. It was usually at Sara and John's place since it was the biggest. That reminded her, they had planned to meet at 7 pm and it was now 6:30. She didn't peculiarly enjoy the time, Phil usually bellyached about the injustices of what was happening and then Sara and John would eventually join in. Sometime or another they would reach a point of haplessness of doing anything about it. All eight of their lives had been joined together, and Brigitte understood that. She forced herself at time not to fight against those who complained so much. Looking at the time, she jumped up, shut the wall monitor off and headed for the door.

There weren't many people in the corridor, as most would be eating their meal about now. Looking about, the station was indeed large. There was a school for the children, from kindergarten all the way up to university. There was a wide screen cinema movie; various clubs, shops, a park and even a bush walk upon the second level. The station had five different levels. Two levels were above the ground and three below. Administration, labs and various other offices were on the top floor. The largest level located at ground consisted of shops, gardens, park, gym, cinema, and activities centre with connections to the spaceport and hanger deck. The third one consisted of general maintenance and repair stations, stock control, vehicle storage, water and food processing while the fourth level contained the accommodations. The last underground floor held the air circulators, generators, and waste reprocessing etc. It also connected to an energy supply some 500 meters from the station. She rounded the corner coming to the Demesnes opened door. Mi Sook and Joshua had just entered and Mi Sook looked back.

"Hi Mi Sook, how are you?" I asked.

"I am fine," Mi Sook replied in distinct English.

Phil was at it already. Lisa, James and Dr Reeves were penned into the corner but seeing me in the door, he said something and moved my way, Brigitte noticed.

"Hi Brigitte, good to see you outside the training halls," Dr Reeves sounded relieved to have someone else to talk to.

"Hello, I see that Phil is at it again," She smiled, not expecting an answer.

"Well, you know Phil. Have you heard the latest?" This time he lowered his voice considerably, "They've given us all a rank, officially as of tomorrow."

This I was surprising, "What's this all about." Brigitte replied also in a lowered voice.

"The ISA wants more discipline among us," he briefly turned his face toward Phil ever-louder arguments. "I overheard one of the tutor discussing it with one of the security types. You'll hold the rank of an Interplanetary



Space Force Captain. Phil is a Lieutenant. Lisa, James and Sara are all Lieutenant JG's while Mi Sook and I are Lieutenant Commanders with Joshua holding the rank of Commander. He's second in charge."

"You think everyone will go for it?" Brigitte wondered aloud.

"I don't think they're going to make too big a deal of it until we actually leave, which puts the responsibility on your back to enforce it," Reeves concluded.

Brigitte knew that she was to head up the group but she never imagined it would be this way.

"Hey you two, come in and join the party," Sara's husband John had had a few too many already. He shoved his hands into the doctors and my arms pushing us to the centre of the room. "Now, no shop talk tonight. They work you far too hard. I think everyone should just put their foot down and tell them no more than eight hours a day five days a week.

The group has worked laboriously from eight am to six pm, six days a week. The program was indeed strenuous, especially for the more aged Phil and Dr Reeves but none were ever tempted to give up. Sometimes individual would complain to their tutors. They were making sure that every person could do two different jobs on the ship plus perform various scientific experiments. But I had not forgotten the reason for it all. We were still dying and once in while some forgot about that point, like Sara's husband now. The training was into it eleven weeks now. Perhaps another two weeks and we would leave.

The ship was ready. It had been completely melted down along with every possible item of freight. A few surprises were experienced. It seemed that the fuel and water was affected somehow differently. The specialist found that they could blend non-affected fuel in with the other as with the water also. That meant that we would have a full supply of both. Nothing was wasted. Personal weapons consisted of high-energy stun guns but they were weak to be called weapons. The new ship was completely redesigned and installed with two new experimental laser cannons, one facing forward and one backward. Joshua now doubled as a co-pilot. Large engines were mounted perfectly below and back of the main part of the craft and two smaller vertical engines mounted along its side. All four could be accessed from inside the ship. The ship had grown to twice its size. It was no longer just a space ship but an atmospheric craft also. Extendable wings had been added that withdrew up under the craft. The most sophisticated electronics I had ever seen had been added and with the latest guidance voice controlled computer. Where the cargo hold once dominated the lower section a small three person atmospheric craft occupied along with a short range all terrain rover plus maintenance, repair shop, science labs and quarters. Behind the cockpit, there was a reasonable sized staff lounge with an open kitchen at the back.

"You're quieter than usual tonight Brigitte," Joshua said moving up beside me.

"Just thinking about things. We'll be leaving soon. You afraid?" Brigitte heard herself say.

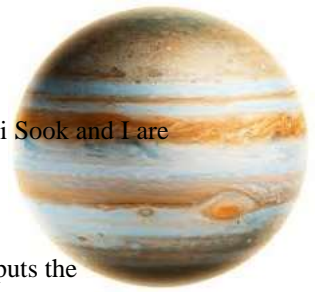
"Isn't everyone?" He replied.

"I don't know. I think I've grown to accept it but even that I'm not sure of," Brigitte answered.

At that moment, I noticed Lisa standing with a blank look on her face in the centre of the room. "Excuse me Joshua, I think something is wrong with Lisa." As I approached her, tiny electrical charges were coming from her. The others had now noticed and slowly became silent. Now the charges build in strength and looked like a web over her entire body.

"Dr Reeves?" Lisa frighteningly held up her arms, the web of electricity totally inclosing her, "What's happening to me?"

James went toward her, "Don't touch her," Dr Reeves grabbed James' arm.



At that moment, she was seen to go slightly transparent. As she solidified the electrical web vanished. Lisa passed out.



#### Chapter 4 – Interplanetary Space Force

Lisa was put in the special care unit of the bases' hospital that night. The medics had arrived within seconds of the call as the hospital was on the same level. With the morning, the team had gathered in the waiting room some out of concern for Lisa others, out of concern for themselves. Dr Keat and Dr Powers both arrived around nine.

"Lisa is fine," Dr Keat, said, "She hasn't shown any more signs of molecular deterioration, however, you must know, more than half of her cells have now been affected. We're scheduling each of you for an examination over the next two days, but until then back to training.

"Back to training! We're dying and you just say, 'back to training,'" Phil's voice was heard.

"There's a special meeting for you at 10 o'clock," Dr Powers replied, you'll be advised then.

Both the doctors exited. Phil continued to complain to those around him. You could see concern on many of their faces. "I would just as soon return to the studies," Joshua said to Mi Sook.

"Yes, me too," Mi Sook replied. "I'm not really afraid of death. My faith in God will help me when that time comes.

Joshua didn't have a reply not realizing that Mi Sook was a religious person. But then thought that some kind of faith could be an important factor in the coming days.

The Director of Interplanetary Exploration, Edward Barns, walked into the hall shortly after 10. He looks about then walks up and stood behind a clear class stand. Brigitte sat up front thinking that she might be called upon. Joshua sat beside her while the others sat in the next row back. Before Barns began to speak, Lisa entered the room looking like nothing had ever happened to her. Her face showed ten years of wrinkles. Quietness settled once people noticed her. "How are you, Miss Ford?" Barns said as a way of acknowledgement.

"Better," Lisa smiled.

"You'll be leaving in two weeks," Barns blurted out. "We had hoped to have you a little longer but that's no longer possible. Your programme has now been altered also. You'll be actively working with the ship in flight from now on and because the ship is now under the Interplanetary Space Force, you have all been assigned a rank in the Interplanetary Space Force." There were murmurs from the second row. "At that I'll let Admiral John Marshall speak to you."

"We didn't ask to join any military," Phil replied.

"No, we didn't," Sara, added.

"I'm very aware of the stresses each of you are going through. None of you ask for any of this and we acknowledge that. But you now have available to you a ship with weaponry, a very sophisticated ship I might add. There's no way that the ISA or the ISF are going to let you have such a ship without a military chain of command aboard. The Interplanetary Space Force, the Interplanetary Security Agency and Interplanetary Space Exploration Agency have jointly funded this project. Each has an investment in it, just like you do. We have a lot to loose, the same as you. Part of your training for the next two weeks will include military protocol in dealing with rank. Now, under the power invested in the Interplanetary Space Force in certain emergency situations under article 54.3.1



Miss Lisa Ford, Mr James Parks and Mrs Sara Demesne, you have been promoted to the rank of Lieutenant JG in the Interplanetary Space Force. Congratulations! Mrs Demesne, I believe your official job is Astronomy and Astrogation. Miss Ford, your official job is Ships Services and Security. Mr Parks, I think your job has already been assigned, Environmental and Engines. Mr Phil Laden, you have been promoted to the rank of Lieutenant. Congratulations! I believe your job is Engines and Environmental. Miss Mi Sook Kim, you and Dr Reeves have been promoted to Lieutenant Commanders. However, Dr Reeves will still hold the title of Doctor and will be responsible for Bio. Your job Miss Kim is Computers and General Services. Congratulations! Joshua Mathews, you have been promoted to the rank of Commander. Congratulations! Besides being Second in Command, you will also be in charge of Security and Co-pilot. I believe you have received considerable training in the simulator? “

“Yes Sir,” Joshua answered correctly.

“And Miss Brigitte West, you have been promoted to the rank of Captain. Congratulations to all of you again. Welcome to the Interplanetary Space Force.”

“I won’t stand for it. I refuse to play your game,” Phil yelled at the Admiral with his fist in the air.

The Admiral held up his hand, “In the effect that you do live through this and might I add, we do believe that your chances are very high, any comments or acts against said chain of command can and will be dealt with under a military court of justice and so from this point on, you can be judged for what you said and do! Do I make myself clear?” The Admiral held a stern look over everyone.

There was silence. Phil looked at the Admiral in amazement for he had some knowledge of the power the Interplanetary Space Force could invoke.

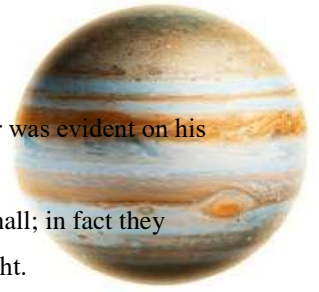
Barns walked back up to the stand while Admiral Marshall stood in back, “I thank you for your attendance. Your training will continue after lunch today but before that, you’re expected to pick up your flight suits and change into them. Thank you. You’re dismissed.

\* \* \* \*

For two weeks, they had hammered us until we dropped. It was boot camp all over again. 10 hours a day had extended to 14 hours. Not one person ever complained again, not that any of us had time. It was amazing how much one could accomplish in two weeks if pushed, Bridget thought. People had their own individual tutors. Computers had been completely programmed for flying the ship, providing map of the wormhole, and the route and worlds encountered by the earlier probe. There were suggested flight lanes where the probe and we had filmed. The computer had three interface backups with more than enough memory to store digitalized footage for one year. The Engines could either be controlled by the computer or manually from the cockpit or one of the stations behind the cockpit. The eight was also hammered on military protocol with the emphasis of using correct titles and following orders. Everybody was taught something about everything and retested repeatedly. Once we crossed over, our first objective was to find a source of food as quickly as possible.

It was now 12 noon on the 15<sup>th</sup> day. We were strapped into our seats in what now was christened, ‘Jupiter’s Storm!’ Everyone was given ten minutes that morning for personal goodbyes. Sara’s husband John had his arms around Sara both were crying.

Dr Reeves’ wife stood beside him. “Leon, I know you’re not supposed to take anything with you but I want to give you this for luck.” She handed him a picture taken of them with Jupiter in the background.



"I don't suppose this would be noticed," Dr Reeves slide it inside his jacket. Phil's fear was evident on his face and his wife's.

As their count down proceeded, there were no special ceremonies from Barns or Marshall; in fact they weren't even there. They probably didn't have much hope in us lasting very long Brigitte thought.

"You have 30 seconds before take off," the space tower spoke to Brigitte and Joshua. Everyone else was at his or her stations right behind the pilots.

"Ten seconds," the space tower said.

The engines were roaring, Jupiter's Storm lifted above the landscape of the science station with Brigitte manually directing it toward Jupiter itself.

"Okay troops, this is it. Say your prayers," Brigitte said.

"ETA to Jupiter, twenty minutes," Joshua inserted.

"All positions report in," Brigitte ordered.

"Astrogation correct," Sara replied.

"Engines running true," Phil replied, his voice full of fear.

"Environmental correct," James answered.

"Communications correct," Lisa replied.

"Medical correct," Dr Reeves Reported.

"Weapons on line," Joshua said.

"Computers are correct," Mi Sook confirmed.

"What's our ETA?" Brigitte asked.

"ETA to Jupiter's Storm, five minutes," Joshua answered.

"Ganymede Space Tower, this is Jupiter's Storm. We are going in," Brigitte said, the ship entered the top layers of the storm clouds, seconds away from leaving their worlds behind.

"God Speed, my friends," Admiral Marshall spoke.

"God Speed, we wait for your return," Barns also spoke.

At that, Jupiter's Storm was gone.

## Chapter 5 – Enforcers

The transparent walls of the wormhole came into view. "We're in," Bridget calmly announces through her head mike. Stars zoomed by and then they flew straight through a solar system, everyone watching in amazement. Brigitte cut the engine's down considerably. "I'm going to try and break free of the wormhole now," she said changing the heading slightly. The ship slid easily out into the normal space some distance from a class M star but before she could check the computers star maps an electrical charge seized the ship. The same spider web that sparkled about Lisa two weeks earlier now flowed over everyone. They jerked about in their seats with the same pain and with it ceasing the each of them passed out. Jupiter's Storm AI took over control of the ship.

Interestingly, Lisa was the first to come too, and then Joshua and Brigitte. One by one the others woke up with questioning looks.

"Okay, everybody report in?" Brigitte ordered.

"No reading on Astrogation," Sara said confusingly.



“Engines are shut down,” Phil replied shaken.

“Environmental is at full operation,” James said.

“Communications is up but we aren’t receiving anything but noise,” Lisa was still somewhat bewildered.

“Medical correct,” Dr Reeves replied.

“Weapons are off line,” Joshua said checking his console making sure of their reading.

“Computers are online but inactive,” Mi Sook also replied.

“Miss West?” Laden asked.

“That’s Captain for you, Lieutenant. We will continue to keep protocol,” Brigitte replied.

“But we’re on our own...”

“Lieutenant, you will continue with protocol!” Brigitte said, thinking that she would now face her first challenge.

“Captain West,” Phil said with a lack of respect in his voice, “Hull pressure indicates that we are in an atmosphere and also Hull density has somehow increased by a factor of ten.”

“Yes, we’re definitely an atmosphere but what do you mean by hull density has increased to a factor of ten.”

“I mean exactly that the hull density has somehow increased,” Phil hesitated and then finished off with, “Captain.”

The others glanced slightly at each other.

“Thank you, Lieutenant,” Brigitte said, “Well folks, it looks like the AI has sat us down. Perhaps on a planet in the star system we were in when we left the wormhole. I’ll rerun the graphics and see what exactly happened.

Lieutenant Parks, can you turn your outside screen on? I see only a huge wall,” Joshua asked.

Everyone had finished un-strapping themselves including Joshua and Brigitte.

“Well, I think you and the Captain need to see this” Parks answered, “I think see people, well, I hope that’s what they are,” Parks said.

