

DaraD

By

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The sky had begun to glow a soft dark shade of purple as his first day on Darrad began. He had been set down on the dark side of this planet, after a week flight through the emptiness of the fifth quadrant of a sector called QY55NINE. He hadn't been given any instructions on what he was supposed to accomplish here, or for that matter, even the nature of this world. Only that he would know what to do and find out the reason for his being there, when he arrived.

'It was best that your mission not be discussed,' was the comment from Bir, as he boarded the star transport. 'Stop worrying,' Bir had yelled. 'If we didn't think you could handle it, we would be sending someone else.'

That was a load of crap, he remembered thinking to himself at the time. But then, most of the stuff they fed us was crap. He had entered the Watchers over 10 angles ago and had excelled, being one of the best. Of course there were few that scored as high as he did in intelligence ratings, that wanted to become a Watcher. He remembered how his commander had tried to convince him to make better use of his abilities, even offering free education and training. He knew that he would never be satisfied with a boring stationary career. Instead, he chose a career that involved a great deal of traveling with a certain amount of danger and violence.

The violence was what he loved the most, a trait that was always looked for in Watchers. The feelings that came with an aggressive focused attack and the destruction that followed was the only thing worth living for. *Rad, he hoped it would be here.*

Having grown up mostly on his own and in a hostile environment, had left him with a loner attitude and a thirst for that rush that comes with independence and danger.

Grabbing his weapon and checking that it was fully loaded, he set out to explore this planet. Leaning forward he started up his engines, moving forward toward a sharp horizon, where the day was starting to glow.

He felt exalted at the fact that of all the thousands, he had been the one chosen. He remembered the moment, when all of the beams from the elders struck him. The feeling of being had never been so high. He was the special one; the one to be awarded a prize of the highest magnitude.

He rested while observing the plain pallet in front of him, given to him by the elders and Dar. It was the perfect place for creativity, a single planet unmarked, except for a black spot at one of its poles and orbiting around twin suns. A perfect white pallet with unlimited energy and it was his to mold into a celebration of Dar. A theme that he had thought of carefully. Not wanting to seem arrogant, for someone as young as he, but the

circumstances demanded no less. Some of the elders had advised him to lower his ambitions, in fear of him bringing disgrace if he failed. 'Better to chose a theme of lesser importance, increasing the chance of honor,' they had advised.

He had explained to them that the planet was of perfect existence, and that its rarity and beauty demanded no less than the highest goals and dedications. To do anything less would be the disgrace. After much debate and deliberation, they had reluctantly agreed.

In a moment of loneliness, he dreamed of being back home on Set, a planet of tremendous cracks in its surface and mountains that disappeared into the orange clouds. A planet of constant change, where its insides were constantly pouring onto the surface creating wonderful new opportunities for creativity and a place where colored gases swirled in a marvelous array. A planet, thats surface boiled with activity when it orbited close to Dar, then froze solid as its elliptical orbit took it out into space. It was during this time that huge mountains were created in the landscape with the most beautiful crystals being formed, some rising 1200rifs into the sky and being larger than this entire planet, which he had chosen. After working for three flicks, placing the marks of Dar on the surface, he stopped his grid marking and stopped to say a small prayer of thanks to the two suns, now approaching the horizon.

He dreamed of Set and all its wonders, imagining that he was there. It was the time of Vartan and a time of great prayer and recollection. A time that celebrated the orbit around Dar and coincided with when the planet turned back toward the sun. He would have to miss Vartan, but compared to what lie ahead of him, it was a small sacrifice to pay.

Lowering himself forward over his steering, the wind sang in his ears as he raced across the smooth surface. A surface that seemed to be totally flat and extend forever. A surface that started to haunt his mind, like something was amiss or he Rad be blessed, they had sent him to a TMT, the rarest of planets, one that is highly valued and totally protected by the FFFD. He should have realized, where he was, looking down at his force gauge. Only a TMT would read 250+ and have a horizon curvature this clean and sharp.

Now he knew why he had been sent here, at least why they had chosen him. He grew up on one of these rare beautiful jewels of the Galaxy. In Galaxy angles he was over 500 angles old, which for a Watcher was young. Yet, memories of his childhood were a bare flicker of images, which gave him the best memories that he had.

