

# ***HEROES***

## **Chapter XXIV**

*“Wow, we’ve almost made it. I don’t know if we’ll be the same after the adventure we just had,” Joseph commented.*

“That was impressive young man, but now do battle with Progorn. He is my best fighter!” Lord Froth said leaning forward in his throne. He seemed to be enjoying the contest.

Joseph again took a defensive stance against the approaching giant. The first blow from the Reidforcian glanced off of Joseph’s shield and Joseph countered with a blow of his own which the guard slapped away with his shield.

Blow after blow, the two exchanged advances, but the battle was not going well for Joseph. Joseph was being pushed closer and closer to the edge of the enclosure, and he was being beaten lower and lower to the ground.

The guard dropped his shield and took both hands on his samitar over his head and then dropped the samitar with all of his force towards Joseph. Joseph threw up his shield but the impact of the samitar knocked it out of his hands. Joseph, taking advantage of the time it took the guard to swing his samitar again, jabbed his samitar into the belly of the alien.

The external armor melted as the sword pierced through it like a hot knife through butter. The samitar continued on through the monster and stuck out of his back as the hulk fell forward onto Joseph. The same greenish bubbling goo that had come from the others,

oozed out of the wound. Joseph was trapped beneath his foe.

A cheer went up from the same audience that Lord Froth had hoped to dishearten with the defeat of Joseph at the hands of his troops.

Lord Froth jumped out of his seat in anger and ordered that the energy dome be turned off. As soon as the energy field went down Dr. Xelco yelled out “NOW!” and everyone went into motion.

Digit disrupted the Reidforcian communicators so they couldn't understand each other. This confused the Reidforcians so much that they didn't know what to do.

Denise grabbed the orb held by Lord Froth and then pushed him down the stairs where he ended up in a heap. The others confused the guards and distracted them long enough so that Dr. Xelco was able to remove the body of the dead combatant off of Joseph. Regis pulled the helmet off Lord Froth and forced him to remain on the ground. They then formed a circle around Lord Froth.

Yendor took the Knoxthian trazer and began to take out the guards in the room.

They formed two groups; one around Denise. She put on the helmet of Lord Froth and asked Digit to give the coordinates to the ZX/2. She closed her eyes then asked Digit to activate the orb and transport them back to the ZX/2. The blue orb gave off a bright blue light, and then in a flash of blue light, the first six were gone.

A few seconds later, Denise returned, alone. The remaining prisoners surrounded her, and she repeated the process as before. With a flash of blue light, the remaining crew members left the room, Lord Froth included. They found themselves in the transporter room on Reidforcia and then just as suddenly found themselves a little disoriented, but safe on the ZX/2.

“Digit, have you used the disrupter on all of the soldiers on the *Fristle*?” Joseph quickly asked the CPU as he ran to the front of the ship..

“Yes, and it is working quite well thank you,” Digit responded.

Yendor opened the hatch and motioned to the slaves in the hanger to come onboard. Confused by the disrupters, the Reidforcians were walking in circles not knowing what to do. Somat had been with the first group and he was firing the Krolon Power canon in every

direction.

The slaves in the landing bay looked around and realized that this was the perfect opportunity to escape, and answered Joseph's plea by running towards the ship. Eleven former captives climbed onto the craft, and then all systems were prepared for the escape.

Somat continued to spread havoc around the hanger. He took out most of the fighters on the landing deck in the process.

"Digit, get us out of here!" Joseph ordered the CPU, "Activate the concealment device, and get the *Pegasus* on the screen."

"As you say, Joseph," the CPU answered the commands.

The little ship lifted off of the landing pad, and with a loud "HOLD ON!" from Joseph, the craft circled towards the exit. Somat fired a long series of blasts at the bay door, and blew a hole big enough for the *ZX/2* to fit. Then the ship blasted from the belly of the *Fristle* out into the expanse of space.

Dr. Xelco adjusted some settings on the console and then ordered, "FIRE!" The five Ralston torpedoes mounted on the underside of the *ZX/2* blew off, circled in a gentle arch and then made a beeline directly for the portal they had just left. A few seconds later the effects of the torpedoes could be seen emanating from the *Fristle*'s side. Then another and another, until the entire ship was engulfed in explosion after explosion.

"This is the *ZX/2* calling the *Pegasus*?" Joseph called over the headset.

"We didn't expect to hear from you again after your surrender. Congratulations, what do you have to report?" a voice responded to the hail.

"We've escaped from the Parrady class ship *Fristle* and have Lord Froth with us. We've damaged the *Fristle*. Activate your disrupters on the assigned frequencies and you should have no problem in destroying the entire fleet," Joseph spoke quickly and excitedly.

"We've already begun to engage the enemy. We took them completely by surprise," the *Pegasus* reported.

"*Pegasus*, this is the *ZX/2*. We would like permission to break off and continue on to Velos in order to rendezvous with the *Burmi*," Joseph requested.

