



Procyon Cluster

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“On War”

Since reaching the Procyon Cluster, I have often asked myself whether the hardships we had to endure were worth what little peace we have gained. I am not naïve enough to close my eyes to the chaos I see around me, threatening to engulf us all. Yet I also believe that not all is lost; for freedom and peace are always born as the twin children of war and suffering.

As I gaze out my window upon the unkempt hills of Haven, dotted from place to place with signs of humanity, I am reminded of my days as a young woman of Earth. I am certain that a great number of those who decide to read this may not have even an inkling of what that fantastic place was like. Those born in the past twenty years, a large percentage of our total population, have known nothing of its beauties, but neither have they known anything of its decadence.

While we now live in a state of perpetual uncertainty, my young days on Earth were even less stable. My father and mother had been killed in the Food Riots of 2184, and I was left to wander the streets with the countless other children orphaned by, not just war, but the terrible diseases and natural disasters which covered the globe like a wildfire. After the Food Riots came the Three Gorges Flood and the Atlantic Tsunami and the UBT epidemic. And the adversity was felt not just on Earth, but throughout the Terran Alliance—the Luna Dome Collapse, the Centauri Fold Disaster. As I hunched in the muddy and polluted waters, searching for edible fish, fighting away rival gangs, I came to believe that the universe was suffering, that there could be no escape.

In what must come as a shock to my younger readers, I will tell you that I did not go into space until I was eighteen. It was only then, after the Shanghai space elevator had been rebuilt, that I had my first opportunity. One of the first few corporations to return to my desolated homeland was the Ambrose-Takazumi Courier Service, and it was from them that I received my first paycheck, and my first glimpse of the outside world, of technologies and ideas that I could never have dreamed. I had always known that the world was big, but I did not know how small it really was until I stood looking out the window of the elevator at the horizon. What had once been familiar to me as a perfectly straight line, untouchable and unreachable, suddenly became a gently sloping curve, growing to encircle the high-tensile strands of the elevator. When I boarded the planetary transport at the spaceport, I could not move from the window; I placed my hand on it as if to reach out and touch the whole world.

Of course, I had to return to my more familiar horizontal world as soon as we docked at the Frankfurt spaceport; but when I looked out at the horizon even there, far from home, I realized something incredible: it looked exactly the same. It was at that very moment that I decided there would have to be

an end to war, an end to suffering. The world must be unified; if people are so close to one another, they must be able to understand one another; and understanding is the key that will unlock the gates of Peace.

Several years later, I found myself gazing out upon the dazzling marble floors of the Terran Alliance Senate and wherever I looked, there was a person. A person who, just like me had come with the hopes of uniting all of humanity, with a purpose to end all war and suffering. I had already overseen in my own country a rapid reconstruction of infrastructure and agriculture, which survived until the day I departed Earth for the last time. If so much could be done in a land literally submerged in suffering, I had no doubt that we could do the same for the entire Cluster, to make the lives of all people better.

But most of the faces I saw on that day, and on many others, are dead. Killed by the heartless and the malevolent, by those who chose to place their own material gain before the lives of all humanity. I was lucky, nothing more; but still it was my duty to help as many as I could by restoring order, by bringing peace and prosperity to those I could. And now I see in the Procyon Cluster those same elements that forced me to leave my home, that forced me to provide an example to humanity of the way out of war.

But those malefactors who wish to harm others will not prevail. I have seen too much pain, but I know that those who cause it are always consumed by it in the end. The pirates who began the Omega Conflict afterwards descended into chaos and self-destruction, just as the pirates of the Procyon Cluster will. If we remain strong in will and strong in spirit, we can overcome their hatred and destructive force. Out of the turmoil into which we have been placed, we can forge a new society free from the suffering of old.

Was our long journey worth it? Was it worth losing contact with our brothers and sisters on Earth? Was it worth the years of hard work we put and are still putting into building this Cluster? One only needs to look out the window at the stars, the specks of light which contain all human life, to know that the answer is yes.

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