

CAPTURE

Chapter XIV

Denise and her Reidforcian uniform flew back into the hallway where she fell in a heap against the wall. Denise lay motionless. She had taken a direct hit from the trazer inside the hanger.

She left the gymnasium and resumed her duties walking around the facility evaluating the next step. As she was nearing the check-in area she saw Lord Froth and Yendor walking together and conversing quietly. Denise couldn't hear what was being said, but could tell by the way they were talking that Lord Froth had to be asking Yendor details about the journey to the outpost. She was certain that he was also trying to get more information about the capabilities of the ZX/2.

"I sure hope that Yendor is on our side," thought Denise to herself.

If Yendor was truly released from the control of Lord Froth this would provide an excellent advantage for the escape.

Denise had to figure out a way to return to the holding area so she could help implement the plot.

Yendor noticed her and motioned for her to follow them.

At the end of the hallway, two doors flung opened, and they entered the dining area. The room smelled and looked like the dining room back on Reidforcia. Food was all over the floor and the tables were arranged in a triangle. Lord Froth took the prominent seat at the head of the table and motioned for his troops to be seated. There were about a dozen

soldiers at the tables. Hoping that they weren't about to have dinner, Denise took a seat close to the doorway. Denise knew that if they were to be fed, her disguise would be discovered; since she would have to take off her helmet.

All of the rooms had just enough light to get around. The Reidforcian helmet provided additional visual aid so it wasn't a major factor for Denise, but she noticed that Yendor was having difficulty seeing things.

Lord Froth began to speak from his throne at the front of the room, "My fellow Reidforcians, today is a great day for our Potentate. We have successfully captured the equipment that will make us the greatest force ever assembled in the galaxy. With this new technology we will be able to defeat the Confederation once and for all! Our good friend Yendor Remlap has told me about the CIG's advancements in technology. We now have acquired this technology and we can utilize it on our own armada."

A great cheer went up in the room.

"With your help we will be successful in this mission and you will return to the mother planet as heroes. Join me as we feast on the fruits of Reidforcia!" Lord Froth stood to his feet and raised his scepter towards the ceiling.

A loud cheer went up from the monsters around him, and the food began to come out of the kitchen.

One of the soldiers yelled, "Fresh goloti meat. I haven't had this in ages," then pulled off his helmet exposing his ugly face. The grotesque figure then began slobbering over the raw meat and the red blood dribbled down his jowls onto the front of his uniform. He took his glove and flung the juices across the floor while laughing at his good fortune.

Denise panicked because she knew as soon as she pulled off her helmet her deception would be given away.

Just then the sound of a Knoxthian trazer blast came from the gymnasium. It startled everyone in the room. The soldiers jumped to their feet and headed down the hallway. Denise followed taking full advantage of the situation. Lord Froth led the way, and when the doors in front of them opened to the gymnasium screams were heard.

When Denise entered the room she saw the bloody mess the trazer fire had caused

when it had blown one of the prisoners to pieces on impact, and she felt her legs go weak wondering if it was her father. Joseph looked up and recognized the uniform. He knew that Denise had succeeded in at least one phase of the plan. He gave her a nod so she knew that everything was OK.

She took the position where she had stood before. She was close to the equipment box she had stashed. She stood motionless while Lord Froth climbed the steps of the pedestal.

Silence pervaded the room as Lord Froth stood quietly in front of the crowd.

Denise could barely see Yendor, and thought that he was doing something behind the regal soldier, but she wasn't quite sure. It looked like sign language.

After his aid read the decree to those in the holding area, Lord Froth continued to stand before his new servants to stare out over the crowd, looking for anyone who might defy his orders. Just as suddenly as he entered, he stepped down from the stage and turned to return to the dining hall.

Denise making a bold move approached the self-acclaimed emperor and made a request.

Saluting and then bowing at the waist, she asked, "Lord Froth, your highness. May I have the honor of watching over these lowly creatures while you and our faithful loyal troops, enjoy the feast you have set out. I would be honored if you would accept my offer."

