

Weyland-Yutani Corporation.

Date Log: 22.361 A.G.

(Story commission)

Part 2

The Expedition.

Falling towards the giant bobcat's tongue, the support pillars within the small capsule that kept the minuscule imperial class ship from being shaken and displaced within the capsule were put to the test in an extreme way. Exceeding their load-bearing capacity, the pillars eventually came loose, allowing the small imperial exploration ship to be brutally shaken within the capsule along with its crew.

Raych, Hari, Gaal, Salvor, and Isaac were all caught off guard by both the breach of protocol by the feline bobcat and the structural failure of the support mechanism. Despite all the effort, budget, and hours of work by Raych's team, the canine engineer failed to anticipate that given the microscopic size they were now at could make even the G-forces of an act as simple as someone dropping their ship from the height of their fingers towards the tongue something brutal and overwhelming. Inside the Raven model ship, most of the crew members were still stunned; and even unconscious. Salvor, after hitting her head against the navigation console on the bridge, lost consciousness. The young-looking rabbit had to be taken to the ship's sick bay by the chief medical officer, leaving the bridge only the Siamese cat, the canine engineer, and the raccoon boy.

“Okay! We need a plan and we need it fast!”

Gaal, the aforementioned raccoon, was the first to speak up as she looked through the visor at the overwhelming, immense, and terrifying interior of the River's mouth. Teeth that were capable of making entire skyscrapers seem like mere particles of dirt or dust compared to their base. Only the pink and sensitive gums that existed around each base of each enormous tooth inside the River's mouth was the size of immense chains of rock formations. The scene could only be more terrifying thanks to the fact that the crew was relatively protected by the capsule of the envelope of the pill that the bobcat had placed in its mouth. Capsule that contained the crew along with their ship inside. But, it was already possible to see the effects of the bobcat's saliva beginning to play its role, already working quickly to dissolve the thin barrier of the envelope that kept the Raven model ship isolated from the outside world that was nothing less than the entire gigantic bobcat.

Splash! It was the sound of overwhelming quantities of hot saliva that flowed along the entire length and surface of the giant bobcat's tongue, crashing against the envelope of the capsule made of a pill and causing more chaos for the crew inside. All this indicated that time was running out and if they were to abort that mission, the window of opportunity they had to do so was shrinking. In a few seconds, the first holes and gaps began to appear in the walls of the pill, allowing overwhelming quantities of saliva to begin to invade its interior!

“We've lost the protection of the envelope! Now we can't abort!”

Raych promptly informed, at the same time as he himself struggled to keep himself supported against the console of his control station. And indeed, the engineer was right, because soon after the saliva hit the interior of the pill, thus acting from both inside and outside at the same time, it was as if a house of cards had collapsed. In a few seconds, the immense barrier that was in front of the imperial class ship dissolved, revealing, without obstructions, the magnificent interior of the bobcat's maw. Which included the River's throat at the bottom. And to the despair of everyone on board, for a brief moment, light invaded the interior of the mouth of that macro, young bobcat again.

This time the crew's fate would be sealed. River had in his hands an innocent crystal-clear glass of cold water, without even thinking much about it and without even moving his tongue much, showing no interest in trying to feel what taste that minuscule pill of medicine had, the young bobcat simply turned that glass of water into his mouth, making sure that it would be well filled and that the small pill of medicine would have been washed away in the process of drinking water, being carried along with it towards the confines of his muscular throat.

Water had spread and taken over the interior of the young, twink bobcat's mouth on all sides. If before the tremors and seismic shocks were disconcerting, now they had evolved to a completely unbearable level. There was nothing more to be done, the occupants of the shrunk Raven class ship could only sit in their seats, hold on tight to their seat belts, and wait for the shields of the microscopic ship to be able to keep them intact until they reached the bobcat's stomach; where new challenges awaited them.

With the simple movement of his tongue and a gloriously strong contraction of the muscles of his throat, River created a pressure difference in the interior of his mouth that made everything and anything that was inside it be dragged without mercy into the interior of his esophagus, from where, after passing through the muscular walls of his throat, it would make its way into the interior of his stomach.

GULP!

“I HATE SWALLOWING PILLS.”

That was the last thing the bobcat said, before putting the glass back on the buffet cart that had been left waiting for him in the room; awaiting further instructions.

The journey to the stomach of the giant feline was short and uneventful. However, that does not mean it was free of anxiety. All members on board knew that due to River having broken the fasting rule, they would be faced with a completely messy stomach as soon as they arrived. As expected, when the small and minuscule Raven class imperial ship fell through the sphincter muscle that regulates the entry of food into the stomach, the crew had a better understanding of the real danger of the situation they were facing.

A sea of stomach acid, covered in semi-digested and semi-chewed cookie dough. Each piece of cookie was so large and capable of making an Arctic sea ice cap jealous.

“Whatever Salvor is going to do, if we don't get out of here and move to his intestine in less than thirty minutes, we're going to become a permanent part of this bobcat's body...”

Commented Raych, the engineer, simply reminding the crew of the fact that their ship, although it had been adapted to the extreme to withstand the severe conditions of the inside of the body on such a reduced scale, would not be able to keep the shields functioning at full capacity for a long period of time. Upon concluding his sentence, everyone immediately looked at Isaac. As the Siamese feline was the overall responsible for the expedition, it was natural to think that everyone would turn to him when something went wrong.

For his part, Isaac didn't have exactly any good solution in mind, his only way out was to trust the team he had assembled. Although the chief of research had complete confidence in Salvor's piloting skills, the task would still be challenging for the rabbit. In addition, aborting the mission would now be out of the question, the team members knew that once inside River's body, the chances of communication with the outside world could only be made through small windows of opportunity. This was due to the fact that by being shrunk to microscopic size, the thick layers of muscles, organs, and various tissues that make up the young bobcat's body act almost like a dense nebula that prevents any type of contact or communication with the world outside of its body, except in moments when they were traveling through the extremities of the giant feline's

body; such as, for example, in the veins and capillaries that run through its arms and legs.

“Okay... Raych and Gaal, you two stay here and conduct an extensive scan with the short-range sensors. Let's see if we can generate a high-precision real-time map of all the pieces of... cookies... that are in our immediate vicinity...”

Isaac said, trying to take his natural place as team leader, although it had already become clear from his voice, now less arrogant and more scared, that he was as lost as the rest of the team. In addition, the slight choking in his sentence that the feline had when looking through the visor as he pronounced the word "cookie" was due to the fact that that enormous mass of sugar, wheat, and chocolate looked like anything but a cookie. Worse, if the preliminary analyzes of the ship's sensors were correct, everything indicated that the giant bobcat had just eaten a package of his favorite brand of cookies; which made Isaac contemplate the reality of how such cookies ended up once in his stomach, too.

After finishing that sentence, the captain/expedition leader withdrew from the bridge and headed for the sickbay where he would meet Hari and Salvor. Salvor had a large purple bruise on her forehead due to the strong blow against the navigation console on the bridge, but nothing that the empire's cutting-edge medical technology couldn't treat. However, time was passing and since the team's arrival inside River's stomach, about ten minutes had already been wasted, and every moment they spent bathed in the feline's stomach acid, the ship's shields were stressed even more.

“Hari, we need him back on the bridge now...” said the Siamese feline in a more concerned tone, not exactly with the rabbit's well-being, but with the success of the crew and perhaps with the survival of his own life.

“I am aware and I am doing everything I can, but as a doctor I cannot release him until I am sure there are no further risks...” The skunk boy replied as he operated the complex machinery aboard the sickbay, while Salvor, according to his more shy and soft nature, remained still and let the devices continue to scan his body; still feeling a relatively strong pain in her head. However, seeing that the discussion between the team's chief medical officer and the chief researcher was about to escalate to another level, the slender, spotted rabbit dressed in his purple and white bodysuit got up with some effort from the bed and spoke up.

“Perhaps I should go to the bridge just to navigate the ship to River's intestine, from there it is very likely that his body would end up absorbing us into his bloodstream naturally...ah...”

