

VISIONARIES

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REVISED EDITION



CHRIS DONLAN

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First edition published in in 2017 by Kindle Direct Publishing

Second edition published in 2020 by Kindle Direct Publishing

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ISBN 978-1548445782

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Cover designed by Tim Holcroft-Smith at Sky Rocket
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Visionaries

I dedicate this book to my late father, John, who along with my mother, Shirley, adopted me at birth and gave me the most loving upbringing a child could ever hope for.

Their invaluable gifts of unconditional love and constant support provided me with the inspiration and confidence, to handwrite the heart of this story back in 1976.

Now, nearly 44 years later and with the benefit from life's experiences, accrued knowledge and the internet, I can reveal it in all its glory.

For Daisy

My love and special thanks to Jane and my good friend Gary, for their encouragement during the long journey towards completion.

Visionaries

Foreword – Life on Xethenia

by Andrew Heyford
The Butler of Chequers Court, England

I've been employed in domestic service nearly all my working life and I feel very honoured and proud with my current position, as the Butler at the Prime Minister's country retreat.

As you might imagine, I've seen and heard many things in my time, but I hasten to add, that for the most part, I have observed a strict code of confidence and privacy.

However, something quite extraordinary happened to me recently, which I have to say, has completely changed my life, so much so, that I just have to tell you about the whole experience.

As with any story, there's always a beginning and this one starts on an alien world located on the other side of the universe.

How I came to acquire all these amazing facts will be revealed later, but for now, please indulge me, as I set the scene for what I am sure you will go on to discover, is a very remarkable story.

Orbiting a single sun, there is a small system of six planets in the southern reaches of the Arcalladium Nebula and by far the largest of the four furthest habitable planets is Xethenia; home to a race of immortal humanoid beings known as the Xethanti.

Xethenia basks comfortably in the rays of this relatively new star, which emerged from the aftermath of the collapsed sun that created the nebula, hundreds of millions of years ago.

The planet has a precise circular orbit and the axis tilt is perpendicular compared to that of the Earth, which is slightly elliptical, with an axis angle of 23 degrees.

Consequently, the planet enjoys a broadly constant temperature with a constant season. It is four times the size of our Earth, but because it has no moon, the planet's oceans are virtually free of

tides and are very serene, as the sun is the only gravitational influence.

The planetary orbit takes around 20 hours to complete and the orbit around the sun takes 300 days. Xethantians count orbital days and years and refer to time zones in the day as Rise, Median, Set and Rest. Days are measured in Cycles which start at 1 through to 300 each year, referred to as an Orbinar.

Xethantians can easily live for three thousand years and as a result, the population has grown to 30 billion people; none of whom can be killed or destroyed. They are the only known immortal life-form.

They never fall ill or require surgery, as the body cannot be invaded by any means, so there are no hospitals to treat the local populace, other than small clinics where females can give birth. Medical and care facilities only exist to serve the needs of off-world workers and visitors.

Scientists believe that a combination of the rich energising radiation from the sun, along with an indigenous substance found in the soil, known as Synexillum, have both contributed to the evolutionary change that has led to Xethantians becoming immortal.

Their bodies are encapsulated by an invisible, organic, self-sustaining layer of enriched Synexillum which is known as the Uniform. They are born with it and it protects them from anything, internal or external, that could threaten their existence or wellbeing. They cannot even harm themselves.

All other life forms on the planet are mortal and exist to form the thin remainders of the natural eco-balance.

Very few Xethantians eat meat of any kind. As a consequence, the wildlife has a natural order of its own, that is rarely interfered with. Instead, they grow vast plant food crops of varying kinds from which they can create a wide variety of protein-based products, supplemented with vegetables and fruit.

Anything which grows on the planet and is sustained through its water supply, is also enriched with Synexillum and this serves to sustain the uniform, more than the body itself.

Female Xethantians can only give birth to one child in their lifetime.

The sex organs for both the male and the female are hidden within their lower abdomen. At the point where fertilisation can take place, a horizontal crease in the skin measuring about 3 inches across, known as the Versipia, opens to reveal glans similar to the lips of the female vagina.

At the same time, the versipia in the male opens in the same way, except that an entrail uncoils and locks onto the glans in the female versipia to secrete sperm.

Like any birthing process, the delivery of the baby is an emotionally fraught event, made harder by the uniform trying to protect the mother from coming to any harm.

At the point when the baby emerges through the versipia, the Mother has to cut her embryonic tube without any kind of anaesthetic. This will be the only short, but sharp, experience of pain she will ever endure in her lifetime.

If a member of the attending care team attempted to cut the tube, then the uniform would react involuntarily and prevent them; leaving the baby connected to the mother, but living outside of her body.

They can speak within weeks of being born and can usually walk and have complete motor and reflex control of their hands within a couple of months.

Xethantian children don't attend a school in the traditional sense, but they do undergo an educational learning process when they reach the equivalent of their 10th birthday.

By then, the brain's cerebral capacity will have developed sufficiently well enough for them to have the necessary knowledge in a wide variety of subjects streamed into them through a type of neural link.

As young adults, they soon learn to develop the means of communicating and moving objects telepathically, but you'll learn more about that later on in the story.

The government of Xethenia is made up of 12 elected Senators who form what is known as the Apostophet (pronounced Apossofet). These people represent the 4 quadrants that govern the entire planet.

Each quadrant has a central government building which is a tower, four miles high, housing workers and management, equipment and resources. These towers are strategically positioned at the epicentre of the poles and the equatorial zones.

All communications around the planet and indeed to the wider galaxy, are passed through these towers via a huge orbiting computer, around 1 mile in diameter. Known as XPACE, (Xethenia Planetary Automation & Communication Executive) it also monitors activity on the planet's surface and helps to control many forms of transport.

The early signs indicating the onset of death through age, are fatigue along with frequent, intense pains in the limbs and the brain.

This leads swiftly to the emergence of a coma-like state known as Transition, during which the only means of communication to close relatives and friends is through telepathy. After several weeks, the body just shuts down completely and the subject is declared as Dissolved.

Ahead of reaching Transition, many choose to voluntarily upload their 'Entience', which is the collective for the soul, the spirit and the intelligence, into XPACE where useful knowledge, experiences and information is accessed and shared with fellow Xethantians.

All trace of Synexillum swiftly evaporates, which means the body can be cremated, albeit left alone for longer than a few weeks, then it will quickly decompose into a pile of black dust.

Many Xethantians have left their homeworld to seek a better life elsewhere and have settled happily on other worlds. They have blended in with other races of people; to the point of cross-fertilising their DNA to produce hybrid beings.

Sexual reproduction with non-Xethantians is fraught with problems, because physical consent is normally achieved telepathically, to reassure the uniform that the body is not being invaded.

Inter-lifeform reproduction has led to an emerging breed of beings that; whilst they are no longer immortal, they can often have a trace of the uniform in their bodily makeup, which enables them to self-heal. However, they don't usually live much beyond the normal life expectancy of the native partner.

This is the case for everyone, except when a child is born out of intercourse between a Xethantian and someone native to a planet called Quella, where the DNA mix continues to allow the uniform to function normally.

They acquire immortality, but they also gain the unique dark blue glowing eyes associated with the Mequellium race of people.

This has consequently led to a rise in the number of people living on Quella who are indistinguishable to those around them. These people are known as Mequexian and what follows, is the extraordinary story about the life of one of these hybrid beings, a highly revered scientist called Janithillon (pronounced Janithiyon).

You're probably wondering, more than ever now, exactly how I have acquired all this knowledge, being as I've rarely left the country in which I live, let alone the planet? Well, let's just say I was touched by an incredible gift from an equally amazing visionary.

Chapter 1 – Arrival

For Alison Jackson, the past nine months of her pregnancy had sailed by, largely trouble-free, but right now she was in a maternity delivery room at Leicester General Hospital, where she'd been for nearly two hours.

The midwife was on the verge of suggesting a caesarean section, but then suddenly, Alison cried out with intense and unbearable pain, as she gave a final push and a baby boy finally slipped out of her and into the hands of the attending medical team.

A nurse recorded the birth as 06:19 on 6th June 2019 and was inwardly surprised, as she completed the pattern of numbers in the relevant boxes on the form.

Exhausted, but relieved, Alison looked on anxiously and eagerly, as the midwife cleaned the amazingly calm new born baby, before placing him onto her chest.

Alison's husband looked on and was overwhelmed with happiness and pride, as he held his wife's hand, kissing her occasionally and talking softly with words of comfort and praise. His eyes were filled with tears of happiness and wonder at what he had helped to create and bring into the world.

Despite the relative coolness of the room, the baby simply nestled contently, seemingly oblivious to physical and emotional endurance that had taken place earlier that morning.

Richard walked over to the nurse and offered his smartphone to her saying "Would you mind taking a picture of the three of us please?".

The nurse smiled and nodded, "Oh yes of course, I'd be happy to, no problem".

Richard rejoined his wife and they both smiled, as the nurse clicked off several photo shots, one of which included the midwife. As she finished, she walked over to the bed to hand Richard's phone back and at that exact moment, the baby opened his incredibly deep blue eyes.

He looked up at Richard, registering his face and appearing to smile and then his gaze moved onto Alison's face, as she sat up slightly, proudly cradling her little bundle of joy.

They were jointly drawn to look into his eyes which were glowing, captivating, almost hypnotic and with a sudden rush of fear they felt very uneasy and alarmed.

Alison instinctively let out a frighteningly whispered "Oh my God no", just as the nurse, who was hovering nearby, saw the baby's eyes. She exclaimed in total shock at the deeply coloured glow and in a panic, called for a Doctor to come over to the delivery room.

Moments later the parents' happiness quickly gave way to concern as one of the duty Doctors breezed in and walked straight over to the anxious parents, whilst talking to the maternity team.

"Has the baby been weighed, measured and checked yet?" he asks, as the baby appeared to glare at this new stranger in the room.

Doctor Thompson walked over to the bedside and carefully carried the infant over to a nearby desk and placed him into some scales.

He recorded the weight at 8 lb and 4 oz, before lifting the boy out and measuring him. Only then, did he start looking at his eyes through a scope; equally amazed and intrigued by the sheer depth of the glowing azure blue colour.

Frantic with worry, Alison called out "Is everything alright Doctor. What's going on? Why are his eyes glowing like that?"

He lifted his head and turned slightly to look at her and despite being extremely concerned, he masked his emotions with a professional and calming reassurance, as he explained, "I've never seen anything like this before, but your baby appears to be well and healthy. However, I would like to conduct some further tests and would request that both Mum and baby stay on the ward for a few days at least, possibly longer, whilst these take place".

He handed the baby to Alison, noting that both parents had brown eyes, but he was forced to leave, as his ward pager started to beep angrily and as he turned to rush out, he said, "I'll be back later to check on developments but please do not panic and try to remain calm".

Once out of sight and earshot he quickly made a call on his mobile to a fellow physician to talk to her about the baby with the incredible glowing blue eyes.

“I’ve never seen anything like it in my life Jenny and believe me you won’t have either; they have an ethereal glow and have such a deep blue, almost jewel-like depth to them. I’d appreciate it if you could call into the Hospital. When could you come by?”

“Wow, this all sounds eerie and intriguing. I can cancel an appointment and be with you around 3 this afternoon – which ward?”

“Perfect, thank you so much. I don’t know whether I should be worried or just amazed, but yeah, meet you on Ward 4, East Wing Maternity. Hang on, second thoughts I’ll put the mother and baby in the private room; just off Ward 5. The name is Jackson, Alison Jackson and I’ll let her know you’re calling in for a second opinion”.

“OK Ian, I’ll see you later” and with that he hung up and marched back quickly to the delivery room, to make sure that the staff were aware of where he wanted them to take the mother and baby to.

He waved and nodded with a smile at the on-looking parents, before leaving the room, as they simply glanced at each other quizzically, before they both turned to look down at their new born child, who quietly gazed back at them smiling.

The midwife followed Doctor Thompson out of the room to ask what was going on and for some clarification about his instructions.

“We need to keep them isolated and we need to keep this as quiet as we can. We can’t have too many people noticing what’s going on. Just tell the Jacksons that we’re doing this as a precaution and for reasons of sterility, privacy and whatever else you can think of. I’ve got a specialist friend of mine, Jenny Dempster, coming in later to examine the baby. She’ll be here at around 3 this afternoon”.

Later that day, Jenny Dempster arrived at the Maternity wing and made her way to the private room on Ward 5. She knocked quietly on the door before walking in to assess the scene.

Mum and baby were asleep and the father looked up from a magazine he was reading. Jenny walked over to introduce herself, gesturing for him to stay seated, as she sat down on the chair beside him and placed her briefcase on the floor.

She extended her hand to shake his and whispered “Hi I’m Jenny Dempster, I occasionally work with Doctor Thompson. He asked me to drop by to have a look at your baby boy; who looks lovely by the way, so congratulations” and as she glanced across at him sleeping in a hospital crib, she said, “Have you got a name for him yet?”

Richard smiled and fleetingly studied her for a moment before introducing himself. She was tall with shoulder-length, auburn hair and hazel green eyes.

“Oh hi, I’m Richard, my wife Alison and yes, we’re going to call him William, after my Grandfather. Have you come in to check his eyes?”

“Yes I have, but I’m not sure whether I should wake him. How long has he been asleep?”

“Oh about an hour, he went off about an hour after Alison drifted off”.

Almost as if he had heard them, the baby opened his eyes and tilted his head in the direction of where the couple were talking and stared at the new stranger, holding her gaze for what seemed like a few minutes, all very quietly and calmly and without even blinking.

“Oh my God” blurted Jenny, “That is unbelievable” and she stood up and walked across to the crib, joined by Richard who reached in to pick the baby up, wrapped in a snuggler. “Hey there little fella, how are you?” he cooed.

Jenny looked on completely mesmerised and astonished by what she was looking at.

“Ian, er ... sorry I mean Doctor Thompson, told me that his eyes were this amazing colour, but I had no idea. This is incredible. I’ve never seen anything like this in my life”.

“What do you think is wrong?” Richard asked, looking on anxiously.

“I don’t know. I’m not even so sure whether there is anything wrong as such. He seems remarkably calm and accepting of the situation and not at all troubled by his eyes being this way. I need to look at them more closely if that’s OK?” and with that she walked over to her briefcase, retrieved a scope and walked back over to Richard, saying “Could you just hold him still for me for a moment, whilst I take a look with this scope?”

She peered into the eyepiece and adjusted the magnifier to study the image that confronted her, whispering incredulously, as she searched around the left and then the right eye.

There was a pupil at the centre, but instead of it being black it was a deep, dark blue and surrounding it was the glowing, semi-transparent ocean blue of colour in the cornea and iris area. The remaining eyeball was white, albeit partly tinged in a blue haze, which she figured must be coming from the glow in the iris.

She put the scope down onto the bed and blinked repeatedly, rubbing her eyes back to the normality of the light in the room and exclaiming “Wow, that is just astonishing” as she peered into Richard’s eyes, saying in a raised and excited voice “Doctor Thompson said that you and your wife have the same coloured eyes, which are quite normal, so this can’t be a genetic influence, which as I’m saying that, is just plain ridiculous, as I can’t even believe what I’m looking at” and as she turned to look back at the baby, Alison stirred and they both turned to look at her.

“Oh Hi darling, are you OK? I’m sorry did we wake you?”

“No ... well yes, but it’s OK. I thought I heard a voice in a dream saying wake up and at that moment I became aware of talking in the room and I just came around”. Then she noticed Jenny and said, “Who’s this?”

“Oh yes, sorry this is, er ... did you say your name was Jenny?”

“Yes that’s right, Jenny Dempster” and she walked over to greet Alison, “I’m a Consultant Paediatrician and I sometimes work with Doctor Thompson. He asked me to drop by and take a look at William”.

Alison smiled awkwardly as she shook hands with Jenny but without letting go of her grip she said, "Do you know what's wrong with him, can you tell us anything?"

Jenny raised her hands in surprise saying, "To be brutally honest, no I can't. I was telling your husband that I've never seen anything quite like this before. Your son seems fine. He's completely untroubled and seemingly not in any pain.

I've had a close look at his eyes whilst you were sleeping and they are just the most incredible glowing colour. I've got no idea what could have caused this and frankly I don't know where to start with researching the problem. Well I'll rephrase that, as it might not be a problem as such; it's just highly unusual"

"Doctor Thompson said he was going to conduct some tests or something and we'd have to stay here for a few days, maybe longer" Richard chipped in "but what will that entail?"

"Yes that's right, we certainly need to conduct some tests and have a closer look at William, probably whilst he's under an anaesthetic. We could ideally do with scanning him; certainly, his head and perhaps his body too for good measure, just to see if anything can reveal what's caused his eyes to be this way.

Alison retorted slightly, still holding and tightening her grip on Jenny's hand "No, please, there's no way you're going to operate on him. Please don't do that. Is it safe to even anaesthetise him? He's just been born for God's sake!"

Jenny placed her other hand on Alison's shoulder and talked softly and calmly "Hey, it's OK, please don't worry we're not going to open him up or anything; but we are going to have to consider putting him under an MRI scanner, but this will have to be in around 10 days time. He'll need to be very still for around an hour, maybe longer, I don't know at this stage, hence why he'll have to be sedated. But please don't worry, sedation is completely safe. We use this practice with premature babies at birth, as it helps with the trauma. I promise you he'll be OK".

Alison relaxed her grip on Jenny's hand and looked anxiously across at Richard who still had William in his arms and said "What do you think love? What should we do?"

Richard walked over to the opposite side of the bed and offered the baby to Alison for her to hold and kissed her on the forehead, as Jenny let go of her hand and stood back, so that Richard could speak quietly and privately.

“Look, we know he’s not in pain and he seems very calm and relaxed. They’re not going to conduct anything invasive” he said glancing over at Jenny before returning his focus onto Alison and the baby, saying “but we need to know what’s going on and at the moment, they’re stuck for answers.

I’ve read about babies being anaesthetised and I’m sure Jenny will make sure he comes to no harm” and again he looked across at her and she nodded saying, “We’ll take every care with him. He’ll be fine”.

William was still awake but fidgeting and nuzzling into the nightie covering Alison’s breast, “Aw look he’s hungry, oh here you are my gorgeous boy” and she lifted him into position so he could suckle on her engorged nipple. She heaved a sigh and gave a relieved looking smile at Richard ahead of nodding her head and saying “Alright then, so long as you’re sure”.

Jenny stepped forward once more towards the bed and said “Good, that’s good. Thank you. I know it’s very troubling for you both at the moment and all at a time when ideally you should be feeling so happy and relaxed. Well, let’s face it someone already is”, as she nodded and let out a little laugh, as William sucked hard and vigorously, still with his eyes wide open looking up at his mother.

“You’ll need to keep him off his feed for about 4 hours before we take him down to the MRI room and put him under, so I’ll try and make sure you get sufficient notice when the time comes. For now though, please just relax as best as you can and don’t worry too much. I’m sure William is OK really. We just need to find out what’s going on. So, please try and rest. If you want to stay in the room overnight Richard I can get the porter to bring in another bed for you”.

“Would you like me to stay my love?”

“Well yes that would be handy, but you’ll need to go home first and get some things won’t you, so why not go now and let me have a

sleep, as William will drift off after this feed anyway, so I can see you later”.

Richard acknowledged the plan and kissed his wife on the lips and then kissed his son on the forehead, whilst he continued to suckle on his mother’s breast.

He walked over to Jenny, who asked if she could walk out with him and they left the room together.

As they walked through the corridors heading in the direction of the exit for the car park, Jenny spoke reassuringly to Richard about the procedure they were planning to undertake on William, adding that he and Alison, if she was up for it, could join her, Doctor Thompson and the MRI team, whilst William underwent the scan.

