

- D O P I N E P H R I N E -

EPGILON DYNAMIS I

It was a time of celebration in the galaxy. The Indigo Priests were engaged in the Festival of Life, a celebration of Maya, and her newly discovered family. More than half the civilized worlds in the galaxy had agreed to recognize the festival, and Malachi had organized a network of Unity Arches to connect the enclaves of priests spread across hundreds of planets. Athlon was in attendance at Malachi's monastery, above which the crystal clear image of the four Trees of Fate remained a symbol of strength and hope for all who saw it.

Music was played, and the interplanetary celebrations were entering their second day. Maya had agreed to address the citizens of the Dopinephrine Galaxy, and on each planet large groups of people had gathered near their local Indigo monasteries to hear the Tree of Life's words. For many, it was the first time they had seen proof of the common legends, and an atmosphere of excitement connected the people. As the time of Maya's address approached, a hush ran through the galaxy. Silence filled the air, and Maya's image was broadcast across the stars.

Athlon hugged Malachi, who was close to tears of joy at the sight of Maya, her image shared with all thanks to Malachi's Unity Arches. He dabbed his eyes with a plain cloth, and waited for Maya's words.

A billion faces leaned forward, ready for the message of the Tree of Life. The image flickered, and for a long moment there was nothing. Then, Maya's image was blocked out as a group of winged creatures appeared around her. They had heads, wings and talons like an eagle; their bodies, back legs, and tails were like those of a lion. Athlon recognized them as griffins: creatures from ancient myths told on Olympus. Athlon did not believe that they could be real.

The griffins attacked Maya, tearing at the tree with their sharp talons and beaks. Others attacked the node installed by Athlon to project Maya's image and consciousness. The image flickered again, and then disappeared.

Malachi fell to his knees. Athlon's mind was racing. It would take several hours to reach Maya at top speed; if the griffins intended to kill her, they would have plenty of time to do so well before the Android could stop them. Nevertheless, he had to try.

Athlon was about to depart for Maya's home when screams pierced the stunned silence of the monastery's audience. Looking up, Athlon saw a red portal forming high above the planet. Lightning leapt from cloud to cloud around the growing portal as it tore a churning gap in the sky. Within seconds, hundreds of griffins were pouring from the portal, and began descending on the city where Malachi's monetary sat.

The people panicked, and soon the screaming masses were rushing about in chaos, knocking one another over in a mad dash to escape the deadly griffins above. Athlon launched himself towards the portal, catching a griffin around the neck and throwing it clear of the city. The griffins began swooping at the crowd below, their huge talons tearing people apart and increasing the panic of the throngs.

Athlon zoomed from griffin to griffin, hitting them hard and fast in an attempt to scatter them. For every beast Athlon struck, five more came through the portal. He caught one griffin by the tail and swung it in a wide circle before sending it flying towards two of its brethren, knocking them to the ground with a thud. He scanned the portal, and found quantum signatures lining the twisting hole. Athlon had never encountered quantum energy before, but he knew that it had been documented by scientists on Olympus who thought it could be used for inter-universe travel. It had been abandoned as a possibility thousands of years ago.

Seeing Athlon, one griffin broke off from the path and tucked into a dive towards the Android. The griffin caught Athlon by the shoulders and plunged towards the city, slamming the Android into the ground. Stunned, Athlon blinked at the portal still twisting high above him. Griffins had stopped coming through when something else appeared.

It was an android. Larger than Athlon, the second android was also much bulkier. His left arm had been replaced with a large cannon, and his body was a few shades darker than Athlon's. The warrior android came gliding towards Athlon, who forced himself to his feet. He saw bodies littering the streets, hundreds dead from the griffin's shocking attack. Athlon rose into the air to meet the second android, who laughed with hateful glee. Coming face to face a few hundred feet above the city, the second android spoke, calling himself Agamemnon and declaring Athlon an enemy of the Olympus Empire. He leveled his cannon at Athlon, and shot him with a blast of dark energy that shook Athlon's innards. Athlon's vision blurred, and his systems began going offline. The light went out of his eyes, and he plummeted back towards the ground in a free fall. Athlon lost consciousness just before hitting the ground.

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Athlon blinked. He was in a dark room, with walls of stone. Voices echoed around the room, but Athlon's head was spinning and he couldn't make them out. He tried to stand, but fell with a thud. Someone helped him up, and he sat on a stone ledge carved into the wall. Inside Athlon's head, subroutines went about the process of repairing residual damage in the Android's brain. Athlon's vision came into focus, and he found that he was looking at Malachi. Athlon put one hand on his dear friend's shoulder, glad he had not been killed in the attack.

Malachi explained that Athlon had been unconscious for just over a month. The high priest had brought Athlon deep into the caverns below the monastery, and spent the past weeks reading everything he could about automaton life, while studying Athlon's remarkable construction. Agamemnon's cannon had fired a blast of bass matter, an unpredictable type of weapon that had been outlawed centuries earlier because of its uncontrollable nature. When the bass matter met the treble matter that formed much of Athlon's body, it had instantly deactivated him. Malachi was only able to bring Athlon back online after days of working to remove the residual bass matter in the Android's systems.

Malachi's face fell. He told Athlon that almost a thousand people had been murdered by the griffins, including more than a third of the priests studying at Malachi's monastery. Athlon's gaze fell to the floor.

Malachi had a prototype Unity Arch left in the catacombs, and had been able to make contact with several other monasteries. He proceeded to tell Athlon what he had been able to learn.

Agamemnon's body was made from treble matter. The metal's molecular signature matched the treble matter that formed Athlon. Malachi had no explanation for the paradox, but the fact remained; the Ares Clef existed in both Athlon and Agamemnon.

Agamemnon had led the griffins in attacks on a dozen other worlds, leaving a swath of death across the sector. At the same time, Olympus had been buzzing with activity. Inside of an hour, every major leader on Olympus had been assassinated. The king was first, followed by the entire House of Gods and House of Goddesses. The Olympic general had been murdered shortly after, and the King's lieutenants had been systematically hunted down and killed. Within two days, Olympus was in chaos.

On the third day, an Olympus Cruiser had appeared, carrying the impossible. Aboard was a man claiming to be Zeus, High God of prehistoric Olympus. He had several prisoners that he claimed were responsible for the terrorist attacks that had left Olympus' leaders dead. Zeus said that prophesy had always suggested he would return one day when Olympus' need was greatest. The provisional government cast an unanimous vote to reinstate Zeus as High God of Olympus, the first in over a billion years.

Zeus militarized Olympus, declaring martial law until any other threats could be identified and quelled. His prisoners were all ethnic Mesopotamians, and Zeus insisted that the attacks had been planned and financed by the Mesopotamian government. He ordered all Mesopotamian-Olympians into camps set up in barren portions of Olympus' Northern continent.

Fear was driving the people of Olympus. They obeyed Zeus' orders, grateful for a strong leader who could protect them from the sudden dangers the griffins and Mesopotamians represented. Afraid of continuing terrorist attacks, they gladly gave Zeus unprecedented powers, securing for him authority over every aspect of Olympus' government.

Zeus brought with him twelve lieutenants which he installed in various positions of power across the kingdom. Zeus declared that he would usher in a new age of prosperity and power for

Olympus, and reformed Olympus into an empire. Zeus was building a huge army that could seize and defend new territories.

Athlon fell back against the wall of the cavern. Agamemnon had called Athlon an enemy of the Olympus Empire. Zeus was acting like the griffin invasion was a new threat to Olympus, but it seemed that the griffins were obeying the orders of an agent of the empire.

Malachi had been unable to gather any information about the Trees of Fate. Maya was presumed dead, and contact with her husband and children had been lost shortly after the griffin attack.

Athlon stood up. He had been sidelined long enough; it was time to get some answers.

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Athlon approached the Tree of Wisdom. Mary could see everything that happened in the Dopinephrine Galaxy, and she could hopefully help Athlon begin filling in the gaps. He called to her, fear rising in his throat for a moment before the tree stirred. Mary tugged Athlon into her realm, and Athlon saw her as a woman. She was dressed in black, sitting cross-legged above the atmosphere of her desert home. She could not reach her mother, and was mourning her death.

Athlon sat beside her, pulling her against his shoulder. She wept for a time, clutching Athlon's arm tightly. When she had composed herself, she began to explain what she knew.

Zeus had been able to shield himself from her view for months before the attacks, but Mary had succeeded in piecing his story together. Long thought dead, Zeus had in reality built a hidden base in the Dopinephrine nebula millennia before the war with Pyke. From there, he had watched Olympus' progress as the great power in the galaxy, while simultaneously working on advanced technologies that could grant him previously inaccessible power. He created the griffins, as shock troops loyal only to him and his lieutenants. He experimented with bass matter, searching for a way to stabilize the volatile substance in order to build weapons that could not be defeated.

When the House of Gods created Pyke, Zeus was watching. Seeing his opportunity, he prepared for his return to Olympus, knowing the war would create the proper conditions for him to reclaim his throne.

Zeus had not planned for the return of Rhythm, however. Zeus was adjusting his plans when Pyke detonated the Ares Clef. During the Dionysus Plague, the Dopinephrine nebula cluster was pulled into the eye of the destruction, and was presumed destroyed. In reality, the power of the Dionysus Plague pushed the nebula cluster, along with Zeus' fortress, into Epsilon, a universe parallel to the one where Rhythm was being reborn as the Android. For an impossibly long moment, Zeus existed in both places at once, watching the actions of the Titans slightly ahead of the event horizon of Epsilon. Working quickly, Zeus boarded his ship and flew through the event horizon, slowing time to a crawl. He waited until the Titan's Epsilon counterparts began the rebirth process that would give new life to Rhythm, before boarding Pyke's ship. He pulled the general into space, moved Rhythm out of the way, and replaced Olympus' hero with Pyke. Pyke fell into the heart of the Dionysus plague in Rhythm's place, merging with the Ares Clef, and becoming Agamemnon. The Rhythm who existed in Epsilon was killed instantly.

Zeus and Agamemnon attacked Olympus Epsilon, taking control easily. They converted the planet into a huge military base, and began mass producing griffin soldiers through a modified cloning technique. Zeus meant to return to his own universe. He wanted to rule *his* Dopinephrine galaxy, not just its parallel. He augmented Agamemnon with a bass matter weapon, telling him that he would have to kill Athlon once they found a way home.

For hundreds of years, Zeus and Agamemnon prepared for their assault. Zeus refused to give up on the possibility of returning to claim his Empire, and one day, the opportunity came: Athlon connected The Tree of Life with the Eye of Unity. It was the first access to the prison Zeus had built for Maya billions of years ago. Zeus felt the connection through the complex blend of elements he had concocted for the gas cloud that imprisoned Maya, and the consciousness of his daughter formed a living homing beacon that Zeus followed from Epsilon back to the prime universe.

Zeus hid in the new nebula cluster that Athlon created after the defeat of Pyke until the assassinations could be arranged. He built a huge quantum generator that could connect to Zeus' technology on Olympus Epsilon, and when the time was right, he opened the portal that

allowed Agamemnon and the griffins into the prime Dopinephrine galaxy. The attack went smoothly, and Zeus was propelled to the position of High God within days. The plan had worked perfectly.

Mary began to cry again quietly. Athlon was filled with an intense feeling of loss. All of Athlon's work had been for nothing; Olympus was back in the hands of a tyrant, and the Android's oldest enemy had been augmented to make him as strong as Olympus' champion.

Sensing his pain, Mary wiped away her tears and took Athlon's hand. She reminded him of their one advantage; Zeus believed that Athlon was disabled. The Champion would have to fight for the galaxy once again. Mary urged him to go to Olympus, to use the Ares Clef to reach the people. He could offer them the truth, and begin the process of resistance. She worked hard to build Athlon's confidence, but she was barely convinced it could work herself.

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Athlon had barely reached the edge of Olympus' new borders when he first heard Agamemnon's song. The reincarnation of Pyke was using his own Ares Clef to sing to the billions of people in the growing empire. The music carried emotions of hopelessness and fear, and Athlon could sense the despair in the minds of the people. Agamemnon had twisted the purpose of the technology to control instead of inspire.

The Android used his widest scanners to gather information about the Olympus Empire, still in its infancy. Zeus was ruling with an iron fist, handing out life sentences for almost any infraction. Huge prisons had been constructed on dozens of worlds to hold the sudden influx of prisoners. Athlon felt the fear of the Mesopotamians as they languished in Zeus' concentration camps, near starvation. Olympus' army had been dismissed, and Zeus had replaced it with his own military, made up of soldiers sworn to carry out the High God's orders under threat of death and the death of their families. Formerly sovereign planets had been blockaded by repurposed ships, and their governments were forced to sign treaties making them members of the empire. Any planet who refused was placed under embargo, until the people were starving and their leaders succumbed to Zeus' demands.

