

## The Salvani

During the first half-year of training at Camp Osilon, Carter and his comrades learned many useful things. This included basic information about other species. Commander Annie Dalton explained the Salvani to them early on.

»The Salvani. The first alien species we humans have encountered. And this is also great luck, because the Salvani are a peaceful species, despite their sometimes frightening appearance.«

They saw the models of the two sexes of the insectoids. They looked like a hybrid of locusts and ants. Antennae, round skeletal heads with pincer jaws, four arms with three claws each as well as long legs, a shortened round buttocks, and a narrow torso. As with some beetles, the knees of the Salvani bent backward instead of forwards, as with all other races. The large sequin-like eyes were frightening. The sexes of the species differed only in the frequency of their natural sounds and in the shape of their antennae and head. Female Salvani were a little more graceful with more straight antennae and narrower heads, while the males had a wider head shape and more oblique antennae. »Not all Salvani have wings and those that do have either one or two pairs. In the evolution of their people, the wingless specimens had other tasks than the winged ones.«

Most of them were in a brownish, greenish color, while a few also had reddish tones. This seemed to be due to the composition of their hormones, according to which the lighter shades tended to have gentler characteristics. Dark brown and red coloration indicated rather aggressive traits. Then there were the dark blue to black specimens that had

developed on one of the moons of their homeworld. They were much more intelligent than the others of their kind. »Recognizing the gender of a Salvani requires some practice in dealing with their people. It is usually easier to talk to them and hear it. Since you have already had lessons with Kova, you know that they cannot reproduce our language because of their physiology. They communicate via high-frequency whistles and need a voice synthesizer that translates their signals into verbal sounds. This is why Salvani often have the same voice. There are only a few variants, as the technology is still quite new.«

She pointed to the representation of the male: »Salvani are an insectoid species and therefore they have no skin, but a shell that resembles the chitin of Earth beetles. Many times harder than ours, and also more resistant to temperatures and external influences«.

»How did we get in touch with them?«, Jane asked.

»Yes, we've heard about it so many times before, but nobody has told us what actually happened back then ...«, it came from Gina.

Annie smiled and sat down. A hologram of Utopia appeared, above it a huge ship from Earth and one from the Salvani. They looked completely different even from a purely optical point of view. Humans built rather angular, elongated models, while the one of the aliens looked like a high-tech beehive. »When humans once reached Utopia, the colonization of the planet began quite quickly. In the first three years, we expanded at an impressive pace. We discovered the synthium and explored it. Even though most of the breakthroughs with the material were only achieved a few decades ago by Magnus Sanders ...«, she said and Roderick looked darkly at Carter, »it could already be considered a valuable resource. It wasn't long before our systems picked up a com-

pletely alien signal. At that time there was a general named Adobar who had a good reputation. He had handled several dangerous situations on his way to Utopia and was therefore highly respected. As soon as it was known that the source was an alien ship, he wanted to attack immediately. The official founder of the colony and leader of the people was William Henderson, the cousin of the mathematician and astrologist Henry Earl Mutten. He was sure that the signal was an attempt of cautious contact, and did not want to risk any conflict, especially as one had no idea what technology the aliens possessed. He ordered the general to hold back his troops.

With a small group of diplomats, he flew to the Salvani ship and met a reception committee there. It was possible to communicate roughly because the Salvani technology could basically grasp and understand human gestures. Adobar was still not convinced of the intentions of the unknown species, but all his attempts at military operations were stopped by Henderson. There was a coup attempt, but Henderson had foreseen it and Adobar was stopped and executed. It took several months of learning and adjustment, but then a form of simple communication was agreed upon. The Salvani had become curious about us and saw us as a clever but careless race. To help us, they gave us a lot of knowledge. The ComNet, space technology and other important breakthroughs could be developed with their help. We grew faster than we would ever have grown without them.«

Henderson was an important historical figure and the capital of Utopia bore his name, while Mutten had a holiday of his own.

After lunch, they continued and Annie called up a model of a dark

world. It was deep dark green and blue with few rock masses or elevations. »What you see here is the Salvani homeworld. Its name is Kunaz and it lies in the Hiron-System, which is not that far from here. As in most systems, the other worlds are not worth mentioning. Only Takesa, a kind of rock in space, has a spiritual-religious meaning for the Salvani. Kunaz is characterized by a humid, hot climate. As a result, the planet is covered by jungle areas. There are endless bodies of water, insects of all kinds and a lot of dangerous creatures. All in all, a rather unpleasant place for humans.«

The image zoomed out a bit and showed six smaller celestial bodies floating around the world. They were of different sizes and in different colors.

»Kunaz surprisingly has six moons. The biggest of them is called Zahkar. Its surface is very similar to Kunaz, which is why Salvani developed on the moon parallel to the Salvani on the planet. They are more intelligent than their homeworld counterparts and have black or deep dark blue tones.«

Tom asked: »You think two independent Salvani people developed at the same time and then just met at some point?«

»That actually sounds pretty unusual ....«, Carter agreed.

Leena said: »Are you serious? We're talking about the galaxy here. There's nothing that doesn't exist. I mean, the Pintans also exist. How likely was it that an alien race resembled us humans so much?«

They had to agree with it. Annie smiled at her because she liked the discussion. She stepped in front of the group and looked at them one after the other.

»In my long years in the military, I have seen many things. Things no

one would believe. I learned that even in an eternal life you could never grasp the range of what exists. Going on a voyage of discovery as a soldier may often be a difficult task because you risk your life for an organization whose actions you may not always approve of.

But you also get the opportunity to travel to places and see miracles that no human has ever seen before. It's a tremendous privilege and I personally don't regret a moment of it. Imagine that everything that writers, filmmakers, and video game designers have ever invented is real. Because it really is. You just have to go out there and discover it.«

That's a thought that Carter should remember for a long time.