

# Revelation Space (The Inhibitor Trilogy) (Preview)

By Alastair Reynolds

# Chapter 1

Mantell Sector, North Nekhebet, Resurgam, Delta Pavonis system, 2551

There was a razorstorm coming in.

Sylveste stood on the edge of the excavation and wondered if any of his labours would survive the night. The archaeological dig was an array of deep square shafts separated by baulks of sheer-sided soil: the classical Wheeler box-grid. The shafts went down tens of metres, walled by transparent cofferdams spun from hyperdiamond. A million years of stratified geological history pressed against the sheets. But it would take only one good dustfall—one good razorstorm—to fill the shafts almost to the surface.

“Confirmation, sir,” said one of his team, emerging from the crouched form of the first crawler. The man’s voice was muffled behind his breather mask. “Cuvier’s just issued a severe weather advisory for the whole North Nekhbet landmass. They’re advising all surface teams to return to the nearest base.”

“You’re saying we should pack up and drive back to Mantell?”

“It’s going to be a hard one, sir.” The man fidgeted, drawing the collar of his jacket tighter around his neck. “Shall I issue the general evacuation order?”

Sylveste looked down at the excavation grid, the sides of each shaft brightly lit by the banks of floodlights arrayed around the area. Pavonis never got high enough at these latitudes to provide much useful illumination; now, sinking towards the horizon and clotted by great cauls of dust, it was little more than a rusty-red smear, hard for his eyes to focus on. Soon dust devils would come, scurrying across the Ptero Steppes like so many overwound toy gyroscopes. Then the main thrust of the storm, rising like a black anvil.

“No,” he said. “There’s no need for us to leave. We’re well sheltered here—there’s hardly any erosion pattering on those boulders, in case you hadn’t noticed. If the storm becomes too harsh, we’ll shelter in the crawlers.”

The man looked at the rocks, shaking his head as if doubting the evidence of his ears. “Sir, Cuvier only issue an advisory of this severity once every year or two—it’s an order of magnitude above anything we’ve experienced before.”

“Speak for yourself,” Sylveste said, noticing the way the man’s gaze snapped involuntarily to his eyes and then off again, embarrassed. “Listen to me. We cannot afford to abandon this dig. Do you understand?”

(End of Preview)