She suddenly stopped and said “Hang on a minute. Look before you go, can I trouble you to come with me to A&E as I could do with taking some blood for analysis from you. We’ve already got Alison’s, as its normal procedure when she arrived. It’ll mean we get on with some checks, whilst you’re sorting yourself out at home and before you come back”.

Richard shrugged his shoulders and nodded in agreement and they rerouted off down another corridor.

In a bid to try and get Richard to relax and take his mind off things, Jenny ventured a question to get him talking, “So how long have you and Alison been together?”

“A few years now” he replied. “We were University sweethearts and had met each other in Leicester, I was studying Law and Alison was studying media. After we both graduated, we decided to stay in Leicester and for a while, we jointly rented a flat close to the City Centre, before eventually moving out and buying the house we currently live at in Market Harborough”.

“Oh right, so what do you do for a living?”

“I work for a leading law firm and am on track to hopefully become a partner in the not too distant future”.

“Wow, that’s brilliant, well done you. And Alison?”

“She works for herself, using the home as an office. She develops promotional marketing material and websites for small businesses, you know that sort of thing”.

“Yes, yes well it’s all necessary if you want to be seen these days, isn’t it? Oh look here we are” Jenny replied as they arrived in the A&E ward.

Jenny commandeered a consultation room and a Nurse, requesting that she brought a kit for taking blood.

“I haven’t had this done for some time” Richard announced as he sat down and rested his arm on the desk.

The Nurse swabbed an area in the crease of his elbow saying “Well I’ll be as gentle as I can. We’ll just place a needle in here” as she pushed a syringe into his vein “and then I’m going to draw off a few phials of blood, so please keep calm and still for me”.

After a few minutes, she withdrew the syringe attachment and was about to wipe the tiny bleeding hole in his arm and give Richard a plaster, when she noticed that the wound was healing up before her very eyes and it unnerved her “Oh my God” she exclaimed with a gasp, as she looked across at Jenny, who was packing the phials into a bag and labelling them.

“What” she replied, “What is it?”

The Nurse pointed, her eyes wide and alarmed “His, his arm it has just healed up. Look. Look!”

Jenny rushed over and grabbed Richard’s arm and stared at the area where the injection had been and it was completely repaired, there wasn’t even the beginnings of a bruise. She gasped and looked at him and a rather panic-stricken Richard looked back at her.

“What the hell is happening to me!” he exclaimed.

Jenny looked around and asked the Nurse to go and get Doctor Thompson to join them and quickly added for her not to talk to anyone. Then she turned back to Richard and said, “Richard this is unreal, when is the last time you ever injured yourself?”

Richard hesitated “I ... I don't know, it must have been when I was a lot younger. I remember falling off my bike and cutting my lip. God, there was blood everywhere. My mother was in hysterics when she came running out of the house to see what had happened”.

“But did it heal up like this?” Jenny said as she pointed to his arm

“No, it took ages. My Mum was thinking about taking me to the infirmary but it slowed up thank God and eventually stopped.

Richard was ashen-faced and he was in shock. His eyes were hunting for help and an explanation.

At that moment Doctor Thompson came into the room with the same Nurse that had gone off to find him. He came straight over to Richard and let Jenny brief him on what had happened.

He looked at Richard's arm and then said “This is incredible. Have you ever even slightly cut yourself, like shaving or something?”

“To be honest, now I think about it, I just can't recall cutting myself to the point of drawing blood for quite some time now, although I use an electric shaver and I'm always careful with knives. I'm not handy around the house either, you know DIY etc. Look what the bloody hell is happening?”

“I don't know Richard. Just keep calm for a moment”. The Doctor glanced around the room and picked up another syringe, broke it out of the packet and having apologised, told Richard he was going to scrape and puncture the skin again, to see what happened.

Richard winced but then watched intently as Doctor Thompson wiggled the needle around a bit to draw some blood out and then he withdrew the instrument and stared wondrously as the skin just healed itself rapidly, without even a trace of blood on his arm.

Doctor Thompson was almost speechless; his mouth agape. His mind was now racing too. First the situation with the baby and those unbelievable blue eyes and now this, all in the space of the same day. ‘God I need a drink’ he thought to himself. However, right now he needed to try and think rationally and somehow get things back under control.

He glanced over at the badge on the Nurse's tunic “OK, Nurse Andrews, I can't fully explain what's going on here but you must

keep patient confidentiality and I forbid you from talking to anyone about this, not family or friends – no-one. Do you understand?”

The Nurse nodded, shaking and excused herself saying she needed to go to the toilet and left the room quickly.

He turned to Richard and said “OK Richard, I need you to remain calm and I’m not sure you should leave here to go home as I understand you might have been planning, as we need to try and work out what’s going on with you.

However, I think it’s fair to say that whatever we’re dealing with here has had some profound effect on your baby and we need to get a handle on the whole situation. Is there anyone you can call on, to get you some things so you can stay here in the hospital, maybe for a couple of weeks at worst, so you can be here with your wife?”

Richard nodded and explained that his sister was a key holder to the family home and he would call her.

“OK good; but you can only tell her that it was agreed you would stay here to be with Alison because of some complications. Tell her to spread the news to the rest of the wider family about the birth of baby William, but they must stay away until you are all allowed home, for your health and safety sort of thing; but don’t go overboard with it you know?”

“OK I hear you Doctor; I’m good at making up stories. So where do we go from here? My sister will want to see us when she gets here with my things”.

“Yes of course. OK. Look you can meet her but just say that Alison and William are in an isolation unit and cannot be disturbed by anyone other than medical personnel and yourself. That way she can drop off your things and hopefully just leave”.

Richard nodded his acknowledgement and rolled down his shirt sleeve as he stood up to walk out the room.

Chapter 2 - Analysis

Richard walked back to the private room with Jenny Dempster to find his wife and baby still asleep. His mind was racing and far from feeling tired, his body was alive, fuelled by a toxic mix of adrenalin, anxiety and disbelief, not only about the condition of his son's eyes, but now the discovery of this previously unknown ability to super heal himself.

After making a cursory check on his wife and son, he turned to Jenny and spoke in a semi whisper "I'm struggling to deal with all this. It's like I'm in some sort of wild dream, or a sci-fi movie or something. What the heck is going on Jenny? I'm feeling really scared and"

Jenny placed her hands onto his shoulders and he lifted his head to look at her, as she stepped towards him and they hugged each other, in a somewhat awkward manner at first, but this soon gave way to a genuine and mutual show of warmth and comfort which they both drew strength and calm from.

They came apart and Jenny said, "You need to rest Richard; although I'm sure you're far from feeling the need to do that; so would you like me to get you something to help you sleep?"

You've had a long and momentous day and we're all feeling shocked and anxious for both you and William, but be assured that we will find out what's going on.

Deep down, I really don't think there is anything to worry about, certainly not for yourself, as whatever has happened to you is not going to threaten your life. As for William, then once the tests are completed, we'll know more and can formulate some answers and if it warrants it, some treatment, perhaps not only for him but maybe for you as well".

Richard nodded and heaved a big sigh, running his hands through his hair whilst looking across the room to the crib where his son lay sleeping soundly.

Jenny continued "It may turn out that we will need to involve a lot more people and resources than we have here at this hospital, so

I'll just warn you now, that we may have to move all of you to a scientific facility in London, so you'll need to prepare yourself for that. Notify your place of work and so on".

Richard frowned and his brief onset of composure was replaced with renewed alarm "What you mean this could take weeks, maybe longer?"

Jenny motioned him towards the door and they walked outside into the corridor and away from the room.

"I'm sorry Richard, but like you, my mind is racing too. We're dealing with so many unknowns here and I can't predict how long this investigation will take or even what the eventual outcome will be.

However, there'll be a lot of people wanting to be involved in getting a better understanding of what is going on and how your body has somehow managed to become capable of healing itself. Maybe your genetic code has had some influence on William's development during your wife's pregnancy. It's a wild theory and I'm probably completely on the wrong track, but there has to be a link in all this".

Richard listened intently and nodded saying "No, I understand and you may be right; but what about Alison, do you think we've yet to discover something about her?"

"I don't know, but so far she's not demonstrated anything unusual or abnormal from what we've seen or been aware of already". She smiled slightly and said "Let's put it this way, she certainly can't repair herself" referring to the delivery, "and she looks and behaves pretty normally to me".

Richard smiled in acknowledgement and nodded repeatedly, almost accepting the strange set of circumstances he now found himself in.

"Are you hungry?" Jenny asked. "I've just realised that you've probably not eaten all day, Can I get you something, or we can go to the cafeteria if you like?"

"For some bizarre reason I don't feel hungry but I could murder a coffee, but you know, not from a vending machine".

"Yeah, I know what you mean. Do you want to come with me?"

“Er ... maybe not, I think it might be best if I wait in the room, just in case William or Alison wakes up, besides I need to ring my sister and get some clothes and stuff brought over here”.

“OK, that’s fine. You make the call and I’ll get some coffee sent over and we’ll catch up again soon” and with that, she turned to walked off down the corridor, but paused and turned back to face Richard and said “Did you want me to get you something to help you sleep? I see the porter has already put the extra bed in the room; so you could take the opportunity of getting some rest yourself – you might need it”.

Richard shook his head and declined the offer saying he wanted to be on hand for his wife and son, besides he had a lot of things to think through and come to terms with and he wasn’t going to do that in a drug-induced sleep. Besides he also needed to tell Alison all about what had happened to him.

He felt very awkward and insincere when he met his sister in the reception area of the hospital, but in lying, or rather being very calculated with the truth, he had managed to convey the feeling of joy, tinged with the awareness of concern and apprehension needed to justify why he couldn’t let her or any other member of the family see the baby.

Thankfully Sarah was his only immediate family member that he needed to have to worry about.

His parents lived near Perpignan in the south of France and were merely waiting for the call with the news of the birth, so they could get themselves organised to travel to England when it suited him.

Alison’s parents lived in Bath and she was an only child, so Richard rang them and explained the situation. He suggested that they come over when the family were all safely back home, which he hoped would be in the next week or so; little knowing that matters were going to get a lot more demanding and complicated.

Richard eventually managed to get some sleep; albeit somewhat punctuated by the need for Alison to feed William. Strangely though, it wasn’t because he was crying in that usual uncontrollable way that babies do when they are hungry, but merely waking her with a soft warble, not unlike that of a wood pigeon.

It was yet another unusual behavioural point he noted and later shared with Jenny and Doctor Thompson when they both came to see them the following morning.

As they were all talking, there was a sudden knock on the door and all eyes turned to see a male nurse walking in carrying an A4 plastic wallet, with what appeared to have several pages inside it.

He went straight up to Doctor Thompson, who had positioned himself strategically between the Nurse and the view he might have had of William, who at that moment was in Alison's arms as she sat upright in the bed.

He simply announced that they were Richard Jackson's blood test results and then he glanced over at Richard with a frowned expression, before turning to leave almost as quickly as he had arrived.

He hadn't quite reached the door, before Doctor Thompson called out "I don't need to remind you about patient confidentiality in this hospital or elsewhere, do I nurse?"

Without looking back, the nurse opened the door and paused to quickly say "No of course not Doctor" and with that, he was gone.

"Well let's see what caused him to look at you rather strangely Richard" said Doctor Thompson, as he unclasped the wallet and slid the documents out onto the foot of the bed and having retrieved his reading glasses, he started to speed read through the more revealing data.

On more than one occasion, he paused to look at Richard and later he glanced over to Jenny Dempster and gestured her to look through the pages he had finished with.

"What is it Doctor?" asked Alison.

Jenny's eyes widened as she glanced through the paperwork she'd been given to read; repeatedly looking at Richard, then at Doctor Thompson, before slowly uttering "Is this right? Surely it can't be? Has there been some sort of sample contamination, maybe some sort of chemical interference or something?"

Richard came over to stand closer to where Jenny and the Doctor stood and demanded to know what they were concluding; with Alison's words echoing around them, pleading for an answer.

"Well let's see. What we have here is Richard's normal healthy blood sample results, but we also have significant traces of ... something, or shall I say someone else" Doctor Thompson announced awkwardly, feeling completely unable to fathom the possibility of how such a set of results could be obtained.

Jenny picked up where the Doctor had fallen silent, whilst still reading and turning the pages over in her hands, "Yes and I would go as far to say however fanciful and far-fetched this may sound, but this DNA blend is human-like, rather than human. There are trace elements and other substances that are not quantifiable, or can be identified in normal data analysis terms"

Richard was speechless and as the voices in the room fell progressively silent; it seemed as though the walls around him were beginning to close in.

Doctor Thompson broke the eerie atmosphere that had descended on everyone "OK, well if we work on the theory that whatever has contaminated Richard's DNA is shall we say, alien for want of a better word, then this would answer why he can heal himself and it would also explain how William's eyes have ended up looking the way they do".

Jenny nodded and repeated to Alison what she'd said to Richard earlier and now she had the medical evidence to substantiate her thoughts, but as she turned to Doctor Thompson she added, "But how did this DNA get into Richard's system and manifest itself so elegantly, without disturbing the balance of his DNA, or indeed causing him to feel ill, or troubled?"

Richard started to laugh as he said "Are you seriously expecting me to believe what you're saying. This is madness. What are we saying; alien abduction or something stupid like that?"

"Look, Richard, this is not a laughing matter and I can only tell you what we are looking at here" retorted Jenny, "To be honest, we are out of our depth with all this. We are going to have to get some bioengineers to examine these results and no doubt take a much closer look at you. Besides, you only have to look at William and to

observe what you can do, to see that we are dealing with something extraordinary”.

“Or perhaps extra-terrestrial” added Doctor Thompson with a somewhat blank expression on his face.

Up until now, Alison had been listening intently and getting more nervous and distressed by the minute and suddenly she shouted out “Look what the hell is going on. I’m getting very scared. No-one’s telling us anything that makes any sense” and she started to cry.

Richard rushed over to comfort her as Jenny and Ian Thompson looked firstly at each other and then across to the crib, where William lay quietly and calmly.

Jenny whispered “We need to schedule the MRI scan on William for sure, maybe Richard, albeit I don’t think it’s going to reveal much more than what we’ve discovered from the blood tests. I think we need to get in touch with Kings College London and move the family down there ASAP, what do you think?”

Ian Thompson nodded and gestured across to the bed where Richard and Alison continued to comfort each other, saying “This is going to put a strain on them all, especially with the need for us to keep all this under wraps. God if news of this broke out, then the media would have a field day. We need to get the Hospital Director alerted and get a communication lockdown on all staff”.

“Do you think we need to get the Police involved for security?” suggested Jenny.

Doctor Thompson laughed nervously and threw his arms up in the air saying “I don’t know if I’m honest. This is all just so surreal. I feel as though I’m an extra on some sort of SciFi film set. This stuff only happens in the movies, doesn’t it? What do you do in a situation like this? Do we call the Government Security Services, or what?”

“I think we’d better leave that to the teams down in London”

They both walked over to the bed and spoke softly to the parents, whilst casting glances across to the crib, as they explained what needed to happen, just as soon as Alison felt able to travel.

It would be left to Richard to keep the wider family informed, but with limited information and make sure that his employers could support his time away from work. He knew he was due paternity leave, but he had the growing belief that he was going to need a lot more time off from work.

During the days and nights that followed, the most notable and alarming change that had begun to worry the medical team, let alone Richard and Alison, had been the rapid growth spurts that William was being subjected to. His crib had already been replaced with a cot, such was his size.

And yet despite these dramatic physical changes, William remained calm and peaceful; never once crying for any reason, be it through pain, discomfort or the need for a feed. He never even complained during all the monitoring tests and blood sample processes, which had demonstrated that he could also self-heal.

The day had now arrived, when the medical team felt it would be safe to place William into an MRI scanner, especially as he was nearly the size of a toddler and yet technically, he was still a baby.

“When was the last time he had a feed?” asked Jenny.

“Oh, about an hour ago” replied Alison, “Why?”

“We are keen to get the MRI scan completed today, so it would be very helpful if you could avoid feeding him again, so he can have a four-hour break before we sedate him. We’ll try and get through the scanning process as fast as we can, so as he comes round, you’ll be with him and no doubt he’ll be ready for another feed”.

Doctor Thompson then added, “We want to run an MRI on you too, Richard, especially as we should be getting the full analysis from your blood tests shortly, so if you want, or feel the need to be sedated, then you’ll need to avoid eating”.

Richard smiled “I fully intend to have something to eat Doctor, because I am famished, so I’ll just have to make sure I lie still, even though I’ve heard that these scanners are somewhat claustrophobic?”

“OK Alison we need to get William’s MRI scan underway; so for the sake of putting you through any discomfort, I would suggest you let Richard bring him down to the imaging room, whilst you remain here. Will that be alright?” asked Jenny.

“Oh, I don’t know. I still feel really bad about this”.

Richard held her hand and spoke softly to her “I’ll make sure he’s OK and I doubt very much whether he will come to any harm. There’s no point in you struggling and probably hurting yourself coming down to the scan room. It’ll be alright. I promise”

Alison reluctantly accepted but not before asking Richard to pass William over to her, so she could hold him and look into his amazing blue eyes.

Jenny echoed Richard’s thoughts and said “Don’t worry Alison, we’ll make sure he’s well looked after and we’ll have him back here with you before you know it”

Richard carried his son down to the room which housed the rather foreboding MRI Scanner. It looked as alien as he was beginning to feel and having taken in the eerie-looking machine, his gaze was drawn to look even harder at William.

Amazingly he’d continued to remain awake but unnaturally calm; despite all the frantic movements and anxious voices of the medical people flying around them.

“OK, we’ll give William a small injection to sedate him and then you can help position him on the bed of the scanner,” Jenny said softly.

Once again, just as soon as the nurse had finished injecting the syringe into William’s arm, his skin heeled immediately; but his eyes did at least close a few seconds later.

Richard gently placed him on the bed and then Jenny arranged him so that the operator would get the best images.

“OK we’ll need to leave the room and go into the operation booth through there,” said Jenny, as she gestured towards a door.

Richard followed her and watched intensely as the enormous machine groaned into life and the eye of the scanner began to orbit William's inert body. Jenny watched wide-eyed, as the images began to compose themselves on the monitors in front of her and the operating technicians.

There was a very clear outline of some sort of membrane running around the body. For a baby, the brain was incredibly well developed, although its shape was at odds to the typical design of a human brain.

It appeared to be constructed of layers, with recesses in between each fold. The eyes, which had been the source of the original alert to things being different about the baby, were not the typical ball shape, but were a simple concave disc.

Other bodily organs appeared to be similar to those found in human beings; although Jenny doubted they would be technically the same or function in the same way.

After about 30 minutes, the operators looked at each other and then glanced at Jenny, indicating that they were finished and Richard could collect the toddler.

Richard handed his son over to Jenny to hold and climbed onto the bed of the scanner and laid down, trying to relax and following the operator's instructions over the intercom.

He closed his eyes and tried to empty his mind; but it was racing around far too much, as the awful drone of the scanner once again resonated deeply around him.

"Very good Richard; you're doing well" Jenny kept saying repeatedly, trying to encourage and support him as his nerves were jangling. "William is incredibly warm and I can't get over how calm and content he is; even though he's with me. Sorry, I don't know why I'm talking to you, as you can only chat back in between the knocking sounds" she said with a little laugh.

A while later and Richard was allowed to leave the claustrophobic and noisy tunnel of the MRI Scanner.

As soon as he walked back into the room, Jenny handed William back to him and he asked her how things looked.

“Well as per what the DNA results suggested; William’s genetic make-up is different from what we expect to see in a human, let alone a baby. There is a common thread which runs between you and him, which appears to be what is protecting the body from being cut and supports the fast healing process”.

