

REBUILDING A SPECIES: CIVIL WAR

BY JOHN R DAVIES

The colony that had been founded eventually became the capitol of New Tellion, Minerva (loose human translation). Minerva still exists as the secondary capitol of the Devonian Empire and is currently home to over 6,000,000 and New Tellion has a combined population of 1.8 billion when you factor Half-Breeds into the mix (which we do). Only 800 million Pure Breeds live there, but that is considerably more than the original 600 survivors. There are now over 60 billion Pure Bred Devonians in existence, with another 54 Billion Half Breeds. But there is a story (or collection of stories if you will humor me) behind the massive population growth. Please note, we will now switch to using a dating system to try and keep the huge distances between times clean. The founding of the colony (FC) will be the base point. We pick up my story 98,875FC (98,875 years after the colony founding). I had long since left New Tellion, deciding to go my own way after Ingrid passed away. She ended up passing away of old age (21,300 years old), leaving behind a very successful new world. 98,875FC was a strange year. I had been away for some number of centuries and had been out of the loop since, but had decided to visit after a run in with a patrol with two Destroyers escorting a colony ship. We had been expanding to new worlds across the different universes and I had unexpectedly encountered one such effort. The encounter was brief is not worth describing here, but it did leave me with a desire to return home.

New Tellion had already changed a lot since its founding. With nearly 80 million inhabitants across three large cities (dwarfed only by the agricultural land that surrounded them), it had started to feel like an actual home instead of a last refuge for survivors. Whether it be the extensive Planetary Defense Network (PDN) or the towering skyscrapers that the majority of the inhabitants called home, you wouldn't think that the planet had been colonized by just 600 people nearly a 100,000 years prior. The biggest difference wasn't on the planet itself. Instead, the formerly empty void above the planet was now filled with a variety of ships (both military and civilian) and four orbital platforms. One of the platforms was the Orbital Construction Yard (OCY) where new ships would be built and crews trained. A considerable distance away was the Docking Station where trade ships would transfer goods to and from the planet. It also allowed the massive warships to refuel and resupply personnel and ammunitions. Both stations had AIs who manned the considerable calculations needed to keep both in orbit as well as the semi-formidable defenses they had. But the real treat was the two MAC platforms that covered both stations. They were former Axion Frigates that had been gutted and refitted to serve as the defense of the planet. They had no real jump capability and couldn't travel through space, instead focusing solely on weapons. There was enough fire power to destroy a fleet three times larger than the invasion force the Hundill Empire had sent millennia prior. It was truly impressive.

I took a shuttle bus down to Minerva to find a greeting party waiting to welcome me. Despite not sending a message stating that I'd be coming, the newly formed Government had somehow found out and sent a delegation. It was a very fitting show, but I instantly knew something was wrong. Other than the colony ship and its escort, I had made every attempt to avoid ships with Devonians on them. I had even gone to great measure to hide my identity by taking on the form

of another species and working as a deck hand on the ship that bought me here. So I found it odd that they knew I was here before I even arrived. None of the delegates talked, as if to hide something from me. I lacked the connection to the Hive Mind that the rest of my people shares, so I was unable to find out what. Something else bugged me. The city itself wasn't anything special. I had seen a million other cities, all very impressive. But there was a great sense of hesitation and worry clouding its people. Almost as if the future proved uncertain. I soon found out why. The Government HQ wasn't a very impressive building. It didn't need to be. Large enough to house the several thousand Devonians that made sure the Government worked, it was still technically under construction when I arrived. But the main building and its defenses had been finished and only the barracks for the resident politicians and defense force was being built. Moving inside was like walking through one of my dimensional tears (the thing that lets me move from one universe to another). Instead of the very Spartan interior I had been expecting, I instead found myself in an ornate theatre with a central stage surrounded by ever rising pews. Then it hit me, I was no longer on New Tellion. The door had been a dimensional tear, but one of such high degree that I couldn't recognize it.

