

MANTIS FORCE

Fiero One

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Book Summary

A Rhizonor galaxy class scout ship, the Osporatta, is sent on a special assignment just inside one of the regions of space where myths and lore are born, known as the “Dead Zones.” Shortly after their arrival, a series of ominous and foreboding events unfold. The mission quickly turns from one of search and rescue, to one of survival. For they are the first to experience the "Deathly Darkness" prophesied in the Kadashah, which will usher in the end of the age. The unmitigated force of the cold merciless power of the kingdoms of darkness is unleashed to afflict those of faith in God. The son of the morning, Kravanoblus, will test the living and trap them in a vise grip of intense trial and tribulation.

Do you have enough faith to endure the end of this age?

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CHAPTER ONE

THE EMPEROR'S TRANSFORMATION

After years of suffering defeat at the hands of his enemies, Emperor Maulvattas made a pilgrimage to a nearby holy Vurdracka temple on the planet Ashtar in the Yaron Phyn system. The Imperial Galactic fleet entered orbit above the planet Ashtar. Following local protocol, they announced their arrival by sending a coded message to the governing authorities. Moments later, the Emperor and sixty Imperial escort ships descended into Ashtar's atmosphere. They sliced through the outer edges of a dark storm gathering over the Sea of Harathue. Uninhibited by the clouds, the sun's rays reflected off the surface of the sea making it appear as though it were made of brilliant gemstones. They quickly reached the majestic sea cliffs of Tlex-Ven which marked the sea's boundaries and their flight path vector. The fleet of ships veered south as they reached the northernmost tip of Tlex-Ven, following the cliffs toward the temple. The small armada decelerated and hovered near the outermost temple wall boundaries, then landed in groups of six on the barren parade grounds.

Emperor Maulvattas and a contingent of Cravateine Imperial Bodyguards disembarked from the imperial flagship Gorgo and marched to the stern of the ship where three imperial class skimmers awaited them. Plumes of dust marked the skimmers path as they zipped across the copper-colored surface of the temple grounds.

The trio of ships slowed as they glided through the center of a field of massive tanzanite obelisks covered with ancient enigmatic hieroglyphic inscriptions. The tall structures cast shadows upon the convoy as it made its way through.

A large copper-colored ziggurat known as the "Stairway to God" lay before the main temple gates. They were offered passage via a dark tunnel running the length of the ziggurat. Slowing as they exited the tunnel, the skimmers smoothly landed parallel to the temple wall near the massive ornate gates. The Emperor, escorted by one thousand Cravateine ceremoniously disembarked, and stood before the large temple gates in parade formation.

Emperor Maulvattas deactivated the blast visor of his imperial battle helmet, mesmerized by the hypnotic waves of heat radiating from the metal temple floor. A strong westerly gust of wind caused a large swirl of dust to sweep by the temple gates, breaking his concentration. He looked to his right, toward the Sea of Harathue where a thin line of approaching dark storm clouds was visible on the horizon. Suddenly, the sound of moving metal, signifying the opening of the temple gates, caused him to re-focus his attention. He watched as the temple gates slid into the sides of the thick imposing temple walls.

The Emperor was fascinated with the legendary and ancient race that guarded all the temples of Vurdracka and the significant history of their origins. The open gates revealed thousands of three-meter tall, bi-pedal, horned beings, 'The Sadit Gabrahgah guards,' standing at attention, resplendent in traditional temple armor. The captain of the guard approached the emperor bowing his horned head according to ceremonial

dictates. “Greetings Emperor Maulvattas, May God bless your life,” he said respectfully. “You are blessed to serve God in his temple” the Emperor responded in accordance with the holy order of Vurdracka etiquette.

The captain of the guard lifted his head and said “God awaits you, Emperor.” The captain of the guard pivoted ninety degrees perpendicular to Maulvattas' left shoulder signaling the legions of Sadiit guards just inside the entrance to split into two ranks.

