

Eleven - Sagittarius Project

Weyland-Yutani Corporation

Station #7-725

Perseus 9

Donna Traegar took a deep draught of her coffee. The cardboard cup was warm in her hand as she scanned her badge at the colossal Trimonite doors. An additional scan of her eye and hand was done at the same console before the doors swung open with the heavy groan of machinery.

The scientist scooped in disgust as she watched them slowly open. She thought they were a complete waste of a billion dollars. The Company insisted on using Trimonite despite it being rare and thus, extremely expensive. It was a decision in hopes of avoiding another incident like the one in Mexico a year ago. It was overkill but they had put their proverbial foot down.

With a substance as hard as Trimonite, nothing would escape and nothing would get in, but in addition to that protection, they had chosen the emptiest and darkest planet she had ever seen to build a secretive base.

Perseus 9 was perpetually dark and incapable of sustaining human life. The temperature was tolerable, but it was the atmosphere that kills. With twice the level of methane compared to Earth, a human would succumb within minutes without a closed circuit air supply. Apparently, the mega-rich overlords that ran Weyland-Yutani Corp didn't care enough about the folks that had to live and work on this planet enough to terraform it for a breathable atmosphere.

What a joke...

But as scientists, they were used to it, so she filed her complaints mentally and dealt with whatever crap was thrown her way. Speaking out could lose the grant money she and her team had lobbied so hard for.

This was her chance. Everything had to go as planned or she would be out of a job, not to mention her entire career would be ruined. There wouldn't be another opportunity like this, at least with The Company. They didn't take failure well.

"Good morning, Dr. Traegar, how is the coffee this morning?"

Madeline, her wiry assistant, joined her as she meandered through the mess the construction crew had made as they worked to piece together the observation cube.

Donna led the way, coffee in hand.

"Still tastes like shit, unfortunately."

They stepped around sheets of plastic sheeting that covered the walkway, Donna being careful not to spill her drink.

Madeline was a young woman of Philippine descent with large brown eyes set in an oval face. She was a graduate of MIT and had quickly been brought on as an intern on another space station elsewhere. Like Donna, she had worked hard to get where she was in life.

There was a kinship between the two due to both being women. Despite how advanced human society had become over the centuries, there was still sexism to be found, even in remote space.

Donna wasn't afraid to tackle life's obstacles though. Sexism was one she would constantly battle into the future. Over and over she had proven herself to be valuable to The Company.

Together, they entered the meeting room.

"I would sympathize with that statement," Madeline said, "but as you know, I prefer a hot English Breakfast tea to start my day. A cuppa really takes the edge off. You should try it." She sat in one of the plush office chairs.

She took a sip of the steaming bean water. At least the caffeine still worked. She felt it energize her tired bones.

"You know me. Tea isn't strong enough. I like a stout drink to fuel my unhealthy work habits." A smile crested her face as she sat in her own chair at the head of the oval table, setting the files down so she could hold her coffee in both hands.

The laboratory was the size of two football fields end to end, roughly the length of two-hundred yards. Pearly white and pale blue strips of neon light made up the metallic walls. Beneath their feet was a polished white floor that would eventually be sanded in from traffic. The builders in the center of the lab were working on installing a life support system in the cube where the asset would be held.

It was a marvel, truly. Donna watched through the glass wall as they worked away.

"What exactly are we going to do with her when they find her? She's not a Predator, so what's the point of all this security?" Madeline walked to stand by the coffee pot pouring hot water into her mug. "Science Gives Me A Hadron" was spelled out in blocky blue letters on the side. Her young companion dunked the mesh tea bag in and out to steep it faster as she plopped back down next to Donna.

Donna in turn took another sip of her brew, savoring the strength it gave her.

She blew out a breath of air and explained, "She's not one, yes, but she has her blood circulating in her veins. Her body alone can give us insight into the advancements we could make if we manage to isolate what gives them rapid healing and extended lifespans." Donna tapped her perfectly manicured nails on the side of the coffee cup, thinking of what all they could learn.

"But," Madeline paused, biting her lower lip in contemplation, "why not continue the research that was started in Mexico? Why not create a new hybrid?"

Donna's young protégé still had much to learn.

"We will eventually, once we've finished the first half of our research. The asset will be nothing more than a vessel to carry the hybrid and will be terminated once she gives birth. Simple as that."