“Excuse me people, wait just a minute before you start moving around too much,” Dr Reeves said quite strongly. “Captain? Commander? I think you should see this.”

Joshua and Brigitte got up from their seats and walked through the console section into the lounge. Both stopped by the screen and watched two distinct groups of people made up of the same race. There were obviously those who had authority, wearing loose darkish brown outfits of baggy trousers and matching blouse. Their facial features were very pale and stiff looking wearing a steel, close fit helmet hiding their hair, their ears and back of their heads. It curved back into their necks and almost made their heads to look similar to a three quarters ball in shape. Each carried a black rod in their hands. It was plain to see that the others were workers who wore a sandy coloured garment with a small robe tied around their middle. Their shoes were of the same make as those in authority, a very flimsy looking cloth shoe. All the labourers’ heads were shaved clean.

“Commander, Captain?” The doctor stood near a refresher bowl in his room.

“What is it Dr Reeves,” Brigitte asked.

“You haven’t noticed?”

“Noticed What?” Brigitte replied.

“Look at your hands,” Reeves held them under some of water, “Look close. Only a small amount of water is touching my hands. “They appear slightly gold. Look there,” he pointed. There’s some kind of field covering our entire bodies. He pulled out a glass to look up close. “Look at this,” he put the glass over Brigitte arms.

Brigitte looked hard into the glass.

“It’s the energy web we’ve just experienced,” Reeves said.

“Run some tests and see how it’s going to affect us,” Brigitte told him. “Okay guys, let’s just take it slowly. Dr Reeves needs to check something out. Joshua, let’s watch what going on outside.” Those in authority were all dressed identical. Some stood at attention. Some walked along side labourers carrying various articles. Brigitte thought that she almost could feel their suffering and agony. Everything they had owned or ever been had now been taken away. She felt that she could almost hear their thoughts but nothing from the others. Again, she noticed the stiffness in their every movement. Their heads always straight, their eyes held a void never flickering or looking around and always forward whereas the labours’ movements were more natural. Some of the labourers showed age shuffling along while other showed more strength and youth. “Those people are obviously in authority,” Brigitte pointed toward one of the guards.

“They look more like enforcers,” Sara was heard to say. “Is it just me but I feel and almost hear those others.”

“You may be right Sara, Uh...I mean Lieutenant,” Joshua corrected himself. “And strangely enough, I think I also hear them.”

“You are defiantly right, look!” Brigitte pointed to one of the labourers who had dropped what they had been carrying. One of the enforcers moved toward him. Fear shown over the labourer’s face pushing backwards along the floor using elbows and feet. The enforcer stuck the rod he was carrying to the person’s body and held it there. The labourer jerked about on the floor. “He’s screaming in my head. That must be some kind of shock stick.” The enforcer held the rod to the person until they stopped jerking and then returned to the direct the others. Another enforcer was seen from one side of the room giving instructions too two labourers. Both came running over and picked up what Brigitte, Joshua and the others thought to be dead now and carried off.

Chills came over everyone that was watching.

“Brigitte, I think we are in trouble,” Joshua looked at her.

Brigitte didn’t bother correcting him for now the enforcers were instructing the labourers setting up something some thirty meters from their ship.

“Lieutenant Parks, let’s take a look all around the ship,” Brigitte requested.

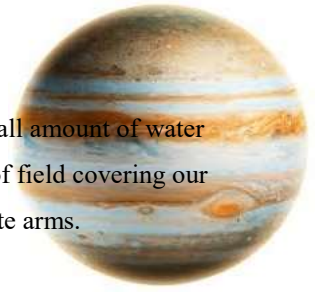
The different views clearly showed they were in a larger hanger. The doors were on the other side of the ships. There were enforcers all around the ship. “Let’s review the ship’s tapes to see how we came to be in this place.”

James pushed a few buttons on the side of the monitor. As thought, the AI had taken over the ship. The monitor revealed the distance star growing closer by the second.

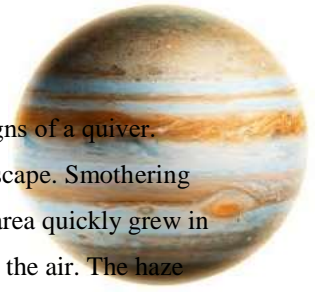
“Something wrong with that,” Phil said watching from behind everyone. “The ship can’t travel that fast.”

Within moments, the AI had entered the system and approached a planet. It was difficult to see the surface. A heavy haze covered the world. One could just make out a few small oceans with mountainous regents scattered throughout the northern and southern hemispheres. Small scatters craters could now be seen.

“There’s been some kind of nuclear war,” Lisa commented.







“Yes and no, the entire world has been desecrated, mercilessly,” James’ voice showed signs of a quiver.

Destroyed cities could now be seen. Burnt forest and scorched land permeated the landscape. Smothering ruins were now visible. The AI homed in on a small dark area in the northern hemisphere. The area quickly grew in size to a large industrial area. No city as such but factories belching dirty black dirty smoke into the air. The haze quickly grew into brown smog. Dull coloured industrial vehicles could now be seen moving about the place. The ship approached what used to be a spaceport left over from the war. Units of enforcers ran hurriedly surrounding the ship as it touched down. They carried weapons other than the sticks seen outside. At that moment, the AI shut down all systems.

A stunned silence held those around the screen.

“What’s going to happen to us?” Sara said bursting into tears. Mi Sook put her arm around Sara hoping to show comfort but Sara jerked away and stared heatedly at her, “Pity yourself, you’re going to die just like us.”

Mi Sook just looked not saying a word.

Brigette’s legs felt weak. She wasn’t trained to handle this. The adventure and excitement blinded her. She never expected anything like this.

“What do we do now, Captain West?” Laden’s eyes were full of fear. “All of you wanted to play captain heroic, well, you certainly got your chance.”

“I think that enough of that kind of talk,” Joshua responded.

“We get out of this place first and then we find out what happened to this planet, and then we find out what kind of place we’re in” Brigitte knew for better or worst she held the ranges of seven scared people. She had no other choice to play the act out, if she only could.

“Commander, how thick do you think those doors are?” Brigitte turned toward Joshua.

“They look like ordinary steel doors,” Joshua replied.

“Would it hurt the ship if we rammed the door Lieutenant Laden?” Brigitte questioned him.

“How would I know?”

“Lieutenant, answer the Captain?” Joshua ordered.

“I don’t think it would,” Laden replied without adding the Brigitte’s rank.

“Let’s do it. Everyone, get to your stations. Dr Reeves? To your station,” Brigitte yelled.

Brigette and Joshua headed for the cockpit.

“They’ve assembled some kind of gun outside,” Parks said looking at the screen.

“Get to your place Parks,” Joshua yelled from the cockpit.

Brigette quickly opened the AI console. Pushing another button ordered the AI to fire all four engines up. Within seconds the craft rose slightly.

James watched the screen. The enforcers pushed the labourers away from the gun and quickly continued preparing it.

Brigette slowly maneuvered the ship around. James still watched the enforcers as they aimed and fired their weapon with no effect. Brigitte ordered the AI into ramming speed and the moments later the ship plunged through the door. They were free. Jupiter’s Storm soared up and away from the industrial complex.

“Let’s see if we can find if there’s anything left of the ruins about this place,” Brigitte spoke into her communication like.

“How about just leaving and returning home,” Laden inserted.



“Military protocol Lieutenant!” Joshua answered.

Strangely, no one followed them, James thought as he continued to watch the screen. He was puzzled. He knew that they had been hit by that weapon but the ship showed no sign of it. Neither did it show any sign of going through that door.

## Chapter 6 – City Ruins

Brigette headed away from the complex. The AI had already been instructed to map possible sites where the cities were only partially destroyed.

“That’s quite a large place there,” Joshua pointed on the cockpit screen.

“Okay, let’s go,” Brigitte replied.

“I believe I found something,” Dr Reeves said over the communications. “It a force field, not only around us but also around Jupiter’s Storm. Coming through the wormhole has caused it in some way.”

“That would explain why the ship wasn’t damaged when they fired the weapon at us, ‘point blank,’” James spoke up, “and why we rammed through that door so easily.

“Well, that’s something at least to our favour. Is it to our favour Dr Reeves?” Brigitte asked.

“Well, it seems to be, at least for now but I would say its only temporary,” Dr Reeves replied.

“There!” Brigitte pointed at the screen as the city came into view. “We’ll land as close as possible to the broken rubble.”

The ship put down in a clearing in what used to be a large street. Collapsed buildings, pipes, crumpled metal, unknown machinery and wires were hanging and lying intertwined along with hundreds of skeletal remains. Dozens of partial buildings remained, even in the haze they stood elegant and gorgeous in their own rite but now burnt with gaping holes or simply half toppled to the ground. Once beautiful greenery flourished but only remnants lay dead and wilted everywhere. The scene was perhaps only several months old. Various kinds of vehicles were lying amongst the rubble with their drivers dead at the wheel, smashed like everything else. Who ever did this destruction was purposely through in trying to kill not only human life but plant life as well.

“Let’s go, Brigitte indicated to Joshua, “Mi Sook? Dr Reeves”

“Yes, Captain?” Mi Sook replied.

“I want you to stay here and keep us informed if you hear anything of the communication channels. And what do we need for that AI to be able to translate their language?”

“As much material as you can find with pictures and words,” Mi Sook answered.

“Dr Reeves, you stay and try to fine out more about what’s happening to us and this ship. I believe we’re somehow hearing these people in our brain, ” Brigitte told him.

“Yes, I’ve also heard noises and personal thoughts,” Dr Reeves confirmed.

Brigette turned to the others, “okay, we’ll have two teams. Joshua takes Lieutenant Ford and Laden. Lieutenant Demesne and Parks come with me. Everyone will take a stun gun and communicator. I want to find a library or any information that the AI can use. If you can find anyone friendly, bring them back.

“You all must be crazy. I’m not going anywhere,” Laden said staring at those around him.

“You are going somewhere. You’re coming with me if I have to drag you along,” Joshua said placing his face right in front of Laden.



“We’ll exit through the bottom hatch,” Bridget hurried down the ladder to the lower compartments and labs with the rest following her. The hatch opening was behind the aircraft and rover.

First, Joshua stepped off the ladder with stun gun in hand, then Brigitte and the others. “Okay, lets be quick and quiet. Brigitte leaned close to Joshua, “Be extremely careful. We have no idea what we’re up against. Don’t take any unnecessary chances.”

Joshua headed the opposite directions down rubble littered street. “Ford, you cover our backs. Make sure no one sneaks up on us. Laden, in the middle, you cover the sides. I’m up front.” They made their way around and over fallen chunks. Mummified bodies lay with their now ragged clothes about, sometimes a limb here and a hand there. Joshua stuck to the middle of the street as much as possible taking no chances what might still be hidden in seemingly empty ruins.

They had gone perhaps three blocks, “Do you hear that?” Lisa asked Joshua and Phil.

“I hear it in my mind,” Phil replied. “It sounds like people thinking or talking to other people.”

“I hear it but I don’t know what direction its coming from,” Joshua said.

“Up this alley way,” Lisa pointed.

Joshua led the group out heading in the direction James pointed. Fallen debris partially covered the alleyway from above. The talking continued to grow more distinguishable in their heads. People were definitely speaking in another language. A smashed door provided an entranceway into an open arcade. Ramps led down into a lower section with footprints easily distinguishable on the dusty floor. The bottom revealed a long corridor with many closed doors, perhaps some kind of quarters. James quietly pointed down the hall. After ten or so metres, they could now just make out the soft voices from within the room. The discussion expressed desperation, anxiety and need. Joshua, Lisa and Phil could now sense all of these feelings. It created some confusion within them on how they were able to hear this in their own minds. Joshua placed his hand on what was obviously the entry mechanism, a square pad on the door and pushed. The door flew open to reveal three stupefied people sitting at a table. Fear came over them so much they weren’t able to move. Lisa, Phil and Joshua felt this and they stood with their stun guns held toward the three. None moved.

“Okay, Lieutenant Ford, Lieutenant Laden ease your guns into your pockets and then hold your hands up so that they know we mean no harm,” Joshua ordered.

“I don’t think so,” Laden argued. “They could easily rush us.”

“Laden, if you don’t do what I say, I will kill you myself. Is that clear?” Joshua responded demanding. “Now, do it now, slowly put your guns into your pockets.”

Laden obeyed, as did Ford. All three held their hands up in peace sign. The three at the table looked at each other and spoke hurriedly. None of them made any quick moves. Joshua quickly took in the scene. There were mats on the floor and what Joshua thought to be foodstuffs in the corner.

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Sara, James and Bridget were forced to climb mounds of rubble. Building after building had collapsed into the street making it almost impossible to traverse.

“This was a peaceful world,” James commented sadly.

“How do you know that,” Sara replied.

“Do you see any guns, army of any kind or even anything that seems defensive?” James asked as an answer to Sara’s question.



“Maybe, they got into a scrape with some other world government,” Sara replied.

“No, there’s an evilness to all of this destruction,” Brigitte entered the conversation. “The people who did this hated life. Whoever did this went so far as to poison the atmosphere. Making sure that nothing lived.”

“Hey, look over there,” Sara pointed to a still standing structure some two blocks away.

Half of the building was still complete. Large marble columns still stood erect holding up a partial roof. Large clear door were lying to the side half covered by debris. The three made their way toward its entrance. On arriving Brigitte cautiously entered.

“Wow, look at this place. What is it?” Sara asked. There were clear tables and walls of glass with inlayed buttons. Some had been broken like glass while most looked in perfect condition. There were rows and rows of shelves further back in the building holding tablets the size of books.

Brigitte pulled a card out from the shelf and turned it over in her hand. There were inlayed buttons on it like everywhere else. “What would happen if I just pressed on,” a movie appeared on the tablet with a momentary. Bridget smiled at everyone. “These are books of some sort! Thanks Sara!

Sara wasn’t very moved by the thanks.

“Okay, gather up as many as you can carry and let’s get back to the ship.” Brigitte instructed.

Both teams arrived back at the same time. Brigitte, Sara and James carrying handfuls of glass/plastic books and Joshua, Phil and Lisa and three men.

Brigitte looks at Joshua, “It seems that your time was fruitful.”

“As so was yours,” Joshua pointed toward their arms.

But before entering the ship, the three men started talking to Joshua and pointing toward the sky.

“What are they saying,” Brigitte asked.

“We seem to have another gift,” Joshua answered. “Just listen and you can understand something of what they want.”

After a minute or two it was evident that the three were expressing concern for the ship being so open to the sky and that it was dangerous.

“Interesting. We hardly need to know their language,” Brigitte said.

“It’s the wormhole, it has given us certain enhancements,” James replied.

“Is it the wormhole that’s done it,” Lisa questioned. “We’re really not sure.”

“Commander, you, Lisa and Phil see to providing some camouflage for the ship. We’ll go in and try to make something out of this with Mi Sook and the AI.

After an hour, the three men had covered the ship with enough rubbish to hide it from any aircraft. At the same time, Mi Sook easily fed the information into the AI.

“Does it have enough information to provide translation?”

