

TRANSMITTER

Chapter VI

“No, let me do it,” said Denise, “I have medical training and I should be able to do it in a jiffy.”

In the room beyond, fifteen Reidforcians sat around a large triangular table. Some of them were disassembling something. In the far corner of the room sat Lord Froth. Standing in the doorway stood two gigantic Reidforcian officers with their weapons drawn directly at them.

“I have been expecting you,” stated Lord Froth, motioning for them to move closer to the table.

To their surprise, on the table was the main CPU unit from the ZX/2. Behind Lord Froth stood Conrad Darnoc; who had a menacing grin on his face.

Joseph panicked. “How did the ZX/2 CPU get here?” he thought to himself. He wanted to say something to his father but he didn’t dare speak or he would give himself away. “And what was Conrad doing behind Lord Froth?!”

From his father’s reaction, he was sure that his father also recognized the CPU. The hoods on the atmosphere suits hid the identity of the prisoners.

“You are right on time. I hope you enjoyed your tour of our facility,” Lord Froth stated with a hint of a snicker in his voice. “After our little meeting in the cathedral I wasn’t sure just whether or not you would be able to figure out how to get here, but thanks

to my friend,” Lord Froth motioned toward Conrad, “and my guards behind you, we were able to direct you right where we want you. You have seen the Processing Room and the results of a visit there. I hope you are prepared to meet your fate.”

He continued, “The good Dr. Xelco has resisted all of our attempts to break him, but you are more expendable than he. It is apparent that the doctor chose to stay by himself in the chapel. That is fine, for I will deal with him later. Gesturing towards his guards he ordered, “Sentinel, bring your prisoners forward.”

No one moved. “Sentinel, bring your prisoners forward!” Lord Froth repeated his command as he directed Joseph and Denise, who he thought were loyal to him, to move closer.

Denise and Joseph glanced at each other and pushed Mark and Dr. Xelco forward toward the regal looking leader.

Lord Froth was now dressed in blue Reidforcian armor and had a red and purple sash draped over his left shoulder He had the staff with the blue orb on it staff in his right hand.

“You have done well my children,” Lord Froth said to Denise and Joseph. “I hope the journey from the auditorium to the Moulton Chapel wasn’t too strenuous. Your prisoners are a welcome sight. They have valuable information that we need in our quest to discover the secrets of the McMarian Hyper-Warp drive system, that will provide us with the tools of for the final annihilation of the Confederation of Intergalactic Governments. Take your places at the table of honor.” he motioned for them to sit down.

Turning to the guards that had met them at the door he ordered, “Sentinels, remove the headlamps from the prisoners!” Lord Froth ordered.

As Denise and Joseph moved to the empty seats at the table, the gigantic guards who had met them at the doorway moved towards the prisoners and removed the headlamps from the atmosphere suits. Then they forced Mark and Dr. Xelco to their knees. The guards then placed the headlamps on the table. Since the visors were still down over their eyes they weren’t recognized.

“You are now prisoners of the Potentate of Reidforcian and as such you are required

to reveal all and any information you have on the McMarian Hyper-Warp system,” Lord Froth said as he stood up towering above his two prisoners. “We know this device is on the craft that brought you here. We want this information and we are willing to do whatever is necessary to get it. Stand, raise your visors and tell us what we require of you or you will die.”

As Mark and Dr. Xelco raised their hands to lift the visors from their faces they turned on the palm trazers and directed them at the helmet of Lord Froth. Just as before, he vanished.

Quickly spinning, they flashed their trazers around the room, surprising the fifteen armored enemies. Joseph and Denise picked up the headlamps from the table and turned them on. They flashed them at the guards seated at the table. Screams of terror rang out from their translators. The element of surprise had given them the upper hand in this battle. Leaping to the opportunity, Mark began to tear the helmets off of the soldiers, and Joseph used the lights to destroy the Reidforcians just as before. Once again their eyes bugged out of their sockets, and then the thick green slime oozed out. Their heads collapsed from the void left inside. Dr. Xelco saw what Mark was doing and began to do the same. Conrad jumped out from behind the throne and began to help pull the helmets off of the Reidforcians, much to the surprise of the others, who had thought him to be a traitor.

When the battle was over Joseph confronted Conrad, “What’s going on here, first you are on our side, then you are against us, then you help us; what gives?”

“Lord Froth knew you were coming to the planet long before you got here. He wants the technology of the McMarian Hyper-Warp drive system, but needed the craft intact,” Conrad began to unfold his tale.

“When you landed, one of the guards pulled me out of the cell and threatened me if I didn’t cooperate. They weren’t sure how far you would get, but they weren’t taking any chances. I was to keep them informed by the use of a small transmitter, implanted behind my ear, of all of the movements that you were making. The reason I went ahead of you to the chapel was I needed time to report to Lord Froth without making him or you suspicious. It appears that the device only tracked where we were. As far as I know,

nothing else about what we did or said was transmitted to Lord Froth. I think the device may have malfunctioned, because from what I have heard about these things they can control the mind. Since I was not under the control of the device in my head, I was able to protect you. I just made some things up to tell Lord Froth so that he would believe me.”