However, before even finishing that sentence, the seemingly young rabbit felt a sharp pain in his head, almost as if it was excess pressure coming from inside out, which made him semi-collapse on the bed again. It became clear even to Isaac that there would be no way for Salvor to navigate them in any way through that sea of icebergs made of cookies and acid in the state he was in, as the risk of them ending up colliding with a semi-digested cookie continent was enormous.

Meanwhile, back on the bridge, Gaal and Raych were having relative success in using the short-range sensors to build a real-time map of the movement of each cookie continent floating around. The model was good, but it failed to demonstrate real-time data due to the overwhelming size of each piece of mass that River's stomach acid worked to digest and break into smaller pieces. This was due to all the movement that the natural contractions that the muscular walls of the young bobcat's stomach applied to the food inside. And, everything was about to get worse.

On the outside of the giga macro scaled bobcat's body, River had just received his final instructions. The twink looking feline had been instructed not to leave the perimeter of the Wayland Tower facilities under any circumstances for the next forty-eight hours, in addition there was another series of prohibitions and instructions that River should follow to the letter; such as using the toilet designated for his person in his personal suit only. And, above all, the impossibility of engaging in sexual activity and physical contact of any kind, even kissing and even with his boyfriend.

“I think Aiden won't like this, but he'll survive.”

River felt relieved even after reading the latest instructions transmitted directly to his neural link HUD and the warning that his physical and bodily activities would be monitored in real time. Soon after, the slender orange-haired feline turned to the door and began to walk casually towards his personal suite where he was supposed to remain confined for the next few hours until receiving new instructions. Little did he know that the simple act of walking would add a new dose of risk and adrenaline for all the microscopic members of the team who were struggling to survive and explore his beautiful body.

From the confines of the bobcat's stomach, whose entire body would now be so immense that an entire planet like Eisnor would be nothing more than a small ball of

clay lost between River's fingers. Beyond the glaring difference in size, there was the fact that unlike a planet, River's body was a living organism! In fact, from the point of view of microscopic beings and cellular organisms, the body of any individual, whether human or anthropomorphic, is nothing more than an enormous ecosphere full of opportunities and resources to be explored and dominated or even conquered. This is exactly how viruses and parasites see your body. However, at this very moment, the difference between the team of the Raven class imperial ship and viruses and parasites was almost absolutely none. At least from the point of view of River's body. Perhaps, viruses and parasites were even larger and capable of representing a greater threat to the living system that went by the name of River than the small ship now lost inside his stomach could. In all effects, as long as the team does not find a way to get out of the interior of the digestive system of the gigantic god that controls the living cosmos where they are now, they would be nothing more than just nutrients for the body of that same divine being.

And, to make the microscopic team's situation even worse, that bobcat cat took a step forward! The first of many as River began his walk through the corridors of the skyscraper tower in the heart of Eisnor on his way to his suite. Already on River's first step, the effects were felt immediately, if the sea of acid inside his stomach, previously agitated only due to the involuntary peristaltic movements of the muscular walls of the feline's almost infinite stomach, now had the addition of the movements of the twink's muscular legs and thighs as the cat walked to his room. Each step brought an earthquake that extended throughout the bobcat's body and decreased gradually the further it moved away from the epicenter, in this case the soles of River's paws. Still, from the point of view of anything inside the giant's stomach cavity, the consequences were enormous, immense acid tsunamis were caused by the impact earthquakes.

The two members of the team who had been left on the bridge on the task of scanning the immediate surroundings and creating the real-time map were now faced with the new reality that everything around them had become more dynamic. This was one of the main fundamental differences between adapting a space ship used to perform exploration in deep space to perform exploration in the depths of someone's body. Planets, asteroids, and even meteors wandering through space follow well-predictable routes with no major sudden changes. Totally the opposite of what they were experiencing in the confines of River's stomach at this moment where the small team witnessed entire continents being displaced by hundreds of kilometers in fractions of seconds! Tsunamis of pure acid so immense that they would be capable of sweeping entire countries off the map! And in the middle of all this, the minuscule and insignificant Raven class imperial ship bravely struggling with its force shields to remain intact.

“ISAAC!!!”

A desperate call rang through the ship's intercom system in the sickbay, from none other than the engineer Raych.

“YOU BETTER GET THAT RABBIT HERE! IF YOU DON’T, WE’RE ALL GOING TO BE NUTRIENTS IN THAT KID’S BODY!”

Raych shouted, his voice mixed with emotions of fear, concern, and anger as he mentioned River. Calling the young bobcat “kid” in a somewhat derogatory way. Although it was unpleasant to think about, the reality was that they were very close to being alienated by the body’s inner workings of a young man who was at least a hundred years younger than all the members of the team on that unfortunate ship.

Everyone knew the course of action of the original plan, and it did not include such a long stay in the bobcat’s stomach. They had been stranded inside River’s stomach for a good fifteen minutes, and they knew that the original plan never included their presence, still trapped and lost inside the gigantic femboy’s stomach at the moment he began walking towards his room. They were wasting time, and with every passing minute, the team’s window of opportunity was shrinking.

In the face of such events, Salvor had no choice but to get up and head to the bridge to play her essential role. Even the medical chief, Hari, showed no opposition this time due to the fact that his own life was in danger. As chief of medicine, the skunk boy knew that being smaller than the smallest cells in River’s body, the stomach acid would dissolve their bodies like salt in water at the slightest direct contact.

With all the team members back on the bridge, the situation was taking on its real and proper proportions. Huge waves were visible on the screen, and, in addition, almost all the ship's sensors were going haywire, all due to the simple act of River walking. If the original plan had been kept, they should have quickly passed through the empty stomach of the bobcat, gone to the intestine, and been absorbed into the bloodstream, where there would be no more risk from the movement of the young feline's body. But all of that was now out of the question, and they were forced to work with the reality at hand. At least, the raccoon and the dog had achieved relative success in adding the new dynamic of the bobcat's walking to the navigation models of the ship's computer. It wasn't that difficult, since River's steps and pace were quite predictable, given that the gigantic and all-powerful orange-furred feline was simply casually walking through the corridors.

“How much time do we have left?” asked the slender rabbit wearing a purple bodysuit as he sat in the navigation console chair where he had been consigned moments before.

“Less than ten minutes! Maybe not even five, considering the stress on the force shields!” Raych promptly replied.

Without thinking twice, Salvor analyzed the telemetry data and short-range sensors before starting the engines and beginning to perform the function that he naturally exercised with mastery. Deviating from enormous chunks of cookie dough and using all possible vectors, the rabbit navigated through the turbulent sea of acid that was the bobcat's stomach. The other members of the expedition could only watch with anxiety as the collision of truly continental masses of food took place inside the stomach, until finally, after much frenzy and with time almost running out, the pyloric sphincter was sighted on the ship's screen. However, there was a huge problem.

The smooth striated muscle that constituted the pyloric sphincter was nothing more than a valve that controls the passage of food from the stomach to the duodenum, the gateway to the small intestine. However, from the point of view of the microscopic members aboard the equally microscopic ship, this muscular valve had the size and dimensions of a vast mountain range and was something completely imposing to behold. Just thinking that they would have to pass through that valley of pure muscle to be able to advance with the mission, without being crushed by it, made everyone aboard the Raven-class ship feel cold. But, to everyone's dismay, the sphincter was closed!

“This wasn't in the plans either!” Gaal was the first to speak up. Even though he was the oldest member of the team, the young-looking raccoon was completely terrified. Even more terrified than his younger colleagues.

“Okay, I'm open to suggestions...” Isaac said immediately, but in a comical way, all four members of the team on the bridge turned to look at the skunk Hari, the team's chief medical officer.

Hari, for his part, immediately understood what was happening. Everyone wanted some kind of suggestion from him simply because he was a highly trained and specialized doctor. But the skunk boy simply responded with a somewhat cynical phrase. “What? What's up?”

However, the morbid silence still hung in the bridge, with everyone's eyes turned to him demanding an answer and with the gigantic sphincter closed and completely contracted on the ship's display just ahead. Without a choice, the skunk boy rolled his eyes slightly before proceeding with a brief explanation. “Okay, I know what's going

on. But, for those of you who are not familiar with medicine or the anthro body, that thing right in front of us is the pyloric sphincter, and that's a smooth striated muscle..."

