

Conflict

Chapter XV

*“Those are better odds than we were given of ever getting off of Reidforcia,”
Joseph chipped in.*

Joseph’s first instinct was to go to Denise, but the plan had to be implemented. He motioned towards one of the groups to go to her, and then Joseph and his troops made a dash for the doors.

“NOW!” exclaimed Joseph as he jumped up and led his band towards the open doors. He activated the concealment device and the disrupter. The tech in the closet threw the switch, and the entire hanger area lit up like a sky full of fireworks. With trazers set on kill, the group spread out looking for the enemy. All that they saw were the bodies of dead Reidforcian guards spread around the floor, and much to Joseph’s surprise, the Krolon Power trazer canon was still smoking from the attack made on the soldiers.

Joseph ordered everyone to turn off the disrupters and the concealment devices.

Seeing all of the rescued prisoners appear around him, Mark shrieked, “I got ‘em. I got ‘em all!” hyped up from the adrenaline rush he was feeling.

“You fool, you killed Denise!” Joseph said as he ran towards Mark. One of the other former hostages caught him and threw him to the ground before he reached him. Joseph just lay on the ground and sobbed.

“What’s he talking about?” asked Mark, “What did I do to make him so angry with me?”

“The Reidforcian you saw walking into the hanger, that was Denise inside that uniform,” One of the other prisoners answered. “You killed her!”

Once the all clear was given, the entire hanger bay was filled with people, not knowing where to go or what to do; Somat and Conrad took control, and directed the crowd towards the *Burmi*. They organized them and began to get them settled into place. When all was ready for the former prisoners to be loaded onto the *Burmi*, Somat and Conrad climbed up the loading ramp and proceeded to the control room to see how the Bignols were coming on the repairs.

Some were assigned to load the supplies that were piled on the floor, while others refueled the ships.

Dr. Xelco and Regis Fisbon searched for copernicium and segonium for the drive system on the *ZX/2*.

Meanwhile, Joseph went to a corner and sat by himself trying to shake the grief that had overcome him. He thought that nothing could be worse than losing his mother, but he and Denise had become so dependent on one another that he just felt so empty. He looked around for a friendly face, but with the hustle and bustle of everyone trying to get on board the *Burmi*, there was too much confusion.

Joseph decided that sitting alone wasn't going to help things so he picked himself up, and went over to the *Burmi* to check on her systems to find out what her status was.

When he got on board he found a couple of the Bignols working on the drive system relay boards. They looked optimistic. As he entered the eleporter, he commanded the lift to take him to the control room. The doors closed and he was on his way.

When the doors opened again he stepped out into the central control center for the entire craft. Conrad was in the pilot's chair being trained by one of the Bignol's on the functions. They showed him the different buttons and knobs at his disposal. Somat was under the console rewiring some of the circuits that would allow the craft to once again travel at light speed. Admiral Vernondi was in command. He nodded at Joseph when he entered the control room. He was busy coordinating the repairs on the ship.

“How long before this ship is fully operational?” Joseph asked through the tears and

stuffed up nose.

“We can have her ready to fly in about one hour,” responded Fragon.

“That’s not good enough. We’ve got to be out of here in less than twenty minutes or that squadron we left behind will be all over us,” Joseph replied. “There is also a Reidforcian repair crew on its way and it could be here even sooner.

“Has anyone taken control of the flight center here on Sigmata? It won’t be long before the incoming ships will be in radio contact.” Joseph continued to try and cover all of the bases.

“We’ve given the radio control center to the *Burmi*. Artor over there is monitoring all known Reidforcian and CIG frequencies so we are ready for anything that might be approaching. He has also sent out a distress signal in the hyper band frequencies to any and all Confederation ships,” Conrad reported.

Joseph walked over to where Artor was setting up the emergency radio equipment and whispered something into his ear. Artor nodded and went back to work on his project.

“We’ve got light speed and possibly Greco-Light capabilities right now, but our problem is we can’t get her off the ground and up to sub-light without help,” Mark motioned to Joseph to join him as he explained to Conrad the problem with the wiring reroute.

“Did you say Greco-Light capability?” Joseph asked surprised that they would have even mentioned the possibility of this new technology on an old a ship like the *Burmi*.

“Yeah, the Bignols rigged it up. We won’t have it for long, but a little is better than none, right? Those Bignols sure are fast learners,” Mark complimented the workers.

“That still doesn’t solve our problem with the initial take off,” Conrad commented.

