

Anunnaki

The Greatest Story Never Told

Book 1 Gods, Gold and Genes

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This is a work of fiction except for the parts that aren't

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Dedication

This story is especially dedicated to Zechariah Sitchin and the other subsequent translators of the Sumerian texts, who have shown us that the Creation Story may well have been much older and different to what historians tell us.

Preface

Anu felt as though he were entering another realm as he entered the Hall of Justice, the second most important building on Nibiru. Even royal personages have to make appointments to have a meeting with the Chief Justice. And it was not just a case of doing an interview. He had to adhere to specific protocols. Most applicants were put off by all the red tape, but Anu remained determined to have his case heard. Sitting in the Chief Justice's chamber, amid symbols of pomp and historical importance, Anu outlined his petition.

The Judicial elder listened patiently as the young prince explained his position. At length, the Chief Justice asked Anu, "What makes you believe you have more right to the throne than king Alalu?"

"My lineage has a more direct royal line than that of Alalu."

"What proof do you have of this assertion, your Highness?"

“My royal descent is directly from An, through Anib; then through a son of AnIb's marriage to the daughter of Enuru, the youngest son of An and Antu. Your Honour, Enuru, then took Ninuru, his half-sister, as his spouse, and they gave birth to Enama of whom I am a direct descendant.”

“I see. So, your Highness, what are we to do about this situation?”

Anu looked hard at the Chief Justice. “Install me as the new king of course.”

“There is much involved in such a process, your Highness. We will speak with the king about this.”

Alalu cut an imposing figure, his bronze-green scales enhanced by a long scarlet cloak, with gold braiding. Standing at 13 feet tall, slightly shorter than the average Nibiruan, he turned to look at the clock. He had been waiting a long time, and still, the Justice had not called him. He turned to Anshargal, his faithful Cupbearer. “Find out the reason for this intolerable hold-up. I can't waste my time here all day.”

Anshargal, embarrassed about his son being the cause of the king's angst, leapt to it. Having multi-pupil eyes, as all Nibiruans do, the Royal Cupbearer had to focus through one of them to navigate his path. Nibiruans learn this skill soon after hatching. Although, it is more instinctual than conscious learning.

Just then the chamber doors opened, and Alalu got ushered inside.

Kunuk looked up at the king and bowed deeply. “Your Heavenness.”

“Yes, that's all very well, Kunuk but I've been sitting in that antechamber for ages. So let's deal with this nonsense and get it over with.”

Alalu then saw the six other judges enter the chamber. He knew this was going to be more severe than he thought.

Kunuk said, “Your Heavenness we have called you here because we find ourselves in a bit of a dilemma. You see, Anu has a legitimate challenge to the throne.”

Alalu, puzzled, said, “What do you mean?”

“Your Heavenness, Prince Anu claims he is the rightful king of Nibiru. We have to adjudicate on this matter, so what do you suggest we do about it?”

Alalu, angry, replied, “That he has challenged my lawful kingship in such a way is disgraceful. Anu knows that he is next in line to the throne. So what's his problem?”

“The problem, your Heavenness, is that he has direct lineage from the great An. You do not have such regal ancestry. If Prince Anshargal had pursued the matter, he would be king now, instead of you. We suggest you offer Anu something to appease him.”

“What do you suggest, your Worship?”

“That you retain the throne while you live, but Anu will continue the succession, and his children will be the future kings.”

Alalu stared at Kunuk. “Unthinkable! It would stop any of my lineages from ascending to the Nibiruan throne.”

Kunuk shook his head. “I fear, if he forces the issue, your Heavenness, it's going to be very awkward and embarrassing for everyone concerned. We want to avoid this at all costs.”

Alalu pondered the proposition. “Do you think such an offer will be enough to appease him?”

“I don't know, your Heavenness. All we can do is put it to him.”

“What happens if he refuses?”

The Chief justice considered the question. He then answered, “Perhaps, to show amiability between Anu and yourself, it would be prudent to make him your Royal Cupbearer.”

Anu listened to what the Seven who Judge had to say about the matter.

Kunuk finished by saying, “We think it best if Alalu retains kingship for now so that we can focus on the problems besetting our world. We need to show a united front.”

Anu leapt to his feet, “That is not acceptable!”

Kunuk implored, “This is a challenging situation for all concerned. Alalu has graciously offered you the role of Cupbearer and conceded royal lineage to your descendants. Can you not accept this gesture for the good of Nibiru?”

Anu looked at the judges. He knew that he would benefit by having them onside once he became king. Rocking the judicial boat could spoil things for him later. He silently cursed his father for his weakness and said, “Very well, I accept.”

Kunuk smiled, “I knew Your Highness would make a wise decision.” Then he said, “There is one other thing.”

“What's that?”

“To show the An-Gels there is harmony between the houses Ea's betrothal to Damkina will seal the alliance.”

Anu baulked, “What, my son marrying Alalu's daughter?”

“It would bring about peace between the royal families for the first time in generations. The people will love you for it.”

Anu rubbed his chin thoughtfully. It would undoubtedly be good public relations once he sat on his throne. “Very well, I agree.”

“Excellent, Your Highness. We will have it announced.”

Chapter 1

Ea put the finishing touches to his model Shamash as his father entered his room. The serious look on his father's face unsettled young Ea.

Anu turned to his daughter, who had been helping Ea with his project. “Ninkhursag, please leave us. I have something important to tell your brother.”

Ninki pouted but acceded to her father's wishes.

“Why are you here?” Ea asked, nervously.

He came straight out with it. “Ea, it has been arranged that you are to be betrothed to Damkina, to bring our families together.”

Ea stared at his father. “But I don't even know her.”

“You will,” Anu smiled.

“But I don't want to marry her. You promised Ninki to me. It is her I love.”

Anu said, "All that has changed. You will now marry Damkina when the time is right."

Ea took the model he had been working and smashed it on the floor. "NO, I WON'T MARRY HER. YOU CAN'T MAKE ME."

Anu said, "I see you are upset, Ea. We will speak of this later."

Once his father left, Ninkhursag came back into the room. Looking at the smashed spaceship on the floor and the devastation on his face, she said, "Ea, whatever is wrong?"

He hugged her, his eyes clouding over. "Oh Ninki, father says I have to marry Damkina, and I want to marry you."

Being a Nibiruan, she did not shed tears, but she felt profound shock and sadness at his words.

At dinner that night, Ea hardly touched his salad, even though the vegetables came from the royal garden.

I-lu, his brother sneered, chanting "Ea loves Damkina. Ea loves Damkina."

"I do not!" Ea protested, getting wound up by his sibling's taunting.

"Don't let him get to you," Ninki said. "He's just his usual nasty self."

Anu banged his claw on the table, making the dishes rattle. "That's enough! Any more bickering and you two go straight to your rooms."

Eventually, Ea had to agree to marry Damkina, mostly to bring about peace to the rival family branches. But his yearning for Ninki never ceased. Ea didn't mind Damkina, and she seemed to like him. But she wasn't interested in his science projects that kept him busy most of the time. As they got to know each other better, Damkina wasn't under any romantic illusions concerning the relationship. She was well aware her marriage to Ea was much more to do with continuing the Anu family succession to the throne, than that of a real love match.

The meeting, held in secret behind heavily guarded doors, barred entry to all but a few chosen citizens. Even Anu could not gain entry. Inside, Alalu presided over an assortment of royal advisors, scientists and Star Command officers. The emergency meeting got called because the planet, was in dire straits, desperately needing solutions.

The king argued, "If causing the volcanoes to erupt didn't work before what is the point of bombing them again."

General Attak said, "The weapons we had at our disposal during Lahma's reign were far inferior to the ones we now have." He added, "Besides, if we are to survive what other options are there?"

Mandiz, Alalu's chief advisor said, "I fear we must seriously look at evacuating Nibiru. We estimate that another three orbits around Solaris will make it impossible to live here. We will all perish during hibernation."

Kutu, one of the leading scientists, said, "With respect, Mandiz is not a scientist. We believe we can make a heat shield with particles of gold in the atmosphere. We are close to making a breakthrough."

"What atmosphere?" Mandiz retorted. "There is so little left we can hardly breathe. I implore you to look for another home for all Nibiruans."

Alalu turned to Kutu. "When can you scientists complete this gold shield?"

The scientists got into a huddle. Then Kutu said, "The process is in place. Now we need the gold."

"And how long will that take?" Alalu asked.

Mandiz chipped in. "We don't have enough gold, Your Heavenness."

Kutu, annoyed at being upstaged, said, "We are looking at other potential sources, Your Heavenness."

"He means off the planet," Mandiz stated vehemently.

"Is this true?" Alalu queried.

"Yes, your Heavenness. But we could at least make a start by collecting all the gold on Nibiru."

Alalu shook his head. He turned to the General. "How soon can you mount an operation to make a volcanic dust shield?"

"We are ready to go, Your Heavenness."

"Very well, I decide to strike the volcanoes."

When Anu heard about Alalu's decision, he stormed into the king's chambers. "Are you trying to poison our world?" he challenged.

"No. Save it." He stared at his Cup Bearer, "How dare you insult me."

"How dare you put this planet at further risk when we should be looking at alternative solutions."

"There are no alternative solutions."

"Nonsense! Why aren't we going for the gold heat shield?"

"Because it's not feasible." He glared at Anu. "I do not have to answer to you. Now leave me and go about your business."

"More Nibiruans will be poisoned and die. Mark my words."

"Leave now, or I will have you disciplined."

Anshargal felt uneasy being back in the palace. Since being removed as Royal Cupbearer he had kept much to himself. But the king had asked him to rein in his son.

So Anshargal met Anu in the royal gardens, where he took his son aside. "It is important that the alliance between my house and that of the king's remains secure."

Anu sneered, "What do you mean? You know as well as I the alliance between the Houses of Alalu and Anshargal has always been fragile, built as it is on rotten, shaky foundations. The sooner it collapses, the better. Then we can build something real."

"That sort of attitude is only going to create trouble."

"And so is that idiot usurper with his plans to use more mass destruction weapons on the volcanoes of Nibiru. When Lahma tried it before, not only did it fail miserably to re-establish Nibiru's atmosphere, it also produced dangerous areas that became heavily contaminated and unliveable. We should be following the gold shield concept."

"I have it on good authority it will not be ready in time. The treasury will have to collect every piece of gold on this planet. It's just not feasible in the short time we have left."

"Then we should be collecting the gold right now."

Anshargal sighed. We can't do that because to get enough gold means we will have to prospect for the precious metal on the Asteroids. It is impractical and has been shelved, in favour of volcano nuking."

"And what happens if that doesn't work this time?"

"We have to pray to An that the King has made the correct decision."

Chapter 2

Alalu nervously paced around his chambers, waiting to hear from Star Command. Then General Attak's image appeared on the vid screen.

"General, how did the operation go?"

"Moderately successful, Your Heavenness. But not as well as we had expected."

"What do you mean?" Alalu queried, startled.

"We hit our targets, but so far there have been no eruptions. That is not to say there won't be but we were hoping for a chain reaction."

"So you failed," Alalu said, with a sinking feeling.

"Maybe, maybe not, Your Heavenness. We have picked up some activity. They may blow yet."

"Let us hope so, General."

Alalu had to go into damage control before The An-Gels aired the king's failure. He quickly convened a meeting with Kutu. As soon as the scientist arrived at the Royal Palace, the king had him summoned to him. "I have decided we are going for the gold project."

"Then we have to gather a huge supply of gold, Your Heavenness."

"Have you pinpointed any gold on the asteroids?"

"Yes, we have. There are strong indications that gold deposits exist on K3." He showed the king a chart. "There, that's K3."

"How quickly can we send an expedition there?"

"The net forces are favourable at the point in our orbit, Your Heavenness."

"Good. Organise it with Star Command. And I want plenty of publicity with me getting the credit."

Kutu stood up and bowed. "At once, Your Heavenness," after which he left the palace.

Kutu handed over the order with the king's seal.

Commander Kotak looked at the order, then at the scientist. "Sorry, it can't be done."

"This is an order from the king. It has to be carried out."

"Well, I haven't got anything available. Unless we fit out a training Shamash."

"As long as it's space worthy, I guess it will be okay."

As the head of maintenance and spaceship servicing, Commander Kotak knew that sending a class 'C' vessel to the asteroids was fraught with danger. Some astronauts said the 'C' stood for crisis or

catastrophe. This distrust was the reason the old Shamashes were usually only flown in Nibiru airspace. "It'll only carry 30 personnel, including flight crew."

Kutu said, "As long as there's room for, say, twenty miners and their equipment as well as cargo space to bring back gold, it's not a problem."

"There also needs to be a big send-off. The king wants kudos on this one."

Kotak cocked an eye. "Are you sure. The old 'Star Warriors' don't look that pretty these days."

"Get something promoting the expedition painted on the side."

"What like, "Asteroids or bust!" he retorted, half joking.

When Anu found out about the proposed expedition, he became concerned. As he prepared the king for his meetings for the day, he mentioned, "I heard about the planned mining project to the asteroids."

"Yes, that's my idea."

"Well, Kutu has his reservations. He thinks it's rushing things and is concerned for the miners and crew."

"So Kutu's getting cold feet. Well, I'm not. This expedition is going to be my finest hour."

"I don't know. A poorly organised expedition could turn out to be very costly. We only have another three full Kingu's before the net forces weaken."

"I have been informed that all will be ready in just one moon. Now get about your duties and stop harassing me."

Anu busied himself organising the guest list for a banquet when he received a vid-call. He didn't recognise the person on the screen, but he did know the Igigi uniform collar. "Prince Anu here. How can I help you?"

"Greetings Your Highness. I have information that might interest you."

"What information?"

"It's about a cover-up. I cannot speak about it now. Where can we meet?"

Anu, concerned, said, "I need to know more first?"

"All I can say is it concerns contamination from the volcano nuking."

Anu, startled, responded, "The An-Gels have not reported this."

"Only those on the mission know what happened and most are too scared to say anything."

Anu thought about it. The prince surmised that if a cover-up existed Alalu would probably have known about it. "Okay, when and where?"

"Do you know Kaseem's in the old city?"

"Yes."

"I will be there around seven of the clock. I will be wearing a red cloak."

Kaseem's, one of Nibiru City's oldest salad bars, nestled amid night market stalls, abounded with excitement, as diners partook of their food. Although the restaurant seemed packed, the caller's red cloak stuck out like a beacon. Anu, having dressed down, wearing a drab hooded cloak for anonymity, made himself known to the mystery officer. "You have something to tell me."

The officer looked up. "Take a seat, Your Hi..." He stopped himself in time. He passed Anu a piece of paper with a map on it. "This is a navigation photo taken a few hours after the bombardment."

Anu scrutinised the picture. "Where is this?"

"Kamtumu Valley, near Mount Vekta, one of the volcanoes we nuked."

Anu looked at one of the prime market garden areas on Nibiru. He noticed a shaded area on the map. "What does this mean?"

The whistle-blower replied, "The area of contamination." Then he said, "There hasn't been any evacuation from the area. Now that's just plain wrong."