Richard couldn’t even muster a reply, as his mind struggled to take in what he was hearing and then he felt his son stir in his arms. He looked down to see his large jewel-like eyes beaming up at him. William was smiling and he appeared to be trying to say something, as his little mouth was forming what looked like words.

Aware of the silence, Jenny looked over at him and then drawn by his gaze, she lowered her head and frowned just at the point where William blurted out the word “Hello”. She gasped in complete shock and dropped the report material that she had been originally looking at as she was speaking to Richard.

“Oh my God he can talk!” she shouted as she raised her hands to her mouth in total disbelief.

Everyone else in the room stared at the toddler, echoing Jenny’s feelings and being equally dumbfounded and amazed. They looked at each other, mouths agape and hands pleading for an explanation, as they anxiously began to wonder what was going to follow next.

Richard lifted him to his eye line and smiled before saying “Hello William. Can you understand me?”

There was a pause before William replied, but when he did, the whole room fell about in complete shock and bewilderment.

“Yes, I understand you father, but my name is not William it is Janithillon”.

Six Months Earlier

Chapter 3 – Proposition

For as long as anyone could care to remember, the orthodox citizens on the planet Xethenia, have had to wrestle with the scourge of the PiruNostram gang culture disrupting their everyday lives.

More disturbingly, the lives of many other alien races, within the galactic neighbourhood, or beyond, were routinely subjected to serious consequences, should they be unfortunate enough to fall on the wrong side of these vicious, sadistic thugs.

The fact that the Xethanti are born into a life of immortality might seem extremely enviable, but with it came the frustrating acceptance, that no capital punishment process, could ever be imposed for malicious crimes against the lives of normal mortals.

Moreover, the government of Xethenia was under the ever-increasing pressure from the burgeoning population of 30 billion people, to address the problems caused by this undesirable criminal underclass.

For centuries, scores of Xethantian scientists had repeatedly tried and failed to work out a way of separating the uniform from the body. And on the back of this failure, lay the consequences of a society which could not easily maintain complete control of law and order.

Removing this transparent layer of immortality would enable the authorities to reduce the life expectancy of convicted criminals like the PiruNostram, or if necessary to be able to terminate their lives completely.

It is now Median, on the 200th cycle in the 30,135th Orbinar and a meeting of the Apostophet with Janithillon and his team of global scientists is about to begin.

Janithillon took a deep breath, more in a bid to calm his excitement than his nerves, as he led his team through the entrance portal and into the debating chamber, where all the members of the

Apostophet had gathered to appraise the results of his latest research.

Principal Sobek walked towards him, shook his hand with a friendly welcome and then gestured that he take a seat in front of the raised oval dais, where the other Apostophet Senators were seated.

His team diligently took their places behind him and stood quietly.

Sobek formally introduced Janithillon to his fellow Senators, more out of respect, for they all knew who he was and then he opened up the proceedings with a direct question.

“So, Janithillon what is this machine you have conceived? Tell us more if you would?”

“Principal” Janithillon began, as he stretched out his arm to draw their attention to the other scientists in the room, “We have engineered a solution to the problem that is affecting our world and that which besets other civilisations around the known galaxies”.

But before he could continue, a female Senator called Lassalla interrupted him excitedly with a question, saying “Have you finally discovered a way of decoding the uniform Janithillon?”

“Yes Senator I think we have”, replied Janithillon very proudly.

There was a pause as the members of the Apostophet looked at each other and passed a few comments amongst themselves before the Principal turned back to look at him and said “You say you think you have. Does that mean you’re unsure?”

“We have been testing the mechanics of the process on molecular, laboratory-grown organisms. We are satisfied they possess the uniform in their DNA structure and we have managed to separate it from the rest of the body.”

Janithillon paused as he let this amazing news permeate the group. “So we’re very confident we can do this on Xethantian criminals. My only concern is what may happen to some of the component elements once they have been segregated”.

Sobek leaned forward and frowned saying “Please can you explain further Janithillon? How does the machine achieve segregation?”

Janithillon paused and was about to lecture to the Apostophet, but instead, he stood up and walked across to a console. After waving his hand over a receptor, he threw the image he'd gathered, into the air, where it quickly formed a clear 3D hologram, streaming a film of the experiments that he and his team had been conducting.

They all watched and listened intently as Janithillon described the sequence of events.

“As you know, we have tried and failed to separate the uniform from the body having conducted an endless number of processes, be they physical, chemical or through the use of complex drugs. The problem is that the uniform is an ecosystem. It is alive and self-aware, so any attempt to undertake what it feels is an attack on the body of any kind, results in the uniform automatically protecting it.

So what we have developed here is a machine with a spiralling circular chamber, which houses a vast array of magnetic pulse proton beams, which will carry the host at high velocity on a maglev plinth. On its journey to reach 1 Marsek, (equivalent to the speed of light) a barrage of nucleoid plasma radiation, gene decoding attributors, neutron phasing accelerators and binary formulising attenuators, gradually peel the uniform away.

At 1 Marsek the machine activates the opening of a FoldSpace aperture just beyond the edge of the planetary atmosphere. Whilst everything is still in the stasis of a raw light spectrum, it shoots minute fragments of the uniform into a randomised exit gate, which means that these segments will be reforming in different inter-stellar time dimensions throughout the known universe. As a consequence, we are satisfied that it will be impossible for the uniform to reassemble”.

Senator Mayan, a widely respected female member of the Apostophet took advantage of the pause in Janithillon's delivery and asked “But what about the original host? Without the uniform are we to assume that they will be destroyed?”

Janithillon looked directly at the Senator and said, “Yes Senator, without the uniform the body; or in this case, the lab-grown organism, has no protection and is destroyed instantly at the point of separation”.

Mayan went on “This raises a whole new dilemma for everyone here Janithillon, because if we condone this plan then it becomes state-sponsored murder, no matter how justified. We have never had to deal with or contemplate addressing anything like this in the known lifetime of Xethanity. I recognise and completely appreciate the need to a degree, but I wonder whether this is the answer to all the problems we have faced as a civilisation across the millennia?”

Janithillon focused on Senator Mayan in the first instance, but then widened his gaze to the other members of the Apostophet as he responded.

“Senator, the respect that other planetary nations have of the Xethantian race is commonly held as being hatred at best. If it were not that we are seen by many as the commercial centre of trade, due to our longevity and expertise; then we would have imploded as a society.

The PiruNostram are the scourge of our lives and that of any mortal who is unfortunate enough to come into contact with them. They would have taken this planet down on the back of that collapse for the sheer sadistic fun of it”.

Mayan responded “Look Janithillon, I know you’ve suffered indirectly at the hands of this evil and ruthless mob and I can empathise with your angst in wanting to approach the problem by bringing an end to their tyranny. However, Senator Magdala and I have campaigned vigorously for resources to be put in place to re-integrate less hardened elements of these PiruNostram gangs along with their sympathisers through an intense programme of social re-education. We believe this will appeal to the outlook and opinions that our galactic neighbours have of our world and I think we should persevere with this approach”.

There was a brief silence before Janithillon composed himself and continued in partial ignorance of Mayan’s statement.

“I have called this machine, TAURUS, which is simply an abbreviation of the experimental process, which is a Terminal Acceleration Unit for the Removal of Unstable Synexillum. It is the most dangerous and destructive weapon I have ever been commissioned to develop and I have consulted heavily with my

fellow scientists on Quella to create it. All that's left now is to test it on a criminal host, but ...”

Once again, Senator Lassalla cut across him and said “Are you asking for Apostophet approval to do this, as speaking for myself and my quadrant, you can have it right now”, she said eagerly, whilst looking around for support from her fellow senators.

There were more internal murmurings and discussion which followed before Sobek called everyone to order and addressed Janithillon again. “You have our collective approval to consult with General Herod of the Planetary Protectorate Force and begin your trials on their most convicted and dangerous prisoners Janithillon. Please advise us when you are ready to start and the Apostophet will reconvene with you at the site of the machine”.

Janithillon's dark blue eyes appeared to glow even more richly as he smiled and bowed before acknowledging the decision from Principal Sobek.

As noted by Mayan, he had lost many of his closest Mequellium friends in the past to mindless criminal violence. Even his own father, had at one point, been abducted and held for ransom on fear of death, so his feelings towards finally dealing with what he considered, were insane animals, would be both revengeful and rewarding.

As the room fell quiet, the hitherto silent Senator Magdala directed a question to Janithillon “You mentioned that there is a part of this process that you have some doubt about. Please explain what this is?”

Janithillon nodded “Yes of course. As you know one of the strongest forces within the makeup of Xethantian bio-chemistry is the Entience. It is the collective for our soul, our gene code, our intelligence and our memory.

We know this is an energy force which carefully harvests key nutrients from Synexillum from the moment we are born. Whereas the body may die after several thousand orbinars, the Entience permeates our collective society and we absorb the knowledge and experiences from the whole of Xethanity.

My only concern is that the Entience will be dispersed around the universe at the point of phasing the uniform into FoldSpace and where it may travel to, or whom it may come into contact with, we have no idea or control over”.

“But surely”, responded Senator Magdala, “the attributes of the Entience DNA would only be of benefit to another Xethantian?”

“All I can tell you Senator, is that once we have decoded the uniform, the Entience DNA will undeniably become vulnerable and exposed to absorption by any intelligent carbon-based life form that could harness its attributes, without necessarily realising what they have acquired”.

Once again, an eerie silence fell throughout the room, until Sobek spoke, saying “Do we know what the furthest dimension is, into which we can create a FoldSpace partition Janithillon?”

“Principal Sobek, my father and his ancestral predecessors on Quella developed this inter-galactic travel system to foster the expansion of life and communication for many nations of this galaxy and others in our sector of the universe.

We only know the limits of moving physical objects like starship cruisers. I doubt whether anyone would have thought that one-day Xethantians would be trying to hurl molecular atoms across inter-stellar distances.

All I can say is that it would be a greater reach than we could realistically measure or control; meaning that the particle physics which make up the Entience will not be reincarnated with non-Xethantian life forms anywhere near this sector of the universe.

My best guess would envisage emergence into the regions we know as the Pallendra, Magella and Gorgin Clusters”.

Sobek sat back looking somewhat relieved as he announced “That is good news Janithillon. Let us hope your best guess is correct, because we cannot have PiruNostram Entience permeating itself within galaxies that are in our universal neighbourhood”.

Mayan leant forward from her chair and said “You also mentioned that there could be a displacement in the boundaries of time when the DNA remnants are despatched through FoldSpace. Are we to

assume that this might rewrite the course of history for some of the planets whose civilisations come into contact with it?”

“Yes, that’s right Senator. Regrettably, because we are despatching a particle element rather than a solid entity into a constantly shifting gravitational field, then there is every likelihood that a region in the universal spread, that is young in evolutionary terms, could have its life cycle track interfered with uncontrollably and quite randomly I’m afraid”.

Magdala glanced across at Sobek and then focused her attention on Janithillon as she said “My Daughter chose to stay on the planet known as Earth, after an exploration visit there nearly two thousand orbinars ago.

As you know Earth is in the Harentian system within a galaxy they call the Milky Way, which is a member of the Gorgin Cluster. We should try and alert her to the possibility of Entience DNA coming into contact with humanity.

Frankly, I think it is reprehensible for a civilised race such as ours, to consider contaminating another less advanced species than ourselves, with a level of intelligence they may not be able to fully comprehend, or know how to deal with. Worse still, it might to impact badly on the society in which they form a part of or even control”.

Sobek nodded sympathetically in her direction and raised a calming hand, before inviting the other members of the Apostophet to a vote.

Despite Magdala and Mayan’s concerns, then it was evident from the majority of their peers that their hunger to be rid of the PiruNostram was too great a force to wrestle with their consciences about. Therefore, not surprisingly, the decision was unanimous to forge ahead with the next phase of using TAURUS.

Upon witnessing the result of the vote and for the most part, having been dismissed by Sobek, Janithillon had turned to walk out of the Apostophet chamber, when Sobek spoke out to him with a grave tone in his voice saying, “You didn’t say that you had been liaising with the Mequellium about this project Janithillon?”

I am personally surprised and disappointed to have found out about this. I hope this does not lead to any further problems and conflict, as it should be none of their concern what we do here on Xethenia.

If this machine can do all you claim, then I don't need to remind you how much of a disaster it would be for our people if it should fall into the wrong hands".

With his back to Sobek, he half turned and muttered an apology, but then he just carried on walking with his team following diligently behind him. As they approached the large hall doorway, it began to dissolve to create an open portal and once they had all passed through, it silently reformed.

Sobek turned and acknowledged his fellow Senators ahead of saying "He is a brilliant young scientist, that there is no doubt, but I fear he is somewhat headstrong and wayward.

I will personally pay much closer attention to the progress of this project and ensure that he proceeds along a course that will ensure its complete success without compromise. Now unless there are any other pressing items to discuss, might I suggest we retire for some food and refreshment before we reconvene for the session before Set?"

Chapter 4 – PiruNostram

To understand who the PiruNostram are, why they exist and what drives them to act the way they do, then you have to appreciate what this minor faction of global society has learned from the immortal life they have been born into.

They don't have a conscience towards their fellow Xethantian and they certainly don't think that they need to contribute anything towards the society in which they live.

They know that acts of criminality will, at best, involve a custodial sentence and nothing more, because there is nothing more their peers can do to impose anything tougher.

If off-world aliens are injured, or as more often happens, they end up being killed usually for currency, possessions or simply and insanely, just for sport, then nothing more can be done.

Xethantian immortality means a lifetime can reach several thousands of years of age and the PiruNostram can do a lot of damage to the lives of many citizens during that time. More worryingly, they can disrupt the lives of many other mortal civilisations on other worlds, which are within reach of the average space cruiser travelling through FoldSpace.

Despite the amazing development of Xethantian culture and the contribution it makes to the wider galaxy of planets, the PiruNostram firmly believe that there is nothing in this life for them.

Why should they work and earn credits to buy what they need, when they can simply take it, including a life when the opportunity presents itself.

There has never been a case involving the abduction of a Xethantian in exchange for currency, as the alternative fate of death is not an option. However, stealing goods and property befalls anyone unlucky enough to become a target.

So where and when did this gang culture begin?

The influence which led to the emergence of the PiruNostram undoubtedly came from an off-world colony, like Quella, because it is well known that many early members of this criminal culture were and still are, Mequexian and consequently they are often seen bearing a menacing look with their deep blue, glowing eyes.

As planetary life has evolved, the appeal of a gangland culture has inspired a growing number of simple-minded and excluded Xethantians to join regional groups known as packs, where they become quickly radicalised.

It is believed that around 2% of the planetary population are either directly involved with the PiruNostram, or are involved occasionally in helping them with regional crime at various levels, usually in exchange for money, gifts or a falsely elevated social status.

By far and away, the most notorious gangster is an evil villain called Nemesis. He is revered by his peers as being the Guensho or king of the PiruNostram. He has been involved with this despised and hated gang culture for most of his adult life and was now 2000 years old.

Nemesis is Mequexian and although no-one really knows who his real parents were, he is gifted and smart. Every time the authorities are lucky enough to capture him; he manages to be released by organised gangs and sympathisers loyal to the PiruNostram.

He very quickly blends back into the enormous planetary populace, only to emerge later to carry out the next high profile criminal act.

There was a time when the Planetary Protectorate Force, a sort of combined army/police force made up of Xethantian nationals working alongside a robotic android workforce; would hunt down and target known members of the PiruNostram and retrofit crimes to these individuals.

This would enable them to be incarcerated in vast prisons, usually run by androids, to avoid the likelihood of any Xethantian guards being seduced with bribery, be it by mental grooming, or some other kind of extortion racket by the inmates.

However, these numerous prisons became uncomfortably full, so it was decided that off-world centres would be constructed, usually on desolate worlds, thinly populated, with mining colonies.

They would put these immortal prisoners to hard labour, knowing that they wouldn't need to be looked after. However, all too often the PiruNostram convicts would manage to escape and jump ship to other off-world planets, from where another reign of terrorism would begin to permeate that planet's culture.

Xethantian off-world Special Forces would then be dispatched to try and apprehend these escaped convicts, which more often than not was merely a gesture of goodwill, as they were far too difficult to locate. Added to which, mortal beings were easily sucked into working for the PiruNostram, which meant they could be helped to hide and blend in.

Consequently, at inter-planetary summits, there was always a rallying call for the Xethantian authorities to abandon and close down off-world prison centres.

As a consequence, this is what eventually led to the spiralling numbers of PiruNostram living on Xethenia.

It was a crack hostage-taking team from the notorious East Quadrant of Xethenia, headed by Nemesis, who had recently kidnapped Janithillon's father, Opus Rah.

They held him to ransom, which the Government authorities on Quella finally agreed to pay. It was evident that his life was on the line, as demonstrated by some appalling video footage, taken by the gang which showed him in a badly beaten state.

Opus Rah was an elder statesman and at the equivalent of 250 years of age, he was classed as someone approaching elderly life, let alone the fact that he held a prominent position as one of the top scientists on Quella.

Consequently, the authorities wanted to make sure he was saved from these mindless and vicious criminals.

During his 3 day incarceration as a hostage by the PiruNostram gang on his homeworld, Opus Rah was interrogated and severely beaten into telling Nemesis about a secret project he was involved with.

The project had hitherto been nothing more than wild rumours concerning some sort of machine which could strip away the immortality of a Xethantian.

“So it is true then” mused Nemesis, his faced pressed up close to the bleeding head of Opus Rah, “Where is this machine? Who else knows about it and who is working on the project?”

“I don’t know any more other than what I’ve told you” Opus replied weeping.

“You’re lying, I can tell. If you weren’t Mequellium I’d have bled your mind dry by now; but I know you’re holding back from me” Nemesis growled, as he hit Opus on the side of his head with a clenched fist.

Opus swayed within the traction beams that the shackles on his arms and legs were connected to and groaned, unable to nurse the throbbing pains being so brutally inflicted on him by his captor.

“Look, I don't even know how close the people working for the Apostophet are towards getting the machine constructed. For all I know they could be orbinars, possibly even hundreds of orbinars away, from completion” blurted Opus Rah, trying desperately to avoid further punishment, but without leaking too much information.

Nemesis scowled back at him with an angry huff and a shrug of the shoulders before turning to face his henchman who were grouped around him in the room, standing idol or sitting in chairs, patiently awaiting further orders from their leader.

“Is your son Janithillon working on this project?”

“And what if he is - what difference would that make?”

“It tells me that he's likely to be colluding with you and maybe others on Quella”.

Opus Rah stared at the wall in front of him, his mind racing with thoughts as to what he might be obliged to say next.

Nemesis mused and whirled on him once again “What's in it for Quella?”

Opus ignored him and continued to stare at the wall.

Another body blow flew in as a consequence of his silence, this time hard into the abdomen, which caused Opus to wretch and cry out.

“Why would Quella help Xethenia to deal with the issue of immortality?”

Opus recovered enough and spat out some bile ahead of saying “For the most part the whole galaxy is envious of life on Xethenia, but you, you animal outcasts, you and the rest of your sadistic gangs have to be stopped and removed from existence”.

But Nemesis wasn't listening. Instead, his finger had touched a transparent piece of film stuck to the side of his neck like tape, and he was now having a communication call with the planetary authorities on Quella, who were confirming the terms of Opus Rah's release in exchange for the agreed ransom figure.

For governments and individuals that could meet ransom demands, then they needed to act fast. It was a widely known fact that PiruNostram packs wouldn't waste time beating, mutilating and when denied payment, inevitably killing a hostage. The fact that Nemesis was talking terms made Opus Rah feel somewhat relieved, as he was about to learn that he was on the verge of being released and rescued.

“Looks like you're highly valued by your peers here on Quella” sneered Nemesis.