"Permission granted to you Joseph Xelco. Good luck to all of you, and may you

have a fast and safe journey. The Confederation of Interplanetary Governments can't thank you enough for your participation in this glorious victory. After you finish on Velos you are to proceed to Earth and bring the tyrannous Lord Froth before the Council of Planets for judgment. This has been a great day for freedom and for the Confederation. It will not soon be forgotten. Again, good luck and have a safe and pleasant journey. Keep the stars to your back!" Vice-Admiral Quaid concluded his goodbye.

On the display screen they saw the battle beginning to take place. The Reidforcian ships were taking hit after hit from out of nowhere. The concealment devices on the CIG ships, and the coordinated attack plan programmed into the CPUs, had the Forodian ships moving from point to point leaving the Reidforcians with nothing to shoot at. The pace of the attack was so fast, they couldn't track the ships, even if they had been able to see them.

After an hour or so the Reidforcian ships were either totally destroyed or were unable to proceed. The enhanced Greco-Light drives allowed them to run circles around the enemy.

The once great Lord Froth, unable to move, could only sit in his chair and watch in amazement as Joseph's prediction came true.

The battle was over, but the war not won. It left the crew with mixed emotions. This had been the first victory by the Confederation of Interplanetary Governments in over two years and was one that was going to be remembered for a long time to come. The premier forces of the Reidforcian Potentate had been eliminated in one encounter.

The Reidforcian king was to stand trial for the wrongs he had done to the galaxy, and the once great armies of the Potentate were now going to be brought to justice.

"Digit, lay in a course for Velos in the Krion system and engage the McMarian Hyper-Warp drives to the most efficient settings. Continue to monitor all systems and give us a report as needed," Joseph requested. A sense of relief that the trip was soon to come to a conclusion came over him. All of his goals were now met or exceeded.

The CPU laid in the course and set their speed at sixty-five percent of maximum. "We will reach Velos in approximately thirteen hours twenty-seven minutes six point eight seconds," the CPU reported. "This will put us on Velos approximately one hour seven

minutes eight point two seconds ahead of the *Burmi*.”

“That’s truly amazing. The speed with which we are traveling is just incredible. We will be able to move from one side of the galaxy to the other faster than we can walk to the corner store,” Dr. Xelco commented in amazement.

Denise and two of the alien passengers went to the rear of the ship to prepare a meal, and opened the showers to all those who wanted to freshen up. The water they had gotten on Lonturi was adequate for all to relax and still they had enough for preparing meals. The di-hydroxide water canisters were almost empty.

Joseph took advantage of the shower, though small and confining, he found it a pleasant change to have some time to himself in a friendly atmosphere. Denise had found a change of clothes and set them out for him. He put them on after taking his shower. He took the dirty atmosphere suit and placed it into the laundry chute where it would be cleaned, and then returned to the closet from where he found it. Feeling clean and refreshed, he exited the shower stall and went into the galley to get something to eat.

He passed his father who was ready for his shower. In his hand, Dr. Xelco had some salve to put on his sores, which were much better than when they first discovered him in the Moulton Chapel.

They gave each other a hug and smiled at the success of the last adventure.

After he left his father, he met Denise in the galley. She looked very different in a dress and with her hair hanging down around her shoulders.

“Well, Mr. Xelco, you sure look clean and refreshed,” Denise noticed Joseph’s clean and neat appearance.

“You don’t look so bad yourself, Ms. Wantis,” Joseph responded. He walked up to her and gave her a hug. They stood there for a few seconds. It felt good not to have the pressures of the war on them. They could just be themselves.

“Would you like something to eat?” Denise offered Joseph.

“I don’t know. The last time I ate I didn’t feel so good afterwards, remember?” Joseph reminded Denise.

“How could I forget? I have never seen anyone in so much pain before in all of my

life. Come on, a little food wouldn't hurt you now, besides you should have seen what I had to eat back on the *Fristle!*” Denise cringed at the thought of eating the mush, much less having actually eaten it.

“It probably looked and smelled something like the stuff they pushed into my cell. I can lose my appetite just thinking about it, yuck,” Joseph shook his head in disgust.

Joseph took a seat in the galley and continued to talk with Denise while she made sure his plate was kept full.

Right then who should appear, but the little whittier; still loyal, and on the ZX/2. He jumped up on Joseph's lap and began looking for something to eat. After eating some of the stew, the little animal curled up in Joseph's lap and fell asleep.

Everyone found a place to rest. Since the number of passengers exceeded the number of recliners, some slept on the floor, while the others sat in the galley and talked.

Joseph and Denise continued their conversation while the crew of the ZX/2 prepared for the landing at Velos.

“Joseph, come up here, we've got something to show you,” Regis called back to Joseph.

Joseph gently placed the whittier on the floor and then they both got up and headed to the front of the craft. They were motioned to look out the forward viewing screen and there in the distance they could see the planet Velos coming into visual range.

“Wow, we've almost made it. I don't know if we'll be the same after the adventure we just had,” Joseph commented. “Have you heard from the *Burmi?*” asked Joseph who thought they might have some news.