Ashaki Sawyer meant nothing to her, so the solidarity she had built with Madeline didn't extend to the hunted woman. Morals had to be thrown aside for progress and the good of mankind. The woman would be a necessary sacrifice, as all those before her had been. It was sheer dumb luck that Weyland-Yutani was determined to complete what they had started with Leonil Prentiss, one of the only successful hybrids that they had created.

Such a shame she had escaped when a Predator intervened and attacked the base. That one had been a teenager when she was found and brought in to experiment on. This new woman would be a fully grown adult who hadn't aged a day during her time in cryo.

Donna had caught up with the files that were given to her on the new asset and these prior events. She wanted to know everything she was getting into beforehand. Prior to working on Project Sagittarius, she had worked at a lab where the focus was understanding the Xenomorphs; they were a pesky alien species that multiplied like ants when given the opportunity.

Working with a human would be far easier. A human could communicate with her and tell her what was missing that she couldn't find under a microscope or from a sample. The human subject was preferable to a non-sentient creature that bled acid.

The young scientist went to her sipped on her tea while she took another draw of coffee. The hot liquid was starting to cool off. They appreciated this time alone for it was not much longer before others joined them.

Three men wearing similar white lab coats entered the room and sat down, tablets in hand. They looked similarly tired. Their previous night had stretched into the wee hours of the morning as they settled in their quarters on the other side of the facility. All three of them grumbled a greeting while nursing their own coffees. Seeing that they were just as cheerful as herself gave Donna a rush of serotonin. Nothing like shared misery and exhaustion. Being in the trenches together meant camaraderie.

"Good morning, gentleman," Donna began, turning the telescreen on the opposite side of the glass wall with a digital remote. "We will start this wonderful, sunny day with a debriefing of what Project Sagittarius is all about."

Kade went through the planets readings, tapping away on the screen before him

The planet was surprisingly Earth-like. Exo-worlds that were like Earth were rarer than humanity had hoped. This one, where Ashaki Sawyer's last coordinates were recorded, was exactly one such world. It was a beautiful blue and green planet with ice caps and swirling white clouds.

At first glance, one could think it was Earth, but on closer inspection one would begin to see the lack of multiple continents and instead a single landmass reminiscent of ancient Pangea. The data suggested the planet was covered in temperate forests with mild weather and ocean that surrounded it on multiple sides.

If it wasn't in Yautja territory then Kade would've liked to explore this planet in the future. He would tell the nerds back home. They would love it. It was yet another world with untapped potential waiting for them to claim.

"Charles, prepare a flight path for Discovery to make landfall. I want to know what we're getting into. Flying in blind is not something I enjoy." The blond synthetic nodded and immediately went to work at his computer station just a few seats to his right.

He sat next to Carlos and Landon, the two between them at their own stations. Carlos was analyzing a map of the planet while Landon leaned back in his seat, his feet propped on top of the control panel casually. Richard and Dennis were in the cargo bay readying up their M41A Pulse Rifles and other equipment they may need. The two had been diligent in keeping themselves busy ever since they dropped out of FTL.

Dennis had made himself more scarce than anyone else. The large man preferred to avoid Charles, having never liked nor trusted synthetics. Kade couldn't begin to understand why. Dennis never explained his qualms with the human-looking androids.

There really wasn't a reason why they couldn't be trusted. They had built-in protocols to prevent them from harming humans or going AWOL like synthetics of old. Charles had proven himself to be a worthy companion and crew-mate time and time again.

Hell, without Charles, this boat would've sunk ages ago!

And speak of the Devil...

Dennis came trodding in, his boots heavy on the metal floor as he made a wide berth around Charles to stand at the viewing window. His arms crossed his chest. The top half of his gray flight suit was tied around his waist, so his white wife beater stood out against his dark skin. There was tension in his shoulders as the Oculodrew closer to the planet.

"I got a bad feeling about this, Kade," Dennis sighed, heaving his wide shoulders.

"You've been saying that. Elaborate, man. I don't have your sixth sense."

The large black man angled his body so his back faced Charles. He would get this way sometimes. Superstitious.

"It's just..." he shook his head, "we're in Yautja territory. This is incredibly dangerous, especially since the Oculods are Arrow class ship. What if they take it as an act of war that we're even here?"

The Oculod was an assault and reconnaissance ship, manufactured by Weyland-Yutani. It was ungodly expensive to fuel, relying on Trimonite, an extremely rare mineral that could be refined and concentrated into fuel. This ship was capable of FTL travel at an incredible speed, roughly fifteen times that of the speed of light. With any other ship, it would've taken an extra two weeks to reach the target planet.

