Chapter 24

 First citizen Rae’Ver was diligently going over the city ships food production and population projections. The city ship Heffnir currently sat in a rich asteroid belt of a lifeless system harvesting and refining metals. He swore as his population was so far beyond food self sufficiency. He was going to have to decide in the next 50 years whether to divide his city ship or take drastic actions like a military operation to significantly reduce the population. He looked at his system grid. He was close to two systems that would trade organic food with a Sylvan city ship. The policy was to not antagonize lesser species with raids even if it would be more efficient.

His aide entered his office area. Apparently there was an auction that might interest him. It was the third time this week that the aide had thought he found something interesting on the Sylvan city network.

Rae’Ver pulled up the listings and went to the one that his aide had flagged. He looked at a heavy necklace, not really impressed. It was pretty piece and made of precious metals but nothing…the symbols from the jewelry were displaying one by one on his screen. He jerked out of his seat and turned to a large monitor and put the symbols up. He quickly pulled up all 20 pieces for sale and the associated symbols. He then pulled up his own archives and placed symbols from an encounter from long ago adjacent to them.

He studied both. Then looked at the dating of the jewelry, over 300,000 years? Yes cultural drift could account for the differences he was seeing. It was possibly them. It was 400 years ago when his city ship had entered a star system with two utopia planets and four habitable moons. He was just an aide to the first citizen back then. The race that resided there was so technologically superior to the Sylvan that they fled after his city ship sustained massive damage. He dubbed the star system and its race the Astrarath, or vengeance star. The race had seemed unique to the one system and it was a not seen elsewhere in this galaxy. Now some jewelry hundreds of thousands of years old had their language on it. Had the Astrarath once travelled the stars? Was this possibly a key to finding their technology elsewhere? Or a key to trading for it? He immediately bid 1,111,111 credits on each item. That should be a sign to the other Sylvan collectors to not bid or risk coming into conflict with Rae’Ver.

He waited patiently for the auction to end and was happy to see no one challenged him or asked to speak with him. It would take 4 days to recall the scouts and miners to Heffnir. Then they could jump to the Silverstream station in 11 days. He sent a note to tell the seller he wished to meet in 15 days. Most likely it would be closer to 16 but the seller should know not to anger a First Citizen.

He started sending orders out and began his own preparations. This was the most exciting thing to happen in a decade. He brought his three aides in and began to inform them of his intentions and plans.