Opus Rah turned to face Nemesis, his face serious, his tone full of anger “More valued than your life is, or that of any PiruNostram scum. Now release me from this traction cell you evil bastard. What shame you must bring on your parents, especially your mother, as no doubt your father must be long gone?”

Nemesis just laughed and at the same time as nodding to one of his men to switch off the traction cell, he kicked Opus hard in the back of the legs so that as he was released from the beam, he lost balance and crashed hard onto the floor.

Opus looked up at him as he dragged himself to his feet holding his back in pain and nursing his bruised and bleeding head and said “The PiruNostram are a scourge, a disease in the universe, but believe me a cure is coming. A cure that the whole universe has been waiting millennia for, and when it arrives, then you will be

consigned to the books of history. I doubt whether anyone will bother writing anything at all as you'll soon be eradicated from our minds, let alone our lives”.

Nemesis yelled back “The PiruNostram will never be exterminated. You forget old man, that we weald the power to over-run entire planets and we will be avenged. We will find this machine and if it turns out to be true, we will not be the only life that loses immortality. I will personally see to it that your son is reduced to being as mortal as you are. Now go, before I change my mind and rip your heart out of your chest. It'll be worth the 5 million Farab your government has agreed to pay for your miserable life”.

Opus realised he was dicing with his death and elected to swallow his anger and pride, in favour of walking slowly to the doorway which lead to the building's exit and his freedom. But as he reached the door he turned back to Nemesis and yelled “There will be nothing left for you to avenge once immortality has been taken away” and with that, he walked out and climbed aboard a waiting taxi, which hovered nearby; owned and piloted by a PiruNostram sympathiser. It took him to the nearest planetary protectorate base; who had already been notified of his impending arrival.

Six officers were waiting outside the gates and Opus was there in minutes. The taxi pilot waited in the craft, but as soon as Opus was barely clear, he gunned the engines and took off, with shields deployed to shun any attempt to bring the ship down.

However, the officers were more interested in protecting themselves and being on hand to help Opus Rah than worrying about apprehending what would be a useless sympathiser. The ship would be falsely registered and the tracking ID would be indexed to a different make and model; plus there were too many other, more demanding crimes to deal with, so there was little point in wasting time and resources on one taxi pilot.

Opus couldn't hold himself up anymore, now the adrenaline was ebbing away along with the stress of his recent abduction and he collapsed to the ground just as a Senior Officer was making his way over to him. He sprinted the final steps, just catching him and avoiding his head crashing onto the hard standing of the drop zone.

“Are you alright Hom Rah?” he asked (Hom is a term similar to Mr on Earth).

Opus looked up at him, his head cradled against the officer's leg, but he was struggling to make out their identity.

Recognising why Opus was reaching up at him, the officer waved his hand across the blacked out helmet visor and it evaporated, leaving the sight of two eyes gazing down at him, focused but friendly and welcoming.

“Hom Rah are you alright?” he repeated.

Opus nodded and murmured a reply, gesturing for the officer to help him to his feet.

The officer yelled back to his colleagues, who were still standing guard, looking around them and using scanners to check for a possible PiruNostram ambush pack, who would often lay in hiding, waiting to pounce and reclaim their recently released hostage.

“Hurry and get a medic across to the base. He's in a bad way and we need to get him into an OLR unit as fast as possible. Give me a hand to get him into the rest area and then stand down”

Organ & Limb Reconstruction units were sometimes needed to help mortal victims recover from an accident, or as was more often the case, from PiruNostram violence but so long as they were still alive, then this machine could rebuild limbs, repair cuts, bruises and damaged organs.

The technology was developed on Quella and the units were in wide circulation around the galaxy. Once the genetic makeup of the patient had been determined, then they were laid down naked into a coffin-sized circular glass case. An orbiting arm emitting a pulsing red beam similar to that of a laser, combined with the high pitch sound of a sonic emitter, gradually rebuilt limbs, repaired damaged tissue and removed scarring and bruising in a matter of minutes.

Once Opus had been attended to by medics and his wounds had been dealt with by the OLR unit, he felt well enough to call his Xethantian wife, Rhysaak.

She was a very experienced and senior member of the inter-planetary diplomatic executive, which reported directly to the

Apostophet. Ironically, she was in a district meeting on Xethenia with protectorate management, to talk about the growing crime rate from PiruNostram packs on visiting aliens, whilst anxiously waiting for news about her husband.

For many years, all high profile citizens of Quella and neighbouring planets elected to have a Personal Data Transmitter chip injected into their necks; so that on top of being able to supply routine health information to their medical advisors, they could be located and hopefully recovered by rescue squads, should they be kidnapped.

It was felt that the neck would be the safest place to have the transmitter located, as most captors would need to keep the hostage alive if they wanted to secure the ransom money.

If it was located in the arm or a leg or elsewhere in the body, then there was a significant chance they could sustain terrible injuries especially if they were unlucky enough to be apprehended by the PiruNostram wanting to extricate and dispose of the chip.

However, the PiruNostram would often scan for PDT's during the kidnap process and if the hostage wasn't "chipped" then they would continue, but if they were, then depending on the potential value associated with the individual, then there was a risk they could be beheaded and the decapitated corpse, along with the head, would be found dumped on some waste ground.

So, consequently, many people began to decline having the PDT's injected and take the risk they wouldn't be got at.

Opus Rah was one of these people and that was why he survived, even though nobody knew where he was.

Chapter 5 - TAURUS

Thirty cycles had passed since Janithillon had presented the concept of the awesome machine known as TAURUS to the Apostophet; which he solemnly believed would herald a new future for the lives and ongoing civilisation of Xethenia.

The moment had finally arrived to perform a public trial on a live Xethantian criminal, a notorious member of the PiruNostram; known to many as a pack leader and a closely respected ally to Nemesis himself.

Janithillon mused over that thought for a moment as an assembled gathering of the Apostophet and senior executives, took their places in the high glass screened gallery, which had a commanding view of the room in which the TAURUS machine now stood. It was a huge, grey, ominous and cold looking monster, which was emitting a deep resonating hum, waiting patiently to spring into life, like some hungry animal, which was ready and waiting to devour its first meal of the day.

Suddenly, a sound not unlike the gentle bang of a gong, filled the gallery and the chanting audience fell quiet as Sobek stood onto an elevated dais and raised his hands to address them all.

“My fellow Apostophet, executives and guests, I bid you a warm welcome to bear witness to what I hope will be the dawn of a new era in our planet's evolution. A new era which will send a message of peace and hope throughout the known galaxies of our universe. A new era celebrating an end to the vile existence of the PiruNostram and to all those that support this evil criminality. Together they have been the burden of many lives for countless orbinars”.

He paused for a moment, as the audience erupted with gentle applause and then quickly fell silent, as he raised his hands once again to continue.

“Our most revered scientist, Janithillon, along with his team have spent many orbinars developing and testing the machine you see before you. Known as TAURUS, it has the capacity to remove the

uniform from the body of a Xethantian in such a way, that it will be impossible for them to remain immortal”.

There was a brief bout of cheers and applause.

“Many members of PiruNostram packs have been detained in maximum-security cells, charged with crimes against Xethanity and more seriously, to other off-world mortals, who have innocently lost their lives as a consequence of mindless violence, and soon they will be silenced forever”.

This was met with more applause from the delegation.

“Let the demonstration begin” hailed Sobek as he stepped down from the dais and made his way back to a central seat among the other Apostophet senators.

Janithillon stood up and took centre stage on the dais. He courteously bowed his head to the audience before turning to wave his hands apart from each other and a hologram console emerged into view. He tapped onto a few imaged buttons and then turned to face the eagerly anxious audience.

“May it please the Apostophet and my fellow Xethantians to witness this inaugural event? The TAURUS will take a few moments to power up, during which time you will experience considerable tremors from a deep and growling noise, but please remain calm as this is quite normal”.

The PiruNostram pack leader, known simply as Malice was carried in on a floating plinth, his arms and legs held in traction binders. His head moved around in an animated fashion trying to take stock of what was going on around him. Eventually, he centred on the huge brilliantly lit maw which formed the entrance to TAURUS, with what looked like steam, rolling off its circular edge.

His eyes bulged and he tried to wrestle free from the bindings but it was futile and useless and he knew it. Janithillon's voice boomed around him in the room.

“Guards, guide the maglev plinth into the mouth of the TAURUS and then you may leave the room”.

They did as he requested and marched away silently without a word to the panic-stricken prisoner.

Malice turned his head sideways and looked over his shoulder up to the viewing gallery window, whereupon he could see the crowd looking down at him and Janithillon in the foreground, his fingers poised over an array of controls.

“Malice” he called out “You are evil PiruNostram scum and are about to be erased from our planet's history. You will live no more to bring pain, grief and death to those who innocently fall prey to your mindless gang violence. This machine will be the cure to your diseased mind. Have you anything to say before it brings your miserable and pitiful life to an end?”

Malice stared at him with a demonic look and tensed his entire body, shouting “The PiruNostram will be avenged, mark my words. You, your family, friends and associates will not be safe. We will destroy you. We will destroy Xethenia”.

Janithillon had heard enough. He waved his hand over a glowing image and the plinth started to move forwards into the overbearing light. Malice closed his eyes to shield them but kept on shouting his pledge to kill everyone that stood in the way of the PiruNostram.

However, moments later, the pace of movement and the noise of the machine started to increase and his ranting was swallowed up by the screeching sounds of the force that would soon begin to transform his entire being into light and energy.

Janithillon turned to the audience, who were already leaning forward and he gestured towards the huge video wall, which was showing a holographic projection of what was happening inside the machine.

“Observe the transformation of the host”.

They all looked on with a combination of horror, interest and twisted excitement. They all knew the enormity of what was about to happen and as the process wore on, many began to feel uneasy and uncomfortable with realisation of what the future would now mean to them, more than the significance of what it meant to the PiruNostram. The atmosphere was tense, quiet, disturbing and fraught with private emotion.

Inside TAURUS, the plinth which had been originally carrying Malice had already been vaporised and he was now wrapped in a

cocoon of energy which was gradually ravaging his body, whilst it orbited around the inner shell of the machine at an incredibly high velocity.

Up until that point you could have been forgiven for thinking that you could still hear Malice screaming, such was the power of the uniform which was desperately trying to protect him. But now, not only was he silent, but the life of the most powerful and advanced organism in the known universe was itself, beginning to be extinguished.

The barrage of concentrated energy sources continued and the orbiting speed kept accelerating, along with the intensity of the screeching noise. It was now impossible to even detect the outline glow of what everyone knew would be a corpse. A moment later, a turret on the outside of the machine swung around and aimed a muzzle skywards, just as an opening in the domed ceiling slid aside.

The room shook as pulses of raw light and energy shot skyward.

Janithillon had to yell at them to be heard above the noise as he directed them to look at the video wall on the other side of the viewing gallery "We now have separation and so begins the process of what we call desolation, as each element of energy will be fired into FoldSpace which is being opened randomly and closed in minute fractions of time by XPACE".

As their collective attention switched back and forth from one wall to another, deep resonating pulses of sound rang out in time to each blast of energy being fired into the edge of the atmosphere.

As quickly as it appeared, it was being swallowed up into the black mass of FoldSpace where it could no longer be tracked as no-one knew where it would emerge, not that anybody cared.

Janithillon's deep blue eyes glowed with excitement and he had a thin smile on his lips as he slowly looked over the audience, pausing to gaze for a few moments on the expressions of those faces who seemed to be demonstrating the most fear of what they were staring at. The likes of Senator Mayan and Magdala contrasted completely to those showing an air of smug satisfaction, such as Senator Lassalla and Principal Sobek.

'What's wrong with these people' he thought 'They've been waiting and yearning for a solution to this problem and now they've got it, all they can do is sit there worrying about the future'.

A few moments passed and the assault on the senses in terms of noise and violent images suddenly ended. TAURUS returned dramatically to the deep but resonating hum it had been exuding at the beginning of what some took to be more like an execution, rather than a feeling of grateful loss.

Janithillon waved both his hands independently towards the opposing video wall and the holograms disappeared and he was about to speak, when Sobek stood up and motioned towards him with his hand, so he could take control of the conversation.

"Well, this a truly historic cycle. What we have just witnessed, which at times may have been seen as very brutal and emotionally disturbing, nonetheless heralds a new dawn for our people and I'm sure many other races will welcome what we have achieved. So, my thanks go out to Janithillon and his team for their dedication and perseverance in finally bringing the beginning of an end to The PiruNostram".

A handful of delegates started to applaud but were not joined in union by the vast majority and the clapping soon fizzled out and a feeling of awkwardness began to settle onto many of the guests in the room, with many starting to stand up and make their way towards the exit.

Senator Magdala stood up and voiced her concerns loudly and directly at Sobek, who by now was standing next to Janithillon, "You see Principal, not everyone agrees with your enthusiasm and wishful sentiment. You have merely managed to divide opinion and raised more anxiety and concern about the future stability of Xethenia".

The delegates that had started to leave, had now stopped to listen to Magdala, with some voicing their concerns, or simply nodding and half clapping to demonstrate their feelings of empathy with what she was saying.

Sobek stood once more onto the raised dais and tried to call them all to order, suggesting they return to their seats, so he could address them, but Magdala carried on speaking

“I know you were given a majority mandate from the Apostophet to create this machine of death, but like all fanciful ideas, you don’t always see the real impact of the decisions that you take, until they are revealed in the stark reality of what we just witnessed; which for me was personally sickening”.

Sobek looked around the room and observed the support from the people in the room.

“Senator Magdala, I know you were against this project from the outset and that is your view and opinion which you are at liberty to share of course. However what most people appreciate and have to live with, is the impact of the PiruNostram on our lives, as well as those that are mortal, which in many cases comes to a horrific end.

I openly admitted, that the process of dealing with an immortal criminal like Malice, is somewhat disturbing, but we have to do something and whilst it may be uncomfortable to live with, this machine provides us with the opportunity to restore the balance and quality of life here on Xethenia. More importantly, it will signal to the rest of the universe that we can now bring law and order, safety and peace to all concerned”.

There was an appreciative response to Sobek’s words, but Magdala was about to deliver a worrying riposte.

“My main concern Principal is that what we have created here is a machine that will destroy any Xethantian. If it were to fall into the hands of the PiruNostram, then we could have a civil war on our hands, let alone bring even more fear and tyranny to our neighbouring galaxies. They are likely to suffer as a consequence of the threat bearing down on the very existence of the PiruNostram, which I have no doubt will simply stoke up their appetite for destruction and survival”.

All eyes that were hitherto glued to Magdala, now turned back to Sobek, who was frantically trying to think of a reply and to calm the anxious nerves of the remaining delegation. But the words wouldn’t come and he was forced to back down and demonstrate a willingness to consider Magdala’s concerns.

“My fellow Apostophet and guests, I will arrange for an executive meeting to discuss Senator Magdala’s concerns and we will announce the outcome after that event has taken place. I want to

ensure that there are no risks to society, either here or in other galaxies, that would prevent us from policing and protecting them”. He then turned to Janithillon and spoke quietly “Meet me in my office once they have all been dismissed, as I need to talk things through with you privately”.

If Sobek thought he could path with Janithillon he would have preferred it, but no Apostophet senator was permitted to bind with each other, or anyone else in the wider community.

Many chose only to bind with their partners, mainly for conception purposes, but avoided friends and relatives, due to the potential risks of compromising their high ranking position of importance in planetary society.

He knew his office was shielded against sound and data intrusion, even from pathing, but he still spoke with a whisper and sat close to the revered scientist. He needed to establish whether he could trust Janithillon and more importantly gauge his opinions and thoughts on the earlier event to see if they chimed with his.

“What are your thoughts about Senator Magdala’s concerns Janithillon?”

Janithillon looked at him quizzically and wondered why he was speaking in such hushed tones, but he went along with the mood, even though he knew they wouldn’t be monitored.

“Senator Magdala does have a point, but she is panicking unnecessarily and I’m sure her concerns will be alleviated once we make significant in-roads into processing these mindless PiruNostram psychopaths”.

Sobek was inwardly pleased with hearing Janithillon’s views, so he ventured further and more directly, “How many PiruNostram pack members can TAURUS dispose of each cycle, if we assume a continuous process of execution?”

Janithillon thought for a moment; his mind churning with statistics on the one hand, alongside a concern that was emerging in his mind with the other. It was all too evident that Principal Sobek was intent on a fast track process of purging the PiruNostram behind a veil of deceit, which was designed to placate Senator Magdala’s concerns.

“I would estimate that TAURUS would be capable of processing 1000 beings per cycle so that would be 300,000 per Orbinar, but that is based on there being only one machine and ...”

But Sobek raised his hand to stop him mid-sentence, as his train of thought suddenly meandered on the back of what Janithillon had just said. He paused whilst cradling his chin in his hand and then turned to face Janithillon.

“Yes the answer is more machines certainly, but maybe not here on Xethenia. Now you have properly trialled TAURUS, how long would it take to construct more of them?”

“But why do you not want the machines here Principal?”

“Because in order to get started on this process and more importantly, to make meaningful progress, then we need to take swift and decisive action to bypass Senator Magdala’s growing pool of symaphisiers. Furthermore, as opposed to the 4 or 5 orbinars, your calculations would suggest we would need to eradicate the PiruNostram, we could potentially achieve all these aims by housing the TAURUS machines out of immediate view”.

“I’m not entirely sure that is an ethical practice Principal” Janithillon said with a slow anguished tone in his voice.

“Do you think the PiruNostram have any ethics my friend?” Sobek responded, with his voice slightly raised, “But answer the question, how long would it take to build say a further 9 machines?”

“I’m very worried Principal that you are rushing things through and I can see now why Senator Magdala feels the way she does, because if you try to hide the truth, then the kickback could be overwhelming, even for our well-resourced planetary protectorate to deal with”

“Just tell me how long it would take Janithillon and may I remind you of your position in society, the privilege you have and perhaps just as importantly, the fact that you seem to be questioning my authority as the leader of the Apostophet”, Sobek replied with a hint of anger in his voice.

Janithillon frowned and focused his glowing blue eyes at Sobek, thinking should he apologise, but then electing to simply provide the

answer requested “Given the right amount of engineering resource, then I would expect it to take 60 cycles in total to construct a further 9 machines and make them fully operational Principal”.

“And am I right in thinking that Quella hosts the largest group of off-world PiruNostram packs outside of Xethenia?”

“Yes I believe it does Principal”.

“Then that is where we start, because the Mequellium will certainly wish to participate in getting rid of these thugs, I can assure you of that, be they Xethantian, or Mequexian for that matter” his voice trailing off slightly awkwardly as he was reminded of Janithillon’s heritage. But then he followed quickly and with more conviction, “Besides, I’m sure your father, Opus Rah, will be the first in the queue to support the annihilation of these vindictive and evil animals?”

Janithillon reflected for a moment before responding. He realised only too well, how badly the kidnap of his father had affected him.

He was already very old, probably close to reaching the end of his life. But the kidnapping incident had left him frail and for that Janithillon felt he was being robbed of some of the most precious years of his father’s life and for what – some miserable sum of money compared to the real value of his worth in terms of being a family man, a scientist and respected citizen of Quella.

“Yes, you’re probably right Principal” replied Janithillon with a heavy sigh “We can get most of the TAURUS machines constructed on Quella and the other planets you have in mind remotely, using DEC technology, which could then be prepped, tested and made ready for use by our own trained teams”

Digitised Equipment Construction is a highly advanced form of 3D Printing where virtually anything non-organic, but none-the-less complex by design, can be imaged and reconstructed in specially rigged rooms, which could be millions of miles away.

In a matter of minutes, computer-controlled beams of energy 'build' by solidifying small fragments of a substance called Plexitrat in fractions of a second. Plexitrat can be used to synthesise any material the engineers have in mind, be it metallic, plastic,

electronics-based or mechanical, but not organic material. Large machines like TAURUS would take just several days to assemble.