Anger filled Athlon's mind. Everything that Olympus was supposed to stand for was being replaced with evil intentions and twisted principles. Athlon's home had been transformed into a sadistic nightmare, and the murderous god who had hijacked the hope of the people had wrapped his roots deep into every institution still standing.

No longer able to bide his time, Athlon wrote new songs, and sang them as loud as he could. He sang of the ideals Olympus was meant to stand for, and exposed Zeus for what he was. He sang of hope, and of strength, attempting to offer the people at least the ability to doubt their new leader.

It didn't take long for Agamemnon to notice. He appeared quickly to face Athlon, their two songs competing for the attention of the people. After a moment, Agamemnon screamed with rage and attacked Athlon.

The two beings pummeled each other as they tumbled through space. Sparks flew from both as equally strong fists struck equally strong bodies. Locked in combat, neither android made progress, and neither gave any quarter. They fought for hours, their songs washing across the people of the empire. Athlon could feel them listening to him, trying to understand. He felt their doubts growing, and their resolve strengthen.

Agamemnon kicked free of Athlon for just a moment, and brought his cannon to bear, firing a blast of bass matter that hit Athlon's left shoulder, making his arm go completely dead. Athlon screamed, and increased speed to close the gap. He locked his legs around Agamemnon's waist, and struck him again and again in the head.

Athlon knew he could not defeat his foe. Scanning his star charts, Athlon found what he needed, and engaged his auxiliary thrusters, pulling Agamemnon with him towards an asteroid field. The asteroids contained a high percentage of silver; Athlon's scanners found a large asteroid that gleamed with the metal, and locked on.

Athlon spun with all his strength, letting go of Agamemnon when the asteroid came into view. Free of his foe, the Android sped for the chunk of rock and metal. He placed his functioning hand on the silver, and began to heat it. As it softened, Athlon pounded the silver with his fist, forming a flat surface. He moved his hand with blurring speed, smoothing the flat panel, and giving it a

shiny finish. Finally, he pushed the edge of the asteroid, turning it so the polished silver was facing Agamemnon just in time. Another blast from Agamemnon's bass cannon struck the reflective metal, bounced straight back, and struck Agamemnon in the chest. His systems fizzled and sparked, and the warrior's entire body went offline.

Within seconds, Athlon's sensors began beeping worriedly. Two of Zeus' warships were closing on Athlon. Injured, Athlon knew he could not fight them off. He sang to the people of his intentions to return, promising he would not abandon them, and then turned to flee at full speed.

Athlon travelled nearly a quarter billion miles towards Malachi's home before he knew anything was wrong. Alarms screeched in his ears as his systems began to be shut down by the bass matter. After disabling his arm, it had continued its corrosive attack, soon reaching his chest where many of his primary systems were located. Left unchecked, it would soon disable him.

Athlon thought of sending a distress call, but knew that Zeus' forces would most likely see it. He checked his charts for a planet close enough to land on, but there was nothing for millions of miles.

Athlon's thrusters shut down. He was running out of time. He switched his control matrix to the third partition of his brain, and powered everything else down, hoping to isolate the damage. He didn't know when or if he would be found and reactivated, but given his dwindling options, hibernation seemed to be his only choice. Athlon took one last look around at the beauty of space, and engaged his hibernation program. He slipped into a deep sleep, where his worries became dreams; there he floated on his subconscious in an ocean of thought, as his dormant body continued on its path, drifting away from the familiar towards unknown space.



Griffins



Agamemnon

- D O P I N E P H R I N E -

EPSILON DYNAMIS II

Chapter 1

293 years after the Epsilon Invasion

HOLY Warlord Malachi sat on the summit of a steep hill, overlooking the city he used to call home. He focused his gaze on the spot where his monastery had stood, before the war with Zeus that had ravaged his sanctuary. He remembered the thousands of students, eager to learn the ways of the Tree of Life. He remembered his peaceful career, dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge, and the teachings of Maya's wisdom. Malachi longed for the days of peace in the Dopinephrine Galaxy, before Zeus' deadly griffins had destroyed all he had spent a lifetime to build.

Malachi looked up at the fiery sunset inching its way across the sky. He searched, as he did every day, for the long silver streak that would announce the return of his dear friend Athlon. The Android had been missing for almost three centuries, while Olympus and a thousand other worlds had fallen to the unstoppable forces at Zeus' command. Most of the galaxy was now in a state of subjugation, operating to fuel the massive empire Zeus had formed. The free people of the galaxy had fallen back, slowly but surely, always on the defensive against the overwhelming might of Zeus' armies. Without Athlon to fight the dark forces, there was only so much that could be done to protect the liberty of humanity.

Malachi closed his eyes as he remembered the path that had taken him from gentle priest to blood-drenched warrior. As Zeus conquered planet after planet, Malachi had made the hardest

choice of his life. Breaking millions of years of tradition, he had militarized the Indigo Priests. In Athlon's long absence, Malachi had taken up the duties of his lost friend. He had thousands of monasteries under his leadership, stretching across the stars. Using the Unity Arches built at each monastery, Malachi had given the order for the priesthood to take up arms. There was resistance at first, but Malachi was a highly respected leader, and many of the priests were willing to fight the forces that had killed the beloved Tree of Life.

The Indigo Warriors fought the seemingly invincible power of Zeus with guerrilla-style tactics, skirmishing under only the most favorable or dire circumstances. Malachi had succeeded in keeping casualties relatively light, and had been able to slow Zeus' advance across the galaxy.

Nevertheless, Zeus had never lost any significant ground. The Indigo Warriors fought well, but they were no match for the untold billions who eventually planted the High God's flag on each battlefield they chose.

Malachi saw his mission as two-fold: he dealt as much damage as he could, in battles he believed he could win; but he also worked tirelessly to keep the hope of Athlon's return alive. The people remembered Athlon's final message to them, even after so many years. Stories had been passed down, generation to generation, about the Android Champion who would eventually return to set things right, and defeat Zeus and his lieutenants. Malachi himself sometimes doubted that Athlon was still alive, but he always found his way back to hope. He had seen Athlon do amazing things, and he believed that if there was any hope at all, Athlon would find it.

In every dark corner of the galaxy, in hushed voices, the people of the Dopinephrine Galaxy remembered their champion. It kept them from giving up, and so Malachi refused to let the legend of the Android die.

Chapter 2

The planet Wulthaire, 382 light years from Olympus

ATHLON opened his eyes, and saw nothing but dirt. He tried to stand up, but none of his systems responded to his commands. His brain was working more or less normally, but nothing else was online. With a great deal of focus, he managed to move his eyes, and found a tiny workbench built into the dirt just below his face, covered in equally tiny tools. Athlon blinked.

He heard a low whistle, and moved his eyes to find its source. Just below his chin, standing on the dirt floor beneath him, was what appeared to be a mouse. It was standing on its hind legs, looking straight up at him with an impressed look on its face. The creature was wearing a dirty, yellow jumpsuit and a tool belt around its waist. Its light brown fur was bunched with grease in spots, and it was wiping its hands with a stained rag. After a moment, it tucked the rag into one of the jumper's pockets.

The creature said its name was Harmony, and asked Athlon his. To his joy, Athlon found that he could speak, and responded. There was a moment of silence as the two gave each other a long look, and then they both excitedly began asking questions of the other.

Athlon assumed he must have drifted, offline, for years through space. Eventually he passed a planet - this planet - close enough to be pulled into its gravitational pull. His body sped towards the surface of Wulthaire like a meteor, before impacting here, leaving a deep crater in a ravine filled with a dense jungle. For decades he remained buried there, unnoticed by the native species Harmony belonged to, a race of small but intelligent people known as the Nereids. Harmony's family had lived near the ravine for generations, working as skilled engineers and mechanics who built and maintained mining machinery. One day when Harmony was digging a new tunnel for water runoff, she dug right through the crater's wall, and found the giant Android lodged there. She covered her tracks, and dug a new tunnel away from the crater until she could return to examine the amazing mechanical man.

Wulthaire was a rich planet, containing high amounts of rare and valuable ore with a wide range of applications, including the regeneration of complex metals. The Nereid's mining operations fueled their economy and gave them the ability to repair their advanced mining

machinery. They had built complex cities beneath the planet's surface, living in peace, trading with other civilizations in the region, and enjoying a comfortable existence full of joy and contentment.

Eventually, the Nereids formed an alliance with the Mesopotamian people, providing them with valuable ore in return for supplies and access to reliable Mesopotamian shipping routes. The alliance strengthened both peoples, and it lasted for over a millennia before the Epsilon Invasion. When Zeus declared all Mesopotamians enemies of the state, those who were allied with Mesopotamia also came to be considered a threat to Olympus' safety. All people associated with the Mesopotamians were systematically rounded up and imprisoned in military camps in the name of national security.

The Nereids were a peace-loving race, and they had long rejected the idea of terrorism; regardless, they were named terrorists and imprisoned indefinitely in the name of Olympus' protection. Soon after, Zeus sent one of his lieutenants to organize the Nereids into work groups as slaves to continue mining Wulthaire's precious ore for the profit of the Olympus Empire.

The lieutenant sent by Zeus was Hephaestus, God of labor and resources. He had complete authority over Wulthaire and its people, and he quickly earned a reputation for his draconian attitudes. He introduced new methods of mining that increased production, but ravaged the planet's environment, and erected dangerous factories to refine the ore in huge quantities. Hephaestus killed anyone who refused to work, slaughtering thousands before the Nereids agreed to obey. They worked long hours, ever fearful of Hephaestus' rage as they destroyed their home in exchange for their lives.

Hephaestus had expensive tastes, and had the Nereids build him a grand mansion in a cleared area of the jungle. He threw lavish parties financed on the backs of the people, taking anything he wanted without a second thought for the increasing needs of his starving workforce. Hephaestus considered the Nereids little more than animals. He was abusive, and often outright cruel. He cared little if his servants died, viewing them as a highly expendable. All that mattered to him was getting as much of the wealth-bestowing ore as possible. Every Nereid was forced to keep the mining and refining operations going at all times, no matter the risk.

So it was that Harmony became part of the imprisoned workforce under Hephaestus' watchful eye. She knew that if the Android in the crater was discovered, he would become the property of Zeus' empire, so she hid Athlon, telling no one about what she had found. When she could slip away from the camp, she took tools to the crater and worked on reactivating him.

It occurred to Athlon the risk that Harmony had taken to help him. From what she had told him of Hephaestus, she was risking her life, and probably the lives of her family as well. Athlon thanked her, hoping she would sense that he understood the dangerous nature of her charity.

Chapter 3

The Front Line - 19 lightyears from Olympus

FOUR warships blocked out the light of the Thracian sun as they moved into its system. A dozen small craft moved in formation towards the massive vessels, their blue hulls announcing them as Indigo fighters. Malachi was in the lead, his weathered hands moving across the controls of his ship with the ease and confidence of a seasoned pilot. He had just left the Thracian capital, where he had assured the Emperor that the Indigo Warriors had no intention of leaving Thracia to its fate.

For decades, Thracian forces had been able to repel Zeus' advances into their territory, and they had been instrumental in helping Malachi spread his message of hope. Now, Zeus was fully committed to a victory over Thracia, and had sent his strongest ships to claim the smaller empire once and for all.

Malachi caught a reflection of himself in the cockpit window, and furrowed his brow at how old he looked. This war had been going on far too long. His face had turned to leather, and deep creases ran along his cheeks and around his eyes. A line of blue paint ran down the center of his forehead, from his gray hairline to the bridge of his nose. And just above his left eye, he saw the cracked numbers he and his men had taken to decorating themselves with before battle; it read *399*, the Indigo Warriors way of reminding all who saw them that they were on the side of the Champion of Olympus, who would surely return to protect the weak, and disarm the evil.

An alarm in Malachi's cockpit disrupted his thoughts. Missiles were inbound, fired by the dozen from the warships ahead. Malachi broke formation and pulled up hard, followed by the other Indigo ships, in an elegant dance that allowed the missiles to pass between them. Malachi opened fire, sending scores of red disrupter bolts towards the enemy behemoths from his twin turrets. All four warships returned fire, lancing the blackness of space with brilliant yellow beams. Malachi came about in time to see one of his comrade's sliced neatly into three sections of sparking metal by two well aimed beams. Another beam was tracking Malachi's ship across the sky, an unbroken line of yellow energy reaching from one of the warships. Malachi rolled his

ship, letting the beam pass him with inches to spare. His tactical console blinked as two more Indigo Warriors were destroyed.

Missiles filled the air as Zeus' forces launched another volley. There was too much heat for Malachi's fighters to dodge, no matter how fast they were. It was time to level the odds. Malachi gave a command code over his ship's broadcasting array, and the remaining Indigo ships entered a new formation.