"Get to the point, Hari!" Isaac interrupted, somewhat nervous and a little angry, cutting off the chief medical officer in his methodical explanation.

"It's involuntary! Smooth striated muscles are involuntary! Neither we nor River can make that muscle wall move, let alone open! We... have... to wait for the good will of his body..." The chief medical officer finally concluded, and immediately the raccoon boy retorted with a cynical joke before saying. "You can't be serious? Your suggestion is to sit here and wait?"

The tense atmosphere was now established, a team discussion was about to form on the bridge. But no matter what happened, the ship's AI made sure to remind them that the force shields were at 96% of their total capacity under stress and that a collapse of the force shield system was imminent! Without force shields, it would be a matter of minutes before River's stomach acid would run through the hull of the ship and kill everyone on board.

"What if we stimulate the sphincter?" The Siamese cat sitting in the captain's chair simply threw the suggestion into the air and let the other members of the team ponder the idea. Just as a good leader should do, but Isaac didn't do it exactly consciously. He just did it without thinking, but it turned out to be the right attitude at the right time.

"It's plausible! A small electric shock should be enough to make the muscles contract and the sphincter open, allowing us to pass through." The chief medical officer confirmed that the possibility was indeed plausible, all they needed was to generate a "small" electrical charge... capable of gently stimulating the muscular wall of an organ in the body of a giant who could hold an entire planet on the tip of his fingers! All eyes fell on the chief engineer now, of course.

"Ah.. my dear team members..." Raych began his sentence in a sarcastic and exasperated way, while he brought his hands covered by the gloves of his bodysuit to his face before continuing to speak after rubbing his own face and eyes well. "I must remind you that, given our current insignificant scale of size, that... innocent pyloric sphincter right in front of us has..., compared to us now, over 3,370,000 square kilometers!!!" A slight silent pause fell over the bridge, as everyone present understood what this meant and contemplated their true insignificance before the body of someone much larger and superior to them now. Raych then continues; "unless someone remembered to put nuclear weapons on the mission checklist, I don't believe we have

the ability to generate an electric pulse strong enough to stimulate any part of this cat's body!"

A moment of tension dominated the bridge of the Raven-class, all members of the team trying to come up with a possible plan of action; while their precious time was running out and the use of energy by the force shields now consumed a considerable part of the ship's main power grid. Finally, it was Gaal who had the idea of using the ship's lasers and anti-aircraft batteries against River's glorious sphincter. Although Raych still insisted that given the monumental size scale, even the lasers at maximum power would not produce any effect, and that they would not be able to stimulate the inner muscles in the giga macro body. Hari, the chief medical officer, eventually spoke out and supported the raccoon boy; but it was only when Isaac came up with the suggestion of trying to modulate the frequency of the laser in such a way that it mimicked as much as possible the natural firing frequency of the neurotransmitters in the feline bobcat's central nervous system. This line of action actually had more chances of being the most successful. However, there was still one more problem.

"Okay, it could work. But we'll still have to concentrate all the ship's energy to make the single shot, and we'll have to be very close to the sphincter because I believe the contraction we can generate will be very quick and momentary." Raych added, which led the Siamese cat to be slightly intrigued by the implications and making a point of asking, Isaac said; "Using almost all the ship's energy? What would that mean exactly?"

After a brief moment of silence, the canine engineer looked into the eyes of his team leader and added. "It means, we'll probably have to turn off almost all systems, operate the ship on auxiliary power, and that means turning off the main shields..."

A chill ran down the spine of each member of the team present on the bridge of the ship. Their expedition was not only going completely off the rails, but it was also leading them to a dead end where the chances of them ending up digested and transformed into nutrients for the body of a giant bobcat god exponentially increased with each moment. In the midst of the silence that settled among the group members again, the engineer broke the ice once again by adding; "It's a plan that can work, but everything has to be in agreement. Salvor, you have to maneuver us as close as possible to the sphincter without letting that muscular wall and the food that will be dragged by the open sphincter into the duodenum crush us. Someone has to aim the Laser and shoot, and I'll go to engineering to manually reassign the energy. If we're fast enough, the thermal shield alone should be able to keep us alive and in one piece!"

It was a risky plan, but it wasn't as if they had a wide range of options on the table. Without further discussion, everyone took their positions in order to execute the said

plan before their time ran out. Salvor bringing the shrunken and tiny Imperial-class ship to the edge of the mountain range, but known as the pyloric sphincter, and getting ready. Gaal along with Hari preparing for the laser shot, Gaal taking care of actually firing the shot and Hari as the chief medical officer helping to aim at regions that could contain the largest number of nerve endings, at the same time as Raych, now in the ship's engineering, was already ready to carry out the energy transfer. With the green signal coming from the bridge signaling that they were ready, the ship's main energy was all directed to the main Phaser cannon mounted on the front of it. The first shot hit one of the numerous nerve endings of the sphincter at the end of River's stomach, but to the crew's shock, there was no reaction. The enormous mountain range didn't even move a bit, as if there was no stimulus at all. Another small demonstrative proof of how absurdly small and insignificant they were in the face of someone's body. Someone who was younger than them, it must be said.

A second attempt was made, and the result was zero. Raych was preparing to warn the bridge that they only had three more attempts left, and after that, the ship's reactor would be exhausted and they would be as good as dead. However, despite the pressure of the race against time, it was on the third attempt that everything happened. The highly concentrated phaser beam, modulated at the correct frequency, hit the nerve endings squarely, causing the muscular walls of the sphincter to contract in an impressive way. A thunderous rumbling sound coming from the gigantic muscles, capable of crushing entire mountains, echoed through the environment in front of the microscopic ship, even making it tremble in its structures.

Almost immediately, all the contents that were being held back by the smooth muscle passed through the ring of the same, falling directly into the duodenum of the River. Including small pieces of still solid cookie that hardly had time to be properly digested. This would undoubtedly have consequences later during the... evacuation of the young feline... but nothing that a young man like River could not handle. In the words of the team's own medical chief; "He would survive." Speaking still of the gigantic, giga macro feline whose body extension could cover an entire solar system. The risky maneuver that almost consumed all the ship's energy, performed in the depths of his body, almost went unnoticed by the River itself. If it were not for a small, almost imperceptible and insignificant sensation of acid and burning in the wall of his stomach, the glorious and almost divine bobcat would not even have noticed the attitude of the microscopic team to intervene in the natural functioning of his body. With luck, this would be the first, last, and only time the team would have to perform such an evasive maneuver. River, for his part, simply decided to take a glass of cold water as a consequence of the incident, completely unaware of the situation unfolding in the depths of his own body.

Now that the worst seemed to be over, the team could organize themselves better and continue the expedition as they had planned. Assuming that the body of the giga macro bobcat would not present any new surprises along the way. Raych, the canine engineer corgi, took advantage of the moment of calm to perform a general review of the ship's systems, while the spotted rabbit Salvor placed it in a position to be absorbed by the intestinal villi present in the imposing walls of the duodenum of the feline. The process happened naturally and effortlessly thanks to the movement of molecules from a region of high density to the River's bloodstream, which naturally had a lower relative density.

Once inside the bloodstream of the giant bobcat, the crew could almost sit back and relax knowing that from now on the body of the gigantic feline would do most of the work. In fact, all they had to do was watch over the ship's shields and implement minimal navigation corrections. Unlike the situation that existed while they were still in the bobcat's stomach, immersed in a powerful sea of acid, inside the bloodstream, despite the constant pressure imposed by the heartbeats of one who was basically a god in comparison to them; the shields of the Raven-class ship were well capable of handling this type of stress. So easily supported by the ship that only the basic thermal shield was used now that they had escaped into the bloodstream of the River's body.

Present on the bridge were Isaac and Gaal, with Raych back in engineering to make sure that all the other systems and subcomponents of the ship were in order and that they would remain in order until their evacuation from the body of the young feline. Hari and Salvor went back to the sickbay because the rabbit was still in pain from the bench in his head since the moment the ship was swallowed by River. However, the trip was being quite uneventful, with the view on the bridge showing an ocean of cellular plasma and occasionally one or another overwhelmingly giant red blood cell that forced either the raccoon boy or the Siamese cat to perform a manual evasive maneuver to avoid colliding with the giant red blood cell. It was the kind of situation that an individual could get used to very easily, but at the same time it was like having a needle poking the bottom of your mind the act of knowing that you and all that ship were nothing more than something insignificant exploring the interior of someone's universe.