Just as Sobek was about to carry on with the conversation, his com-link alerted him to an incoming call and via his audio sensory nerve, he knew it was Senator Magdala. He tapped the film piece on his neck and said “accept with view” and immediately, a perfectly formed, unnervingly real, 3D image of the senator appeared in front of him.

“Hello Senator, how can I help you” Sobek said in a rather banal tone.

“Good Median Principal, are you busy or can we talk?”

Sobek whirled round to face Janithillon as he said “Well, as you can see I'm here with Janithillon and we're talking about the concerns you have expressed about the TAURUS project, so as long as you don't mind him being here, then we can speak freely”

“Hello Janithillon and yes I'm happy with him being in your presence Principal”.

“Very well, now how can I help you?”

“Well it's somewhat fortuitous that you should be talking about TAURUS, as I would like to suggest that we venture more towards understanding and appreciating why the PiruNostram behave the way they do.

Rather than simply obliterating them, which in itself will take many orbinars; affect the consciences of many citizens and no doubt, will have a huge knock-on effect not only here on Xethenia but around the galaxy, why not address the issue through care and education? Besides which, I don't think we can afford your proposal, let alone justify it. Consequently, I would like this motion to be put on the agenda for discussion at the next Apostophet planetary summit meeting in 10 cycle's time”.

In response Sobek struggled to contain his emotions “Are you out of your mind Senator. Do you seriously expect to be able to change the hearts and minds of these animals through education and care? If it were that easy, we would have done it a millennia ago woman”.

Magdala was somewhat taken aback by Sobek's insulting reply, but she stood her ground saying "I won't be addressed in that tone or bullied either Principal. Besides these are not just my personal views, rather those of an influential collective, including Senator Mayan, who have changed their thoughts and opinions quite considerably since the demonstration of TAURUS".

Sobek raised his hands in a pleading gesture "Look I'm sorry but we have invested billions of Sidar credits pursuing a varied course of incarceration, mediation, education and re-integration in a bid to achieve exactly that which you say we ought to do. However, it has only served to limit the public support for the PiruNostram and has not dented their numbers or turned them away from the life of violent crime they lust after".

"I'm aware of that Principal, but maybe we just haven't directed the investment as well as we could have done and consequently we gave up too soon. Furthermore, what price do we risk paying by pursuing a policy of destroy and be damned?" she replied in a rather passionate voice.

"I hear you Senator and believe me I'm considering many options, which is why I will grant you your discussion with the Apostophet, but in the meantime, I would ask that you remain calm and more importantly, that you refrain from talking about this to outsiders".

"Very well Principal but can I ask what view Janithillon has about all this, being as his family have been directly affected by a PiruNostram crime. Does he feel, in all fairness, that TAURUS is the answer?"

Sobek turned away from Magdala's gaze and fleetingly caught Janithillon's attention, before he walked into the reach of the holovision arc. It was obvious, judging from the wide glare of his eyes, what he wanted him to say before he had the chance to reply.

"Would you like to reply to Senator Magdala's question Janithillon?"

"Senator Magdala, TAURUS has become my life's work and the PiruNostram so very nearly ended the life of my father. As much as they are evil and a dangerous threat; it is immortality which underpins what is wrong with the Xethantian civilisation.

If my research is allowed to progress, then I believe we can, in the future, divorce ourselves from Synexillum forever and restore normality to Xethantian evolution. It is my belief this will, in turn, restore the harmony, peace and balance throughout the universe. Something which I would have thought even you would cherish?"

"I see. So what you're telling me is that the path towards achieving that aim is to rid ourselves of the PiruNostram first - is that right?"

"It may be a necessary step - yes" Janithillon replied cautiously, conscious of the fact that Sobek was still glaring at him discreetly and having some difficulty lying in the process.

Sobek turned to face Magdala and tried to restore a calm and composed look on his face once more and said "An intriguing and interesting view on things don't you think? However we will talk more about this at the Apostophet meeting Senator Magdala, so for now, if you'll excuse me, I need to return to my meeting with Janithillon".

"Yes of course Principal. Goodbye" and with that, the call ended abruptly.

Chapter 6 – Arrest

Sobek's plans to begin the annihilation of the PiruNostram were coming together and he was ahead of schedule.

He had managed to secure the secretive construction and deployment of six TAURUS machines on outer world colonies, including four on Quella, thanks in the main to the almost zealous support from their government, who had provided military control and protection over the project.

He had also managed to avert what would have been a major backlash from his fellow Apostophet senators, which would have questioned his ongoing ability to remain as Principal. And all this despite the pressure being exerted by Senator Magdala, stoking up populist support to deal with the PiruNostram issue more sensitively.

When it came to it, the majority of the senators voted with the heartfelt opinions of the executives and representatives, from their respective quadrants, ringing in their ears.

Whilst they could empathise with Senator Magdala's ideals; they knew that a vote to discourage the removal of the PiruNostram, would be a vote which would only serve to see them ultimately removed from office, such was the overwhelming mood of this vast planetary nation.

However, what the Apostophet did not know, was how far advanced Sobek's plans had progressed with the deployment of TAURUS and they certainly had no idea that these deadly machines were being installed off-world and Sobek didn't want them to know either.

It was Rise on the 120th cycle on Xethenia and the Chief Administrator to the Secretariat on Quella had just received a coded message from what appeared to be an unknown source, but signalling the authority to commence with Operation Exodus.

Ten cycles earlier had seen the arrival of a dozen troop ships, each one carrying a hundred Xethantian PPF officers, along with their equipment, that had been tasked with arresting PiruNostram gang members on Quella and taking them to a secret compound, which the Mequellium forces had constructed in readiness. Apart from being ray shielded, it also featured a disruption beam which would

prevent them from pathing friends and associates, once the Xethantian troops had begun the process of rounding them up.

Due to the likelihood of extreme violence and use of weaponry, no military involvement would be provided by Mequellium forces, other than to ensure that the populace would be protected and the areas where PiruNostram criminals were likely to found, were clear of vulnerable beings.

Smaller, more agile Landers were now being deployed stealthily and at a discreet distance from ghetto areas, which had been previously targeted by a joint intelligence-gathering exercise with Xethantian forces.

In one such ghetto, Nemesis himself was suspected to be holed up in a secret underground bunker, which had been fully equipped and furnished to a very comfortable standard.

The PiruNostram are a very secure and efficient terrorist army and as such, they deploy a conventional hierarchy when it comes to command and control functions.

“There’s an eerie atmosphere Nemesis, I don’t like the feel of it”, murmured one of his closest and trusted Generals, a male called Caesar. “I feel as though Quella is closing in around us somehow and we need to be on our guard I tell you”.

Nemesis shrugged off his colleagues claims, saying “I don’t know why you are so nervous Caesar. Nobody knows about this safe house here on Quella, besides we’ve been using this base for many orbinars. Lest you forget the Mequellium won’t venture into this ghetto. They know the PiruNostram rule here and we can’t be overturned by their forces, no matter what firepower they try to use, because they know we will avenge them and destroy them. Rest easy my friend”.

“It’s not the Mequellium I’m worried about; its Xethantian forces, especially on the back of that nugget of information which that insect of a scientist blurted out when we kidnapped him; what was his name?”

“Ah yes, you mean Opus Rah. Hmmm, well we’ve seen nothing of what he was dribbling on about here on Quella, which is why I think we’re safer here than back on Xethenia don’t you think?”

“I don’t agree Nemesis. If Rah was right, then that self-righteous bigot, Sobek, would be deploying those machines everywhere he could”.

“But you’re forgetting that we have a friend in the Apostophet in the form of Senator Magdala, who along with Senator Mayan and others have been supporting our cause and limiting Sobek’s determination to roll out this mythical machine of death”.

“Yes I know all that, but what about Malice, no-one has been able to reach him for some time now; be it by coms or pathing, which is very strange for such a strong, loyal and determined pack leader?”

Nemesis looked hard at his General and his mind went deep in thought. He looked around the room at his fellow gang members, running his hands through his hair and returning his stare to Caesar, this time pathing him, so he couldn’t be heard ‘I didn’t want anyone to know this but I have it on good authority that Malice is dead’.

‘What! When? How?’ Caesar replied, his eyes widened in alarm, ‘So the machine is not a myth as you say?’

‘I don’t know my friend’, he paused ‘I just don’t know. The detail is vague and could be Apostophet propaganda’.

Caesar was about to reply when he held up an outstretched hand ‘Wait. A message coming through ... just a moment it’s from Kiridian it’s fragmenting’ he closed his eyes and tried to focus all his mental energy on the incoming message. There was a brief pause before he opened his eyes and frowned saying ‘No it’s gone. It sounded like he was saying Xethantian Protectorate squads here on Quella’.

Just then, they both whirled around in an instant as the heavily fortified steel doors were blown into the underground room. As the dust was still clearing, six Xethantian troopers stormed in, moving quickly and led by a unit Commander barking out instructions to ‘beam and cuff’ and stating that all PiruNostram were under arrest.

There were several Mequellium sympathisers who started to make a run for the doorway, but they were soon cut down and lay motionless, stunned by a bolt of energy which virtually froze them on contact.

They would be left where they lay for a couple of hours with just the ability to breathe. They would be interrogated later and any useful data would be analysed and used to track down more PiruNostram gangs.

The troopers could have tried to use the same stun gun on the PiruNostram, but more often than not, the bolt would be deflected

either by a telepathic move, or more likely by their natural Synexillum defence system.

So instead, they worked in pairs and each one used a portable traction gun, which created an envelope around the target, depriving them of movement and enabling the troopers to step in and wrap a cuff band around the arms of the prisoner they were taking into custody.

Also, they would place a small telepathic disruptor bead towards the top of the forehead, which is exactly what they'd done earlier when they arrested Kiridian, to block any attempts he would make to warn fellow PiruNostram colleagues. It was almost impossible to rip this bead off without using the same device which put it on there, to begin with.

As the gang members were led out to the waiting personnel carriers, other Xethantian forces were going back into the bunker, ripping out computers, devices, weapons and anything else they thought might be of interest to the authorities.

Once they had decided it was clear of what they wanted, they tossed in several neutron grenades, which vaporised what was left and removed all trace of the previous occupants.

Now firmly strapped into his seat, Nemesis looked up to the nearest Xethantian trooper and in a menacing growl; he yelled "Where are you taking us?"

But the trooper ignored him and continued to pace up and down the cabin of the carrier, checking on the seated occupants, all of whom still had their cuffs on, with their hands behind their backs.

Nemesis yelled again "I said where are you ..."

"I heard you scum. You'll find out soon enough and when you do you'll know what it's like to live in the same fear as you mindless savages have been doling out to the citizens of Quella".

On hearing those words Caesar screamed out at Nemesis "You see I told you. It's true. They've got one of those killing machines here on Quella. We're all going to burn" and then the guard quickly chipped in "More than one, more like ten. One would never have been enough" and he laughed as he walked away again.

Caesar suddenly went into a frantic panic saying, "Nemesis we're doomed. The PiruNostram, its game over. What are we going to do?"

But Nemesis shouted back at him and whilst he glared at the guard he said “Shut up Man. Remember who you are. We are PiruNostram and we will be avenged”. Making sure that the guard was out of earshot he turned his attention back to Caesar and whispered “We’ve got to get these inhibitors off so we can path for some help. I would feel happier if we could be taken back to Xethenia, as I know how we can get out of this situation”

Caesar looked incredulously at Nemesis “How in the name of all that we live for, are you going to get us back to Xethenia?”

“Let me worry about that. Let’s just find a way of getting rid of these inhibitors”.

The prisoner vehicle they were travelling in sped quietly and quickly through the city on its anti-gravity drive, heading towards the military compound which Mequellium forces had set up to receive and hold the arrested criminal gangs.

Once they had passed through the gates and touched down, the prisoners were quickly herded into a detention reception centre, where their details were recorded before they were marched off and put into isolation cells.

For the most part, all the PiruNostram prisoners were completely unaware as to what the significance of their arrest would mean to their very existence. However, Caesar was making every effort to circulate information about TAURUS and worrying rumours were beginning to run riot as the whispered messages were gradually passed around.

Shortly after being placed into his cell, a guard released the door and escorted Nemesis into the private office of the compound commander.

“Well, well, well, if it isn’t my old friend General Herod. How nice to see you again” laughed Nemesis.

Herod ignored the teasing banter for a few moments as he glanced at several floating image screens and spoke into a speech pad which authenticated in writing everything that he dictated. He eventually glanced up at Nemesis who had been instructed to stand to attention “I’m not your friend Nemesis. Animals like you don’t have friends so just sit down; I have something important to tell you”.

Nemesis fell into the chair, still with wrist binders on and his arms behind his back. He tilted his head and he had a thin, wry, almost

nonchalant smile on his face. He knew full well what General Herod was about to say.

“You and I both know that by rights, you along with your sickening mob should be processed through TAURUS and obliterated from the galaxy once and for all, but”.

Nemesis cut in and said “Ah so this machine has a name too, does it?”

But Herod cut back over him “Just shut up whilst I’m speaking. As I was saying, you should all be burned and most of them will I personally guarantee it. But for some inexplicable reason, by order of Senator Magdala, you are to be taken back to Xethenia to stand some sort of trial” his voice fading as he looked down at the voice pad, his head shaking in complete disbelief.

“I have to abide by her instructions, but believe me Nemesis when I say, that it will be under strict prisoner status and you won’t be let out of our sight and neither will your pathing disruptor be taken off that miserable, pathetic head of yours the whole time you’re in our custody. However, this order only applies to you”. Then he smiled and said, “I’m afraid all your friends will be terminated”.

Nemesis stood up and yelled a long “No!” before launching himself across the desk at Herod who deflected his dive easily and Nemesis went crashing into the wall.

He quickly got back onto his feet and lunged at Herod again, hoping to dislodge the disruptor off his forehead but this time, Herod had a traction beam at the ready, which he pointed at Nemesis pinning him back onto the wall, affording him the chance to tap the comlink on his neck with his free hand and call for some backup.

Several guards came running into the room as the entrance door evaporated, each one armed with a traction beam and between them, they marshalled Nemesis out of the office, with Herod barking at them to throw Nemesis into a maximum security, solitary confinement cell.

As he was frog marched down the corridor to the cell block, Nemesis struggled in vain to break out of the traction beam shroud which securely encased him, but it was futile and after a while, he reluctantly accepted the situation he was in.

His head fell forward more in a bid to hide his emotion over the impending fate of his fellow pack members, than it was with the anger of knowing how powerless he was to help them.

By the time he'd reached his cell, he had already drawn some strength from knowing that he would soon be on his way back to Xethenia and a meeting with Senator Magdala.

They both knew why she had gone to extraordinary lengths to always have him detained and brought to her directly, whenever he was arrested. What she didn't know was how close he had come to being terminated this time around.

She had no idea that Sobek had effectively organised 'kill squads' to round up off-world PiruNostram packs on Quella and elsewhere, so he could purge them out of existence, using the secretly constructed TAURUS machines.

Chapter 7 - Interrogation

Senator Magdala touched the comlink on her neck and said, “Yes Habedina, what is it?”

The receptionist in the entrance hall in the East Quadrant tower replied “General Herod is here Senator, together with a detachment and they have Nemesis in their custody”.

“Very well, tell them I’ll meet them in room 12501 shortly”.

“Of course Senator. Thank you”.

Magdala left her office, walked down the corridor and eventually arrived in front of a bank of 20 elevator doors. She was on the 400th floor on the east bank of the 4 mile high tower and she needed to get to the north bank on the 125th and one carriage would take her there, using the quickest and most direct route possible.

All the elevator carriages were mounted on the outside of the building and could traverse around its conical shape in all directions as well as vertically.

She arrived at the 125th floor and made her way to the detention room which already had two guards posted outside it. She breezed in the through the doorway, which was composed of a force field screen, which would solidify very rapidly with a kind of liquid polymer, to form a visual barrier.

Sat around a circular desk were General Herod, Nemesis and two more guards.

As Magdala walked towards the desk she said “General Herod, how nice to see you” and she simply nodded at the other men, followed by a discreet but short stare into the eye of Nemesis, who merely smiled back.

“Please release the prisoner from his binders, there’s no need for that kind of restraint here. This room is also shielded so you can also remove the pathing disruptor”.

Herod was initially startled by the request to remove the disruptor and was on the verge of objecting, but with a slight shrug of the

shoulders, he waved towards one of his men to carry out the request.

Nemesis immediately began to exercise his arms and flex the fingers in his hands and thanked Magdala.

“Now, to the point of why you’re here. You are without a doubt, the most revered leader of the PiruNostram and simply incarcerating you in an off-world prison, will not help us to deal with the unacceptable level of crime and violence here on Xethenia and elsewhere. The time has come where we must work together to bring this tyranny to an end”.

There was a brief silence in the room before Nemesis responded saying, “Do you include extermination as a way to bring an end to the tyranny you speak of Senator?”

“Extermination! What are you talking about?” Magdala stared wide-eyed at Nemesis then looked straight at General Herod, with a gesture saying “Well General ... what is he talking about?”

Herod moved uneasily on his seat and looked awkwardly at Magdala and eventually he said, “I don’t think this is a discussion to be had in front of the prisoner Senator, as you know only full well how they lie, cheat and deceive”.

“Hmmm very well. However, I do need to question Nemesis and whilst I hear what you say, I also need him to speak freely and without any feeling of oppression. So I need you and your men to leave the room and wait outside with the other guards. Please make yourself comfortable and feel free to use the catering facilities in the adjacent lounge. I will call you on my com-link when I’m ready for you to rejoin us”.

Herod stood up and looked worried “You want me to leave you alone with this vile renegade?”

“Yes that’s exactly what I want you to do. Where’s he going to go General? What harm can he do to me? If there’s an issue, however so unlikely, then I will call you. Now as I said, please leave me to talk with him”.

“I have to say this is highly irregular Senator” barked Herod.

“Well it’s not that often and especially whilst we’re in this state of uncertainty regarding new legislation, that as a Senator on the Apostophet, I have the chance to interview such a high ranking member of the PiruNostram”.

“As you wish Senator but there is nothing high ranking about this lowlife criminal” and with that Herod motioned to his men to follow him and they left the room as requested.

“Hello Magdala, how are you and thank you for rescuing me”.

“Now just listen to me Nemesis, first of all, you need to respect my position here and secondly I have not rescued you. You are a prisoner as General Herod has reminded you. You are in the custody of the Planetary Protectorate of which admittedly I have authority over, but I can’t just simply allow you to walk out of here”.

“Have you suddenly elected to forget our little secret Senator?” teased Nemesis.

Magdala was staring out of a huge window which looked out over the sprawling metropolis of the quadrant she was responsible for, but she suddenly rounded on him and smashed a clenched fist on to the table directly in front of him and shouted “How can I ever forget. You don’t need to remind me of it Nemesis. At the end of the day there are limits as to what I can do in this situation, so for now, let’s just concentrate on the facts as they exist in the present. So what’s this about extermination?”

“Does the name TAURUS mean anything to you?”

“Stop playing games with me Nemesis you know full well what it is. You must be aware of what happened to one of your pack members in a recent experimental trial?”

“Yes, I have only recently become aware of what happened to Malice, but let me rephrase the question. Are you aware of TAURUS on Quella?”

Magdala stopped dead in her tracks, her mind was racing “Quella ... what do you mean? What’s Quella got to do with this?”

“I’m saying are you aware of the existence of TAURUS on Quella and what they are doing to my people with it?”

Magdala was in a state of panic and disbelief “This cannot be. There’s been no Apostophet consent for TAURUS to be fully commissioned and activated. You’re lying to me Nemesis! Don’t lie to me”.