## **Chapter 7 – Serenity**

“We had the nearest thing to a utopian world. Two hundred years ago our governance chose not to develop space flight or weapons with the full support of the population but instead they centred on the needs and problems of the people, especially those things that fostered greed. We have been without a single war or major conflict since then. But now it’s all gone, just like that. It’s been about nine months since they came with their black ships and their endless bombings from space. They then spread chemical poisons over the entire planet to

destroy the plant life. Over three quarters of our world's population were killed. Men, women, children, our own families killed before our eyes and those who survived were gathered up and taken off somewhere else," the man that called himself Sigone spoke earnestly. "A small number of us were able to hide."

"You had no idea that they were coming," Brigitte asked.

"None,"

"Were you ever aware of their existence?" Brigitte continued.

"In the past twenty years, we've had the occasional refugee ship to stop asking for supplies. It was news all over the planet, talks of a powerful mind controlled space fleet, but no one really paid any attention to it," another one who calls himself, Tigone answered. "Most people thought it was just scare tactics, but what about you? Where did you come from? You're space worthy. Have you not come across them before?"

"No, I'm afraid not, except for the factory complex about two thousands kilometres to the west," Joshua replied this time. "What will you do now? Do you have enough food for yourselves?"

"We know that our people are there working as slaves and often tortured mercilessly. We are developing weapons to fight and free them and our world. Most of us now live in hidden underground shelters that our governance built for emergencies. We have everything we need, stock piled food, everything," the Sigone paused, "except people. Can you stay and help us? You've got a space ship that could help us to some real damage to their factory and gain the freedom of our people."

The AI translated between two groups with ease. Brigitte, Joshua and the others sat around the table listening to what had been said.

"There's only eight of us, how can we be of any help to them?" Sara said.

"We were sent here to find out what was wrong with us and what was happening in this space, not get involved in somebody's war," Laden responded. "And to get ourselves killed."

"This explains the fleets of ships we came across the first time. The probe also picked up some. According to that information, I'd say they've taken over a lot of space," Joshua said.

"They're waiting for answer to whether we will help them or not," Mi Sook said slowly, "It could be by providence that we have come here."

"And what exactly do you mean by that?" Laden asked brusquely. "Do you think Jesus has brought us here or something? To bring salvation to the sinners?" At that, Laden jeered. "You Christians are all alike."

"Let it be, Lieutenant Laden. She has as much right to voice her opinion as you do," Joshua cut him off.

"Uhhhhhhhhhh, lover boy coming to the ladies' defence," Laden stabbed.

"Lieutenant Laden, you will cease your disrespectfulness and apologise to a senior officer or I'll have you up on charges," Brigitte eyes stared into his sternly.

Laden looked at everyone around him, obviously realising that he had stepped over the bounds that had been put in place. There appeared a sneer on his face, "sure," he finally answered, "sorry commander," and then leaned back in his chair.

"Helping these people to free their friends may not be much of problem for us," Parks said taking the edge out of the air.

The three men watched the group of eight continue their talk listening all the time to the AI's translation of events. They wondered whom this Jesus was that the lady mentioned but kept quiet. That gave them a little hope but it was then smashed after this other fellow agued against her and the others. They thought it was all lost until





the young man said it wouldn't be a problem. Obviously, the young man didn't know what he was talking about but they wouldn't discourage the conversation by any of them differently.

"What do you mean, Lieutenant Parks?" Brigitte asked.

"Well, has anyone taken note to the fact that we're not exactly who we use to be," James smiled.

"Something has happened to us. Besides just pushing open locked door, we can even read senses of people."

"Lieutenant Parks is correct," Dr Reeves entered the conversation. "The more I've studied our new cell structure since coming back through, the more it seems that we're here in this place and space but we're not totally part of it, at least, yet. We still have the protective film over the ship and us. In fact, I don't think that there's much of anything that could do harm us at all."

"I think you're all crazy," Laden interrupted. "Doc, you're saying that we're some kind of super heroes?" Laden then laughed

"I'm not sure I would call us that exactly, but I'm pretty sure that we can't easily be hurt at the moment," the doctor replied. "I think we can easily test this theory."

Then the three men's eyes opened widely. What they were hearing was impossible but they reminded themselves that they also laughed at those warnings of years past and they came true.

Brigitte turned back to Sigone, "How many people and weapons do you have?"

"At the most, we have a hundred people who are trained enough that can fight but we only have enough weapons for fifty of those people. I'm sorry. Do you carry weapons of any kind?" Sigone answered.

"We only have some light weaponry for ourselves," Brigitte replied. "I want you to contact your leaders and bring them here so that we can talk move of this. I haven't made a decision yet but we're willing to discuss this further. I also need to know more about this enemy of yours."

"The underground shelter is quite far. It will take us about ten hours to go and return," Sigone replied.

"Okay, we'll wait for you. And.... we're actually short on food ourselves. Could you spare some?"

Brigitte asked somewhat timidly.

"We have more than enough,"

"Oh, one last thing. We don't even know the name of your world," Bridget said.

"Serenity," Tigone smiled and the three then left.

Brigitte then turned to Parks and Reeves, "Okay, I really need to know more about what you're talking about before committing to anything. I'm trying to objective here. Lieutenant Laden isn't altogether wrong at what he's saying. There are indeed two points to our mission. One is to find out what's going on in this galaxy or wherever we are. Sara," Brigitte looked at her, "so soon as we get back in space you need to get onto that. The second point of the mission is to find out what has happened to our molecular cell structure and why it's acting the way it is."

Laden held a smirk on his face at hearing what Brigitte had said.

"But, I have a feeling that we're going to meet up with these people or whatever they are, sooner or later. So maybe now is the time to get a little closer and see exactly what they're able to do," Brigitte said.

"Why don't we go outside the ship and try a few things," Dr Reeves said.

James was the first to grab a chunk of a building and toss to away like it was a soft ball. Joshua picked up an iron rod and flung it through the air for over a hundred metres puncturing a building wall.





“This could be caused by gravity, the make up of this world elements, anything. It could be strong and lightweight at the sometime. We just don’t know,” Bridget said to everyone.

“Throw something at me, Commander!” James said.

Joshua smiled willing to play the game, “Okay, but if I hurt you, don’t get upset.” At that Joshua picked the heaviest piece he could find. It felt as if it weighed twenty-five kilograms but looked as if it weighed a thousand kilograms. He tossed it as James who didn’t try to catch it but just let it hit him.

It hit James directly in the chest but didn’t move him. He smiled, “See what I’ve been saying!”

“I think this is a better test,” Dr Reeves yelled as he through a long sharp shaft directly at James’ Chest.

“Noooo!” Joshua yelled.

The shaft hit James directly in the stomach to no effect.

“Dr Reeves, never do that again,” Joshua said firmly.

“Of course, but that would definitely have gone through him had not the film protecting all of us had not have been there. I think that we are quiet safe from harm!” Dr Reeves continued. “And I think we can continue to confirm this when those other people return. We can test ourselves against them.”

“I believe that’s enough, you’ve proved your point,” Brigitte said somewhat shaken.

## Chapter 8 – Laden

The group settled down to its first ever dinner in the lounge area of the ‘Jupiter’s Storm.’ Lisa prepared and served up the meal and then sat down beside James. They started to make small talk about their days discoveries and had a laugh or two. Sara and Laden sit together and ate their food quietly. Mi Sook first prayed, bowing her head, she mumbled a hardly audible prayer while Sara and Laden looked upon her loathingly. I was never a religion person but could not understand why Sara and Laden had developed such hatred against Mi Sook. She had her hurts like everyone else with her husband leaving her and her family disowning here and now being part of this group; maybe she had more hope than anyone in the group, Brigitte thought.

“It’s been a non stop day hasn’t it,” Dr Reeves said to no one in particular. “I am exhausted. It is nice to sit down to a prepared meal. Thank you Lisa.”

Lisa looked up and smiled.

“Dr Reeves, I’d like to talk to you sometimes about some pet theories I have about this wormhole business,” James spoke off handed raising what looked like greens to his mouth.

“Sure James; Uh, I mean Lieutenant,” the doctor replied correcting himself.

“Captain, how long do you think it will before we return,” Sara asked before taking a large drink of water.

“Well, we’ve certainly had a successful day with you finding that library for us and I believe Dr Reeves has a little more information that may help us,” Brigitte answered, “but I couldn’t give any dates as to when that might be.”

“Oh, before I forge everyone, I need to draw up a watch schedule for sleeping. There’ll be two hour watches so we have someone awake while we’re sleeping, a safety measure,” Joshua said. There were a few stares from Sara and Laden. Joshua decided not to let this brother but instead turned his attention to Dr Reeves. “Dr Reeves, tell me, what was that information you’ve found?” Joshua asked, picking a steaming cup of hot coffee up in his hands.



The air became very still around the table. “Well, as far as I can make out, things have reversed themselves. Our time clocks have been reset back to zero. Re-entering the wormhole has somehow influenced our cell structure. As you know all of us have an immune system to protect us from viruses. Well, some type of natural order immune system that we’re part of is protecting us by encasing us in this shield. To each other and this ship we’re the same as we’ve always been but to the world, environment and space around us, it seems that we’re not. Even our minds are different to this space that we find ourselves. I’m really not sure what limitations we have or don’t have but I’m fairly sure that we are pretty close to being indestructible at the moment.”

Surprised Brigitte asked gravely, “I don’t necessarily question your knowledge Dr Reeves but what does that mean?”

“I’m not sure Captain. I’m not a physicist but out of the studies I participated in on Ganymede, I’m forming my theory from that and the blood and various other samples I’m now studying. But all is not so great. We will eventually lose this protection. We need to cross back over into our galaxy in six to nine months. Like the doctors on Ganymede, I still don’t understand why this is happening to us.” Dr Reeves finished.

“How soon will we lose this strength that we have,” Laden blurted out.

“I wouldn’t classify it as strength but the reaction with the physical items which we come in contact with. But to answer you, now, I would say that we are virtually indestructible. And to make things worse, I believe once we return to Ganymede our clocks will be once again reset back to zero giving us another six to nine months.”

Laden leaned back and gave a hideous laugh.

Others looked to see if he had gone crazy.

Laden looked directly at Brigitte and said, “I’m really sick and tired of all this Captain this, Captain that, Commander this, Commander that. From this moment I will cease to play your Navy games and you can’t do anything about it.” Laden folded his arms before him.

Brigitte looked back staring into his eyes, “You’re idiot Lieutenant. Can’t you see that we need discipline in order to accomplish our mission, in order to even stay alive?”

“I’m all for finding out what’s wrong with us and I’ll do what you tell me and do the job I’ve been assigned but no more of this military business,” Laden said.

“Do you realize I could have to done up for treason?” Brigitte stood up.

“You might as well accept it, Miss West. I’m being much more reasonable than I should be and besides what are you going to do about it here?” Laden questioned.

Others looked to what would happen next. “Lieutenant Laden, I warn you that you’re acting imprudently,” Joshua reacted.

“Well, you and Miss West write up your treason papers. For me, I’m going to finish my dinner. I have agreed to work with you and do my job but I suggest, Mr Matthews, that you don’t act too imprudently yourself!” Laden kept a serious face and continued eating his food.

Nothing else was said for the rest of the meal. Afterwards, everyone returned to their cabins except for Brigitte and Joshua who went down into one of the labs on the lower deck to talk.

“We can’t do much about Laden,” Joshua replied.

“Not right now, but I can’t let it go as it is,” Brigitte said.

“Well, I can almost see his point. Before three weeks ago, we had nothing to do with the military or rank or discipline of this kind. No body likes it but I do see the need for it in our situation,” Joshua said. “I think we

should go ahead and address him by Lieutenant and act like nothing's changed and who knows, maybe he'll come around. It's better than forcing the issue especially after what Dr Reeves has said."



Brigette deliberated for sometime, "Okay, I agree with you. And Perhaps I have been a bit to jagged pushing it like I have." They left it there and decided to return to their own separate quarters but Brigitte was still very much concerned over what Laden might decide to do next. "But the worry and weight on her shoulders didn't stop her from going straight to sleep. She only woke once when Joshua went next door to James' room to wake him for the next watch.

The next time Brigitte awoke, she could see that eight hours had passed. Peeking out of her cabin door, Joshua had already brewed some hot coffee. The smell it brought her further awake. A short wash and fully dressed, "good morning," she said sitting down at the table. "How did you sleep."?

"Except for the two hour watch, very well actually," Joshua replied handing her a hot steaming mug.

"Have our friends returned yet?" she asked.

"No but they should be arriving soon," Joshua answered back.

"Wake the others and have them to get dressed, some food and be ready when they return. I think we're going to have a very busy day."

Their friends soon returned with twenty-five additional men and women with single hand held rifles made with a sleeve that slipped over their forearms. Brigitte and Joshua brought Sigone, Tigone and three others into the ship to see what they could do to release their fellow Serenitians.

Mi Sook organized headsets so that everyone could communicate through the AI while others stood toward the back. James positioned himself beside Dr Reeves whispering, "would now be a good time to talk to you?"

"Captain?" Dr Reeves said getting her attention. "Lieutenant Parks and myself will be just outside unless you want us to stay?"

"That's fine." Brigitte replied.

Outside, the rest of the Serenitians stood around now watching both Dr Reeves and James. Reeves set down near some wreckage. "So what did you have in mind, James?"

"Well, this is going to sound a bit far fetched but I think we are actually in another universe that's some how opposite to everything that we know," James said. "We act and think just like before but I believe everything around us is acting to different rules. I know that we really had much time to experiment but isn't it obvious?"

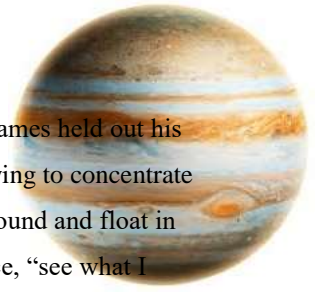
Dr Reeves smiled, "James, I think we need more proof rather than speculation. However, you could be right, we just don't know enough yet."

"Yesterday, I did some experimenting on my own. Watch this." James got several of the Serenitians to pick up large piece of fallen building fragment. Five of them weren't able to move it. "You see that's looks as heavy as it would be on Earth. I've checked the gravity of this world and it nearly the same."

"Okay, so what are you saying?" Dr Reeves replied.

"If we were in the same universe, the laws would be the same for us," James said. "But they're not." With that, James had the five to move back, then bent down and lifted the concrete and metal chunk up and balanced it on one hand. The twenty or so men stood by in alarm quickly talking to each other. "I shouldn't be able to do this. What's so strange is that I feel no weight whatsoever." He lower it back to the ground.

"That's certainly substantiates for proof," Dr Reeves held.



“But there’s more. Watch this? I haven’t tried this yet but I’m fairly sure I can do it.” James held out his hand toward the same piece and closes his eyes. Reeves watched James realizing that he was trying to concentrate on the object. He wasn’t sure what James was trying to do until he saw the object rise off the ground and float in the air. At this, he stood up not believing his eyes. James opened his and a smile went on his face, “see what I mean.” At that, the chunk of concrete and metal fell to the ground.

“Unbelievable,” Reeves replied.

“But this is only after a few tries,” James replied. “Who knows what we’re capable of doing?”

“James, I think we should talk to the Captain about this. Oh, I wouldn’t mention to the others just yet,” Reeves told him.

