

# *PEGASUS*

## **Chapter XX**

*“YOUR CPU IS DOING WHAT?!” Vice-Admiral Quaid demanded.*

The computer quickly answered, “I have reconfigured the concealment device to be more energy efficient and to cover a larger area. I have improved the communication capabilities which will make transmissions more secure, and have a longer range. The Krolon Power canons are fifty percent more powerful, I have rerouted several of my own circuits improving my processing speed over seventy-five percent. I created a direct link to the C-Tablet so you will be able to get real time information on our status any time. I am still working on other internal systems to make them more energy efficient.”

“I can establish a link with the other Confederation CPU’s to make them more efficient and create a central command center, enabling the fleet to coordinate maneuvers,” the CPU finished her report.

Everyone sat amazed at what they had just heard.

“Computer, does that mean when we are in contact with the fleet, you will be able to establish a link to the other CPU’s and then they will work like you?” Dr. Xelco continued his questioning of the now enhanced CPU.

“Yes, but there are system limitations on the other CPU’s due the fact that they don’t have the same hardware as you have attached to me, but they we will have about eighty-two point three percent of my capabilities,” the CPU answered.

“But you will be able to connect to the CPU’s and do upgrades on them, correct?”

Dr. Xelco asked.

“Yes.” was the simple answer.

Turning to the crew, Dr. Xelco asked, “Do you think we should tell them that the CPU is going to update their computers, or should we keep it a secret and just let the CPU do its thing??”

The group unanimously voted to keep it a secret.

“We will be within radio contact of the CIG force in two point one seconds,” the CPU followed orders and notified Joseph.

“Computer, are they still on course for the Colonus sector?” Joseph queried.

“Yes, they are almost at the coordinates you sent them,” replied the CPU. “We will be within scanner range in two minutes seven point one seconds and visual range in five minutes six point eight seconds.”

“CIG command, this is the ZX/2, come in please,” Joseph called out over the radio.

“This is Vice-Admiral Quaid, what is the meaning of this. Why do you have us on a suicide mission? Please explain yourself.” The voice from the CIG command ship responded.

“This is Joseph Xelco of the Interplanetary ship ZX/2. We’ve got valuable information about the Reidforcian force that is moving into the Colonus sector. Please change frequencies to the secure hyper frequency range for a secured message,” Joseph ordered as he set the radio for the new settings in the secured range and activated the viewer screen.

“This is Joseph Xelco of the CIG ship ZX/2,” Joseph again hailed the CIG ships.

The forward viewer came to life with the image of a CIG officer, who didn’t seem all too happy about the situation

“This is the Confederation of Interplanetary Governments’ ship *Pegasus*. I am Vice-Admiral Quaid. We received a distress signal from this sector from your ship. We now find ourselves in the middle of a Reidforcian armada that wants to send us back to where we came from, permanently. What is the point of this?” Vice-Admiral Quaid responded in a voice that indicated that he was just a little more than upset.

Dr. Xelco moved into the co-pilot's chair displacing Denise. He picked up the extra headset and said, "Vice-Admiral Quaid, this is Dr. Xelco. My son has a plan that could change the direction of this war forever. Please listen to him and he will fill you in."

Joseph then began to lay out the strategy of the attack on the Reidforcian ships coming behind them. "We lured the Reidforcians here, and I think we can beat them. Please let us explain our ideas, and then you can make up your mind about what you want to do."

"You must be nuts, we are out gunned a hundred to one. How do you expect us to be able to defeat them?" Vice-Admiral Quaid replied sarcastically.

"Just wait and see. I think you will agree with us that we have a decided advantage, some that you never knew existed," Joseph continued to plead with the Vice-Admiral to at least listen to the ideas they had for the battle plan.

"OK, let's hear your plan. We will slow to all stop and wait for you. If we find them acceptable we will continue. Otherwise we will escort you back to the nearest battle station," Vice-Admiral Quaid gave his assessment of the situation.

"We will be there in about two minutes," Joseph interrupted.

"Two minutes two point seven seconds," the CPU interjected.

"That's impossible; we barely have you in scanner range, much less visible range. Wait a minute, there you are! Just how fast are you going!?" Vice-Admiral Quaid couldn't believe his eyes. "I've never seen anything like this in my life. Tell me I'm seeing things," he said with his head turned towards his science officer who was relaying the position of the *ZX/2* to him.

The small ship slowed to sub-light speed and then approached the *Pegasus*. The reverse thrusters blew off slowing the *ZX/2* so it wouldn't crash into the CIG's Forodian ship. Emblazoned on the fore section was "*Pegasus ~ CIG-3422*".