It is important to note that very few species can create small dimensional tears without massive technological equipment. To create a dimensional tear the size of a door requires precision not found in many species, even within the Vault. The Devonians of the First Age (before the Genocide) found out how to do it on the genetic scale. The Galaxians have the technology, but abandoned it long ago. That leaves the Ancients, who were the ones responsible for removing me from New Tellion. They are, as their names suggests, an ancient species responsible for the creation of the Vault. Very little is known about the isolationist species, even now. 98,875FC was the first time the Devonians had any contact with the Ancients since the First Age. I had heard of them from my father when I was considerably younger, who himself noted that they avoided talks even when we were being slaughtered. Suffice to say; if they brought me here then they had something important to say.

At first, I didn't notice all the Ancients surrounding me. The low levels of light tricked my eyes into not seeing anything. It is only when what I assumed was their leader spoke up. I don't remember the dialogue for some reason. I've always assumed they didn't want me to. I only remember being in that amphitheatre surrounded by some ancient species I couldn't see. I do remember what it was all about (chiefly because of the end result). They were apparently seeing if we were good enough to rejoin the Vault. Though I would later come to understand why, back then I spent a good amount of time wondering why they would start to contact us.

After returning to New Tellion, I decided to seek out the new Prime Minister. Julia was only 8,000 years old but had already shown a lot of political acumen. If anyone would know what was going on, it would be Julia. When I got a chance to talk to her, she straight up refused to discuss the issue with me. In fact, no one would talk to me at all. This was worrying, as they had no reason to keep anything from me yet I was treated as the black sheep. Maybe I was, considering all the things I've done in my life. But to be shut down whenever I tried to find out what was going on infuriated me. I noticed something was odd after a short investigation. Someone was on New Tellion influencing things a certain way. Worse, this person (or group of people) had somehow severed the planet wide Hive mind that almost every Devonian shared. The hive mind is a leftover from our ancestors. It cannot share memories, but can share feelings and is incredibly important to us as a species. I cannot connect to the Hive Mind due to a genetic illness. It's so rare that I've only encountered four others in my lifetime, including my own

brother. The side effect being that I am more of an Empath (meaning I can sense the general feelings of other species). I noticed the Hive Mind had been severed by looking at the way people behaved. They were lost and confused, with many outright stating that they couldn't access it. At this point in time, I had come across many different species with a Hive Mind and nothing like this had ever happened to them. I didn't even know it was possible.

I had an idea of what happened soon enough. A rogue member of the Ancients had unleashed some sort of plague or virus onto New Tellion. One of the side effects was the severing of the Hive Mind. Or so it was claimed. The whole event was quickly resolved and hushed up. The virus was dealt with and the memories of what happened were removed. I was off planet when that happened and was otherwise preoccupied with tracking down the colonies. I wanted to know if they had gone through the same thing. They hadn't, but I felt better having seen it for myself. The Ancients themselves didn't say anything about it. I don't think they realized I still knew. Either that or they simply didn't care. Doesn't matter.

Another 3,000 years passed without word from the Ancients. Those years proved more than eventful for us Devonians though. A few minor wars here and there proved to be nothing more than a minor distraction. Julia, it seems, was an imperialist. Under her leadership, our influence grew to over 30 galaxies across three universes. She also founded multiple new colonies, using the birthing pods to expand our numbers. It worked like this: a colony ship with 1,000 Devonians would be sent to a new world, escorted by two Destroyers. When they got to this new world, they would set up a simple colony and utilize the birthing chambers to increase their numbers. How many birthing pods did they have? Around 2,000 per colony ship. You can guess at what happened. These colonies grew very quickly. As did our numbers. I warned her that such quick expansion wouldn't keep the empire she so desperately wanted together. But she refused to listen. I suspected the reasons why, but never seemed to have proof. Without ties to New Tellion, each colony would develop its own Hive Mind, its own community. She didn't listen. Some of the earlier colonies, ones founded before the plague, had started to question the rule of the Government. They didn't understand why someone they never met, someone that didn't live on the planet and didn't share the same Hive Mind was ruling them. It is so easy for us as a species to make the case of a unity – that is, for us to come together as a community rather than as a group of planets. To mess it up so badly that they consider themselves independent, even back then, begs the question.