The trip to the first scheduled stop by the crew, the River's lungs, was now proving to be quite monotonous. What was originally the original plan, no high adventures like the ones the team had to face when dealing with the twink bobcat's empty stomach. But, even such an incident was starting to appear as a distant memory now. Eventually, the ship's sensors indicated that they were traveling through a vein that passed through part of one of the outermost regions of the River's body. Without a large amount of tissue or organs obstructing the communication path, the crew was able to establish their first contact with the outside world and send their first report. There was a certain degree of concern already forming on the part of the team of scientists and doctors who were

observing and monitoring both the bobcat and the progress of the mission, since the team had been delayed in making the first contact.

It was at this opportune moment that the raccoon boy took the opportunity to also send his personal report. Gaal, who was committed to sending laboratory secrets from the Wyland corporation to his superiors, had to limit himself to sending a somewhat mediocre report. Basically limiting himself to describing the mess that the young feline had caused the team by simply breaking the fasting rule and that at the moment the mission was behind schedule. Despite the raccoon with fur ranging in different shades of gray having taken the necessary precautions to hack into the ship's communication systems and carry out his pirate transmission, he did not count on the fact that the Corgi, Raych, was still carrying out a final sweep of all the sub-systems of the Raven-class ship. Such an attitude on the part of the engineer resulted in the detection of an unauthorized transmission coming from Gaal's quarters. However, Raych would not have the opportunity to delve into the matter in question, as soon after that the red alert of combat was activated, demanding that all members return to their posts on the bridge of the ship.

As they arrived on the bridge, the main viewscreen showed the reason why everyone had been called back. A huge virus was blocking the path of the Raven-class ship, and as if that were not enough, after avoiding it, the virus was now in pursuit of the ship.

Hari, the purple skunk boy, was the first to question Isaac's attitude. "You called us back just because of a flu virus? There must be thousands of them scattered throughout his body and his immune system doesn't even notice them." The chief medical officer said in a tone of voice that he was not at all impressed by what had happened and even sounded slightly mocking.

But the skunk boy was soon rebuked by the corgi engineer. "Yes! An innocent flu virus that is almost the same size as our entire ship! And for some reason it's coming after us..."

"Maybe he thinks we're a molecule of protein?" Gaal, the raccoon, finished; his tone of voice seemed to indicate that he was trying to lighten the mood of the situation.

Despite the attempt to relieve the tension, the raccoon boy was ignored by everyone, or at least by almost everyone, since the corgi, Raych, already had a slight aura of suspicion that that raccoon was up to something.

Unfortunately, given the arrogant nature of the corgi, Gaal was able to detect the discontent and animosity in the air coming from the team's chief engineer towards his person almost immediately and knew he had to do something about it.

In fact, to be faced with the reality that their mission as well as their entire ship could be at risk simply by the mere fact of coming into contact with a virus as common as the flu virus was both disappointing and comical. However, it was nothing less than a call from River's body forcing the team to contemplate their own insignificance. Such a virus that at most would be capable of causing a small sneezing fit in the body of the gigantic divine effeminate bobcat they were now exploring, if it came into direct contact with their ship, would start the process of endocytosis. A process by which the virus breaks down the membrane of the attacked cell to enter its interior to steal its nutrients. Needless to say, if such a process were to be carried out in the minuscule and microscopic ship of the team, it would result in the total destruction of it and the loss of the entire team.

However, despite Salvor's best efforts at navigation, the virus was closing in on them. Hari, for his part, as the chief medical officer, had a better understanding of the danger of the situation. He was not as gifted in materials physics as the corgi boy, but he knew that virus would easily break open the hull of the ship and that even the shield might not be able to do anything about it against a virulent cell that was basically the same size and perhaps more brute force than the entire ship itself.

"Doesn't this kid's body have any defenses?! Where are his white blood cells?!" The rabbit asked, trying to pull the Raven-class ship's engines to the maximum while dodging other particles and red blood cells present in River's blood plasma. "Listen to me, you don't want to run into his white blood cells. At least not that size! If we're not prey for a simple flu virus, imagine what one of his white blood cells can do to us!"

Truth be told, within this new universe that constituted the interior of the body of the gigantic, almost divine organism that was the body of the bobcat feline, the team along with their advanced research ship were only the base of the food chain.

"Okay! But there's not much I can do, he's going to catch us!" the rabbit replied, fiddling with the navigation console to the best of his ability. At that moment, Isaac's own voice interrupted the small argument that was forming; "Suggestions, people! I need suggestions!"

Hari, deciding to break out of his state of lament and worry while standing in a corner of the bridge, suggested that they could use the nanoreplicators installed in engineering

to replicate large quantities of a protein that would force the cell walls of the membrane to collapse, which would lead to the virus's genetic material spreading throughout the bobcat feline's blood plasma and resulting in the death of the virulent cell. It was a plan that was indeed very promising and beautiful on paper, and it even came to be better than the plan that the corgi originally had in mind, which involved using the ship's main reactor to eject nuclear material into the plasma and kill the virus with it, just like a cancer treatment would. The skunk boy's plan was not only less evasive, but it would also apply less stress to the ship's systems. However, there was still the problem of scale. Given the overwhelming scale of such a virus facing their ship, the team would be forced to replicate and materialize industrial quantities of such an enzyme in order to attack the virus with it; not that it wasn't possible, it wasn't a matter of technological limitation, it was a matter of lack of time.

Only the Siamese cat and spotted rabbit remained on the bridge, with the other members of the team all heading to the ship's main engineering once again to make the necessary preparations for the plan to succeed. However, despite the best efforts of everyone on board, fearing for their lives in the face of the risk of being wiped out by a simple flu virus, as soon as the trio of scientists and technicians arrived at engineering, a loud bang echoed throughout the hull of the ship could be heard. It was the protein endings on the surface of the membrane of that giant virulent cell making direct contact with the ship's shields. From that point on, evasive maneuvers would be futile, as the virus had attached itself to the exterior of the minuscule ship. However, not all was lost, as now there would be no need to put the artificial protein in torpedoes and fire them at the virus; it would simply be enough to simply replicate the chemical in large quantities and then ventilate it out of the ship through the exhausts of the propulsion system and the machinery itself in the main engineering. Even better, this new course of action would save time as well as allow for the replication and delivery of the proteins directly to the attacking virus.

But the overwhelming reality of being minuscule and insignificant inside the body of a giant being made itself present once again. Almost as if it had no resistance at all, the virus began the process of endocytosis, passing through the ship's main shields as if they didn't exist in the first place. A call via intercom from the bridge warned of the immediate danger of being without shields, which meant that the ship's hull was beginning to sustain heavy damage.

Raych hurried to the engineering systems and machinery to start the process of replicating the desired proteins, receiving and following the chief medical officer's instructions coldly. Gaal, for his part, monitored all the parameters, but at the same time his mind was already anticipating what could probably happen in the future soon after they dealt with the current crisis. "I need to get rid of this Corgi," Gaal thought to himself, even as he didn't let his attention stray too much from his current task at hand; after all, his life also depended on the success and survival of the ship.

It didn't take long for the first colossal quantities of artificial proteins replicated by the ship's industrial-scale nanoreplicators to begin being vented out of the ship through the heatsink and exhaust systems. The virus, for its part, fought back. The quantity simply wasn't large enough yet to cause the chain reaction of rupturing the cell membrane of the giant invading cell, but the virus was already starting to feel the effects.

"Hari, stay at the controls and keep production high. Gaal, let's go to the tubes and try to increase the dispersion rate manually. Bring the tools!" Raych could be a good team leader if it wasn't for his arrogant nature and superiority complex. His tone of voice and general way of being and acting made him almost an unbearable presence for many. However, he was undoubtedly the right choice for the mission, as thanks to his quick thinking and lack of hesitation in taking action in dangerous situations, the team would save themselves once again. Or at least that's what it looked like.