## Chapter 9 – Domain Installation

“Well, I think we’ve worked out a plan to release Sigone and Tigone’s friends,” Brigitte and Joshua started explaining it to the others. Dalone, their leader, and his group will be let off outside the dead zone while we fly over to the other side of their complex and blast a couple of things to get their attention. Sigone and Tigone will stay with us. Dalone and his people will come in from the other side and try to get as many of them away as possible while we try to take as many out as we can from our side. We’ll be making our way through the complex and meet up with Dalone and his group. Is that clear,” Joshua said looking at everyone.

“No, it isn’t,” Laden replied immediately. “Like I told you, I’ll do my job but fighting these people’s war isn’t my job. I’m staying on the ship.”

“Why you ungrateful,” Joshua headed toward Laden.

“What Commander,” Brigitte ordered.

“Okay,” have it your way Lieutenant. “Mi Sook, make sure you cancel all of Lieutenant Laden security codes to the AI and any other parts of the ship. Lieutenant while you are on the ship by yourself, you’ll also be locked in your cabin.”

“Sure, suits me your majesty,” Laden replied sarcastically.

“We leave straight away,” Joshua finished off.

“Commander, can you see that Dalone and his people get situated?” Brigitte ordered.

“Captain,” Dr Reeves called from across the table. “Lieutenant Parks and I have something to tell you.” Parks explained what he had told Dr Reeves and the experiment that he had done. Dr Reeves told her that they had not mentioned it to Laden or the others yet.

“I think Lieutenant Laden is a problem. Once he understands what he can do, there may be no stopping him,” Brigitte confirmed. “Okay, do keep this to yourselves, but Lieutenant Parks I want you to exercise as much of this as possible once we arrive at the complex. Do whatever you can to stop these Enforcers.”

“Yes Sir,” James replied enthusiastically.

Jupiter’s Storm lifted off an hour later and retraced its flight back to the factory complex. Brigitte flew the ship in low and dropped Dalone and his group off behind a grove of tall dead trees. Brigitte flew around approaching the factory complex from the opposite direction. They immediately received some kind of bombardment. Exploding fire along side the ship made Jupiter’s Storm bounce up and down along with direct hits but no damage. The shield was working perfectly. Brigitte aliened the toward one side of the complex where their



were no workers. “Okay commander, fire away.” The laser beam hit with a force that surprised Joshua and Brigitte. An Explosive fireball blazed into the air. “The result is a little more than I expected. Don’t fire until we see what it did.” Brigitte flew the ship in a circle waiting for the dust to settle. She started to approach the complex again. Air bombardment continued but much less intensive this time.

“Look at that!” Joshua said. A large crater was seen just before the complex. They had missed, however flames could be seen boiling up into the sky from the residue of the laser strike. “It’s just as well we missed, we probably would have wiped out the whole area.”

“Lieutenant Parker is certainly correct in his theories. If we had have hit that place, we would have destroyed all of Tigone and Sigone’s people,” Brigitte replied. “Joshua, all of this really scares me. What does all of this mean?”

“We need to learn more about ourselves and about this part of space we are now in,” Joshua replied. “We need to be extremely careful to protect this place from ourselves.”

“Agreed,” Brigitte came in close to the complex and landed their ship. All except Laden left sealing the exit behind them. At first most got behind tree stumps and rock as the walked toward factory except for Parks. He was buffeted by small balls of liquid plasma but it slide off him. Powerful Canon fire now hit amongst the group as they continued to approach the place. Tigone and Sigone were told to stand behind them as they continued their approach. A group of Enforcers came out of the place using rapid gunfire. The whole place was in mayhem. Noise from the explosions buffeted the group also.

“Don’t do anything,” Brigitte yelled to the group. “I don’t think they can hurt us.” It was then that one of the Enforcers ran up to Sara. The dull face of the showed no sign of life except for the movements it generated. As it touched Sara, it exploded into a gaseous liquid fire. It covered Sara completely. A few seconds later Sara could be seen holding her deeply burned arm where the Enforcer had touched her. “Okay, protect yourselves anyway you can. Try not to let them get touch you,” Brigitte now corrected her first order. “Are you all right Sara?” Brigitte ran over to her.

Everyone started to use the stun guns, which knocked the Enforcers off their feet when hit. Tigone and Sigone used their arm rifles with great accuracy. But a moment later, all the enforcers were seen rising into the air. Amazed, the group turned toward James and saw him poised in one spot with both hands reaching out before him. “What should I do with them Captain?” James turned with a smile on his face toward Brigitte.

“Oh! Uh, toss them over there out of our way,” Brigitte replied stunned.

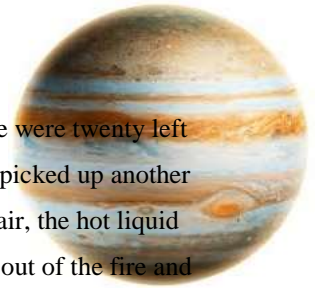
At that moment, the Enforcers could be seen hurling through the air two hundred metres from where they now stood. Hitting the ground with some force none were able to move.

“Let’s go,” Joshua said to everyone. Brigitte was now helping Sara along.

“Hey Lieutenant Parks, can you show me that trick?” Lisa called over and then everyone else replied, “and me too.”

“Later people. There’s more of them coming,” Joshua said. “Lieutenant Parks, you take the lead and just keep doing whatever you’re doing.”

The firing continued from the Enforcers as they ran at an evenly pace. There were about fifty of them this time. James would occasionally stop and manipulate about ten of them and toss them 3 or 4 hundred metres to one side, but after the first twenty, the rest threw down their guns and ran faster toward the small group. James lifted the next five Enforcers up but they exploded just metres off the ground. They were now gaining ground. The



moment James lifted them off the ground they exploded into hot gaseous plasma fireballs. There were twenty left still darting toward James. Others of the group were now firing their stun guns non-stop. James picked up another ten with them exploding. There were three left almost on him. As James scooped them into the air, the hot liquid rained down on him. Everyone froze and waited to see if he was hurt. Moments later he walked out of the fire and turned to the others, “well I felt a little of the heat that time.”

“Okay, let’s keep going,” Joshua ordered. “I just hope the Dalone isn’t facing this.”

Right before entering part of the burn ruins a tank like machine right out form behind the complex speeding down on them. This time Lisa could be seen as if lifted the machine with her bare hands and turning it over with a crash.

“Way to go Lisa,” James replied.

Entering the complex, they walked up a road that ran into its heart. Tall massive skyscraper like machinery lined the road. The road was unwholesome. It contains parts of human skeletons, mixed together with a dark gluey substance. Corroded machines parts lay about all through the underside of the place. The smell was unlike anything the group had ever experienced.

A hot plasma bolt was fired from above, “watch it,” Sara yelled out firing her stun gun at the Enforcer some three flights up. The stun gun threw the Enforcer back into the machinery. Other shots were fired to no avail.

“James!” Joshua saw an Enforcer jump toward him but James caught him in the air and flung him back up several flights into the ocean of pipes, tanks, and framework.

“Thanks Commander,” James replied. But then something else hit the ground behind Mi Sook. It was one of the slaves. “Nooooo! They’re throwing people at us now.” Mi Sook screamed. Other bodies were now seen falling from the heights. Screams were now heard from them. But James, Sara and now Mi Sook went into action of catching them in the air and slowly lowering them to the ground. James was handling five at a time. Fear was seen over their faces as they touched ground. Tigone and Sigone yelled something at them. They ran to where the two stood, obviously feeling safer with their own. About ten more were thrown down by Enforcers but all survived. Others of Tigone’s people were now coming out from among the infrastructure no long frightened.

“Dr Reeves, you and Lieutenant Demesne go and watch our backs. Make sure you keep Tigone’s people in front of you,” Joshua ordered.

They had travelled some three hundred metres into the city like complex. A central structure dominated towering some ten levels into the sky. Pipes, lines and other attachments lead out in all directions connecting it to the rest of the factory complex.

“I bet you anything that structure is the power source to all this,” Joshua said to Brigitte.

“It was also a ship. Look at its shape,” Brigitte replied.

At that moment, the ground began to shake. The group saw a glow from beneath the structure. “It’s taking off,” Brigitte yelled. “Fire at it.” Everyone fired their stun gun at it to no avail. “James? Can you topple it somehow?” Bridget asked.

Pieces of metal, pipes and machinery were separating themselves from the ship, cascading to the ground. Scalping metal thunderously hit the already shaking ground. Then hundreds of Enforcers were seen coming toward them from all around the complex, jumping off from above and from down the narrow road. The ship steadily rose into the air. James, Mi Sook and Sara put their efforts toward arresting the stampeding group about them. The ship rose higher and higher gaining speed moment by moment. Everyone was firing their guns. It was taking every



effort from the group to hold the Enforcers back. The ship now grew to a small figure in the sky. Then the Enforcers stopped in their tracks falling to the ground. It was all over just like that.



## Chapter 10 – The Body

“The Enforcers were under direct mind control from that ship that took off. Once gone the control ceased,” Tigone informed Brigitte and the group.

“And they all died?” Mi Sook interrupted Tigone.

“No, they died months ago during the invasion,” Tigone answered slowly, “They gathered a few of the dead up and attached it. This restarted their hearts and made their blood flow. Their brains are reprogrammed accordingly. This is done through a link directly with the control ship, which in turn is controlled by a different cast of Enforcers. Once the ship left, control stopped and so did the machines.

The higher cast are also controlled themselves. They are allowed a certain amount of individuality. The head collar provides communications at the mind level. As a reward for bravery and loyalty, they are allowed increased individuality. The more individuality one gains in their society the higher the cast they become. The higher the cast, the more people they have control over. There are hundreds of different casts. The Ruling Enforcer whose control reaches out to hundreds of worlds is of the highest cast. They collect and use captured people as slaves also who are considered animals to work or kill as they see fit.”

“What are they really called?” Brigitte asked.

“Earlier reports gave them several names: Domain of the Mindless, the Controlled, and the most common being the Domain of the Dead. Any of those names really fit. Their space was thought to be far away until they came and destroyed our planet. Now we’re not sure how much space they actually control,” Sigone answered.

“We’ve seen their dark ships and something of their space. It’s large,” Brigitte said.

“Dalone, why do you think they came here,” Joshua asked.

“We have a dark mineral that we have traded to the occasional space trader. The purpose of their factory was to extract this dark mineral. It’s obviously important to them,” Dalone replied.

“Okay, what will you do now?” Joshua questioned Dalone.

“Thanks to you, we are free. We still have our knowledge and now enough people to rebuild our society.”

“But they may come again,” Joshua stated.

“We will stay hidden and build our forces. Hopefully next time, we will be able to do something about it,” Dalone answered. “But I have a question. If we weren’t a knowledgeable people, you would be like gods to us. How did you accomplish such feats?”

“Perhaps we shouldn’t answer that, just for your own safety and ours,” Brigitte said.

Dalone smiled and nodded his head, “so what will you do now?”

“I think we need to find out more about this Domain of the Dead. Seems as if a lot of people are suffering under their rule. We might be able to do something about it,” Bridget replied.

“Well, if I didn’t know better, I would say that would be impossible but then again, you might have a chance. Captain, my people have brought foodstuffs for you. I’m afraid it’s only sealed rations but, nevertheless, they are tasty.”



“Thanks, it’s much appreciated. Goodbye to all of you and we wish you the best. We will be leaving within the hour,” Bridget said.

“Thank you again,” Dalone said.

“Yes, thank you and good bye, Sigone and Tigone said in unison.

The crew of the Jupiter’s Storm was sensing a mixture of new hope from Dalone and the others along with great sadness. All of them except Laden had seen them off the ship and again said goodbyes.

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Laden had been released from his cabin the previous evening after the fight. He went about his work checking the engines as if nothing had happened. He hadn’t asked about what happened nor did they volunteer any information. After re-entering the ship, Brigitte had everyone to gather in the lounge.

“After talking with Dr Reeves and Commander Matthews, I have decided to relax some of the rules regarding military etiquette. In haste to obey Admiral Marshal, I made the mistake of forgetting that we aren’t the military or the space force. We’ve a group of people that’s been put into a very difficult situation. We’ve only had a couple of weeks military training so from the point on we will drop the ranks and use first names except for the Commander, myself and Dr Reeves. I’m to still be addressed as Captain. There is still a military structure and all of you are expected to obey orders but I do this to relax our working together somewhat,” Brigitte said. “We all have basically the same goal and that’s to find out what has happened to us.”

“About time!” Laden commented.

There were harsh looks from everyone, even Sara.

“Our next move is to try and find that ship that left here. If we can stop it, Dalone and his people may have more time to get themselves organised. I want to know more about this Domain of the Dead. It sounds to me, that they’re more like a group of computer-controlled zombies. We just may be able to do something about it,” Bridget finished off.

“What! We’re only eight people. What are you saying? We should return and tell everybody about what’s happening in this area of space before they come to us,” Laden said a historically.

“Calm yourself Mr Laden,” the Captain used his civilian name. “We’ve only been here three days and we have yet to learn the problems we facing much less a cure for ourselves. Okay, I’ve said what I wanted to. Now let’s move on. Everyone, take your positions.”

Laden fixed an unbelievable stare at Brigitte, unwilling to move from his seat.

“That means you too, Mr Laden. See to your job,” Brigitte stared him down.

Jupiter’s Storm left the planet Serenity and easily followed the polluted trail of the Enforcer’s Star ship. Strangely enough, Jupiter’s Storm was travelling at speeds unheard of and their ship was set only normal at cursing speed. None of them understood it nor did Laden feel like expressing any theories on it. Bridget and Joshua set up a watch system so there were two people in the cockpit at all times with others sleeping eight hours out of twenty four. Interestingly two days had only passed when they saw the Enforcer Ship ahead of them.

“Commander, I want to get as close as possible so that we can study their ship,” Brigitte asked. “But be prepared for them.”

Joshua replied, “Understood.”

Brigitte continued to easily gain on the ship finally coming alongside. The holes had been all closed up but scrapes from where the connections had fell against its sides were still visible. The ship had black streaks



toward the lower half and nearer the engines, a rusty colour could be seen. In size, it engulfed Jupiter's Storm by a factor of ten both in length and breadth. Near the upper section, various antenna and dishes protruded from the ship. Brigitte didn't remember seeing this before.

"Do you hear them?" Brigitte asked over the headphones. "Everyone, I want you to try and listen to them and see if anyone can make out what they're thinking. And Mr Laden, would you please check the Enforces' ship in one of the monitors. Can you comment on their engines and the possible fuel they're using,"

"The vapours are a mixture of burnt oil substance. It's not really oil as we know it but it's highly polluted. There are also signs of explosives anti-matter mixed in with it. Not much else I can tell you," Laden finished.

"Captain, I detect quiet a few beings packed into the ship but only a few are expressing any kind of concern, with possibly one or two expressing even fear. Some are going about defined work. Most are idle sitting in rows in different parts of the ship. Some are busy preparing something being directing by those that have expressions of concerns. I think they may be preparing something against us," James answered.

"James, you can understand all of that," Brigitte asked.