The war that ensued was short and bloody. The first colony to take up arms was the Undying (translation). Founded in 43,980FC, Undying was the largest and oldest colony to break off from New Tellion. Over 200,000 Devonians with a small fleet (one carrier, two frigates and three destroyers) as well as a large military (75% of the population) made the surprisingly formidable force even stronger. To make matters worse, thirteen other colonies joined the fight, bringing their own armies and resources. In total, they had 2 cruisers, 6 carriers, 10 frigates and 25 destroyers. The New Tellion Fleet was three times as large, but was spread thinly over the remaining 25 colonies. The thing is, I very quickly joined the side of the rebels with the idea that they were the better choice. Julia had long since proved herself incompetent by this point, so it was only natural to want a change in leadership. Elections are good and all, but sometimes a bit of violence will keep the leadership in check. So I advised the one leading the whole thing, a Devonian by the name of Talia. She was in a whole different league to Julia in that she was incredibly popular amongst the populations. She was also a military commander of high standing. Julia was a farmer by trade who used.... Other means to acquire power. Back then, we

were a democratic species. It was a short lived experiment due to the corruption we faced, thanks in part due to Julia and her sponsors. But that will be explained further in a minute.

The war involved a lot of hit and run tactics. Talia knew damn well that if the Loyalist fleet ever came together, she'd lose. Julia still had over 60 destroyers and seven cruisers under her command. That doesn't even count all the other ships defending the home turf. It was good for us then that the destroyers and cruisers were spread all over the place. In most cases, we outnumbered them four to one or more. Within three years, we had decimated the opposing fleet to such a scale that the numbers had evened out (we had built or captured more ships than we destroyed). It was that point which we decided that an attack on New Tellion was the best idea. Over the course of the war, I had convinced Talia that she should take over the responsibility from Julia. At first, she was simply dismissive of the idea in favor of independent rule of the colonies. But I simply kept pushing by saying that people would support her attempts at unification. Besides, who better at securing independence than the leader of the free colonies.

The attack on New Tellion was as swift as any attack we could muster. The fleet defending the planet consisted mainly of frigates and carriers but had been reinforced by the remaining destroyers and cruisers that we hadn't been able to destroy or capture. They had about 30 frigates, 6 carriers, 8 destroyers and 2 cruisers. We had a single cruiser, 38 destroyers, 15 frigates and a single carrier. Sure, we outnumbered them. But numbers don't mean a damn if you don't know how to use them. And Talia knew exactly what she was doing. She had the frigates line up in two rows, sort of like a firing line. As the enemy ships approached, the frigates began firing with a five second delay between the two rows. The ploy worked as several of the enemy destroyers blew. Many of the other ships, predominately frigates, were damaged or crippled. With five of the eight destroyers and two frigates down for the count, we made our move. Talia held most of the fleet back, sending in ten destroyers backed up by single ship fighters and a secret weapon – boarding craft. The idea Talia had was simply genius. The single ship fighters would make up the first wave, clearing the path for boarding craft that would arrive in the second wave of reinforcements (who would end up masking the signatures). The intent was to capture the two cruisers and set off the self destruct, with the hope of crippling the enemy fleet. Not at all a simple task, but a daring plan nonetheless.