“Yes we did. As we passed by her, at our current speed, we were only able to say ‘Hi’ and then we got a brief update on their situation. Everything is fine and they'll see us on Velos. We should see them in a couple of hours or so,” Dr. Xelco replied.

“One hour fifty-six minutes twenty-seven point eight seconds,” Digit cut in. “We will be slowing to double light speed in forty-two minutes seven point two seconds, then we will reduce speed to sub light speed as we come into standard orbit around Velos,” the CPU continued.

The small ship began to slow down as it made its approach to the CIG station. Activity around the base was feverish as the fighters, that were now about to engage the Reidforcians, were going out on missions.

“Velos, this is the CIG ship ZX/2. We request permission to land at your base,” Regis called out over the radio.

“ZX/2, we have received your message. You are cleared to land in the pedestrian landing zone on the western wing of the base station. We’ve been receiving scattered reports about your assistance in the great Battle of Colonus and the defeat of the Reidforcian guard in that sector. Congratulations and welcome to Velos,” the voice from the planet below concluded.

“Joseph, would you like to bring the ZX/2 home?” Dr. Xelco asked as he got up from the pilot’s chair and motioned for Joseph to be seated. Joseph turned red from embarrassment as he took the seat. Then the group onboard gave him an ovation for a job well done.

“Entering Velos air space, reducing speed, and changing pitch to compensate for atmospheric resistance,” the CPU relayed its information to the crew.

The ZX/2 swung around in a gentle arc and then came to its predetermined landing point. The landing bay was beside the hanger. It allowed the craft to come to a hovering position over the ground before coming to rest on the pad. When the ZX/2 was finally in position the thrusters blew off their final burst of energy, then came to a quiet rest on the landing site.

As soon as the craft was secured, a crowd of people rushed out of the hanger towards the little ship and surrounded it, cheering and screaming at the crew inside.

Joseph stood up and gave his father a hug, which his father returned with a friendly slap on the back. They had succeeded, and they were now among their friends.

Denise walked up to Joseph and joined the embrace, relieved that the mission was now complete.

Regis lowered the hatch and the former slaves from the Bristle climbed down the ladder into the cheering crowd below. With them they took Lord Froth and bound him over

to the authorities who were waiting at the bottom of the steps. A rebellious jeer went up when the crowd realized that this was the dethroned leader of the enemy.

The remaining passengers lingered a while on the ship taking a few moments to reminisce about the adventures they on the *ZX/2*. They looked around the friendly confines and smiled at each other. For now, it was over.

Digit spoke up, “Joseph Xelco, I have enjoyed this journey with you. I hope that we will have the opportunity to work together again. If it were not for you I would not have experienced the feelings and emotions I feel now. I thank you and I owe my existence to you. I love you, Joseph Xelco,” the CPU said as emotionally as a CPU can.

Joseph walked back to the front of the ship and put his hand on the console. “Digit, I know you can’t feel the touch of my hand, but I love you too. Take care and we will fly together again, I promise.”

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Joseph saw the *Burmi* circling around the landing pad ready to make its landing close to the *ZX/2*. The crew had waited for the arrival of the *Burmi* so they could be the first to greet the arriving family and friends.

The *Burmi* gently circled the field and then came to a soft landing. Just as the hatch opened to let the passengers from the *Burmi* out, Joseph and Denise ran up the ramp.

It took quite a while for the passengers to disembark off of the *Burmi*.

Finally Mark Cooter and Conrad Darnoc appeared. They all just stood and looked at each other and then embraced.

At the bottom of the ramp the crowd had reemerged and was waiting to cheer on their heroes. The crowd joined in the celebration.

A band was playing the Confederation of Interplanetary Governments’ anthem and flags from every corner of the galaxy were waving back and forth in celebration of the victory won at Colonus; as well as for our heroes who had made it all possible.

Dignitaries from the CIG high command were waiting in the hanger, and were

prepared to present the heroes with awards for valor.

The group from the ZX/2 climbed the stairs to the top of the podium and looked out at the throng of people cheering and yelling in happiness that the Reidforcian threat was now in apparent retreat.

The crew members waved at the crowd as they mounted the steps and then onto the stage.

The master of ceremonies motioned for Joseph to come and say something to the people on the crowd.

Joseph climbed the stairs looking out over the crowd. He was humbled to be asked to speak.

He took the microphone and prophetically stated, “The Reidforcians are doomed in this galaxy. We must band together and learn the lessons well; we will never allow another empire to control our lives in the manner of the Reidforcians. We must remain loyal to our Confederation and to ourselves. We must learn to live in peace and to treat our fellow inhabitants of the universe with dignity and respect. It’s only by doing this that we can hope to rid the galaxy of threats such as the one that the Reidforcians have hung over us for the last decade. Come to the aid of your fellow citizens and keep the Confederation of Interplanetary Governments strong!”

With that, the crowd exploded in an uproarious cheer that shook the hanger. “The Potentate of Reidforcian is now on the run!” Joseph ended as he threw his fist in the air.

***The End***