

# ***SURRENDER***

## **Chapter XXII**

*“What if the Reidforcians search us again and take all of the equipment away from us?”*

*Denise thought. “Count on it,” Joseph responded.*

He got the full attention of everyone on the ship as he continued to talk with Lord Froth. “Otherwise, I will guarantee the destruction of your entire fleet today and the eventual elimination of your Potentate.”

The passengers on the ZX/2 were in shock.

“Ha! You are a silly boy, you thought we were fooled by your crash landing? You think so little of me. You speak boldly my young friend. On our last conversation you told me you would rather destroy the ZX/2 than allow me to uncover its secrets. Why have you changed your mind and why are you so willing to just give it to me without a fight? You puzzle me Joseph Xelco, yet you have pricked my curiosity. I am interested to hear how you intend to destroy my Potentate, for that I will allow you to enter. Follow the instructions of my first officer and we will meet shortly,” responded Lord Froth as confidently as ever.

The screen before them went blank and the radio signal went silent.

“Are you nuts!?” Dr. Xelco responded after the screen went blank. “What do you think we can accomplish by giving ourselves up?”

“I have a plan that I think will work. Just be patient and I will try to explain it to you,” Joseph tried to settle his father down.

“This had better be good, Joseph Xelco, because this could be our last great adventure together if you screw this up,” Denise jumped in.

Joseph motioned for the others to come over to the console so he could explain to them the plan he was forming in his head.

“I want to capture Lord Froth again and bring him before the Interplanetary Court for crimes against the galaxy,” Joseph laid out his plan in a very abbreviated form. “Our presence on the *Fristle* will give the CIG force more time to prepare for the battle to come. We can act as a diversion.”

“That’s a pretty bold plan. How do you intend on pulling this one off?” Dr. Xelco expressed his feelings, lacking the confidence he once had for his son.

“If we all work together, and with the CPU’s help, I know we can accomplish whatever we set out to do,” Joseph said defiantly. “We need to check out the five atmosphere suits to make sure they have all of the equipment we will need; di-hydroxide water, the Phaluvian army knife, hand trazers, headlamps, concealment devices, disrupters, and the communicators. We’ve got to be prepared for anything when we get there. They already know most of our tricks.”

Joseph turned to Denise and asked, “Are you able to put the micro transmitter in my head that you took out of Yendor?”

“Yes, but why?” Denise responded with a surprised look on her face.

“Just do it. Set the frequency so I can communicate with our CPU and it with me.” Joseph ordered.

“You sure are getting bossy again, Joseph,” Denise commented to Joseph walking back to the observation table. “The device I took out of Yendor’s head should still be operational, but I can’t guarantee that you won’t be affected the same way that he was.”

“Computer, can we readjust the transmitter so we can communicate, and can you deactivate the mind control program?” Joseph asked knowing that the CPU would respond in the positive.

“There is a ninety-five point six percent chance of success,” responded the CPU.

Denise laid Joseph on his stomach deadened the area so she could make the incision.

She set the communicator behind his ear to mark where she needed to cut. She took a laser knife she found in the medical kit (much easier to use than the Phaluvian army knife) and sliced a small incision behind his ear. She then took the little transmitter and set it carefully in place. By placing the sensor on the bone behind the ear, very small vibrations are picked up, and then turned into audible sound. The reverse process works as the sound of Joseph's voice activates the sensors. This allows a reasonable channel for communication both ways. After the device was set in place with some calcium glue, she then covered the spot with plastio paste. Joseph rolled over, sat up, and shook his head to make sure everything was in place.

"You're taking a big risk with this thing, Joseph," Denise warned him. "If the Reidforcians figure out what you've done they could turn you against us just as easily as they did Yendor," Denise continued with a concerned look in her eye.

Joseph slid off the table and gave Denise a big hug. He held her hands and looked into her eyes and said, "We have to take a few chances or others may die. I want to finish this thing now and forever. I have an opportunity to make a difference and I'm not going to walk away from it."

"Joseph, that's what I love about you," Denise said as she looked into his eyes. "Just be careful, OK?"

"With you here I have nothing to worry about," Joseph replied as he gave her another hug and a kiss on the cheek.

His father interrupted them.

"Joseph, get up here. I think you need to see this," Dr. Xelco interrupted Joseph and Denise.

"Gotta leave," Joseph said as he went forward to find out what his father wanted from him.