"No evacuation!" Anu stared at the informant. "Why, in the face of lethal contamination, wouldn't they leave their farms?"

"They haven't been warned. Some of us wanted to alert the farmers, but we were ordered not to do so."

Then Anu got it. "It's because of the food, isn't it."

"Aggranda own most of those farms, and they don't want people scared of eating their food."

"So it got covered up."

"I just had to tell someone. I hope you don't mind."

Anu nodded. "Can I keep this map?"

"Sure, but It didn't come from me."

Quietly, in his quarters, Anu researched the area shown on the map. Around 3000 farms could have been affected by the fallout. That meant at least 6000 Nibiruans could get sick and not know why. The Kamtumu Valley covered a vast area and produced at least 65 percent of the vegetables consumed on Nibiru.

Apart from the fact the vast Aggranda monopoly had the power and wealth to bury what happened, Anu knew that exposing the cover up to the An-Gels would cause widespread panic and fear of eating. Although revolted by the Igigi's callous attitude, there seemed nothing he could do about it.

Chapter 3

A vast gathering took place at Star Base, as Kutu, the crew and the miners boarded the freshly painted Star Warrior, Shamash class 'c'. Alalu and his courtiers were present in full regalia as the craft readied for take-off. The king had his statement ready, as the An-Geliks besieged him for his comments.

Mandiz fronted the media. "His Heavenness will not be answering your questions, but he will make a statement."

The media, though disappointed, hung onto his every word.

"We are doing everything we can to solve our problem. At present we are gathering in the gold on Nibiru to make a heat shield. But we haven't got enough. So I organised this expedition to mine for gold on K3, one of the larger asteroids. I ask all our citizens to give up their gold for the greater good. Thank you."

Anu, also present at the launch, did answer questions.

One of the An-Geliks asked, "Is this a publicity stunt to make the king look good?"

Anu said, "I truly believe the king did this with the best of intentions."

"Are you saying it wasn't a good decision?"

"I think the decision to look for gold off the planet is a good one. I do have some concerns about the haste with which this mission has been assembled."

"Surely time is the essence here."

"I agree, but a rushed expedition is also a risky one."

The An-Gelik news reported the disaster. The only details they had being that en route between K3 and Kb1 the spaceship crashed into an asteroid, without any survivors. Alalu's blood went even colder than usual. His mission had failed and ended in disaster. He quickly gathered his top advisors.

Anu horrified but not too surprised, readied for the attack. He thanked the lucky stars he had aired his concerns. Now he could distance himself from the accident and let the king deal with the flak. He could have reiterated his concerns about the poorly organised mission using inferior equipment. But there was no point as nobody would fly to the asteroids to try and find the crashed spaceship.

On the news that night the king made his statement. "Fellow Nibiruans, it is with great sadness I address you this night. As you probably know by now, the mining mission members were all killed when their spaceship collided with an asteroid. Our hearts and minds go out to those brave mining pioneers who died while trying to save our planet. They will always have a special place in our hearts. We will not forget their selfless sacrifice." Then he said. "Fellow Nibiruans, we need your gold more than ever, Please give it up freely."

Anu couldn't believe it, but somehow, Alalu managed to ride out the bad publicity criticising his leadership, put out by the An-Gels. The king's chief advisor, Mandiz, saw the bombing and mining failures as a golden opportunity for him to push his evacuation solution. The king agreed to set up a body to look into it. Mandiz chaired the committee.

For nine more Sars (Nibiruan years) Anu played the role of Royal Cupbearer but it grew thin on him. The king had failed in every attempt to arrest the planet's waning atmosphere, and even made matters worse. The media criticism of Alalu's mishandling of the shield issue further fuelled Anu's kingship challenge. The time had come for him to make his move. This time he took his argument to the media.

In an exclusive one-off interview, Anu put his case.

The interviewer asked, "If you are entitled to the throne why do you serve as the king's Cup Bearer?"

"Because of an agreement I was coerced into, by Kunuk. He persuaded me not to muddy the waters and to present a united front to confront our problem. However, owing to the king's repeated failure, I feel the agreement is void."

"Will you take the throne by force?" asked the interviewer.

"That is not my intention. Let me say this. Apart from my being the rightful Nibiruan king, my stand to have Alalu dismissed, has nothing to do with that. It has to do with the way he is handling, or should I say, mishandling many important issues."

When Alalu found out about the interview, he became furious. How dare he come out publicly and challenge the king?

He sacked Anu as his Cupbearer and reassigned Anshargal in his place.

The whole affair troubled the High Council, which delegated Kunuk, to deal with the Prince. He took Anu aside to try and smooth things over. "Your Highness, I thought we had an agreement," he said, as they walked in the indoor gardens.

"I have been very patient, but Alalu has to go."

"Your Highness, your turn will come. Please, just keep a low profile until then."

Turning abruptly, his short tail twitching angrily, Anu hissed, "Is everyone blind around here? There will not be a Nibiru for me to rule if we do not start making sensible decisions immediately!"

Given that he was not going to be able to appease the royal prince, Kunuk took another tack.

"There is one way for you to be king."

"What way is that?"

"You must challenge him to a wrestling match."

Anu was confused. "Sorry Kunuk, I don't understand."

"It just occurred to me that Nibiruan law still stands that states, by Nibiruan tradition you can challenge the king to a wrestling match for the throne."

Anu's eyes widened. "Then I will do just that! I at this moment challenge Alalu to a wrestling match for the Nibiruan crown."

Kunuk smiled wistfully. "All you need now is the assent of the High Council."

"Will I get it?"

"I believe so, your Highness," the elder grinned. Then he added, "But if you lose, you forfeit your chance of being king of Nibiru, forever."

Seeing this as his only chance to save his planet, Anu decided, "You get me the contest, and I will do the rest."

Chapter 4

Alalu, both troubled and amazed by Anu's challenge, confided in Anshargal. "I've never heard of the wrestling challenge."

"Neither I, Your Heavenness," the Cupbearer said handing the king his royal blue cloak.

"It's ridiculous. I want you to talk your son out of it."

"I doubt he will listen to me. But I will try."

"Show some backbone. You're Anu's father. He should respect your wishes."

That evening he broached the subject with Anu, as they ate fresh salad and drank fruit juice. "The king is not happy with your challenge."

Anu looked up from his food. "I didn't do it to make him happy."

"It could all end badly, you know. I mean if you lost you can never be king."

"Wake up father. If Alalu remains on the throne, there won't be a planet to rule over."

Anshargal looked at his son. "Do you know why I didn't become king?"

Anu stared at his father. "You have always avoided the subject."

"I couldn't handle the responsibility of saving our world. And I wonder if you could do any better than those kings who went before you."

"What we need is a thoroughly well-planned mission to a planet with a lot of gold."

"And do you know of such a planet?"

"Ki."

Anshargal chortled disparagingly, "Ki is just a pipe dream. Nobody knows what to expect there."

Anu firmed his jaw. "Before Kutu died he showed me readings that suggested a lot of gold there."

Anshargal changed the subject. "Give up on the wrestling match, Anu."

"Yes, if he abdicates."

"That's not going to happen."

"Then I will have to vanquish him in the ring."

Alalu prowled around the court like a wounded lizard. He needed to blame someone, and Mandiz seemed a suitable target. After all, as his chief advisor, he should have advised the king about the wrestling challenge. "Why didn't you warn me this could happen?"

Mandiz clasped his claws together. "My humblest apologies, Your Heavenness. Nobody has practised that obscure rule for many generations since Duuru's troubled reign. I didn't know it still existed, let alone it being a legal statute."

"Never mind your excuses. What am I to do? Can I refuse the challenge?"

"I'm afraid; traditionally, you have to comply. To refuse the challenge means losing the crown by default."

"Then I am stuck," Alalu moaned slumping into a chair. "Anu is much younger and fitter than me."

"All I can suggest is that I get you the best trainer to prepare you for the match."

Dejected, Alalu beseeched, "Talk to Kunuk again. There must be some loophole we haven't explored."

Mandiz shook his head. "The Chief Justice is Adamant. Although nobody had mounted such a challenge for many generations the High Council upholds the challenge and the wrestling match has to go ahead."

On Nibiru, the regal challenge became a public affair. For a while, the impending wrestling match entirely engrossed Nibiruan minds. The An-Gelik media built the event up into a massive spectacle, attracting an audience from wide and far, with many coming from areas a long way from Nibiru City. The hover pads were chock-a-block with Margiddos (personal flying saucers) as families queued up to get seats in the auditorium.

On the night of the match, the auditorium became so overcrowded that Nibiruans were standing in the aisles. Never had so much publicity surrounded such an extraordinary event. And the An-Gels were, of course, there, in full force, to record every moment for posterity. The wrestling match was to be broadcast to vid-screens in homes all over Nibiru City and some outlying districts.

The MC picked up the speaking stick, saying, "Good evening all Nibiruans, here and in your homes. An extraordinary event takes place tonight in which His Heavenness King Alalu and His Highness Prince Anu will wrestle for the throne. The victor of this contest will become the king of Nibiru. Although Anu appears younger and fitter, Alalu has trained with the best Nibiru has to offer. So let us see who will triumph this exceptional evening. So, without further ado, let the match begin."

A huge cheer rang out, along with the stamping of feet, as the combatants entered the fighting circle. The referee stood between the pair and announced. "This bout will be decided by a shoulder pin to the count of three if any fighter ends up outside of the circle or a submission. Now let the challenge begin." He backed out of the ring, leaving the combatants staring at each other, as they looked for an opening.

With oiled scales they began circling each other, searching for a weakness in their opponent's defence. Anu got the king in a neck hold, and the fight for royal supremacy began. In naked hand-to-hand combat, with bodies oiled, they fought. Alalu had learned well and matched Anu, move for move, blow for blow.

Eventually, Anu got the upper hand and forced the king to the mat, pinning his shoulders by landing heavily on Alalu's body. Anu then applied a choke lock, causing the king's eyes to bulge in their sockets, forcing him into submission. Having achieved his goal, Anu, rose up, raising both fists in victory. He yelled to the spectators at the top of his voice, "I AM YOUR NEW KING!"

A huge cheer went up, but Anu's triumph became short lived.

The Grand Vizier announced, "Although it is true that Anu bested the king, under the Nibiruan rule, if the match takes place while the planet is facing a crisis, the incumbent ruler can decide to remain as such, until the crisis is past."

Unable to believe the announcement, Anu's eyes widened in shock and disbelief. Struggling to control his anger, he shouted, "THIS IS MADNESS! IT IS THE KING'S INCOMPETENCE THAT LED TO THIS CHALLENGE TAKING PLACE!" Anu's outburst did nothing more than vent his spleen. His raised voice got lost in the ensuing uproar, as Alalu vowed that he would still not relinquish the throne until he had dealt with the heat shield problem.

"NO! THIS OUTRAGE CANNOT BE HAPPENING!" Anu yelled, but to no avail. He cried out "I AM THE RIGHTFUL KING, AND I WILL TAKE MY THRONE,"

With that declaration the die became cast. The seeds were sown to be reaped in the fullness of time. But Anu still had to wait.

Chapter 5

The mission of survival was so crucial that Alalu decided to command it, himself. He called for Anshargal to come to his chambers. When he arrived, the king said, "I shall leave you to hold my position here, while I take the expedition to Ki."

Anu's father, taken aback, said, "You are flying on the mission?"

"It is too important for me not to go. If we do not find an alternative world soon, it will be too late for all of us."

"Your Heavenness, The scientists are confident of a breakthrough."

"How many times have I heard that? No, Anshargal, I fear it is too late for Nibiru. We must prepare ourselves for evacuation."

“Your Heavenness, you have never left Nibiru before.”

Alalu turned to Anu's father. “You will be my place holder while I am gone.”

“I'm not sure I can take on such a responsibility.”

“Listen to me, Anshargal. The devastating effect global warming is having on our planet means we have to find a more hospitable home very soon. Urak, our new chief scientist, after exhaustive research into habitation compatibility, is convinced that Ki, one of Apsu's minor planets, will be best suited to our needs.”

“I understand that Your Heavenness, but why are you going when you could send someone in your stead.”

“The Nibiruan High Council has decreed that I will lead the mission to Ki, to establish a new Nibiruan homeland.”

Alalu knew his mother would try to talk him out of going, but he remained determined to stick to his decision. As he expected, once she heard of his intention to fly to Ki, Lama demanded to see him. He wasn't looking forward to a confrontation with his mother. Nevertheless, the king got his pilot to fly him to Lama's villa, a mere one hour flight from Nibiru City. When he arrived, she looked up from her work in her beloved garden.

No sooner than they had greeted each other, Lama launched into, “I do hope you have given up that foolish notion about going to Ki.”

Alalu pulled back from her. “Whether we like it or not, mother, this planet is doomed. We have to find somewhere else to live.”

“Then let someone else go there. Your place is here, on the Nibiruan throne.”

“Have you seen what they are saying about me in the An-Gelik broadcasts?” I have to do something to regain my subjects respect.”

“What do you need their respect for, when you have power? Besides, the moment you go, that young upstart Anu will grab the throne. He is just waiting for such an opportunity.”

“I don't believe that mother, not with his father acting as king in my absence.”

She stopped weeding and stared at him. “Then, things are even worse than I assumed. Now they can conspire together.” Then Lama brightened. “Send Anshargal on the mission instead of you. That way you can ensure you keep your throne.”

Looking his mother straight in the eye, Alalu responded, “Nice try mother, but I am the one who needs to lead this expedition, and nothing you say will deter me.” Given that she wouldn't concede defeat, he added, “Dear mother, you worry too much. Anu and I may have our differences, but we both agree that the survival of our people is foremost in our minds.”

“If, as you say, you and Anu are working together on this, why not send him to Ki. That way you know he will not be a threat.”

Alalu sighed and sat on an outdoor seat. “If we are to abandon this world, then I must lead my people to another. Besides, Anu would get all the credit, not I. No mother, I have to go.”

Lama flicked out her tongue and tutted, “Be it on your head when Anu grabs your throne.”

Alalu knew that Lama spoke the truth. “I will just have to come up with something to deter him.”

“What do you have in mind?”

"I don't know yet, but I will think of something."

Lama, the matriarch responsible for both lineages of the warring houses of Anshargal and Alalu, didn't want any further complications to arise in the royal household, during her son's absence. She had a message sent to one of the Seven who Judge, saying she wanted a meeting. Not many Nibiruans could demand the attention of a judge, but Lama wielded enormous power in the upper echelons of Nibiruan society. She enjoyed the privilege of being one of the few.

"Nibiru needs a strong hand to guide it, and I don't believe Anshargal is ready for such a challenge," She stated to Dayanum, one of the seven who judge, as they sipped wine together.

Looking out over her beautiful flower garden, the judge inhaled a mixture of fragrant scents. He then turned to his host, "Although I understand your anxiety in this matter, we can hardly stop your son from choosing who he wants to rule in his absence."

"I am more concerned about Anu making a play for the crown while my son is away."