“I never let Lord Froth know who was in the atmosphere suits or in the Reidforcian uniforms. As far as he knew the passengers on the ZX/2 were in the atmosphere suits and his loyal guards were bringing them to him.”

“He must have believed what I told him so he assumed that he was under no threat from you,” Conrad told the group. “I told him that his guards had subdued the intruders after they shone the lights on him. I told him that I had led you here.”

“The most surprising, to him, is how you were able to penetrate the compound and get into the prison. I take my hat off to you for that. The problem we have now is that Lord Froth knows that you are of immense danger to him, and the next time we meet he will not be as surprised by your capabilities. He probably suspects that his trusted guards are now disloyal to him, as well as me. So, the Reidforcian armor is probably not needed anymore.”

“I think he may be playing with you and allowing you to think that you have succeeded, where actually you have failed,” Conrad concluded.

“Failed? What do you mean we failed?” Joseph asked Conrad.

“You are trapped here and he knows it. He is just waiting for the right time to capture you and get the information he wants,” Conrad shared the intentions of Lord Froth.

“We’ll see about that!” Joseph said defiantly.

As they stood in the large room assessing their circumstances it became evident that they were in great danger. How were they going to get out of this predicament, now that Lord Froth was aware that they were able to take advantage of the Reidforcian’s weakness? They no longer had the element of surprise on their side.

“The first thing we need to do is get the CPU reassembled so we can get it back to CIG territory”, stated Dr. Xelco.

“Good idea”, responded Conrad. “But don’t you think we’re putting the horse before the cart. We’ve got to get out of here first.”

“Mark and dad, can you take charge of the reassembly project while the rest of us devise a plan of escape?” Joseph interrupted. “We need to keep our spirits up. We’ve made it this far haven’t we?”

The others looked at Joseph nodding their heads, but thinking, “Just how far have we gotten?”

Mark and Dr. Xelco moved over to the table where the CPU lay disassembled. They asked Conrad to assist them in the repairs. Meanwhile, Joseph and Denise began to formulate a scheme to make their escape. They referred to the C-Tablet for assistance.

“We still have one tool at our disposal that the Reidforcians don’t know about,” volunteered Denise. “We still have the concealment system that Mark built into our atmosphere suits.”

“A what?” Dr. Xelco asked as he turned to look at Denise.

Mark jumped in, “A concealment device. You see I cross wired the x-tone circuits with the modulated disrupter system to create a simulated...”

“You don’t have to get technical with us Mark,” Dr. Xelco cut him off, “Just tell us how it works.”

“OK, I’m sorry. If you take the blue harness and connect it to the red connector like this,” Mark demonstrated being careful not to actually connect the two. “It will create a shift in the fourth dimensional field making the person unseen by most detection devices, and be invisible to the eye. The problem is that the batteries are already low and the amount of power required to make the system work will not last very long; perhaps 20 to 30 seconds. It’s only useable once, so we will have to be careful how and when we use it. Anything that is within two cordons will be under its effect. We’ll have the advantage that when we can attack, and we can do it without being seen.”

“You mean that if we stay close together we will all be invisible?” asked Joseph.

“That’s correct,” responded Mark.

“How will we know where each of us is while we are concealed?” asked Dr. Xelco.

“As long as we stay within the range of the device, we will be able to see each another,” Mark answered.

“How is that?” questioned Dr. Xelco who wanted to know more about how the equipment worked.

“That’s not important, just trust me, it works,” was Mark’s response.

Meanwhile, Conrad and Dr. Xelco were making headway on getting the CPU components back together.

“How’s it coming?” asked Mark as he moved back to the table to assist Conrad.

“Almost done, let’s give it a test,” Conrad replied. “Go ahead ask it a question.”

“OK, Computer what is the meaning of life?” asked Joseph.

“I... do... not... know... that... is... a... question... I... am... not... pro... grammed... to... an... swer...” the CPU laboriously replied.

“Just a few more adjustments and we’ll be on our way,” Dr. Xelco volunteered.

“How did the CPU respond without any power?” questioned Joseph.

“You should know that every CPU has latent power residing in its circuitry. Haven’t you ever read the warnings on the back panel? ‘Do not open back, no user serviceable parts, danger of electrical shock’,” queried Conrad. “We’ve got to be careful though because we only have about thirty minutes of useable power available. I will set the power consumption to lowest levels. I think that way we can double the life. It won’t be as efficient though.” he continued.