Like his childhood home, this place appeared to be the same, the shiny smooth plain stretching out in all directions, clean, pure without a flaw. There was nothing more pure or beautiful than

a TMT. It was the expression of perfection, a creation of Rad, which is unequal. A planet that is set aside, which inspires and gives hope to all. A perfect round crystal globe untouched by space debris, despite its high gravity and protected by the twin suns that it orbited around. It is considered by all as a miracle in planetary development. The early explorers had literally destroyed the first one that they had discovered, mining the planet for its resources, creating huge gashes, riffs and craters in its surface, that could never be repaired.

It was an ugly period of indifference to Rad, a period that lasted for 350 angles, where only a few of these gems had ever been discovered. He now understood why he wasn't told about this trip. They were meaning to keep it a secret, as long as they could.

He pushed his speed up to near Mach 3 as he flew over the smooth surface. The horizon a perfect sharp curved line, unchanging, pure perfection. The suns climbed higher into the sky, giving it a light shade of pink that was reflected off of the hard surface. A surface that in reality was a grayish white, but turned a pink shade from the flawless pink sky overhead.

Setting a course straight ahead, he slipped into a trance-like state as the plain sped by so smooth and quiet, only the sound of the wind was heard. Closing his eyes he turned a sharp left, knowing that the perfection would protect him. Through out

the day he sped over the surface, like a child of a long time ago, without concern or problems. Enjoying the freedom of being part of the finest creation known, he sped, on and on . . . a dream without end. A dream that was always the same and a dream of wondrous delight, an experience that few would ever know.

He was jerked out of his daydreaming by the sight of one of them. There it slowly moved at 50fks on the horizon.

That's all I need, on top of everything, this place is occupied by one of the most stupid and violent of creatures.

He had heard stories from elders who once lived on Yuo, where they had been driven off by these things, and for no apparent good reason. Communication with them was impossible, due to their minimal intelligence. Numerous attempts had been made by those of Yuo to find out what they wanted, but the only response had been a discharging of a part of them that was quite obnoxious.

Apparently they were quite harmless during light times, but became violent at dark. *Ugly little masses of low order material, that were incapable of even the lowest of creativity.*

He watched it slowly moved across the horizon. It probably thinks I cannot know him or they simply cannot know rays during the light times. An explanation put forth by the elders during the trying times of Yuo. Now he would have to find a way to rid himself of this pest, which he was told, would follow you around

forever. Not to mention staying away from his obnoxious discharge. The one advantage that he was told that he had was that they moved at an unbelievable slow speed. He waited patiently watching it move slowly toward him as the suns fell below the horizon. Gathering himself up for a move of grace. *We shall see.*

It was like a spot on the horizon that he wasn't sure was actually there. Closing his eyes and opening them . . . then it was gone. Turning quickly into the direction of where he thought he saw the spot, he went to maximum speed. He was positive that he had seen something. *Could there be another Watcher here, or an inhabitant of some type?* Reaching his maximum speed-view distance and still not seeing anything, he thought that it might be his imagination, if he had one. Watchers weren't known for their imagination, it was part of the qualifications for being a Watcher, that you couldn't have any imagination. Having one only got in the way, in doing your job; in addition, it could be dangerous. Detractions were of no use for a watcher and were responsible for most that didn't make it.

He slowed and set himself into a zigzag course keeping the axis in the direction of the spot sighting. There it was again, a spot on the horizon. Turning straight for it he accelerated to maximum speed again. He closed in on it quickly, when he got within 56 k's, he realized what he had found. Slamming on the

brakes, he came to a complete stop. It didn't move, probably hadn't seen him yet. He stayed there staring at it. The sight of one made him sick, and finding one here was the worst that could happen.

It stood there a tall ugly pyramid of clear crystal, a Mod. An ignorant being created by an obnoxious race. A race that left their destructive crap everywhere, a life that ignored Rad, a people who were destructive to all that they touched. Known as the curse of the Universe, a form without purpose or understanding. They were found throughout the universe, along with their trail of destruction and rectangular garbage. It was once thought that they were from another dimension, due to their ability to disappear. During their purge on K897 by the FFFD, a lot was learned about them. They didn't disappear; instead it was discovered that they were capable of acceleration and speed that gave them the appearance of disappearing. During the campaign on K897 as a young watcher he had participated in destroying many of them. K897 was a planet that they had almost ripped into pieces. It had taken them almost three angles to rid the planet of their presence.