"Yes, well there is still a question mark over the result of the wrestling match."

She hissed, "My son got forced into that ridiculous position due to some archaic rule you forgot to erase from the statute book."

"That may well be, Lama, but it is, nevertheless, still a law."

"Huh. Well, I don't like my son signing up for this dangerous mission. Look at what happened to the last one."

"Dear Lama, our claws are tied."

"I don't like him leaving that pathetic Anshargal in charge."

"The place holder has to be the king's choice."

"Then you will have to clip Anu's wings. I just know he will make trouble."

Dayanum sighed heavily. "The Royal Guard will stop any threat to the crown. That's their duty."

A special Shamash stood in readiness for the historic trip to Ki. The massive metallic winged disk, equipped with the latest technology, including a nuclear fusion engine and a powerful laser for cutting through space junk and other obstacles, underwent its final safety checks.

Igigi Command invited the king to have a guided tour of the craft, but he had other ideas. Instead, he had arranged to meet, Anzu, an old and trusted friend, who came from a well-known and influential farming dynasty.

Despite him being Alalu's close friend, Anzu, an ex-astronaut, responded coolly to the king's proposal, as they sat and talked at the farmer's home.

"I'm not with the Command now Alalu. As you can see, I am a farmer."

"Come on Anzu; you can't-fool me. We both know you'd love to be in space, flying again."

"Not if all I can fly is some air taxi, which is all they will offer me."

"How about flying a Supreme Orbiter?"

"Do you have one?" the farmer asked, his eyes widening.

"I had hoped that with all your contacts you would be able to come up with one for me."

"For you! Why do you need it?"

“To fly to Ki.”

Anzu's old face became a question mark. “I don't get it Alalu, Igigi Star Command has offered you state of the art Shamash. So why come to me?”

“I need some special requirements for the craft I am flying in, to Ki.”

“Can't the Igigi provide you with these special requirements?”

“I do not think so, Anzu. You see, I am after some missiles.”

“Why on Nibiru do you want missiles?” the ex-astronaut asked, startled by the king's request.

“I need an edge to deter Anu from stealing the throne from me, in my absence.”

Not liking the sound of this, Anzu ventured, hesitantly, “What have missiles got to do with it?”

“I will have them aimed at Nibiru. If he makes a move to grab the throne, I will threaten him with the 'great destruction'. Then he will soon back off.”

This madness proved too much for the ex-astronaut. “Y..you seriously expect me to find a Shamash loaded with deadly missiles, Alalu?”

“Are you able to do it?”

“The question is, am I willing to do it?”

“I wouldn't ask you if I didn't consider it necessary.”

“I know that. Look, let me do some sniffing around, then I'll get back to you.”

Anzu, as good as his word, checked around, speaking covertly with his trusted contacts. After a few failed attempts, he heard about another ex-astronaut, one with a reputation for flaunting authority. According to Anzu's source, Colonel Azdiz, a disgruntled ex-Igigi officer, cashiered from Space Corps, could be just the person.

Anzu discovered Colonel Azdiz in a down-at-heel juice bar, in a slummy sector of Nibiru City. It took a while and a few juices to track the retired pilot down. When Anzu finally caught up with the Colonel, he asked, “Is it true that you can lay your claws on just about anything?”

The hardened veteran flier queried, “Who's asking?”

“Commander Anzu.”

Eyeing Anzu with suspicion, he said, “Yes, I have heard of you. I also heard you'd retired.”

“Yes, and I believed you were invited to leave.”

Azdiz stared daggers at the intruder. “And I don't like being disturbed when I'm having lunch.” Then he gave a hissy laugh.

“But I like someone with a sense of humour. What do you want with this broken down old battle horse?”

Anzu leaned in close. “A supreme Orbiter fitted with missiles.”

The ex-colonel went silent. After a moment Azdiz said, “This is a joke, right?”

Anzu shook his head, “No. I'm very serious.”

Azdiz, worried and suspicious, said, “If you're recording this conversation I'll ...”

“Relax. There's no need to make threats. This request is genuine.”

The cashiered astronaut just stared, wondering if Anzu planned to trick him.

Anzu continued, “Of course if you cannot come up with the goods...”

“...I didn't say that!”

Leaning in closely again, Anzu said, “Look, this is for a client of the highest importance. Money is no object. Can you get these items for me?”

The colonel brightened. The words, money is no object, became sweet music to what passed for his Nibiruan ears. “How many missiles do you want?”

“I don't know, a dozen perhaps.”

“What type are you after?”

Anzu shrugged. “I don't know, long-range mass destruction, I guess.”

Azdiz gasped, “By the great An, is your client starting a war?”

“No Colonel Azdiz, he is trying to avoid one.”

For Azdiz the big dream had finally come true. This time he didn't have to hustle for surplus ray weapons. He had hit the big time and could name his price. He went through his list of contacts. One Nibiruan rogue came to mind. They had flown together when the crazy king Lahmu had ordered them to nuke the volcanoes. After the failed operation, many of the decommissioned rocket ships became scrap. Jaki, Azdiz's old co-pilot, looked after that part of the project. He also looked after himself, holding back the more serviceable craft for the black market.

Azdiz tracked him down and beamed him, Once he saw his old comrade on the vid-screen, he asked, “Jaki, you old crock, are you still running that spacecraft graveyard?”

“Is that you Azdiz, you old war dog?”

“Yes, it's your old skipper. Look, I've got a special order for you.”

“What do you mean, by special order? What are you after?”

“Are you still at the same place?”

“Yes, I'm still running the old rocket graveyard. Now, what is this all about?”

“I'll come and see you. Make sure you're well stocked with veggie juices.”

Anshargal had been trying to contact the king all day. Eventually, he turned up, and his Cupbearer approached him. “Your Heavenness, we have been trying to contact you. Igigi Command needs to go over some preparations with you.”

Alalu brushed it off. “I haven't got time for them at present.”

“What should I tell them?”

“Tell them what I've told you.” Then Alalu, realising that such an off-handed response might raise suspicions, changed his mind. “Sorry Anshargal, it been a tough day. “Tell them I will visit tomorrow.”

“Very well, Your Heavenness.”

Alalu had more important things on his mind than checking out the ship the Igigi had prepared for his upcoming mission to Ki, especially, as he had made alternative arrangements. He wondered if Anzu had managed to organise the things he required. He hadn't heard from the astronaut since their discussion, and time seemed short. Unwilling to wait any longer he contacted his friend, and they arranged to meet at the Kadir salad bar for lunch.

“Where are we with this Shamash?” Alalu asked as they sat eating.

“It's in hand. Don't worry.”

“I have to leave on the set date.”

“I understand Alalu, but these things take time. Besides, I haven't been able to get all the crew together yet.”

“Please speed things up. You know the time restraints I am under.”

“Come on Alalu. You are the king. You are not subordinate to time restraints.”

Alalu fixed the astronaut with his gaze “When the Igigi comes looking for me I need to be gone, Anzu. Is that understood?”

Seeing how stern the king looked, Anzu responded, “I will chase up my contact as soon as we have eaten.”

“Let me talk to him.”

“It's best if you don't get involved. Leave it to me.”

“My client cannot wait much longer,” Anzu stated cogently, having found which bar Azdiz currently frequented.

The colonel looked up at his client. “I'm having trouble getting a Supreme Orbiter. If your client would settle for a class 3 Shamash that's not a problem.”

“Why couldn't you have asked me about this before?” Anzu asked, angrily.

“You asked for ...”

“Yes, I know that. Look, if the Shamash is flight ready for a long mission, then yes. However, organise it quickly.”

“Okay Anzu, I will arrange it.”

“Good.”

“There's one other thing,” Azdiz mentioned, unsure of his client's response.

“What would that be?” Anzu asked, impatiently.

“My source can only find eight missiles.”

“Are they armed?”

“Yes, of course, they are!”

“That's fine then.”

“What about my payment?”

“As arranged, just let me have your code, and I will pay the agreed sum into your account.”

“When will that be?”

“You will be paid, as soon as everything checks out.”

A huge crowd gathered at Igigi Star Command, in anticipation of the event about to take place. Pushing against the barriers, they craned their necks, waiting for the arrival of their king, their brave hero who had volunteered to lead his subjects to the unexplored Ki. The An-Gels were ready and waited with cameras primed to roll. This event made the top news. King Alalu would be leaving Nibiru for the first time. The only problem being the king hadn't turned up.

“Where could he have got to?” asked the Igigi Commander, as he waited beside the Shamash, ready for take-off.

“I'll check with the palace, sir,” the first officer replied,” wondering why the royal personage had not arrived as planned.

As far as the palace knew, everything about the king's travel plans seemed in order. Alalu had set it up that way, making sure that Anshargal and his vizier saw him leave for the Star Command base. Little did they know he had his secret travel plans.

By the time the king's personal Essuru, (a small spacecraft) piloted by Anzu, landed at the secret location, the Shamash awaited ready for take-off. As Igigi Command controlled all Nibiruan flights, finding a private launch base was not easy. However, after hunting around, Anzu managed to find a mostly disused training base, manned by a handful of disgruntled personnel, who were not averse to supplementing their low pay.

“Smiling, Anzu said, “There you are your Heaviness, the ship and crew are ready and waiting.”

“What about our special cargo?”

“It's loaded and primed.”

“That's excellent Anzu. You have done well. Let's go aboard.”

The king, still angry losing the match to Anu, believed he had all avenues covered, should the renegade Prince make any attempt at grabbing the throne in his absence. Convinced that Anu would relinquish the throne in the face of a significant threat to Nibiru city, he felt assured the throne would be awaiting his triumphant return. Then he would also become King of Ki.

As he settled in his cabin, he heard a knock on his door. Anzu entered. “Are we ready for blast off?” the king asked.

“I just wanted to check to see if you needed anything first.”

Looking straight at the veteran astronaut, Alalu smiled, saying, “Is this better than just flying a taxi?”

“It certainly is a bold adventure, my friend.”

Alalu became apologetic. “You know, I didn't want to blow up those volcanoes, but what choice did I have?”

“Don't worry. Look at it this way. If you hadn't done so, we wouldn't have this ship now.”

“True, but if I hadn't ordered the missile attack, I might not have been needed to lead this mission.”

Anzu smiled, "It's best not to dwell on such things. Here we are with a rocket ship loaded with missiles, ready to fly into unknown space. I only need your consent, and we will be on our way."

Alalu finally felt the reality of his situation. Once the Shamash took off, there would be no turning back. Alalu, who found it difficult to make commitments, had to make the biggest one of his life. Clasp his clawed hands behind his back, he went to the porthole and looked out, realising it could be his last view of Nibiru. Then, turning to Anzu, he said, "Let's go."

Chapter 6

The astronaut, awaiting his royal passenger became increasingly concerned at the king's non-appearance. He informed Igigi Star Command, who contacted the royal residence to find out where the king had gotten to.

Anshargal, at a loss said, "I saw him leave for the Star base with my own eyes. I cannot think what might have delayed him."

"Well he has not arrived, so what has happened to him?"

Anshargal, in a sweat, a rarity for a Homosaur, said. "I have no idea. I will keep looking though." He tried not to panic but as the royal place holder he became the king by proxy. As such it became his responsibility to make sure his king remained safe. Now he seemed to have disappeared off the face of Nibiru, so Anshargal set about searching for his missing king.

He called for the vizier and told him what had happened.

"Have you contacted his mother?" the vizier asked, upon his hasty arrival.

Anshargal cringed at the thought. "Why should I contact his mother?"

"Well, she seems to know everything that's going on."

"Yes, I suppose it might not be a bad idea."

"You don't reckon she had him kidnapped, to stop him from going, do you?"

"Kidnap the king! No, I don't believe even she would go that far."

The thought of speaking with Lama, never a pleasant experience for Anshargal, especially as he did not come from her son's side of the family, made him cringe. However, as she was most likely to know where her son would be, he had to see her.

When they met, at the palace, Lama, who, normally bitter and resentful, seemed light-hearted and jovial, putting Anshargal on his guard.

He ventured, "Lama, we are searching for the king. Arrangements were made for him to take off on the Ki mission today, but he didn't show up at Star Command."

Lama's demeanour soon changed to its normal self, "So, you have lost your king. What do you expect me to do about it?"

The stand-in king became suspicious. "If it doesn't concern you, Lama, then you must know something of his whereabouts."

Lama just laughed. She then said, "I would love to see you lot running around blindly, chasing your tails, but you'll know sooner or later."

"Know what, Lama?"

“Know that my son has made his own arrangements.”

“What arrangements?” the proxy asked, startled.

“You will find out when he is ready to contact you.”

“I don't understand.”

“In time you will,” she answered, refusing to say anything more on the subject.

Despite the 'Class 3' being an older ship, the take off and initial flight went very smoothly. Anzu, very pleased with the Shamash's handling, became confident of a successful flight. All on board systems were working efficiently and the flight continued effortlessly, at least until they encountered their first obstacle. This occurred as Anzu carried out a routine check on the flight deck.

The navigator caught his attention. “Sir, I'm picking up some unusual blips on the screen.”

Anzu peered over his shoulder, “Are they space craft?”

“No sir, the energy registration suggests inert objects, possibly rock fragments.”

“What size?”

“Different sizes. There does, however, seem to be some large ones among them.

Concerned, but not showing it, Anzu monitored the Nav-screen, watching, as more blips appeared to be on a collision course with his ship.

As the Shamash closed in on the unpredictable asteroid fragments in its path, Anzu knew he had to take action. However, as this, being the first time a Nibiruan flying saucer had travelled to Ki, left him unsure about what action to take, to avoid having his craft damaged, or even destroyed, by the huge floating boulders. “Can we fly around them?” he asked.

“That is difficult to know, sir. They're very widespread,” the navigator replied.

“Then we may have to fly through them.”

“If one of the bigger ones hit us, I doubt the ship will survive, sir”

“Then, we'll have to blast them out of the way.”

“I don't believe our ray guns are powerful enough, sir.”

There are always the missiles. We can certainly make a mess of those rocks with one of those.”

“Yes sir.”

Anzu then called out, “Somebody, bring the king here immediately.” Anzu knew the rules. Galactic Federation law forbade the use of mass destruction weapons in open space. The only time using such a weapon would be allowed was if the crew's life was threatened. 'That's all very well,' he thought, when facing a hostile force. But how could he assess the danger level from a bunch of floating space rocks?

The blips became bigger and more frequent by the time Alalu entered the bridge. “Why have you had me brought up here?” He asked, annoyed.

“I need your decision on something, Your Heaviness.”

“Anzu, I left strict instructions not to be disturbed unless we have an emergency.”

“This could very well be one, Your Heaviness.”

“What do you mean?”

“We need to launch a missile to carve a path through some huge space rocks.”

“Launch a missile! Isn't there some rule against that?”

“Yes, your Heaviness, but if one of those boulders hits us, it could easily rip open our hull.”

“Then it would be an emergency.”

“Then it would be too late!”

The navigator interrupted, “Sir, we have to decide now. The rocks are becoming visible on our vid-screen.”