"Well, it really emotions that I understand. But this tells us a lot about them. They are certainly alive and are able to express emotions to different degrees. It must go along with that individuality that Dalone told us about," James said.

"Captain, as James mentioned, I detect there's increased activity over something that has to do with us. I might be prudent to move away from them," Lisa commented.

"Yes Captain, anxiety is building rapidly from the person directing this group," James said.

Brigitte directs the Jupiter's Storm some hundred kilometres away from the alien ship. "I can't hear anything now. What about you James?" Brigitte asked.

"Nothing, Captain," James replied.

"Here comes something," Joshua yelled, "fast and straight on an intercept course for us."

Hitting the Jupiter's Storm side on caused a giant fireball that shook the ship slightly.

"Tell me what exactly that was Mr Laden?" Brigitte ordered.

"Looks like a mixture of that black substance, oxygen, and refined antimatter encased in a propelled ball of metal," he answered. "Archaic, but it obviously works."

"Does this not appear peculiar to anyone," Brigitte wondered aloud. "Using oil, oxygen and antimatter in space. Antimatter would need to be held in a particular special field not tossed about in balls made of metal."

"Mi Sook, try and contact them using the AI," Brigitte instructed her. "You loaded those language plates Dalone gave us, didn't you?"

"Yes Captain," Mi Sook replied.

Moment later, an image of an Enforcer appeared on the screen. The image didn't move its mouth but only looked into the screen unconcerned, "Come and join our glorious body. With your power joined with our glorious body, we will be invincible throughout the universe."

"And if we don't join your glorious body?" Brigitte replied through the AI.

"Then you will be consumed anyway," the AI responded.

"Why did you destroy that planet, kill and enslave all those people?" Brigitte wanted to know more about how they reasoned.

“We needed energy. The planet has reserves enough to help us meet our needs. These people you refer to are soulless without a body, mindlessly driven by personal greed. Those that become part of our body now have eternal life,” the non-respondent image answered using the AI.



“I was told that some of you have a certain amount of individuality or freedom of thinking. Are you one of those?” Brigitte asked.

“I am a cast 20. I have served my masters well,” he said proudly.

“Then you must see that to force your will of others is wrong,” Brigitte wondered if they could reason.

“It is wrong not to help them. Those who submit to the Body will be rewarded.”

“And those who do not submit will be consumed, is that correct?” Brigitte replied.

“That is correct.” The Alien replied. “Will you join us?”

“No, I enjoy my freedom,” Brigitte watched as the ship launched another explosive ball toward them.

“Commander, realign the ship and use the laser on that thing immediately.”

“I’m not sure that it will do any good,” Joshua said.

“Just try,” Brigitte replied.

As the laser hit the metal ball, the reaction was very different. No explosion as such happened but a rippling effect could be seen in space against the background of stars. It increased in size stretching out from the point of impact. Within seconds, the alien ship tore into pieces. A further twenty seconds the effects could be felt abroad Jupiter’s Storm. The ship was tossed about but no damaging effects resulted. Everyone aboard Jupiter’s Storm was awed seeing the effects, where the alien ship’s once occupied, now a junkyard of parts and bodies floated about.

Brigitte looked downcast as she saw what had happened, “I really wanted them to understand me. I really wanted to communicate with them.”

“Not only mind controlled but mind warped, I would say,” Joshua commented.

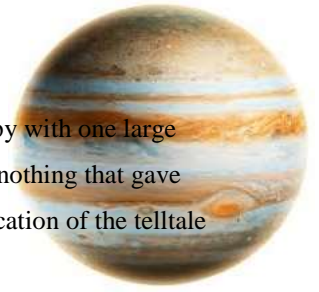
“We got to find out where we are and why every action we take produces unexplainable reactions,” Brigitte said.

## Chapter 11 – Battle for Janu

We continued our zigzag journey toward the Domain of the Dead. Finding the Enforcers was somewhat of a different goal altogether. Right now, we needed answers. Answers to the puzzle we found ourselves a part of. However, I feared that our answers were somehow mixed up with the Domain of the Dead. First, we needed to find others who could perhaps help. We came across several untouched systems with uninhabited planets, some with giant orange suns that cast lethal radiation onto greenish orange flora of dense bush and orange yellow seas.

Like everything else, the speed at which Jupiter’s Storm travelled across space was a mystery. I tried to get Laden to come up with some theories but instead he continued to be his obnoxious self, sometimes unbearable to deal with. Always arguing against every decision. Several times, Joshua had to threaten to lock him in his room, which became very wearing on whole group. Sara showed signs of depression. I tried to spend what little free time I had to cheer her up but she wouldn’t have any part of it. Unlike Laden, she seemed to enjoy the challenge of understanding the star systems around us, especially when we entered star systems with unusual characteristics.

One such star a pale white sun with a planet closely hugging it, held a lush green canopy with one large ocean. Heavily populated cities once spread across the world, now years abandoned. We found nothing that gave any evidence as to where its sentient race would have gone neither did the planet show any indication of the telltale dead effect that the Domain of the Dead seem to propagate.



Dr Reeves continued cell research and its effect on us. Our molecular structure was continuing to degenerate in an alarming rate. He could only guess, but from having six to nine month to live, it was four to six months now.

On we travelled for nearly a week and it was sleep time for everyone.

“There’s a heavily planeted system some ten light years over,” Lisa who was sharing the watch with me said.

Hours later, we entered the system Lisa had pointed out. We found more than what we were looking for. A fleet of Enforcer ships surrounded two of the system’s five planets. Near one such world, a space battle seemed to be in progress. Various catfights existing with two types of smaller ships were actively engaging each other. Larger ones with marking that identified them as the Domain were being attacked by the orange and grey smaller one. Very small dark grey ships fought against the orange and greys. The orange and greys even though outnumbered, fought suicidal against those of the Domain. The second planet was being systematically bombarded from space. Huge fiery explosions could be seen on its surface even from where we were. The exact number of the Armada as of yet couldn’t be numbered especially at the position Jupiter’s Storm held.

“We’ll stop right here,” Brigitte spoke to Lisa. “Go and get everyone up.” Brigitte tried to get the AI to zoom the screen’s lenses closer but they were already at their maximum. Minutes later she heard the others rousing about and coming to their stations. “Okay, everybody. Look at the screens and tell me what you think. Most likely, there are billions of people being wiped out down there. They’re fighting for their lives from being killed or enslaved by those Enforcers.

“You’re not suggesting that we do anything, are you?” Sara asked.

“We’re only one small ship and there are forty, maybe fifty battle ships down there. All of them twice, three times the size of the one we accidentally destroyed,” Laden said in his hysterical manner.

“Let’s do it,” Park said.

“Phil, you don’t suggest that we just standby and let them destroy them,” Lisa looked at him.

“We must help them,” Mi Sook said.

“What about you Commander, Dr Reeves?” Brigitte asked.

“I wasn’t aware that this was a democracy?” Dr Reeves said.

“Let’s stop waiting around. Just go!” Joshua looked at Brigitte.

“You’re all crazy,” Laden said looking around at them.

“Okay, everybody to their stations. That includes you also Mr Laden. Commander, take your seat up here,” Brigitte hit some buttons on the board redirecting the AI toward the planets.

“We’ll go for the second planet first. First to stop the bombardment and second to draw ships from the first planet,” Brigitte spoke in a rush. “Commander, try to target as many metal balls being launched from the centre of the group. Do it just as they’re launched. James? You and Lisa try to focus in on one ship pushing it into another. The closer we get perhaps the more power you’ll have. If each of you can take out a ship each that would

be better. Laden, keep those engines running. Dr Reeves? You and Sara watch the screens. Make sure nothing evades us.”



“Let’s centre on that one,” James pointed to a large ship on the screen. All three pushed the ship with their minds and watched as the ship moved toward the one next to it. The next moment, both ships were venting air. Large cracks and then holes appeared and fires could then be seen inside.”

Jupiter’s Storm swooped down like an angry eagle preparing to snatch its prey. “There’s the most centre point, Commander.”

“I see it. Let me take the helm now,” Joshua’s mind was fixed on what he saw before him. None of the black ships had taken any action against the Jupiter’s Storm yet. “Okay, okay. There’s one,” a laser shot out from above. “There’s another one,” and another shot was seen. Joshua now flew the ship out of the danger zone. “The first is a miss,” Joshua was genuinely surprised but then the second one hit.

“It’s working,” Dr Reeves said from the back.

They all saw the ripple develop and gain in strength. Four ships blew apart with another four badly damaged. At the same time, three other ships were plunged into the atmosphere by James and Lisa.

“Mi Sook, find out from the AI how many ships are left around the planet,” Brigitte ordered.

Within seconds, Mi Sook replied, “Another twenty five.”

“Okay, we’re going in for another round,” Brigitte said loudly over the communications set.

“There are two ships altering course toward us,” Dr Reeves advised.

“Okay, let them come,” Brigitte said. Brigitte had already aligned the ship up for another pass. “You’ve got it Commander.”

There were six ships clustered together launching bomb after bomb down into the planet’s atmosphere. “We’ve got company,” Joshua said as dozens of small fighters were seen coming out of the ships but Joshua sent laser strikes against two just released bombs. The ripple effect immediately started, all six ships and smaller fighters were caught in it. At the same time, Joshua felt a jolt from behind where they had been hit from the two Domain ships. Jupiter’s Storm only shook for a moment. At their next launch, Joshua fired the aft laser hitting the metal bomb that was well on the way to them. But the two ships flew directly into the ripple and blew apart into tiny pieces.

“There are ships pulling away from the first planet, about twenty altogether,” Sara advised.

Continuing around the planet’s curve, James and Lisa were busy pushing ships straight down into the atmosphere. With each effort, James and Lisa glistened with sweat. Three other ships were now closing in on Jupiter’s Storm along with twenty of so fighters. The smaller fighters speeded ahead of the dark menaces.

“Those fighters are gaining on us,” Dr Reeves said.

The fighters were fast and they were now like hornets buzzing around Jupiter’s Storm. Explosive projectiles were heard glancing off the protective shield protecting the ship.

“Missiles coming in from those fighters,” Joshua said. “And they’re fast.”

“Mr Laden, what’s in those missiles that are coming?” Brigitte yelled into the communication set.

“About a third of the concentrate of what’s in the metal balls,” Laden replied.

The first missile hit Jupiter’s Storm’s side, then another and another, but not before Joshua got off a shot at one of them. Jupiter’s Storm was knocked off its course out of control with more missiles hitting. Things within the ships flew everywhere. The engines buckled and closed down followed by the rest of the systems. Before the



screens shut off, Brigitte was just able to see the laser hit causing the resultant ripple destroyed the three larger ships that flew into it. The smaller fighters seem to go limp. But now, Jupiter's Storm was out of control tumbling toward the atmosphere.



"Mr. Laden, I need the engines," Brigitte said held in her seat by the crossed belts. "Mr Laden, do you hear me. Mr Laden?" The engine cut back in. All other systems immediately responded.

The AI rebooted itself and within a minute, Brigitte was back in control. She actually didn't hear anything from laden but didn't have time to think about it. Re-adjusting course, Brigitte flew the ship toward the rest of the ships where other fighters were now waiting. James and Lisa threw the smaller into each other making a hole for Jupiter's Storm to fly through. Then, one by one or in groups, the Domain's ships met the same fate as the others. Brigitte veered off and left the second planet behind where the Domain's battle ships floated in a sea of parts, dead fighters and debris. She headed straight for the first planet.

"Captain? The AI is reporting a voice message only from the planet," Mi Sook shouted.

"Take it Mi Sook. We're rather busy," Brigitte responded.

At first a tape-recorded silence was heard, then, "We don't know who you are, but our world thanks you," an over whelmed relief heard in the voice. "We see that you're already on your way to Janu so we won't dwell. The best of luck to you. Please save them."

"I pray for you and your devastated world. I'm sorry that we didn't arrive sooner," a tear faced Mi Sook answered.

With in minutes, they approached the Domain ships. Jupiter's Storm had so much more manoeuvrability than the larger Domain ships. Smaller fighters had not been launched obviously due to the speed everyone was travelling at.

"There are only nineteen ships now," Dr Reeves said.

Obviously not understanding what Jupiter's Storm could do, the threatening dark ships launched a series of missiles toward Jupiter's Storm. Joshua quickly fired, altered course, fired again and continued the pattern for five successive strikes. One, two, three, four and five ripples all started one after another to form. Joshua quickly cut back the speed and there was a chain reaction as ships of the Domain ran into multiple ripples. Ships were either destroyed outright or knocked into others causing explosive bursts of oxygen in space. Within literally seconds, the nineteen were destroyed outright. Brigitte took control and altered course to Janu.

More ships of the Domain met them just before arriving. Fifty Domain fighters provided a first stage attack against Jupiter's Storm. No missiles metal bombs were launched against them, only the scraping sounds of projectiles off of the ship's shields. The tiny grey Domain ships swarmed about Jupiter's Storm.

"Well, at least, they're teachable," Brigitte replied.

"I know everyone is rather busy," said the Doctor, "but I'd like to point out that the Enforcers who are piloting those ships are totally integrated into those ships and I do mean literally."

"Oh, my goodness. Look at them," Sara cried.

"Okay, minds on busy everyone," Brigitte replied. "We need all of you to do as much as you can to keep them off of us."

Moments later, fighters were crashing into each other. Others began crashing into their mother ships but immediately their tactics changes. They now flew directly at Jupiter's Storm trying to ram into it. Jupiter's Storm continued to take the battering. Different crewmembers were exercising their mental strength by tossing into



another craft beside them. After an hour, the last fighter was hurled into one of the black Domain ships. At that point, the Domain battle ships set poised before Jupiter's Storm.

"Mi Sook, have the AI to establish a visual with one of the ships," Brigitte ordered.

Moments later an Enforcer appeared on the screen with attached head gear. Brigitte didn't lose anytime in speaking to them, "order all of your ships away from the planet and return to your own space. You are to never come back to this part of space," Brigitte stopped and waited for a reply.

"These planets and beings are to be absorbed into our glorious body. Why are you interfering?" a voice replied from the AI.

"These beings do not want to be absorbed into your glorious body. They do not think your body is so glorious," Brigitte replied.

"You will also be consumed," a voice said.

"You will be destroyed," Brigitte replied, "Is that what you want? Don't you have enough freedom of thought to see that?"

"I am a cast 50 ship commander. I have served the body faithfully," the voice answered. "And besides, you are only one ship where we are many more."

"But we have already destroyed fifty of your large ships and over a hundred of your fighters. We one ship is more powerful than your whole fleet. You have only sixty ships left. For the last time take your ships and leave this space never to return. Advise your higher cast that space will no longer tolerate your forced consumption to your glorious body," Brigitte tried one more time.

"This is highly irregular. I have communicated your request to the cast 75 fleet commander and I am ordered to consume you into the glorious body. You will be an added strength to us," at that, the ships started firing their metal balls.

"We just should have went ahead and shot them in the first place," Joshua said firing his forward laser. The ripple immediately exploded the ships nearest to it while further distance ships were immobilized.

There was an obvious renewed effort by planet's smaller fighting ships. Joshua and those aboard joined the fight decimating ship after ship. The crew received some serious knocks as even the large black ships tried to ram the smaller Jupiter's Storm. James and Lisa were doing a great job but Joshua found it more and more difficult to fire as the ships of Janu flew closer and closer to the dark Domain ships.