It was soon found out that you should only destroy them in the dark, to delete them during the day or in the sunlight, released enough energy from them, that the planets orbit might actually be changed. Apparently they absorbed their energy from sunlight during the day and then expelled it during the night.

They could see anything that moved, including the smallest of particles, and the smallest of movements, but for some reason had difficulty with stationary objects. The trick was getting within range of his deleter. He froze into stillness hoping that it wouldn't move again until dark. Thank Rad he had stumbled on to it before it began it's cutting up of the surface. No one knew why they were that way and to tell the truth, he didn't care. He saw what these monsters had done to K897 and was sicken by it. Taking a perfect inhabitable planet and cutting up its surface into gigantic cubes and triangular forms.

Sitting there and watching this filthy thing; the anger returned to him, an anger that had passed after many angles beyond K897. He sat there staring at it, the anger boiling inside him, as the two suns made their way overhead. He needed to keep control. To fire at it, anytime during daylight might cause harm to this jewel of a planet. He knew that he would have to destroy it in the darkness. Even firing at it at dusk, could do damage to the planet's surface. It was a matter of precise timing, for it would probably move as soon as it got dark. Once it started its ridiculous leaps, the chance of getting close enough was slim. They moved with such speed that it appeared as if they simply vanished. However, a Mod could only make one move at a time and only as far as the horizon then it had to re-charge for its next move. On K897 they hunted them in a group, scattering themselves

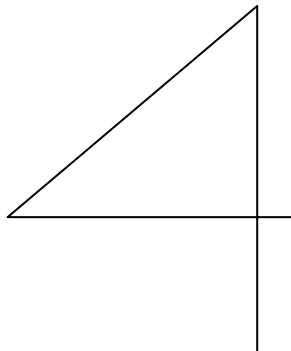
over the distant horizon. When the move came, it frequently ended up near one of the group. However one on one was another story. He may never be able to get close enough, by himself. The day dragged on as the suns slowly fell towards the opposite horizon.

It was all in the timing, he knew, yet it took all the control he had to not charge it and fire while it was still daylight. Measuring the distance between them, he calculated that he would need to travel only 10f's before firing. Maybe he should risk some damage to the planet, in lieu of the chance of it getting away. The problem was he didn't really know the ratio between light and the amount of energy it released.

He had dozed off for a brief second as darkness came nearer.

If I charge now and fire, I might catch him by surprise.

Looking up he saw that it was gone. The damn thing had moved while it was still light. Quickly moving to the spot that it had sat, he cried at the odd triangular burnt mark in the pure surface. A triangle with its perpendicular legs running past their point of intersection and each side the exact length.



He recognized the mark, they were found all over K897. It was already starting its destruction. Scanning the horizon he saw it at a34.000:b798.000. Accelerating to maximum 10M speed, he headed straight for it. He flew across the surface bearing down on the Mod. One moment it was there, then it disappeared again. To lose sight of it, to start off was disastrous. He must make visuals immediately. Setting a tangent pattern towards it's last sighting; he sped at reckless speeds, angling left then right, but always on a course toward its last visual. Another burnt mark appeared on the clean surface as he flew by it. Straightening his course out he turned into a line that ran parallel to the two marks. Pushing for all the speed he could get, he continued on the same consistent bearing. Straining his eyes on the dark horizon hoping to see a spot that would say that he hadn't lost it.

There it was dead ahead, on a perfect line with the other surface burns. The distance closed swiftly as he closed in. He held a steady top speed straight toward it. Lifting up his deleter he pointed it, as it came into full view. At the instant he was in range he fired. The Mod rotated as the beam from his weapon struck its edge splitting it into two harmless shafts of light. A hole opened up through the side of the Mod and it again vanished.