Anzu looked straight at Alalu, “We fly, or we die, your choice, your Heaviness.”

“How many missiles do we have?”

“None, if we don't fire one very soon!”

Alalu had no time to appraise the situation. It seemed that using nuclear missiles would be the only way they could blast the rocks out of their path. Taking a deep breath, he ordered, “Okay. Fire one.”

By the time, Alalu made the decision to fire a missile at the boulders, smaller rocks were already making dents in the ship's hull, as the Shamash flew through them. The missile, once launched, streaked unerringly to its target, a boulder about 100 feet across. The massive blast, which created a huge energy release, as matter and anti-matter collided, blew the huge rock to smithereens, leaving just tiny pebbles to ping harmlessly against the craft's pock-marked hull. The explosion, an amazing sight when seen from the flight deck, had Alalu stunned.

Anzu ordered, “Activate radiation shields.”

Alalu, totally blown out by what he had witnessed, uttered, “That was truly outstanding. However, now that the excitement is over, I will return to my rest.”

Turning to the king, Anzu corrected, “It's not over yet. The effect of the blast will vaporise the surrounding space.” He then picked up an intercom mike, saying, “It's going to get rough. Everybody, strap yourselves in.”

The Commander's words proved all too true. No sooner than he gave the order, the vaporised space, which rapidly expanded, formed a massive shock wave that tossed the Shamash about as though it were merely a piece of driftwood in a stormy sea.

The craft's metal body shrieked - its durability tested to extremes. The flight crew, fighting a losing battle with instruments going haywire, tried, desperately to keep the ship on course. A major power failure shortly shut down most of the electrical systems, and then the auxiliary generator kicked in.

Despite the extreme buffeting the old Shamash took, as it flew through the exploded asteroids, its metallic hull held together, and its inboard equipment stayed intact. Once the danger had past, the crew went into check and repair mode. After checking that the nuclear core still remained intact, without any leaks and the warheads were still safe and secure, Anzu's crew began maintenance work on the ships technological components that needed repairs.

Eventually, the autopilot, which had failed during the crisis, became re-established and the navigation equipment, reset. Once he felt satisfied that all was again in order, Anzu resumed his course for Ki.

“Come and look at this, sir,” the navigator requested, as the star ship flew through Ki's atmosphere. Looking over the officer's shoulder, Anzu asked, “What is it?”

“It looks like dense cloud covering the whole planet.”

“How thick is it?”

“I'm not sure sir. The main problem is that we don't know how close we are to the planet's surface.”

Anzu nodded, then, addressing the flight crew, ordered, “Reduce speed and angle of descent and be ready to activate retro boosters.”

Having successfully flown blindly through the thick cloud cover, the Igigi pilot began to feel the planet's gravitational pull kick in. It registered as a weird sensation, as if the attraction of the planet had taken over his controls. He activated the retro rockets, which lessened Ki's gravitational pull. It still needed further adjustment for alignment, so the pilot slowed the craft down by further reducing his spiralling landing angle.

Having passed through the thick cloud bank the blue/green world below, came into view. As the Shamash neared its destination, one of the Igigi crew members had the unenviable task of waking the king, and, again, escorting him to the bridge of the craft.

Upon arrival on the bridge, Alalu's grumpiness had not abated. “What have you disturbed me for this time?”

“You said you wanted to know when we came into land, your Heavenness,” Anzu reminded the king.

Upon hearing, they were approaching Ki, Alalu's mood noticeably improved. Congratulating the flight crew, he said, “Well done one and all. We have made history this day.”

“Would you like to view the landing from the co-pilot's seat, your Heavenness,” the Igigi Commander asked, bowing as he did so.

As he looked out of the pilot's window, Alalu beheld the most magnificent sight, a sphere of iridescent blue and green, floating in inky space. “So this is Ki,” he commented.

“It is Your Heavenness,” The Commander replied.

“Let us pray to the gods that it will serve our purpose.”

“Yes, Your Heavenness,” the pilot agreed.

As the space ship descended through Ki's atmosphere, the smooth ethereal sphere transformed into to the uneven surface of the land and the, seeming, flatness of the oceans. These fitted together like an interlocking jigsaw that made up the planetary sphere. As the Shamash descended in ever-decreasing spirals, the planet's finer points revealed themselves. The, uneven land mass fractal revealed even greater detail, as mountain ranges, rivers and lowland jungles came into view. The blue/gray oceans exposed their iridescent blue/green hues, topped with white-capped waves.

“We are going to land here, in the ocean, Your Heavenness,” the pilot pointed out, indicating an area on the screen that ‘much later', became known as the Persian Gulf.

“Okay everyone, it's time to strap yourselves in, as we are about to land,” the Commander announced, as the Shamash slowed, ready for splash down.

Landing, for the first time on a planet is fraught with difficulty for any pilot, no matter how experienced he is. Without having a control centre to navigate him in, and only a small visual guide to go by, the pilot had only his know how and instinct to direct him. In addition to this, he was also responsible for Alalu's safety.

Despite all the obstacles impeding them, the landing proved successful, if a little bumpy, as the saucer-shaped craft skimmed the waves, and eventually came to rest on the rippling waters of the gulf.

Anzu breathed a sigh of relief. They had actually landed safely on Ki. Turning to Alalu, saying, "Here we are, Your Heavenness."

Looking around at the ocean, Alalu commented, "Yes, an extraordinary journey. However, it is now that the adventure really begins."

The pilot approaching his king, said, "Your Heavenness, we apologise for any discomfort you may have felt during the landing."

Alalu brushed the apology aside. "That is nonsense! You did an excellent job." Then, turning to Anzu, he said, "Now perhaps we should venture outside."

A sealed hovercraft, made ready for the scouting party, stood by. Alalu, Anzu, and eight of the crew boarded the vessel, which then hovered over the ocean until it reached the shore.

Donning his 'Eagle helmet' to assist his breathing in Ki's thicker air, Anzu announced, "I will check the outside atmospheric conditions, Your Heavenness." With over 50 Sars of experience to his credit, the Commander checked everything thoroughly before leaving the hover vehicle. As he stepped outside the craft, a blast of sticky heat hit him. The temperature, however, wasn't surprising to him. In fact, it had been a prime reason the Nibiruans chose that landing zone, them being cold-blooded beings.

The total mission crew numbered 50, including Alalu, the maximum amount of personnel their class of Shamash could carry. Forty stayed with the star ship and two with the landing vehicle, leaving the remaining six Igigi, plus Anzu and the king, to set off on their quest of discovery.

Chapter 7

Anu could not forgive his father for giving up his right to the throne. He could not figure out why Anshargal allowed Nibiruan sovereignty to slip so quickly out of his grasp. Why had his father let the pretender, Alalu take his place? On the only occasion, his father had been willing to talk about it he said he relinquished the throne because of the responsibility being king entailed. That being so, why was he acting as king now?

Anu thought there was more to it than that. Then, to add insult to injury, Alalu had offered his father the servitude role of Royal Cupbearer. The fools at the royal court saw Alalu's offer as a gesture of reconciliation, or possibly a reasonable act, but Anu saw through it, recognising it as an insult against the Household of Anshargal.

Later, when Alalu offered Anu the appointment of Royal Cupbearer, he had wanted nothing to do with it. However, to refuse such a perceived honour affronted the throne of Nibiru. Such an insult against the Crown would not stand him in good favour with the High Council. Therefore, the diplomatic thing to do meant accepting the position gracefully. Having carried out this onerous task for eleven Sars, enough had been enough.

Being his rival's Royal Cup-holder filled Anu with utter loathing. But, to make matters worse, LaMa, the king's mother, always hovered around her son in a way that made it evident to Anu that she stood as the real power behind the throne. Anu felt as though her slit eyes were boring into him, reading his mind, as he tended her precious son. He knew she could not read his mind though, which was just as well because he had treason on it.

Under the Nibiruan Constitution, the king became enthroned for life, unless, under specific circumstances, got overthrown by a challenge for the crown. Anu, such a challenger, convinced himself his motivation to seize the throne wasn't only because he coveted it for himself. His primary motivation for becoming Nibiru's royal head was his great love for his world. He didn't want to desert it, in favour of some far-off planet.

He wanted to stay there and find a solution to the atmospheric problem. As a member of the Nibiruan Council, he had voiced his view that, instead of putting energy and resources into colonising another world, it would be far better to concentrate on fixing their waning atmosphere with an active gold heat shield.

The problem, which had begun long before Anu's time, recorded in the annals of the vast library, became of great interest to him. Records stated that for some unknown reason Neptune's gravitational pull had dragged Nibiru from its orbital course, locking the enormous red planet into the Solaris System. Subsequently, Nibiru's new orbit brought it very close to the Apsu, damaging, over time, the natural heat shield in the planet's atmosphere.

Most of Nibiru's new orbit took it to the far reaches of the Solar System, way beyond Neptune itself, where it orbited around its dead Pulsar. It amounted to an Ice Age occurring with the passing of each Sar. This situation was not suitable for cold-blooded beings. It was already tough for the Homosaurus living on Nibiru. Most of the time they had to hibernate, and when they did eventually emerge above the ground, further damage done to the Nibiruan atmosphere confronted them.

It had now reached such a crucial point that, if the problem remained unsolved much longer, they would have to abandon their planet. Anu and his growing body of supporters determined that this would not happen. There just had to be a way to get the shield working.

Although Anu had more faith in science than in the gods, he willingly tried anything. He even joined with many other nobles to offer prayers to the gods, in the 'Temple of the Bright Light'. There, enjoining An to save their planet, they recited in one voice:

My, Nibiru where black birch trees grow in a good place,

My sanctuary.

Nibiru, where white birch trees grow in a pure place,

My sanctuary.

My Nibiru's shrine is built in a good place,

My sanctuary.

The sanctuary Nibiru's name is a good name,

My sanctuary.

My Nibiru's shrine is built in a good place,

My sanctuary.

The sanctuary Nibiru's name is a good name,

My sanctuary.

Anu reasoned that prayer might very well offer some help and certainly could not do any harm. However, for the Prince, the solution had to lie with science.

The High Council had taken all possible steps to slow down the atmospheric deterioration, by changing or prohibiting any practice that led to further heating of the planet. Although such imposed measures indicated some improvement over time, they were not going to save the world. One Nibiruan scientist working on the problem, UrAk, head of the 'Nibiru Rescue Project' at the Scientific Academy, dedicated his time to that crucial task.

Anu, taking a great deal of interest in the progress made, kept close contact with Urak, whom he asked to keep him informed every step of the way. Urak, of the same mind as Anu, wanted to produce the means to save the stricken planet. Therefore, Anu became overjoyed when Urak beamed him, notifying the prince that his team had made a breakthrough.

The scientist explained his discovery, as he and Anu dined together at his Academy apartment.

"It's all to do with gold," Urak explained.

"That theory has been around for a long time, but nobody has been able to make it work effectively."

"Up to the present moment," Urak grinned

"How have you done it then?"

"By finding out how to produce the orme."

"What is the orme?"

"It is powdered gold to be precise."

"What's that?"

"The white powder of gold will if suspended it in the atmosphere, improve our heat shield."

"White powder?"

"Yes, It's amazing really. Instead of just grinding up gold particles, my team have discovered a heating process in which the gold seems to turn to glass, making it much more easy to grind down."

"Are you sure it will work?"

"We are as sure as we can be, without actually putting it to the test. The experiments, so far, have proven successful. So, yes, we think it is the answer."

Anu became excited. "Then I must tell the Council!"

"Before you do that, understand we need more gold than we can find on this planet."

"Everybody will have to have their gold trinkets melted down. We will issue a decree."

"Even then, there would not be enough. I am talking about a lot of gold here, and continuous supply."

"I believe we should try out your theory with the gold supplies we have and then look for more."

Urak rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "We could do it that way. Then we would know if we are on the right track, before committing ourselves further."

"So where, apart from here, have your scientists' detected deposits of gold?"

“The largest amounts seem to be on Ki, where our missing king was supposed to have gone.”

Anu became thoughtful. “Perhaps he did.”

“What do you mean?”

Anu remembered what Lama had said to his father. He will let you know when he is ready. “Maybe Alalu is on Ki.”

“If so, why did he not go with Star Command?”

“Because he probably had other plans. He wanted to be the big shot, and he's probably cooking up something.”

“I wonder what?” Urak said, puzzled. He added, “If he did land on Ki he might be looking for the gold.”

Anu pondered the scientist's statement. “It's a possibility, but we don't know for certain if there is much gold there.”

Anu, ready to make his move, felt wholly justified in so doing. Alalu had not done anywhere near enough to save the planet, and now he had disappeared. It seemed apparent to Anu that the king had deserted Nibiru, so he deserved to lose his throne. Now, with the king's dereliction of duty and the scientific breakthrough, Anu had the ammunition he needed to gain support for his proposed royal coup. To achieve the advantage of surprise he had to act quickly, before his father, who bowed to the usurper, found out about the scientist's discovery and told the High Council. Timing was of the essence.

Therefore, in a secret meeting at the Science Academy, Anu gathered his core group, which included some sympathetic members of the High Council. Scientists, royal advisors and business colleagues, who wanted Alalu removed from the throne.

Anu introduced Urak to the covert gathering. “Urak has some exciting news for us.”

“What news?” a Council member asked.

The head scientist announced, “We have made a breakthrough, and we can now protect our planet with a gold heat shield.”

Those present stood up, clapping and cheering.

Anu silenced them. “The bad news is that we need more gold and lots of it!”

“What has Anshargal decided, considering this news?” someone asked.

Anu answered, “He does not know yet.”

“Then we had better inform him about it,” one of the council members urged.

Anu replied, “Not yet. The King of Heaven has given up on this planet. He has disappeared, An knows where. It is time for me take his place.”

The room became silent.

Then a Council elder said, “Given time, the throne will fall to you, Anu.”

“How much time are we talking about here?” another asked.

“Once we have discovered what has become of the king, then ...”

Anu interrupted, "We do not have time. We have to act now before we all lose our planetary home."

"I agree with Anu," one of the Council members said.

"Alalu has forfeited his right to the throne by deserting us at this crucial time," another agreed.

"Supposing he was forced to go," Somebody suggested, defending the king.

Anu became impatient. "Enough of this bickering. It's time for me to take command. Therefore, who is with me?"

Many fists rose up, a Nibiruan sign signifying solidarity.

After the meeting settled down, The Council elder asked, "Do we have the numbers?"

"I have military support in place. I only have to give the word," Anu answered.

"When will you inform Anshargal about this?" a supporter asked.

"When the time is right," the prince answered.

"But Anshargal is your father!" a member stated.

"I do not need to be reminded of that. Although there is no love lost between my father and Alalu, he is loyal to the throne, no matter who sits on it."

Many members nodded in assent.

Anu pressed home his advantage. "It's time for a change. All those with me again raise their right fist."

This time, all the fists raised high.