“Then don’t believe me and ask your Principal instead”.

Magdala was pacing the room muttering to herself when suddenly she screamed and shouted “Guards!”

The doorway dissolved and Herod along with all his men stormed in, traction beam guns at the ready.

“Stop!” shouted Magdala “That won’t be necessary. I need to speak with Principal Sobek but I haven’t finished with Nemesis, so please remain here on guard and I’ll be back shortly” and with that, she walked out of the room.

Magdala went to a conference suite so she could make a call. Com links work in tandem with the user’s ability to path, so they take an image of the person you wish to call if you know them, or they can identify them from the equivalent of an online directory by name, business, or purely a known ID number. Magdala simply composed the name of Principal Sobek in her mind and then touched her neck to activate the call.

Sobek glimmered into full 3D view in front of her. He smiled and said “Hello Senator Magdala, what can I do for you?”

“What can you tell me about the developments with the TAURUS project Principal?”

Sobek could tell she was angry and emotional so he needed to be careful and guarded “As you’re aware Senator we have yet to hold an Apostophet meeting to formalise the deployment plan here on Xethenia”

“So what about Quella? What have you been doing there?”

“Quella? You know we have no jurisdiction on Quella. How can I possibly comment about what the authorities are doing there? Look what is the problem Senator?”

Now it was Magdala who needed to be careful, because she couldn’t very well announce that she’d taken Nemesis into custody,

as she would have to explain how this had happened. Although she was screaming in her mind to accuse Sobek of lying and covering up, she was forced to take a deep breath and say something else “There have been rumours about a deployment of TAURUS machines on Quella”

“And where have you got this information from?”

“Well ... let’s just say it’s from the PiruNostram”, she replied hesitantly and feeling such a fool in the process.

“I see. Well, we all know how good the PiruNostram are at spreading malicious propaganda, so even by your standards and your cause for their wellbeing, then surely you must know this is just another tale to disrupt our determination to deal with them?”

Magdala couldn’t wait to end the call “Well as I say, rumours abound or not we have a duty to investigate and to reassure the populace that we are working objectively and cohesively to protect the livelihoods of all Xethantians”.

“I heartily agree with you Senator and we will progress our discussions on TAURUS at the next meeting in 10 cycles time. Was there anything else?” he asked with a knowing grin on his face.

“No that is all Principal. Thank you” and she ended the call, smarting and seething. She marched out of the conference room and back down the corridor to the detention room. Two guards had been posted back to the entrance and one of them waved a hand over a sensor which caused the doorway to dissolve, allowing her to pass through.

“Right, let’s get back to where I left off. So if you would please leave us again General Herod, as I need to carry on interviewing Nemesis”.

Once everyone had left the room it was Nemesis that spoke first “So I take it Sobek didn’t concur with my revelation?”

“Oh I know he’s up to something, but I couldn’t very well tell him that I’d got it from you, or indeed that you were in my custody, so it was very difficult to approach him as confidently as I would have liked. But he knows I’m on his case, so you’d better tell me what you know”.

Nemesis regaled Magdala with recent events and by the time he was done she was sat down with her head in her hands, almost in tears and shaking with anger.

“I take it you won’t have any idea if TAURUS has been put into operation elsewhere in the galaxy?”

“No I don’t. I can put someone on it, but I need to path with them if you want my help to stop this”.

Magdala looked deeply into his glowing blue eyes and for a moment her mind drifted back to a time when her partner Padmonell, was still alive. He was much older than her and had reached Transition 500 Orbinars ago. For the most part, she’d had a happy life with him and they were both delighted when Magdalene and the eminent Doctor from Quella with whom she had partnered, gave birth to a son.

Unfortunately, Eradius Sen and the boy didn’t bond, or see eye to eye and this put such a strain on the family relationship, he eventually left Xethenia and returned alone to live on Quella.

When Magdalene left for her exploration visit to Earth, her son was a young man at just 100 orbinars old, but by then his behaviour had begun to rapidly deteriorate. Eventually, he became completely destabilised and vanished somewhere off-world without a trace. She never saw Eradius again and because he was mortal, he died whilst she was away.

Magdala shook herself back to reality, but now there was sadness in her eyes. However, she suddenly felt a renewed sense of determination to make things right. Her face tightened as she clenched her jaw. Despite the challenge to her moral compass and the weight of expectation on her as a Senator, she stood up and told Nemesis to follow her.

As they walked out of the room, the guards immediately yelled and lunged for Nemesis. This only served to attract the attention of General Herod and his other officers, as they were in the neighbouring lounge.

“Let him be” Magdala shouted.

“Where are you taking him Senator? Besides, you should not be escorting a prisoner by yourself” responded Herod.

“I’ve arranged for Senator Mayan to join me and was on my way back to my private office”.

It was at that moment that Herod realised that Nemesis was still not wearing the pathing disruptor. He quickly grabbed one from his utility belt and rushed over to where Nemesis was standing to fix it onto his forehead, whilst shouting at Magdala for bringing him into a non-shielded area.

Nemesis didn’t need much time to path one of his pack leaders who was located in the same quadrant, to pass on a significant amount of data and news; so by the time Herod reached him, his task was complete.

Magdala scowled at Herod “I’m sorry General, I completely forgot, but please don’t chastise me like a child”.

“I apologise Senator. Now perhaps we can escort you and this thug back to your office?”

“Well, in hindsight, it may be best to stay here and await Senator Mayan’s arrival. So I will stay with Nemesis in private until then”.

Magdala knew full well what she’d allowed Nemesis to do and she’d lied about the meeting with Mayan. She would have to excuse herself away from waiting for her and arrange for Nemesis to be escorted to a prison, where he would likely have arranged to be sprung from.

Herod was becoming incredibly suspicious of Magdala’s empathy towards Nemesis and the PiruNostram in general. He walked away from his men who were back in the lounge and walked down the corridor until he was out of earshot. Then he called Sobek on a secure link.

During his conversation he said “I have grave concerns about Senator Magdala’s loyalty to the Apostophet and how much Nemesis knows about the deployment of TAURUS on Quella. If we are to reach your targets of eradicating the PiruNostram Principal, then we will need to ramp up their operational capacity, either here on Xethenia or on other off-world planets. If, or when, this news gets

out, then it will get very awkward and I fear for your position and those around you”.

“Yes, I know General. You are a good man and you’ve been a loyal protector for our cause. I will seek to expose Senator Magdala as a traitor. It may be that it’s not just the PiruNostram that we end up eradicating through TAURUS” and he closed the call.

Chapter 8 – Uprising

The TAURUS machines on Quella had been running to full capacity for 10 cycles and even in that short time frame, the numbers of PiruNostram gangs had begun to dwindle quite noticeably.

What had begun as mere rumour, had now stretched to endless streams of pathed messages among their kind and to Xethantian sympathisers.

But none of this mattered, as no-one in authority on Xethenia had become officially aware of what was happening on Quella and because of who it was, would they have cared?

Certainly, no-one on Quella cared about the destructive removal of the PiruNostram as they had only ever been something akin to a plague. Nevertheless, the planetary authorities were taking the highly unusual step of screening all communication, just to make sure that nothing could be leaked either in or off-world.

Any Xethantian PiruNostram gangs that attempted to leave Quella illegally, were being hunted down and where necessary, shot out of the sky before they could engage FoldSpace, should they fail to adhere to military requests to return and land.

As their ships exploded, all the bodies could be seen falling to the surface, unharmed of course, apart from being somewhat dazed. Ground patrol units would then sweep in and collect them, taking them back to detention centres for processing through TAURUS.

Mequexian PiruNostram gangs were a lot tougher to identify and detain because of their glowing blue eyes, but they were treated no differently.

On Xethenia the Apostophet were in counsel and the main topic on their agenda was the official recognition and deployment of TAURUS, whilst for the most part, being completely unaware of the activity on Quella.

As Sobek delivered his unsurprisingly positive opinions on why TAURUS should be deployed; there sat opposite him on the long, semi-circular table, was Senator Magdala.

She was seething inside, whilst desperately trying to present an image of composure, as she knew full well that trying to accuse Sobek of being disingenuous and a partisan to the atrocity on Quella, would be a very foolish thing to do right now.

She could easily be arrested for rebellious and treacherous behaviour as she couldn't easily substantiate her claims without corroborative evidence linking the whole thing back to Sobek.

“So, I would now like to see a unanimous commitment to the proposal that has been laid out before you. A proposal which without any doubt, will be of significant benefit to the whole of Xethanity and the wider galaxies in this quadrant of the universe”

Some senators wasted no time in confirming their approval for the commencement of the TAURUS project, which simply required them to have their thumbprint scanned and verified by an encrypted reader.

Others looked at each other and into their consciences before they made their choice. Nobody would know how each Senator had voted, not even Sobek. In all cases where a vote was required, then Sobek would always present the facts as he saw them and so his vote was already obvious.

Sobek smiled and stood up to announce the verdict with his traditional outstretched arms “Thank you Senators. The TAURUS programme will commence immediately”.

Senator Magdala stood up and shouted “No! This cannot be allowed to continue! I will not have this abhorrent process carried out in my name” and she made her way towards the exit from the chamber.

Sobek immediately shouted back “Senator Magdala I know you have your views and opinions, but the Apostophet have spoken as a collective and we are duty bound to take action based on the majority view and that is what we are doing”.

She stopped and turned around with a scowling look on her face “This is a dangerous course we are taking Principal and you and I both know that this is not the beginning of the ramifications that will ensue as a consequence, as I believe they have already started”.

Sobek's eyes narrowed and he was about to respond but chose to change his words "You are entitled to your opinions Senator, but if you would prefer I will accept your resignation, as this issue will become a very absorbing matter for the whole planet. We need to present a unified stance to maintain control and recognition for what we are doing which is to address this intolerable situation".

"I will think about your offer" Magdala yelled and left the room.

Sobek sat back down and addressed the remaining Senators "Well that could have gone better. However, unless there are any other matters then I would suggest we adjourn and reconvene in 10 cycles to progress other business?"

They all looked at each other and signalled their acknowledgement and began to walk away from the room, some talking in pairs.

Once he was alone, he touched the comlink on his neck saying, "General Herod with view" and a moment later an image of Herod appeared as if he was standing in the chamber next to him.

"Yes Principal" he announced standing to attention.

"General Herod, the Apostophet has signalled their approval to commence the rollout of TAURUS and I want to see the extermination of the worst gang members of the PiruNostram to commence immediately. I take it that the DEC build of the 20 TAURUS machines has been progressing in the background, whilst we waited for the collective Apostophet approval?"

"Absolutely Principal, all machines will be completed in the next 3 cycles".

"I have been receiving favourable progress reports from Quella, so my sincerest thanks and appreciation to you and your Away Teams General".

"Thank you, Principal. We are here to serve and we are equally as pleased with the results to date".

"You are a loyal Xethantian General Herod. Now I need to bring Senator Magdala to account, as she is getting far too wayward for my liking. I cannot risk her tales overspilling into the public domain and gaining the wrong kind of gravitas. So let's make sure that Nemesis is one of the first to be purged by TAURUS along with his

closest aides. Then we'll see what her attitude is like after that, and if necessary I will arrange for her to be placed under house arrest. I hasten to add, I'll need some hard evidence of her empathy and support towards the PiruNostram, so bear that in mind over the next few cycles if you could"

"Yes, Principal. No problem. I'll update you in due course. Was there anything else?"

"No that will be all for now General. Thank you" and with that, he closed off the call. Next, he made contact with Janithillon who was at the Laboratory.

"Hello, Principal how can I help you?"

"Hello, Janithillon. I have some good news for you".

"I take it that means that the Apostophet have signalled their approval to roll out TAURUS here on Xethenia?"

"Yes, exactly right. I wanted you to be among the first to know. It's thanks to you and your hard work and dedication as a scientist, that we now have the means of changing the lives of everyone here on Xethenia. I am sure that your mother and father will be very proud of you what you have achieved".

"Thank you Principal. Has the experimental process on Quella been very successful?"

"I can't comment about that Janithillon and I must ask for your continued discretion on this matter".

"There have been a lot of rumours that TAURUS has been decimating large volumes of PiruNostram on Quella and before long, you may have to make a statement on the matter Principal. That is all I will say".

"Yes, yes, that is in hand, which is why I need to get an equally large number of PiruNostram processed here on Xethenia, so that the populace will understand and appreciate why we needed to install TAURUS on Quella".

"Well, I'm sure General Herod's teams are working as quickly as they can to deploy TAURUS. When can they start?"

“Seemingly in 3 cycle’s time, but I’ve been thinking that I want to start now, using the machine in your lab, as I think we need to be able to make a planetary wide announcement of our progress. I have asked General Herod to process Nemesis and his closest cohorts as soon as possible”

“You know my feelings about Nemesis, Principal, so please feel free to use our facilities here as we have no further need to develop this particular machine. I hasten to add that it did not form the basis of the DEC schematic for the machines on Quella, or those that will shortly be rolled out here”.

“Well, that shouldn’t matter surely? So it is done. Excellent. Thank you Janithillon. I’ll alert General Herod, who I’m sure will be in touch. Goodbye for now, my friend”.

Sobek had a series of important meetings to attend that day, so he made a note to call General Herod later, but he was interrupted during the last one with an urgent call from Herod himself, which he was forced to take on Private mode.

“Principal, I have some very bad news. Nemesis and some of his commanders we arrested earlier have escaped detention, thanks to what must have been a carefully planned mission by a highly trained and experienced PiruNostram pack. They invaded the security block with explosives and weaponry. I’m very sorry Principal. We’ll do all we can to bring them back into custody”.

Sobek went white and then stood up and shouted “Damn the PiruNostram, Damn them all. Have any mortals been killed General?”

“No Principal. They were in a secure block. One we thought was unknown to Government outsiders and so only Xethantian personnel were on duty”.

Sobek paused and his train of thought went immediately to Senator Magdala. He was about to yell an instruction to the General, when he suddenly checked himself, made an excuse to the people in the room he was chairing a meeting with and stepped out to continue talking.

“I want you to locate Senator Magdala and escort her to my private office and then you can organise the recovery of Nemesis and his

pack. I want an FTB (FoldSpace Travel Ban) on all flights leaving and arriving Xethenia with immediate effect and initiate an XPACE search to screen all occupants in case anyone is planning an illegal exit”.

“Of course Principal. I will see to it personally”.

The XPACE orbiting computer system can be instructed to physically restrict the passage of all spaceships from moving anywhere within a set radius from the surface of the planet.

This enables the security forces to quickly conduct a very secure and remote examination of all the occupants via a penetrating beam which scans the ship and identifies all those on-board based on their PDT chip.

If they are Xethantian, then their ID card can be scanned remotely, which they would be required to carry for travel in any event. The ID card would contain a reference to their birth number along with images, data and information relating to various stages of their life, which would enable the security forces to validate that the holder of the card married up to who it said they were.

This isn't just a process exercised by the Government of Xethenia, as it is a widely practised form of identity checking, adopted by many planetary authorities within many neighbouring galaxies.

The system isn't completely fool-proof and armed with the right tools, the PiruNostram can and do, forge ID cards to avoid detection. It is a specialist skill and requires significant resources to make a convincing and accessible forgery.

Clearly, any obvious discrepancies between the passenger count and an ID tally meant that one or more passengers were travelling illegally and the security forces would need to board the vessel.

The problem with exercising an FTB, was that it required passenger ships to come out of FoldSpace much earlier and place themselves into a parking orbit around Xethenia.

They would have to surrender the control of their ongoing movements to the security authorities via XPACE, which would normally lead to lengthy delays, especially if they were going to be boarded.

More importantly, by being in a parked orbit and not in control of their ship, they would potentially, be leaving themselves wide open to interference by PiruNostram gangs.

All of this would affect the smooth running of commerce and travel and the ramifications could easily impact badly on the planetary economy. Hence why any decision to suspend travel into the planet or worse still, for departing flights, would not be taken lightly.

Sobek was now livid with anger, “General Herod; begin the process of PiruNostram elimination using the TAURUS machine at the laboratory installation. Janithillon has agreed to let us use this, whilst we bring the other machines on stream”.

“The laboratory is not a military establishment Principal. It may present us with some difficult security issues”.

Sobek screamed “Just do it General. I don’t care and whilst you’re at it, get your best men to track down Nemesis. I want him removed as fast as possible”.

“Yes Principal. Certainly. Will do. Herod out”.

Sobek closed the call and stood in silence, so he could take in some deep breaths to calm himself ahead of returning to the meeting he’d excused himself from.

Within an hour of the FTB announcement, there were already 50 ships inbound that were parked in orbit, with more coming in behind them. A further 200 craft were grounded and numerous others which weren’t necessarily scheduled, were now all prevented from leaving Xethenia.

Media announcements were already rife with reports of mounting anger and dismay as the impact of the ban worsened the delays and disruption.

General Herod commandeered a fleet of carriers, filled with as many PiruNostram gang members as he could safely carry and headed off for the laboratory, where he already had a team of his troops waiting to receive them.

What he hadn’t been prepared for was the number of PiruNostram squads that were quietly and stealthily heading for the same laboratory, fully armed and ready for combat.

Normally, each prisoner vessel would be accompanied by one or two outriders, whose job it was to protect the carrier from attack. But with the laboratory being so close to the security building and with the FTB taking up significant resources on the ground, let alone potentially checking craft in orbit, then he was compelled to take a chance and forgo the need for outriders.

Nemesis was a very experienced tactician when it came to guerrilla warfare and he had waited patiently until all the carriers were en-route, before he authorised his gangs to attack them.

He'd even arranged for some heavily disguised gunships to position themselves innocently above the carriers along the route they were taking, so that once everything went weapons-hot, they couldn't easily take flight, as he would make sure they could be taken out early.

Prisoner carriers are built to withstand attacks from medium-scale weaponry, such as proton pulse bullets, blast lasers, even rocket shells, but give the PiruNostram half a chance and they will use excessive force to overcome what in this case would be a virtually defenceless convoy.

They knew that no-one will be killed outright, just temporarily dazed and confused, but that's all the time they would need to rescue their fellow gang members.

The first hits simultaneously took out the first and last carriers using high power military-grade neutron torpedos and the resulting destruction was on an epic scale. The ship just disintegrated like melting tin foil and all the occupants were blown out several hundred feet across the surrounding landscape.

Small snatch squads moved in quickly to collect comrades whilst using the opportunity to let off a few rounds from their pulse rifles at the government troopers and detonating smoke grenades which were futile and pointless, but it all added up to create the confusion and distraction they needed to make off with their fellow bounty.

The remaining carriers tried to execute random evasive manoeuvres but they realised all too soon that this was a futile action, as the strategically placed ships flying above them were easily able to target them like an angry rash.

Those that managed to make some distance were hunted down and destroyed. Some tried to turn and face their hunters and enter into a weapons fight but they were massively outnumbered and outgunned.

Within minutes, all the carriers were either severely damaged or destroyed. All that remained on the ground were dazed and confused troopers, desperately trying to regain control and composure of the situation they were caught up in, but time and opportunity were just overwhelmingly against them.

Their uniforms had been reduced to shreds and torched and any equipment they were carrying including pulse laser pistols, portable traction beams and more importantly the com-links on their neck were either destroyed or unusable, so they couldn't even alert anyone in the command centre for help.

Similarly, whilst the PiruNostram prisoners were in an equally tattered state, the pathing disruptors had been neutralised and had fallen away from their heads, so they were free to communicate telepathically.

Thankfully, the all-seeing eye of the orbiting XPACE computer had been alerted to the destruction of the military vehicles and had begun to record footage of the scene whilst broadcasting it, along with an audio track to the command centre.

