

## Chapter Eleven

### Brains and Brawn

"Sure, the pen is mightier than the sword, but give me a sword to settle personal arguments any time."

- Attila the Hun - last words.

"Jim," insisted Khriys, "we must find out what happened to our cruiser Hresaty."

"I don't think we've got the time to spend as many as twenty days out of our way, when we know there's a bad situation on that planet." Phillips gave a deep sigh, and resumed, "We may be able to help there, but we certainly can't help the Hresaty, especially since the pirates have already looted it." Jim desperately did not want to upset his new ally, yet he had to insist on the logical course of action.

"No, Sir, he is right," said Clemists, after another pause in the debate. "The relief fleet from the forward base should be here in eighty days, sooner if all goes well. They can send a ship to investigate. They will know as much as we do right now, but they will have more resources. I think we must proceed to the other system as suggested by First Officer Phillips."

Formally correct as always, cool and controlled on the surface, Clemists was itching with excitement, and could not wait to be off in the human ship. To think of it! To be the first to serve on an alien ship, accepted as an equal crewmember: the honour was almost overpowering him; pride gleamed on his feathers, every single one immaculately in place. He was not going to put a claw wrong, first impressions count for much! Somewhere deep inside he had a feeling that Phillips was enjoying the situation and perhaps even gently laughing at him, at least he didn't show it though. And if he didn't know better, perhaps even the ramrod Khriys was also being amused by his ill-concealed eagerness. He resolved to plough on, Academy training to the fore.