

Book IV

SOLAR WARS

THE DAWN OF TWO SUNS

A long time ago, in unmeasurable eons of time... not in some distant galaxy, far, far away... but right here, in our own cosmic backyard... in our solar system... there was no earth!

Chapter 9

Cross Roads of Destiny



Kael'Ryn
MERCURY



Princess Lysara
VENUS



General
Vaelor Krynn
MARS



VX-17 (Vex)
Combat-Droid
JUPITER



The
Shallit'Biru



Xal'Zirath
MERCURY

DEE DOWNING

Chapter 9: Cross Roads of Destiny

Far from Xyphos, in the depths of space, a Martian warship carved through the void, its blood-red hull gleaming under the distant glow of the distant Ra.

Inside, **General Vaelor Krynn** stood before a vast holomap; the shifting light reflecting off his battle-worn armor. His crimson gaze remained fixed on a single blinking signal; a tracking beacon pulsing in the direction of Mer’Kuri.

“They took her there,” Krynn murmured, more to himself than to the officers stationed around him. None dared question the intensity in his voice.

A **subordinate** hesitated before speaking. *“Shall we deploy the hunters, General?”*

Kyrnn’s jaw tightened. His grip on the edge of the holomap flexed, fingers twitching with restraint. *“No. We follow. Observe. She cannot slip away from me.”*

The officer saluted and stepped back, but exchanged a wary glance with his comrades. Whispers had spread among the ranks. The General’s determination to retrieve the Venusian princess was relentless... too relentless.

Some believed he sought to steal the glory of her rescue; to deliver her to Venus himself and claim victory over the Eclipse. Others suspected a deeper motive, though none could quite fathom what it was.

“Strange, isn’t it?” one officer muttered under his breath as he stepped away from the command deck. *“The way he talks about her.”*

Another scoffed. *“He’s Martian. He doesn’t talk about women at all.”*

And yet, the way the General watched the tracking beacon, the way his grip tensed when her location was mentioned... it unsettled them. There was something unspoken in his pursuit, something no one dared to question aloud.

To the universe, the princess was a prize of war. To him, she was everything.

The ship surged forward, stars streaking past as it raced toward Mer’Kuri. The hunt for the Venusian princess had begun.

The Aftermath on Xyphos

The Xyphos moon facility stood in eerie silence, its frozen halls still echoing with the remnants of battle. The once-imposing structure, carved into the icy surface, now bore scars from the conflict that had unfolded within.

Deep inside, in the command chamber, the air crackled with an unnatural energy as Aethor, the Master of Masters, arrived.

The general in charge of the princess' capture knelt before him, his body trembling despite the frigid air. He had failed. The princess was gone, and with her, the leverage the Eclipse had promised to deliver.

Aethor's expression remained unreadable, his golden robes untouched by the cold as he gazed down at the disgraced commander.

*"You were entrusted with **one** task," Aethor's voice was quiet, yet it cut through the chamber like a blade. "And you failed!"*

"My lord, please..." the **general** choked, his breath visible in the cold. *"The Solari, they..."*

Aethor raised his hand, and a searing golden light erupted from his palm. The general's words died in his throat as his body convulsed, fire bursting from within, consuming him in an instant.

The flames raged unnaturally, feeding on the very essence of their victim. Within seconds, nothing remained but blackened remnants, smoldering on the icy floor.

Silence followed. Then, a deep hum resonated through the chamber. A point of brilliant light formed in the air, expanding rapidly into a swirling vortex of golden fire; a sun portal.

The heat it radiated was suffocating; bending reality as its light stretched outward. From within the blazing rift, a presence emerged.

The Shallit'Biru.

The celestial entity's form was ever-shifting, a mass of luminous energy entwined with shadow. When it spoke, its voice resonated in a layered chorus, each word weighted with immeasurable power.

"Aethor."

The **Master of Masters** lowered his head slightly. *"Great One."*

The **Shallit'Biru's** energy flared, its disappointment a tangible force pressing against Aethor's very being. *"This setback is*

unacceptable. The princess was a key to our designs. And now, she is beyond our reach."