“Conrad, you mentioned that you have an implant that was installed by the Reidforcians to track your movement around the compound. If you move around they will know exactly where we are, won’t they?” Joseph surmised.

Conrad shook his head in agreement assuming the same thing.

“Shouldn’t we remove it and find a way to distract Lord Froth?” Mark interjected.

“We could remove it with one of the Phaluvian Army knives. We have a first-aid-kit with a mild anesthetic so it shouldn’t hurt too much.” Then examining Conrad she asked, “Where is it located?”

“Behind my left ear, I think.” Conrad said with a worried look on his face.

“You aren’t sure?” asked Dr. Xelco.

“Well, I didn’t exactly see where they put it,” Conrad said as he checked out the spot

he told them about.

“All right let’s get started,” Denise directed. “I have medical training and I should be able to do it in a jiffy.”

Dr. Xelco and Joseph helped Conrad onto the table.

Denise picked up the Phaluvian army knife and poured a small bottle of antiseptic over the blade.

Conrad’s eyes bulged out of their sockets as he saw the large knife approaching him.

“You DO KNOW WHAT YOU ARE DOING.... Don’t you?” Conrad asked Denise.

“Trust me,” Denise replied concentrating on the job before her.

“WAIT!” exclaimed Joseph, “What if the device is booby trapped?”

“Oh my God I never thought of that,” screeched Conrad.

“It’s a chance we’ll have to take,” responded Denise as she closed in on her project.

The rest of the crew backed off as Denise slowly and meticulously maneuvered the knife to the spot that Conrad had indicated. Sweat dripped off of both Denise and Conrad as the delicate surgery began. A small incision was all that was needed to find the small sensor, but when she saw it she noticed that it was wired to the bone just behind the ear, and the wires looked as if they might be attached to a small detonator.

“What should I do now,” asked Denise, “I think that these wires are set to explode the sensor if I cut them.”

Dr. Xelco moved in closer..... “Hmmm, I think you’re right. But if we bypass the red wire and connect it to the base of the firing mechanism it just might keep it from going off. That’s if the Reidforcians use the same technology as we do. What do you think Conrad?”

“How the heck am I supposed to know? Perhaps I could just go the opposite direction and act as a decoy for you. Yeah that’s it I’ll just act as decoy,” a desperate Conrad concluded as he started to get off the table

Pushing him back down, Denise said to him, “No, it’s all of us or none of us,” She then did exactly as Dr. Xelco suggested.

Poof, a small cloud of smoke lifted out of Conrad’s head as Denise gave out a sigh

of relief.

“I’m on fire!” screamed Conrad.

“No you’re not; it’s just a little smoke..... Nothing to worry about,” reassured Denise.

“NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT?! I’m the one on fire,” responded Conrad.

“Quit being such a baby!” Denise yelled at Conrad.

“Now that we have the device out what should we do with it,” asked Joseph.

“I have an idea,” responded Mark. “If it’s still functional I propose we use it to throw off the Reidforcians.”

“What about me?” questioned Conrad. “Are you going to sew me back up?”

“Oh, I’m sorry I almost forgot,” responded Denise as she took out the needle and thread from the first-aid kit. “I’m sorry I have to do this the old fashioned way because we don’t have any plastio paste.”

“I have a great idea!” Joseph burst out. “I know how we can throw off the Reidforcians,”

Joseph recounted his plan, as Denise finished sewing up Conrad. “If we take the transmitter and implant it into the whittther we can mislead the Reidforcians into thinking we are one place when we’ll actually be somewhere else, assuming that the whittther doesn’t follow us,” Joseph explained.

“We don’t have to implant the transmitter in the whittther, all we have to do is put it into some food and he’ll ingest it, giving the same results,” Denise interjected.

“Great idea,” exclaimed Joseph.

Mark went into the Processing Room to find the Whittther. A minute later he reappeared with the little critter. He took out a small amount of manstaka jelly, put the transmitter in the goo, and fed it to the whittther. The whittther gobbled it up and they were ready. Mark released it and closed the door trapping the poor creature in the Processing room once again..

“I’m finished with the CPU,” Dr. Xelco exclaimed loud enough for the others to easily take notice. All of a sudden a soft beeping sound began.

“What’s that noise?” asked Conrad.

“I programmed the CPU to keep track of the whittier. When it’s within fifty cordons or so we will get a signal. That way we can know where he is, thereby we can avoid being too close it. Then the Reidforcians will be chasing a wild goose, or whittier.... so to speak,” Dr. Xelco said with one of those ‘I’m proud of myself’ expressions.

“That’s a great idea, when did you think of that?” Conrad inquired.

“It just came to me,” Matthew retorted.

“You don’t have to be so smug about it, you know,” Joseph joked with his dad.

As Denise and Joseph quickly repacked the equipment and prepared to leave, Dr. Xelco, Conrad, and Mark sought a way to escape. Nothing was found.