“What if we used the trailer energy on the ZX/2?” Joseph asked.

“The what?” Conrad asked.

“The trailer energy packs my dad put on the ZX/2. They can move another ship when it can’t operate on its own power,” Joseph responded.

“You’d have to talk to your dad about that one. I don’t have any idea how much weight the trailer energy can support,” Conrad replied. “Why don’t you go ask him. Our

communications are fine; you can just give us a call when you find out.”

“Meanwhile, we will try to see what we can do from this end. It’s amazing how much the Bignols have accomplished in the short time they had to repair the ship. Before we got here, the ship had no power at all. Every system inside the ship is fully functional, including the food dispensary. Joseph, you had better get back to the *ZX/2*. They need you there,” Conrad looked up and gave Joseph a nod and a look of understanding.

Joseph returned to the eleporter and ordered it to take him back to the entrance. In a flash he was at his destination and the doors opened.

Joseph stepped out of the transport and retraced his steps back to the exit. Just as he was leaving the ship, Somat and one of the rescued hostages were dragging Lord Froth onto the *Burmi* as a prisoner. Lord Froth was still mumbling and resisting. Joseph passed in silence, instead choosing to stare into his eyes with all the hate and disgust he could muster.

He walked slowly across the hanger towards the *ZX/2* glancing briefly at the spot where Denise had met her end. Her mother and father were there as well as Yendor.

He nodded his head and gave a brief silent thought towards heaven, then picked up his pace as he walked back to the smaller ship. When he got there, Mark was sitting outside the craft with tears in his eyes.

He looked up at Joseph and said, “I’m sorry, I didn’t know it was her. I was under attack from the other guards. After all the noise from inside started, the soldiers stationed in here went crazy. I was just trying to protect the *ZX/2* and keep myself from getting killed. I had no idea she would walk in here like that.”

“I know,” said Joseph, “I’m sorry I popped off at you. You had no way of knowing it was Denise.” Joseph patted him on the back and climbed onto the ship that had brought him so far in such a short time. Mark headed over to the *Burmi* to see if there was something he could do to help.

Joseph climbed into the pilot’s chair and surveyed the equipment before him. He picked up the head set and put it over his ears.

“*Burmi* this is the *ZX/2* do you copy,” Joseph broadcast into the microphone.

“Loud and clear ZX/2. We have you ten by ten,” Conrad’s voice came cleanly over the headset.

“I haven’t seen my father yet, but as soon as I do I’ll get the information you want. How are the repairs progressing?” Joseph requested.

“About the same as before. Without that trailer capabilities of the ZX/2 we don’t have a prayer of a chance getting out of here before the Reidforcians arrive. I’m telling you, I don’t want to have to fight them here on the ground!” Conrad quipped.

Just then Dr. Xelco climbed entered the ZX/2.

“I have good news! We were able to find copernicium and segonium for the thrusters,” Dr. Xelco reported.

He and Regis headed towards the back of the ship to load the fuel into the hopper located behind the workstation, but turned around when Joseph called to him..

“Father, we’ve got a problem. The *Burmi* doesn’t have any thrusters or sub-light capability. Can we use the trailer energy to help them off the base?” Joseph quickly pounced on his father.

“Theoretically, yes. Let’s ask the CPU.” Dr. Xelco said as he moved to front of the ship. Somat, who had returned to the ZX/2 and Regis, went together to load the energy cells.

“Computer, based on the weight and inertia of the *Burmi*, can this craft utilize the trailer energy to get it off this place?” Dr. Xelco almost begged the CPU.

“How many passengers will each ship carry?” the CPU responded.

“This craft should have sixteen or seventeen, and the *Burmi* about two thousand,” Dr. Xelco estimated.

“At what speed will the *Burmi* become self-sufficient?” asked the CPU.

“As close to light speed as possible,” replied Dr. Xelco.

“Give me a moment to run calculations,” The CPU then went silent while the lights flashed on and off. “Based on that information, the probability of success is approximately eighty-seven point eight percent,” the CPU finally completed its computations. “However, the energy required to operate the McMarian Hyper-Warp drive will be seriously drained.

Light speed capabilities may be hampered as well,” the CPU continued.

“Those are better odds than we were given of ever getting off of Reidforcia,” Joseph chipped in.

“*Burmi*, this is the *ZX/2*. The CPU gives us an eighty-seven percent chance of making this thing happen. Anything in the way of power you can give us will be a big help,” Joseph relayed the CPU’s information to the *Burmi*.