The virus, for its part, was fighting for what was rightfully its, as the unintelligent cell believed it was stuck to a mere protein particle floating in the bobcat's blood plasma that it now inhabited. Meanwhile, inside the interior of the said "protein particle" that the virus didn't know was a ship, the situation was becoming increasingly critical with each passing moment. The structural integrity of the ship was being severely compromised, but still, both the raccoon boy and the canine corgi were walking and slithering through the ship's entire service piping; ever closer to achieving their goal successfully.

"So, are you going to tell me what that was about in your cabin earlier today?" the Corgi said. Now that they were alone and outside the common areas of the ship, he was confident that his conversation with the raccoon would not be picked up by the ship's internal communication system or security systems. Gaal, for his part, tried to act in a disguised manner. "Ah... I don't know what you're talking about, Raych." The corgi rolled his eyes as he stopped right in front of the main control panel of the exhaust venting tube. The system itself was an emergency system designed to be activated manually in case of nuclear reactor overheating. The idea here was to increase the amount of proteins being expelled from the ship through the manual and forced activation of such a system.

"Don't try to play dumb with me, Gaal. You may have a few centuries more experience than all of us, but I can spot falsehood when I see it." The engineer pressed the gray raccoon, while at all times continuing to work in the dark and cramped environment of the ship's auxiliary piping.

"Ah..." Gaal, for his part, insisted on trying to pretend and lie, continuing with his feigned performance. However, Raych was right. Gaal was two hundred years older

than all the other members of the team, relatively speaking, and he was not willing to put his already not-so-glorious career at risk to boost the personal career of an arrogant engineer who was younger than him. Without letting the corgi notice, the raccoon slowly backed away and moved closer to the bulkhead door that isolated that specific section of the tube from the rest of the section. Raych, now wrapped in his natural arrogance, continued to speak and reconfigure the exhaust systems for manual activation.

"I detected long-range transmissions coming from your cabin while you were transiting through the veins of this feline. If I had to bet, I'd say you're selling corporate secrets to someone, and that's the kind of thing that's punishable by death..." Raych finished that sentence with a certain tone of satisfaction. It would certainly be a personal pleasure to report the raccoon, knowing that more than his career would be over because of such an act. Gaal, for his part, simply continued to listen to the corgi's monologue, speaking more to himself now and trying to intimidate the raccoon, almost as if he were giving the engineer enough rope to see how far he would go with his threat.

"I can propose the following. I can pretend I didn't see anything. I won't report having detected your little pirate transmission in my report, and you, well, you're going to have to make me happy. After all, I assume that at the very least, you're not revealing Weyland corporate and industrial secrets for free, right?" Raych finished, sounding very confident at the same time that he had also finished reprogramming the emergency heat exhaust system activation.

"Correct, but I refuse." Gaal replied simply and directly at the same time as he pressed the emergency button, sealing that section of the auxiliary maintenance tube where the corgi was working. The despair on Raych's face was more than visible since he had already started the manual heat exhaust system, which meant that in a matter of seconds, industrial quantities of chemicals and proteins would be passing through that specific tube, carrying everything out of the ship through the exhaust vents, including the poor engineer now trapped there by the raccoon's act. Raych tried to bang on the glass of the small hatch that constituted the door that separated him from Gaal and the rest of the section of the ship. The corgi spoke, clearly begging the raccoon to let him in, but in a very Machiavellian way, Gaal pointed to his gently pointed, gray-skinned ears while shaking his head, signaling that he could not hear the desperate screams of the relatively young corgi. It didn't take long, and moments later, a torrent of high-pressure green liquid flooded the tube and definitively carried the corgi out of the ship with it.

On the bridge, the ship's integrated AI displayed numerous warnings that the structural integrity of the Raven-class ship was approaching its maximum limit! However, the moment coincided with the activation of the emergency exhaust system, and both the rabbit and the Siamese cat could see through the viewport the virus being bombarded

with the artificial chemicals synthesized in the ship's engineering, causing the chain reaction so eagerly awaited that led to the cell membrane that contained the virus's genetic material, along with its proteins, bursting and spreading all the contents throughout the River's blood plasma.

Up to that moment, no other crew member had any idea that alongside that sea of proteins outside the ship, there was now poor Raych; still alive thanks to the survival provided by his suit. However, if he was not rescued soon, he would not have a chance. Gaal, for his part, was in no hurry to warn or bring the bad news to the rest of the crew. The raccoon returned through the ship's service tubes to the entrance point in the confines of engineering without any haste or with all the calm in the world, thus ensuring that the corgi would very likely be dead by the time he gave the news or by the time the other members of the team could mobilize to do anything to rescue him.

The situation could be bad, but nothing is so bad that it can't get worse. The uncontrolled release of genetic material by a virus that had just been exploded along with relatively large quantities of proteins ended up attracting the attention of the River's immune system. Fighting the immune system of a titanic divine being was everything the team had wanted to avoid from the beginning. It didn't take long for the short-range sensors to show the approach of several cells from the bobcat feline's defense system, running towards the area where the Raven-class ship was located to investigate what was happening. As a consequence, Hari, the chief medical officer, was called to return to the bridge immediately, but he was prevented from doing so because both Gaal and Raych had not yet returned from the ship's service tubes. However, just seconds after reporting to the bridge, the gray raccoon emerged from the dark depths of the service piping and promptly proceeded to deliver bad news, informing that the corgi had been ejected from the ship along with the mixture of highly pressurized and high-speed proteins.

The information was passed to the bridge, which promptly began to track the location signal of the canine's electronic components. But at the same time as all this commotion was taking place inside the ship, the white blood cells of the River's immune system were also executing their own race. It didn't take long for the first cells of the defensive system to arrive at the site, neutrophils! Although small, neutrophils already had a relative potential to cause problems for the ship if they were in large quantities, and they would soon be because they are the first responders and signal to the body that something is wrong. But the situation would start to get really complicated as soon as the first lymphocytes appeared on the scene.

As soon as the raccoon and skunk returned to the bridge, the phaser beam cannons and anti-craft cannons mounted on the ship were working at full capacity, destroying both neutrophils and the first lymphocytes that began to appear. "Are those lymphocytes ?!

"We have to get out of here now!" Hari said desperately, only to be countered by Isaac, who said they wouldn't leave Raych behind. "No! Don't shoot the lymphocytes! Are you crazy? You're going to kill us!" What the chief medical officer was trying to explain, although he was short on time and receiving little attention, was that the more attention they drew to themselves, the more the River's body would have to fight their presence as if they were a real heavy infection. And shooting the lymphocytes was the worst thing they could do because lymphocytes are auxiliary cells of the defense system, unlike neutrophils, which are first-line responders and would be able to clean up all the dirt left in the bobcat's blood plasma on their own. When the virus exploded, the lymphocytes were there only to "supervise" the work and make sure that nothing was out of place. If they were quiet, all the white blood cells would soon go away, but now that the lymphocytes had been destroyed, the young bobcat's immune system had no choice but to send reinforcements, and being a truly young man, the River's defense system didn't take long to take such altitude.

Long-range sensors soon detected the presence and movement of a large object heading towards their position. Meanwhile, the team had finally succeeded in tracking and determining Raych's position, with the ship's visor still having difficulty framing the corgi's body in its field of vision due to the mess that was happening in the plasma outside the ship. Although the team members were not aware of it, the canine engineer was already almost half dead, having a good part of his bones broken when he was ejected from the ship's exhaust tubes at speed and pressure. Raych couldn't even command the HUD of his suit to communicate back to the Raven-class ship, let alone swim in the currents of the blood plasma. Just floating helplessly and in pain in the midst of the protein molecules that once constituted a virus. When the ship's visor systems finally managed to focus the image on the engineer's body, it was the moment when such a large mass that was moving towards them finally reached the location they were located. It was a macrophage.

A single macrophage, an immense white cell! Part of the defense system of the god-like being called River whose goal was to phagocytize (eat), infected cells and or invading cells. It was this kind of encounter that the chief medical officer so wanted to avoid, as their ship had no chance of dealing with a white blood cell of that stature. Being an overwhelmingly giant cell, much larger than the red blood cells present in the blood, that macrophage could easily drag and trap the entire ship in its interior where powerful chemical agents would dissolve it into nothingness.