Emperor Maulvattas confidently proceeded to enter alone passing through the waiting ranks and a complex labyrinth of passageways. Arriving at the final set of doors leading into the sanctum sanctorum of the temple, he placed his hands on the center of the Vurdracka crest imbedded in the ornate doors and pressed firmly to open them, revealing the hidden chamber. He stood almost motionless as he examined the vast chamber containing an unusually large metal plateau with a stairway spiraling to the top. He took a long measured breath, exhaled, then moved toward the staircase marveling at the immensity of the structure. At the bottom of the stairway, looking up, he began his ascent of the dimly lit stairs. Reaching the top he proceeded to the center and stepped atop a raised octagon-shaped platform triggering the chambers lighting, enabling him to see thick, ten-meter long, transparent crystals equally spaced throughout the ceiling of the chamber.

Removing his Imperial battle helmet he proceeded to kneel, leaning forward ever so slightly with his helmet held firmly in his left arm, reverently bowing his head in supplication. Maulvattas cleared his mind; his solid black-colored eyes fixed upon the platform beneath him and began his prayers. In a loud booming voice, which echoed throughout the chamber, he prayed aloud “Kravanoblus! My God! My empire has lost vast regions of

territorial space to our enemies." Like so many times before, he was met with dead silence, no response.

Frustration building, he continued shouting "I demand that you fulfill the blood covenant you made with my forefathers, now! Anger, mingled with hate, swelled within him as he wondered, *"Why is God not honoring my request? I am a devoted worshiper, and more importantly, heir to the royal family's blood covenant established between my forefathers and God himself."*

The emperor's right hand clenched tightly into a fist, as he vehemently continued his prayers.

"God, assist me now to crush our enemies. I demand that you answer me!" Hatred for his enemies burned within his soul like an unquenchable fire.

A faint pulsing sound disrupted his train of thought; quickly lifting his head he scrutinized the chamber in an attempt to pinpoint its origin. The sound increased in volume, until the deep pulsating thrums were so powerful, they caused his body armor to reverberate. Above him, the crystals came to life, dimly glowing then flashing with highly intense bursts of light resembling the stroboscopic beacons of the landing zones of intergalactic ships. The size of the crystals grew exponentially with each burst of light, in perfect unison with the rhythmic beat. Reaching over sixty meters in length before the strobe effect ceased, the crystals retained their almost blinding brightness. The intervals of the thrumming increased in duration, until a single prolonged tone was broken by a sharp sound, like a water drop echoing throughout the chamber, followed by an eerie silence.

Maulvattas captivated by the events unfolding before him, remained kneeling staring at the crystals. Tendrils of fear pricked at his soul. *“I have the royal blood of my forefathers. I have ascended to the throne of the Levysheen Empires as Emperor. I have been trained to meet adversities and all manner of challenges set before me and be victorious over them,”* he mused to himself. In an attempt to dissipate his fears, the emperor recalled two major accomplishments that had shaped both his character and his life. Twelve years of imperial training that most royals do not survive, and his ascension to the imperial throne of the Levysheen Empires traversing hierarchical treacheries, greed, and ensnaring webs of family intrigue, which had devoured so many before him. By comparison, this was by far a more dangerous journey than the imperial training.

A tiny sparkle from the grayish floor caught his eye. Instinctively, he redirected his attention from the crystals to a small pool of liquid silver flowing from the center of the chamber floor. Its smooth shimmering surface reflected the crystal's light as it expanded and formed a distinct oblong shape near the plateau. *“It’s God!”* Maulvattas exclaimed, awe-struck. Gripped by anxiety, the Emperor’s heart beat faster and sweat poured down his forehead. A large wave formed and raced toward him nearly touching the bottom of the plateau, followed by a continuous stream of smaller silver ripples. Slowly from the epicenter, a large black pillar-shaped object made of a dark viscous substance, passing thirty meters in height and six meters in width, ascended and hovered just above the pool of silver. Its surface was completely covered with large scales and moved hypnotically in a serpentine motion. The scaly pillar reminded him of a dragon's tail. As he looked on with both fascination and fright the pillar, with fluid-like smoothness, re-shaped itself into a male humanoid form.

At that moment, the crystals were engulfed in a spherical cloud of high-intensity light which descended from the top of the chamber and enveloped the being in an almost blinding white luminescence. Maulvattas' soul sensed its mortality but he dared not move for fear of instant death. In a repetitious chant, he whispered the words, "It's my God, no harm will come to me." His fear began to ebb, and through squinting eyes, he peered at the bright ball of light as the being slowly emerged from the shimmering cloud in front of him.