"Mi Sook, have the AI to contact Janu control requesting that they pull back away from the larger ships," Joshua ordered.

Several minutes later, Mi Sook replied, "they don't understand but will do as you request."

The smaller Domain fighters followed the Janu ships as they retreated away from the Domain battle ships. Joshua waited until they had back off a considerable distance. As the battle ships weren't firing, Joshua sent laser after laser destroying ship by ship, punching hole after hole into their sides. Then they all started to fire missiles and Joshua hit them and again the rippling effect started tearing ten ships apart at once and taking many more out of action. Many of the Domain fighters went dead in space easily picked off by Janu's pilots.

It came down to the last five battle ships. "Captain, we receiving the communications from one of the ships."

"Now they want to talk. Okay, put them on, let's hear what they've got to say," Brigitte responded.



"I am cast 75 fleet commander. I have received a command from Cast instructing me to hold you accountable for the interference and destruction you have caused," the voice said.

They don't give up. "And how are you going to do that? We have destroyed your entire fleet of ships. If you have any brains whatsoever, just think about that. And now there are only five of you left. However, I have a better idea for you. Take your ships and return to your space and never again come back to these planets. Instruct your Cast what you have seen here. And if you don't I will destroy you right here and now," Brigitte waited for the answer.

This time the man actually spoke, "Yes, I certainly understand the situation." The fleet commander then leaned into the camera and said, "I assure you that you will live to regret this. But for now I will do as you request and advise the Cast," at that the five ships pulled away and headed for open space.

"We should have destroyed them, Captain," Joshua said as he continued to watch their exit.

"I was hoping that their individuality would kick in somewhere and perhaps convince their head cast not to tamper with these planets any longer," Brigitte replied. "Well, that guy certainly has individuality but also hatred."

Janu's fighters were flying circles around Jupiter's Storm in celebration.

"Captain, I have a communication from the planet inviting us down," Mi Sook said with a smile. They've given a location.

## Chapter 12 – Honorary Citizens

Jupiter's Storm was escorted down to the surface by two of Janu's fighters. The planet was laced with what looked like large populated cities that were made up of an extensive range of dome structures and towers. Bomb craters could be seen at various places over the landmasses. With the exception of the strangeness of the architecture, the world looked quite normal. Brigitte's thought was that they were fortunate. The city landscape was certainly different; again, various sizes of half domes that presented themselves like egg shall type domes and tall towers that were elongated domes themselves. There were no streets to be seen with many of the domes spread across areas as large as city blocks. Other structures were quite small.

They were directed to a large tarmac area inside the city. Other fighters, damaged, broken and smouldering dotted the area. The city had received considerable damage with smoke rising from quite a few of the white towers. Other domes had large gaping holes in them.

Brigitte sat the ship gently down between the two fighters that had landed along side them. Expecting the pilots to exit their crafts and waiting several minutes, nothing happened. The view screens revealed nothing of the inhabitants, which struck Brigitte as being a bit odd. There were no people walking the tarmac or guards standing security.

"Look at this," Mi Sook switched the camera to reveal an approaching wheel less bus-sized vehicle. It was cream coloured with no noticeable difference between the front and back which was fashioned like a blunted worm.

"Most likely, some kind of delegation," Joshua commented.

"We've received a communications saying that we are to accompany the vehicle back to the terminal," Mi Sook replied.



“I don’t like this. Inform them that we can only understand them because our AI does all the translation,” Brigitte said aloud while looking at Joshua with a questionable look.

“They said that they have translation devices that will do the same,” Mi Sook replied.

“Let me speak to them,” Brigitte moved to sit beside Mi Sook.

“I’m Captain Brigitte West from Sol’s Interplanetary Space Force on a peaceful mission to your sector of space. We saw that you were in trouble and so we helped. We’ve just saved your two planets from certain death and slavery. For us now, your actions are very suspicious. What would you do in our places?” Brigitte finished.

“You have indeed saved us from certain destruction but forgive us if we don’t just open ourselves to you. Generally, we are a suspicious species never having adventured beyond our system. Infrequently we have had voice contact with the occasional vessel either wanting to trade or running from those of the Domain of the Dead. So we knew of these beings but were surprised they knew of our co-ordinates in space. We thought naively that we could handle them if they were to ever come to our system. Within very little time, we found ourselves surrounded by a fleet of their spaceships. We had been fighting for a week when you appeared. Within one hour, you destroyed them. How is this possible?” The voice asked.

“The answer to that question is difficult. We will come. Do you need our language files in order to provide translation?” Brigitte questioned.

“We have already contacted your ship’s machine and downloaded the needed data,” the voice replied.

“Interesting,” Mi Sook said. “I haven’t detected any downloads.”

“Well, what do you think people?” Brigitte looked at Joshua first.

“It’s not that we are helpless,” Joshua said.

“They do seem friendly enough,” Mi Sook answered.

“Where Mr Laden?” Brigitte questioned, “I haven’t see him.”

“That’s because, while all of you have been chatting, I was laying by there with a broken arm. That is if any of you cared!” Laden walked up holding with arm.

“You’ve also bumped your head. You’ve got blood on it,” James answered.

“Sorry Mr Laden, it’s my fault. I should have first checked to see if everyone was okay. Dr Reeves, you and Sara stay here and attend to Mr Laden. We’ll go and find out what going on. Mi Sook, you stay also. I want to be in contact with you and the ship at all times. Okay, let’s get ready,” Brigitte said the others. “Mi Sook, advise them that we’ll be joining them shortly.”

After twenty or so minutes, Lisa, James, Joshua and myself descended the lower latter to the tarmac. A door of the bus opened from the centre outward revealing a lush decorated inside. There were no seats of any kind, only a rug with a thick form underlay carpeted the floor, walls and ceiling of the vehicle. There were obvious handgrips a little less than a metre up the side that we could easily hold. The windows were totally blacked out.

Entering the bus, “Well, here we are. What’s next?” Joshua said to no one in particular.

And at that, the bus started moving. It was air cushioned and flowed gentle toward one of the larger domes. Still, nothing could be seen as to the inhabitants but perhaps that wasn’t so surprising as it had been only a few hours since the battle had ended.

“Okay everyone, let’s be ready for anything. This just doesn’t bode well,” Brigitte said.

An iris door opened as the bus approached. It entered a cotton white tunnel and came to rest fifty metres into the passageway.



“Oh, they want us to get out now,” James got up off the floor.

On exiting the bus, another iris door opened in the wall of the tunnel. The foursome walked straight ahead into a room cushioned and carpeted like the bus but with bright red colours this time. Ceiling to floor darkened windows covered an entire back wall. The group stood around admiring the décor when a voice spoke, “welcome to the planet of Janu. You are the first ever visitors from another world to land on this planet. You are our most honoured guests. You have saved us from death and destruction. You are hereby given honorary citizenship of Janu. This citizenship entitled you to all the respect and hospitality not only by the Centralized Administration of Janu, but also by every citizen of Janu. Everything is at your beckon call.”

“Wow, this is more like it,” James whispered to the others.

“But why have you not revealed yourself to us,” Brigitte looked around the room.

“Forgive us of this. You must be patient with us. It’s just that, you are so ugly and scary to us,” the voice responded.

The four look at each other in surprise. “Okay, we’re beginning to understand,” Brigitte replied. “But as I said, we’re very peaceful beings and even though we appear ugly to you, we try to be kind and considerate and pretty inside.” The other three looked at Brigitte strangely. She just raised her hands indicating that she was trying to be diplomatic.

At that, another set of concealed doors opened from the darkened glass. They watched awe struck as meter and a half tall white leathery beings scampered on six short legs attached to the lower part of the worm length body. Five of them lined up in a row. Their lower halves ended in a worm like tail but speaking of ugliness; their heads consisted of a curved blunt end with two large white oval eyes. Their mouths contained a set of pincers, two on each side, obviously used for eating, something. There was no distinction between their head and the rest of their body but lower down two thin human like arms with hands having three fingers each appeared to be the only human resemblance, otherwise, they were large white worms on six legs.

One from the group approached Lisa hurriedly, pincers moving in and out its large needle toothed mouth. Lisa fainted. Shocked, the creature moved back to its previous position.

“What have I done?” the creature spoke with fear in its voice.

“Nothing, nothing,” Brigitte quickly said. “You just surprised her. It’s just that we too have never met anybody else like you. We are all surprised but very happy to finally meet you. What are your customs of proper greetings on Janu?”

“May I come forth?” The being asked Brigitte gracefully before moving.

“Yes, please do so,” Brigitte replied.

The creature approached Brigitte; this time a little slower than before. Stopping within a metre of her, it lowered its head and performed a bow and said, “welcome oh honoured citizen of Janu.”

Brigitte immediately reciprocated and bowed her head, “thank you fellow citizen of Janu. You have showed us much grace when none was due. Any help we provided would have been no different if you were in our place.” Brigitte only hoped that she was doing things right. Interestingly, at that comment, several of the others started to chat.

Brigitte finally got to the point that the flowered language was put aside. Over the course of an hour, they had talked about themselves and curious circumstances they had found themselves into. The Januyons, as they liked to be called, were an advanced society living partially above and below the ground. They slept during the

sunlight hours and worked and socialized during the night. They were indeed a timid society who had never had anything but voice contact with other beings. Their population ran into the billions. They ate and digested a mixture of plant life and could absorb minerals directed from the soil, although that was no longer considered civilized. Their planet was laced with rich deposits of minerals so food wasn't a problem for them. The best Brigitte could tell, the Januyons were a mixture of insect and worm. They created the domes from a fluid mixture and mineral from their own bodies piecing it together using the pincers around their mouths.



The Januyons thought the Domain of the Dead to be a myth but having developed inter system space flight, they populated another of their system's planets and at the same time build up their defensive capabilities and felt reasonably secure. That security was now broken.

"So you see, we need a safe place to study what is happening to us and perhaps to get your help because none of us are molecular scientist. Perhaps, we could help you develop something to protect yourselves from the Domain of the Dead," Brigitte explained.

### **Chapter 13 – The Tour**

The planet continued its cleanup. Brigitte and the others had returned to their ship for the night. A lashing storm woke Brigitte up. She thought this to be strange considering the stress the ship was able to take. She watched baseball sized hail being blown about. The winds sounded ferocious through the bulkheads of the ship which made her glad to be inside.

The next day, they and the ship had been moved into the dome under objections from Sara and Laden. At first Laden would not leave the ship but Brigitte after threatening finally got him into the new accommodations provided them by the Januyons. They had access to visual communications covering just about anything they wanted to know about Janu and its inhabitants. They provided Brigitte and the group with vegetarian meals and quickly assembled furniture for the group after Joshua had explained some of their necessary needs. The accommodations also had in house water and a toilet, which consisted of a flushable hole in the floor with water to clean with.

The group had been assigned one of the beings they had met the first day as a guide to the city. The being's name was Jogn. Jogn was overjoyed in being given this assignment. Her speciality was anthropology and wanted so much to learn more about us, but her job was a nothing more than a glorified tourist guide for the group. They had somehow connected the translation between the two languages into every computer on the planet. Only occasionally, there was some lapse when they heard interesting noises and sounds from Jogn. According to Jogn, the Januyons had two sexes, which were chosen according to the needs of society. She had two young worms that attended training every night from about an hour after sunset to about an hour before sunrise. Jogn's husband Relt would look after the kids during the day, as her newly assigned work would be during daytime hours.

Everyone worked. Their employment scales were made up of general labour workers, specific labour workers, technocrats, lower educated, higher educated, and governmental. Each of these scales was further divided up into different general and specific job positions. Each was trained according to the needs of society but had freedom to change their status after serving a specific length of time in their particular field. Females were given leave from work to have children and were allowed up to four. Their lives were very organized and everywhere they travelled was orderly and immaculately clean and.





There was a planned tour later in the evening. Jogn said that her people would put on a face of happiness for them, the strange beings who saved their two worlds but they were hurting inside. Several millions died from the attack on Janu but their sister planet, more than a quarter of the population died. The populace were frustrated at this attack and their inability to protect themselves.

Jogn was already at Brigitte's accommodation when James and Lisa arrived. The two were obviously excited about the tour.

"So, Jogn, what marvellous things are we going to see today?" James asked walking up to her.

Jogn bent her head slightly looking down at him. Her soft white eyes seemed as if they were glowing at him. Her large wide mouth gave them an uneasy smile; "Well I thought we would start out by seeing some of the repairs that are taking place in the city." Her pointed teeth and movement of her pincers were unsettling to the nerves. "After that, I hope to show you some of the more cultural sites and to end things up, maybe a walk outside the dome."

"Hello!" Dr Reeves and Joshua appeared at the open Iris.

"Hello, how did you sleep?" Jogn asked the two men.

"Really great," Joshua replied.

"Very well, thank you," Dr Reeves said.

Mi Sook and Sara arrived at the same moment. Mi Sook only smiled while Sara indicated nothing. Following them Laden appeared around the corner.

"We're ready then," Jogn said to everyone. "Let us proceed. Just follow me." She headed down a corridor.

Jogn led them down several inclines to a station. "We'll use this vehicle for our tour. It will be a little cramped but I believe all of us can fit in."

The vehicle resembled a minivan inside and consisted of a dark glass top with the interior soft cushioned carpet. Jogn entered first then Joshua and the others. Brigitte followed up last not entirely trusting Laden. Jogn had withdrawn his legs and curled his body up like a snake.

"Disgusting," Laden was heard by several.

Everyone found themselves a place and sit down on the cushion's floor. It was a bit tight but they all managed. Jogn waiting until everyone was comfortable. Jogn turned pressed several buttons on a forward glass panel and the vehicle moved down a tunnel the size of the vehicle. After twelve or so minutes it slowed as it came out of the tunnel into the night. The city domes were all lit up. Other vehicles could be seen in the distance.

"We'll be arriving at a damaged repair centre over there," Jogn pointed at a far off dome." Major reconstruction is being done to the dome. The workers have been warned that we are conducting a tour with our guest so there shouldn't be any surprises," Jogn grinned.

The vehicle rolled out into a large open area. Hundreds of worms could be seen about the place. Large cranes held workers hundreds of meters aloft. Each worker was positioned in a container with tubes attached to the bottom. Each seemed to be biting into the roof itself. Ground crews ran here and there feeling liquids into tanks scattered about the floor. Tubes from the above containers led down to these tanks. Coming to a stop, everyone exited the minivan. Ones and twos stopped to stare at the alien beings, and then whole groups froze, watching intently as they walked out of the van's iris door. Within seconds, there was an explosion high above as one of the container holding a worm hit another container. One of the tanks connected to the container then burst into a blaze.

"That container is coming down," Brigitte yelled. "James, can you do anything?"



Then, another tank burst in to flames. “Come on, let’s help those put out that fire,” Joshua said running toward a group coming out with a fire hose.