There was a small discussion about what to do unfolding inside the ship's bridge, the sensors present on the corgi's suit showed that his vital signs indicated that Raych was still alive, although very weakened. However, his body was right in the middle of all that genetic material that had been left behind by the virus and that would be the first target of attack by the gigantic macrophage cell that was approaching. In the end, unfortunately, there was nothing the crew could do but watch through the ship's visor

the terrible and miserable death of their teammate. In a casual and agile manner, the macrophage swallowed up all the genetic material of the virus now loose in the blood plasma, as if it were a common flu virus, the white cells of the River's defense system should be more than accustomed to dealing with this type of pathogen. In seconds, the genetic material, along with the corgi's body, were dissolved into nothing inside the semi-transparent interior of the giant white cell that now moved dangerously towards the still-parked ship as its crew watched in terror the consequences of being minuscule and microscopic invaders in the body of another being. River at that very moment should be taking care of his own life without having the slightest idea that his body killed a life in a totally autonomous and correct way! He would never know about it to be honest.

Without even having time to process the information of the death of a teammate, Salvor was forced to drive the ship forward, desperately trying to escape the approaching giant white cell. Unfortunately, the lost reaction time on the part of the team observing the death of their companion would be costly, as it provided all the time the lymphocytes needed to mark the hull of their ship with proteins that would signal to the rest of the bobcat's immune system that they were invaders! A foreign body in the middle of the blood plasma that were not desired in that living universe that was the interior of the organism of a giga macro. In a desperate attempt to awaken the bobcat's defense system, the rabbit responsible for the navigation of the ship did his best to keep course towards the lungs of the River, without getting lost in the vastness that was his body. If they got lost inside River's body, it wouldn't be such a problematic thing, depending on where they ended up lost, of course. But it would end up becoming a setback. A setback that they couldn't afford given that their ship was already relatively damaged and that they had just lost an important and valuable member of the team.

The team continued to flee toward the superior vena cava, and soon they passed through the heart of the gigantic bobcat feline. Although they were still being pursued by several neutrophils and leaving a trail of their pursuers behind them as their ship was impregnated with proteins that attracted the attention of the giant and powerful feline's immune system. However, it was when the Raven-class ship entered the right atrium of the young anthro's heart that they attracted the attention of not only the cells of the River's immune system, but also of another entity.

It did not take long for the Raven's short- and medium-range sensors to detect the presence and approach of new objects, although these were significantly different from the white cells of the River's body that were attacking them. According to sensor analysis, the objects were organic, but simply did not fit the descriptive profile of any other cell in the human or anthropomorphic body. And despite the rabbit Salvor piloting the Raven-class ship with mastery and maximum speed, which should be one of the fastest ships in its class, the object with the strange signature continued to intercept them and reduce the distance between them. Within a matter of minutes, all the other

cells of the River's enlarged divine proportions defensive immune system simply moved away from the area, almost as if they had been repelled by a force of strange nature.

The exploration team had already left the heart of the divine feline and was close to entering the pulmonary veins, when the object with the strange signature that had been pursuing them approached for real, now appearing to be performing a true interception maneuver and approaching close enough to appear on the ship's visor. To the surprise of all the remaining members of the crew aboard, what had been identified as organic material was in fact another ship!

Indeed, the sensors of the Raven-class ship were not lying, the strange ship that was now intercepting them was in fact a strange mix of organic components that seemed to operate artificially but in perfect symbiosis. The genetic material of the organic components of the said "alien" ship did not match the genetic material of either the River or any known alien species in the empire's database. However, what the Raven's preliminary scans showed was that the genetic material present in the organic components of that alien ship partially matched the genetic material of the molecules that were believed to be the cause of the pandemic that was spreading through the empire and was causing the indiscriminate death of humans.

A moment of silence fell over the bridge, as the team did not know how to react to the situation. They did not even know what they were dealing with, and even less did they know that inside that strange semi-organic machine there was another crew equally scared and not knowing how to react to finding their ship. The River's lung was just ahead, and it was noticeable that the attacks of the organic ship that was pursuing them were becoming more brutal. Soon, the Raven-class ship's AI accused them of being probed by the strange ship, which the team had not yet determined if it was hostile or not.

The realization was somewhat frightening for the team, especially since their ship's shields were up at all times. Therefore, not even the best ships of the enemy factions would be able to perform any kind of probing of the interior of their ship. This only contributed to raising the tensions of the group, and it did not take long for the situation to escalate as the ship continued to take more hostile actions. With not much left for the Raven-class ship of the expedition team to actually enter the River's lungs, the previously single and solitary organic ship joined two other ships that looked like it, with the exception of the third being visibly larger, which led the team to believe that it was another class of ship, but all maintaining the same profile of being organic ships, and all with the same genetic material signature, which at least indicated that they had been designed and built by the same entity.

The frustration on the bridge of command only grew as the crew watched the unfolding of what seemed impossible. The ship's computer was also recording, analyzing, and probing as much as possible all the strange ships so that the information could be shared with the other members of the empire's scientific community once they were outside River's body. That is, if they even managed to escape such a situation alive. At that moment, a beam was emitted from the largest ship on the side of the unknown attackers. It did not take long to realize that it was a tractor beam, powerful enough to lead the Raven-class ship and take it off course at the pleasure of the attackers, even though they were with their shields up at all times. Trying to fight against the force of the tractor beam was futile, and no matter how much Salvor tried, it was as if all the power of the ship's engines did not exist. They were now at the mercy of being led by that small fleet of three strange ships. However, and to their surprise, their original route was not necessarily deviated.

"They are still keeping us on course for the lungs," the rabbit said, still trying to control the ship's navigation system, which was currently inoperable. With not much else to do, the team began to explore their alternatives, which included using extensive probing against the ships of the attacking fleet to opening hail frequencies on all channels. But, to their disappointment and increasing tension, their probing seemed to be ineffective against the shields or any other defense system of the attacking ships, and although the communication frequencies were open, they received no response.

It did not take long for the expedition team and their ship to be led to the lung of the giant bobcat, where the situation they were facing began to take on even grander proportions, and even less sense. An entire civilization was revealed before the eyes of the shrunken passengers of the equally microscopic Raven-class ship. What looked like entire structures, like cities, immense colossal metropolises, could be seen dominating the landscape and ecosystem of the River's pulmonary alveoli. It was something that defied all understanding of science up to that point. How was it possible for an entire civilization to exist within the microcosm of the inner universe of the body of another individual? It was indeed all a simple matter of scale. From the point of view of the beings that inhabited those structures, and even the organic ships that escorted the team's ship, the River's body was an entire galaxy to be explored.

Everyone was apprehensive, even the skunk, the chief medical officer, who had been almost certain that the expedition would be interesting, but that he would see nothing beyond what he had already studied in his long years of medical school. He was now standing in silence, observing the ship's visor with the other members of the team, incredulous and speechless. Soon, their ship was led by the tractor beam to a structure that looked more like a kind of orbital anchor. The structure, also completely organic and showing signs of artificial organelles, was in orbit around one of the gigantic pulmonary alveoli that existed inside the lungs of the young bobcat. As soon as the Raven ship was placed in position in the living tow, capillaries-shaped organelles

extended from the muscular walls of the structures and attached themselves to the hulls of the ship, holding it in place. The team still kept all communication frequencies open, and the raccoon, Gaal, continued frantically to try repeatedly to make contact, calling on all frequencies and using the ship's universal translator to communicate in all known languages. No contact.

The view on the ship's visor was no less imposing. Now that it was in a privileged position in orbit around one of the pulmonary alveoli, the systems allowed for optical zoom in on the unnatural organic structures that extended over the entire surface of the River's pulmonary alveolus. They were cities, indeed! It was possible to recognize distinct points of interest, such as large hubs, cargo terminals, resource production and transformation centers, etc.

The team didn't have much to do, but they never wasted an opportunity to conduct all sorts of scans, short, medium, and long range, and to save as much information as possible. In case they could not even return to the world outside the body of the gigantic and glorious bobcat, they needed to bring all of this to the public.