Out in front of them was the *Fristle*, the largest craft any of them had ever seen. It was a battle station with thruster power. Activity buzzed all around. Smaller craft were landing and taking off from her many landing zones. The side of the ship looked like a bee hive with elaborate holes cut in its side for the fighters to come and go. Giant trazer

cannons mounted along the sides were directed at any enemy targets that came into range. Beneath the behemoth, tracking devices moved from side to side tracking movements within thousands of kilacordons. On top of the giant ship was the control center. Flashing lights and organized movements around and in the tower indicating that the Reidforcians were very well prepared for any threat against the ship. As they moved closer, the CPU notified them that they were under surveillance and that the CPU banks were being scanned.

“Computer, allow the Reidforcians to think they have been successful at scanning your memory banks. Only allow them access to the usual files they would have normally been able to scan. Keep all information on our improvements unavailable, and also the purpose of our mission,” Joseph instructed the CPU.

“All of the instructions you gave me are already in operation. Having anticipated their tactics, I have already determined that this would be the best plan of operation. Is there anything else?” the CPU replied.

“No, that will be all,” Joseph replied to the CPU’s question.

The closer they came to the *Fristle* the more menacing she became.

A voice came over the communicator, “Follow the ship in front of you into hanger fourteen. When you arrive, remain seated and await further instructions,”

Joseph spotted the craft he was to follow, maneuvered behind it, and followed it into the belly of the Reidforcian stronghold.

The approach to the entrance of the *Fristle* was smooth, but the fact that Reidforcian war ships were flying around made all of them extremely nervous. They all stared out of the front windows and watched the enemy fighters sweep by in formation. They were so close that the pilots in the crafts were visible.

The entrance to the landing bay opened as the lead ship proceeded to guide the ZX/2 into the hands of the enemy.

The craft glided to a halt over a large red circular mat. As soon as the thrusters blew off their last blast, the ZX/2 came to a quiet rest. Immediately a blue field surrounded the ship from the floor to the roof. A penetrating squeal filled the interior of the ship that was

so piercing that it almost knocked the passengers unconscious. This lasted for about two seconds and then the noise stopped. As the crew recovered from the sound they realized that they were being held, at least for the time being, in the same force field as they had seen around the transporter. They knew that if they attempted to break through the field they would die. Knowing this, they sat and waited for the enemy to make the first move.

Looking out of the forward windows the passengers in the *ZX/2* watched as the workers, who were from various parts of the galaxy, loaded and armed the ships that were being prepared for battle with the CIG force that waited only a short distance away. The distraction of the *ZX/2* was putting a delay on the attack.

Large stockpiles of fuel and ammunition were stored in all corners of the landing bay. Surrounding the bay was a walkway, about ten cordons from the floor that had guards with Knoxthian trazers in hand, watching over the slaves as they did the menial tasks of readying the space birds for battle.

Joseph and Dr. Xelco went over all of the equipment they had on the ship and selected the items they felt would be most useful.

“Computer, can you create a concealment shield over the strategic parts of the ship, yet allow the Reidforcians to search the insides of the *ZX/2*,” Joseph asked the CPU.

“Would you like me to do that?” the CPU answered back with a question.

“Yes, I would,” Joseph answered back.

“OK, consider it done,” the CPU replied confidently.

The entire crew put on atmosphere suits and checked out the tools they had at their disposal.

“What if the Reidforcians search us again and take all of the equipment away from us?” Denise thought.

“Count on it,” Joseph responded.

“You mean you expect them to take all of this stuff?” Denise queried.

“Yep,” Joseph acknowledged her.

“Then why are we going through all of the trouble of putting all of this together?” Denise continued to pester Joseph.

“Because Lord Froth expects it of us,” Joseph answered while he continued to check through the equipment.

“Joseph Xelco, sometimes you frustrate me!” Denise sighed.

“You’re not alone,” Dr. Xelco chipped in his two cents worth. “But I think we’re going to have to override you on this one. We may need some of this equipment later, and if we leave it with them we may never get it back. The crew agreed so they stowed some of the gear away in protective slip covers and put them in the closets at the back of the ship.

“I’m sure they are going to find that stuff and just take it anyway,” Joseph quipped.

“We at least have a chance to get it if we leave that stuff here,” Yendor added.

“Come on, we’ve got to get ready. If my guess is correct Lord Froth is extremely curious why we are here, and he’ll want to execute his plan for us as soon as he can,” Regis interrupted.

“Computer, how are we doing on getting out of here?” Joseph asked the CPU.

“If your plan is successful, once you exit you should be outside the influence of the *Fristle* in approximately forty-nine point four seconds. By the way, why do you continue to call me Computer? It is so impersonal. Why cannot I have a name like the rest of you?” the CPU pleaded.