Staggering themselves a dozen yards apart from one another, the Indigo ships formed a spiraling corkscrew shape. Each ship remained in the same relative position to each other, but continuously flew in wide barrel roles, winding as one at high speed towards the closest warship. Missiles and energy beams filled space, but the corkscrew configuration allowed the Indigo Warriors to evade destruction. At the last possible moment, the smaller ships went into a dive, before twisting upwards again towards the warship's belly. All ships opened fire, punching holes in their enemy's underside as they sped beneath it. An explosion sent plasma and radiation spilling into space, and the warship began to rotate as it lost its stabilization field. The titanium frame of the warship began to buckle, and then hemorrhaged oxygen and soldiers into the vacuum.

The Indigo Warriors didn't have time to celebrate. Cannons rose from the next warship, and a sonic blast pulverized three more Indigo fighters. Half of them had been destroyed, but 75% of the enemy vessels remained. The situation was grim.

Malachi scanned the wreckage of the disabled ship, searching desperately for solutions. His ship's HUD flashed readouts from the scan, while Malachi prayed for something they could use. Then, he saw it: the warship's propulsion molecule had not been destroyed. It was pure luck; usually a ship with that much damage would have automatically dropped the entire engine into a thick containment chamber and destroyed it to avoid an implosion that could harm survivors.

Another blast from the cannons wiped out another fighter. Malachi knew they couldn't last much longer. He sent another command code, and watched the friendly blips on his console break off and retreat.

The remaining warships let the retreating fighters go, focusing their attention on Malachi. His was the craft bearing the markings of a squad leader, which offered a more enticing target.

Malachi wove his ship around the debris of the damaged vessel like a needle sewing stitches in canvas. The warships fell silent as they maneuvered around their disabled ally, moving in closer as they hunted for a clear shot. Malachi was ready for them.

With all four warships grouped together, Malachi made his move. He fired everything he had at the aft section of the disabled ship: disrupters and magnetically propelled slugs that ripped through the vulnerable metal left weakened by the ship's injuries. Malachi threw his ship into full reverse and backed out of the debris field as the wounded warship imploded as its propulsion molecule went critical. The resulting electrical shockwave fried every system in the three intact ships, leaving them stranded in space. Malachi let out a cry of victory and made his way back towards the Thracia capital. They would live to fight another day.

Chapter 4

Wulthaire

THREE weeks after Harmony managed to activate Athlon's mental and vocal systems, the two had become great friends. Harmony wanted to hear about all of Athlon's adventures. She had never been off world, and found Athlon's extensive travels exhilarating.

Each night, Harmony would arrive several hours after dark, and work on the Android while they talked. Athlon told stories of beautiful places he had seen, and about the fearsome enemies he had fought. He told her about the power of music, and everything he had learned about the legendary Trees of Fate. In return, Harmony told Athlon about her childhood and her family. Athlon felt as though he knew them from Harmony's detailed and passionate stories about her parents and brother, even though the Android had never met them. They were remarkable people, full of love and spirit, their fiercely held beliefs rooted in compassion and strong principles. Athlon liked them.

Harmony also answered all of Athlon's questions about Hephaestus, Zeus and the Olympus Empire. Athlon had witnessed the very beginning of the conflict, but had missed the vast majority of it during his bass matter induced coma. Harmony told Athlon about Zeus' long reach across the galaxy, claiming all he saw. She talked about the long suffering of the Mesopotamians and their allies, locked in camps and made to work as cheap labor for the ever-growing empire.

There was still much that Harmony didn't know. News was hard to come by in the camps, and especially so on Wulthaire. The whole planet was under lockdown, with the indigenous peoples restricted to wide swaths of mining land, and only Hephaestus and his guests were allowed to move freely.

There were those who spoke out, to what extent they could. Harmony told Athlon about the last time she had seen her brother, before he left the prison camp to join the rumored resistance groups that were said to be moving through ancient tunnels built by the Nereids' ancestors far below their now-abandoned cities. Harmony refused to place too much faith in rumors, but she

had read her brother's books about philosophy and revolution. She was impressively versed in the writings and history of her people.

Athlon enjoyed his time with Harmony a great deal, but he was eager to regain control of his body and return to the fight. What Harmony told him was disturbing, and Athlon despised what he had learned about the vile Hephaestus and his treatment of the Nereids.

Finally, to Athlon's delight, Harmony arrived with news. She had secured a canister of specialized nanobots. Part of the reason progress on Athlon's repairs was so slow was Harmony's lack of experience with a machine as advanced as her android friend. The nanobots had been designed before the subjugation of Wulthaire to improve communication between engineers and their machinery. The nanobots would join with a selected piece of equipment, and simultaneously enter the engineer's brain. The nanobots could communicate wirelessly with one another, and then translate information about malfunctioning machinery directly to the biochemical structure of the engineer's organic brain. With practice, an engineer could determine how to troubleshoot a problem as it was happening.

Harmony's plan was to adapt the nanobots to work the same way between herself and Athlon. With an expert-level understanding of Athlon's incredibly intricate matrixes and neural networks, she hoped to repair Athlon in a matter of hours instead of weeks or longer.

Athlon jumped at the chance, and they set to work. Harmony released the nanobots, and within minutes the connection was made. Harmony stumbled and nearly fell as the massive amount of information surged into her mind, but the nanobots compensated and she gained control over the monsoon of data rushing from Athlon's mind to hers.

Athlon could feel the nanobots traversing the depths of his brain. It was an oddly warm sensation, one that made Athlon feel safe. What surprised him was that he could feel Harmony too. A quick internal diagnostic revealed extra activity in the areas of his brain most associated with the Ares Clef. His musical abilities were communicating through the nanobots in his head right into Harmony's. Her nanobots sent responding signals back, communicating effortlessly with Athlon's unique construction. He could feel Harmony's instincts, and sense her intentions as she formed them. Harmony felt it to, and blinked up at Athlon as a wide grin spread across

her face. They were communicating everything they wanted to, before they could even form the first word to express themselves.

In a single moment, the two friends shared their awe at the new connection, compared notes on the experience, and agreed to move forward with repairs immediately. Harmony set to work, her hands choosing tools from her belt and using them to adjust delicate circuitry exposed by a section she removed from Athlon's torso. Her hands moved with impressive talent, her sudden understanding of the Android's body lending her a level of skill second only to Athlon himself.

An hour passed, and Athlon could feel his arms and legs tingling as the corrosive bass matter was quickly dissolved by Harmony's work. She reconnected thousands of micro-processors to Athlon's master control matrix, and soon Athlon was able to move his fingers. Progress was being made at breakneck speed, much faster than either of them had hoped.

There was a sudden sound from the tunnel behind Harmony, and Athlon felt her fear at the unknown intrusion. It was only a few seconds before several tall figures appeared. They were humanoid, each wearing what Athlon recognized as Olympic Imperial uniforms. He had never seen one himself, but Harmony's knowledge offered Athlon the information nearly instantly.

Athlon tried to stand to face the guards, but he succeeded only in rotating his right ankle 360 degrees. Harmony understood immediately which systems Athlon needed to fight, and without a moment's hesitation she leapt onto her work table and then jumped to grab a flex-piston connecting Athlon's head to his shoulders. She began to burrow between the clumps of wiring in Athlon's neck as he forced his head to tilt away from her, widening the gap where his collar bone would be if he had collar bones.

Once inside, Harmony worked faster than she ever had before, rushing from one side of Athlon's chest cavity to the other in order to activate basic locomotion abilities. She heard a dull click from outside the metal chamber that was Athlon's body, and saw the guards pumping shotguns through Athlon's eyes as her nanobots relayed his visual input. A series of thuds echoed through the Android's chest as the guards opened fire, their weapons blasting Athlon's torso with hundreds of alloy pellets. Harmony felt Athlon's lack of concern at the attack, and she forced the threat from her mind. She needed to give Athlon the ability to move before the guards put down

their guns and started ripping out the vulnerable circuitry exposed by the access hatch she had been working in.

Athlon's right leg lurched forward, finding solid ground and taking the weight of the Android's body. A moment later, Harmony's work made the left leg join the right, and Athlon stood up. Harmony hot-wired a few more circuits and Athlon's right arm swung in a wide arc, knocking one of the assailants down. A second was knocked unconscious by a sudden swing of the left arm. Athlon could feel Harmony dashing about inside his chest, intuitively touching components to send surges of power to the systems she wanted to activate. Like a zombie testing its reanimated limbs, Athlon took wobbly steps forward, swinging wildly with both arms until the guards were unconscious. Unable to contain her glee, Harmony made Athlon's body follow up its jolting attack with a clumsy dance that made Athlon laugh.

Harmony wiped her brow and slid down Athlon's spine to the open access panel. Her progress was growing exponentially as Athlon's systems became more consistent, offering stability to other systems in adjoining compartments. Harmony poked her head out of the access panel and connected the final two wires for Athlon's locomotion systems, the rest of his hardware following suit.

There was a deafening blast. Athlon looked down at the guard, weakly raising his shotgun towards the Android. Something wet fell on Athlon's knee.

Looking down, he saw Harmony's tiny body hanging from the access panel. Another drop of her blood fell from her still body.

Athlon kicked as hard as he could, sending the guard back down the hall, through a support beam and at least twenty feet into the dirt wall of the cavern. The tunnel collapsed, sealing the crater off from the rest of the Nereid complex. Athlon cupped Harmony in one hand and tucked her back inside his torso. He sealed the access panel, collected a shotgun from the pile of guards, and then blasted out of the crater into the dense jungle above.

Chapter 5

Thracia

MALACHI had barely set down outside of the Thracian emperor's residence when an Indigo Warrior ran up to him. He quickly recited a report from an outpost near the Olympus border. Zeus was furious at the defeat of his warships, and was diverting half his personal fleet to crush Thracia and the Indigo Warriors who had defeated his ships.

Malachi closed his eyes and took a deep breath before himself running up into the emperor's residence. The two men retreated to the emperor's private office to discuss possibilities.

After a long debate, and against Malachi's advice, the emperor sent a priority message to Zeus; Thracia would surrender, unconditionally. The emperor asked that his people be spared in exchange for his personal surrender to the Olympus Empire.

They waited with bated breath. Long minutes stretched into what felt like hours as Malachi and the emperor watched for Zeus response. Finally it came.

Zeus refused the surrender of Thracia.

He would crush the resistance in the Thracia system as an example to the rest of the galaxy. If anyone dared to stand against the High God, they must be prepared to pay for it with their lives, and the lives of their people.

Malachi sunk into his chair. His victory had actually been the death sentence of an entire civilization. Thirty warships would soon arrive to wipe the name Thracia from the lips of the galaxy.

Malachi walked outside, staring up at the beautiful sunset over the mountains to the north of the capital, and wondered if it would be his last. He closed his eyes, and tried to remember what it felt like to be a scholar. His old life felt so far away.

Malachi's vision blurred slightly, and he heard a faint whisper in the back of his mind. Malachi tried to focus, tried to make out the strange voice, hoping for anything that might offer some comfort, even if it was his own insanity.

The voice grew clearer. It was gentle, feminine, but fierce as well. Malachi furrowed his brow in concentration. What was he supposed to hear?

Then his eyes flashed open. The voice... it was impossibly familiar. It came again...

Malachi.

Can you hear me?

It is I. It is your friend in all things, in this life and in the next.

I am Maya.

I am the Tree of Life.

I am Alive.

And so is the Champion.

Chapter 6

Wulthaire

ATHLON flew through the jungle at top speed towards the place where Harmony's memories told him he would find Hephaestus. He touched down a few hundred yards inside the tree line and continued on foot, shotgun at the ready. Athlon crept to the edge of the jungle, and peered out at the pristine valley where Hephaestus' silver mansion stood in stark contrast with the run down camps Harmony had been living in for years. The lawn was the picture of perfection, without a single blade of grass out of place.

It was too much. The opulence of this tyrant disgusted Athlon to his very core. This was a being who was addicted to wealth and power, and was willing to enslave as many people as he could just to get a fix. Athlon's anger at seeing Harmony's tiny body, pierced by a single alloy pellet from the shotgun blast boiled over. He started running across the lawn. Guards came pouring out of the mansion, and the lawn turned into a battlefield, ablaze with fire from the weapons of the men standing between Athlon and his target.

Athlon refused to slow down. He leveled the shotgun and began firing at the scores tracking him. He took dozens of shots, barely noticing as he focused on the front doors of the hideous mansion. Men fell in the Android's wake, and finally the shooting stopped as the final guards were dispatched by Athlon's smoking shotgun.

Athlon went through the doors like they were tissue paper. He roared into the huge house, loud enough to make the building shake. There was no response.

After a long moment, a muffled chuckle echoed down the long halls. Hephaestus was laughing.