For the coup d'etat to be successful, Anu knew it had to involve control by an active portion of Nibiru's military, while neutralising the rest of the armed force's potential counteraction. His people had to be ready to either capture or expel key Alalu supporters, including political and military leaders. They had to be prepared and able to take physical control of the most important government offices, means of communication, and the physical infrastructure, such as critical streets and power plants.

In its initial stages, everything went smoothly with the coup. Even Lama, who always kept her ear to the ground, knew nothing about the imminent takeover. Oblivious to the events taking place, the palace guards carried out their regular duties, until a commotion at the palace gates alerted them. Upon investigation, the guards, confronted by Nibiruan military, were ordered to surrender. Confused and outnumbered, they retreated to a secure vantage point, where they beamed for assistance. The operator at the command post, unsure how to proceed in such a situation, didn't want to be the one to order his guards to fire on Nibiruans. It fell to the king to decide such things, not him.

Anshargal, unhappy having his sleep disturbed, grumbled, "This had better be of the highest importance."

The nervous messenger spluttered, "We are under attack, Your Majesty."

"What do you mean, under attack? Attack by whom?"

"We're not sure, but there is Nibiruan military personnel amongst them."

"And what are my guards doing about it?"

"Waiting for your instructions, your Majesty."

“What do you mean, waiting for my instructions? Their job is to defend the crown!”

“Even if it means firing on our citizens, Your Majesty?”

“They are no longer citizens. They are traitors, and we shall treat them as such!”

“Even your son, Anu?”

The Proxy king stared wide-eyed at the messenger. “What has Anu got to do with this?”

“He is leading the rebels, Your Majesty.”

Anshargal, shocked at this disclosure, remained silent for a moment. Then he responded, “Countermand my previous order for the present. Tell Anu to come and see me.”

Having received no orders from their king and having refused to surrender, the Captain of the guard remained in a quandary. He knew they had to have a strategy to defend the palace before it became too late, but he needed direction from his king. Just then, he received orders to locate and bring Anu to the king's quarters. This Anshargal conveyed to a rebel spokesperson, who in turn personally informed his leader.

Anu would not risk going into the palace unarmed and alone. He sent a message back saying, if the king's servant wanted to talk, he would have to come to him.

Anshargal listened to the messenger. He noted but ignored his son's insult. He had to stay focused on breaking the stalemate. Therefore, he agreed to meet his son at the gates of the palace.

An uneasy silence filled the night, as they faced each other. Anshargal broke the ice. “So you are trying to seize the throne, Anu.”

“Something you should have done a long time ago!”

“You just don't understand.”

“That's right father. However, understand this. Get your guards to surrender, or we will take the palace by force.”

The proxy king stood his ground. “I have been entrusted with protecting the Crown. I cannot give in to your demands.”

“What even if it sits on the head of a pretender?”

“It is the office, not the person I am protecting.”

“The office has been corrupted. Can you not see that, father?”

Deep down Anshargal knew his son was right. Yes, he should have claimed the throne all those Sars back. His action, or inaction, had cheated his son out of his rightful inheritance. He could not blame Anu for having the courage he had not shown. Turning to Anu, he said quietly, “Very well, I will do as you ask.”

Having received an order from Anshargal not to fire on the rebels, the Captain of the Guard had no choice but to surrender. He could do nothing to stop the plot to take the throne. However, as the coup orchestrated by Anu had the proxy king's support, he no longer had anyone to guard. Therefore, following a few minor skirmishes between Anu's army on the outside and the palace guard, the latter laid down their arms.

Realising they had won, a huge cheer went up among the rebels. The guards stood meekly aside as Anu, and his entourage marched through the palace to the throne chamber, where, following great

fanfare, Anu, wearing the king's golden crown and with the royal sceptre in his hand, assumed his position as the new king of Nibiru.

Chapter 8

Alalu quickly developed a hatred of Ki. Getting used to breathing the denser air proved difficult enough, but stomach cramps, caused by eating alien plants, made things even worse. He also had initial difficulty in adapting to the very short periods of constantly changing light and darkness. One moment Solaris scorched them with its heat; the next Kingu shines its reflective light upon them. Everything seemed to happen very fast, especially the growth of plants. Then the squelchy mud underfoot in the marshy land added to the difficulty of adjusting to life on the new planet. The teeming rains were even worse but the news beamed from Nibiru was the last straw.

Alalu summoned Anzu to his crude shelter, for a conference.

Anzu, having responded immediately, asked, "What is the matter?"

Still incensed by the news, Alalu exploded, "Anu has seized my throne!"

Anzu showed no surprise at the news. "Well, you knew that distinct possibility existed when you decided to come here, didn't you?"

"The coward waits until I am out of the way."

"The perfect time for a takeover, I would say."

"Whose side are you on, Anzu?"

"I am on your side, of course, Your Heaviness." After a short pause, he asked, "So what are we going to do about it?"

"We are going to do what we planned. Get me back to the mother ship so that I can beam that upstart, Anu."

Owing to Alalu's response to the takeover Anu discovered his location. Contacting Kunuk, he said, "I have just heard from Alalu."

"Really - where is he?" The High Council leader asked.

"As I suspected he is on Ki. Apparently, they landed safely. He's been there all the time we've been looking for him."

"Then why did he not use the ship the Igigi prepared for him?"

"More to the point, how did he get to Ki?"

"Precisely, your Heaviness. We need to ascertain his location and find out who he has with him."

"I will contact him if I can. In the meantime don't leak this to the An-Gels, at least not until we find out what is going on."

Using a beam technician, Anu made contact with Alalu's Shamash, and the ex-king. Anu, annoyed and puzzled about the former king's disappearing trick, stated, "By leaving Nibiru the way you did you showed total disregard for your planet and everybody here."

Alalu countered with, "The reason I am here is to save our planet, not to neglect it."

"How do you propose to do that?"

“I propose to help Nibiru by looking for sources of gold on Ki.”

Anu became interested. “Have you found any?”

“I will present my report once we return to Nibiru.”

Changing the subject, Anu asked, “How is Ki?”

“It has potential. Why do you ask?”

“I think it best if you stay there. You are not welcome on Nibiru.”

Alalu shocked by Anu’s cold statement, finally regaining his wits, responded, “I will decide whether or not I return to Nibiru.”

“I will exile you if you force me to.”

Taking a deep breath, Alalu said, “I’ve listened to you, Anu. Now you are going to listen to me.”

Anu, surprised by the former king’s change of tone, said, “What do you mean?”

“I want you to relinquish the crown in readiness for my triumphant return home.”

“Are you mad? I am the king now. Haven’t you been listening?”

“Anu, if you want me to do this the hard way then so be it.”

“What are you raving on about?”

“I have a ship armed with mass destruction missiles. If you do not give up the throne, I shall return and fire them at Nibiru city. The first target will be the Royal Palace. Now have I got your attention?”

Anu felt weak, reeling under the verbal onslaught. “You’re bluffing,” he challenged.

“I assure you I am not bluffing! Why would I make such a threat if I couldn’t carry it out?”

Anu became silent. It all began to make sense to him. The mysterious way Alalu had left the planet and the cryptic explanation Lama had given his father. Measuring his words, he said, “This is very serious, Alalu. Making such threats against Nibiru is punishable by death. You know that.”

“When I come back and reclaim my throne I will have you exiled. Let me know your decision by next Apsu rise.”

“I will have to convene the Council.”

Anu quickly gathered his closest advisors. He briefly outlined the subject of his conversation with the deposed king. Everybody sat stunned at the news. Anu said, “We have to keep this information within these walls.”

They all nodded.

Anu said, “We must all focus our attention on an effective strategy to combat this threat. Ideas please.”

Kunuk asked, “Your Heavenness, how do we know he has these weapons?”

“We have to take it that he does,” Anu answered.

“Oh, he has them all right,” the Igigi Supreme Commander, stated.”

“How do you know that?” Kunuk asked.

“As soon as we knew he had left the planet we did some checking. There are not many places on Nibiru from which a Shamash can take off. We tracked it to the take-off pad of a disused training facility. We also know that some MD missiles have gone missing from a dump in the Savu desert region. Putting the two incidents together gives us a clear picture of what happened to the King - I mean Alalu.”

Anu asked, “Have you notified my father about this?”

“Of course, your Heavenness.”

“I see,” Anu said, thoughtfully. He tried not to show his concern. “So now we know Alalu is not bluffing.”

“Your Heavenness, we may know he is not bluffing about having the missiles on board, but we don't know if this threat to use them on us is real,” Kunuk added.

“I am not willing to take that chance,” Anu responded.

“What do you want us to do, Your Heavenness?” The Supreme Commander asked.

“Get your people to be on the lookout for Alalu's ship and be ready to deal with it.”

“You are ordering us to destroy it?”

“Yes – before he destroys us.”

Anu summoned Lama to his chambers. Although offended at Anu for ordering her around, and despite seeing him as a pretender to the throne, she still had to obey him. She acted very coldly towards him, even chillier than usual. “What do you want with me?” she hissed once they were alone.

“We know that Alalu got his own star ship for his journey to Ki.”

“I told your pathetic father he'd made his own arrangements.”

Anu, determined not to react to her venomous insults, responded, “You didn't say he had MD weapons on board.”

“Does he?”

Anu showed surprise “Then, you don't know?”

“Of course I don't know. Now, what is this nonsense about?”

“Your son has threatened to come here and fire missiles at this city if he is not re-installed as king.”

LaMa sat silent for a moment. She then said, “I assumed you had arranged this meeting to convey congratulations to my son.”

“Congratulate him! Whatever for?”

“Finding a source of gold, which, as you well know, is the reason he went to Ki in the first place.”

“As I understand it, he went there to find a suitable environment for a new Nibiruan domicile.”

“Surely it's better to find gold there.”

“He has found gold?”

“That's what he said.”

“I need to find out about this.”

"I'm sure you do. Now, if that is all, Anu."

"There is one thing Lama. Your son's threat is grave. If he intends to become a threat to us, the Igigi have orders to shoot him out of the sky. Do you understand me?"

As the full realisation of Anu's words hit her, she retorted, "Of course. I'm not stupid."

"Then may I suggest that you try to make him see sense. Tell him to drop the threat, and we will negotiate with him."

Anu sat in his chambers, weighing up various scenarios in his mind.

(1) Alalu had the missiles and was prepared to use them.

(2) Alalu did have the rockets, but he bluffed about using them.

(3) He had discovered gold on Ki and wanted to use it as a bargaining tool.

(4) He had not found any gold and was bluffing.

Ultimately, Anu decided to contact the ex-king. He beamed Alalu and waited for a response.

Alalu took the beam, saying, "Anu, you've decided to comply with my demands then."

"Your mother tells me you have found gold."

Alalu did not answer. Instead, the ex-king asked, "Have you decided to step down, Anu?"

"If your ship comes anywhere near Nibiru it will be destroyed. Now, I want to know more about this gold."

Ignoring Anu's request, he said, "I suspected your underhandedness and traitorous trickery Anu, which is why I armed myself before flying to Ki. The missiles are primed and ready to hit their targets. However, I am ready to trade the gold here, for my reinstatement as King of Nibiru."

"You are dangling the gold in front of us, as an enticement, while threatening us with your missiles. That is not the way to negotiate, Alalu."

"My missiles are all the negotiation I need."

"Space Command assures me that you will never get close enough to do any damage."

"I wouldn't bet on it if I were you. I can launch the missiles a very long way from Nibiru. The Igigi won't even see us."

"Alalu, I cannot believe you would want to attack your home planet."

"If you do not give up the throne, Anu, you leave me no choice."

"That is not going to happen, Alalu. Why not carry out your mission on Ki and we can negotiate terms later?"

"You know my terms, Anu. They are the only ones I am interested in."

Anu alerted Kunuk, telling him about Alalu's demands. He decided that the High Council should adjudicate in the matter. Once the meeting got under way, there were many frantic questions from the floor. Queries, such as: Does he have the weapons? Is he likely to carry out his threat? How did the king sneak off with a rocket full of missiles and nobody knew about it? Are you going to step down? Are you going to destroy Alalu?

Among all the commotion, I-lu, Anu's foremost son, suggested, "Ask Alalu to prove that he has found ample gold on Ki."

“That is a practical idea I-lu. You beam Alalu and ask for proof,” Anu suggested.

Kunuk spoke up. “With respect your Heaviness, It would probably be better if I spoke with Alalu. After all, we have to neutralise this threat.”

“Very well, see what you can do,” Anu agreed.

Alalu felt indispensable. It seemed that everybody wanted to talk to him. He picked up the latest beam. Seeing the head of the High Council on the screen, he became very curious. “How can I assist you, Kunuk,” Alalu asked.

“It seems we are in a delicate situation, Alalu.”

“Correction, Kunuk. Your situation on Nibiru is very delicate.”

“That's true, but we need to work out a peaceful solution we can all live with.”

“What do you suggest?”

“If you can prove to the Council that there is adequate gold in Ki, for our needs, that would go well in your favour.”

Alalu could not believe it. The ex-king retorted, “Prove there is ample gold on Ki. Just how am I supposed to do that? You may just as well ask me to jump over Kingu!”

“Have you found any gold, Alalu?”

“Are you calling me a liar?”

“No, Alalu. It's just that ...”

“All I know is that we have discovered a gold mine in a range of mountains north of our landing zone. What I want to know is do I get my kingdom for the gold?”

“Alalu, I'm afraid that is not going to happen. You must get used to the idea that you will never be the King of Nibiru again. If you carry out your threat and survive the attack, we will execute you for treason and crimes against Nibiru. Your mother may well not be able to live with such shame. Do you want her death on your conscience as well?”

Alalu weighed Kunuk's words. At length, he said, “Anu had no right to steal the crown from me.”

“With respect Alalu, since he beat you at wrestling, he has had every right to take, what by Nibiruan law, is rightfully his. However, the important thing now is to work out a peaceful solution to this impasse.”

“There is only one solution, Kunuk. Tell Anu the gold supply is plentiful, and I will let him have access to it once you restore my kingship.”

The emergency Council meeting reconvened, and, in response to Kunuk's report, some of the councillors were all for meeting Alalu's demands.

I-lu stood up, saying, “We only have his word about the gold supply. It could just be a ploy to get him reinstated. Can we believe the word of a traitor?”

A councillor, tired and exasperated, asked, “Your Highness, Would you prefer that he carries out his threat?”

“We will not give in to threats of terror. We should go to Ki, and arrest him. He should be brought back here to stand trial.”

Kunuk responded, "That's all very well, your Highness, but right now, dealing with this threat is our greatest priority. Now all of you that are in favour of giving in to Alalu's demands vote now."

After much deliberation and soul-searching, the Council voted against Alalu, and Kunuk conveyed this to him.

He responded, "Then, I'm afraid, we have to do it the hard way."

Kunuk's heart seemed to miss a beat. "That would not be a wise move," he said, lamely.

After Kunuk had signed off, the deposed king felt very unsure and alone. Having had time to reflect on his actions, a stalemate ensued in his mind. Although he had the means at his disposal to back up his threats, he did not want to go down that path. He had been confident the risk alone would be enough, but it turned out not to be so. Now, he either had to embark on a path of mass destruction or back down and take his chances.