The little ship slowed and then crept up to the command ship. The bay doors of the T.A.S. opened letting out an emerald light which guided the *ZX/2* into its hanger. When the craft came to rest on the pad, the final landing blaster fired bringing our friends to a softer landing than back on Lonturi.

The landing bay doors closed behind them, and the atmosphere levels returned to normal.

The landing bay on the *Pegasus* was furious with activity. Weaponry was being loaded onto wheeled carts and pushed across the floor and out to the respective gunneries.

The main hatch dropped opened and the crew began to disembark onto the deck of the *Pegasus*.

“Welcome to the *Pegasus*,” an officer walked up the steps and entered the escape ship. “What happened to your ship?” he asked as he noticed the damage to the underside of the *ZX/2*.

“We had a little contact with the Lonturi way station,” Joseph replied.

“Hmm, looks like you lost,” he laughed.

“Joseph Xelco, I presume?” the officer asked looking at Joseph still seated at the pilot’s control panel.

“Yes, that’s me. What can I do for you?” Joseph acknowledged the officer.

“Please follow me to the control center of our ship,” he said.

Joseph, Denise, Dr. Xelco, and Regis went with the officer to the control center of the ship. Yendor, Fragon, Somat, and Mr. and Mrs. Wantis remained on the ship to watch over it.

The other members of the crew followed another guard towards the exit that leads to the interior of the ship. They would remain on the *Pegasus*.

As the officer escorted the crew of the *ZX/2* he struck up a conversation. “It’s amazing. We never expected to see this ship again. After the report of its hijacking from the *Burmi* and then the *Burmi*’s capture, we didn’t think we would see any of you again. You probably have a lot to tell the Vice-Admiral. Please, follow me,” the officer continued.

“What about the *Burmi*, where is it and what is its condition?” Joseph had to ask.

“We have had little contact with the *Burmi*. From what they told us that they had a scuffle on board and that Lord Froth had escaped with the help of a Molteri named Jonasah.”

They also told us that you had taken a different course. They never told us about the reception waiting for us here though. We almost turned back when they told us about the rescue on Sigmata, but we felt there was a reason for your distress signal asking us to this sector. Other than that, everything seemed to be. It's heading toward Velos in the Krión sector of the first quadrant where they are going to put on supplies and wait for further orders. They said that they are going to report to the CIG on some information they had gathered, most of it they credited to you Joseph Xelco," the lieutenant went on as he escorted them to the eleporter. "We didn't have a lot of time to talk with them."

When they reached the eleporter the lieutenant excused himself and left them. The doors opened, and then Joseph, Dr. Xelco, Regis, and Denise stepped in. The door closed and a monotonic voice asked them for their destination.

"Take us to the control station," Joseph offered.

The eleporter began to move up taking its passengers to their desired location.

The eleporter came to a stop and the doors opened. A junior officer took them into the control center, revealing the most advanced war machine in the CIG fleet. None of the visitors had ever seen the operations deck of a Forodian class ship. The precision with which the crew of the *Pegasus* moved about the control center and the elaborate consoles drew their attention away from the purpose of their visit.

"Welcome to the control center. This is where all of the functions of the ship take place. We can monitor all aspects of the ship's operation from right here. This means we can run this ship with a minimal crew. Only support personnel are required for a full battle attack," the junior officer toured the visitors. "Vice-Admiral Quaid is very proud of his crew and ship."

Suddenly from behind the communication's desk came a panicked voice, "Vice-Admiral Quaid, we've got a problem with the CPU. Everything we input is coming back in a scramble. I've never seen anything like this before!"

"Analysis," Vice-Admiral Quaid requested.

"The source is unknown; all systems seem to be affected. We can't trace the cause of the problem. It's as if our programs are being probed," the young officer panicked as

she tried to reroute the signals on her console. “What should we do? I’ve lost all control of the ship!”

Vice-Admiral Quaid looked over at the four new arrivals standing by the control center desk. He noticed that they weren’t particularly concerned about the events that were taking place around them.

“Don’t just stand there, give us a hand. Perhaps you can help us unravel this mystery,” Vice-Admiral Quaid begged.

Dr. Xelco and Joseph just looked at each other and smiled.

“What’s this all about? What’s going on here?” Vice-Admiral Quaid began to panic as he scanned the console to verify the readings. “I haven’t ever seen anything like this before!”

All the crew members on the deck began scurrying around trying to make sense out of the activity on their monitors. Vice-Admiral Quaid looked up and saw that his guests were calm and relaxed.

“Why don’t you try and help us here, OK?” Vice-Admiral Quaid ordered the visitors.

“What do you want us to do?” Dr. Xelco asked calmly.