By that time, the container had snapped off from its connections. Everything went into slow motion. James calmed himself trying to exert a mental effort in slowing its fall. He grabbed control of it just before it hit the deck and gently laid it down on its side. James ran over watching a gluey liquid spilled out onto the floor along with the worm. Before he realized a worm had hit the floor beside him along with more of the same gluey liquid. Looking up, he saw the container snap off and plunge downward. James grabbed it in mid flight and steered it over to a clear area of the floor. Joshua, Lisa, Sara, Mi Sook and Brigitte were manning hoses. James looked back at the dead worm. Dr Reeves was kneeling down before it.

“James, it’s dying. I can feel it,” Reeves said resting his hand on its body. “Hey!” Reeve said in surprise, “I can see the internal damages. Yes, I’m doing it,” By this time, Reeves had both of his hands on the being. “Okay, I just close that and that,” James heard him say. “Yes, everything seems to be back in order now,” Dr Reeves stood up. Other worms had by now joined us surrounding their fallen comrade.

The fallen worm then blinked its eyes several times and then moved about. Several other worms had bent down holding it. However, it then stood on its own feet still being supported by the others around it. The worm looked at the doctor and gracefully bowed its head toward Dr Reeves and Dr Reeves returned the bow.

The tank fires were well under control and one was out. ‘Where’s Laden,’ James wondered looking about the repair area. Laden walked out of the minibus they had arrived in. James wanted to say something but knew that it would do no good. The man had serious problems. James was then lifted into the air along with Dr Reeves and then the others. Laden had dived back into the minivan. Shouts were heard.

“Are they blaming us for what happened?” James called out to Brigitte.

“Oh no!” They heard Jogn’s voice. “They’re giving you praise for what you did.”

“That’s all good and fine,” Brigitte said, “but they should be more careful.”

“Agreed,” Jogn said, “but those at fault will be talked to later about following proper safety procedures. Are you gods that you can do these things?”

“No, we’re not,” Brigitte answered. “We don’t know how we do them, but we’re certainly not gods.”

Jogn calmed everyone down. Letting them go, everyone went back to work. Everything was being cleared away. Laden, once again, came out of the minivan. Those on the floor and high up in the other containers continued their work occasionally staring at the group.

## **Chapter 14 – A Walk in the Park**

“I’d like to go up and see what they’re doing exactly,” James said to Jogn.

“Sure, we’ll go up together,” Jogn waved at one of the crane drivers and soon a platform was lowered before them.

Moment later, James was watching the worm’s process. It was up to its waist in a gluey substance. It seems as if it was eating the dome but in fact, it was adding on to it. “What is he doing?”

“As I mentioned earlier we can absorb minerals as a food substance,” Jogn hesitated and spoke to the worm. “Her name is Labt. She really admires you for what you did,” Jogn gave me an enormous grin.

James couldn’t imagine what that was all about.

“Labt is absorbing a certain mixture of minerals and regurgitates those from her stomach all the time working the substance until it begins to harden. We keep the dome’s shell at about ten millimetres thickness. It’s a weather control, protection from animals and various large species of birds we have on Janu.



“How long will it take them,” James pointed to the others, “to repair this opening?”

“About three days if all goes well,” Jogn replied.

The group had returned to the minivan and were now headed to another destination. It ended up being a museum of sorts showing the development of their race of thousands of years. They had an ongoing religion mixed up with several different god types. They didn’t worship idols as such but there were great shrines deep in underground places where the mummified remains of great religious leaders were held. These were said to date back to pre-enlightenment, before their race came out of the ground.

Hours had passed before arriving at their final tour site. They exited the minivan and followed Jogn through a large iris door leading outside the dome area. They stepped into a carefully maintained park where grass, trees and bushes were placed in an orderly fashion. Small lights lit paths. Jogn looked up into the sky and said, “We must be careful and not get caught out in a storm. The weather is supposed to be fine tonight.”

“Jogn, this is such a restful place,” Brigitte turned her head toward her.

“I come here all the time with the kids during my time off,” she replied. “Further on there is sand where we all bury ourselves in. If you go there just after sundown, the sand is so warm. Sometimes we just go to sleep.”

“What kind of non sentient animals, do you have on the planet,” Dr Reeves asked.

“There are still quite a few large ones that run wild in the lower mountains. They can be dangerous if provoked but we try and let them be. The smaller animals invade the farms and destroy the produce and it’s difficult to control them without killing them off but we’ll still working on the problem. There are a couple of them that can be dangerous also.”

While Jogn continued to talk, Lisa and James walked off across the park. Brigitte, Mi Sook and Joshua listened to Jogn describe the various kind’s of wildlife on Janu. Sara and Laden strolled about the grass.

“These beings are so incredibly human,” Lisa said off handily, “They’re peaceful and actually comfortable to be around.”

“Yeah, they’ve developed an amazing advanced culture. It’s a shame those goons from the Domain of the Dead know they’re here,” James answered. “If they don’t find some way to fight them, I don’t think they’ll have much of a chance once we leave.”

“I find this whole thing such a paradox,” Lisa said.

“What do you mean?” James asked.

“Well, us and our powers for example and then this world of intelligent worms. In fact, it’s a world of advanced intelligent worms. Also, this Empire of dead people that runs this part of space, isn’t that a contradiction in itself,” Lisa said.

“I guess you’re right. I actually enjoy all this power business. It seems that nothing can hurt us,” James replied and then looked around, “Hey! Where’s everyone?”

“Back this way, I think,” Lisa said, “We haven’t gone that far. Is that the dome over there?”

A distance thunder could be heard and a cool breeze blew through the park.

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“HMMMMMM...” Jogn said looking up at the stars. “Thunder. It isn’t supposed to rain tonight. We shouldn’t be out in the rain. It gets very bad sometimes.”

Joshua looked around, “Sara, You or Phil see where Lisa and James went to?”

“They’re big enough to look after themselves,” Laden replied, “and headed back toward the entrance way.”

“Where are you going? We need to find them,” Joshua spoke to Laden.

“You find them. I’m going inside before the storm hits,” Laden kept walking.

“What if it was you out there?” Brigitte asked this time.

“It’s not,” Laden laughed.

“I’ll go and look for them,” Jogn said not understanding the dialogue that had just taken place between Laden and Brigitte. “All of you just wait at the entrance way.”

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“I thought I heard them over here,” Lisa said calling the name of Jogn.

“Let’s keep heading for that dome there,” James said as he felt a bit of moisture on his face. “I can’t believe we are lost in a park.”

“You sure that it’s not that farther one over there?” Lisa pointed in another direction.

“I’m not sure. Let’s just keep moving,” James replied.

The rain was coming down steadily now with the temperature falling rapidly.

A crashing could be heard about them when Lisa was hit in the back. “Hey, something hit me!”

“It’s snow. No, it’s hail,” James showed the fist size chunk of ice.

Both rain and hail increased hitting both James and Lisa on the heads and backs.

“We need to find some shelter, fast,” Lisa said.

They started running along a path now. The rain was bucketing down around them with the occasional lump of hail hitting them. Visibility was practically zero. The only way they knew they were still on the path was the difference between it and the grass. The water seeps through the mesh that protected them bodies and they felt tiny electrical currents flowing over their skin, popping like the sound of firecrackers on New Years day.

“What’s happening to us?” Lisa yelled out.

“I don’t know but we must keep going. We can’t stop,” James yelled back.

The full strength of the storm was now released and both knew they needed to find a place soon. They were now feeling a burning sensation about their bodies and the cracking continued about them.

“Look! A light,” Lisa pointed.

Just in front of them stood a partial dome two or so metres in height with the iris door open. Lisa and James ran into the opening out of the storm.

“Wow, we made it,” both felt finally relieved.

“How the burning?” Lisa asked.

“I think it’s going away,” James replied and was about to ask Lisa was but heard a sound in the back of the place. “I don’t think we’re alone,” he said looking around.

“Can you see anything?” Lisa was looking as something human sized jumped out of dark and grabbed James face on. It month was biting at James’s head trying to take it off. Lisa screamed. James fell backward down on the desk wrestling with whatever it was trying to pull it away from him. Lisa suddenly took a hold of its tail

trying to pull it away but it was locked onto James's head. James was also screaming feeling the pressure of the creature's teeth about his face and head. Lisa still pulled not managing to budge the creature.

"Help! Help us!" Lisa screamed out through the iris door. "Please help us!"

The rain had now lightened up. She thought she saw a white figure approach them and then felt herself being pushed aside. She then saw Jogn quickly open her mouth wide revealing the needle pointed teeth, something that scared Lisa even more. At first, she thought the worm was going to bite into James but saw her bite into the creature just below the head. Lisa heard bones crunch as the worm closed its mouth around the creature twisting it one-way and then another. Jogn continued to jerk the creature about until it released its hold on James. With a twist of its head, the worm sent the now dead creature out through the iris door. James just lay in shock.

"We need to get him back to the ship," Lisa said, still frightened from the ordeal.



## Chapter 15 – Mi Sook

Both Lisa and James had burnt marks the length of their body. Jogn told them that once the drazil had locked its mouth on to its prey, it was very difficult to dislodge it. However, Dr Reeves was more concerned with what caused the marks. Lisa had explained about the rain and the way it reacted to them.

"Well, it seems that we have some weaknesses. The mesh that covers our body leaks. The reasons why we haven't had any problems up until now, we've been using part of the original water that we had with us on our first trip through the wormhole. We'll have to be aware of that in that future," Dr Reeves finished off.

"How are you guys?" Brigitte asked the two.

"Just sore," Lisa replied, "and perhaps a bit shocked."

"Yeah, sore," James agreed. "Well, that really pricked my bubble in thinking that I was invincible. And that creature scared the daylights out of me."

"I guess we can be thankful that you're still alive," Brigitte said.

"You should have seen Jogn bite into that thing. I'm sure glad the worms are on our side," Lisa told Brigitte.

"Well, speaking about that. Do you think you'll be able to assist Laden tomorrow? I want you and him to work with some of their weapons experts. I'm hoping they can find something to use as a defence from our ship," Brigitte asked.

"Will Laden co-operate?" James questioned.

"With some prodding and ordering from his Captain!" Brigitte smiled.

The next day Laden had initially refused to have anything to do with helping the worms, but when Brigitte explained that it could improve their chances of returning home, he gave in. So, James, Joshua and Phil Laden were assigned to work with some of Janu's weapon experts and the scientists. Dr Reeves was to do similar things with medical experts while Sara asked to study their star charts.

"Everyone has been assigned to a guide to assist in finding their way to the various labs they need to go to," Jogn said directing her voice down over Brigitte. "Is there anything else?"

"Thank you Jogn," Brigitte answered, "Mi Sook wants to know more about your computer systems."

"Of course. A friend of my husband will help you with that. He's helped to design one of our latest system that controls our fighter craft," Jogn said. "I'll take her there myself."



Jogn and Mi Sook entered the tube transportation system. They were told that all the domes were connected through this system. It was an extensive array of tubes stretching throughout the city. The tubes were made of the material and fashion as the domes. Larger tubes connected cities with other cities. There were limited roads on Janu as air cars were only used above the surface.

Mi Sook was taken to what Jogn called Central Data Flow Control. To Mi Sook, it was just another dome but learned later that it was a dome underground. Upon arriving, Mi Sook stood amazed at the seemingly advanced technology.

“On our world we have compressed tiny circuits and tubes of various sizes that transmit data in the form of light. In addition, data and electricity is also transmitted in the form of special waves but I haven’t seen any of this on your planet,” Mi Sook said to Sibn, Jogn’s friend.

“In some ways, we aren’t so different. All of our conductive lines that take the data or electricity from one place to another are inside the walls of the transportation tubes. The tubes themselves are made of non-conductive materials so workers just use a conductive mineral when they fashion the tubes,” Sibn answered.

“Wow,” Mi Sook said, “That’s really convenient, but what do you do when they develop a short or a break?”

“That’s rare, but we do have repair buses that go to the break and easily repair it. Workers can easily soften the tube walls and restore it like it was,” Sibn said raising her hand and pointed, “The object you see before you is our main Central Control Unit where data is collected and displayed to us.”

Mi Sook saw a massive configuration of thousands of kilometres of chalk white 5 cm tubes resembling a den of snakes. The configuration took up half of the dome and extended deep into the surface. Monitor screens were encased into the ceiling panels. There were hundreds, perhaps thousands of large balls spaced throughout the configuration. In fact, the closer Mi Sook looked the more she realized that the whole configuration was encased. No wires could be seen anywhere. The only thing she could think of was, “How does it work?”

“Well, those large balls each contain control and storage switches and their actions are controlled by the instructions contained in the data they receive. Each control ball and storage area is in communication with all the other control balls. We have two types of data flow, one for statistics and one for instructions. Each ball has its own set of data instructions and that tells it what to do with the data statistics it receives. We have large balls deep down that permanently keep the data statistics,” Sibn instructed.

“What a computer!” Mi Sook said, “Does it have intelligence? What we refer to as AI.”

Sibn paused and look at Mi Sook strangely and then answered, “I’m not sure what you’re asking. Nothing can have intelligence unless the Great Being gives it to living beings such as us and you!”

A chill went to Mi Sook. She hadn’t even thought about these beings having religion and she wondered whether she had just insulted them. “I didn’t mean to insult you or your religion. I also believe in Supreme God that made all beings.”

Sibn watched her with her large white eyes, “Tell us about your God. We can discuss computers and data anytime. As most of our society believes in the Great Being, however our society has become so busy as work takes most of our time, we have less time to discuss such things,” Sibn said.

“Well, some people just believe in God from the view that there must be a First Cause of all things in our universe, for every effect must have a cause. Others say that God exists because we see everywhere the operations of an intelligent Cause in nature. While others say, based on the moral consciousness and the history of mankind,





which exhibits a moral order and purpose and that this can only be explained on the supposition of the existence of God. So conscience and human history testify that there is a God that judges the earth," Mi Sook paused to see the response from Sibn. She hadn't expected to provide a theological lecture.

"I would agree with that," Sibn truthfully replied. "Tell me more."

"Seems like there are many names for God, Jehovah Jira is one of them, whereas the only other word generally used to denote the Supreme Being, is the word, "LORD." We have the Bible and the existence of God is taken for granted in these ancient writings. There are no arguments given to prove it. It's said that he who disbelieves this truth is spoken of as one devoid of understanding."

"This is also well known on Janu. As I said, only the Great Being can give intelligence. I find the similarities in this belief very interesting, please continue."

"Well, there's not much else to say. We read the Bible and believe that it's the Word of God. We believe that God sent his Son, Jesus to save us from our sins," Mi Sook wasn't quite sure what else to say.

"God's Son? Some of Janu's more religious people believe that the Great Being will come to our world some day."

"If I can get to my ship, I can download a copy of our holy book. Would you like that?" Mi Sook had really grown excited now. Their beliefs were indeed very similar.

"Wait please," Sibn turned to a wall monitor and push invisible buttons above the monitor. "Is this your Bible?"

Mi Sook saw the English words display on the monitor, "How did you get that?"

"We had a complete download of your computer system when you first landed," Sibn answered.

"Okay," Mi Sook seemed surprised.

"Mi Sook, I thank you for this gift and I will study this book about your God. We have no such book in our religion," Sibn. "Everything is in the form of legends.

"The rest of the day was spent in talking on computer subjects and sometimes back on religion," Mi Sook said to the reassembled eight in Brigitte's accommodation.