Meanwhile, The High Council on Nibiru maintained their intransigence regarding Alalu's position. They could afford to do this because Nibiru had started to move away from Apsu, for another of its long cold journeys to its dead sun, at the extreme perimeter of the Solaris system. This situation meant, if Alalu did not act soon, another 3600 Ki Sars would have to pass before he could make good his threat.

(The reason for this, being that Nibiruan rocket design did not include anti-gravitation technology. Instead, it used, what we call, Electro-dynamic propulsion [EDP], which the Nibiruans accomplished by optimising the ramjet process over the entire leading surface of the Shamash, in response to space through which it moved. With the traditional Nibiruan ramjet, air sucked into the front of the craft; with added fuel from its nuclear cells, ignited inside, and got expelled out the back. The major problem with this system is the same as with push-only propulsion systems namely that all the leading surfaces of the rest of the craft encounter direct inertial resistance from the air that is not passing through it - but around it. Consequently, travel between Ki and Nibiru could only take place when the gravitational pull between both planets allowed space travel to occur.)

Sumerian Chronicles state 'If from the gold dust of Ki a shield for Nibiru its atmosphere to save, let Alalu on Ki rule as king. For kingship on Nibiru let, him again wrestle Anu. Let me in the chariot (rocket) through the bracelet (asteroids) with water, not fire (a reference to Alalu using missiles) I shall fashion. On Earth from the waters let me precious gold obtain; to Nibiru back it will be sent.

Chapter 9

Alalu stood on the higher ground, at the mine location. As it wasn't marshy, the hard Earth, much more substantial, was more comfortable on the soles of his scaly feet. After traversing the rocky incline, he came to a flat area, near the mouth of the newly excavated mine. "Ah, there you are," he said, noticing his friend Anzu, overseeing the mining operation.

"Greetings Alalu," The Commander replied. "I have to talk to you."

"Oh, what do you want to talk about?"

"About levelling some ground here and relocating the Shamash to this area."

Alalu looked around at the uneven terrain. “How are we going to level it out?”

“We can do it with the ship’s laser. It will easily cut through these rocks.” Then, to strengthen his argument, Anzu added, “The time saved in walking to and from the mine will allow us more working periods each day.”

Alalu nodded, “It does make sense. Okay, find an area to level, and the miners can use the Shamash as their living quarters.”

Anzu, having been a career astronaut all his working life, had gotten used to taking orders. As Alalu’s pilot, he came to know the king very well. However, he still found it difficult to be casual with him. Never the less, because the ex-king always treated him as a friend, not as an inferior, he had learned to be more relaxed with him. Being a king’s man, he was prepared to do anything, even sacrifice his life for Alalu's cause, in which he firmly believed. However, his master seemed to be losing his resolve and, even worse, for him and his crew, he seemed to be accepting his exile on Ki. This frustrated Anzu. He could not work out why Alalu kept vacillating. One minute, he supported Nuking Nibiru. The next, he seemed happy to sit out some time on Ki. In the end, he had to say something.

“Alalu, if we don't make our move soon we will have to wait until the new cycle comes around.”

“We have to make sure we are doing the right thing, Anzu. Once we decide to carry out our threat, there is no turning back.”

“Yes, but the longer we wait, the more Anu is laughing at you. Your threat is being treated with lesser importance now.”

“I've been thinking about that. Nibiru needs the gold more than it needs Anu.”

Once we start shipping the precious metal home, I can name any price – any price.”

“Are you just prepared to leave it like that?”

“There's not much else I can do at present, except launch a suicide attack on Nibiru, and that wouldn't achieve anything in the long term.”

“There is still time if we load up the gold we have and head home.”

“But I've been exiled here!”

“The gold will change all that. Besides if, you are stuck here, then so are we. That's not of our choosing. The crew is already complaining. The men assumed we are on a short fact-finding mission.”

“What do you suggest then?”

“That we are all pardoned, in return for giving Nibiru our gold supply. Then we can go home.”

“But I still won't be the king!”

Anzu said, “I believe it is time you realised that no matter what happens you will never again be king.”

It was the first time Alalu had heard those words it from his close and trusted friend. His eyes clouded over as sadness engulfed him. Alalu, taking a deep breath, said, “I fear you are right.”

“Then let us all return to Nibiru.”

“I will put your proposition to the Nibiruan High Council.”

With only forty-nine Igigi astronauts, to support him, Anzu could not do much about the untenable situation in which he found himself. Due to the coup back home, he and his crew were traitors, unable to return to Nibiru. The team could always plead they were just following orders, and maybe they would be able to return home. However, Alalu's exile on Ki presented even more problems as Anzu could not bear leaving the deposed King of Heaven alone on that strange planet.

To make things even more impossible, the supplies, which were only adequate for a short stay on Ki, had nearly run out. Anzu, well aware that they would not survive without support from his home planet, didn't know what to do. In addition to this setback, Anu announced that Ki was no longer required, as a Nibiruan homeland, because Urak and his team had the answer in hand to solve the planet's atmosphere problem. Ultimately, Anzu and his astronauts held a secret meeting aboard the Shamash.

Once most of his crew presented themselves, Anzu spoke frankly. "Okay, this is the scenario we face. We must accept the fact that Anu is now officially the new Heavenly king and we are under his command."

"Does that mean we can return home soon, sir?" the pilot asked.

"There has been no directive to that effect, but to do so means facing charges of treason."

"But we were just following the orders of our king, sir," the navigator stated.

"That's true, except, he is no longer the king; our actions are treasonous in the face of the new king."

"We still have the missiles. We could use our threat to broker an amnesty deal," the communications officer suggested.

"They won't take our threat seriously now," the Igigi pilot stated.

"What about Alalu?" Anzu asked.

"He is not our responsibility now. We have to look out for ourselves," the pilot said.

"We still have a duty of care to perform, Captain. He is not welcome back home, but we can't just leave him here."

"So, what are we to do, sir?" the pilot asked.

"We can keep him on an off-planet space platform and guard him until Anu makes his decision."

Overall it seemed like the most practical compromise, so it got the raised-fist vote. Even Alalu, who, although deeply depressed about his exile, agreed the solution to be the fairest outcome for all concerned parties. The next problem facing the Igigi rebels, obtaining the supplies they needed for their return home, had to be organised. They had assumed that, once they had established themselves on Ki other Nibiruan colonists would follow, with extra supplies. Now, this wasn't to be the case, and the astronauts found themselves stranded and isolated.

They complained about this to Anzu, who beamed Kunuk, whom he knew on the Council. "My crew needs amnesty so that we can return home," Anzu put forward.

"Why should the king grant you amnesty, Anzu?" Kunuk asked.

"Because we still have the missiles and we can carry out our threat."

"We are not taking that threat seriously now."

"We can renew our threat any time we want."

“So why this call?”

“We need supplies to get off Ki.”

Kunuk laughed, “Then you cannot make good your threat, and you have nothing to bargain with.”

Anzu tried a different tack. “We will bring back the gold we have in return for the king's clemency.”

“That might work. I will put your proposal to his Heavenness.”

“Did he mention why he wants this meeting with us, Anshargal, Anu's Cupbearer, asked, as he and the king waited for the Igigi Supreme Commander to arrive.

“All I know is that it has something to do with Ki.”

Just then, The Commander arrived at the palace, after that Anu had him shown to his quarters.

“Greetings Your Heavenness,” Commander Za-ag said, upon entering Anu’s private chamber.

“Hello Commander,” Anu replied. “Now, what did you want to see me about?”

“We have to do something about Alalu and the Ki mission, Your Heavenness.”

“What do you suggest?” asked Anshargal, who seemed a little more confident.

“Their supplies are low, and very soon they will have to stay there for a whole Nibiruan Sar.”

“That would be 3600 Ki Sars. That's a long time on Ki.” Anshargal calculated.

“Is this supposed to be of concern to me?” Anu asked.

“We cannot just leave them to perish, Your Heavenness.”

Anu sighed. He was not a heartless ruler, even to his enemies. "I know that, Commander. However, our main priority at present is smelting all our gold to protect this planet.”

“If we could just send them one supply ship with enough fuel to lift them off, the problem would be solved.”

“As you well know Commander, all our craft are engaged in looking for gold sources.”

“Your Heavenness, what about the gold Alalu has already found on Ki?”

“We have no idea how much there is,” Anshargal said.

“I know, but supposing, I can get Alalu to tell me the figures, and it all seems worthwhile, will you grant me permission to send one of our craft, with equipment, to go and see for ourselves?”

The Cup Bearer commented, “Your Heavenness, if what the Commander suggests turns out to be successful, then we have solved two problems in one go.”

Anu answered, “Your proposal seems sound enough, Commander. Go ahead and send one commercial ship to Ki.”

Alalu and the Igigi were much relieved when their Commander relayed Anu's decision. With lifted spirits, the crew set about making preparations in readiness for the landing of the cargo ship. While Anzu and his technicians set up their equipment to act as a control centre to guide the Nibiruan craft in, Alalu used his spare time going for long walks, during which he observed many strange creatures in the weird world in which he found himself. The beasts of this strange land were much

different from any species from back home. However, stranger still were the hairy beasts who, like the Nibiruans, walked upright on two legs.

Alalu had not seen them at first. He put it down to the fact that they appeared to be small, timid, and they hid in the vast tree fern forests, whenever he got near to them. Whether they were becoming less afraid, he did not know. Perhaps he had just become better at detecting them. However, unlike themselves, the hirsute bipeds moved incredibly fast. At first, Alalu assumed, their haste to be due to some predator chasing them, but he eventually discovered that wasn't the reason. They just seemed to be in a tremendous hurry. Alalu did not understand why they moved around so fast.

One day, an Igigi astronaut managed to trap one of the hairy bipeds and bring it into the mining camp, but it stank so badly, they let it go. Since then they kept their distance and only observed the erect beasts from afar.

Observation of the hairy creatures did prove useful though, especially concerning their eating habits. As the flora and vegetation on Ki proved very different to that back home, the Nibiruans did not know what was right or safe to eat. By watching the hirsute beings gathering plants, the space visitors learned what vegetation made excellent, wholesome meals. As time went on, the Nibiruans hunting and gathering skills significantly improved.

Great excitement abounded as news about the cargo ship nearing Ki reached the ears of Anzu's flight crew. Communications took place between the Captain of the Shamash and the Commander of the transport ship. Co-ordinates to ensure a safe landing was worked out and a strip of ground crudely excavated, served as a landing area. Before the supply vessel's arrival, torches were set up each side of the landing area to guide the space vehicle in to land.

Loud cheers erupted from the grounded astronauts, once the lights of the supply craft became visible in the evening sky. Another huge cheer went up as the approaching cargo vessel came into land. Unlike the Shamash, which landed vertically, the space transport needed a short runway in which to stop. As the immense craft came to a halt, the Igigi began gathering around it. Soon the crew emerged, much relieved at having made the first stable Earth Ki landing. They looked around with amazement as the initial effect the new world penetrated their senses. They welcomed the warm, humid temperature, as they took in the view around them.

The freighter Commander had a disk message for Alalu. Although he did not know its content, he did not feel comfortable handing it over to the deposed king, himself. So he sought out Commander Anzu, to deliver it for him. He had been uncomfortable about the whole assignment. Although nobody at the space base back home knew what had happened to Alalu, much speculation abounded, and rumours were rife among the crews and ground staff. The freighter Captain didn't listen to the stories flying around, but he knew that Alalu had left Nibiru under some cloud, probably as dense as the one he had to fly through to land on Ki.

He located the rebel skipper on the bridge of the Shamash. Anzu had been a bit of a legend among those at Space Command but the freighter Captain, knowing Anzu to be part of whatever Alalu had plotted, treated him with suspicion. "Commander I have a message for Alalu."

"He is in his quarters. I will have someone show you the way."

"I had hoped you would give it to him."

With a puzzled frown, Anzu asked, "Why?"

"You have a close relationship with him."

"It is bad news then?"

"I don't know what the disk contains," he answered, handing over the package.

Anzu nodded. "Very well, I will deliver it."

Anzu found the ex-king in his spacecraft quarters. After being invited inside, Anzu said, "The supply ship landed safely. Isn't that good news?"

Seeing how down-in-the-mouth and morose the ex-king looked, Anzu asked, "What's the matter with you?"

"It's all hopeless. I have messed everything up. There is no future for me."

"I have a message for you," Anzu said, handing over the disk.

Alalu looked at the disk, blankly.

"I will leave you to find out what it says then," the Igigi Commander said, making to leave the cabin.

Alalu, having no will to take any more bad news, needed some moral support. "No, don't go. Listen to it with me."

Anzu hesitated. Then he took the diskette off his master and inserted it into an information processing system. Anshargal's visage filled the screen. His voice elucidated, "After much deliberation, the High Council of Nibiru has decreed that the original indictment against you still stands. You deserve execution, for such a treacherous act! However, we have decided, in consideration of your late status on Nibiru, you will live in exile on Ki. If you have discovered substantial supplies of gold, we will set up a permanent colony there. If you willingly hand over your weapons to the freighter Captain, so we can disarm them we will review your situation in one Nibiruan Sar."

Alalu and Anzu just sat there, stunned.

The cargo crew had just finished unloading the gold supplies from the Shamash and prepared to load the treasure, onto the freighter, when armed Igigi surrounded them. "What's the meaning of this?" the charge hand demanded, a ray gun pointing in his direction.

Anzu stepped forward, "You are not taking the gold!"

"What do you mean? We have orders to take back the gold," The workman stated.

Threatening with his gun, Anzu said, "I am revoking those orders. If anybody goes after the gold, they are dead. Do you understand?"

"Yes, but the king is not going to like this."

"That is your king's problem. Now the sooner you take off, the better."

The merchant ship's Captain, just about ready to spend a few days in this strange world, had to change his plans when the charge hand told him of the extraordinary events that had unfolded. The Captain sought out Anzu. He located him at the loading site.

"What is going on here?" he asked, eyeing the stalemate taking place.

"We have decided to hang onto the gold for insurance."

The Captain considered this. At length, he asked, "How much gold do you have?"

"Why do you want to know?"

"If you will not let me take the gold I need to get an assessment to show the king."

“Okay, I will show you our gold reserves, but you must agree to leave it here.”

“I don't have much choice, do I?”

“No, you do not.”

“Then, show it to me.”

Anzu stood back as the freighter Captain scrutinised the ore.

“How many tons of rock is there here?” The Captain asked.

“We estimate around fifty tons.”

He turned to Anzu. “What has happened to you?”

He replied, “I am loyal to my king.”

The Captain sneered, “The King of Ki.”

Chapter 10

The day dawned for the Astronauts to leave Alalu on Ki. Anzu, very sad to have to go without his friend, put on a brave face. “Well, I guess this is it,” Anzu said, his eyes glistening with tears - a strange sensation he had only experienced while on Ki.

“The others are all ready then,” Alalu responded, meaning the rest of the Igigi crew.

