

Chapter II - Zablaron

Planet Metallon

"Zablaron Inrazax!" the police deputy cried out. "We know you are in there! Show yourself out in sixty seconds, or we will force entry to detain you!"

The deputy raced toward the façade of Cantohuo Estate with two agents at his heels. Equipped with light-salmon and steel-blue crossbows, their silver armor and helmets glinted in the sunlight.

Metalloy Police MagneCars were lined up in the magnetic, stainless steel driveway of the estate. It was a sprawling mansion with an upturned, gabled roof and curtain walls of colorful, metal alloy frames inset with lustrous silver so much so that it shimmered under the bright sun like a mirage. A vast expanse of gardens sat on either side of the driveway, the plants gleaming with the silvery coating of mercury - the soil on planet Metallon was so enriched with metals that, not infrequently, they found their way onto the surface of the local flora.

It was a typical day on Metallon where days were hot and the nights just as cold.

The Metalloy Security Department had received an anonymous tip that the owner of Point Blank, a defense contractor organization, Zablaron Inrazax, was seeking asylum in this mansion. Zablaron had been accused of accepting contracts from King Riplartz of planet Wystalline for manufacturing and supplying arms to the Wystal army. Metallon and Wystalline had harbored severe enmity for decades, each vying to be wealthier and more powerful than the other by tapping into their metal and crystal resources, respectively.

The deputy, perspiring under his armor, tightened his grip on his crossbow as he heard footsteps coming toward the main door from inside the mansion. He was here to make sure that justice was served today.

The door opened, and two guards in black suits strode out. The police officers trained their weapons.

"There has been a misunderstanding," one of the guards declared in a deep voice, his arms folded. "Zablaron Inrazax has never been seen on these premises. Why would Ms. Tielin ever harbor the very traitor she helped expose?"

The owner of the mansion, Senator Ferrina Tielin, had been one of the staunchest advocates for outlawing Point Blank. Her crusade against the company and Zablaron had culminated in this final allegation for which she seemed to possess substantial evidence - many said she finally had Zablaron in a chokehold. Therefore, it had come as no small surprise when the police learned that she was now providing asylum to the same person she had just triumphed over.

The deputy shrugged. "We mean to ask Ms. Tielin that once we arrest her. Now, if you would be so kind as to-"

"Arrest her?" The guard sounded incredulous. "Do you even have an arrest warrant?"

"No, but we do have a search warrant - and if we find Zablaron Inrazax lurking in there, you know... we won't be needing an arrest warrant for Ms. Tielin." The deputy motioned to one of the agents who produced the warrant and handed it to the guards - but they barely bothered to read it.

The deputy was rankled. The police officers were going in one way or the other, and his patience was wearing thin.

The other guard, with a pug nose, clasped his hands and clicked his tongue. "Listen. We are not Ms. Tielin's personal guards. We are the Titan Guard appointed by the Metalloy government due to threats against her person. And we do not authorize you-"

"You are still not the ones to authorize us. Officers of more than one department of the Metalloy Police are waiting outside. And our sixty-second time limit is almost at an end," the deputy said, placidly. "We'll use force if you don't step aside now."

The guards unholstered their guns. "By all means, use it. You're going to need it."

This is ridiculous, the deputy thought. Without warning, he emitted a steel-blue magnetic field from his body to levitate above the guards and then kicked with both feet at the guards' hands to disarm them. The guards reeled, and their guns dropped at their feet.

The two agents rushed forward, and each grabbed one of the guards' arms, brought them behind their backs, and materialized light-salmon, metal cuffs to bind them.

"Where's Zablaron?" one of the agents with a squeaky voice asked.

"He's not here!" the guard with the deep voice grunted.

"Alright." The deputy stood over the guard. "Where's Ferrina?"

"Get lost already!" the guard spat out.

The deputy laughed. "You wish."

The police officers entered through the main gate to alight into the foyer, where it was much cooler. It was a spacious hall, wider than it was long, exquisitely furnished and lined

with draperies and paintings in a riot of color. Straight ahead, a single staircase curved upward, lined with a red carpet, and led up to the second floor, which extended on both sides of the foyer. A set of heavy, golden doors, inset with silver scrollwork, stood right in front of the staircase.

"That's her study." The deputy pointed toward the set of doors. "She has to be in there."

"Let's go, then." The second agent cocked his crossbow, looking like a murderous robot in his armor and helmet.

The deputy eyed the weapon disapprovingly. "Just to be clear, we will use non-lethal force. Understood?"

"Non... what the heck do you mean non-lethal?" The boisterous agent lowered his crossbow in dismay. "We might as well just ditch these crossbows, then."

"Threaten all you want, but I won't have any casualties because one of my trigger-happy subordinates couldn't control himself," the deputy snapped. "They won't dare try to kill us either, so get your act together!"

"What about Zablaron?" the other agent intoned in his squeaky voice. "We can kill him, right?"

"As for that scumbag, if he so much as looks at you the wrong way, you use him for target practice. But you gotta make sure to make it look like he started the aggression," the deputy said wearily. "Now, move!"

The police officers started up the staircase. Suddenly, one of the agents stopped in his tracks. "Listen," he whispered.

The deputy stopped and tried to focus. At first, he could hear nothing but his own breath echoing in his helmet. But soon enough, he could discern the sound of shuffling feet from behind the doors on the first floor, on either side of the foyer.

Just as the deputy opened his mouth to speak, two pairs of the Titan Guard burst out of the doors, one from each side, and threw two orange and blue, horseshoe-shaped objects at them. They started beeping right when the deputy shouted. "They are magnetic bombs! Throw them back!"

From his left palm, the deputy shot a metallic cable with a claw at the end. As the claw grasped the bomb, the deputy whirled the cable through the air and then sent the bomb flying over to the guards on his left.