The destroyers we sent held up well, but we lost two almost instantly. By all accounts it wasn't a total loss, but I could feel the discomfort many of my fellow shipmates felt as they felt the deaths of their friends and family over the Hive Mind. I couldn't help but admire their will to keep fight regardless of the circumstances. Talia also felt the same discomfort but made sure to not let it get to her. Another one of our destroyers blew up, once again drawing my attention to the battle ahead. We were down to just five destroyers out of the ten Talia sent into the middle of the New Tellion Fleet. We had no idea if any of the boarding parties had managed to get aboard, but Talia was already in the process of ordering the remaining destroyers when one of the cruisers suddenly rammed into the other. Both exploded with the intensity of a sun for the briefest of moments before disappearing. When I turned to look back at the colossal scene of destruction, I was both appalled and shocked by what I saw. The explosion had been so massive as to destroy nearly the entire remainder of the opposing fleet. The rest was crippled, unable to fight. Our destroyers hadn't even been given the orders to retreat yet. But it didn't matter as three were completely destroyed and the others were crippled to the point where I questioned whether or not any of them could be salvaged. The sudden loss of so much life connected to the Hive Mind caused many on the bridge to throw up, with some even fainting. I was one of those. Despite not

being connected directly to the Hive Mind, my Empathic ability still connected me to everyone else in the room. The grief I felt emanating from the room struck me like nothing else had. It was so much that I ended up blacking out.

I woke up in a hospital room several days later. The battle was long since over and Talia was already in the process of taking control of New Tellion. It would take some time, given that the previous Government was still holding on in the Parliament Building (they wouldn't last too much longer, though). I shared a wing of the hospital with many other Devonians. Many of them were part of the Rebellion who themselves had suffered much like me. Many of them were in comas or were otherwise unconscious. It didn't take me long to get on my feet and make the rounds. There weren't many injuries among the crews of the crippled warships. Too many had died, on both sides. Instead most of the injured were there for the same reason I was. They were all connected to the Hive Mind and were subsequently burdened with the death of many thousands of other Devonians. It was described to me as dying over and over again. You feel it, even though you're not the one dying. It must have been horrifying for them. So much death and destruction and all of this because of what? A few more worlds to colonize. What a waste.

It took a few days for me to be discharged from the hospital due to my unique condition (the one that stopped me from connecting to the Hive Mind). But I was in for a surprise when I managed to get out. Talia had made me aware of the situation following the defeat of the loyalist forces. Talia had taken complete control over Parliament before dismissing it entirely (a move which upset a lot of people on both sides of the conflict). In doing so, she earned the ire of many who called for representation, even though they never really had any to begin with. The former warzone in the Space above the planet had been filled with debris, most of which was being burnt up in atmosphere. The bigger pieces were being moved out into the dark recess of Space by tugboats meant for moving ships from the construction yards. There was a lot of unease as leadership changed hands. Julia had committed suicide in refusal to accept the circumstances she helped create while her army stood down. It wasn't an easy fight, but three years of war were finally over. But it had an impact that forever changed the fabric of our species. Firstly, our experiment with Democracy ended in failure. Every time elections came about, corruption reared its ugly head. Many of the colonization efforts were privately funded, as in through a single company that produced the colony ships. That is to say, Julia owned shares in a company that built the colony ships used during the effort and later warships for the war effort. Not only that, but the rest of Parliament wasn't any better. Corruption, it seems, is intrinsic to Democracy. I had originally helped set up the system centuries before I left to travel. It seemed like a good idea at the time, though I was very much aware of the corruption that usually followed such a system. I thought that we were above all that, but I was wrong. So long as people think of themselves, corruption will always exist. As long as that is a reality, Democracy is just a pipe dream for idealists.

The effects of the civil war had a lasting impact, despite its short duration. In the end, it did very little for the colonies seeking independence. Only two of the colonies remained independent, with the others now staying as part of the empire (arguably for all the benefits Talia was offering them). Politically, we moved away from Democracy and experimented with a new form of Governance: a Meritocracy. I'd seen many species pull it off, especially other warrior species like ourselves. Thankfully, it's worked out for us. Our empire couldn't be stronger and, at the very least, our leadership isn't corrupt as it would've been if we had kept with the Democracy you Humans are so fond of. In the end, the blood spilled was worth it.