

# **One small step for a man, one giant leap for the Empire**

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### **11518**

#### **35 ABY, Kelatrii, Wild Space**

It was one of the uncharted planets in the Wild Space of the Galaxy. It was a region rarely visited by anyone, save refugees, who had been forced to leave their homes, and free spirits, who felt too restricted with rules of conventional societies. Even notorious criminals and crime lords from the populated part of the Galaxy rarely visited that area, because there was little to raid. The governments had other matters to deal with and they did not have enough resources to conduct scouting and colonization of the Wild Space on a large scale.

On the other hand, the same qualities made it an excellent place to relocate both the surviving civilian citizens and military forces of the Empire after destruction of Cocytus system. IMS Tipoca II was a medical station that was not suited to serve as a long-term base of operations. Clan Scholae Palatinae required more permanent location to rebuild their base of power. The Wild Space was an excellent area to start from scratches. Maybe not from scratches. If they could only find a planet with relatively advanced society that somehow stayed away from the main stream of events. It would allow the Empire to rebuild their fleet and army without the need to bring technology from more industrialized parts of the Galaxy. Thanks to that the Clan would not bring unnecessary attention to its operations gaining it enough time to expand their sphere of influence and to prepare for the upcoming battles.

Utilizing his contacts all over the Galaxy, Xantros secretly looked for any information about any planet that might suit the needs of Clan Scholae Palatinae. He hoped that some of them, who spent a lot of time travelling all over the Galaxy, would know a proper place to relocate the refugees from the Empire. Fortunately, he was right.

One of his old friends had found himself in a powerful ion storm that damaged his freighter. He had almost died out of suffocation, but he had been rescued by a ship of an unfamiliar shape. It had definitely not belonged to any of the governments or crime organizations. The man was brought to a planet that hosted a relatively small, but technologically advanced society that was capable of space faring. They saved his life and helped him repair his ship so that he might return to his home. They deleted the coordinations from his navcomp, but he had managed to save them on a datapad. He owed the Duros a favour and agreed to share the data with him.

Xantros utilized the coordinates to reach the planet. Under the disguise of a lone explorer, who wished to chart the unknown planets of the distant areas of the Galaxy, he made few smaller jumps from nearby star systems to finally reach Kelatrii while pretending to accidentally get there after scanning nearby star systems. He was immediately stopped by local navy, who demanded him to indentify himself. He sent the indentification data and awaited for confirmation.

Soon, he was ordered to follow one of the starfighters without making any suspicious maneuvers. Few minutes later, he landed on a landing pad in the mid layers of the atmosphere. There, he was carefully checked by the guards and later he led to another chamber on the same level. There were twelve people in the room. They seemed to be a kind of governing body of the planet. Few minutes later, his speculations were proved to be correct.

The leaders of the planet, calling themselves the Conclave, questioned him about the motives of his arrival and the way that he had found Kelatrii in. Xantros told them the story about being the lone explorer. His falso ID confirmed his story, but it had been prepared in rush, so he hoped that they

would not investigate it too thoroughly. He utilized the Force to influence the minds of the Conclave in order to convince them to let him take a look around the planet. Their minds had to be quite strong, as they agreed after long hesitation and deliberation. They made him agree that he would not make any photos of the planet and that their presence on it would not be mentioned by him. As he was not going to make that knowledge public, he agreed on those conditions without hesitation. After all, only a specific group of people would know that and if they chose to come to Kelatrii they would prefer to keep their presence there in secret too, even though he was sure that the inhabitants of the planet would not be happy with the arrival of the Imperial Fleet, Army and citizens.

With the approval of the Conclave, the Duros flew around the planet making necessary scans. The planet mostly consisted of vast oceans with multiple relatively small continents that housed a variety of plants and animals adjusted to various climate zones present on the planet. Most of the society lived in several large cities that floated in the air. Presence of the cities and orbital structures proved that the planet was abundant in minerals and there were some mining facilities on continents located in the northern hemisphere of the planet. They seemed to be automatized and the mined resources were sent to automated factories in the orbit. Thanks to that the waste was sent into the space, where it could not pollute the atmosphere, land and waters of Kelatrii.

After few hours of scanning the planetary surface, Xantros decided that he gathered enough data about the planet to prepare a detailed report for the Emperor and other leaders of the Imperial Clan. It should be enough for them to make their mind, if the planet was worth relocating to, both in terms of technological advancement and safety of the refugees. He thanked the Conclave for letting him to study their planet and left the system.

The Duros made few short jumps to the nearest star systems in order to make an impression that he scanned them too. It took him much more time than it would have taken him, if he had returned to IMS Tipoca II on the shortest route, but it was necessary to avoid getting imprisoned or shot down for lying to the inhabitants of Kelatrii.