“Yes we will be taking off soon,” he answered, a mixture of happiness and sadness in his voice.

“You won't forget to drop in on my mother, will you?”

“Of course not, and we'll do all we can to get you returned home.” He then embraced Alalu, saying, “We gave it our best shot my friend, or should I say our best bluff.”

Sighing, Alalu said, “Yes, I suppose a bluff is all it turned out to be.”

Smiling slowly, Alalu added, “At least it got you and the crew clemency, in return for the gold.”

“Yes, thank you for that. I won't forget the sacrifice you made.”

“I won't let you forget it,” Alalu smiled, wanly.

Events had taken some interesting twists and turns. Anu angered at Alalu's threat to hang on to the gold, said he would send a heavily armed star ship to Ki, to deal with him and the rebels. Alalu, knowing he would come off second best in such an encounter told Anu he could have the gold if he and his crew, were granted amnesty. Anu remained adamant that Alalu's exile stood, but he showed willing and granted clemency to Anzu and the rebel astronauts. Somehow, amid deals and counter-deals, the missiles, which were at the centre of the whole venture, remained on Ki. Alalu got Anzu to transfer and hide the rockets in a deep cave. If Anu asked Anzu what happened to them, as far as he knew, they had been disarmed and scrapped.

Alalu felt happy for Anzu and his crew and, much to his relief, he was not left alone in the alien world. Trained miners came with the merchant ship. They stayed behind to develop the mine the astronauts had started. Strangely, since Alalu came to terms with his situation, he felt more settled with his lot. He even started to see himself as King of Ki.

After the Igigi left, Alalu felt very lonely at times. To keep the dark thoughts at bay, he occupied his mind with work. To this end, he had daily briefings with a miner who had taken over as manager.

Alalu, giving himself a sense of purpose, controlled the mining project. At least believing he had control of his destiny gave Alalu a sense of security and stability. He had always been a creature of particular habits, and he needed order in his life, especially in the extraordinary circumstances in which he found himself. Separation from family and friends left him feeling empty while filling him with great sadness. However, he saw his lot, as a decision he had made, out of a sense of duty. He could not bear to see himself as a victim of circumstances.

In line with his assumed high standing, he ordered that a palace is built for him, a project that he oversaw himself. Building in the new world required a completely different technology to that on Nibiru. Here the materials were elementary. Muddy clay, dug up from the swampy areas, became bricks. Left exposed to Apsu, the blocks soon dried out, and became hardened. These brick blocks became the basic building unit in hot climates for hundreds of thousands of Sars to come. Construction progressed smoothly as the sun-baked mud-bricks were set in rows, to form the first Nibiruan building, built on Ki.

As Nibiru moved away from Apsu, on its long cold journey way beyond the furthest reaches of the Solaris system, Alalu and his miners began to realise what it was like to be alone on Ki, completely cut off from the home planet. They remained so for 3600 Ki Sars, very long time with no communication and no backup systems. (Ki Sars were too confusing as a term to explain 360 Apsu rises. Alalu began calling these periods of time, Eras. This term got distorted, by the miners, as Yeras and eventually into Years.)

Although the prospect of having to fend for themselves for so long seemed daunting, it brought them all closer together, as a dedicated team. Alalu missed Anzu though, the only close friend he'd had on the mission. He often wondered how they were faring on the home planet and sometimes wished he were there to find out.

One Nibiruan Sar later, a small team of scientists arrived on the first spacecraft to land on Ki for 3600 ErAs. They began carrying out Ki-logical tests on soil samples, as they looked for further evidence of gold deposits. Although Alalu knew the Nibiruan scientists had been attempting to solve Nibiru's global warming problem with gold filing heat shield experiments, he knew nothing of their breakthrough. Therefore, curious about the tests the scientists were carrying out, he asked what they were doing.

Heron, the mission's chief scientist Realised the King of Ki knew nothing of the solution to Nibiru's waning atmosphere. He explained, "Your Ki-ness, Urak, the wise and brilliant one, discovered that the powder of smelted gold, once the lustrous metal had turned glass like when suspended in the Nibiruan atmosphere. Its reflective qualities formed an effective heat shield. Owing to this breakthrough we have a much more effective shield."

Alalu, surprised, answered, "It is with great joy, I receive this news. To know that our work here has given Nibiru a new lease of life is wonderful indeed."

"Yes Alalu, so we won't need to colonise this world after all."

Alalu became quiet as the realisation hit him. Although genuinely overjoyed about the survival of his home planet, he felt profoundly shocked and saddened by the understanding that the Nibiruans were not colonising Ki. Ki would only ever be a mining camp and him merely the king of a gold mine. The reality of his exile on Ki then really hit him. If his family did not come to Ki, he would never see them again.

As black thoughts and depression increasingly consumed him, Alalu slipped into an abyss in his mind. Deeply depressed, he no longer took any interest in the mining activities on Ki. He kept pretty much to himself and spent his time making long walks into the jungle and down to the coast. One day, while he walked along the sand, he espied a small group of upright beasts rushing towards

him. Alalu hid from them by darting behind some palm trees. From there he observed their strange behaviour.

The two-legged, hairy ones raced into the wet expanse of rolling waves and stood still, holding pointed sticks in their hands. Soon Alalu saw them stabbing wildly at something, so frantically it all seemed a blur. At first, he could not see what they were doing. Then he saw them quickly raise their sticks, some of which had wriggling things attached. Alalu watched in fascination, as they sat on the sand and began gnawing at the wriggling stuff they had caught on the sticks. He then realised that these hairy beasts could use tools, albeit crude ones, to aid them with their hunting. It occurred to him that perhaps they were not so stupid after all. A vague idea hit him. What if he could communicate with them? He could offer them so much. He could become King of the Hairy beasts.

The miners were rejoicing when he returned to the base. "What has happened?" Alalu asked the mine manager.

"The scientists have discovered another source of gold" The manager replied.

"Have you reported this to Anu?"

"No, not yet, your Kiness. We need to know if there are large enough deposits for us to launch a full-scale operation first."

"What are the scientists saying?"

"They are confident, but we first have to make sure it is not a false alarm."

"Yes. Of course," Alalu replied, a plan already forming in his mind. Knowing how important the discovery of more gold would be to Nibiru, he wanted to break the news himself. The gold strike would then be, at least partly, dedicated to him. Yes, that is what he would do. Then, instead of being a defeated leader in exile, he could return home, the people's champion. He just had to go on board the freighter and send a message to Anu.

Only a handful of Nibiruans stayed on the transporter, which, having been unloaded, became a huge empty shell. Alalu went to the communications deck and told the technician on duty to connect him to the King of Heaven (Heaven became Nibiru's name on Ki). Anu came on screen, and when he heard of the new mine, he became elated. He congratulated the former king on his discovery.

Alalu asked, "Can I see my family?"

"Well they can't go to Ki, and you can't come here. So I don't see how it can be worked out. I suppose we may be able to set up a vid link. I will raise the issue with the High Council."

Anu, overjoyed, partly because he could save his stricken planet and somewhat because he had taken a considerable gamble in sending a mining party to Ki, felt vindicated. Many members of the High Council had been against the idea, seeing it as a reckless act, when the time was running out for the planet. Now he could hold his head high when he next addressed that august assembly. He wondered what to do about Alalu and sought counsel in the matter with his father.

Once Anshargal got used to the idea of his son being king, he supported him wholeheartedly. He felt very proud serving Anu, who had achieved great things for Nibiru. And he happily served as his son's Cupbearer. Owing to this improvement in their relationship, Anu and his father conferred on all-important state matters, especially that of Alalu's predicament on Ki.

Anshargal had extreme views concerning the deposed king. He said, "To let him come back would be to court trouble. We don't know how strong his support is here and now that our planetary crisis is over, they may well welcome him back."

"You are correct in what you say, father. However, a man has a right to be with his family."

“If you invite him back to Nibiru, my son, you are making a rod for your back.”

“Supposing he signs a document that states he gives up, forever, from aspiring to any public office, and he just lives quietly in the background without talking with the An-Gels.”

“You will have to put this proposal to the High Council, Anu. Personally, though, I don't think it is a good idea.”

The High Council heard arguments for and against Anu's proposal. The main case for allowing him back on Nibiru being, that despite his exile on Ki, he had used his time constructively to assist with the mining project. The main argument against him being able to return home is that he had orchestrated a terrorist act against Nibiru.

Kunuk pointed out, “He got exiled before he made good any threats, and therefore it wasn't the threats he made that had him sentenced on Ki.”

“However, Alalu still made the threats, and that itself is, as you well know, a treasonable offence,” one of the members argued.”

“If he is allowed back here what will be his punishment?” another asked,

“We should have him executed!” yet, another member forcefully stated.

“I believe he acted under great pressure, and that he behaved out of character,” Kunuk suggested.

Anu, having listened to all the pros and cons of the debate to determine Alalu's fate, intervened, “I agree with Kunuk that Alalu could have had an unbalanced mind at the time he made the threats. I believe he should be allowed back here providing he agrees to certain strict conditions.”

“Which are, Your Heaviness?”

Before Anu had the opportunity to answer, another Council member put a counter argument forward, “He would have been of sound mind when he stole the missiles, at which time he had already meant to threaten us.”

“That is an excellent point,” another member agreed.

Anu said, “Now, concerning these conditions. If we allow Alalu to come back here, as our crisis is thankfully over, he has to agree to relinquish all rights to the throne. He has to live here quietly with no contact with the An-Gels, and he has to change his identity.”

Arguments continued into the night. In the course of time, however, the Council voted to allow Alalu to continue his exile, on Nibiru, with certain conditions:

1. His arrival had to be secret, no welcome committee and no An-Gelic broadcasting of his return.
2. He would not hold any public office or influence anybody in public office.
3. He would assume a new identity and live quietly with his family.

Dayanum conveyed the Council's decision to Lama the next day.

Although, relieved that her son would be returning home, when she heard of the conditions of his release, she became furious. “How dare they treat my family in such an off-handed way?”

“I agree, it is rather harsh, but that is the Council's decision.”

“Then override their decision and let the judges decide.”

The judge smiled, “We cannot do that. The decision stands.”

“I do not accept that, and I shall let the king know my views on the matter, in no uncertain terms.”

Lama, elderly, even by Nibiruan standards, felt her advanced age. Her scaly skin had become greyish green, a typical trait in the Nibiruan aging process. Since the sudden death of her husband, she lived her life alone, apart from her servants, in her villa, just outside Nibiru City. King Lahma's death had always been a mystery to her. She did not believe he had taken his life by jumping off a tower. An anonymous witness testified that there were two Nibiruans on the roof at the time her husband fell to his death, but they were so high up it wasn't possible to discern who the second one was. While grieving for her dead husband she also had to deal with the young upstart, Anu, who had her son taken from her as well. Now he wanted Alalu to live anonymously, with a new name. She wasn't going to stand for it. She sought an audience with Anu but had to settle for a discussion with his father.

Confronting Anshargal, she raged, “These appalling conditions are an insult to our family. How dare your son to treat us in such an off-hand way?”

He wanted to say because your son threatened all of us with mass destruction, but he kept his counsel on the matter. He instead responded, “I cannot comment, Lama. The High Council made the decision, not I.”

“You and that upstart son of yours are enjoying this,” Lama retorted.

“No, we are not. However, Alalu cast the die and now has to live the result.”

“I am not standing for it. I will make my appeal to the High Council.”

“Then do so Lama, only through the correct channels.”

The matriarch squared her jaw. “I'm not without influence in the Council you know. You shall soon see the extent of my power, Anshargal the Cupbearer,” she retorted pointedly.

Anshargal would not allow her to goad him. He replied, calmly, “Very good Lama. That is your right. Even so, I cannot assist you with this.”

Huffing, she turned to leave. Then, turning to face Anshargal she said, “You had your chance to rule beside my son. Now, what have you got?”

“I am honoured to be Anu's Cupbearer.”

“Oh really!” she taunted. “Well be honoured while you can because you won't have that exalted role for much longer!”

“What are you talking about, Lama?”

“Oh, Anshargal, it's not for me to say. I don't make these decisions.” With that parting shot, she walked haughtily out of the chamber.

Chapter 11

Anu cut a dashing figure around the palace, the Crimson robes of office complementing his greenish brown skin. Young, by Nibiruan standards, and full of vigour, he stood almost 15 feet tall. Anu's rule, well accepted, by the populace, was highly respected by them as well. Most Nibiruans thought Alalu should have abdicated after he lost the wrestling match. Many of those who still supported his reign following that event, did not like the sneaky way he left Nibiru for Ki. Anu certainly had the numbers, and that helped give him the confidence he needed to be their king. However, he soon found out that being King of Heaven did not mean everything went his way.

On Nibiru, the law stated, that the High Council must pass any significant decisions or proposed changes to state and planetary policies. Sometimes, even he had to abide by Council decisions not of his choosing, as with the vexing issue he now had to face. Although new Council statutes only passed into law if they had the royal seal stamped on them, the king would have to have a solid reason for not doing so. As he scrutinised the document outlining Alalu's conditions for re-entry to Nibiru, there remained one aspect that troubled him deeply. "Damn her," he cursed.

Before he put the royal seal on the Council's decision, Anu sought spiritual guidance in the temple dedicated to him, Eanna, the House of An. He lit incense and sat in quiet contemplation, praying to An, the divine Creator, "Divine Mother, forgive me for what I have to do. Help me make the right decision and give me the strength to carry out this onerous task, for the good of all Nibiru."

Feeling refreshed spiritually, he entered the Chamber of the High Council and addressed those assembled therein. As on all official occasions, he wore the traditional TiaRa, the divine headdress, upon his head. In his right claw, he held the Septar, the royal symbol of power and in his left claw, the Rod, which symbolised the guiding light of Apsu. With a heavy heart, he put his seal on the motion, and it became law. In doing, so he agreed that Kumarbi, a grandson of Alalu, became his Royal Cupbearer. This compromise appeased Lama, in return for her acceptance of the conditions set out for Alalu's exile on Nibiru.

Anshargal could not believe his ears. Not one prone to outbursts, he felt his pain silently. Being betrayed by his son, galled him, the most. Profoundly upset, he got up and left the chamber. How could his son treat him like this? For many Sars he had served the Royal House of Nibiru faithfully, even giving up his right to the throne to broker peace between the two families. Now his son had cast him aside, to appease that old dragon, Lama and her ambition to have her family line strengthened.

Anshargal lamented his situation, his emotions a mixture of hurt and hate. He did not know how she managed to have such an influence on the High Council. She always favoured Alalu over him. She pulled strings in the High Council to have her son ascend to the throne.

For the next few days, Anshargal avoided Anu and the royal court. The hurt, the hatred, the feeling of betrayal, all ate deeply into his heart. His emotional state affected him to such an extent that, in desperation, he sought out Lama at her villa, where he confronted her. "Lama, how can you treat me in such a way?"

She looked at him with contempt. "The High Council' made the determination, not I."

