

## Chapter 5

May 7, 2133

“If you’ve lost control of things, we’ll have to find someone else for this project.” The Major’s words were clearly a no-nonsense ultimatum. “It’s been months and you haven’t even heard from this woman. Her people have been causing even more trouble than before. Keep her in check or those contracts will go to someone who will.”

Bog could do nothing but watch him walk out the door. He was concerned but not overly so. The Major was more show than anything. He liked to think of himself as a corporate power broker, but he was just a cog in the machine.

Tucker still had a good handle on Maddison’s movements and activities. Pursuing her would be a mistake. He needed her to come back to him, keeping the power dynamic skewed in his favor. He invested a lot of time and money in this, playing the long game. Those contracts will be worth hundreds of thousands of times more than anything he has invested in this environmental gambit.

The informant has inured himself into this Gaia group. He’s eager to please and will do anything asked, a great combination for a spy. Not the brightest bulb, which is an asset for someone who is simply a tool. Bog has no time for some little pisher trying to climb the ladder. Fortunately, the boy should be checking in sometime today, keeping Bog up to speed on Maddy’s movements.

o o o o

“I really have to be getting back home,” Maddy sighed, walking in from the lanai.

“You would leave paradise to go back to snow and freezing cold?” Jimmi really did hate to see Maddy go.

“Actually May is a very warm and wonderful month in Minnesota. But I’ve got to get to work formulating a presentation. This agglomeration of data here has to make sense, not for just Bog’s people but so that the military can understand it as well. We have, with Gaia’s help, thrown a wrench into some incredibly profitable projects, not just here but all over the world. There’s no telling how much they’ll fork over to get us to stop. I think I’ll head home after Tam gets back.”

“She was planning on being out for just a few days. I’ll give her a call on the sat phone and then you can make your travel arrangements.”

“Have you had any luck contacting your colleagues?”

Jimmi was happy to share her professional information. “I have, and none of them have noticed what’s happening. The shift of the planets is almost imperceptible but without a doubt real. The movement of the moon is inextricably tied to the tides. I have seen nothing of note with the sun, but I have little experience thinking of it as a sentient being, still wrapping my head around that one. The information we’re getting about weather anomalies is being funneled to our experts trying to map out possible outcomes. They believe the goal is restoring the polar ice caps.”

Maddy pondered that news. “Are you getting any sense of a timeline here. That’s the one instruction left out of this manual for the destruction and rebirth of a planet.”

Jimmi smiled, “You can’t expect Gaia to hand out an agenda. There’s always been mystery in this relationship, she deals in much larger terms.”

“Thanks, you’re a load of help.”

o o o o

Kilian Hart waited outside Tucker’s office. A thin young man in his early 20’s, he is in constant motion even as he sits impatiently waiting for the man he believes to be his mentor. The news

he brings is ready to burst out, he's been holding it in for days making his way back to Bog. Finally Bog's secretary ushered him into the office.

Bog stayed seated behind his desk, staring at his screen not acknowledging Killian. The boy slowly made his way to the desk, his smile shrinking as he did so. "I have news for you."

Bog, spoke his eyes still not engaging the young man, "I should hope so, you've spent enough time with that Indian boy. What have you for me?"

"Emory's grandmother is kind of important with these tree huggers. They check in with her all the time. The Bear's Heart woman calls weekly. They don't talk about legal issues or protests, mostly about the weather."

"That's what you have for me, weather?" I pay you to gather information and you're telling me about the weather?"

Hart defended his information. "It's more than that, it is about how the patterns are changing, the rains are different, the winds are blowing in unusual directions --- and that worries them. They talk about leaving."

"Leaving where?"

"Earth?"

"Are you asking me or telling me?"

Killian didn't know. "I'm not sure, it seems impossible but it's the only conclusion I could draw from their conversation, they want to leave earth."

"That could be the way to get rid of the problem."

o o o o

Bog swaggered and menaced, puffing himself up. "I don't hear from you for months and you walk in here asking me to not only finance a space flight, but to broker the deal with the military. Do you have any idea what you're asking of me?"

Maddy kept her business posture and her resolute voice. "I know how serious this is, I have spent the last few months preparing to show the viability and the necessity of this project. I know you've been at odds with the military --- you and Major Miller are sworn enemies. But I also know you can sell a bad idea, so it should be easy to sell a good one. As far as they're concerned it will pull our group off the offensive. Our focus and energies would have to change. It may seem to them like a fair trade."

"You mean you would all back off? How many of you are you thinking would travel on this ship?"

"I've done my research. There's a ship in use now that could take up to 200 of us. We would have to back off; it would take planning and the efforts of many more than those going to make this work. I was hoping you would come with us?"

Tucker feigned humility. "Wow, I didn't expect that, how kind of you. If I went who would be here to make sure the military followed through with the mission? I'll have to give that some thought. Now let's look at what you have here and see how to introduce this to the Major."

o o o o

Major Owen Miller just stared at the documents in front of him. "I can't believe what I'm hearing. You protest at every base, try to block our operations, harass us on every mission and now you want me to sign over one of our newest ships so you can go and find a new planet to live on? This is ludicrous, you can't expect me to take you seriously."

Bog reached for an as yet unopened folder. "I'm entirely serious. I have more than enough backers for this. It's amazing how generous corporations can be when you tell them the greatest thorn in their side wants to leave the planet. They not only opened their checkbooks, they made calls to their congressional and senatorial representatives. Sir, this is a career making mission. I brought it to you because I know we can trust you."

"Congressional and senatorial representatives you say? Perhaps I should take a closer look at your proposal."