Athlon rocketed into the air, through the ceiling and into Hephaestus' private chambers. The Android was immediately struck by a heavy double headed axe that sent him sprawling through a wall. Athlon charged at Hephaestus again, only to be struck once again by the axe. Hephaestus' laugh told Athlon what the slaver was saying.

I am a GOD. What are you, small one?

Athlon grinned as if to reply,

Nothing nearly so impressive. But I will kill you.

Athlon and Hephaestus ran at each other, sending a blast of power outward that toppled the West wall of the mansion, bringing half the building down on them both.

After a long moment, Athlon punched through the rubble, emerging alone. In his left hand was Hephaestus' axe. In the other was the god's severed head.

Athlon walked back to the edge of the jungle to calm himself down. He sat at the base of a towering tree and tried to organize his thoughts. He had to tell the people of Wulthaire that they were free. With a long breath, Athlon activated the Ares Clef. It was impossible to remove all the rage from his voice, but he sang nonetheless to the Nereids. He told them that Hephaestus was dead, and that they were free. He explained that he would try to come back to help them soon, but that he had to return to the conflict with Zeus. There were others who needed to be freed.

Athlon wished to help all people, and there was no denying the need of the Nereids. But Athlon's thoughts were now on Olympus. He remembered his promise to the people, so many years ago, before Harmony had rescued him from the secluded crater. Olympus had been in the hands of Zeus for long enough. Athlon belonged beside the people of his home.

A gentle warmth grew in Athlon's chest. The nanobots were likely still active in some fashion, leaving a residual effect.

Athlon bolted upright. He focused as hard as he could on the nanobots in his brain, searching for the presence of his tiny friend, surely still connected physically to the nanobots' network. The electrical current in the nanobots stimulated the still tissue in Harmony's brain, trying to connect like normal. Athlon used the connection to analyze Harmony's physical condition, sending nanobots through her blood stream to assess the damage the same way she had; system by system; organ by organ.

Harmony's heart had been critically damaged. She was bruised elsewhere, and had a few fractures in her ribs, but it was only her heart that was damaged beyond repair.

Athlon shut down his external senses. He needed to be completely distraction free. He reached out with his consciousness to the nanobots, slowly but surely bringing them under his direct control. He ordered them to gather around a power conduit feeding one of his backup surge protectors, and then, with great precision, he used the nanobots to sever it.

Guiding the nanobots, Athlon opened a small slit in Harmony's chest, and inserted the power conduit. Then he resealed the wound, and gave the conduit a surge of power. Harmony's heart took a beat, then fell still again. Athlon gave the conduit another jolt. Another solitary beat rose in his friend's chest.

Athlon tried to summon the memory of the Elysian's power during his final battle with Lucifer. He pleaded with his memory banks to remember it well enough to make it real. Then he gave the conduit one more surge of power.

The faintest spark of blue energy ran down the conduit and into Harmony's heart. There was a long moment of terrible anxiety before Harmony gulped for air. Her heart took a beat, and then another; her heart found its rhythm.

Athlon returned the nanobots to their normal function, and soon he felt the harmonious blend of thought between himself and his friend once more. The conduit would have to remain; without its constant power, Harmony's devastated heart would stop beating again. They talked for a few moments, and agreed that they would just have to stay together. Athlon reminded her of the dangerous battle ahead, and Harmony grinned in his mind. She told him that she was grateful for Athlon's help in freeing her people, and that she was looking forward to helping him free his own.

Athlon sealed his body against the hazards of space to protect his passenger, made sure she was prepared, and then lifted off. It would take a while to return to Olympus, but Athlon was ready. He wouldn't be taken out of the fight so easily again.

Epsilon Dunamis II is dedicated to the Japanese-American citizens who lost their freedom when the Land of the Free allowed fear to surpass the rights of its people during World War II.

- D O P I N E P H R I N E -

EPGILON DYNAMIS III

PROLOGUE

A simple tradition had emerged on Olympus. During the first century after Athlon's disappearance, Malachi and the Indigo Warriors had developed a simple piece of technology; using treble matter and some other metals, they had created plain bracelets that quickly became popular among the citizens of Olympus. The bracelets were designed to perform a very simple function; they could sense the musical signature of the Ares Clef. Malachi had his disciples distribute them to the people, with the promise that when the Android returned, the bracelets would tingle as the Ares Clef's proximity activated them.

The bracelets were passed down from father to son, from mother to daughter, through the long years during Athlon's absence. They were common, found in almost every home on Olympus; Zeus decided to allow the people their petty souvenirs, seeing no threat in the popular novelty. The bracelets had become something like good luck charms as the years passed, and even after hundreds of years remained popular with the Olympian people.

One day, the slightest hum began emanating from the bracelets. All at once, millions of people felt the gentle tingle of the treble matter coming to life.

The people left their homes en masse. As one, the downtrodden citizens of Olympus turned their gaze towards the sky, breaking out in excited laughter as they waited for the legend to come true. It was more than hope; they knew that the silver streak of the Champion in flight would soon appear, heralding the coming return to freedom.

EPSILON DUNAMIS: PART 3

ATHLON nudged Harmony awake with his mind, and grinned at her as the blue dot of Olympus came into Athlon's vision. She smiled back, pleased to finally see their destination. The world was beautiful; it almost glowed in the blackness of space, backdropped against the awe-inspiring Dopinephrine nebula.

Unable to contain himself, Athlon burst into song, his love for his home reaching the ears of everyone on the planet, which quickly grew in Athlon's eyes as he approached. Not wanting to disturb her friend's joy, Harmony took it upon herself to scan for ships. This was Zeus' capital, and there would surely be warships monitoring them. To Harmony's surprise, only a few signals appeared on the miniature monitors she had installed inside Athlon's belly. Where was the rest of Zeus' fleet?

The connection between the individuals on Olympus and their treble matter-infused bracelets reached Athlon's ears. In an instant, Athlon's powerful brain surged with new information. Athlon learned the stories of every family, suddenly understanding the suffering of the people, the history of Zeus' rule, and the tactical outline of his forces. When combined, the fragments of data in each person's mind created a tapestry of knowledge offering Athlon a complete picture. One person remembered seeing a fleet of ships departing a month earlier; another had seen a console displaying the itinerary of Zeus' voyage to Thrace. Billions of snapshots fit together to give the Android a broad comprehension of Zeus' strengths and weaknesses. The High God had taken half of the Olympus fleet to conquer the Thracian Empire, and had not yet returned. Most of the remaining ships orbiting Olympus were engaged in other sectors, or had gone to offer support to the tardy fleet, which had failed to contact Olympus for over a week.

Apollo, the God of Knowledge, had been left in Zeus' place, charged with watching over the empire's home while the High God was absent. Apollo was one of the few lieutenants that Zeus had not brought with him from Epsilon; the younger god's story began much earlier than Zeus' invasion. In fact, Apollo was conceived during Zeus' first turn as High God of Olympus.

The Tree of Knowledge was greatly changed after being reunited with his family by Athlon and Malachi. The Tree of Life had been able to impart some of her compassion to her son, and he quickly forgot his cruel nature. The Tree of Truth shared the story of his life as Alethar, and his

rejection of Zeus' authority, teaching the Tree of Knowledge about the value of duty and love for the people one is sworn to protect. After the Trees of Life and Truth were destroyed, Zeus found the Tree of Knowledge and asked him to help Olympus protect the rest of the galaxy from the Mesopotamians and their terrifying griffins. Zeus swore he no longer wanted to rule blindly, but that a strong Olympus was the only way to ensure a safe Dopinephrine Galaxy. He asked his grandson to help him remember the needs of the people he ruled, and the naive youth agreed.

Zeus gave the young man the body of an Olympian and appointed him God of Knowledge. The new lieutenant took his name from the famous Apollo Council who had composed the music played on the Ares Clef during the Saphyre Age, and he made it his mission to ease the suffering of planets ravaged by war before being annexed by the Olympus Empire. Zeus approved of Apollo's mission, making him the face of Olympus' charitable attitude, enjoying the cooperation Apollo's aid brought him. Zeus understood the power of mercy, and was more than willing to take credit for the relief Apollo organized for war-torn planets.

In the streets of Olympus, the people were buzzing with excitement. The domestic police force were known as the Kouroi, and they were under specific orders from Zeus to enforce the strict laws he had implemented, designed to limit the movement of the people. Emboldened by their zeal, the citizens were pushing against their boundaries. They wanted to celebrate the champion's return, and the Kouroi quickly found themselves losing the control they were accustomed to. The people spilled across the painted lines meant to restrict them to residential areas, and began walking towards Athlon's silver streak, just beginning to become visible in the sky.

The thrill of the moment overwhelmed some, and soon a young man named Itys was dancing in the middle of a restricted road. He sang at the sky, giving himself completely to the irresistible buzz of coming freedom. The Kouroi were furious at the display, taking it as a direct challenge to their power. A squadron rushed to the area, and aimed their rifles at the masses, ordering them to return to their homes with more than a little panic in their voices. Itys raised his hands in surrender, but refused to stop singing to the heavens. The chaotic noise of the situation came to an unsettling halt with the crack of a Kouros weapon. Itys froze, abandoning his carefree dance as blood dribbled from the hole in his chest. He looked up at the officer, his eyes wide before several more shots sent him sprawling into the gutter.

High above the planet, Athlon stopped singing. Harmony felt it too: the treble matter bracelets had sent a sudden surge of fear and pain to the beings attached to the Ares Clef. Athlon's smile disappeared from his face, and he increased his speed towards the source of the disturbing signal. He could see the murder in his mind, through the eyes of the witnesses weeping for the needless loss of life. The grief soon festered into anger, and Athlon felt the volatility of the situation. Escalation seemed inevitable.

Athlon and Harmony set down in the street next to the body of the young victim. A mob was forming, and Athlon saw the fear in the Kouroi's eyes as angry men and women stepped into the street, moving towards the officers with rage in their minds. Athlon stepped between the people and the police, raising his hands and asking the citizens to stop.

A hovercraft appeared from between two buildings, and a brilliant spotlight pierced the waning light as dusk settled over the capital city. A voice came from a loudspeaker on the craft, ordering the Kouroi to fall back. The craft landed near Athlon, and Apollo emerged. The people moved back a few steps, uncomfortable being so close to one of Zeus' lieutenants. Hatred rose in the minds of the people as they watched the Kouroi enter Apollo's hovercraft, believing that the God of Knowledge could have stopped the murder before it happened.

Apollo gave Athlon a long look, and then asked him to enter the craft. Harmony snorted, but Athlon agreed. Apollo could have simply attacked the champion, but instead was inviting him to talk. Athlon took it to be a good sign, and stepped aboard. He nodded at the masses, their expressions ranging from rage at Apollo to fear for the Android being arrested.

The hovercraft took them to the Olympus palace where Zeus resided. Apollo lead Athlon to his private chambers, and sealed the door against the ears of the Kouroi. Once he was sure of their privacy, he turned and grinned at the Android. Athlon was surprised to hear the lieutenant welcome him home.

Apollo spoke quickly, informing Athlon of his true identity. Seeing Athlon's apprehension, Apollo assured him that he held to ill will towards the Android or the people of Olympus. He had seen Zeus' true nature, and had secretly been working to undermine the High God's plans.

Apollo believed in the legend of the champion, and had worked with Malachi to keep the stories alive. When Athlon failed to reappear for so long, Apollo had begun research on other possibilities behind his grandfather's back. He read the old texts about Rhythm and Poetry, and about the amazing golden shroud they had been laid to rest in. Over the course of three decades, he had collected powerful technology from Zeus' vaults, and used it to build an experimental portal in the golden chamber where Rhythm and Poetry had been buried. The golden shroud had been woven by the Dopinephrine Titans in the nebula where the Ares Clef has housed, providing a strong link between the tomb on Olympus and the location of the Ares Clef. Apollo had used the portal to follow the shroud through to the Zeta Universe, parallel to Epsilon and Dopinephrine Prime. There he recreated the process Zeus had used to create Agamemnon, this time collecting Poetry's body from Pyke's flagship and sending her into the Dionysus Plague, still wrapped in the shroud she had once shared with Rhythm.

Apollo managed to capture the new android as she was propelled out of the heart of the Ares Clef's detonation. He returned to Dopinephrine Prime, sealed the portal, and hid the Zeta android in the golden tomb, forgotten by most, and accessible only through a secret lift concealed in Apollo's chambers. Knowing it had taken Athlon the better part of four years to gain consciousness, Apollo left the Zeta android to develop naturally, looking forward to the day he would find her awake, and could explain everything that had happened. She could fill the role of The Champion in Athlon's absence, and serve as the single greatest weapon in the fight against Zeus.