As he looked out of his window he could see the line of passengers eager to get on the *Burmi*.

Dr. Xelco took the co-pilot’s seat, having every confidence that his son could handle the lift off of both the *ZX/2* and the *Burmi*.

Still talking to the *Burmi* Joseph continued, “I’m going to switch control of the *Burmi* to our CPU so I can fully control the lift off. The CPU will also know when to activate your Greco Light drive systems. I’m hoping the Greco-Light drive system you guys rigged up over there does some good!” Joseph cheered on the crew of the *Burmi*.

“What Greco-Light system?” Dr.Xelco asked Joseph. “It’s not fitted with that system yet.”

“It is now,” responded Joseph. “Those Bignols learn fast.”

“Computer, assume all navigational functions on the *Burmi* and set all thrusters to ready. Plot a course for lift off, and then put us into trailer energy mode on my command,” Joseph exhorted the CPU.

Joseph checked all of his systems to verify that all was ready. Dr. Xelco read off the check list and double checked each of Joseph’s readings.

“We’ve got everyone aboard,” Conrad reported from the *Burmi*. “We should have everyone seated and ready to go in about five minutes or less.”

“Thanks for the report,” Joseph replied.

Joseph turned around to see his compliment of passengers. Five more seats were available.

Joseph looked at the faces of his passengers. They had mixed expressions, from being delighted to be leaving the captivity they had suffered, to the long faces of those who felt the loss of Denise.

Just then, up through the hatch Yendor appeared. “Hey, can you give us a hand here. We’ve got something important to bring on board,” Yendor pleaded with the passengers on the ZX/2.

Joseph unbelted himself and went over to the open hatch to help bring whatever they had onto the ship. He reached down through the portal, much to his surprise, up came the Reidforcian armor with Denise in it. He helped pull her up onto the floor. Close behind, Yendor and Mr. and Mrs. Wantis climbed aboard.

“What’s going on here?” Joseph demanded.

“We brought Denise onto the ZX/2 because there is less stress here, and with her mother’s medical training we should have her fixed up in no time at all,” Mr. Wantis responded as he and Yendor pulled Denise gently from the armor and placed her limp body on the same table where Denise had worked on Somat and the Bignol.

“Wait a minute, you me.... me.... mean Denise is all right?” Joseph exclaimed not believing his ears. “How did she survive the trazer blast?”

“The chronthium shield absorbed the blast, but the impact of the trazer threw her backwards so hard it knocked her unconscious. She hasn’t come to yet, but her vital signs are excellent. She may have a couple of broken bones and a pretty good headache, but she’ll survive,” Mrs. Wantis stated as she began to scan Denise with the QRE.

Joseph just stood in amazement as he looked down at Denise. She looked so helpless laying there. He was both concerned and happy at the same time. He bent over, gave her a gentle kiss on the cheek, and then returned to the console to prepare for the lift off.

Fragon, the Bignol, returned to the ZX/2 from the *Burmi* with a complete medical kit to assist Doris Wantis in helping Denise recover. He brought a calcium reposatator (used to fuse broken bones together) and a thermodilometer (used to control the internal temperature in case of shock). He also brought along plastio paste in case she had any serious cuts.

Mrs. Wantis and Fragon pulled around a privacy curtain and began working on Denise.

“All systems are a go, and all occupants are ready for lift off,” Conrad’s voice echoed from the speakers inside the small craft, “How are things on your end?”

“We just brought Denise on board and she appears to be OK,” Joseph responded with a giant grin on his face. “We will give you the high sign just before we move out,” Joseph continued.

“Did you say Denise is OK?” Conrad blurted over the radio.

“That’s correct,” Joseph gleefully replied.

“Wow, that’s the best news we’ve had in a long time,” Conrad radioed back with a cheerful response and cheers could be heard in the background.

“All systems checked out. We are ready for our exit from the hanger,” Dr. Xelco reported, still reviewing all of the instruments on the console.

“Computer, take over control of the external doors, reduce atmosphere, and get us out of here,” Joseph exhorted the CPU.

“All operations are under control. The systems on the *Burmi* are now locked in. Ten seconds to lift off,” the CPU kept them informed. “Five.. four.. three. .two.. one..” the CPU counted. The thrusters came to life and the little ship began to shake and shudder under the load of both crafts.

Mrs. Wantis yelled from the back, “Hey, settle this thing down, we can’t do anything while this thing is shaking like this.

“Hold on, we should be past the worst of it in a moment,” Dr. Xelco attempted to reassure her.