To his dismay, he could see the squeaky agent from the corner of his eye, throwing the other bomb in the same direction. He would have liked to believe that the agent had enough sense to chuck it at the guards at the other end of the foyer. But then, he realized, the agent must be thinking the same about him.

"Darn it!" one of the hapless guards yelled, trying to get away.

The objects exploded and emitted a strong, steel-blue magnetic field. All ferromagnetic objects in the vicinity began tearing out of their places in thin shreds and homed in on the bombs - railings, sconces, knobs all broke off and pierced through the air like metal serpents, hissing as metal scraped on metal. Even the crossbows were wrenched free of the police officers' grasp and went sailing toward the bombs.

Reflexively, the deputy tapped the screen on his VBP - a light-salmon device in the shape of a stylized gear with a steel-blue screen, which was strapped to his right forearm. Device and weapon glowed light salmon, and in an instant, the crossbow disappeared.

Meanwhile, the metal shreds had begun viciously pelting the guards in their path to the bombs, and moments later, the guards and the metal particles lay on the floor in a heap.

As everyone looked on, stunned for a moment, the deputy uttered softly, "Iron Paladin."

In a flash of light, the crossbow materialized back into the deputy's hands. He then spun around and aimed at a light sconce directly above the remaining pair of guards. As he released the trigger, a light-salmon metal bolt shot out and pierced the sconce, which exploded in a shower of sparks and glass with a loud pop.

The guards ducked, protecting themselves by creating metal shields overhead. The brash agent extended his palms and shot out several metal discs from each. They hit the guards in their faces and knocked them out.

"I don't like the fact that you're the only one left with your crossbow," he quipped as he brought his arms back to his sides.

"So much the better," the deputy replied as he started up the steps once more.

When they reached the doors, the deputy put his palm against one panel and pushed it ajar. With the Iron Paladin cocked, he peered inside. Wisps of smoke swirled inside, and from where he stood, he could see the east wall, lined with tall, golden bookshelves. Other than the smoke, nothing moved.

The deputy kicked the panel hard, and it swung wide open. The three of them quickly entered the room. The air inside was suffocating and stale, and the deputy's eyes began to water. Both the east and west walls were lined with bookshelves carrying all sorts of ponderous books. The wall facing the doors was glass, projecting outward to view the lush gardens in the back of the mansion.

A desk lay in front of the glass wall and behind it sat Ferrina Tielin - a middle-aged woman with auburn hair in a bob cut and gaunt features - cross-legged with a cigar wedged between her fingers. A female Titan Guard stood next to her with her arms crossed.

Ferrina took a puff from her cigar, all the while eyeing the police officers intently. "This is madness, you know."

The deputy aimed at the guard. "Drop your weapon."

"I ain't usin' it," the guard replied nonchalantly.

"Drop it!" the deputy snapped. "And kick it over to me."

Reluctantly, the guard unholstered her gun, dropped it to the floor, and sent it kicking toward the deputy who picked it up.

"Zablaron is not here!" Ferrina snarled. "Some rival of mine spread this falsehood, and you lackwits played neatly into their hands."

"Oh, he is here." The deputy let out a smirk. He went over to the doors, closed them, and barred them shut. Then he raised the guard's gun and shot the two agents through their necks, one by one. The agents fell to the floor, lifeless.

Ferrina gasped in horror and lurched to her feet, her cigar dropping from her fingers. "What are you... who..." she stuttered, at a loss for words.

Zablaron Inrazax tossed the gun back to Ferrina's desk and then removed his helmet. Brushing his platinum-blond hair back, he said, "Here he is." His eyes coolly fixed at Ferrina, he felt thrilled to imagine her shock, staring into those sharp, gray eyes of his.

It took several moments for Ferrina to compose herself. "You!" she seethed. "How did you do this?"

"I got in touch with these two escaped cons here." Zablaron motioned toward the lifeless bodies of the two agents. "Of course, they didn't know I was Zablaron Inrazax - I'm so good at disguise. They wanted me dead, as an alarming number of other people do too. I told them I knew where their target was - all they needed to do was pose with me as officers from another precinct, inform the local police about the anonymous tip and then raid your mansion. It was up to them to get the badges and uniforms and all the rest."

Ferrina ground her teeth together. "And now you're going to kill me? Is that it?"

"No. Here's what I'm going to do." Zablaron swept a hand through his hair. "I'm going to call for backup because you shot these two agents here. Then I'm going to slip out of here. I suggest you do the same if you don't want to get arrested."

"No! I did not shoot-" Ferrina was screaming.

"Neither did I supply those arms to King Riplartz!" Zablaron roared menacingly. Ferrina looked taken aback at this sudden outburst. "If you want me to get you out of this mess, you will do as I say, Ferrina. Get out of here, make yourself scarce, and then meet me at the docks tomorrow at five in the morning."

"Why? What do you want from me?" Ferrina demanded frantically.

Zablaron ignored her and put the mouthpiece of his transceiver to his mouth. "I've got two men down. Backup requested immediately!"

"Roger that," came the reply. "Where exactly are you?"

Zablaron fired several bolts into the air. "Oh, my... I need to get out."

He then let the mouthpiece go and ran past Ferrina and the guard to the glass wall. He fired a bolt at it, shattering it to pieces. "See you, Ferrina." He waved at her.

He leaped into the hot air outside, and as he descended, he surrounded himself with a steel-blue magnetic field. Gently, he lowered down onto the ground. As he ran across the gardens, Zablaron heard Ferrina shout to the guard, "Get me out of here, you moron!"

That's more like it, Zablaron thought as he let out a smile. Tomorrow was going to be a long day.

Do give me your feedback about this chapter, and if you enjoyed it, please consider dropping a vote. Have a great day!