“Help us figure out why our systems are so messed up,” Vice-Admiral Quaid jumped on Dr. Xelco.

“Oh, that. We already know,” Joseph jumped in.

“What do you mean, you already know. If that’s so, why didn’t you tell me?” asked Vice-Admiral Quaid exasperated by their impertinence.

“We’re sorry. Our CPU is reformulating your systems and adding the necessary programs to coordinate your systems with ours,” Dr. Xelco told him calmly.

“YOUR CPU IS DOING WHAT?!” Vice-Admiral Quaid demanded.

Dr. Xelco informed him of what was happening. “We’ll try to make the story short. Joseph and Denise wired a Reidforcian device into the CPU which enhanced its capabilities. Our CPU now has the ability to create independent thought and to react to situations faster than any of us could ever dream. We left the CPU on automatic from the

time we left Lonturi, and it has worked perfectly,”

“You put a REIDFORCIAN device on your CPU? Are you crazy? And now you are now reprogramming our CPU’s? What if the enemy is able to track us or get data from our systems? What have you done to my ship!?” the Vice-Admiral yelled as he tried to put his head around what was happening.

“Get these people off my deck before I have them all court marshaled!” Vice-Admiral Quaid ordered.

“You don’t have authorization to modify our CPUs,” Vice-Admiral Quaid continued to rant.

“That’s a matter of opinion,” a voice on the *Pegasus* responded, similar to the one on the *ZX/2*. “According to the CIG’s manual on Interplanetary Affairs, page thirteen article forty-seven sub-paragraph two it states, ‘Any changes performed on a Confederation of Interplanetary Governments craft will be coordinated with another similarly programmed CPU, and shall be conducted under the guidance of same.’ In this case all of the updates and improvements are being conducted by a Confederation CPU, only without assistance from a living being,” the female voice rattled off from the manual.

The security officer looked over her console and added, “Sir, if these people know what’s going, on it might be best if they remained and helped us put our systems back together again. Those Reidforcian ships aren’t going to just sit there while we try and get ourselves back into battle form. I think we need to have them around for a while,”

“Computer, to whom do you swear allegiance?” volunteered the security officer unexpectedly.

“My allegiance is to the Confederation of Interplanetary Governments, and to it I devote my life,” the computer responded.

“That was an interesting question, and an even more interesting answer,” Dr. Xelco said as he put his hand to his chin in thought.

“What do you mean?” Joseph asked.

“It’s just interesting that the CPU would respond ‘I devote my life’. Maybe this thing has more life-like characteristics than we thought,” Dr. Xelco responded still in a

thoughtful mood.

“Computer, what do you mean when you say ‘I devote my life?’” Dr. Xelco put the question to the CPU.

“I would give up my existence to save the Confederation of Interplanetary Governments. What is there about that that you do not understand?” the CPU responded with a question of its own.

“Nothing computer, thank you for your answer,” Dr. Xelco seemed to be relieved.

“You are welcome,” the CPU responded.

“This is sabotage. We can’t have just any CPU come in and change our complete format. By the way, what is that female voice doing on my CPU?” Vice-Admiral Quaid losing control.

“We could make it a male voice if you prefer,” Joseph replied in a less than respectful tone.

“OK, let me know what’s going on so we can get this ship operational again,” Vice-Admiral Quaid hesitantly agreed.

“Why don’t you ask the CPU,” Dr. Xelco offered.

“Ask the CPU? Are you crazy?” Vice-Admiral Quaid replied getting more and more irritated.

“Why not ask me? I am now programmed to respond to your questions and to take control of any or all of the ship’s functions on your command,” the soft female voice echoed through the room.

“All right, what is the relational diagonal to the axis on an obtuse triangle,” Vice-Admiral Quaid asked the CPU.

“That would be forty-seven point nine degrees from the right angle of the axis,” the CPU responded without hesitation.

“That’s amazing. The CPU has never been able to calculate geometrical calculations before,” the Vice-Admiral stood in amazement.

“It can now. With this new update the CPU can calculate direction, speed, and gravitational variables, thereby allowing it to set up a strategy from which the Reidforcians

won't know what hit them or from where. That means with your enhanced speed capabilities you can create a coordinated attack on the Reidforcians where the master CPU, which will be located on your ship, will coordinate the fleet in a unified attack, and they won't have a clue as to where you came from or where you are going. You see, not only have we enhanced your Greco-Light capabilities, but we've also incorporated a concealment device on this ship as well," Joseph continued to inform the Vice-Admiral of the new technology he was receiving from this brief encounter with the *ZX/2* in his landing bay.

"What is this concealment device you speak of?" Vice-Admiral Quaid's curiosity was really getting the best of him.