

By the time the two Braknaghs were emerging onto the bridge Petti had already been able to convince the computer core high above the ground to accept his inputs, it presenting him with the best data it could give to meet his requirements in the form of holographic projections in the air. He had furthermore uploaded the specially-designed virus by now, yet no matter how fast it could corrupt the stolen data the computer could nevertheless get through a lot more before everything was gone. The pair clambered to their feet, taking in the balcony behind their heads as well as the mostly-open floor with its central interface in front of a wide window. Beyond the limits of the bridge could be seen, as well as the rest of the ship stretching forward beneath them, the vastness that was the interdimensional barrier separating the Outer Region from this particular universe of the Alpha Realm. That being said, Petti only had eyes for the holograms. Presenting the onlookers with a condensed representation of all the information the computer itself was processing each individual second, the mess of figures would have been completely incomprehensible had Petti not also programmed in a portion that focused in on the fragments of data that the system seemed more interested in, acting as a magnifying glass for those standing below. It told them they were going to be here for a bit longer.

Feeling that there was no immediate need for them to stand by Petti at the computer core, the two Braknaghs made their way to the window. If they hadn't been able to touch the protective screen it wouldn't have been too hard to believe there was nothing separating them and the seemingly-infinite plain. In most directions there was only space or its phenomena to see, stealing their breath away as it reflected in their eyes. They might have lived on a space station but views like this could still be something to behold. Moving their line of sight around the rim of the window they came upon the rest of the Legacy stretching out as well. The body thinning the further away from them it got, it was incredible how many arrays and the like the builders of this ship had been able to fit onto the hull.

On getting round to the top of the frame again, P'kuln and Ay'jov this time caught sight of something on their side of it. With the ends having found their ways into the Braknaghs' views, the myriad of cables hanging from the ceiling were finally seen. They were everywhere and it appeared that they weren't in prime condition. It was as if someone had gone along and torn off their lower halves. As such the new ends were uneven and occasionally sparking, or otherwise linked together with another end to make a closed circuit between two strands. But were those sparks? They were too far up to tell for sure... Perhaps the lights slipping out from time to time were in fact of a more ethereal nature, dissipating as wisps into their air, somehow transparent while at the same time appearing to have the colours to give the concept of an image.

At what was more the Braknaghs' level, although it was still overhead for them, the Entities had clearly not been satisfied with the interface and cables alone as along the walls they had forced into place consoles of their own for command, piloting, tactical

and navigation. These were of a much more recognisable brand of technology, yet there was also a sense of imperfection about them. Maybe the Entities didn't feel as much of a need for safety as others might have, being creatures of energy themselves merely inhabiting replaceable bodies, for the conduits and cells that powered these terminals could clearly be seen through their minimally-protective casings, allowing a yellowish glow to seep and pulsate through the cracks.

Any further observations on the part of the pair were cut short at this point by the hologram in the centre whose sudden change had led to the distracting words from Petti, "It seems to have found what it was looking for."

Assuming his interpretation was correct, Petti was somewhat perplexed by what exactly the Legacy had been seeking. Of all the information about the Towers or significant races contained within the files it had stolen, the ship had elected to ignore that which could have given it some sort of tactical advantage and instead isolated a single planetary system, one which had managed to form around a few tight-knit orphan stars not too far from the Milky Way Galaxy. If he wasn't mistaken, it was also the system at the centre of which was the great Rift connecting it to the Outer Region, the system he had pointed out to Gryal as being able to support their existence within the Alpha Realm due to its encompassing distortion of temporal energy. Was it indeed the Rift it was after, or was there something else of interest there for the Legacy as well?

Just as he was remembering that his virus had better have been getting around to destroying these last batch of files any time soon the ship finally came to life, now turning itself to presumably face the direction of the planetary system. This wasn't good. What Petti really didn't need was for the ship to...

As the essential components came back online ports along every side of the hull opened themselves to the vacuum. An invisible light rushed outwards, flinging itself into the far corners of space through every plane of existence. While it itself could not be seen, its progress could be marked by the fact it caused the sapphire bands known to Earth as the Cosmic Microwave Background Radiation to become visible to those aboard the Legacy through its reaction with it. Thus the Alpha Realm was lit up, not that that made the sight any better for the Lord. At the same time the engines could be felt activating as the configuration of the vessel continued to alter in preparation for its jump to FTL. Nothing could be done to stop it. With a jolt they were off, careening down into the oncoming colossus that was the Alpha Realm, accelerating exponentially with every available drop of power being utilised for propulsion.

"Where are the Hexagons?" Petti barked at the Braknaghs, who by his reckoning had at least been able to grasp some of the danger of the situation.

I'kuln and Ay'jov didn't know. This didn't lead to an agreeable conclusion.

"Well this ship isn't using one," Petti pointed out. "You two might be able to handle the Alpha Realm for a time, but *I'm* not compatible. We can't go in there without one, yet at this rate of acceleration we won't have time to get back to the shuttle!"

Thinking fast the Lord pounced upon one of the Entities' additional terminals beneath the now-furtive hanging cables. Eventually he found the control linked to engineering, in the process blocking out the Braknaghs' panicked attempts to deal with the situation themselves. There was no simple way to bring this thing to a standstill. The Legacy was fixed on its path. It wasn't going to allow anyone to break its course. So what if he didn't try to do that? It seemed it was the engines that were most protected by these safeguards he was meeting. Something else might make for an easier job. A power transfer might not come up as a threat compared to other actions he could take.

Making swift work of the control panel, power suddenly began to disappear from throughout the Legacy once more, only this time it was entirely being focused into the engines, all at the same time. With the ports in the hull closing upon detecting the lack of energy, thus ceasing the release of the radiation, the surge caused an audible overload at the rear of the ship. Everything had gone dark, they were no longer accelerating, but they were not out of the woods yet. Momentum was still carrying them closer to the point of no return.

"Do we have time to get back to the shuttle now?" I'kuln dared to hope.

"If we hurry, it should be possible," Petti confirmed.

Dropping off the console and onto all fours, the Lord wasted no precious seconds dawdling. If only he'd got around to recharging his subdermal Hexagon array since last using it to rescue the Mancynn. If only these Braknaghs hadn't left the portable ones behind. As they too made to leave, Ay'jov stopped I'kuln by the computer core they had started with.

"Is there a chance any data's left in there, if someone was to reboot it?"

Already at the entrance to the lift shaft, Petti turned his snout over his shoulder to give the departing comment, "I'm leaving in that shuttle before this ship reaches the Alpha Realm. I'd suggest you don't fall far behind."