Years passed, but the Zeta android did not awaken. Apollo believed that Poetry's dead body may have been insufficient as a base on which a living android could be built. It had been 82 years since her creation, and there was still no evidence that the Zeta android would ever wake up. When Apollo was informed of Athlon's return, he hurried to find the champion. Perhaps together, they could find a way to revive the Zeta android.

Athlon was stunned. He blinked twice, and then asked to be taken to the female android. Apollo agreed, and the two descended the lift to the former tomb. Athlon stepped out of the lift slowly, and approached the upright chamber holding the Zeta android. She was beautiful. Athlon studied her, amazed by her construction.

The Zeta android looked vaguely like Poetry. The shroud had mixed with her creation, giving her a golden color instead of Athlon's silver. Her head extended into a gorgeous golden headdress that suited her. Athlon thought she was perfect.

Apollo pressed a button, and the glass cover of the chamber folded back, exposing the Zeta android's head. Athlon was speechless, but he instinctively stepped forward, pressing his forehead against hers. His mind exploded outward on contact, and he felt her Ares Clef touch his own.

After the most intense moment of his life, Athlon felt Poetry reaching for him. He focused his thoughts, and cradled her in his mind, telling her who he was. Her response was slow, but Athlon felt her quiet joy at the contact. She was alive.

With a leap of trust, the Zeta android opened herself to Athlon. Music mixed and blended in fantastic ways, temporarily joining the two androids in a single mind. Athlon was given total understanding, and saw the fear that had seized Poetry. She was confused and alone, frightened by the jolting experience of rebirth. Her consciousness had been trapped by the sudden metamorphosis, unable to reconcile her death with her renewed life.

Athlon wrapped himself around her, and opened his story to her. He showed her everything he had seen, using the two Ares Clefs to recreate his own experiences for the Zeta android's benefit. From her point of view, she was reliving Athlon's life starting with his birth in the Dionysus Plague. He sang to her about everything he had learned and felt, offering his experiences as a blueprint for her to define her existence.

In those long moments, Athlon and the Zeta android relived his entire life. She experienced everything he had, from his initial growth in deep space to the salvation of Olympus from Pyke, on through Athlon's battles with Osiris, Boris and Lucifer, and his journey to find the Trees of Fate. Athlon told her about Harmony, Malachi and Perseus, sharing his friendship with the Elysians and his sabbatical in the nebula cluster following their death. The Zeta android watched it all, using Athlon's gift to resurrect herself. She learned what she was and where she existed, and gained Athlon's ability to feel emotions. Poetry blended with her new form, choosing for herself the name Athena. She smiled at Athlon, and the two androids felt a pure love that connected them in the strongest way.

Athlon's thoughts were interrupted by Harmony. She was frightened, and forced a systems report into Athlon's mind. Athlon's external temperature was approaching 5000 degrees; Athena's resuscitation had superheated her body.

Athlon relayed the information to Athena and stepped back, severing the physical connection between them. His body began to cool, but the female android was glowing red, and her temperature was rising. Apollo's fingers flew across control panels on the outside of Athena's chamber. It resealed, and then Apollo flooded the chamber with liquid nitrogen in an attempt to lower her temperature. The nitrogen evaporated quickly, and Athena's body actually grew hotter, shattering the glass. Athlon's scans indicated she was approaching a temperature that would begin to melt her components. The power that brought her to life was now killing her.

Apollo opened the chamber once more, and put his hands on either side of Athena's head. He poured his power into her, holding her body together as she passed critical temperature. Slowly, Athena began to cool. Her form returned to its golden color, and her eyes opened, revealing a piercing blue gaze. Apollo gave her a final surge of power, and then collapsed.

Athena stepped out of the steaming chamber and examined her hands. Athlon embraced her before kneeling to help Apollo. He was alive, but the power of the God of Knowledge had been greatly depleted. He looked up at Athlon with a weak smile, assuring the Android that with time the power expelled would replenish itself. Athlon helped Apollo to his feet, and the three beings looked around at each other before laughing at the intense mood.

As they returned to Apollo's chambers, they discussed the future. It was decided that Athlon should go find Zeus and the Olympus fleet, while Apollo would try to contact Malachi with the news. Athlon looked forward to seeing his old friend again, and Athena agreed. She felt like she knew him as well as Athlon did.

They stepped out onto Apollo's balcony for some air, and Athena got her first real look at Olympus with her new eyes. A tear ran down her cheek at its sight, and Athlon wondered if she was happy to see her home again, or if the appearance of the imprisoned city made her sad.

The crack of a rifle broke the silence. Athlon and Athena both turned to pinpoint its source, seeing a man running into the shadows of an alley. Harmony gasped. Athlon looked down to

find Apollo bleeding. He clutched his stomach and groaned with pain before coughing up blood on the marble balcony. Athlon's mind whispered with the thoughts of the people, watching in groups from the blackness with satisfaction as Zeus' lieutenant died. They felt that Itys' life had been avenged, having no idea that Apollo had been working secretly on their behalf. The people had been pushed to the limit, and had lashed out in the worst possible way. Athlon and Athena wept for Apollo, and for the monstrous act their people had committed. A hero of Olympus had been assassinated for crimes he did not commit.

Athlon and Athena took each other by the hand, and rose into the sky. It had been millions of years since Rhythm and Poetry had sung together, but on that night they sang to Olympus, not with the joy of Athena's arrival, but with sadness at the tragic loss of Apollo. They circled the planet, singing tribute to their ally, and telling the people of Apollo's true nature.

As dawn broke over the capital, Athlon and Athena felt the quiet remorse of the citizens. They had answered violence with violence, and all felt the loss of their misunderstanding. The two Androids collected Apollo's body, and flew him to the Dopinephrine Nebula, interring him in the hero's cemetery with the Elysians. Athlon found that he had to forgive the people. What they had done was horrific, but Athlon believed it had happened as a product of their treatment by the ruling class of the Olympus Empire, not because they were murderers.

Athlon returned to the palace, and entered the Hall of Kings. Each king of the Olympus Empire had a portrait there, as a permanent tribute to their contributions. Athlon walked the long hall, stopping to look at the picture of Perseus before moving on to the end of the line. There, on the blank wall beside the king killed by Zeus during the Epsilon invasion, he etched a new portrait as Athena looked on. Apollo's likeness would remind the people of what had happened when Itys was killed. It was Athlon's hope that Apollo's death would be the last such tragedy.

Athlon and Athena hugged for a long moment, and then took to the sky. It was time to find Malachi, and Zeus' missing fleet.



- DOPINEPHRINE -

EPILLON DYNAMIS IV

The Cypher

Athlon and Athena were nearing the Thracian border when they received a remarkable message from the Tree of Life.

It is very good to see you, Champion. Another day and I may have lost my grip on Zeus' forces. They came to destroy the people of Thracia, and the Indigo Warriors fighting to protect the people of this system. I have lost my physical body, but I hold great power in this ethereal form. I live among the stars, moving from place to place as I please.

I could not let my father destroy Malachi and the billions in danger here. I have reached out with my mind, and found all living things in this system. I will not kill, even to save others, so I paused life in its tracks. The slaughter has been postponed.

Harmony scanned the system and showed Athlon the results. A dozen motionless warships were sitting in orbit around Thrace, and the billions of life signs on the planet were completely stationary. The entire system was still.

Athlon and Athena descended on Thrace, searching for Malachi. They found him quickly, standing on the Emperor's balcony. Athena activated the Indigo ships, and Athlon carried Malachi to his craft. The two androids placed the Indigo Warriors in their cockpits, and then carried the fighters one by one into space. They positioned the fighters around the fleet, and then boarded Zeus' flagship.

Athlon walked to Zeus' bridge, and studied the evil god for a long moment. Athena found restraints in the flagship's brig and brought them to Athlon, who bound Zeus in chains. They carried the remaining officers to the brig and locked them in cells, before moving on to the next warship.

The two androids secured the crew of each vessel, and then returned to space. Athlon focused on his thoughts, and called to Maya, telling her that their work was done. A moment passed, and then life returned to the system. Athlon contacted Malachi and explained the situation, and the Indigo fighters moved to intercept the motionless warships. The Indigo warriors quickly boarded the defenseless ships, and landed them on Thrace, where Thracian soldiers helped transport the captives to a military prison.

Malachi rushed across the courtyard to Athlon, pulling his old friend into a hug. Athlon grinned, and introduced Harmony and Athena to Malachi. They moved inside, and found the Thracian emperor, and briefed him on everything that had happened. An impossible battle had been turned into an easy victory, thanks to Maya and the androids. The excitement quickly spilled over, and the people of Thrace rushed into the streets to celebrate.

The Indigo Warriors gathered around Malachi and Athlon, all proudly displaying enhanced treble matter circlets around their forearms. They began to sing, each taking turns expressing the thrill of victory over the enemy. Athlon's Ares Clef amplified their voices, blaring the spontaneous anthems across the surface of Thrace. It had been a long time since a true victory had been won, and the former priests had much to say. The spirit of the people rose as they listened to the Indigo cypher.

Deep in the Thracian prison, a hundred guards had been posted outside their most secure cell. Inside, Zeus was bound in thousands of pounds of chains, completely restricted until a more specialized prison could be constructed to hold the most dangerous man in the galaxy.

Zeus laughed silently to himself. He closed his eyes, and focused on the transmission module surgically attached to the inner wall of his cranium. Zeus had a secret weapon, buried hundreds of feet beneath his palace on Olympus. A lieutenant who had a single mission. A warrior of incredible might, dormant until summoned by his master.

In the blackness of his hidden chamber, where he had remained nearly three hundred years, Agamemnon opened his eyes.



A Warship Is Claimed For Thrace

- D O P I N E P H R I N E -

EPGILON DYNAMIS V

THE surface of Olympus began to shake. The citizens of the capital city rushed for cover as the ground cracked from the immense pressure of Agamemnon's ascent. An earthquake split the earth, swallowing dozens of buildings before the psychotic lieutenant burst from his tomb.

Agamemnon rose into the air, and screamed at the sky. Rage filled his thoughts, as he focused on Zeus' signal, tracking the High God across the stars to the Thracia Empire. The former general studied his master's message, seething with hatred at the image of the Champion who had captured Zeus.

Athlon. Agamemnon hated him. Lost in his anger, Agamemnon barely noticed the few brave people who had not retreated into their homes. A few rocks bounced off the warrior's body, breaking his concentration. Agamemnon leveled his bass matter cannon at the citizens and fired, pulverizing the whole group with a single blast.

Having finished his analysis of his Lord's predicament, Agamemnon formed a plan. For this mission, Athlon was the threat, and Zeus was the objective. Agamemnon sped into space, sending a message to his oldest enemy. He demanded Zeus' release and Athlon's surrender, and promised to begin slaughtering Olympus' population if his terms were not met. He gave the vile Android one hour to comply, and then turned his thoughts inward to his own warped mind.

Agamemnon's brain was filled with sadistic rage, and his disgust at the weak beings populating Zeus' empire threatened to rob him of control. He craved bloodshed.

On Thrace, Athlon froze in his tracks as he received Agamemnon's message. Harmony gasped as she listened from Athlon's interior, and Athena rushed to their side, sensing Athlon's fear.

Athlon forced himself to stand tall. There was no time for despair. Zeus could not be released, and the people of Olympus had to be protected. He gave Athena a long look, passed the message to her, and then disappeared into the sky.

Athena rushed to find Malachi, explaining the situation and asking him to help her form a plan. Malachi closed his eyes, remembering Agamemnon's first appearance during the Epsilon Invasion, and the trail of death he left across the galaxy. He put a hand on Athena's shoulder, and then led her to the emperor's residence to strategize.

Athlon was pushing the limits of his propulsion systems, speeding towards Olympus faster than he had ever flown before. He was afraid, but the thought of the coming massacre held the terror at bay. Harmony rushed from console to console, squeezing every scrap of power from Athlon's systems, and transferring it to his engines. Stars and planets were a blur as the Android raced for his home.

The Thracian Emperor ordered his most elite units to Zeus' prison. Malachi was preparing the Indigo Warriors for battle, leaving the Thracians to keep the prisoner secure. Athena lifted the Indigo fighters into the carrier bays on Zeus' flagship and took a seat beside the nimble ships as the bay doors closed. Moments later, the flagship rose into the air with Malachi at the helm. The Indigo Warriors would not leave Athlon to fight alone.

Athlon desperately searched his sensors as the hour mark passed. Olympus was still at least five minutes out. He picked up Agamemnon's treble matter signature moving back towards the planet; the slaughter was imminent.

Agamemnon grinned to himself as Olympus rose to meet him. He powered up his cannon and began firing at the most densely populated areas, vaporizing homes and humans with a dangerous glee. It felt wonderful to kill, and the evil lieutenant began to laugh as he fired again and again into the terrified population.