"You are truly an inspiration to our race. Yes, you may take guard over these wretched excuses for life forms. If they are disruptive, show them the Reidforcians punishment," Lord Froth answered. He then turned, with Yendor by his side, to return to the festivities in the other room. The other guards followed leaving Denise to watch over the entire group.

As soon as Denise was alone she motioned towards Joseph who quickly ran over to where Denise had stashed the weapons and equipment. The others in the room gasped as Joseph made this mad dash across the room. They were even more surprised when the guard did nothing to stop him. A murmur began to rise from the crowd making Denise nervous. She didn't want to expose herself just yet, because if she did, the crowd would

probably get louder. Joseph and the others in their group began waving their hands up and down to try and silence the swelling of noise that had begun.

Fearing that the other guards would come, she fired off a shot at the wall. The prisoners immediately fell silent.

Joseph quickly passed out the weapons to the crew that had come in the room with him. They reattached the lights on the hoods, connected the batteries, checked the status of the hand trazers, realigned the concealment devices and adjusted the frequencies on the disrupters.

As soon as they were ready the five rescuers spread out across the room and forcing the other prisoners to lay flat on the floor. Denise then took a position at the far end of the room with a direct bead with her trazer, on the doors through which Lord Froth had left only minutes before.

A louder din rose from the prisoners as they watched the preciseness of the plan as it began to unfold, and then rose to a crescendo.

Denise shot off another trazer round at the wall which brought all of the prisoners down on the floor and once again silenced the room.

Joseph and the others took positions around the room so that all of the doors were covered. They expected the guards to re-enter the room the same way they did when the Kryomian was hit by the Knoxthian trazer blast.

It wasn't very long before suddenly, the doors burst open and through the doors the guards, led by Lord Froth and followed by Yendor, entered.

Joseph motioned to the others to turn on all of the disrupters. Yendor, who had followed behind Lord Froth, grabbed the scepter and pushed him through the doors onto the floor.

Caught totally by surprise, and not able to communicate with each other, the guards didn't have a chance to respond. The guards ended up in a pile of armor. The crew from the ZX/2 jumped on them and pulled off their helmets. They flashed their lights into the eyes of the helpless creatures on the ground exposing the weakness to the entire crowd.

The ex-prisoners were amazed at how quickly the plan unfolded and at the

weaknesses they saw in the Reidforcians.

Joseph jumped onto Lord Froth, and pulled off his helmet, exposing Lord Froth for what he really was. An ugly dwarf of a creature that, without the use of his armor, was nothing more than a crawling bug. His eyes were squinting from the light. This time the regal leader wasn't going to make an easy escape. Joseph lifted him up from the ground and displayed him to the prisoners in the room.

A loud cheer went up from the crowd begging for the death of Lord Froth. They wanted to put an end to the sniveling creature who stood before them in a puddle of slime from his now dead troops.

He just mumbled on and on, but no one could understand him because he no longer had the translator. He was just a pile of alien flesh trying to survive.

Joseph picked him up off of the floor and returned his helmet. All of his weapons were removed, and his mechanical arms were deactivated. After putting his helmet back on, the mumblings became discernible speech.

“You will pay for this. My army will never give up trying to free me. Now that we have your technology we will chase you to the outermost parts of the galaxy. You will never sleep for fear that my troops will be coming to cause havoc throughout the universe. We will dominate the galaxy and no one will stop us.”

“What is your name young man, so that I will remember it for all time.” Lord Froth requested.

“I am Joseph Xelco, at your service Lord Froth. I am the son of Dr. Matthew Zelco. I am the one who rescued him from your planet. Remember me, Lord Froth, because I have become your worst enemy!”

“I will be back and no one can stop me, not even you, Joseph Xelco,” Lord Froth ranted and raved. “I know things about your voyage here and we will use those secrets against you.”

“Are you talking about the information you got from Yendor Remlap?” Joseph laughed. “All this time he has been with us. We found the device you implanted in his head and we deactivated it several hours ago. All of the information he gave you is false, and

won't do you or your army any good!" Joseph exclaimed right in Lord Froth's ugly face.

Joseph removed the helmet, turned off the translator, and then returned it to his head. Only muffled sounds came from inside the helmet.