“This is XPACE, several prisoner carriers have been intercepted and destroyed PiruNostram gangs. General Herod has been identified as the Commanding Officer and they need rescuing from the scene. Their location code is 117259”.

Herod suspected that the escaping PiruNostram gang would now be on their way to the Laboratory. He clenched his fists and yelled up to the sky in frustration and anger, but there was little he could do other than wait for a support team to arrive.

Within minutes, Nemesis and his now swollen rank of gang members had landed outside the laboratory, where Janithillon and his team, along with the Planetary Protectorate forces were waiting for the prisoner carriers to arrive.

A sudden blast filled the air with noise and smashed debris, followed soon afterwards by a hoard of PiruNostram foot soldiers running in

and quickly disbursing down various corridors, vaporising anything that blocked their way, be it a wall or a door.

Oddly enough when a situation like this erupts, then Xethantians just begin to walk away and avoid any contact with the terrorist gang, as they both know that maiming or death is not an option and consequently there's certainly no point kidnapping anyone.

However, once the troopers became alerted to the marauding gang, they tried at least to slow them up and wherever possible apprehend and cuff isolated members. However, it was a trivial effort in the face of such numbers.

By now a loud siren was reverberating throughout the complex and everyone knew what that sound meant and it certainly wasn't to suggest that the building was on fire.

Janithillon was on a comlink call to Principal Sobek who had called to alert him to the imminent threat being posed by the invading PiruNostram gang headed by Nemesis himself.

He hardly had time to end the call properly, when the doors leading into the very room where he stood were vaporised and in marched Nemesis flanked by 4 gang members.

In amongst the sound of the explosion, Janithillon could hear Sobek repeatedly shouting his name and slowly he silenced the call as he stared across the room at Nemesis and their eyes met.

“So the mighty Janithillon, we finally meet at last”.

“What do you want you murderous thug?”

“I want your killing machine Janithillon so we can both be equal in our pursuit of controlling life?”

“We don't go round murdering innocent victims of your violence and savagery. We are trying to bring an end to that which is feared throughout the galaxy”

“Oh selective killing then?” mused Nemesis with a condescending laugh.

“Look Nemesis I'm not going to try and debate rationally with the PiruNostram, it's a waste of time. No-one here is going to help you

to understand how TAURUS works or how to use it for that matter. So it'll be useless to you".

Nemesis laughed again saying "I don't need to know, because I've got a bunch of my people accessing DEC files and a sympathetic Senator who will obtain everything else I need to know. In exchange, I've agreed the protection and safety of her daughter, who is on some forsaken primitive world, which I must get around to visiting sometime. I'm sure I'll end up living like a member of the Apostophet if I did".

"So what do you want with me?"

"You're directly responsible for killing my fellow PiruNostram family and for that, they need to be avenged".

"Which means what, you mindless animal? What would you know about family, you've no understanding or meaning of the word".

"Wrong, but irrelevant. Your life will now be terminated, just like theirs was" and with that Nemesis signalled his comrades to grab Janithillon and drag him over to where the TAURUS machine stood, humming and waiting to start the process of death.

"Bind him onto the maglev plinth. Hurry we don't have much time, as the Protectorate will be on their way".

Janithillon writhed and screamed but it was useless, because he could no more undo the binders by pathing than fly. So instead of panicking, he focused his mind on the control panel in a desperate attempt to try and compose settings and processes, to try and limit what would happen to him and then he spoke to Nemesis.

"Whatever you do to me, it will not prevent the extermination of the PiruNostram. I can assure you I will return to deal with you and your kind in another lifetime, and when I do, I will make doubly sure that you won't be in a position to avenge anyone or anything else ever again"

"That's if there'll be anyone or anything left for you to come back and save Janithillon".

Nemesis comlinked through to an agent, whose image immediately beamed into the room and she started to look around and take in all the controls for TAURUS.

“Everything looks in order, you’re good to go. Just edge the plinth up to the opening and I can control it from here”.

Janithillon looked across at the 3D image of the agent and cried out “Jabrah, what are you doing? Why are you disgracing yourself, your parents and the whole of Xethanity for that matter by helping these savages? When I think of everything we’ve gone through to build TAURUS, what has happened to turn you to the belief that the PiruNostram has in any way, a right to live among us”

“I’m sorry Janithillon but my heart was never in this fight. I don’t share in the beliefs of Principal Sobek or with you agreeing to work with him to develop this machine of death. The only way I can clear my conscience is to see the creator destroyed along with it”

“No Jabrah you’re wrong. I too have a conscience. TAURUS is just the beginning of a much longer journey, but to begin with, we have to silence this evil streak of existence that ripples through our culture with so much hatred. Do you think you’ll be spared by the PiruNostram? They will exterminate you along with anyone else they want out of the way whilst TAURUS exists”

Nemesis shouted menacingly “Silence! Enough! Jabrah, don’t listen to this idiot and his gibberish. You are a friend to the PiruNostram. Proceed now. No more delays”.

Thankfully in his haste to get Janithillon into the TAURUS, Nemesis had neglected to put a pathing disruptor on Janithillon’s forehead and so he simply closed his eyes and began to path as many of his contacts as he could to say farewell.

He started with his mother and he asked her to tell his father that he loved them both and that he would be sorry not to be around to mourn his father’s impending demise due to old age. Whether he would manage to get back to see her, he had no idea. All he could do was hope that the machine settings he had put in place, would allow him to retain more than just his Entience.

He never thought he’d end up being terminated by the very machine he had helped to create. His mind raced back to Senator Magdala’s speech to the Apostophet, in which she reminded them of her daughter’s fragile position on the planet known as Earth.

He quickly composed the imagery of the galactic constellation in his mind and focused all his mental energy on reaching XPACE to try and pre-ordain the point of FoldSpace emergence for his Entience.

Jabrah wouldn't have noticed any changes to the configuration mapping being pathed into the controls, as she was only aware of how to activate the despatch sequence.

She had simply taken it as read, that the laboratory machine was already pre-calibrated to deal with the PiruNostram based on what it had been set to from the original unveiling event. Even though she was in effect a hologram, she could still physically engage with the controls, thanks to what was known as pulse-drive technology.

Suddenly Janithillon was aware of Nemesis speaking to him in a quiet voice close up to his ear, as he lay bound and motionless on the plinth "And when I've finished with you, I'll seek out your mother and everyone else that has worked with you on this project. After that, Sobek can meet his destiny along with anyone on the Apostophet that fails to recognise the PiruNostram. Life on Xethenia will take on a whole new meaning when we have dealt with all that stands in our way"

Janithillon opened his eyes and looked at his executioner and said "You can't reach my mother or anyone else on the Apostophet as I have alerted her to what is going on and in turn, she will get a communication for the safe passage off-world for the Apostophet if necessary"

Nemesis shrugged when he realised his error about the disruptor but then laughed "There's an FTB embargo, so that will put pay to their swift despatch. Besides which my comrades will soon reach their targets".

"An FTB doesn't apply to the Apostophet or anyone they clear for passage, but that is of little consequence Nemesis. Mark my words you mindless, ruthless thug, I will discover a way to change life for the better for everyone on Xethenia and the PiruNostram will become a hated legend and consigned to the historical archives"

"Well the race will be on to see who wins, but for now you will be somewhat disadvantaged" and with that, he shouted "Commence" across to Jabrah and she directed some PiruNostram operatives who sat at the control desk.

As the plinth edged into the maw of TAURUS, the noise and associated energy began to escalate in volume and ferocity.

The uniform surrounding Janithillon's body was already alert to the threat of impending destruction and despite his mind being focused on remaining calm and in the resignation of what was about to happen, it still fought to keep him taut and protected.

He could feel the bonded biology of life racing through his veins and muscles, crawling through the very skin that covered him as the tyranny of destructive technology battered his body, mercilessly tearing away at the fabric of life that for 300 orbinars, had protected his very existence.

He wasn't sure at what point he had lost consciousness due to the intense pain, but he did remember receiving a message from his mother which began with "Be at peace Janithillon, my beloved son. I have every faith that we will meet again and be reunited. We will always love you" but then it was lost.

He remembered thinking at the time he received his mother's message 'so this is what pain feels like' and consequently experiencing the hitherto unknown emotions of fear and apprehension being brought on by the imminent end to his life. An experience which he thought must be what a normal Xethantian feels when they reach Transition. After that his memory of most of the events that had just taken place evaporated.

He had no idea as to how much time had elapsed since his Entience and safeguarded DNA code had been expulsed through FoldSpace, but it had now reached Earth and had manifested and reincarnated itself into the human genome of Richard Jackson, who at that moment was making passionate love with his wife Alison.

Chapter 9 – Reincarnation

It had been a very traumatic couple of weeks for Richard and Alison Jackson, now safely and securely located at a secret address in London.

Throughout the day and sometimes during the night, they were often surrounded by a whole raft of people, be they special security, medical specialists, Government officials and a dedicated social worker, the latter of which seemed to be the only person genuinely interested in the wellbeing of the pair of them and baby William.

They still hadn't come to terms with everything that had happened and were just desperate to be given the chance to get their lives back to some degree of normality.

They were being housed in a comfortable and spacious apartment, which was within the confines of a large multi-floored building and although they could see out of the fairly large windows, Richard had concluded that the outside world couldn't see in.

He had stood on many occasions, waving frantically at passers-by and workers on an adjacent building site without attracting any attention whatsoever.

One of the biggest issues for the pair of them to grasp, was the dramatic changes in William's physical appearance, as despite only being two weeks old, he was already the size of a 3-year-old toddler and every night saw another growth spurt. He could walk quite steadily and could eat and drink regular food.

He could easily hold a conversation with anyone that engaged with him and despite every event being filmed, with him often hooked up to a variety of sensors, monitoring his brain patterns and measuring his physiology signs, he was never troubled by all the attention and paraphernalia that came with each interview.

Dr Ian Thompson and Jenny Dempster often telephoned from the General Hospital in Leicester to speak with Richard to check on things, because once the family had been moved to London they could no longer visit them.

A new man appeared to be in charge of matters now, a high ranking Government official called Robert Quinnell, who was able to command the attention and instruct all around him, including the Police and security personnel, who often responded with a curt “Yes Sir” every time he addressed them.

Quinnell sat opposite Janithillon, talking to him, referencing data on an iPad as he did so. He always spoke to him with this alien name, as did everyone else around him, apart from his mother and father who couldn't, or wouldn't completely recognise him as being anything other than their son William, despite all that had gone on since he arrived into the world.

“So Janithillon, it's clear to all of us that you're not from this world of ours, but my main concern is how many beings like you there may be here on Earth and what threat do you, or anyone else pose for national security. Are your people going to come here to our planet and what threat do they bring?”

“Mr Quinnell, neither I nor anyone else from Xethenia will pose a threat to your civilisation. For the most part, we are a very peaceful race of people ...” but before he could finish Quinnell was hastily flicking through pages on the iPad screen and retorted with “Well, that conflicts slightly with what you've already told us, with regards to the criminal elements who may have been reincarnated throughout the history of humanity and who knows what may lie in store for us here in the present”

“That is true and it is with regret that your planet has been infected in this way as I can tell from the little I have seen from books and images on your television systems, that it is likely that dangerous Entience DNA from executed PiruNostram criminals has permeated its way into people such as Adolf Hitler, Genghis Khan and many other notable but demonic characters. However, I also hasten to add that due to an uprising on my world, Entience DNA from a significant number of very intelligent and respectable citizens could also have spread to humans here too. If you look back into your history then you will see flashes of brilliance in people such as Leonardo DaVinci, Albert Einstein and so on. So, you see your race has benefitted, albeit admittedly you do appear to have suffered more”.

“But why are you so different? We can see you’re different. Why are you growing at such an alarming rate? How can we detect which people on Earth have this Entience DNA and how much longer can we, as the human race, expect this to continue?”

“Yes, Mr Quinnell, the questions must be endless, but let me deal with them in the order you asked them of me” Janithillon replied calmly and precisely.

“I’m sorry Janithillon, but there is so much to ask and so much to learn. We are very keen to keep the impact of what has been going on since your arrival to as close a group of trusted people as we can.

I’m sure you can imagine the furore around the world, were they to finally discover that we are not alone in the universe and that humanity’s history has been influenced so greatly by an alien race and not just through its natural evolution”.

“I quite understand Mr Quinnell. Now the reason I have such strange eyes is because my father was from a planet in a neighbouring star system called Quella and my mother was from Xethenia.

The Mequellium are a very advanced race of humanoid people, some of whom have visited Earth along with people from Xethenia. I’m hoping to make contact with one of them just as soon as my higher cerebral capacity has developed itself sufficiently and ...”

But before Janithillon could continue, Quinnell barked out “Hey, hey hang on, hold it right there. What do you mean make contact? With who? Another alien here on Earth?”

Everyone else in the room suddenly stopped what they were doing and looked across at Janithillon, hanging on every word that followed.

“Yes, a female Xethantian has been living here amongst you for around two thousand of your Earth years now. She was part of an away team travelling on an exploration visit and she expressed the desire to stay, so she could learn about and observe your culture and the development of your race”.

“She’s been here for two thousand years!” Quinnell gasped “Oh my God how can anyone live that long?” My God, how could they live

that long and not be detected?” Quinnell stood up brushing his hands through his thick black hair and walked around the room, glancing back at Janithillon and waiting for his response.

“Xethantians can live for three thousand of your years. They are immortal and they cannot be killed. This God that you speak of, are you referring to the Nazarene known as Jesus?”

I would suspect that Magdalene may have met him and probably shared some of her life with him, if he ever existed of course. He may have even been from a race of people known as the Mezzakiah. Magdalene may well have adopted or changed her name over time and moved from one land to another to avoid suspicion and detection”.

“Whoa hang on a minute. Stop right there. This is bordering on religious blasphemy” interrupted Quinnell, his voice raised in alarm.

“Why would it be blasphemous for me to infer that your religious God may have been a myth? Why would it be any more absurd to suggest that he may have been a visitor to this Earth?”

“Well for one thing, how could he have been alien? He was born of a human, the Virgin Mary, so how can he be alien?”

“Well, I’m born of a human but your point about a virgin birth is a contradiction in terms isn’t it Mr Quinnell. Even female Xethantians can’t conceive without the involvement of the opposite sex, so what are we saying here, that some hitherto unknown, never seen again singularity, created a living entity out of nothing?”

Quinnell wasn’t a churchgoer, but neither was he an atheist “Look all we know as humanity, or certainly those who believe in a faith, is what the bible tells us happened. No-one has ever really questioned the basis of the story, well certainly not with any hard evidence, but it underpins everything which Christianity is based on and has lived for all this time. So if you know different what’s your take on it all?”

“Religion which pits faith against faith has been the cornerstone of mistrust and the procreator of warring factions across the known universe in which they have travelled, let alone here on your planet.

You only have to look back through your history and even witness today what religion has done to your world. All religions base themselves on spiritual belief. All are supposed to be for enlightenment, peace, the better good and mutual respect, but the truth is that they are all based on fear and for some, that underpins their lack of understanding and a determination to protect their own beliefs.

Humanity embraces religion because you struggle to come to terms with who you are and what your purpose in life and the universe around you is all about. But in fairness, how can you, when you only have a relatively short period of life. You can't fulfil everything you need to do physically in that time frame, so you turn to religion for enhanced spiritual enlightenment.

It is highly likely that Jesus became a prophet having been influenced by The Mezzakiah. They are humanoid beings just like you and I, preying on cultures and societies that are in the very early stages of development and giving them spiritual guidance, teachings and laws which are often misinterpreted over generations and form the basis of conflicting religions.”

Quinnell just stared at Janithillon and all around him looked on in silence with some people slowly shaking their heads in disbelief, hands raised and in utter disbelief. For Alison, being a devout Christian, she just held her head in her hands repeatedly whispering “Oh My God”

“But hang on, if the baby Jesus was from this Mezzakiah race as you say, then how or who created him? My God, are you suggesting that Mary, or Joseph, or both were alien?”

“Look, I know this is all sounding improbable and unbelievable Mr Quinnell, but to be fair I don't have all the answers. Maybe when I find Magdalene, she will know more”.

Quinnell was fired up but also struggling to grasp the enormity of the conversation “But the bible states that he was crucified on a wooden cross, on which he eventually died from his injuries, but later seemingly he was resurrected and spent time with his followers. Did this Mezzakiah race share your immortality?”

“No Mr Quinnell they are not immortal. Yes Jesus may have been crucified, thanks to the ignorance and fear of his peers, but what

happened afterwards cannot be verified, as this bible you talk about is more an allegory of stories written by people that weren't even witnesses and hence why they have been simply adopted and believed over the centuries"

"Alright, but what about all these miracles that were supposed to have taken place, how would Jesus be able to achieve these things. Did the Mezzakiah have special powers?"

"They will undoubtedly have had a higher level of cerebral evolution, just like the Xethanti. As I've mentioned already, humanity has only been in existence for a short space of time and together with your limited life span, you will never experience the amazing capacity that your brain has, to perform what you might perceive as being something incredible.

So, it is likely that these miracles as you refer to them were merely illusions or at best, a demonstration of ability beyond your wildest comprehension, conducted and controlled by the Mezzakiah using Jesus as an instrument of delivery"

Quinnell just stared at Janithillon momentarily and then added "Do you have any idea how this world of ours will react to that kind of information; let alone the fact that you're from another planet altogether? There will be absolute mayhem and not all of it euphoric either. Anyway, we can only hope that we will remain in control of this information", said Quinnell with an emphatic concern in his voice as he looked around the room.

"I must admit this name Mezzakiah sounds very similar to the word Messiah....." his voice trailed off as his train of thought went back to his iPad "Now Janithillon, tell me more about Magdalene".

"Xethantian society is run and controlled on a planetary scale by a group of elders and appointed members of an elite council made up of 12 Senators that are collectively known as The Apostophet. Magdalene is the Daughter of a Xethantian Senator called Magdala. She is a scientist, like me. We are interested in all the forms and aspects of life, be they from our species, or that which exists throughout the known universe. As I have already said, she came to Earth as part of an exploration team and elected to stay here and observe the pace of human development".

“You said earlier that this woman, of whom you speak, may have come into contact with Jesus. With a name like Magdalene, am I to assume that you are referring to Mary Magdalene?”

“I believe there is the likelihood she will be the same person” replied Janithillon nodding.

Quinnell was struggling to take in all this information. His mind was racing; “But there are rumours that Mary Magdalene had a child with Jesus, maybe more than one; so could that have been possible?”

“I doubt it very much Mr Quinnell. You won’t yet fully appreciate Xethantian physiology, but it is a difficult enough task for females to reproduce with their own species, let alone with an alien male; added to which Xethantian females can only give birth to one child in their lifetime”.

“Right but hang on a minute... is there also a connection with this word, what was it now, the aposso, something...”

“The Apostophet”

“Yes that’s it, but it sounds like the word Apostle – there was a group of 12 apostles from our biblical era that followed Jesus. How can this name be so familiar and yet so alien?”

“Mr Quinnell there will be many phrases, names and even people that will be known or familiar to you, that will be connected back to Xethenia, because of what has been taking place over your planet’s evolutionary lifetime”.

“Well,OK, but that brings me neatly to asking why are you so different? Why have you and” as he spoke, he gestured towards Richard “your human birth father, been able to change the physiology to the point that you can both self-heal. Why has this not been so evident historically with these other, shall we say, more notable human characters that you talk about?”

“As I mentioned earlier Mr Quinnell, I am what you might call a hybrid being. I have the genetic makeup from both Quella and Xethenia. Just because Richard, can now self-heal does not mean, like me as I am now in this life, that we are immortal. I would be surprised if other humans have not been affected in this way and have possibly chosen to conceal this ability, but equally, it may be

that they have merely and unknowingly acquired the intelligence from Xethantian Entience DNA and nothing more”.