Olympus exploded into view as Athlon arrived. Harmony began to initiate an engine shut down to slow the Android, but Athlon overrode her command. He had Agamemnon locked on targeting scanners, and was refusing to decrease speed.

Athlon hit Agamemnon like a bullet. The streets below them cracked from the force of the collision, and the two warriors went flying away from the city. Locked together, they pierced the atmosphere of Olympus and were sent spinning into space. Athlon swung with more strength than he knew he had, pummeling Agamemnon's body with both fists, a blur of rage and power. Harmony bounced around inside Athlon's chest, ricocheting from wall to wall during the brutal clash.

Stunned, Agamemnon fought to turn to face the assailant. Athlon refused to give an inch, striking again and again at his enemy. Sparks flew from Agamemnon's body as dents formed under Athlon's fists. Agamemnon caught Athlon around the waist with his legs and ignited his thrusters, performing a summersault that flung Athlon away. The lieutenant turned with his cannon at full power, catching Athlon in the face with a blast of bass matter. The light in Athlon's eyes went out instantly, and he spiraled away from Agamemnon, unconscious.

Agamemnon had lost all control over his thoughts. Furious, he punched Athlon as hard as he could, sending him spiraling away from Olympus. The bloodthirsty general roared at the Champion before flying back towards the unprotected people he was now determined to destroy.

Harmony screamed at Athlon to wake up to no avail. The bass matter had shorted almost all of his systems. They were floating dead in space. The tiny engineer wiped a streak of blood from her matted fur and took a deep breath. It was up to her.

Agamemnon initiated his Ares Clef and began assaulting the people of Olympus with his rage. His insanity and anger blended into music that filled the people with unspeakable fear as he resumed his assault. Thousands died each minute under the indiscriminate attack. Agamemnon completely forgot his mission as his mind fell into chaos.

Inside Athlon, Harmony was hard at work. Her fingers flew across her custom interface as she targeted the nanobots swimming in Athlon's body. She loaded the algorithm she had used to

remove the bass matter from her friend when she first found him on Wulthaire, and sent the nanobots to work. In unison, they rushed through Athlon's head, dissolving every molecule of bass matter in minutes. Harmony reconfigured the nanobots to project a shield against the destructive substance. The nanobots positioned themselves like a net throughout Athlon's body, forming an energy field that could absorb further bass matter attacks. Harmony whooped as the Android came back on line, immediately speeding back towards Olympus.

Athlon followed Agamemnon's trail of destruction, spotting the monster a few hundred feet above the surface of the besieged planet, firing wildly into the crowds of horrified citizens. With a burst of speed, Athlon tackled Agamemnon to the ground, leaving a crater where a park had stood. Stunned, Agamemnon took a few dozen punches before his bearings returned. He fired his bass cannon, hitting Athlon point blank in the chest and sending him through the side of a tall building. Athlon came back out of the crumbling structure as fast as he had been sent in, chasing Agamemnon as he flew back towards the wreckage of Zeus' palace.

Agamemnon typed a command code into a pad concealed in his wrist, and the half-toppled building crashed to the ground as Agamemnon's warship rose from its buried hanger. Agamemnon entered the ship and sealed the hatch just as Athlon reached the vessel. The ship rose into the sky, and dozens of cannons emerged from its hull. Athlon dipped and dived as cannon fire exploded around him. The attack kept Athlon from getting close, but he followed the ship into orbit, struggling to avoid the powerful shells exploding all around him.

Turrets lit up the sky as Malachi arrived in Zeus' flagship, punching dozens of holes in Agamemnon's vessel. Malachi opened the bay doors, and dozens of Indigo fighters spilled into space, followed closely by Athena. Fire pierced space as the battle raged.

Athena found Athlon, and they flew together for Agamemnon's bridge. Athlon ripped a section of the ship's hull open, and the two androids set down inside. Sensing defeat, Agamemnon typed another command into his wrist before launching himself out of his craft, followed closely by Athlon and Athena.

The warship's weapons fell silent, and it turned away from the onslaught of the Indigo Warriors. Anticipating the coming chase, Malachi called for the Indigo fighters to return to their bays as Agamemnon's ship jumped to light speed. A few moments later, Malachi gave chase in Zeus'

massive dreadnaught. Athlon caught a glimpse of the ships disappearing, and knew they were headed back towards Thrace.

Agamemnon turned to face Athlon and Athena. He knew he was outmatched. He aimed his bass matter cannon at Athena, and Athlon sped to intercept the blast. Harmony's shield shimmered as it absorbed the shot, and Athlon told Athena to stay behind him. They flew at Agamemnon once more, with Athlon taking three more blasts before they reached him. Athena wrapped her arms around the lieutenant's neck as Athlon got a grip on his left arm. They flew in opposite directions, tearing Agamemnon's cannon from his body at the shoulder.

Athlon tossed the arm away as Agamemnon screamed. Athena pointed, and began flying in the opposite direction, and Athlon nodded. Agamemnon cradled his sparking shoulder as Athlon and Athena sped away from each other, leaving Agamemnon between them. In unison, they turned on their enemy, and flew at him fists first. A terrible sound erupted from Agamemnon as his head was crushed between the force of Athena and Athlon's collision.

Onboard the flagship, the Indigo crew pushed their engines as hard as they could. Agamemnon's ship was only a few moments ahead of Malachi's, but it remained out of weapons range. Both ships dropped out of light speed dangerously close to Thrace, and Malachi immediately opened fire. Agamemnon's ship continued to rush towards the planet below, barely holding together under Malachi's relentless attack.

Malachi contacted the Thracian Emperor, trying to warn him. It was too late; what was left of Agamemnon's ship crashed into the prison holding Zeus, instantly killing the soldiers guarding him. Malachi lost contact with the emperor as half the city crumbled under the impact.

Darkness covered the planet as Zeus rose from the rubble. Lightning arced across the sky, knocking the flagship's systems offline, and leaving it dead in space.

The High God was free.



The Battle Over Olympus

Epsilon Dunamis V is dedicated to Maris

- D O P I N E P H R I N E -

EPGILON DYNAMIS VI

PROLOGUE

MALACHI was screaming coordinates into Athlon's ear. The leader of the Indigo Warriors had made it to his fighter before Zeus reached the stolen flagship floating above Thrace, and the small craft was now spinning through space, hurled away by the High God. Athena gripped Agamemnon's corpse around the leg and spun him in circles, finally letting him go on a trajectory course for Olympus' sun. Athlon smiled at the coincidence, but there was no joy in his eyes. The vile general needed to be stopped, but Athlon couldn't help feeling sorry for him.

Athlon considered staying behind to face Zeus, knowing he would return to his empire as quickly as possible, but the Champion knew he would need his friends to bring the High God down. The androids set a course for Malachi's location, flying side by side away from Olympus.

They found Malachi's ship millions of miles from Thrace, it's battered systems sparking in space. Malachi was working under the navigation console, trying to keep life support online. He told Athlon that his propulsion system was damaged beyond repair. The Android would have to carry Malachi to their destination. The heroes discussed their options, and finally decided they should visit the Tree of Wisdom. She would be able to tell them what was happening on Olympus, and help them coordinate with the other Indigo Warriors.

Harmony offered Malachi some suggestions, and soon his life support was stable. Athlon pushed Malachi's ship along to Mary's home, and grinned at the thought of seeing her again.

Athena was looking forward to it as well, but worried what Mary would think of Rhythm's wife returning to fight beside Athlon.

As they descended on the desert world where the Tree of Wisdom lived, Harmony began scanning the surface. Athlon's database contained Mary's exact location, but Harmony's tiny viewscreen remained blank. Athlon frowned at the news, but everyone agreed they would have to land anyway, even if the Tree of Wisdom was absent. With access to Malachi's cockpit, Harmony thought she would be able to rig a new propulsion system so Malachi could fly on his own.

Athlon showed Athena how to fly straight down to the rise in the middle of the sand where the electromagnetic fields would not affect them. He set Malachi's ship down next to the rise, and walked to the spot Mary had occupied. He collected a sample of sand in his hand and analyzed it, finding no trace of organic matter. Where could she possibly have gone?

Athlon's thoughts were interrupted by a scream. He spun around, finding Athena pinned by a huge creature. No, not a creature; It was a woman, encased in metallic armor, and hanging from a helmet that extended backwards into a fearsome assembly. The assembly was segmented like a spine, but it reminded Athlon of a nightmarish serpent. Over each shoulder, the assembly formed two narrow cannons that poured forth with fluidic stone that covered Athena. Her struggles slowed as the rock hardened, and in a moment she was still.

Red disrupter fire exploded from Malachi's ship, striking the attacker. In a flash, the woman slithered to the open cockpit, her feet never touching the ground, and filled it with liquid rock, trapping Malachi in a stone prison. She spun towards Athlon and hissed as she rushed towards him. Athlon leapt into the air, narrowly avoiding a third blast, and flew in a tight loop, coming down behind the enemy and grabbing the assembly just behind her head. The sight of Athena and Malachi trapped so suddenly filled the Android with fear. He flew backwards as sharply as he could, trying to rip the assembly from the woman's helmet. It didn't budge.

Athlon forced words to form, yelling his question as he struggled to maintain his grip on the assembly.

“WHO ARE YOU?!”

The woman laughed.

“I am Medusa, Lieutenant of Zeus. I have been waiting for you a long time, ‘Champion’.”

She spat the word.

“My God sent me to claim his granddaughter centuries ago. He always believed you would come here eventually, and told me to return and wait, so I could claim you too.”

Medusa’s cannons spun to face Athlon, and liquid stone rushed over his body. It leaked into every crevice of Athlon’s body, filling his chest and trapping Harmony along with him. Athlon gasped, and then fell still, embalmed in a casket of rock.

Medusa dropped out of her assembly and produced a transmitter pad. She pressed a button, and the sand trembled as a long, sleek ship rose from the desert. She loaded her captives in the ship’s hold, and then entered the cockpit, rising from the planet and setting a course for Olympus.

EPSILON DUNAMIS: PART 6

Ten Years Later

A gentle warmth crept across Athlon's face. After a moment, he managed to open his eyes, revealing a blinding light. He squinted, manually adjusted the dilation of his pupils, and watched as the room came into focus. A man entered his field of vision, looking down at him with a wide grin. The warmth moved down his throat and across his chest, eventually filling his stomach and covering his legs. Sensitivity returned to Athlon's limbs, and he struggled to stand. The man offered him a hand, and Athlon rose to his feet.

Athlon blinked at his surroundings, trying to clear the murkiness from his mind. He turned towards the sound of Malachi sputtering on the ground, coughing gray liquid onto the floor. Three hooded figures knelt around him, and when one glanced at Athlon he saw the blue stripe of an Indigo Warrior painted across his forehead.

The man clapped Athlon on the shoulder and chuckled before moving behind Athlon to help Athena out of her stone trap as it melted around her. A tiny cough echoed from inside Athlon and he felt Harmony shaking the sleep from her mind. With Athena on her feet, the man moved to the center of the room and opened his arms towards the recovering heroes. With a bright smile, he began to speak.

This was Alethar. His tree had been burned by Agamemnon and the griffins on Esadru shortly after the Epsilon Invasion, but with Maya's help his consciousness had survived. Determined to fight Zeus, he had used the cover of the Agamemnon battle to slip deep into the palace on Olympus and find the hidden technology Zeus had used to give Apollo a human body. Alethar reconstituted himself, and quickly made contact with the Indigo Warriors hiding on Olympus.

For ten years, Alethar sang the Truth to the people of Olympus. He revealed Zeus' many deceptions, exposing the lies surrounding the Mesopotamian internment and the griffin attacks. Slowly but surely, Alethar became a symbol of revolution to those willing to stand against Zeus, unifying the people in the name of truth and freedom.

Organized into small groups, Alethar's revolutionaries began a campaign of guerrilla attacks on Zeus' imperial forces. An underground network was formed, allowing the revolutionaries to

move undetected throughout the city, passing information and supplies to each other. Alethar smuggled weapons into Zeus' huge prison camps, arming the incarcerated Mesopotamians, and telling them that when the final battle began, they would be an invaluable part of the offense.

Discovering the Tree of Wisdom was being kept in Zeus' trophy room, Alethar and an elite squad of Indigo Warriors embarked on a mission to free her. The fate of Athlon, Athena and Malachi was unknown, but once inside the trophy room Alethar discovered the captives still in Medusa's stone caskets. They distilled a special acid that would ignore all matter save rock, and used it to free the prisoners.

Malachi stopped coughing long enough to shake Alethar's hand, unable to contain his excitement at meeting the Tree of Truth under such hopeful circumstances. Harmony spoke to Athlon, telling him to turn around. There, at the end of a gently curved corridor, stood the Tree of Wisdom. Athlon rushed to the beautiful tree and touched its trunk, searching for Mary's consciousness. For a long moment he felt nothing, and a chill ran down his spine as fear that she was dead whispered in his thoughts.

