

Chapter 12

Means To An End

Captain Jacques Jordan stepped out of his Marineville apartment and into the cool early morning air. He glanced at his watch, it was just after 4am. He hadn't even attempted to sleep; there were far too many things on his mind.

Firstly, he had to release Lieutenant Shore from her cell. All the facts seemed to back her story - and Admiral Beatty had indicated that he also believed she was telling the truth. Jordan frowned as he remembered the video-phone call. There had been something in Beatty's eyes that he hadn't liked. Still, one thing at a time...

As he drove towards the detention centre, the navy captain began to feel more optimistic. He would tell Atlanta that he believed her story. They would work together, not against each other. Besides, he owed the girl an apology. He would get this whole mess sorted out.

A WASP security guard hastily stubbed out his cigarette when he saw the Captain's car pulling up outside. He saluted smartly when Jordan entered.

Jordan returned the guard's salute. "Lieutenant Shore is to be released, all charges are dropped."

"I'm sorry sir, there's been some trouble..."

"Trouble? What do you mean man?"

"Er, the Lieutenant sir, Lieutenant Shore, she, she's dead sir. Committed suicide in her cell."

Jordan froze, "Dead? When did this happen? Why wasn't I notified?"

“Er... World Intelligence sir, they said...”

Jordan turned as an inner door swung open.

“That’s all right Higgs,” a grey suited man said softly, “I’ll deal with this.” The man stepped forward confidently, flourishing an I.D. card, “Taylor, World Intelligence Network. With respect Captain Jordan, this is now a World Security matter. I must ask you to leave.”

“Nonsense!” I am the Commander here and I demand to know what has happened!”

As Taylor returned his I.D. card to an inner pocket, he exchanged a meaningful glance with the security guard. “I’ll just take your gun Captain,” he said quietly, as Higgs stepped quickly behind Jordan grabbing his arms and pinning them to his sides.

Jordan struggled furiously, “This is mutiny!”

The WIN agent smiled coldly and shook his head as he pulled Jordan’s pistol from its holster, “Oh no, Captain Jordan, on the contrary, I assure you that this is Government business...”

Some important Government business was also being conducted in Unity City — behind closed doors...

“Frankly, Mister President, with all due respect, we don’t have enough public support to fully implement your plans.”

The World President glared across his expansive desk at the grey suited man sitting opposite, “Nonsense! The threat is real. The undersea races must be brought to heel.”

“Yes absolutely Mister President. However, the majority of the general public fail to see the real issues involved. Polls indicate that they don’t appreciate the potential security implications.”

“I’ll have somebody’s head for that botched terror attack on Marineville...”

The man in grey shifted uneasily in his seat, “With respect, Mister President, even if the attack had been successful, Marineville was a military target...”

“Meaning?”

“Civilians expect the military to suffer casualties from time to time.”

“Then we need some civilian casualties in order to make them aware of the danger that we face.”

“Quite so sir. Should there be a significant attack on a civilian target, then our cause would gain much support.”

The World President shrugged, “Regrettable, but I guess it would be for the greater good of mankind. We need to strike at the alien sea creatures before they become too strong.”

“May I suggest an attack on a coastal tourist resort, with significant loss of life?”

“Do you have one in mind?”

“No, Mister President, but with your permission, my staff will select one without delay. Somewhere in Australia perhaps?”

The President looked thoughtful, “But how do you propose we lay the blame squarely at the feet of the fish-men?”

“The fish-men don’t own the world media Mister President; you do. The media must comply with your security directives. We shall ensure that the international press paint an appropriate picture — in the interests of World Security of course.”

“Excellent, see to it... But please don’t bore me with the details. I just want results.”

The President pushed back his chair and walked over to the window. He gazed down at the people in the city streets far below, “Just one year ago, I was the undisputed ruler, that is, leader, of this entire planet. Then, those accursed fish-men were discovered... Now I’m mocked by other members of the United Planets Organization. They say I have no right to speak for Earth, that Earth is barbaric and feudal and has no one leader. I intend to wipe out every last one of those vile sea creatures — for the good of all humanity.”

Al Jackson sat on the bunk in Atlanta’s cell, wiping blood from his hands. The WIN agent looked up angrily as the cell door was suddenly swung open, “I said I wasn’t to be disturbed.”

Higgs glanced around the cell. “Who’d have thought there’d have been so much blood!” he ventured, “Real nasty business... Guess that must have hurt real bad.”

Jackson dabbed his bloodstained handkerchief in the general direction of his nose and glared.

Atlanta was standing in a corner of the cell, her hands still handcuffed behind her back, “Let me out of here!” she shouted hoarsely, “He tried to kill me!”

“Really?” the guard asked innocently. “Guess you’d both better come along with me. Captain Jordan’s waiting in the interview room.”

Jackson looked worried, “Jordan’s here?”

Higgs nodded, “Yeah, your buddy sent me to fetch you.”

