

SPACE FACTION

A vibrant space-themed illustration. In the upper left, a large, complex space station or orbital platform is shown, composed of numerous rectangular modules and structures, illuminated with warm orange and yellow lights. In the lower right, a sleek, futuristic spacecraft with a rounded nose and thin wings is flying towards the viewer. The background is a deep purple and blue space filled with stars, a bright sun or star in the lower right creating a lens flare, and several large, semi-transparent planets or moons in shades of blue and purple. The overall aesthetic is clean and modern.

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Chapter 1

The Decagon, a galaxy that had once been a sanctuary for the outcasts, the frail, and the uncelebrated heroes of decades past, was now riddled with war and terror. Ten inhabited planets at the periphery of familiar space saw more lost than they ever did—people, flora, and fauna. Most living beings in the Decagon



walked through destruction and fought for hope, but every victory was fleeting. With a galactic war raging for centuries and for an unknown origin, continuing to

fight became less about power and more about survival. However, not everyone was aware of that. Within planet Darcya, the leader of the faction called the Crystal Resistance believed that he and his soldiers could restore his home to what it once was—rivers that weren't polluted with toxic chemicals and marketplaces that sold art, technology, and comforting goods instead of weapons and sustenance. The general's name was Vince Starflight.

Vince was relatively young among his followers, but he was just as battle-hardened as the rest. What drove soldiers to follow him was that he stood alongside them on the battlefield—his ideas and calculative perception were secondary. Vince was a leader that his soldiers knew. He sat with them, shared drinks and laughs with them, and he carried their dismembered but alive bodies to shelter.

When it came down to it, Vince was a man who never left another behind or sacrificed them for gain. As rational as he was, he was driven by an almost rigid sense of morality when it came to protecting his own people. The same could not be said, however, about those who stood against his ideas.

“Sir, come take a look at this,” Vernon Bakowsky, captain of the Crystal Resistance, approached Vince. Vernon was a rhandian, a race of humanoid beings that immigrated and settled at Daryca millennia ago. He had bright red skin, matted silver hair, and white patterns on his face—thin lines stretching across his forehead and down the cheeks. Over the years, his ancestors integrated with the humans and made this planet their home. Whatever tensions there may have been before the war were non-existent when both humans and rhandians united against common enemies—the people of the other nine planets of the Decagon.

Vince nodded and followed the captain into the tent, where they busily reevaluated their plan for the ongoing attack. The sounds of explosions from a



distance rang in his ears as he walked under the chilly night sky in the encampment. As soon as he entered the command center, hopeful eyes looked at him. On the table, in front of them, was a green hologram—a skeletal but accurate representation of their ongoing battle against the Tarfiens. The Tarfiens, from the planet Tarfa, were known for their brutality during the war.

They operated on the belief that mercy against the enemy, even if it is one person, compromises their position of power, laying the seeds of deposition. Thus, the Tarfiens were absolute in their adherence to and application of military rule, which was arguably the case with all factions' leaders, Vince included.

“We believe we’ve found a way to stop the Tarfien starship before it reaches close to our airspace,” a commander of combat operations, Ursula Jardenian, said. **“If we deploy a stealth cruiser from the Harbinger moon, we can get two soldiers inside to disable their attack cannons, leaving them defenseless against Strike Force One from the front...”**

“Do we know how to disable the cannons?” Vince interrupted.

“Yes, Jaime from Cyber Operations managed to secure the plans to their starship, among a few other of their fighters.”

“Go on.”

“The weapons control center on the port side of their vessel. Our Stealth Operations specialists will come in from the left as soon as the ship is eighty degrees from the moon.”

“Eighty degrees? Won’t that mean that the Tarfien starship will be too close to Darcya for a nuclear option?”

“...Yes. But, we’re confident that our Stealth Operations specialists can disable the cannons and retreat successfully, giving us enough time to take the starship out with Strike Force One.”

“So, you’re suggesting that we leave the fate of our home, our freedom, in the hands of two of our operatives? Who the hell are they anyway?”

“Ingrid Riley and Lalo Penn, sir. They’re the best we have, and they showed their mettle at the Battle of the Onyx Mines.”

“That was them? Impressive.” Turning to the hologram in front of him, Vince said, **“Rentyke, what do you estimate the chances of this plan to be?”**

“Sir, I don’t think we should let the numbers make this decision for...” Ursula interrupted.

“Let the computer speak, commander,” Vince reprimanded.

Rentyke was the artificial intelligence system that ran everything on Darcya. It was named after its creator’s wife, who perished early in their marriage after a traffic accident caused by a faulty traffic light system. Determined to improve the transit system on the planet, Ger Hans created Rentyke to prevent other people from sharing the same fate that his wife once did. Since then, Rentyke evolved and started to look after other bureaucratic processes, ensuring that life ran smoothly on the planet. Ever since the war began, however, Rentyke mostly helped the Crystal Resistance with their battles.

“Considering the two stealth operatives have to travel in a shuttle that has a three percent chance of cloaking failure, have only seven and nine years of experience in the field, need to maintain a calculated speed and trajectory, must enter the automated control center undetected, which won’t have anyone guarding the space according to our assessments, and then

Strike Force One has to take down the Tarfien starship, I would estimate the chances at um...carry the one on top...I'm just kidding...sixty percent," Rentyke said.

"Sixty percent of success is not good at all," Vince bowed his head with worry.

"Oh, sorry, I wasn't clear. There's a sixty percent chance of failure."

"Then why the hell are we even talking about this plan?"

"Well, fighting the Tarfien starship head-on does have a sixty-seven percent success rate, but we would most likely lose at least twenty pilots and gunners," Rentyke added.

Vince ran his hand through his hair and scratched the scalp. He looked up and saw several eyes on him but didn't say anything yet..

"I really feel like taking the stealth-based approach will pay off," Ursula said.

"All right, let's do it. I'm not going to sit here and treat my soldiers, men and women who've fought consistently, bravely, and unrelentingly for their freedom, as disposable," Vince iterated, assured that this decision was in the planet's best interest. **"Ready the shuttle on the Harbinger moon, and tell the two operatives to get to battle stations. Lieutenant General, gather Strike Force One. We're leaving in five. Let's blow these Tarfien motherfuckers out of the sky."**



Vince walked out of the command center and toward the runway. He started his military career as a pilot in the Crystal Resistance—a young boy looking to make a difference for his family and his planet. Many have argued that his first battle was what transformed him into the sharp, calculated, and stoic but earnest leader that they've come to know him as. In his first mission, he missed a shot that cost his superior officer's life, and even though it was an honest mistake and that no one blamed him for it, he couldn't help but feel responsible for that failure. So, even after years of training, service, and climbing the ranks, Vince rode alongside his squadron, leading them through battle in space.