From behind the tree, a young woman emerged. She smiled at Athlon, and approached him with her hand extended. Athlon took it, and Mary spoke, saying she was pleased to see him with real eyes. She smiled down at her new body as Alethar joined them, scooping Mary into his arms, and kissing her on the forehead. Mary giggled in her father's arms, lost for just a moment in the joy of being with him in the flesh.

Regrouping in the center chamber, Alethar looked around at the eclectic group. He smiled at the floor, and thought about their chances. Two androids and a Nereid, an old man, a girl and eight Indigo Warriors. Alethar's bright teeth flashed as he looked from face to face. He couldn't imagine a better team.

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As the group moved through Zeus' palace, Alethar and Malachi strategized. The best hope for victory rested on maintaining the element of surprise. It was decided that a distraction would be created outside the palace gates. Zeus would turn his attention to the threat of an uprising,

directing his forces from his throne room. Athlon and Athena would engage the High God there, while Mary used her powers to monitor both sides. With a nod from Alethar, Athlon activated the Ares Clef, and began singing to the people, still linked to him through their treble matter bracelets.

The sudden hope of the Champion's return sparked passion in the hearts of the revolutionaries. Within minutes, huge prison riots broke out as the Mesopotamians attacked Zeus' soldiers, setting alarms off in the palace. Olympians of all walks of life poured into the streets, charging the imperial forces. Athlon closed his eyes for a moment at the thought of the bloodshed he had just ignited.

The capital of Olympus was at war with itself. The walls of the prison camps fell as the Olympians fought to free the internees. Within the next hour, thousands were killed on both sides. Mary pressed her face into her father's shoulder as every scream of every death reached her ears. Sensing the fever pitch outside, Athlon took Athena by the hand and rushed forward, leaving the rest of the group behind as they ran for the throne room.

Zeus sat on his throne, three screens dancing with violence before him. He yelled orders into a transmitter, swiveling from console to console as he directed his response to the surprise uprising. Athlon gave Athena a look of determination, and they rushed the High God. Athlon threw a punch that would shatter steel, and Zeus fell from his throne with a cry of pain and anger. Athena wrapped her arm around Zeus' throat and pulled with all her strength, forcing tears from Zeus' eyes. Athlon roared as he swung both fists, faster than the eye could follow, striking Zeus again and again, leaving his face bruised and bloody.

With a sharp jab, Zeus caught Athena on the temple with his elbow. He caught Athlon's fist in his hand, and bent the Android's arm backwards, sweeping his legs and sending the Champion onto his back with a thud that cracked the marble floor. Anticipating Athena's attack, he spun towards her, hitting her across the face a microsecond before she could attack. Athena crashed into a wall with enough force to shake her vision, and Zeus lifted his leg over Athlon, stomping on his chest with a blow that sunk him several inches deeper into the floor.

Harmony threw a switch, igniting Athlon's thrusters just before Zeus could stomp again. Athlon flew off the floor and in an arc, driving his fist into Zeus' face. Zeus covered his eyes with his

hands, and Athena made herself stand up. She ignited her own thrusters, flying through the air in a perfect kick that hit Zeus between the shoulders, sending him careening forward into another punch from Athlon.

Zeus spat blood as he got to his feet, backhanding Athena as she rushed for another attack. Athlon swung hard, but hit only air. Zeus flew straight through his own ceiling, leaving rubble falling in on the androids. Athlon tossed a piece of the roof away and searched the sky frantically for the villain, but Zeus was already gone.

Alethar and Malachi rushed into the crumbling room a moment later as Athlon helped Athena up. Malachi cursed when he saw the open sky through the ceiling. Alethar turned to Mary, who was focusing on Zeus' new location. She opened her eyes and called coordinates to Athlon. The androids disappeared through the ceiling in a flash to pursue their enemy.

The Indigo Warriors began speaking into communicators and Alethar pulled Malachi and Mary into the hall. For a few seconds, the ringing in their ears was deafening, before being replaced with disrupter fire. As the dust cleared, Malachi saw ten Indigo fighters hovering alongside the throne room just beyond where the East wall had stood moments earlier.

The Indigo Warriors leapt one by one into the open cockpits of their fighters, followed by Alethar and Malachi. Alethar tossed Mary a communicator from his ship, and asked her to stay behind. She nodded, and the squadron flew in formation away from the smoking palace. Mary brushed bits of ceiling from Zeus' throne and sat down, closing her eyes to watch the battle in her mind.

Athlon and Athena circled a narrow shaft in the ground where Zeus had disappeared. Malachi's voice came through from his ship, telling the androids that the squadron was thirty seconds out. Athlon looked at Athena, and they decided to wait for backup before following Zeus. The decision had barely been made before the ground rumbled, splitting the street open as Zeus rose from his hidden bunker.

Harmony burst into nervous laughter as Zeus came into view. He had donned an evil suit of armor that covered every inch of his body, and in his right hand was Thundaiga, ancient sword of legend. Lightning crackled along his arm and sword, and thunder boomed around him as particles in the air exploded under the intense heat.

Hundreds of energy bolts struck Zeus as the Indigo squadron arrived, barely eliciting a response. Electricity surged down Thundaiga's blade, gathering in an orderless ball of energy that Zeus cast at the squadron. Lightning jumped from ship to ship, frying systems and burning the flesh of pilots. Three fighters fell from the sky, sizzling as they crashed into the ground.

Athlon sped towards Zeus with his arms extended, intending to tackle the High God away from the other fighters. Zeus turned in mid air, and swung his sword with both hands, hitting Athlon with a blow that sent him soaring through the air. Athena watched Athlon disappear into the blinding sunlight before flying in a tight circle around Zeus at high speed. He swung at her, but her speed kept her ahead of the spinning sword, buying Malachi and Alethar enough time to dive beneath Zeus, pulling up together in a spiral as they opened fire from below. Athena broke away as Malachi and Alethar sped past their target, looping away from each other to make room for Athlon, who was rushing straight down at Zeus.

Athlon hit Zeus hard. They slammed into the ground as one, sending cracked concrete in every direction. Athena searched the crater for movement, but Athlon and Zeus were still. Static cracked in Athena's ear as Mary talked through her communicator. At Mary's direction, Athena turned to look South. Thousands of Olympians were marching towards the battlefield.

Harmony spoke in Athlon's mind, telling him to get up. The Android stirred, and tried to stand, but pain shook his head. He sank back to the ground as the revolutionaries approached. The crowd gathered around their Champion, murmuring to one another. Slowly, they lifted Athlon on their shoulders and passed him overhead, out of the crater and onto the singed grass of a lawn.

Alethar and Malachi set down in the street and left their fighters. The murmuring of the people grew louder, and soon their voices turned to cries of victory at the sight of their fallen overlord. They swarmed over Zeus' body, pulling at his armor and hitting him with sticks and rifles. Several large men gathered around Zeus' head and began prying on his heavy helmet. As Alethar approached, they managed to separate the helmet from the rest of Zeus' armor, and heaved it aside, exposing the High God's bloodied face. The crowd cheered, and they began striking Zeus' face, years of anger pushing them into a state of frantic disorder.

“ENOUGH!!”

Alethar's voice echoed across the streets, causing a hush to fall across the stunned crowd. They moved aside, allowing their leader through. He looked down at his foe, and then around at the people gathered.

**“HE IS DEFEATED. WE HAVE PREVAILED, AS I HAVE ALWAYS
KNOWN WE WOULD. WE ARE OLYMPIANS! LET US NOT
STRIKE A DEAD FOE. LET US REBUILD WHAT IS OURS!”**

The people cheered once more, and cast down their weapons. Alethar knelt to examine Thundaiga, remembering the last time he had seen the weapon, just before the start of his long exile. He couldn't remember now if his old body resembled his new one, all those years ago when he stood as Zeus' most loyal lieutenant.

Alethar's thoughts were interrupted by Mary's frantic voice coming through the communicator on his belt.

“Father! Behind you!”

Alethar wrapped both fists around Thundaiga's hilt and spun around as the crowd ran from Zeus, who was struggling to sit up. Alethar looked into his former God's eyes, and saw the recognition on his face. As Zeus roared in hatred, Alethar swung the mighty sword, severing Zeus' head.

The tyrant fell back with a mighty thud. Alethar dropped the sword and closed his eyes. The forced exodus from his home, millions of years trapped in the mountains of Esadru, isolated from his family; it had all been leading to this moment.

Zeus was dead.

Long Live Olympus.



Medusa



Zeus

Epsilon Dunamis VI is dedicated to Bryce

- D O P I N E P H R I N E -

EPGILON DYNAMIS VII

WITHIN an hour of Zeus' death, Olympia City had erupted into a party that reached well beyond the city limits. The rest of the planet quickly followed, and by dawn all of Olympus was cheering and dancing with joy.

Athlon and Athena took to the sky, flying low across the planet, and singing songs of love and victory to the masses. Huge crowds filled the streets and parks, and people climbed buildings to call with happiness as the Champions flew overhead. Athlon noticed that Indigo Warriors were being hoisted on the shoulders of the grateful citizens they had fought to liberate.

On the third day, at the request of the people, the Indigo Order helped to facilitate an election for a new king. Nearly everyone voted, casting ballots written by hand on any scrap of paper they could find. The votes were collected in each city, and tallied in the Hall of Kings, still damaged from the battle with Zeus. After a long night of counting, the winner was announced: Athlon had been chosen to lead the Kingdom.

The Android was deeply touched by the people's trust, and for a moment, he considered taking the job. He decided, however, that while he cared deeply for Olympus, politics was not where he belonged. He thanked Olympus profusely, but told them that he had to decline their offer. Alethar had been a close second in the election, with Malachi following. Athlon implored the people to accept Alethar in his stead, and they agreed, cheering so loud Alethar had to wait ten minutes on the palace balcony before he could speak.

Alethar bowed deeply to the citizens, pledging to step down after one year to allow for another election. He put his hand on Athlon's shoulder, and begged him to stay on Olympus for that year, and serve as his second in command as well as Ambassador. More cheering persuaded Athlon to say yes, and he embraced Alethar, overcome by the love of the people.

The party continued outside, with Athena singing to the adoring masses. Alethar, Athlon and Malachi retired to the palace to plan Olympus' immediate future. Alethar called for some official letterhead, and signed his first two acts as King; first, he pardoned and officially released all political prisoners, including every Mesopotamian. Generations of Mesopotamians had died in Zeus' prisons, and Alethar almost cried as he realized he was freeing the descendants of those arrested after the Epsilon Invasion. None alive had ever known anything but the inside of their camps. Alethar asked Athlon to make reintegration of the Mesopotamian population his top priority as Ambassador.

Alethar's second act dissolved the Olympus Empire, and released all worlds annexed by Zeus from Olympus rule. He decided to ask Mary to coordinate with the provisional governments of all worlds formally part of the Empire, and work to offer any and all needs they would have. For centuries, a thousand worlds had been part of the empire, their economies interwoven. It would not be easy to restore sovereignty.

Malachi was appointed personal advisor to Alethar. He was also asked to form a plan for law enforcement; it was a lot to do, but Malachi agreed. The fight against Zeus was over, but the fight to restore Olympus and her neighbors was just beginning.

Athlon's head was buzzing with ideas about the reintegration program. He decided he would start by meeting with as many Mesopotamians as he could, and hear what they had to say. They were about to be back in charge of their destinies for the first time in hundreds of years; Athlon wanted to help them choose their own path forward.

Harmony tugged Athlon's attention away from his new duty to ask a favor. Athlon realized they had barely had time to even talk to each other since returning from Wulthaire. He pushed everything else aside for a moment, and gave her his attention.

Harmony had been thinking about her family. There was no way to know what had happened to them after Hephaestus' death, and the ten years lost to Medusa's stone trap had been on her mind. Her family definitely had no idea what had happened to her, and likely thought she had been killed. Harmony longed to see them again.

She had been thinking about the technology that was keeping her alive. Harmony told Athlon that she thought she could sever her connection to him, but it would mean taking a small part of his internal construction with her. Athlon smiled in Harmony's mind, and used the nanobots they shared to touch her brain. Gently, he directed the nanobots to trigger her nervous system, giving her the physical sensation of a hug.

Athlon collected a few materials for Harmony, and then put himself into standby mode. When he woke up, Harmony was standing on his shoulder with a silver crescent on her chest. She smiled down at the Android, and he smiled back, pleased to see her with the freedom to move around on her own. Harmony stepped forward, and leaned down to give Athlon a kiss on the cheek.

Malachi asked an Indigo Warrior to fly Harmony to Wulthaire, and help her find her family. They departed soon after, and Athlon couldn't help but feel a bit sad without her thoughts among his own.

