Chapter 5 ~ Astronomy Domain

"Here we go." I select a beautiful black leather book from the Antiquarian section for Sara to read. "Book One, Heart of the Sun," I read aloud the gold-embossed title. This is the living book of the Squashatch people. This book, ten in total, chronicles the creation, early life, and times of the Squashatch people. It's an ancient tale stretching far beyond the age of this rare and valuable four-hundred-year-old copy. This book, and many more, came with the Overlook. The Overlook is also appointed with native Sybarinian art, rugs, antiques, furniture, and sizable sections of terraced farmland. It was given to my father by my late maternal grandmother as a wedding present.

Our library, or should I say soon-to-be my library, is built on my Mothers collection, and the collection Father inherited from his father. The entire collection will be mine if Father dies in space or fighting Zuman's on Caesuria. I will lovingly care for the collection, add to it,

and pass it on to my son when I transcend this physical universe. Collecting and preserving knowledge is what we Atlantians do. I'm also Sybarinian; we invented libraries.

My library optically encompasses three spacious, carpeted, and tastefully decorated floors connected by a lift, ladder, and spiral staircase. The collection contains thousands of rare books and folios. Millions more are stored in high-definition, digital holographic format. Some say digies are just as good as the real thing. I say yes, and no, both have their place. I love beautiful books neatly arranged on shelves. I also love the convenience of a digital desk. I load digies on my tablet all the time. My library is not as comprehensive as the Library at Syberenia, but it's close, comfortable, and quiet.

I love books. My Mothers used to read Sybarian folktales, legends, and myths to me when I was a child. The stories made me happy. Mothers made me happy. And then the happy stories stopped.

"Hey," I look around the empty carpeted rows of hardwood bookshelves and peek into the reading nook, "weird you all go?" I yell.

"Robert, I'm downstairs in the print lab. Magnus is up in the map room," Eleni hollers up the stairwell.

"We've got to go in a few minutes. Get ready if you want to come," I holler down the stairwell.

"I want to come. Is Sara staying?" Eleni hollers up the stairwell.

"I dunno, Father is inviting her. Chop-chop, let's go."

"I'm almost done."

"What are you doing?" I yell down the stairwell.

"I'm printing my portrait for Magnus. It will be ready in a few minutes."

"On paper? That only takes a second."

"On a pink cameo crystal. Go talk to Magnus. He wants to speak to you.

"Finish up and be ready in five minutes," I say, bounding upstairs.

I find Magnus in the map room studying a holographic star chart. "Mag, Father says it's time."

Magnus checks his timepiece. "We have time."

"Zup? What are you looking at?" I inquire.

"Caesuria, I was thinking about what you said in the study."

"What did I say?"

"You said the Zumans will attack Ebo-Six again."

"I know they will." I spin the galactic globe and zoom into the Ebonian quadrant. Ebo-Six lies directly between Sybaris and Caesuria. I will fight there," I point to a spot on the map and close my eyes... ***I hear tortured screams, cries for mercy, and the agony of those who lie dying. I see fire leaping and dancing. I see Zumans...***

I shake the awful vision from my mind. I only like happy, wholesome visions.

"What else do you see?"

I twirl the galactic globe back to the Caesurian quadrant. "I'll fight here."

"Caesuria? You're not coming with us."

"Not this time, in a few years."

"What makes you think so?"

I sigh, "I'll have to mop up the mess."

"What are you saying?"

"Father's campaign will be unsuccessful. It's not his fault, but he should have listened to me."

"How do you know?"

"I know."

"Tell me," Magnus implores.

"Book of Numbers, Chapter One, and I quote. One Zuman in the universe is one too many." I twirl the holographic globe over the inner ring quadrant and point to a spot in space orbiting a red sun. "There lies our real problem, Saturacon must be dealt with, and I must do it."

"You?" Magnus questions.

"I must do it. I'm telling you, Mag, as a friend and as my future brother-in-law, we as a species are on our way to extinction if something isn't done about Saturacon. It's just plain math, pure and simple," I reassure his troubled mind, placing a firm grip on his shoulder.

"Future brother-in-law? What do you see for Eleni and me?"

"Happiness."

"What else can you see?" Magnus asks.

I look into the mirror of souls. I stand in a blazing desolation of molten glass. Burning tar rains down from a coal-black sky. Everywhere I see their tortured, burned bodies, skulls, and bones.

"Wog, what do you see?" Magnus presses.

"Nothing." I shake the awful vision from my mind. "We should go now."

"What is it?" Magnus stays my arm.

"Volunteers for Atlantia."

“Who?”

“Sigurians,” I smile.