It was then that suddenly the ship's AI warned, somewhat belatedly, that an unauthorized teleport had been detected and that an intruder was about to materialize right on the bridge in the midst of the team of scientists. The warning was given so late, but it was given as soon as the ship's systems were able to detect the transport. It turns out that whatever technology these beings possessed was so advanced that even the empire's ship's own systems were too precarious to take any countermeasures, leaving the team without any time to react. For, as soon as everyone turned their attention to what was actually happening, a strange figure was already present in their midst.

The situation could have been even more shocking if it weren't for the appearance of the said "alien" who was now standing as the newest fifth member of the crew on the bridge. Even Isaac or Gaal himself expected a completely unusual life form, different from any other being that the empire had ever encountered in the galaxy or that could be found in its galactic library. But, to the surprise of everyone on board, the being who had just materialized aboard their ship and was standing before everyone was no less or no more than an anthropomorphic being just like they were. A dark gray serpent-anthro with a white inner collar that extended probably from its abdomen to its neck and jaws. An anthropomorphic reptile dressed in an equally technologically advanced and body-hugging suit that left very little of its slender, fitness nature to the imagination. The suit also drew attention on its own, being clearly of a military nature and flaunting various insignia and emblems in the chest and shoulder area, which indicated that the group was now in the presence of some kind of officer.

The shock was immensely great, on a scale of greatness that probably surpassed the relative size that the body of the River itself had to the members of the crew. After all, it had been a little over a millennium since anthropomorphic beings had been integrated by humans into the galactic empire. The discovery of a civilization of equally miniaturized anthropomorphic beings living inside other anthropomorphic beings was infinitely mind-blowing. The serpent, on the other hand, did not seem to be shaken by the group's presence, quite the contrary. He even reacted in a very procedural and protocolary way, as if he had dealt with that type of situation countless times before. The being's serene and attentive gaze passed from corner to corner, observing not only the expressions and reactions of the bridge crew, but also their clothes and even the characteristics and details of the ship's controls and consoles, as if he were already conducting a preliminary analysis of the team's technological capabilities. Judging by his facial expression, the reptile was not at all impressed or satisfied.

"Who is in command?" The anthropomorphic reptile asked in a deep, firm, and direct voice; and once again caused the amazement of everyone on board. Harri, the chief medical officer, was the first to speak, but the skunk boy was simply in such a state of shock that he seemed to be talking to himself rather than answering the question of the "alien" commander. "He speaks!" was all the skunk boy wearing a purple suit was able to say.

The anthropomorphic snake, for its part, would slightly turn its gaze to the ground upon hearing that sentence before returning to look directly into the frightened eyes of the other crew members before it and say; "Clearly a level zero contact. I apologize if I scared you."

No one on the bridge had understood exactly what he meant by "level zero contact," but at that moment Gaal had already turned his gaze to look at Isaac. As the Siamese cat was the real person responsible for the expedition, he should take the initiative and interact with the strange being present. But, even though he was aware of this responsibility, Isaac just remained observing, however, unlike the other members of the crew, the Siamese cat was not scared, he was silently judging the commander of the "enemy" ship back.

"My name is Golan, I am the commander of Eros. I apologize if I scared you, I believe this must be your first expedition beyond the body of your titan of origin. It is the first time we have encountered this type of ship, although your technological signature is relatively similar to others we have found. We thought you could be another one of the nanomachines that the titans use to attack us."

Never interrupt your enemy when he is making a mistake, that's what was going on in Isaac's head now, and now Gaal had realized the strategy of remaining silent of the feline. Assuming that they were at a lower technological level than their captors, Isaac knew that if they were going to be killed or destroyed they would have already done so. So the Siamese cat created the conditions necessary for the said commander to feel comfortable releasing any type of information, even if he believed it to be trivial or futile, just as Golan had just done now. After all, a small sentence like that already raised countless questions in the minds of everyone on board, for example; if they were not the first, were there others? And if there were others, how many were there? The team could simply be on the verge of the greatest discovery of the century, that not only could intelligent life exist in microscopic sizes, but there could also be a universe living within the bodies of some of them, right under their eyes or better said, under their cells.

After realizing all of these mental conclusions, Isaac quickly identified himself. "I am Isaac, I am the one responsible for this... vehicle." Not wanting to call the ship a ship, in an attempt not to introduce concepts that could give clues that they were not actually what Golan believed they were, whatever that was.

"It is always a pleasure to meet and welcome new anthros in search of refuge." The snake boy said, extending his hand to greet the feline anthro, Isaac did not refuse to shake his hand for the sake of looking friendly. "I hope you have not separated too much from your original titan."

As they talked more, the pieces of the puzzle began to make sense. It seemed that these beings, members of the microscopic civilization, believed that they were other beings, equally microscopic and members of another civilization that inhabited the body of another being of normal size, here referred to by them as "titans".

"I believe you must come from... what was his name again, the biological partner of the feline... Aiden! That's right, Aiden." Golan added, before inviting them to explore a bit more of the complex to which their ship was docked. And so, once again and without realizing it, the reptile ended up delivering another crucial piece of information for understanding the situation. By mentioning the name of the bobcat feline's boyfriend, the spaniel dog named Aiden demonstrated that these beings had a certain level of awareness of what was happening in the outside world, of what was happening in the world of giant titans! A world that everyone present inhabited.

Isaac ended up accepting the invitation, but gave orders for the other members to stay on the ship and work on repairing it. The Siamese cat ended up taking the raccoon boy with him just so he wouldn't feel too exposed being alone in a completely unknown environment in the midst of a civilization he knew nothing about. Gaal, for his part, was

the logical choice, his communication and observation skills almost as good as Isaac's would be more useful accompanying the feline in this form of unofficial first contact between the empire and a new alien race than with the other members repairing the ship.

Their stay with Golan, now accompanied by a small team of staff members of what was actually a kind of anchor species, crew members of the snake boy's ship, and members of the local government or entity that administered the mini-metropolis located in that lung alveolus was neither long nor short. Hours had passed as the two members of the Raven-class ship talked and exchanged information with the other members of the microscopic civilization, of course the Siamese cat took great care to change some names and facts when talking about his society and the galactic empire so as not to give the impression or reveal facts that could mention planets, stars, and such.

The entire argument of the beings that inhabited the body of the divine being known as River revolved around the Titans, how to survive and thrive within their bodies, and especially how to make safe attempts to migrate from one titan body to another. It was all very confusing, but; to clarify some details, what had attacked and intercepted the Raven-class ship were not actually spaceships, but rather different classes of "submarines"... basically they were large manned vehicles, but that did not have propulsion systems designed to fly properly and were more geared towards moving through liquids, such as the blood plasma present in the blood and veins of every human or anthro being.

Beyond that, it was clearly visible that the rest of their technology was not as superior as the technology existing in the outside world. Advanced yes, perhaps even a bit equivalent in some areas and aspects, but not superior. Despite everything and all the secrets being revealed, Gaal felt the need to remind Isaac that they had a second window of opportunity to communicate with the rest of the team, the other scientists who were monitoring the gigantic bobcat where all this universe inhabited. The raccoon boy did this not because he was exactly concerned with the normal progress of the mission, but also with his own interests, since he had to report to his true superiors the real progress of the mission and also had to share the shocking and revealing facts about what, or in this case who, was behind the terrible pandemic that was ravaging the empire.

Aware of the short window of time to establish new contact with the outside world, Isaac tried to shorten the conversations between the group and began to be more direct and ask less curious and more targeted questions.

Despite being trying to save time, little by little, the pieces of the puzzle were fitting together more and more. What the two members of the expedition team learned from the small retinue that interviewed them was the way they adapted to the bodies of the

“titans” and began to extract from them the nutrients so necessary to survive, triumph, and build all the structures that their microscopic civilization needed without disrupting the natural biological processes of the body.

To the astonishment, but not so surprising to both Isaac and Gaal, these beings seemed to be the third generation of colonists, meaning that they had already successfully migrated from one titan body to another, however their own records reported that the second attempt, in the case of their second colony, had not been successful because the entire biology of the body of the second titan in question was not... anthro. It was when things started to make sense.