They led him away, a prisoner of the CIG.

Yendor, meanwhile was exploring the scepter he had taken from his former leader. He bounced it on the floor, lifted it over his head, turned it upside down, but couldn't get it to do anything.

Denise walked over and explained to Yendor, "There are special powers needed to operate this thing. First of all, you have to be able to communicate in Reidforcian. If you don't do it right you might end up like Thomas Reikof, you wouldn't want that now, would you?"

Yendor quickly gave the staff to Denise, who handed it to one of the prisoners, a Molteri, who was standing nearby and said, "Here you take this thing. I have no desire to commit suicide."

Dr. Xelco and Somat began distributing the weapons they took off the Reidforcians, and explained how they worked. Joseph then addressed the former prisoners.

"Listen, if we are to be successful with our escape plan you will have to pay close attention. Those of us with the atmosphere suits will take positions fore and aft of you. We have a device that will render us invisible to the remaining guards, but absolute silence is a must or we will be sitting targets. We also have communication disrupters that will allow us to confuse the enemy. Please, follow our plans closely, or we will all perish here," Joseph took control of the situation.

Both Denise and Dr. Xelco looked up at Joseph with pride.

The prisoners from throughout the galaxy were placed into five groups, each with a member of the ZX/2 crew appointed as a leader. Denise replaced her Reidforcian helmet and left the gymnasium before the others. Joseph signaled each of the groups who then responded with a sign that they were ready to proceed.

Denise walked out into the reception area and encountered two guards.

They saluted Denise as she passed.

“What is all the noise about in the holding area?” One of them asked.

Without answering them, Denise turned and fired her trazer at them. They were caught completely by surprise and never had a chance to respond. Denise opened the doors to the hall, and motioned to the lookout that it was OK to continue. Joseph and his group were the first to leave the holding area. Careful not to wear down the batteries too much, he held off on using the concealment device until it was absolutely necessary. When his group reached the reception area he turned and motioned for the next group to follow. As each team reached the same position they repeated the same procedure. Down the hallway toward the hanger they crawled, moving along the floor so they wouldn't be observed through the glass that surrounds the colony. Denise was in front, just within view.

When she got to the doors to the hanger she stopped and waited for the doors to automatically open as they had before. Nothing happened. She looked back at Joseph who turned and looked back at his band and asked if anyone was a technician. One of the Phaluvians, from the back of the procession, crawled forward and caught up with Joseph.

“What seems to be the problem,” the technician whispered to Joseph.

“The doors to the hanger aren't opening. What's the matter with them?” Joseph whispered back.

“Well, they may have set the doors on a time delay or they have may have switched them off completely,” the technician surmised.

“Is that a problem?” Joseph whispered looking for an answer.

“No problem, I just have to get to the panel and change the settings,” the Phaluvian muttered.

“Where is it?” Joseph asked getting a little frustrated.

“Just to the right, inside that closet,” was his reply.

Joseph motioned for him to go and fix the problem, but just as he was moving away Joseph grabbed him by the pant leg and pulled him back.

“What else is in that closet?” Joseph asked softly.

He answered, “The lighting panels for the hanger, the atmosphere control unit, and the automatic sensing devices for incoming and outgoing traffic...”

“Did you say the light controls?” Joseph cut off the technician.

“Yeah, they’re in there,” he replied.

“Great, get the doors working, and then on my mark, turn on every light in the house, got it?” Joseph ordered.

“Yeah, yeah, piece of cake,” the tech said as he crawled towards the doors. He slowly opened the door and disappeared into the small room. A few long seconds passed and then he gave the sign that the doors would now work.

Denise walked up to the doors, and this time they separated, allowing her access to the hanger and the means of their escape. She looked over at Joseph who nodded at her and then she walked through the portal to the hanger area.

Suddenly, there was the sound of tracer fire coming from inside the hanger area. Then another blast was heard just as she stepped through the doorway. Denise and her Reidforcian uniform flew back through the door where she fell in a heap against the wall. Denise lay motionless. She had taken a direct hit from a tracer inside the hanger.