Quinnell flicked back the pages on his tablet “But I thought you said earlier that the TAURUS machine destroyed all the physical and I assume, the biological DNA. Yet we have seen from the MRI scan that your physiological make up is alien and there's no getting away from your glowing blue eyes; so how has this been possible?”

“I'm not sure Mr Quinnell, as I am unable to relive the moment when my life was terminated. All I can assume is that somehow the intensity of the cellular breakdown process was not as destructive for me and consequently the reincarnation of my DNA has manifested itself into Richard's genes and possibly my mother's too and this has led to my present condition”

“I can see that you're growing at a phenomenal rate. Is this typical of your race?”

“No, but I suspect this is also a side effect from my genetic DNA being blended with that of a human host” replied Janithillon as he glanced back smiling towards his mother.

“You currently converse like an adult but with a child's voice, so what changes can we expect?”

“I can feel myself growing Mr Quinnell. My higher cerebral brain functions are evolving quickly, so I would anticipate being the size of a mature adult in around three months”.

Upon hearing that she would be losing her toddler son to adulthood so soon after having come to terms with him not being a baby after just a fortnight, Alison wept openly, as she buried her face into her husband's chest; whereupon his eyes began to well up. All they could do was comfort each other.

Quinnell noticed the emotional outpouring and stood up. He put his iPad down on the table and walked over to where Richard and Alison were sitting and spoke softly saying “Look, I'm really sorry. I can't even begin to imagine how you must both feel. We'll call it a day with the interviews for a while and give you some time together as a family. Is there anything that I, or my team can do to help make this more bearable?”

Alison looked up, tears were running down her cheeks and as she snuffled, Quinnell reached over for a tissue and handed it to her “Hear allow me”.

As she dried her eyes and blew her nose, Richard spoke up “We just want to go home Mr Quinnell”.

Janithillon had climbed down from the big armchair he had been sitting in and walked over. It already looked as though he had grown a few inches all over whilst he had been talking that morning.

“I’m sorry mother” he said as he held her hand. Alison gathered him up in her arms and hugged him, as Richard wrapped them both up in his.

Quinnell looked on forlornly and sighed, saying “I’m sorry we’ve got to go through this line of questioning and I’m sorry that you can’t go home either, but you must know that?”

Alison spoke up “Well I don’t know why we can’t go home. We won’t say anything to anyone will we Richard” as she shot a pleading look to her husband.

“We just want some time with William while we can”

“I can sympathise with all that you say, believe me, I can. But the fact is that you couldn’t keep Janith, er ... sorry, William, a secret from everyone all the time and let’s face it, when people see him, then will be alarmed by his eyes and they’re going to start asking questions.

My biggest fear right now is media attention and God knows what else. I’m really sorry, but this is a national security issue and there’s just no way we can have this situation breached, not by anyone, not even you” Quinnell said softly, trying desperately to avoid sounding harsh and careless.

Alison looked back at Quinnell, tears in her eyes but thin-lipped and tense “Well on that basis we’re never going to take him home are we?”

Janithillon hugged her and then he pulled back to address his parents, saying “mother, please don’t be upset. I will be fine. I know this is a very difficult and emotional time for both of you” he paused to point over at Quinnell, before continuing “I’m afraid Mr Quinnell

is quite right. The best that could happen here, is that you are allowed home soon, but I doubt whether I will be released to go with you”.

Alison fell slowly out of her chair onto her knees to hug Janithillon and cried out “No, no, no” as she pulled him close.

Richard stood up sharply and was about to speak to Quinnell, but as he looked down at his wife and son; he placed a hand onto his shoulder and motioned that they walk towards an area of the room to be out of earshot.

“Look Quinnell, I’m not very happy about this and you can see the state that my wife is in. There has to be something you can do to help?”

They reached the far end of the room and stood behind a series of shelves and filing cabinets and Quinnell responded in a hushed tone. “There isn’t a lot more I can say or do Richard. I’m really sorry. The magnitude of this situation is just not like anything else I have ever dealt with, or for that matter is anything which the world has ever had to deal with.

I can’t just let you take William away with you. The best I can hope for, is that you’ll be allowed to keep in touch with him and see him occasionally. But to do that, then we’re going to have to come up with a story that we can all agree to and we stick to, no matter what”

Richard thought for a moment and then he said “OK Quinnell, let’s call it a day for today as you say and my wife and I will take our son back up to the apartment. But I need you to come and see Alison and me ASAP to talk this story through, because she is going out of her mind and I’m not very happy about the situation either”

“OK Richard that’s fine, you go back and relax. Ask my people for anything you might need. Catering can prepare you a special meal if that helps too”.

“A big bottle of red wine might be a good start” Richard said with a resigned smile on his lips.

Later that evening, after the whole family had dined on chef-prepared food, Richard spoke quietly with Alison at the dining table whilst Janithillon was trawling manically around the internet looking

for traces of what might be a link to Mary Magdalene, little realising that she was already using another anagram name of Megan D'Lameray.

“I think Quinnell plans to keep William here as there is just no way the world will ever accept him as normal, or leave us alone for that matter, even if we could take him with us”

Alison replied holding Richard's hands tightly and bravely trying to hold back the tears “Oh Richard, I hate to say it, but I've thought of little else since we got to this place. I know he's not a normal baby, with what's inside him, but there has to be some of you and me in there somewhere and soon he's going to be prized out of our hands; and then what?”

Richard looked thoughtfully into his wife's sorrowful eyes. The past few weeks had taken their toll out on the pair of them, but he knew deep down that his Wife wasn't coping with this situation as much as he felt he was. He responded softly saying “I know love, I feel for the lad too. This is all just so surreal. I've got this awful feeling that Quinnell will make up a story which protects us, whilst allowing us to go home, but William will have to stay here”

Alison wiped her eyes on her napkin “What sort of story love?”

“Well I've been tossing that one around in my head for hours and the only thing I can think of is that they're going to fabricate his premature death, as that way all interest and knowledge about him from the hospital back in Leicester; to our relatives and friends etc will just disappear”.

Alison looked over at the sofa, but Janithillon was too engrossed in the activity on the laptop screen to even notice her staring at him, so she turned back to look at Richard and said “My God are you serious? Do you think they could do that? What about all the records? We would have to live with that lie for the rest of our lives. I can't even contemplate that thought right now Richard. Besides what is going to happen if we try for another child? I can't go through all this again”.

“Yes I know what you mean, I'd been thinking about that too” replied Richard and then he raised his voice and looked across at Janithillon “Hey William have you got a minute?”

Janithillon looked over and put the laptop down on the sofa and walked across to stand next to Richard.

“What is it father?”

Richard heaved a heavy sigh “Look you already know from what’s been said that you may well have to stay here in this place, whilst the authorities carry on with their interrogation work. It is very doubtful that you will ever be able to come home with your mum and me”

Alison started to sob on hearing Richard’s words.

Janithillon looked at her and then walked over to her side of the dining table and held her hands before saying “I know this is very distressing for you mother, but my father is correct in what he says. My path will ideally take me away from this planet back to my homeworld of Xethenia and I must achieve that aim as soon as practicably possible. I’m sorry this is neither your fault, nor that of my father; but it is what I must do none the less”

Richard broke in “William” and he turned to face him.

“Your mum and I want to know what will happen if we try for another child. Will the contaminated DNA in my body mean that we will reproduce another baby bearing all the same hallmarks as you?”

“I think that is highly unlikely father. From what I have understood from examining my physiology and knowing my Xethatian ancestry, along with appreciating the impact from human DNA, then whilst you will forever have the ability to self-heal; then I firmly believe your normal genome balance will be restored going forward”.

Richard half smiled “Thank you this will mean quite a lot to both of us”.

He looked up at Alison expecting to see a relieved look of optimism on her face, but instead, he was met with a rather vacant look as she just stared at the table.

Chapter 10 – Departure

Several months had passed since Janithillon had been taken into the custody at the top-secret, high-security Government facility in London, headed by Chief Investigating Agent Robert Quinnell.

Janithillon's surrogate parents, Richard & Alison Jackson had very sadly and reluctantly accepted that they would never be allowed to take their 'son' home with them and live a normal life.

Richard would be under constant monitoring by the country's top physicians and specialist Government security advisors, as a consequence of his unique biometric condition that enabled him to self-heal.

The couple were sworn and signed to the official secrets act and would be branded as traitors to the state, if they were to leak any of the truth to family, friends, or worse still the media. As a consequence, they would also face a very harsh prison sentence apart from each other.

Richard would be the subject of endless experiments and tests at a secure hospital location for many years to come, making it impossible for him to continue his day job with the legal firm he worked for.

However, both he & Alison would be adequately compensated, which only went a small way towards cushioning the severe mental and emotional blow they had both been forced to face. A blow that they would continue to endure for the rest of their lives.

These past few months had seen Janithillon develop from being a baby into a young man and with it had come new challenges for the security teams to wrestle with, not least of which was the alarming ability for him to move and control things telepathically.

Providing him with suitable clothing had also been a problem, so the decision had been taken early on, to keep him in a bright orange jumpsuit, whose size was evolving every week.

It was a dull, wet Friday morning and Janithillon was preparing himself for another day of interrogation sessions with the ever-probing Robert Quinnell.

“Good morning Janithillon, so how are we today?” he pondered.

“I am well thank you Mr Quinnell and trust you are too? So, what are we going to talk about today?” Janithillon replied, as an apple leapt out of a bowl of fruit and into his hand, moved entirely by the power of his worryingly powerful mind.

Quinnell frowned and heaved a sigh at the remarkable sight he'd just witnessed, which was also caught by the array of cameras that were constantly trained on every movement and word that either of the two men expressed each day.

“I want to go back and talk some more about Magdalene” Quinnell eventually replied “but I am becoming increasingly concerned about this excessive use of telepathy Janithillon and I would like you to refrain from using it”

“Mr Quinnell, my destiny is not to remain here in your custody being interrogated by you every day, as I am very bored and tired with it all now. I must make contact with Magdalene, as she will be my only way of escaping this world and returning to Xethenia and very soon, none of your resources here, will prevent me from leaving this facility”.

“Yes, I can believe that, but this worries me Janithillon, because this world is just not ready to accept you or what you stand for. When humans fear what they don't understand, their whole outlook on life changes and they start to panic and mindlessly protect what they feel is of value to them. I feel you would be safer if you were to remain here”.

Janithillon laughed “Mr Quinnell within the next few days, I will walk out of this facility and neither you nor anyone or anything else will stand in my way. Please have no fear for my safety. Worry more about what could happen to others, as believe me I shall not come to any harm. It would make more sense if your resources were deployed to help me find Magdalene, rather than hinder me from locating her myself”.

“OK Janithillon, let’s remain focused and calm. You know full well what I’m talking about. We can’t have someone who passes for a man in the street wandering around attracting attention from the public at large, witnessing incredible feats of telepathy”.

“That will be your call, as you humans like to say, Mr Quinnell”.

“OK. OK. Look why can’t you just connect with Magdalene – why do you need our help?”

“For Xethantians to path each other, we need to have physically touched one another and willingly accepted an exchange of a unique DNA ID if you will and that’s not happened between us yet”.

“Oh, I see. Well, let’s see if we can help you. She’s not going to be going around using her real name, because alarm bells would have been going off well before now if she had.

I would suspect she’ll probably be using a disguise in the form of a nom de plume, to throw off any unwarranted attention. It’s an unusual name in its raw sense, so she must have changed it completely. Equally, she could be anywhere in the world, so how on earth do we find her amongst 6 billion people? What have we got to go on?”

Janithillon swept his hand in the direction of Quinnell’s iPad and a barrage of text, images and other data appeared on his screen in an instant.

“What the fuck!” Quinnell exclaimed, “What have you just done?”

“Don’t panic Mr Quinnell. Your petty toy is quite safe and undamaged. This is all of my research on the matter” Janithillon replied casually “I think we are looking for a freelance researcher/historian”.

“So what name do you think she is going by?”

“It’s likely to be an anagram of her real name which is a clever enough disguise, but she will have done little to hide the tracks of her research and her involvement in some fairly high profile projects.

Thinking about it, I would even go so far as to say that she may have deliberately done this to attract attention” he added, not hearing Quinnell’s following words.

“What do you mean? What sort of attention?”

But Janithillon continued to think out loud “Yes of course. She wants me to find her. She knows what’s been happening with TAURUS and life on Xethenia. They must have alerted her somehow. But she doesn’t know who to look for because she won’t know me. I was only born 300 years ago ...” and at that point, he stood up and started to walk around the interview room. His blue eyes glowing even more deeply.

Quinnell watched him for a few moments then stood up and walked across to him and put his hand caringly onto Janithillon’s right shoulder saying “What is it Janithillon? What are you thinking?”

He turned to face Quinnell and stared at him for a moment before a thin smile began to emerge on his lips “I think Magdalene is trying to find me, Mr Quinnell. I need a computer and two large screens, or ideally a table tablet, so I can communicate my knowledge onto it”.

Quinnell paused and hesitated “I’m not too sure whether we can accommodate that Janithillon. I know you’re not a danger in the clear and present sense, but your security threat level to the UK, and for all I know, to the rest of the international community, remains alarmingly high and protocol tells me to deny you access to anything that may enable you to interfere with the resources, or infrastructure of this country”.

“Mr Quinnell I merely wish to sift through what I’ve gathered in my mind and cross-check it against information held on your internet system, in a bid to locate Magdalene, so please don’t treat me like a criminal or a terrorist.

I told you several of your months ago now, that I wish no harm to the people of planet Earth. If anything, I am trying to do the opposite and make amends for what my world has been doing to your evolutionary history. Worse still, if I don't succeed with my plan; then reincarnation will carry on happening to your world and may become uncontrollable".

Quinnell studied Janithillon for a few moments whilst a war of reason raged in his head. What should he do? He'd grown to like this alien from another world. He was in awe of the power and intelligence of what was a superior being. He marvelled at the inhuman abilities, but it made him equally nervous and worried. Could he be trusted, he thought?

"I'll need to clear it with the PM first and no doubt he'll want something in return Janithillon and I don't just mean assurances either".

"Then bring William Grant here Mr Quinnell and he can ask of me what he wants in exchange for what I need".

A Day later the Prime Minister and an entourage of staff and senior military personnel turned up for a meeting with Janithillon and Quinnell. They had all been briefed some time ago about Janithillon's detention and had been kept up to speed with the results and analysis from the many interrogation meetings.

"Now look here Mr... um sorry, Janithillon; that's your name, right?" said Grant his head turning around in all directions to get the approval from his staff that he was addressing Janithillon correctly.

"Look what we can't have; as has probably been explained to you, is a situation emerging which may and I do stress, MAY, lead to a complete collapse in the ability of the forces in this country to maintain proper law and order".

"Mr Grant I have already assured Mr Quinnell that I merely wish to take what I consider to be the right and necessary course of action

to protect your planet and afford me with the opportunity to return to mine” pleaded Janithillon.

“Yes that maybe, but you have to see matters from our side of the fence, insofar as we have no safeguards and if we let you free, then we are no longer in control of the situation”.

Janithillon stood up and walked across the room towards Grant who was immediately engulfed by suited security, drawing on guns from their shoulder holsters.

“You are not in control now Mr Grant” smiled Janithillon, as he waved his hands outwardly in opposing directions and the bodyguards were flung across the room, whilst their weapons remained frozen in mid-air.

The army officers instinctively drew their sidearm weapons, but Janithillon simply stared at them, causing their bullet clips to eject and fall to the floor, with the shells rolling away in all directions.

Quinnell shouted “Janithillon. Enough! This won’t get you anywhere!” He then turned and reached out towards Grant who fell in behind him shaking and looking nervously pale with terror.

The guns that had previously been floating into the air simply dropped to the floor in a crash and the slightly dazed bodyguards cautiously walked over to reclaim them whilst keeping an apprehensive eye on their mysterious target.

Grant tried to remain calm but spoke nervously “OK ... er ... we can all see that you have an amazing gift and I’m sorry if we caused you to doubt our intentions, but these people will do all they can to protect me, ... it’s their job you understand?”

“Yes, I know Mr Grant. Now can we please get down to the business of you providing me with a table tablet to assist in my search for a fellow Xethantian who has been living here for 2000 years?”

It was evident, not everyone was fully aware of all the facts, as there was an outpouring of disbelief and incredulity from some of the people in the room.

Quinnell quickly took the initiative to bring some order to the room “Please, please I can explain. It would seem from the interviews that I have had thus far with Janithillon, that one of his ‘kind’ has been living here on Earth for some considerable time as you’ve just heard.

I’m still finding it quite difficult myself to believe that anyone could live that long. Anyway, I can’t go into things much further, right now, as not everyone in this room is on the right pay grade shall we say, to hear all this, let alone witness what just happened. No offence gentleman” as he looked around the room at the stunned and subdued bodyguards who were hanging on Quinnell’s every word.

Grant wanted to learn more, so he reasserted his authority and said “Right, can everyone apart from Agent Quinnell, please leave the room, but remain outside. I’m quite sure I’ll be safe”.

As the room gradually cleared, he went further, saying “Now, what has all this got to do with the need for a table tablet and who is this friend of yours Janithillon?”

“She has assumed many identities over her time here Mr Grant, but I know her as Magdalene and I need to find her in a bid to make a return to my homeworld”.

“Hmmm, I see and why do you need to leave Earth. Are you running away from something terrible we should know about?” he asked curiously.

Janithillon laughed “No, far from it Mr Grant. I want to run back into the lion’s den as you humans would say, to try and undo what has happened or certainly prevent matters from getting any worse here on Earth.

I'm convinced Magdalene has been told what has been going on, as well as my position in all this and therefore she has sufficient technology to arrange for a mode of transport to collect me and take me back to Xethenia".

"I see" Grant replied and fell silent for a moment whilst he tried to think what he should say next, "You know the news of your arrival here has been nothing short of astonishing and from the reports I've read from Agent Quinnell, they have left me feeling numb and amazed.

There are an awful lot of questions that an awful lot of people here on Earth would love to know the answers about and whilst I know you probably don't have the time, or the inclination to deal with all of them; I would welcome a chance on behalf of humanity to understand where and how we fit in the universe now we know we're not alone?"

"Give me what I need and some resources to travel to wherever I need to go and I'll see to it that you and your world get some answers and guidance, I promise you that".

Grant turned to address Quinnell, "Please render all assistance as may be necessary to Janithillon, but do so with the utmost discretion, whilst exercising high security and let's start by rigging up this table tablet" and with that, he turned to face Janithillon and with a smile, he said, "And get this man some sunglasses whilst you're at it and when he leaves this establishment, make sure he wears them constantly".

He shook hands with Janithillon whilst also gripping his shoulder and then he leant in to speak more privately "It sounds ridiculous, but I feel as though I'm in the presence of a God. I genuinely hope you can help us, as I feel humanity is in dire need of it right now?"

"Mr Grant, I am not a God or a deity of any kind. You humans, are a strange race of people, as you struggle to appreciate that you all share the same existence on this planet and if you are to change

anything in your lives, then it has to be to work towards unity, peace and mutual development”.

“Tell me about it” he replied “but where do we start? I’ve tried everything from diplomacy to defending the oppressed, but without much success. We need a symbol of hope”.

“There will come a day Mr Grant when this world of yours will unite to save itself from oblivion. Only when the odds are completely stacked against you and life seems on the verge of extinction, will the true values that make the human race what it is, suddenly come forward to symbolise all that is good and strong within you”.

“My God man!” Grant hissed, “How long will we have to wait for that to happen and what sacrifices will our country have to make in the meantime?”

“Please be patient Mr Grant; I will endeavour to provide you with that symbol” replied Janithillon before he turned away and walked over to where Quinnell stood patiently waiting for them to finish talking.