As it all indicates, this race of microscopic anthropomorphic beings were extremely well adapted to establish a symbiotic relationship within the bodies of equally anthropomorphic beings, and given the differences between humans and anthros at the molecular and genetic level, the same relationship failed catastrophically in the case of humans, causing the human immune system to promptly recognize them and all of their unnatural organic structures as foreign invaders and declare war on their civilization as if it were fighting a cancer or a parasite. All of this, added to the medical technologies available in the empire, such as nanites, nanomedicine, and others, resulted in a cruel battle inside the bodies of humans, which ended up being fatal for both the human hosts and the micro furry civilization. The anthro beings, on the other hand, despite having general knowledge of what was happening in the outside world, even if limited, had no idea that the “titans” on which their colonization attempts failed were humans, that is, they were beings of a completely different species.

Apparently the root of all the problems here was a lack of information and communication, but unfortunately, faced with the fact that the expedition team had its own agenda and interests, and even individual members of the team had their own parallel agenda, as in the case of the raccoon, who still had to find a way to establish new contact with the outside world without being noticed, the simplest solution to the problem would not be adopted. A little before ending the brief interview session that both representatives of the different “delegations” had established, Isaac was given a small compilation of the general public library belonging to that people, and in return, the Siamese cat was supposed to do the same for the empire. But, as such an action could end up revealing to the nano beings that they were representatives of the same titans that they inhabited and so much idolized, Isaac found himself forced to deny such an act and inventing any excuse not to have to reciprocate the gesture. Such an attitude would prove to be very prudent moments later.

On the way back to the Raven Class ship, the snake commander named Golen, along with a small handful of other representatives, accompanied both the cat and the raccoon. However, Gaal still managed to separate himself from the main group, and luckily, the

portable long-range transmission device he was carrying with him was able to establish contact with the outside world, even being in the depths of the lungs of the giga-sized bobcat named River. But the group had no idea that once again the raccoon's subversive activities were putting the entire progress and security of the group at risk. Since Gaal was not the only one working in espionage at the moment.

Although the raccoon boy managed to establish contact with the outside world, the signal was weak and Gaal was unable to make a live broadcast. But what he did not know was that the government intelligence entity behind that nano civilization was renting his connection with the intention of stealing the data that Isaac had refused to give them. Basically, it was performing a backdoor on the corporate spy's transmission, without the raccoon boy even having the slightest idea of it. And this would eventually be definitive in the change of attitude on the part of the anfiltrôes with respect to the expedition team.

Back on the Raven-class ship, the Siamese cat finally realized the raccoon's absence moments before stepping aboard the ship again. Golan said that the feline should not fear, as he would inform his staff to look for the member of his crew. But, while Gaal remained hidden on purpose, ensuring that his pirate transmitter would have all the necessary time to finish sending the necessary data to his contractors in the outside world, the rest of his team aboard the Raven ship took the liberty of carrying out the first studies on the public data library handed to them by Golan's team. The pieces of the puzzle were fitting together further more.

The translation of the files was carried out with agility and mastery, even in the absence of Gaal, thanks to the use of the onboard AI. The most intriguing part of the files was related to historical passages and mythological passages; such texts and stories gave an account that the civilization of nano micro anthros that now live in a nomadic way wandering from body to body of their absurdly gigantic counterparts had once been as colossal as the anthros they inhabit today. For much beyond that, the historical data gave an account that such a belief was something recurrent in the culture of the nano micro civilization to the point that, finally reaching the most modern and current mentions of history, it became clear and evident that several members of the top of their government not only believed that it was possible that they had once been as gigantic and colossal as the "titans" they have been living inside, but that they could be like that again one day! There was even a whole movement popularly known as "Return nanos to their former glory!"

The findings extracted from the text were shocking! To say the least. And, as Isaac studied more and more of the passages, he felt increasingly sure that he had made the completely correct decision not to reveal any data about his team, expedition, or point of origin. It was unimaginable what consequences he and his crew could suffer if the

nanos, who were currently treating them with hospitality, learned that they were not only like the titans they so idolized; or rather, now that Isaac had been able to better analyze their history, it could be said that they actually nurtured much more a desire for conquest and domination over the outside world that existed outside the universe known as the body of the River than anything else; as well as they possess the long-dreamed-of technology capable of making them..."colossal giants" again. Isaac had to contain a slight urge to laugh, the narrative of absolute and universal power made perfect sense from the nanos' point of view, yes. But, from the point of view of the Siamese cat, who was naturally a being of normal size, he knew that these nano micros had no idea what really awaited them in the world out there when and if they ever really managed to develop such technology on their own.

In any case, there was no more time to waste. Now that they were better aware of the risk they were running, Isaac gave orders to the bridge to contact Gaal through the short-range system, even teleporting him aboard if necessary. Unfortunately, what they didn't know was that the raccoon himself didn't want to be contacted or teleported for that matter; and this would end up costing Gaal dearly. Since, on the other hand, and at the same time, in a distant room located outside that orbital complex where the expedition team's ship was anchored, an intelligence team was carrying out the same process that Isaac had just completed. It didn't take long for the nanos to get to the truth! Taking knowledge of a good part of the world out there, of the universe, and the entity known as the Galactic Empire to which the ship they had power over apparently served. Now that the nano micros knew of the team's origin and the ability to change their size at will, it didn't take long for the team on board the ship to realize that an excursion and apprehension was in progress.

The short-range sensors of the ship immediately noticed the presence of a considerable amount of personnel gathering in the same sector where their ship was anchored. It was safe to assume that it was a boarding party. At the same time, the same "ships," now known as submarines, that had intercepted them earlier positioned themselves relatively strategically outside the station that orbited the lung alveolus. All of this indicated that the window of opportunity was closing and that they needed to leave that place immediately. However, it was at this moment that the Raccoon also ended up answering the communication calls coming from the Raven class ship, but the image that appeared on the bridge's display was not at all encouraging.

Imprisoned and under the guard of Commander Golan, the snake boy greeted Isaac and the remaining members of his team in a glorious manner. The snake commander demanded that they hand over the schematics for the size manipulation technology and in exchange for that they would not be executed, but only to be under house arrest within the body of the colossus bobcat for the rest of their lives. However, once again the reptilian anthro ended up revealing an unnecessary piece of information by accident, since at the very beginning of his transmission Golan mentioned that they would

intercept the transmission of their companion to the outside world and that through it they learned that they were titans and that they possessed the technology to miniaturize in size. This ended up exposing the raccoon spy in front of the other members of the team and not only that, Hari, the skunk chief medical officer who was working in engineering at the time of the incident that resulted in Raych losing his life, immediately began to doubt in the back of his mind if the incident with the corgi engineer was really an accident or a deliberate act.

Unfortunately, the truth would never be known by the three remaining members of the Raven class team, because now Gaal, having his true nature as a corporate spy exposed and with the window of opportunity that the team had closing, the Siamese cat did not hesitate to give orders for Hari to fire at the organelles that kept their ship anchored at the same time that the rabbit Salvor received orders to leave the lungs of the River at full speed.

“Oh! Look, that’s more interesting, it seems that your friends didn’t think twice before betraying you... And I thought that keeping you hostage would prevent them from fleeing. Next time I’ll send a boarding party to teleport directly to their bridge. Get him out of here.” Golan finished his monologue in front of the raccoon before two guards carried the now all-bound and immobilized raccoon out of the transmission room. Gaal, for his part, remained quiet and did not answer anything, he knew that his “friends” had not betrayed him, they had only returned the favor once he was in fact the real betrayer among the team.

However, both Gaal and the team now had distinct priorities, the raccoon had to find a way to escape and make contact with the outside world again, since his espionage agreement covered his removal from the body of the gigantic twink bobcat in case of a catastrophic failure of the mission, such as the one he was experiencing now. As for the remaining members of the original team, now fleeing again through the bloody plasma of the River with three “enemy ships” en route to intercept them again, they needed to decide which evacuation route to follow to leave the universal body of the immense bobcat as quickly as possible! If captured again by those nano micros, it would mean the end of the expedition definitively.

To be continued.