"Lama, what a coward you are, hiding behind the Council when it was you who coerced them into making the decision."

Lama, enjoying his entreaties, replied, "I am flattered that you assume I have such an influence over the Council."

Anshargal, barely able to keep his rage in check, said, "How dare you treat me with such contempt after I gave up my throne to your son?"

"Yes, and your son stole it from him." Lama looked at him scornfully, "In any case, I did not betray you, Anshargal. Your beloved son put the seal on the Council's decision, not I." Glaring at him, she thrust the emotional sword in even deeper. "In any case how dare you talk of betrayal when you betrayed Alalu in such a cowardly and despicable way when he wasn't there to defend himself? I will never forgive you for that."

"Anu took the throne for the good of Nibiru, not for personal gain."

Laughing derisively, she retorted, "If you believe that you have even less sense than I thought. Anu sits upon the throne like a proud bird, preening its feathers, the throne that shall one day be Kumarbi's inheritance. Then, and only then, Alalu will have his revenge against the pretender."

Anshargal felt wretched as he left Lama's villa - even worse than he did before the confrontation. He did not blame his son for sealing his fate. He knew that even the King of Heaven had to abide by the Council's determination. He would at least leave the Royal House with honour and dignity, once he had performed his last function, that of instructing the new Cupbearer in the protocols that went with the esteemed position.

First, he had to relinquish his position at the Nibiruan Royal Court, in the presence of the king and two courtiers. He knew that Anu had to stand firm and be as rigid as the rod he held, as he accepted his father's resignation as Cupbearer. However, beneath Anu's hard exterior Anshargal could see the subtle signs in his son's demeanour, that only a father could pick up, indications that showed deep sorrow and shame. Anshargal's heart went out to his son, for he knew their relationship would never be the same again.

He deliberated on whether to take the next step and knock at the door. Hesitating, he fixed his gaze upon the five-pointed gold star over the King's door. He smiled wistfully, reflecting on how he had helped his son choose that icon as his symbol, and regretted that he would never feel that close to him again. As tricky as the meeting would be, he needed to clear things with Anu. His knock brought a response from Antu, Anu's intended spouse, who came to king's door. She said quietly, "Your son is not seeing anybody at this moment."

Anshargal turned to leave, his head bowed.

"Anu found it a tough decision to make," she said to his back.

He turned around, his eyes clouded with tears. "Tell him. Tell him I know."

"I will," Antu smiled sadly.

"There's something else though Antu. Something I must warn him of."

"Tell me, and I will let him know."

He hesitated, and then said, "Tell him to beware of Kumarbi. Lama is pulling his strings."

"I will, and thank you Anshargal for the great support and comfort you have been to your King."

With sadness showing in his face, Anshargal replied, "I am very proud of my son."

"I know that Anshargal, and so does he."

The colossal transporter touched down at Nibiru Igigi Central Command. It had flown light from Ki, its only cargo being just one special guest. In the dead of the Nibiruan night, the lone passenger walked down the ramp to the waiting guards. With no words spoken, he proceeded to a room in which government officials were waiting. One of them handed him a document to read and sign. Having read and approved the conditions of his exile, he received an identification chip with his new life embedded in its circuitry. "Welcome to Nibiru, Arsarg," stated an official. With this completed the newly named Arsarg was free to go.

Lama was waiting for him outside the restricted area. She embraced him. "Welcome home my son," she said, her old eyes sparkling with joy.

Ea, Anu's son, continually asked questions about anything and everything, right from when he began to speak. Anu often ribbed him about it, saying that he asked questions about everything, even before his egg cracked. Owing to his thirst for knowledge, it wasn't at all surprising that Ea proved to be a very bright scholar.

One day he asked his father, "Why are we not able to send a Shamash to Ki at any time, while we travel around Apsu."

"It has been that way, for as long as I can remember. I cannot answer that for you, but Urak may be able to tell you."

"Then I shall ask him, father. Will you take me to him?"

"He is busy with the gold problem, my son, but I'll see if he can spare you a few moments."

Ea found the Nibiruan Academy of Sciences, where Urak taught, awe-inspiring. Built in the Nibiruan classical style; the stepped Pyramid-shaped hard stone building had entrance steps leading to each of the four levels. These steps also led down into a garden courtyard, enhanced by a variety of trees. Some of these provided adequate shade for those relaxing by an artificial lake, in the centre of which was a small rocky island. At the centre of the island, there stood a life-size statue of Kuna, the academy's founder. It appeared so realistic that it seemed as though he looked out on all who passed by.

Urak, taking his midday recess when Anu and his son arrived, looked up, saying, "Your Heavenness, this is indeed a great honour you do me."

"Then you may honour me in return."

"If it is within my power, Your Heavenness."

"It is my son, Ea. He has a question to ask you."

Urak smiled, "Then, dear child, ask away."

Ea shuffled close to the chief scientist. He then asked, "Why are we not able to send a Shamash to Ki at any time, while we travel around Apsu?"

"What a wonderful question," Urak said, "Now let me see. Well young one, on Nibiru, a Sars equals 3600 Ki Sars or Years. This situation is due to the extreme orbit our planet makes around Apsu, a cycle that takes us out to the far reaches of the Solaris System, even way beyond Neptune." Checking to see if Ea understood, he asked, "Are you following me?"

"Yes Urak, please continue,"

"Very well, owing to the nature of our planet's circulation, space travel between Ki and us is only possible when this world reaches its perihelion."

"What does perihelion mean?"

"That's its closest point to Apsu."

"How do we know this?" Ea asked.

"This became well noted by the Nibiruan stargazers, who kept track of such events." Pointing at the statue in the middle of the lake, he explained, "That is Kuna, who, among many other scientific attributes, became the head stargazer, during Lahma's rule. He notified the king when Nibiru would soon be moving out of Apsu's range, which would be the case for the remainder of the current Sars."

Ea, still puzzled, said, "I understand that. What I don't know is why, when we have star ships, we can't fly to any planet at any time."

"It is because we haven't yet worked out anti-gravity technology," Urak answered. He then asked, "But what is your reason for wanting to know this?"

"So that I can develop the technology to travel off-planet at any time we wish. This development would make our gold production program much more efficient, and it would mean that our citizens would not feel stranded for long periods of Ki time."

Urak laughed at this, not derisively, more in surprise. "Well, young Ea let me know when you have done it because we have been trying to do so, for a very long time."

Anu was very proud of Ea, and he wanted to support him in his project, but he had more important things on his mind. The latest Ki-logical report from the scientists in the off-planet mining colony had reported that the gold was less plentiful in the area than the data previously indicated. This was very worrying for Anu, as he had to report this finding to the High Council for their deliberations.

He knew that there were those members of the Council who had never supported the 'Ki adventure', as they described the mining project taking place there. Lama was already pulling strings to create support for Kumarbi's succession to the throne. This disquieting news would provide the matriarch with the ammunition she needed to put her devious plans into action. Anu needed something positive to put before the Council to assure his regal standing on Nibiru.

As it happened, Ea came up with a promising solution. After discussing rocketry technology with Urak and other scientists from The Nibiruan Science Academy, Ea knew he had found kindred spirits. From the moment he first entered those hallowed halls of higher learning he became awestruck by the experiments taking place there.

Urak, quite taken by Ea's grasp of the subject, explained, "To be able to invent the anti-gravity technology we so sorely need, we have to be able to understand the workings of the smallest of all things."

"What's that?" the young Prince asked.

"It is called an Atom. We believe it is the source of all things in science."

Ea, intrigued, listened intently.

"This Atom, we believe, has within it a tremendous force, that if tapped, will be powerful enough to drive anything."

"That's remarkable, Urak. So how does this force work?"

"That is what we are trying to find out." Then Urak asked, "Do you know what a conductor is?"

Ea beamed, "something that conducts energy. I guess."

"Good answer. Well, what we are talking about here is a superconductor, which not only directs the course of the energy but also changes it into something else."

"What does it change itself into?"

"It changes the power we use to run everything, into a driving force that cancels the reaction without using any fuel to propel it."

"What do you mean by cancels the reaction?"

Urak considered Ea's question for a moment. Then he held a cube above his desk and dropped it; it did not bounce. Then he took a ball and made it fall on the counter; the ball bounced up again.

What's the difference between the behaviours of the two objects?" he asked.

"That's easy." Ea answered, "The ball bounced, but the cube did not."

"Excellent. Another way of explaining this is that the ball reacted, but the cube didn't"

"Okay, but I don't see how that explains ..."

"When the ball bounced, its reaction caused the force that drew it to the table to react by drawing it back to the tabletop. This attractive force is what we know of as gravity. Each time it does this the ball has less power to react and eventually comes to a standstill on the table. Therefore, the driving force can cancel out the gravity reaction without needing any fuel to propel it. Once we can do this, then we can solve our problem."

Ea was puzzled. He asked, "If you know this then why can't you make it work?"

"Because, we believe the force we are talking about comes from within the Atom, and we don't understand enough about that yet."

Ea was not about to let the scientist off the hook that easily. He asked, "So if this anti-gravity is needed for our star ships to take off from Ki, how is it possible for them to take off anyway?"

"A good question young Ea. When our star ships land on planets, such as Ki, the planet's gravitational pull naturally draws a space vehicle to its surface. It is for the return trip that we need anti-gravitation propulsion. Now, when our planet is close enough to Ki, our net forces are so strong its attraction assists our pilots in take-off propulsion from that world."

"Now I understand," Ea said, beaming.

Ea quickly became so interested in all aspects of science that he enrolled at the Academy to become a scientist himself. Urak, at Anu's request, became his son's tutor, a task he enjoyed immensely, due to the young prince's inquiring mind.

One day Ea asked Urak, "What makes one form of life different to another?"

The scientist thought about how to answer such a profound question. At length, he said, "There are many aspects to this. We are as we are on account of where we live and because of our needs."

"I already know that. What I want to know is what decides how we are going to turn out the way we do, even before we hatch?"

Urak, taken aback by his young ward's wisdom, answered, "You are talking about one of the greatest mysteries Ea. It's known as the 'Key to Life'."

"Tell me then, what is this key?"

"It is in us."

"Where is it in us?"

Urak wondered how to explain something he wasn't even sure of himself. In the end, he said, "We are made up of tiny compartments that each incorporates a special code that is unique to every living thing."

"Tell me about this special code," Ea probed.

"It is very complex, and there is much about it we do not yet know. What we do know is that by understanding this code we can learn to create forms of life."

As the implication of such an outrageous statement sank in, Ea uttered, "We will be as gods."

The more Ea learned about this code, the more enthralled he became. Of all the areas of science he studied at the Academy, the 'Key to Life' captured his imagination the most. So captivated was he that it became the discipline in which he majored.

He was talking to his father about it one day. "Just imagine, father, by understanding the 'Key to Life', we have the power to create life. We will have the control over life and death."

Anu was dubious of such study. "I think it best to leave such things to An, the Great Creator. It would probably be more beneficial to all of us if you helped us work out how to get more gold out of Ki."

Ea showed surprise. "Is there not enough gold there?" he asked his father, unaware of the flawed Ki-logical data.

"Supplies are dwindling. We may have to send expeditions elsewhere to find new sources of the yellow metal."

"It sounds exciting, going on one of these expeditions."

Anu became stern. "The brave Nibiruans who go on these missions do so out of a sense of duty and honour Ea, not for excitement or personal adventure."

"All the same father, I should like the opportunity to go on one of these expeditions."

Anu thought about what Ea was saying. He did not want his son to risk his life on such a project. Still, everything had gone relatively smoothly on Ki, so far. In the end, he replied, "If you come up with a method to help us extract more gold from Ki, I will grant your wish."

Filled with the desire to go to Ki, Ea became engrossed in working out alternative methods for extracting gold. Apart from the trip being an excellent adventure for him he genuinely wanted to assist with the gold project. He even dreamt about it. However, in his dreams, instead of burrowing into the Earth to find the precious metal, it seemed to be in the Tiamat (the vast ocean). Although the meaning of the dream meant little to him at the time, its profundity proved useful later.

Captivated by being part of a project to increase the Ki gold supplies, Ea posed the question of gold to Urak, at their next tutorial. "What is it that makes gold so special?" he asked.

The scientist replied with another question. He asked his bright young student, "What do you know of the white powder of gold?"

"Very little."

"Would you like to know about it?"

"I would like that very much Urak."

"Very well, come with me, and I will show you the process."

Ea followed his tutor into a specially set up laboratory equipped with a sort of furnace in one corner. A Sinnis scientist checked the temperature gauge of the kiln. She then checked another machine that looked like a grinder.

"This doesn't look like any science laboratory, I recognise, Urak," Ea commented, indicating the large kiln.

Urak replied, "This is where we smelt the gold. The temperature has to be high enough for the gold to take on a crystallised effect. The glass-like substance is then ground into tiny particles to transform it into a translucent powder."

"It doesn't seem to be anything special in its powder form."

“Urak laughed. I have never thought of it like that. However, when the white powder of gold is mixed in water, it becomes the Elixir of Life, And Then it becomes something extraordinary indeed.”

“Tell me about this elixir of life Urak.”

“The white powder of gold is used to make the container of the light of life. Just being in its presence stops the ageing process. By drinking the mixture, we can, supposedly, live forever.”

“If this is so, why do we all not drink it?”

“Not everybody uses it because the solution of gold comes with a warning, Ea. Once we have consumed it, should our vibration fall below a certain level, the opposite effect shall occur, and the white powder will rend and destroy us.”

“How can it do that?”

“The white powder, when consumed, opens our minds. At first, this affords us great knowledge of what has happened, what is happening and what will happen.”

“Surely gaining knowledge is a good thing.”

“Not when it happens all at once. Too much knowledge all at once will drive us mad. Worse still, too much of the solution makes us feel invincible when we are not. It has to be respected and not abused.”

“How can we make it safe?”

“It's perfectly safe if used correctly.”

After seeing the process, Ea said, “Now that you have shown me what we do with the gold, can we focus on how to find and extract it?”

“Very good Ea, follow me to the next laboratory.”

Ea followed the scientist and found himself in a room with a huge water tank, which turned out to be a wave-making machine.

“What's that for?” Ea asked, intrigued.

Urak explained, “Ki, like some other planets, has a large supply of water on its surface. It has a Moon called Kingu that pulls this watery substance across the planet, as Ki rotates.” He then switched on the wave maker and the water began undulating across the tank. “As you can see, waves are formed by the agitation of the wave maker.”

Ea became impatient. “This is all very interesting, but what has it got to do with extracting our precious gold.”

“Have patience Ea. Now, where these waters meet the land, they break up the nearest rocks, extracting their minerals. This erosion is what gives the water a salty taste.”

“I believe I know what you are going to say!” Ea burst out, remembering his strange dream. “One of the minerals extracted is gold.”

“Sometimes, but it is not always the case. Tests have to be undertaken to verify the existence of gold in the water.”

“Have any such tests been carried out on Ki?”

“I do not think so. As far as I know, the miners have only dug for the gold on land.”

“Then I will find out all I can about the process and let my father know about it.”