Atlanta felt a surge of hope as she was led out of the cell and down the corridor. Jackson limped awkwardly along behind, still clutching a handkerchief to his bloodied nose.

Captain Jordan was sitting at a desk. He looked up as Atlanta and the others entered the room.

“Jaques!” Atlanta exclaimed, horrified to see that the Captain was gagged, his wrists tied to the arms of his chair.

“Hello again, Lieutenant Shore.”

Atlanta froze, she recognised that voice.

“I see you are in remarkably good health,” Taylor closed the door, “Al must be losing his touch.”

Atlanta was speechless... so she was going to die after all.

“I see you’ve been getting your kicks Al.” Taylor noted.

“What’s he doing here?” Jackson scowled.

“Captain Jordan? Oh, he came nosing around and asking rather awkward questions about this young lady’s recent suicide. I see she hasn’t quite got the hang of it yet.”

“Very funny. So, what do we do about him?”

“I guess we kill two birds with one stone. We’ll probably get a bonus for this.”

“A jail break?” Jackson asked, suddenly feeling much better.

“Yes. The traitor grabs Jordan’s gun, kills him in cold blood, and then makes a run for it...” Taylor turned to Higgs, “Okay, hold the young lady still for a moment while I dispose of Jordan. Then you can shoot her.”

“Hold on!” Jackson said hurriedly. “There’s always Conva...”

“The Prison Planet?”

“Yeah. Why not? Jordan’s dead body is all the evidence we need that she’s a murdering terrorist.”

Atlanta didn’t like the look of the smirk on Jackson’s face, “What are you talking about?”

“It’s a new government policy honey,” the agent explained, “Conva isn’t subject to Earth law. It’s a handy place to deal with people like you and your father — in any way we want, no questions asked — in the interests of Earth security.”

Taylor nodded approvingly, “Not a bad idea. Under interrogation she can name all her terrorist friends in the WASP so we can remove all the bad apples.”

“I’m no terrorist!”

Jackson laughed, “You’d be amazed at what you’re gonna confess.”

“Why are you doing this?” Atlanta shouted, “Are you working for Titan?”

Taylor managed to look hurt, “Our business is Earth Security. We’re just obeying orders like any good soldiers.” He took Jordan’s navy pistol from his pocket, casually released the safety catch and aimed the gun at the helpless Captain...

Lieutenant Fisher frowned thoughtfully as he drove his car towards the ramp which led down to the submarine pens. He couldn’t believe the events of the last week. Stingray missing in action; Commander Shore, and now Atlanta, arrested on charges of treason.

He glanced at his watch, he was early. He’d just have time to get over to the detention block before he went out on patrol in Barracuda. He braked

sharply, and turned the car around. He had to hear Atlanta's side of the story. He doubted he'd be allowed to speak to her, but he had to try.

A few minutes later, Fisher was pulling in to the detention block parking area. There was only one other car there, the one allocated to Captain Jacques Jordan. Fisher sighed; he had a feeling that this was going to be a wasted journey.

As he got out of his car, the Lieutenant was startled by a woman's scream — Atlanta? Fisher clenched his fists, and thinking there was liable to be more mutiny before the day was out, raced up the steps to the outer office and flung open the door.

The duty guard wasn't at his post. Warily, Fisher pushed open the inner door. He could hear a voice coming from down the corridor. It was Atlanta. She was shouting something. Then there was a man's voice, not one he recognised. It certainly wasn't Jacques Jordan.

Fisher edged cautiously down the short corridor. The sounds were coming from the interview room. He paused outside the closed door, uncertain what to do next.

Atlanta screamed again. Fisher's hand instinctively went to his holstered gun.

"No!" Atlanta screamed, "Don't shoot!"

Lieutenant Fisher drew his pistol and kicked open the door.

There was Captain Jordan, tied to a chair and being threatened by a gunman.

Jordan flung himself to one side, causing his chair to overbalance and he crashed to the floor — out of the line of fire.

Taylor spun around but Fisher shot first, firing twice. The government man went down instantly, clutching his chest.

Higgs hurriedly backed away, dragging a struggling Atlanta along in front of him as a shield.

"Look out!" Atlanta shouted as Jackson drew his gun from a shoulder holster.

Fisher ducked back as a bullet ricocheted off the steel door.

Jackson laughed, "Throw down the gun, sailor boy, or the lady gets the next bullet."

But the next bullet came from under the desk. Al Jackson fell backwards against the wall; he was dead before his body slid to the ground.

Under the desk, Captain Jordan was lying on his side, still tied to the chair, but now holding his gun. Without saying a word, Higgs tossed his own gun to the floor and raised his hands.

Fisher grabbed the keys from the guard's belt and quickly unlocked Atlanta's handcuffs. She hurried over to help Captain Jordan. Kneeling down beside him she pulled off the gag and untied his wrists.

"Merci Lieutenant Fisher," Jordan said as he slowly got to his feet, rubbing his aching shoulder, "I think you just saved your commanding officer's life."