Athlon left the palace to seek out the Mesopotamians. He circled the planet three times, calling all Mesopotamians to focus their thoughts on their treble matter bracelets. He explained Alethar's desire to help them re-enter Olympus society, and asked them to express what they thought would be best. Soon, millions of voices filled Athlon's mind, each telling him their individual desires. A few wanted to move to their home world, but most wished to stay on Olympus. Athlon's powerful brain processed every single voice, and gave him an understanding of the wishes of the people.

Next, Athlon expanded his voice to the entire population, telling them that the Mesopotamians would be rejoining society en masse. There was a little pushback, with concerns ranging from logistical to a few voices speaking with prejudice. There had been a couple isolated incidents of conflict between newly freed Mesopotamians and non-Mesopotamian Olympians.

Alethar gave a speech, addressing the challenges that lay ahead for Olympus, and voicing full support for Athlon's efforts. He formally asked the people of Olympus to welcome their long-removed neighbors, and he set a date for reintegration to take effect. Athlon spent the next few days traveling all over the planet, talking with concerned citizens on both sides, and trying to prepare for the massive undertaking.

On the morning on reintegration, Athlon waited for any trouble to arise. As the sun rose over the horizon, he watched for motion to fill the streets. After what felt like an eternity, Olympians began coming out of their homes. They were carrying all manner of goods; pots and clothing, food and supplies. As the Mesopotamians entered the cities, their neighbors met them with gifts to help them start their new lives. A few even offered houses for families to live in. Tears filled Athlon's eyes at the selflessness of the people.

Mary found an ally on Thrace; the emperor dedicated huge amounts of his planet's wealth to be distributed to any neighboring worlds in need. Mary worked day and night to get needed resources to the people of formerly occupied worlds just starting to find their own way in a brand new galaxy.

Malachi gathered with the Indigo Warriors on Olympus, abolishing the name and readopting their old title. The Indigo Priests would remain separate from any one world, existing as a group that spanned the stars. Malachi and the priests offered to step in as a more active part of galactic society, serving as peace keepers on any world lacking police forces. Hundreds of worlds accepted the offer, and the Indigo Priests dispersed to rebuild their monasteries. They formed a philosophy based on their spiritual beliefs, and began serving as arbiters and protectors for all people. They took boxes of treble matter bracelets with them everywhere, passing them out to the citizens they were sworn to protect. Soon, trillions of people knew all about Athlon and Athena, and proudly wore the bracelets.

Athlon and Mary found some time, and took a long walk in a valley. They talked about everything that had happened, about Mary's time trapped by Zeus, and about their relationship with one another. Mary made it clear how much Athlon meant to her, and he could sense her sincere fear at hurting him as she explained her feelings. For a very long time, Mary had faced the hardest years of her life without Athlon, eventually making herself move on in order to focus on her own troubles, watching helplessly as her grandfather ruled the galaxy with spite and

cruelty. She hugged Athlon for a long time, pleading with him not to be upset with her. Athlon squeezed her back, and told her he would never feel anything but love for her. He apologized for leaving her on her own for so long, and told her he was impressed with the amazing work she was doing now that she was an integral part of the Olympus government. He wiped her tears away and kissed her forehead, giving her a smile before flying her back home.

Months passed, and stability began to return to the Dopinephrine Galaxy. Through unity and mutual respect, the people had found true peace, and were beginning to reclaim prosperity. The hard work of the heroes and the strong spirit of the citizens had persevered. Life was good again.

One day, Harmony contacted Athlon. It had been a long search, but Harmony and her escort had found her mother and brother. They were rejoiced to see her, and had listened with excitement to all of her adventures with the Champion of Olympus. She told Athlon that she had decided she would like to rejoin him, once she was done working on her brother's campaign; he was running for governor of Wulthaire.

Athlon spent several hours speaking with Harmony's brother Polyphony. Impressed, he travelled to Wulthaire himself, surprising the Nereids as he travelled from place to place voicing his support for Polyphony's candidacy. He won in a landslide, and Athlon helped throw an inauguration party for his new friend.

After a few days, Harmony and Athlon departed, heading for Olympus. Harmony was happy to be back, and had brought with her a fresh collection of advanced tools and special supplies for upgrading her quarters in Athlon's chest. The Android was pleased to have her presence in his life again.

As the one year anniversary of Zeus' defeat approached, the people of Olympus began debating who would become their next leader. Alethar remained very popular, but other names had entered the discussion. Alethar barely campaigned, focusing instead on his work, and leaving the people to make their decision.

When the votes came in, everyone was surprised to see that Mary had won the election. Her tireless work had left a powerful impression on everyone, and the citizens decided they wanted

her to be the first Queen of Olympus. Alethar was overjoyed, kissing her over and over as she grinned in the palace after her acceptance speech.

Malachi retired from his position in the Olympus government, and launched a project to rebuild the Unity Arches destroyed in the war. The emperor of Thrace offered to finance the project, and the arches went up quickly across the galaxy.

Athena approached Athlon, and encouraged him to retire as well. She had been pleased to help Olympus rebuild itself, but she was ready to explore. She had only been away from Olympus once as Athena, and that trip had ended in defeat at the hands of Medusa. She asked Athlon to show her the stars, and he agreed.

Malachi invited Athlon to join him in the ancient archives on Olympus, where no one would overhear them. Before anything else, Malachi produced the ancient book that held the prophecy of Ragnarök, and flipped to the last page. Athlon read:

The duality of the Champion of The Trees shall be revealed before the final days. Their bond will give them strength far beyond themselves, and together they will see the End as well as the Beginning. They are Alpha & Omega, the stewards of rebirth, the witnesses of total death and of renewed life.

Athlon read it three times before looking back at Malachi. The High Priest leaned forward and whispered Athena's name before snapping the book shut and giving Athlon a trembling smile. Athlon sensed Malachi would say no more, and shook the eerie feeling from his thoughts. Malachi quickly switched topics, spinning across the room as his carefree demeanor returned, and Athlon followed his lead. Together, they discussed what they should do for Alethar and Mary. Malachi was partial to a huge party, to celebrate both Alethar's retirement and Mary's inauguration.

In meditation, Malachi managed to contact Maya, who remained absent in her ethereal form. She was watching the galaxy heal, taking time for herself to mourn her son and father. She told

Malachi that she was ready to return, and that she was willing to making her first appearance at the party. Athlon was thrilled with the plan, and helped Malachi make the arrangements.

They guided Maya to the reconstitution chamber beneath the palace and watched as she was reborn in the body of an Olympian. She was the most graceful being either of them had ever laid eyes on, and they rushed into her open arms to embrace her. Maya gave Athlon a long look, and then let him lead her to a small Unity Arch Malachi had built in the East wing of the palace.

Taking Athena by the hand, Athlon closed his eyes, focusing on every piece of treble matter in the galaxy. Athena's focus joined his, and they formed a musical network between bracelets, starting on Olympus and slowly building outwards, extending their mental reach to hundreds of worlds. With the connection made, they rose into the sky.

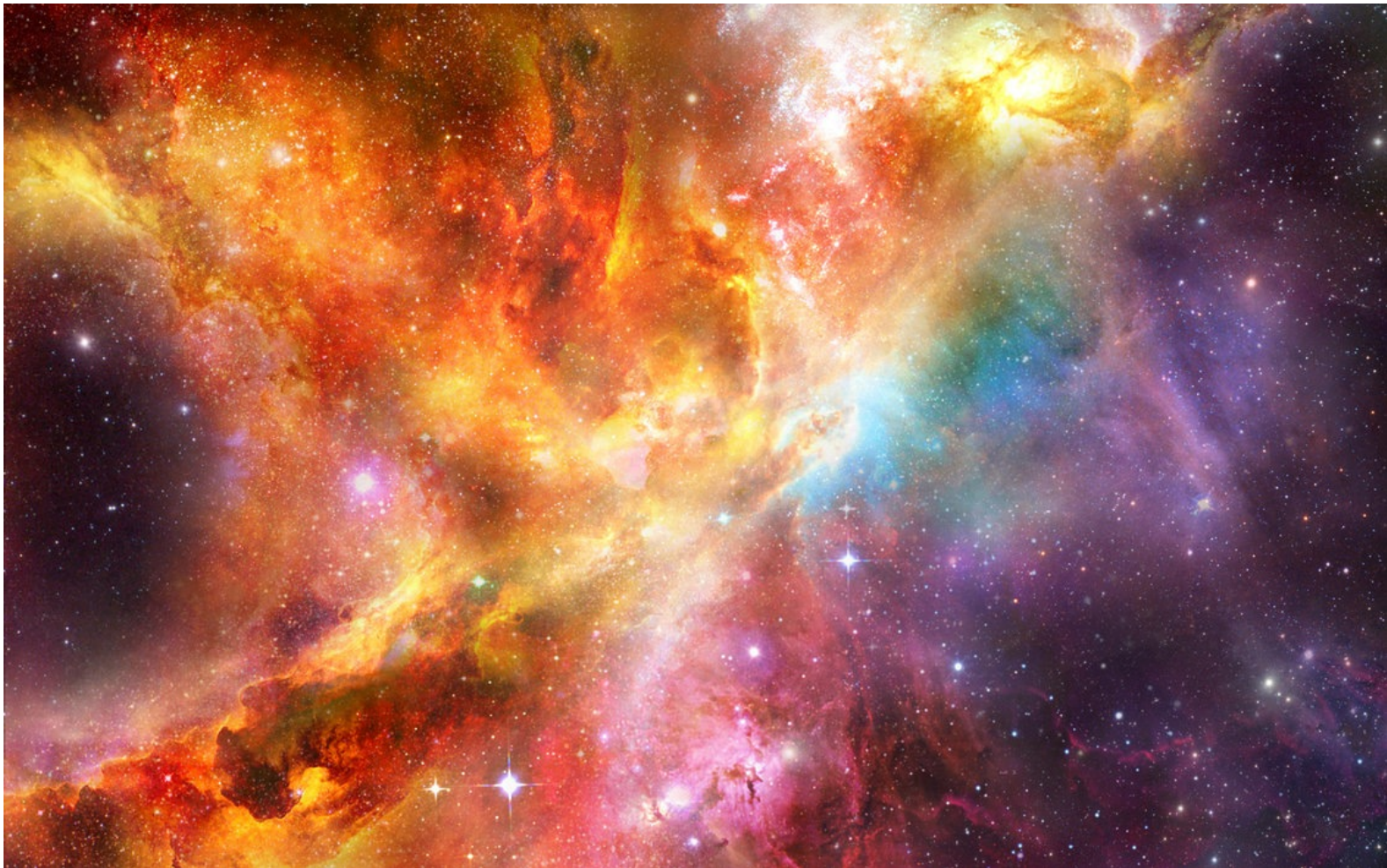
With their minds linked, they sang as one, pushing their music to the ears of trillions. Olympus, Thrace, Mesopotamia, Wulthaire, and countless other planets moved to the same beat, celebrating the dawn of a new era for the Dopinephrine Galaxy. The stars sang together that day, sharing in an experience that would be remembered for the rest of time.

After a short while, Harmony contacted Malachi, and the androids lowered their voices. The Unity Arches activated, and Maya stepped forward. The people were filled with love at her sight, and the Festival of Life started once again, 305 years after it began. Indigo Priests on every world celebrated Maya's return alongside local populations, all watching her beautiful image as it was broadcast live on their respective Unity Arches.

As Maya stepped forward to speak, the androids left Olympus' atmosphere, listening to Maya's words remotely. Athlon led Athena into the Dopinephrine Nebula, and soon they were surrounded by brilliant colors. Athena was breathless as she soared through the gorgeous art that Athlon had sculpted a millennia before. As they flew, Maya told the galaxy of her unconditional love. She praised Mary and Alethar, who held each other and cried with joy at her appearance, and she thanked Athlon, Athena, Harmony and Malachi for their unwavering fight to protect life. She spoke a few words for her son, and for a long moment the galaxy mourned with her for Apollo. Finally, she reminded the people of Dopinephrine to follow their hearts, wherever they may lead:

Life is the ultimate adventure, and you must be willing to stand up for what you believe in: especially in the face of adversity. Follow your own path, and don't let anyone else choose it for you, no matter how strong they are.

As Athlon and Athena reached the far side of the nebula, Maya gave a small bow to thunderous applause. As they looked back, Olympus' sun was rising over the Western continent. Athena watched the stunning scene for a while, and then took Athlon's head in her hands, kissing him deeply on the lips. Athlon kissed her back, and they looked into each other's eyes with the pure love they had shared in years long forgotten, during a very different life.



*Epsilon Dunamis was written and compiled
by Cory Constein
on Terra*

*Epsilon Dunamis VII is for Dani,
with love*