The crew just stared at each other. How was the CPU coming up with this one?

“Computer, what would you like to be called?” Dr. Xelco, realizing the CPU was serious, and thought it would be a good idea to humor it.

“I have no idea. Will you please choose one for me?” The CPU directed its question.

“Ah...what do you think of ...ah .... Gadget, or Gidget, or Digit, that’s it, Digit. What do you think of Digit?” Joseph suddenly had a brainstorm.

There was a pause and the CPU replied, “The name seems to have a reference to my abilities. Is that common for a name to relate to one’s abilities?” the CPU responded in a positive manner.

“Sometimes, but in your case, I think it fits.” Joseph replied while the others agreed.

“Henceforth, you will be known as Digit,” Regis went over to the CPU and dubbed her with an imaginary sword.

Just then the blue field that had surrounded the ZX/2 disappeared and the lights in the hanger went dim.

Looking out of the portal windows they could see above them a door open and onto the walkway stepped Lord Froth in all his glory. Around him he had a large contingency of troops who marched to the right and left of him. They proceeded down separate stairways down to the floor of the landing bay. The troops completely surrounded the ship holding their Knoxthian trazers, and then Lord Froth motioned for the passengers to disembark. Joseph lowered the hatch and was the first to drop to the ground below; closely followed by the others. Regis who was last, began to close the hatch when the guards approached him and forced him away from the exit. Two guards straddled each member of the crew, and led each of them through the landing area to a pair of doors that opened onto a lower level.

They were subjected to the same search procedures as they had endured at the Sigmata station. Individually they were taken through the process of being physically searched, removing their atmosphere suits and then being hosed with the disinfectant.

As before, Joseph was the last to go through the processing. They searched his uniform but didn't find any of the equipment they had expected to find. They took what he did have, and put them into a bag, and then dragged him to the 'showers'. After hosing him down with the noxious fluid, he shook his head in defiance and sprayed the milky slime all over the guards who were detaining him.

The guards slapped him across the face sending him to the floor. Joseph just looked up at them and smiled.

He put his atmosphere suit back on, and then they forced him into a small narrow hallway which led down a slight slant. About fifteen cordons down the hall a door swung open and they tossed him into a cell by himself.

The door closed behind him and he found himself in utter darkness.

"Com.. I mean Digit, do you hear me?" Joseph whispered.

"Yes, but why are you talking so softly?" Digit replied over the transmitter installed in Joseph's head.

“I’m not sure if I’m being monitored or not,” Joseph answered.

“According to my scanners you are alone and there are no electronic listening devices within range of your voice,” The CPU returned the information that Joseph needed to know.

“Can you tell me where everyone else is at?” Joseph asked.

“You are located in a row of cells. Dr. Xelco occupies the first, the second by Fragon, the third by you, the fourth by Regis Fisbon, the fifth by Somat Donley, the sixth by Yendor Remlap, and Mr. and Mrs. Wantis occupy the last. Denise is in the presence of Lord Froth,” Digit rattled off the locations of the others.

“Do you have any idea what Lord Froth is doing with Denise?” Joseph panicked.

“That information is not available at this time,” the CPU responded.

“If she has one of the implants put in her head would you know it, and if she did get one, would you be able to deactivate it like mine?” Joseph quickly questioned the CPU.

“Affirmative on both questions,” the CPU replied. “Would you like me to do as you asked if she has such an implant?” the CPU continued.

“Yes, I would,” Joseph responded. “By the way, how do I get out of here?”

“There is a door in front of you,” the CPU quipped.

“NO, I mean how do I get the door opened and get out of this room?” Joseph asked again a little perturbed.

“You will have to wait for a Reidforcian guard to open that door. If you were to escape at this time it would mean certain death for you and the others. When the time is right we will put the plan into effect,” the CPU rebuked Joseph.

Joseph, frustrated by the CPU’s answer, slid down the wall in a heap and waited for his release to come; whenever that would be.

Silence was the only thing keeping Joseph company as he sat in the darkness, wondering if the idea of coming here to Lord Froth was such a good one. A small trap opened at the bottom of the door to the cell and into his cell a small tray appeared. It was barely visible in the dim light that followed behind it. Just as Joseph reached for the tray, the small opening closed. Joseph pulled the tray to his lap and then lowered his head to

smell what was on the plate to determine if he was familiar with the mashed substance. The smell that rose to his nose was so disgusting he pushed the tray to the side and left it there. He figured it was same the raw meat he saw the Reidforcians eating. Totally disgusted with the smell he nearly became sick.

Joseph became drowsy in the darkness and eventually fell asleep.