With the ship being typically used by the Colonial Marines to transport personnel, it was common to fly with weapons of war. Kade and crew would have to be careful in how they maneuvered through such dangerous territory. The fact that they even carried an arsenal of weapons endangered all of them. Every movement would have to be calculated, even when they took the smaller Discoveryship to the surface. The small drop-ship was manufactured with ordnance—ordnance being mounted artillery.

This whole mission was stupidly risky but Weyland-Yutani demanded their asset be found and brought back, no matter the cost. It wasn't even the woman that was the issue. The issue was possible Yautja encounters.

Kade and his crew had so far evaded contact with the Yautja. Their luck had endured so far, but they all were uneasy despite the fact.

"Hey man, we'll be fine if we keep our cool and stay on the trail. Before we know it, you'll be spending all of the credits we got from this." He assured, popping the tab on a can of pop. A quick glance at the readouts gave him further confidence.

Charles looked up from his intense focus on the task that Kade had given, green eyes taking in the sight of Dennis before sliding to his superior.

"I have completed the route as instructed."

Kade grunted in acknowledgement, "Thanks, Charles." He switched focus to Carlos, the Latino scratching at his five o'clock shadow.

"How's it looking weather wise? Anything nasty we should expect?" "It's a sunny eighteen degrees Celsius. That's sixty-five Fahrenheit for you, Landon. I can't believe they still use that shit where you're from. What was it... Kansas?"

Landon chuckled on the head, "Yes, Kansas. Grew up among Children of the Corn." Sarcasm leached through every word, his brown eyes rolling at Carlos's quip. "Do you still have siestas and drink cervezas every family reunion?"

Carlos scooped, a crooked smile on his face, answering in rapid Spanish, giving him his middle finger as he leaned back in his seat once he was finished. He looked all too pleased with himself, his fingers avoiding his spiked black hair that had been gelled to perfection.

"I'm sorry? I don't understand a word of Spanish." Muttered Landon.

"Good! You wouldn't like what I said." Kade cast a half grin at Landon with a wink before turning back to watching the planet draw closer.

The blond smirked and left the room, muttering that he had to take a piss. Carlos pulled a pen from his pocket and spun it around in his fingers as he turned his attention to the planet that grew larger in the front window.

Kade took a sip of his pop, "Leave it to me to run around with you lot."

Dennis turned to show off a smirk of his own.

"You know you enjoy our company."

He snorted, "That I do, unfortunately." Another drink of pop wet his parched mouth some more. "Let's get our heads in the game and hope your worries are all just bullshit."

The synthetic passed his gaze around the room, observing the humans on board, quietly enjoying the company. Humans fascinated him to no end. They weren't governed by logic or a computer, instead relying on their own mental faculties. Secretly, he found their arguments and joking with one another amusing.

"Dennis," Charles addressed him with all of the confidence of the highly advanced android that he was.

"What?" He turned to face Charles fully, beefy arms still crossed over his chest. "Are you going to mock my anxiety, too?"

Charles shook his head, "No, Dennis, I have done the calculations and you are correct to have a 'bad feeling.' It is instinctual to have fear when put in a dangerous position such as the one we find ourselves in. There is a seventy-three percent chance of an encounter with the Yautja."

"Oh, good. I'm feeling much better!" Dennis threw his arms up and out, not in the least bit pleased to be talking with Charles.

The synthetic observed him with sympathy, "I mean not to inflame your fears. My apologies for doing so."

Dennis narrowed his eyes with suspicion before excusing himself from the bridge.

"Hey man," Kade said, "don't mind him."

"I wish for the crew to be harmonious but I fear that may never be so between Dennis and I."

"That's the fun of being human. Sometimes, we're very stubborn. Dennis has his own reasons, ones that hopefully one day he'll explain." He finished the last drop of his pop, retrieving another from the mini fridge at his feet. "Let's just finish this mission and work on your friendship later. We have a bounty to find."

The gray, angular body of the Discovery looked ugly and foreign among the endless greenery around the men as they checked their gear one last time.

Landon busied himself with consulting the GPS, the direction laid out before them on the tablet thanks to Charles's calculations. "We are only a twenty minute walk. Their trek wouldn't be as hard as they had expected, much to Kade's relief. The three of them, Landon, Dennis, and Kade, made up the planet-side party. Richard had opted to stay aboard with Charles to keep watch in case of contact with the Yautja. Dennis had happily volunteered, taking the opportunity to get away from the synthetic."