He came to a stop searching the horizon in the direction of line it had been travelling, but it wasn't there. Turning around

searching the faintly lighted horizon, he spotted it off his right. Tearing out after it, reaching top speed in seconds. *How odd it turned in an exact eighth.* He also knew that at this rate he would never catch it, for it could always stay one horizon away. His getting close for a shot was an accident and he didn't feel that it would happen again. He remembered on K897 a few had done that very same move, and were usually destroyed. Those who got away weren't known to repeat it.

He moved toward Dar at a half, leaving the ugly little mass of ignorance by itself. Preparing for another gracious leap he read the rays that announced that the little pest was following. Moving the second half, he waited as this odd alone Charger came on at an unbelievable slow speed. What puzzled him more was how did it know which way he was going. Possibly this one was different, maybe a reject from its family. After all, it was known that they always traveled in a pack. One alone was unheard of. Watching it approach he thought that it might be a chance to establish some type of contact. It really wasn't doing anything to warrant hostilities, aside from slowly following him. If it had wanted to harm him, it would have tried so on their first meeting that afternoon. Besides, he always felt that the stories that the elders told were a little exaggerated. In particular the ones about Yuo.

Its agonizing slow progress toward him made him start to feel a little nervous. Calling on all the rays, he studied its small disgusting shape. Slowly the shape changed as a small point like part protruded out from it in his direction. Immediately he assumed the blessed position, as a beam flowed from the charger striking his edge. He identified the type of beam as he instantly moved. This time he moved into the holiest of positions, the minus 8. Enough of juvenile ideals, he thought, this piece of low life form was trying to change him and he needed to continue with creation. Moving for the maximum distance, he said a prayer to Dar asking for guidance and wisdom.

He remembered stories of Yuo when they had tried to repair some of them, but there low development simply caused them to stop. Their life part not taking on any other form. How odd he thought, that the universe could produce such greatness and at the same time something as sad as a charger.

He flew across the surface, holding himself as low as he could to maximize his speed; heading for the dot on the horizon, not daring to loose visuals. Plotting its movements on his grid, he studied the last move. The turn that it made was an exact angle being a perfect division of the whole. The trick now was to anticipate which direction it would move now. He studied the image

in his recorder, extending a line from where it now sat in numerous directions. Calculating the odds of each direction against each other, he knew that the only way he would ever catch it would be to out maneuver it. The alternative was too horrible to imagine; that is to slowly watch it from the horizon, destroy this planet. The alternative directions came up in favor of its next move being another turn of the same angle, which meant it would cross over its original path and end up pass it, since it moved in horizons. It would be a gamble, he would need to set a course at a 90 to get to the place where it may appear, possibly losing sight of it.

It then dawned on him that if he was right, the course pattern it was making was the same as the marks it was leaving on the surface.

Setting out for the anticipated meeting place, he reached top speed in moments. He expected it to arrive in front of him and then move before he got in range, but the horizon ahead stayed empty. Looking over his shoulder, he saw it still in the same place. Coming to a stop at the coordinates of, what he hoped it would be the end of its next move, he turned and stared at the dot on the horizon. Arriving at his destination he turned on his grinders as he quickly dug himself into the planet's surface. He would hear about this, he knew, but he just couldn't take the

chance on being seen, besides the hole he was digging could easily be repaired.

A thunderous clap filled the air as the Mod instantly slammed in front of him. His reflexes discharged the deleter at point blank range. The following explosion threw him out of his hole stunning him momentarily.

Getting up he looked at a huge crater that had been created on the pure surface as the suns began their journey across the deep pink sky. It all can be repaired, he thought, it can all be fixed.

He floated with Dar between the two stars, absorbing their energy and their life. Joyous to be headed home yet apprehensive over his failure. The elders will be angry and rude. The rest will shun him. Only Dar will stand by him as he does with everyone. Only Dar will have all the truths.

He swung into the most gracious of arcs drawing nearer to the largest of the suns, gathering the energy that will send him back. Below he watched a special planet move into a tighter orbit; its pink atmosphere streaming outward toward the larger sun.

The proper thing would be to stay and mourn its lost. For events of this nature were rare and he would be asked to share the images when he arrived home.

He felt at peace with the universe, a perfect being, a being without birth, a being without death, and a being without time. A part of the eternal universe, alone yet one with all.

It was the only witness, which watched a small perfect world, change from pink to white and throw itself back to where it had started as the arm of Dar embraced them both.

The End