Aethor did not flinch. *"The mission was compromised. But this does not change the grand design."*

"Your grand design falters with each misstep," the **Shallit'Biru's** voice deepened, its glow intensifying. *"Before you claim dominion over the cosmos, you must first conquer Mer'Kuri. That world, that power... must be ours."*

Aethor's gaze remained steady. *"Mer'Kuri will fall. And when it does, we will build an unstoppable force; one that will channel the power of Ra itself."*

The **Shallit'Biru's** form pulsed, its swirling light cascading like solar flares. *"See that it is done!"*

The portal flickered, then collapsed inward, vanishing as suddenly as it had appeared. The oppressive heat faded, leaving only the cold and the charred remains of Aethor's wrath.

The Master of Masters stood alone once more, his mind already turning to the next phase of his conquest.

Mer'Kuri would fall.

Princess Lysara at the Solari Stronghold

The room was bathed in the soft glow of starlight; its walls adorned with intricate tapestries depicting legendary battles and valorous warriors. Princess Lysara stood before a mirror.

Her eyes were hard, her thoughts distant, as she surveyed her surroundings; far from the comfort of her all-female Venusian society.

She had been in the Solari stronghold for a few days; a guest, though she didn't feel like one. Around her, only women from the warrior caste of Solari and civilian Mer'Kuri tended to her every need.

They spoke to her with respect, but there was something in their voices; an unfamiliar softness that she couldn't ignore.

A soft knock at the door interrupted her thoughts.

"Your Highness," the voice of a female Solari warrior called. *"May I enter?"*

*"Of course, **Tephra**,"* **Lysara** replied, her voice a bit colder than she intended.

The Solari warrior entered, her stance strong and commanding despite the softness in her eyes. She was dressed in the traditional Solari battle garb, a mix of fluid armor and flowing cloth, her long hair tied back in a warrior's braid.

Tephra bowed her head respectfully, but it was clear from her posture that she was used to being in command.

"I've brought you the evening meal, Your Highness, as per your request."

Princess Lysara turned toward her; her expression thoughtful, almost pained. *"Tephra,"* she began, her voice measured, *"You have fought many battles, I presume? I've been told you willingly fought alongside men. What is it like... to fight with them?"*

Tephra's gaze flickered slightly, but she maintained her composure. She had long since learned how to keep her emotions in check.

"It is... challenging, Your Highness. But not for the reasons one might think. We are warriors first, regardless of gender. The Solari's bond with each other... male or female... is forged in blood and sweat. When you fight side by side, gender ceases to matter. Only your ability, your commitment, your honor."

Princess Lysara's lips pressed into a thin line, her eyes narrowing. *"Honor... That's what you call it? After all the years of training, of being taught that men are inferior, that they have no place in a society like ours. I find it hard to imagine ever fighting alongside one."*

Tephra's brow furrowed slightly, sensing the discomfort in the princess' voice. *"I understand your hesitation, Your Highness. But with all due respect... I understand you got a taste of what it's like to fight alongside men... during your escape from Xyphos."*

The princess nodded. Tephra continued, *"Venus is a society built on a different foundation than ours, but fighting alongside men is not about accepting them. It's about the mission. The greater cause."*

"But what of their weakness?" **Lysara** pressed, her tone now more intense, betraying a deep-seated disdain she could not hide.

"The escape from the Eclipse was out of sheer necessity... But as far as men in general are concerned, their flesh is not as strong as ours, their minds not as sharp. How can you fight alongside them, knowing that their very presence might slow you down, or worse... endanger you?"

Tephra paused for a long moment before answering, her voice softer now, almost reflective.

“There are weaknesses in all of us, Your Highness. Even in our strength. But you cannot let those fears govern you. Strength is not measured in how one is born, but how one rises in the face of adversity. I’ve seen male warriors fight with unmatched courage... fighting for the same cause as we are. And I’ve seen women who falter.”

Princess Lysara clenched her fists at her sides.

“You would fight alongside them... even knowing how much our worlds despise each other? Knowing that every man I see is a symbol of all that we have been taught to despise?”

Tephra’s eyes softened as she placed the tray of food down on the table before the princess.