"It's this way." Their guide, Landon, pointed North and led on; his side arm and M41A Pulse Rifle were slung over his shoulder.

Together, they set out into the wilderness. While keeping watchful eyes on their surroundings, they took in the alien landscape.

"Ya know, it's nice to breathe fresh air for a change." Dennis drew in a deep breath and loudly exhaled, a smile on his face.

"No kiddin'." Agreed Landon, carefully stepping over a fallen three branch.

The men made their way through thick underbrush. Beams of light shone through the dense upper canopies, highlighting the dark bark of the trees and letting them catch the glimpse of the alien critters that called this planet home. Much of it was reminiscent of Washington state on Earth; the state was covered in temperate forest with the upper half being rainforest.

"You are ten meters out from the last ping from the Star Chaser Kade."

"Thanks, Charles. Copy that." Kade took large steps to catch up with Landon, the blond man's focus honed on the forest that lay before them.

Landon glanced at Kade, acknowledging his presence with a brief nod. "He's right. We're close. I hope she's somehow still here. I hate being in hostile territory like this without a reason."

"It's not the first time. We've literally been in cartel owned space. Aliens are just another obstacle to overcome, my friend." Kade clapped him on the shoulder.

A scooped behind them, "That's the problem. Aliens. Not just any aliens. Yautja. Dennis came up to Kade's opposite side with a frown on his face. "Those fuckin' killpeople. They'll kill us! Because of these!" He waved his own Pulse Rifle around to make his point.

Kade knew Dennis was right. He had his own worry about it all, but it wouldn't be wise if he let his fear show. He needed to be the strong one to keep up morale.

"Let's just take this one step at a time, brother." Landon sighed. "Just chill out."

Dennis glared at Landon, "There are goddamn aliens that hunt people! How do you expect me to chill out?"

"It's one of the benefits of being a bounty hunter. We expect danger and run to it. We can't be pussies!" Kade opened the bag of trail mix he had stashed in his cargo-pants pocket and tossed back a handful.

"Now, quit your bitching and let's finish this fucking hike."

They continued on through the woods until the trees finally opened up to a clearing. The meadow that made up the clearing was partially burned away, a heap of twisted metal sitting in the center of a small crater.

"Well fuck me sideways and call me Sally. Looks like we missed the party." Dennis crossed his arms and sighed.

"Whatever did this had a lot of fire power." The burned ground cracked and crumbled beneath Landon's boots as he stepped forward, eyes wide with surprise. He began a scan of the surrounding area with his tablet.

Kade stepped forward to take in the half-melted remains of Star Chaser. The ship was nearly unrecognizable as a charred and broken husk. He circled the remains to the rear and swiped a hand through the thick layer of ash. The vessel's name appeared under his hand, etched into metal. It was definitely the Star Chaser. Something with twice the firepower they had could only melt a ship like this and Kade didn't like what it meant.

"My scan isn't bringing up any human remains, Kade. She's not here." Landon looked up from his tablet with a grim look.

"Our scans here on the Oculod show you are the only humans on the planet. I see no recent remains, either." Charles chimed in over their comms.

Kade noticed how the metal was pitted in a large portion of the ship. The only weapons capable of producing such wicked heat were the weapons Yautja used. He had seen the wreckage elsewhere, when people had encountered these creatures, fought and lost. Sometimes there were lone survivors too. Those ruins were burned the same as this ship. The heat from the plasma rounds were intense enough to cauterize wounds or vaporize a human being to ashes.

Basically, they were in deep shit.

"Gentleman, we just might have to add an alien to our hunt. Either she found another ride off of this rock or a Yautja has her. My instinct leans to the latter." Kade tossed back more of the trail mix, anxiety settling into his shoulders and sparks of ice cooling his veins.

"See? Fucking Yautja!" Dennis gestured at the ship like a madman, sweat beading on his brow.

"Let's look around the perimeter and see if we can find any hints about what happened here. A er that, we can hit the strategy table again. Only then can we say our Hail Marys and prepare ourselves to take on a Predator."

Kade felt that bolt of fear burn inside but he kept a straight face as he ordered Dennis and Landon to check out specific areas of the clearing. There had to be something they could use. Some clue that would lead them to Ashaki Sawyer.

Even if it meant having to add a Yautja to the mix.

A/N: I hope you like it! We get to meet our antagonists. ;)

[Continue reading next part.](#)