Everybody had given their report and Mi Sook had been the last. They all stood silent not knowing how exactly to respond to the excited Mi Sook.

"Well, that's certainly interesting," Brigitte responded.

"Interesting! I can't believe my ears. We've here less than a week and she's filling their minds with this rubbish!" Laden looked critically at Mi Sook. "And now they have a Bible. That should have been forbidden. Why was a Bible allowed to be stored with the AI? Do you know what you have done? You've interfered with a sentient species culture."

Mi Sook could be seen cowering down in her seat with her head lowered.

"You Christians are all alike spreading your lies everywhere," Laden continued.

"I think that's enough, Mr Laden," Brigitte interrupted. "Let's have a little balance on things. You have made it very plain to all of us that you despise these beings refusing to help them. Now, Mi Sook has treated him like equals."

Sara then responded, "however, I do agree with Phil that this is not a missionary trip and the culture of these people should not be interfered with. Of all the problems we're facing, we don't need a religious fanatic creating more problems."



Mi Sook was now crying slightly to herself.

"This meeting is closed. I don't want to hear anymore on this subject. Mi Sook did nothing wrong. Thank you for your reports everyone," Brigitte went to her cabin.

Laden and Sara stared at Mi Sook as they got up from the table and returned to their cabin also. Joshua just shook his head in discuss at Laden and Sara's reaction. The others went away a bit dumbfounded. They didn't agree with Laden and Sara's actions but neither did they really sanction religious activities such as this.

## **Chapter 16 – Anti-matter Universe**

Days turned into weeks. Laden and Sara avoided Mi Sook whenever they could. There was nothing more said about the event with her but Mi Sook continued her discussions as more and more of the worms took interest in the subject. Laden, James and Joshua were giving their daily report to everyone while seated on the cushioned floor. James and Lisa were leaning back on fat blue, red and yellow pillows provided by the Janu. Dr Reeves was laying down propping his head up by his hand. Brigitte was cross-legged with a clipboard in her hands. The Iris door had been left open.

"The Janu scientist have really been excited about something recently," Joshua said, "but they aren't openly sharing everything with us."

"They don't trust us and I certainly don't trust them," Laden responded, "They're very secretive about everything. They want but they never give."

"Oh, I don't believe that. They just not accustomed to working with beings like us. I think they feel quite uncomfortable being around us and have difficulty in relating to us," James entered the conversation.

"I cringe every time they open their mouths. I think they would as soon take a bite of me," Laden said.

"Oh, I don't know about that Mr. Laden. Do you think that you would taste that good?" Mi Sook smiled and said jokingly.

The others immediately laughed understanding Mi Sook's joke but Laden eyed her dirtily.

"If you don't have anything positive to say, don't say anything," Laden directed his words towards Mi Sook.

"Now, Mr. Laden, it was only said in fun," Brigitte said.

Mi Sook swiped the smile from her face and lowered her head after the reprimand from Laden.

"I think Phil is correct. We've been here for weeks and haven't learned anything. I can't find any relationship in the patterns of stars in their star charts. I think they're holding back purposefully. They don't seem to know what I'm talking about when I ask about well known star references," Sara said with a bit of anger.

Lisa wanted to add something in defence for Janu creatures. She found them such a delight to be around but before he could say anything, Jogn appeared at the iris door.

"I'm sorry to disturb you after such a long day, but we have just made a break thought. This is very extraordinary news," her face held an air of suspense.

"Please come in and join us," Brigitte stood up while Lisa and James moved around giving her an opening to the table they were at. "What have you found out?"

"Well, first of all, the basic atomic structure of you, your ship and everything on it has totally opposite properties than anything in our own universe!" Jogn was obviously excited, holding a small square item in one



hand that everyone surmised to be the proof and then bending down within biting distance of Sara. “And here’s the good news, our scientist found a way to isolate this basic structure by putting it behind a containment field. This has enabled us to take away the protective shielding that automatically protects you. In lowering the containment field, we have control over the reaction of the material at the atomic level. In one of our experiments when we took away the containment field, the resulting explosive took away half of the inside of a dome!”

Brigette, Joshua and the other looked shocked, “was anyone hurt?” They quickly asked.

“Oh, yes, everyone’s okay. Just a bit shocked. But don’t you understand? We have the ability to protect ourselves from the Domain now. There’s enough base structure in what we already have for a lifetime. However, for you, sadly, it’s a different situation.” Jogn’s wide mouth turned downward. “The universe that you have come from, seems entirely opposite to ours and the field that protects you is weakening. We estimate that you have two months at the most before it completely breaks down. And please forgive me for saying this, but we hope that you aren’t anywhere near our star’s system when that happens! I’m really sorry.” She looked around; her large oval eyes revealed sadness. “The Janu people have so enjoyed their new found relationship with you. It is with sadness that we tell you this.”

“Of course, we will prepare to leave as soon as possible. We would not want to endanger you or your people and we are very happy that we have been able to help you in this way,” Brigitte said.

Jogn moved her large head and body around again, “You will have things to discuss,” Jogn hurriedly left them to themselves, the patter of her feet creating a purr on the floor.

Sara got out of her seat and stared, “Well, I now hope you listen to reason,” she now directed herself toward Brigitte. “We can no longer stay in this here! Can you understand what that beast has just said? We should have seen this ourselves. It’s been staring us right in the face. This universe must be anti-matter and we know our universe is matter. That storm on Jupiter somehow created that wormhole and connected the two.”

“I think it even gets worst,” Dr Reeves interrupted. “If you remember, when we were on the other side in our own universe, we still had this shield about us. Right? I kept wondering about that and now the picture is clearer. Sara is correct, we represent matter in this universe but I think when we are present in our own universe, we somehow represent anti-matter! We’re as dangerous there as we are here.”

“When the combined explosive power of every atom in our bodies and all the material that makes up our ship, comes into contact with this universe, anti-matter, who knows how much space will be totally destroyed and everything in it,” Sara’s voice was now quite forceful.

“Fools. All of you; fools! Everybody that we’ve had dealing with regarding this mission have been fools,” he looked around at everyone, “and you’re the biggest of them all,” Laden yelled in a crazed voice toward Brigitte. “You’ve been playing ‘save the worlds from the big bad Domain,’ while our clocks were ticking faster and faster all the time,” Laden eyes were opened wide with fear; his breathing fast. “Fools, fools, fools,” he said stomping off to his own accommodations.

Brigette held her pose as she watched Laden march off then said, “Dr Reeves is correct. We’re not only a threat to this universe but also to our own universe. I’m deeply sorry that this has fallen on all of you. If I had the choice, it would have only happened to me. But we are all a danger.” She paused obviously thinking to herself, “but we aren’t leaving yet, if at all. The Domain of the Dead is still a ways off. When it comes time for us to ignite, I’d prefer to be right in the middle of their space, if not on their home planet. However, before that point, let’s see if we can be of any other help to anybody.”



"I feel the same," Joshua repeated.

"I'm in," James said.

"So am I," Lisa said.

"I'll do what the Captain orders," Mi Sook followed. "We're still under the Interplanetary Space Force."

"What the hell," Dr Reeves joined in.

"Laden is right, you are fools! I can't believe what I'm hearing," Sara stood up and ran out of the room.

"We leave tomorrow," Brigitte concluded.

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"We're sorry it had to end this way," Jogn was saying to Brigitte and others standing outside Jupiter's Storm. Some five hundred worms stood about the tarmac near the ship. Along with Jogn, an official government designation expressed their thanks. Jogn's husband Relt was also there along with a number of the scientist and workers the group had dealt with over the weeks. In addition, a large group of worms stood around Mi Sook chattering to each other with Sibn heading up the group.

Brigitte noticed out of the corner of her eye that several were laying their hands on Mi Sook with their heads lowered. Were they praying? Interesting, Brigitte thought to herself.

A speech was then given by some head government official about the eternal friendship to two different species of sentient beings. Brigitte was sad to be leaving in this way. They could have learned much more from these beings but it wasn't to be so, ever. She sadly thought, they were leaving to meet their deaths, heading toward an empire run by zombies and we're supposed to look happy.

The ceremony had eventually ended. They had all entered the ship and now prepared for take off. "Okay, everyone at your stations," Joshua said of the communications. "Mr Laden, how are the engines?"

"They're working," was the cute reply.

The engines fired up and Jupiter's Storm slowly began to rise. Those seated behind the cockpit watched the worms grow smaller and smaller.

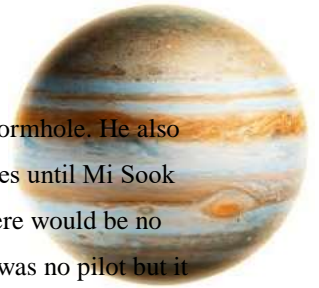
"Leaving atmosphere," Joshua said.

Broken ships and wreckage still floated about space. Smaller Janu fighters and space tugs were seen attached to some of the derelict Domain ships.

Jupiter's Storm maneuvered through the debris field. "Okay, increasing speed," Brigitte said. The ship was now speeding away from Janu toward the Domain of the Dead.

## **Chapter 17 – Home?**

The day had gone well. Joshua and James were now on watch in the cockpit. As usually Brigitte and Joshua set eight hour watches each. Mi Sook, James, Lisa, and Sara now set four-hour watches in the cockpit. Phil Laden looked after the ship's engines during the day and slept in the engine room every other night with Dr Reeves relieving Laden every second night. During the sleep period, Brigitte and Joshua, as pilots, allowed themselves to sleep at much as possible while the other four stayed awake watchful of the instruments, changes of space around them or anything all of the ordinary. It was one in the morning; both Joshua and James had fallen asleep in the cockpit. Laden had made sure of this earlier on by dousing the coffee pot with sleeping pills he had taken from medical. Laden first made sure they were asleep before he set to work in the engine room. He first welded the door



shut from the inside before he manually changed the co-ordinates of the ship back toward the wormhole. He also increased Jupiter's Storm's speech to the maximum limit. Nobody would know about the changes until Mi Sook came on watch at four to relieve James. At that time, he would cut the connection to the AI. There would be no stopping him after that. Once, near the wormhole, he would manually guide the ship into it. He was no pilot but it couldn't be that difficult. They were all crazy. Going into the heart of the Domain of the Dead to die. He had to return to let everyone know what was going on. He was going home to his wife, away from these maniacs.

Jupiter's Storm had streaked across space at phenomenal speeds. The AI had displayed the change of co-ordinates with a blinking light in the cockpit; however, there had been no acknowledgement from the pilot. Perhaps they were sleeping, as the AI had been advised that the pilot would sleep during this period. But it was strange for the pilot to change directions and not acknowledge it before going to sleep. The AI decided to leave it awhile as nothing else was out of the ordinary. At half past three, AI was alerted to the discontinuance of control to the main engines. It sounded an alarm throughout the ship.

"What!" Brigitte opened her eyes then jumping out of bed.

"I've slept in!" was Mi Sook first reaction but looking at the timer, "No, I haven't!"

Brigitte was out of her cabin headed for the cockpit. Other doors were opening, Mi Sook, Dr Reeves, Lisa and Sara.

"Hey, you two, wake up!" Brigitte shook the two but neither of them moved. Mi Sook and Dr Reeves appeared on the scene. "What's wrong with them?" Brigitte directed her question to Dr Reeves.

Dr Reeves lifted Joshua's eyelid and felt his pulse, "seems like they've been drugged."

Brigitte notice the blinking two lights on the console. One light showed a change in the co-ordinates and the other saying control had been severed from the engines with the AI. Turning back to Dr Reeves, she said, "get them awake. Now, Doctor!"

Lisa stood sleepily before Brigitte, "What's going on?"

"Come with me, quickly!" Brigitte grabbed her and headed to the engine room. They rounded the corner back behind the galley and Brigitte's hand went for the engine room's lock mechanism.

"It's stuck or something," Lisa said.

"Or something," Brigitte countered. "Phil," Brigitte called out. "Something wrong with the engines."

"There's nothing wrong with the engines. We're just going home. That's all," Laden answered smugly. "I've had it with all of you. I'm not dying in the middle of space."

"We're travelled at far too great a speed. We could crash into a meteor, planet or anything," Brigitte said.

Joshua and James arrived, "Dr Reeves filled up in. Was it Laden?"

"Yes," Brigitte answered. "He's got the door blocked somehow."

"Look at this," Mi Sook rubbed over the burn paint around the door.

"He's welded himself in," James also running his hand over the peeled paint.

"Let's get some welding gear from down below. We'll have to cut a hole into the bulkhead," James said.

"Mi Sook? See if you can find any other way to take back control. Talk to the AI and see what it suggests we do," Brigitte ordered.

Shortly after, James and Joshua had the welding gear set up and were cutting into the Bulkhead. Sara was told to set watch in the cockpit, not that it would do any good. Mi Sook was busy talking to the AI.

"Has it said anything?" Brigitte asked walking up to Mi Sook.



"The broken connections will have to be spliced together in order for the AI to take control. All the connections have been severed," Mi Sook looked into Brigitte eyes.

Sara screamed from the cockpit. Another alarm sounded throughout the ship. "Captain! Something is headed toward us."

"What is it, Mi Sook?" Brigitte was half way between the cockpit and Mi Sook's station.

"Meteorite of some kind. Too small to detect, but the AI says we have two minutes to impact," Mi Sook raised her voice.

Brigitte hurried to the engine room hatch, "We need to get in there." Joshua and James were almost finished. They tried bending the hot steel to no avail. "Just keep trying," Brigitte returned to where Mi Sook sat, "How much more time?"

"One minute before impact," Mi Sook listened carefully to the AI.

"What can we do to avert this?" Brigitte asked.

"The AI says that at the present plane of the ship, a downward burst will push the ship away from the rock," Mi Sook answered.

Brigitte shot back to the Joshua and James. They were pushing at the steel. Brigitte put her foot against it and her back against the opposite bulkhead and the circle of cut steel began to move. "That's doing it," Joshua said putting himself in the same position and pushing with his foot. The steel bent forward and James dived through hole. Brigitte, upon her feet, quickly followed. James tackled Laden knocking him on the floor away from the engine room controls.

Brigitte hit her hand down on the button introducing more fuel to the lift engines but it was too late. A momentary scraping sound was heard from the bottom of the ship. Spark flew from various panels around the ship. Brigitte quickly shut all power and gently began increasing the reverse thrust to slow Jupiter's Storm down.

The ship had almost come to a stop when the AI sounded yet another alarm. Sara burst through hatch door, "we've entered the atmosphere of a planet."

Joshua switched the forward screens on, "We're still going too fast," Brigitte said to Joshua.

"Turn the ship and use the aft engines," Joshua said quickly.

Within a few minutes, Brigitte had managed to turn the ship and was applying fuel to the aft engines and was now flying the ship backward. Joshua had reversed the view screen. Jupiter's Storm was approaching a blanket of mist and fog that stretched for hundreds of miles in every direction. Entering the mist, Brigitte finally levelled off. The lack of visibility brought on an unnerving silence. The fog muffled the sound of the engines. Their movement had slowed to smoothness. Brush could be seen rubbing against the underside of the ship.

"There's movement." James said.

"What kind of movement?" was Brigitte's reply.

"I'm not sure yet, visibility's too poor," James' answer.