The Emperor looked down, away from the gaze of the being of light. "I am Kravanoblus, I am God! I have come to honor and fulfill the blood covenant that I made with your forefathers!" Bursts of energy and light shot from his hands, struck the plateau, and the temple shook. The Emperor felt the temple move as the energy and light from Gods' hands surrounded and strengthened him. Now emboldened, he lifted his gaze to the eyes of God whose eyes were the same as his own, but somehow blacker, colder ... lifeless. "The time has come, Emperor, to fulfill your destiny" Kravanoblus said, his voice echoing throughout the chamber. Maulvattas cowered and bowed his head, with his eyes closed, and humbly exclaimed "Thank you my Lord and my God!" At that moment, Kravanoblus extended his right hand over the head of his supplicant and stated forcefully "For your worship and loyalty, I will grant you extended life and great powers I once bestowed upon your forefathers." The temple shook. Kravanoblus extended his right hand as the index finger transformed into a dark fang positioned directly over Maulvattas' head. "By my power and the strength of my arm, receive your reward!" Kravanoblus said in an omniscient-sounding voice.

The fang descended slightly touching his skull, the tip so sharp, that he didn't feel it penetrating until it was too late. Suddenly, a pain so

excruciating pierced him and paralyzed his vocal cords, trapping his agonized scream in his throat. His eyes closed tightly, and bursts of colors exploded across the canopy of darkness as he drew close to losing consciousness. The pain ebbed slightly as Maulvattas felt something cold enter his body.

Like prey, when struck by a poisonous snake, the sting immobilized him and his body shuddered as the dark venomous essence coursed through his veins exchanging warm blood with near-freezing necronos-plasma. He felt as though he was being pierced by thousands of needles as his frail flesh was being transformed into something vastly superior.

The dark essence continued its relentless assault and Maulvattas' soul trembled at the approaching darkness. He tried to escape, but to no avail. Like a sword wielded in battle, the dark essence began to slash with unbridled ferocity at the pillars of his morality. Mercy, compassion, and then love were razed as the sword continued its deathly thrusts until all vestiges of moralistic thought were utterly destroyed. The sword of Kravanoblus spared none, the will of Kravanoblus, be done.

Maulvattas, now keenly aware of his physical change, sensed incredible new powers growing inside him, sprouting from the seeds sown by the dark essence. Blinded momentarily, he feared nothing, instinctively knowing that his sight would return. Kravanoblus, with knowledge of the gate prophecies written in the Kadashah, addressed the Emperor with concise orders on what must be done.

Q3 verse 4

From the gates of purple, two noble houses will defeat the children of Mavet.

Q3 verse 5

From the gates of gold, fierce battles rage, many mighty shall fall, hope remains within the inner man.

"You will go to the Fiero System with three orbs of power to awaken and release the Qwravasha in order to thwart the prophecies.

After you defeat the Mantis Force, you will recommence the blood covenant ceremonies established by your forefathers and rule for fifteen hundred years. Now, go in my strength to your victory!"

Kravanoblus then vanished. Maulvattas knew that he was no longer in the presence of God and was no longer inside the temple as he breathed in cool ionized air from the impending storm. Deep in thought, the Emperor pondered the preceding events, and came to believe that if his interpretation of the prophecies were correct, the transformation of the Vurdracka temple to a Necrovothom fortress that had just occurred would be the fulcrum of a glorious new age for the Levysheen Empires.

He became aware of a bright haze surrounding his mind, indicating recovery from the sting of death was close at hand. In the distance, Maulvattas heard a series of thunderclaps and felt raindrops on his face at the same moment his sight made a full recovery. Looking around, Maulvattas was proud that his spiritual insight of the Kadashah prophecies and other holy scriptures was equal to that of the religious priests and those of the sorcerer guilds. Since the formation of the Levysheen Empires, the study of

ancient prophecies had been a required course for all royal and military personnel. Maulvattas was astounded at the magnitude of the changes within him and the temple, and the affirmation of his beliefs became stronger.

Pride swelled within his heart, for he alone was chosen by God to awaken the legendary Qwravasha sorcerers and to recommence the blood covenant practiced by his forefathers during the first age of Quintástraya. From the depths of the Emperor's subconscious, surfaced an image of his wife Empress Drahalla pregnant with twins, the means by which he would establish his reign of fifteen hundred years. The image was engulfed by a powerful vision of a dark mountain whose foundation was the dark abyss. Atop the dark mountain, was the ancient blood stained altar of Kravanoblus. Hovering over the altar were two verses from the Kadashah, written in the fresh blood of the innocent.

