

Human Outposts

Humanity was not satisfied with the settlement of Utopia Beta. They wanted to create more colonies in the galaxy and spread out. During the lessons, Carter and his comrades learned about the previous attempts to accomplish this.

After they had practiced the hell trail with Banes and he had shot Carter between the shoulder blades with his paintball gun because he was too slow on the ladder, they went back to theory with Annie in the classroom. As usual, she smiled at them and waited until they had all taken their seats. As always, they were excited to see what topic they would discuss that day, as ›New Topic‹ was on the schedule again.

Annie started: »Are you ready for something new? You remember that we talked about the settlement of Utopia. About Earth and about Failure. This was the first expansion of the human race. When they saw that it was possible to colonize a new planet, they thought earlier about the future this time. Centuries ago, the idea of further expansion came up, but first, we had to learn more about the galaxy and our place in it. No new advance is possible at this time because of the war, but there was some progress before the war and I want to tell you something about that.«

»So there are humans somewhere else?«, Tom asked. »But yes. In the beginning, we needed a few mine colonies on rock worlds to cover our raw material needs. We primarily used Failure and its neighbor Nagakira, where the Lorgans had kindly left us abandoned mine sites. This is where we learned the most about them so far. And to cover our

water needs, which are not covered by Utopia itself, we built a large facility on Novas, a water world in the Sedar-System. In the meantime, there is also an ice-breaking facility here in the system on Jotunheim.«

»Named after the icy world of the giants in Old Norse mythology, right?«, Carter asked.

Annie confirmed that: »As you can imagine, they didn't want to risk the same overpopulation on Utopia as they did on Earth, and they also wanted to prevent it on Earth this time. They also wanted to know how well it could work with our new knowledge and better technologies. So a few decades ago they founded two colonies. And I'm not talking about our small populations on shared worlds like Aeya or Haizo. There, only a few humans joined the other species, but hardly created anything of their own. I'm talking about own colonies that were to be built from scratch.«

Rod said: »And there have been two colonies? Why didn't we hear about them? New colonies are certainly a piece of information that circulates.«

Annie nodded: »I guess that's true. Well, actually only one of the two attempts was successful. A group of scientists had heard that Vindurans and Pintans had built plants for research purposes. They also wanted to build something like this, so they sought a good place where their research would not be disturbed. Unfortunately, they chose the Rurha-System in the Utbikh-Cluster. Apart from Lamui, a world shared by Krodaa and T'zun, there are no life-friendly planets there. Since there are some less beautiful spots of the galaxy, they decided to build their facility on a large asteroid in the local belt. That worked and the Sophos facility was put into operation. Large parts of the facility have not yet

been completed and are still empty, but they are already doing good work in various disciplines. The view is also said to be incredible. But since the site is behind the khaki line and every ship of the Initiative is immediately attacked there, we had to reduce the communication to the station to a minimum and only use T'zun channels for this. The T'zun are using some civilian tourist transports to Lamui to deliver goods to the Sophos facility to survive there. But people are stuck until the end of the war. They have not yet been discovered by the Lorgans and we hope it will stay that way. Since they are scientists, they keep quiet and keep working.«

Leena wanted to know: »But then why hasn't anyone heard of it?«

»Because the Lorgans are very likely using spies and if we even mention the facility, it will be discovered, destroyed and the T'zun will also get problems. That's why we keep it airtight.«

»I see, and what was the second expansion?«, Henry asked.

»That was something very controversial. We discovered that the surface of the only habitable world in the Sedar-System, Cyclone, is comparable to Lamui and Aeya. A natural beach world. Large seas, many sand deposits, a lot of tropical flora and rich fauna. An unparalleled paradise. We wondered why the other species had not yet established a colony there. They told us that the world would not suit them. Only the Pintans and the Krodaa had been interested and sent a few pioneers, but no one had ever returned. This was obviously not suspicious enough for the leaders here and they started an initiative to found a colony. Twelve ships with materials. The whole thing was more than twenty years ago now. The war with the Lorgans has been going on for ten years already. Officially, war has only been going on for two years, but there were

attacks ten years ago as well. In any case, not one living soul of these twelve ships has ever reported back since. Scans of the planet remained pointless. No scanner could capture the planet surface of Cyclone closer so far. This world refuses to be explored. Since we have no idea and the whole thing is very suspect, one has given up the efforts. We also had no choice but to leave the crews to their fate. Two rescue ships were sent and as soon as they reached the atmosphere, they were simply gone.«

»Shit ...«, Jane said.

»Indeed.«, Annie agreed. »Anyway, there have been no further attempts since then because the conflict with the Lorgans has been going on for so long. If we could afford it, we would explore new sectors and build a base there, but right now we need every man and every ship.«