

## **Chapter 14**

### **Corruption At High Levels**

Titan gazed imperiously around the large coral table. Most of the undersea leaders had sent their representatives to Titanica. Titan had been gratified that Aphony, ruler of Pacifica, had chosen to come in person. Much as Titan despised Aphony, he sorely needed allies right now.

Titan raised a hand, "Silence!"

Everyone at the table stopped speaking. All eyes were now on the undisputed ruler of Titanica — perhaps the last hope of the undersea peoples.

"I have received interesting news concerning our enemies, the Terraineans. They fight amongst themselves. My surface agents inform me that the Terrainean government has become unstable, due of course to my own efforts on behalf of the undersea civilizations. Many of our enemies have been neutralized by their own kind. Stingray was destroyed by a Terrainean spacecraft. The accursed Troy Tempest is dead." Titan was pleased to see that Aphony nodded his head in agreement. "The Commander of the Terrainean submarine force has been incarcerated, along with his daughter. My agents report that they are to be executed..."

There were mutterings of approval and astonishment from around the table.

"As I speak," Titan continued, "one of my Surface Agents has informed me that the Terrainean President is planning an attack, on his own people. An attack which will be blamed on all those that dwell beneath the seas.

So be it. Let the fools destroy themselves and promote fear and distrust amongst their own people."

Titan stood up and raised a fist, “Shall we strike now? While the Terraineans are at their weakest?”

All eyes turned to Aphony, the peaceful leader of Pacifica.

Without hesitation, he nodded his head in agreement.

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“What?” Jordan asked incredulously. “Why? That is, on what grounds General?”

“The President is tearing up treaties that preserve international and interplanetary peace. He won’t listen to reason — either to the national leaders or the military.”

“And you ask for my support?”

“Yes Captain. If the world leaders push through a vote of no confidence, the President will certainly declare Martial Law; and that needs the support of the military.”

Jordan frowned. “I have reason to believe that Admiral Beatty was in some way implicated in the recent attack on Marineville. I have evidence that the attack was carried out by WIN agents. It seems to me that there is corruption at high levels.”

“What’s your evidence?” asked Zero.

“I have a witness... Lieutenant Shore tried to thwart the attack. Three government men tried to kill us both. They tried to stage a murder — with me as the victim and Atlanta as the killer — a phoney jail break — to eliminate both of us. Furthermore I have one of the men locked up in the cell block; the other two are dead.” Jordan placed two small cards on the coffee table. “These men carried their IdentICODES. I’ve ‘ad them checked, they were definitely government agents.”

Zero picked up the I.D. cards. “With friends like these...” he muttered glancing at the photographs inside. “Say, these two have clearance Alpha1...”

“Oui, General Zero, the World President’s personal bodyguard; responsible only to ‘im.”

“This could be all we need to make our move Captain,” Zero said quietly. “With your permission, we’ll leave immediately for Unity City — with that captured WIN agent. With your joint testimonies we’ll persuade the world leaders to convene an emergency meeting and register a vote of no confidence pending further investigation.”

“Certainly General, we can leave right away. I’ll have a jet standing by at the airstrip.”

“That jet of yours won’t be necessary Captain. Just arrange landing clearance and we can be on our way.”

Jordan used Atlanta’s telephone to advise the tracking station and alert security. “It is done General Zero. The prisoner is being brought over and you are clear to bring in your aircraft.”

Zero took out his personal communicator. “Okay Ross, bring her in, code one, one, five zero blue. Two passengers and one prisoner to pick up.”

Within seconds, a Fireball Junior spacecraft was descending to the Marineville complex.

“Okay... let’s get on our way!” Zero yelled above the sound of the retros.

WASP security guards handed the handcuffed prisoner over to Space Lieutenant Ken Ross.

“Okay Ross,” General Zero said briskly, “I’ll fly us to Unity City. Take the prisoner aft and ensure he doesn’t cause any trouble; and above all, make sure he stays alive.”

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As Ross headed for the rear section with Higgs, General Zero escorted his two guests through to the flight deck. He pointed to the co-pilot's chair, "Take a seat Atlanta, you'll enjoy the trip. Don't worry Captain Jordan, this flight will only take about ten minutes; with the artificial gravity you won't feel a thing."

Soon Fireball XL7 Junior was blasting away from Marineville and streaking into the clear morning sky.

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Somewhere in Unity City, a woman was speaking anxiously to Admiral Beatty over a scrambled communications channel, "We've lost all contact with our operatives at Marineville."

There was a pause, "Is that Shore woman still alive?"

"Last reports indicated that Lieutenant Shore had been released from her cell and was being debriefed by Captain Jordan."

"Jordan's alive?! Sam, we'll have to make our move now. Once Bandranaik declares Martial Law we'll control the law — in fact I'll be the law. I'll have all of those traitors executed; every last one of them."