From the dark shroud of the bottomless abyss, a Nostro Hedrin cipher emerged, and ascended to the mountain top where it began to drink the verses.



Q1 verse 5

The wombs turn into graves, many hearts turn cold; love is quenched.

Q1 verse 7

The tongue of death laps the blood of the unborn; the darkness is strengthened.

Then as quickly as the vision appeared, the images evaporated like fine mist. He pondered the vision for a moment, and then self-importance overtook him, for he was the tip of the spear that pierced the threshold of life and the power of mere mortal men.

Maulvattas gained his bearings as he stood on the vast parade grounds of the new Necrovothom fortress. To his left, three hundred metallic dracka-bots stood in semi-circular formation. Within the center of the formation were three small glowing orbs, the keys to the release of the Qwravasha, hovering inside a transparent transportation platform. One of the dracka-bots glided toward the emperor. “Emperor Maulvattas,” the dracka-bot said in a monotone voice, “We are the guard detail for the three orbs.” “Where are the Cravateine?” Emperor Maulvattas asked impatiently ignoring the obvious statement. “They’ll appear shortly, my Emperor,” responded the dracka-bot, twisting his metal torso away from the Emperor.

He pointed towards the rows of new ships that were ascending from the floor of the new fortress. The ships, shining like sharpened blades in the quickly-fading sunlight, were evenly spaced, six across and ten deep. Multiple loading platforms alongside the ships, in sequential order front to back, descended into the fortress floor. The platforms reappeared moments later with the new Cravateine warriors to the waiting ships. The warriors wore various types of body armor, brandished menacing new weapons, and were indeed stronger and faster with a greatly increased life span of two hundred years or more. Thunder bellowed from the darkening storm clouds as they snuffed out the last rays of the sun. The dracka-bot did an about-face maneuver and glided back to the formation.

A large oration pedestal rose up from the fortress floor obscuring the Emperor's view of the warriors and ships. The time had arrived for the Emperor to unleash his forces and with his increased abilities he rose and claimed his position atop the pedestal. He reached his hands down and gathered up his glittering imperial battle helmet that rested on the pedestal. After he had donned the helmet, he stepped forward to the edge and sparks of dark blue energy crackled from his armor. He felt invincible! His voice reverberated across the parade grounds and echoed distantly, "The dawn of a new age has arrived for the Levysheen Empires. We have been given the honor of receiving the promise of the blood covenant made between God and our forefathers. We are the instruments by which the destruction of our enemies will come about. We are the first to be resurrected to glory!" The troops erupted into a roar.

Intoxicated with power, he lifted his hands toward the sky and proclaimed "The Levysheen Empires will stand forever!" Bolts of blue energy lashed out from his hands and the air tore asunder, causing a thunderclap. The darkened skies above responded in kind, as bolts of lightning streaked across the dark storm clouds. The Emperor looked down toward his troops and imperiously commanded, "Admiral Iblis and command staff, present yourselves before me!" Immediately, a small group nearest the pedestal stepped forward. Even now, imbued with supernatural powers, his soul devised ways to satisfy his insatiable thirst for more power as he descended to a height just above the heads of the group. "Supreme Fleet Admiral Iblis, I order you, and your commanders to re-deploy several fleets to the Fiero Prime system immediately!" "Yes, Emperor, as you wish," Iblis replied.

The Emperor looked to the remaining Supreme command leaders. “Grand Commander Thraxx, you are in charge of placing a new command staff at this fortress.

You will have this fortress fully operational when I return.” While he spoke, bluish energy continued to spark from his armor, emphasizing the dire consequences if Thraxx were to fail. “Thank you for the honor, Emperor,” Commander Thraxx replied quickly. The Emperor addressed Admiral Iblis “Admiral, prepare to launch. Our destination is the Fiero System. You’re dismissed!” The group came to attention, snapped an Imperial salute, and left the Emperor's presence.

The Emperor explored the new powers increasing the strength of his force field, creating a blue glow which encompassed his imperial armor. He stretched his arms outwards and observed dark-blue starbursts across his force field, displaying nature’s choreographed randomness of rain. He grinned with pleasure and glided toward his new flagship.