“I would, Your Highness. Because the world needs warriors, not the divisions of society. And I believe... when you’ve seen enough of battle, you realize that strength doesn’t come from who you are. It comes from what you’re willing to fight for.”

Princess Lysara remained silent for a long moment, her gaze far away, lost in thought. The princess, a product of a society that prided itself on the superiority of its all-female warriors, was struggling with a concept she had never allowed herself to fully consider.

Tephra bowed again, retreating toward the door. *“If you need anything, Your Highness, I will be outside.”*

As the door closed, **Tephra** quietly walked away. She smirked, *“Surprisingly... I think I like the Venusian princess.”*

Lysara stood alone, staring at the reflection of herself in the mirror. She was a princess, a warrior, and yet she felt more vulnerable in this moment than she had ever felt before.

Her thoughts raced... not just about her mission, but about everything she had been taught, everything she had believed.

The sound of her own heartbeat thudded in her ears as the image of the General, whom she had secretly loved for years, flashed in her mind. Could there really be strength in what they had shared?

Could the same principle Tephra spoke of apply to her, too?

The thought unsettled her.

The Twin's Reward

The heavy, metallic doors of the Solari stronghold slid open, revealing the familiar sight of their home base... an imposing structure carved from the side of Mer'Kuri's mountains, glowing with the light of distant stars.

The air was thick with the scent of cool, mineral-rich stone and the hum of the stronghold's power systems.

Kael and Xal strode through the entrance, their armor gleaming, eyes scanning the space as if the events of the last few days had yet to sink in.

The mission to rescue Princess Lysara had been swift, but the weight of what they'd faced, and what still lay ahead, seemed to hover over them like an unseen force.

Their return was met with quiet reverence. The Solari warriors who lined the hall stood at attention, their gazes unwavering but respectful. The twins barely acknowledged their presence, their minds still fixated on what awaited them.

At the far end of the hall, Commander Rhenar stood, his hands clasped behind his back, his expression stern yet approving. Beside him stood an official representative of the Mer'Kuri council, who had come to offer the twins their reward.

They both had made their way here specifically to welcome the twins back and discuss their next steps.

"Kael, Xal," **Commander Rhenar's** voice boomed, echoing through the hall.

"You've returned victorious, but the journey ahead is not over. What you've done for Princess Lysara has proven your skill, your resolve... but more importantly, your loyalty. You are more than mere warriors now. You have earned your place among us."

Rhenar's eyes flickered with something deeper as he continued.

"It is my recommendation that you both be elevated within the ranks of the Solari. This is not merely a reward for your actions, but a recognition of your potential. You will continue your training, but now under direct guidance from the highest ranks of the Solari. You are needed."

Kael and Xal exchanged a brief glance, a spark of pride flickering between them. The idea of being elevated had always

seemed distant, like a dream too far to reach. Now, it was within their grasp. They nodded in unison, their faces resolute.

"You are warriors now," Rhengar continued. "But you must learn more than how to fight. You must learn how to lead, how to influence the course of history. And that... is where you will be tested."

Kael, the quieter of the two, stepped forward first, his usual stoic demeanor slightly betrayed by the gleam of determination in his eyes. *"We are ready, Commander. Whatever it takes."*

Xal, more impulsive and bold, added with a firm nod, *"We've proven ourselves already. We'll do whatever is needed. No hesitation."*

Rhengar gave a rare, approving nod before motioning to the representative of the Mer'Kuri council; a tall, imposing figure clad in intricate ceremonial garb. The Mer'Kuri representative stepped forward, holding a scroll sealed with the emblem of the Mer'Kuri council.

"This," the representative said, "is your formal recognition. The Mer'Kuri council officially extend their full support. Your victory in rescuing the princess has not gone unnoticed. You will receive resources, training, and the full backing of our people. You are no longer just Solari... your names will be known across the galaxy as heroes."

The twins accepted the scroll with silent reverence, understanding the gravity of the moment. But even as they held it in their hands, they knew that this was not the end.

Before they could speak again, the doors to the stronghold opened wide, and a familiar figure emerged... Alaric, their father, his tall frame imposing even in his older years. His piercing gaze swept over the twins, and for a brief moment, his face softened, revealing a glimpse of pride that few had ever seen.

"I always knew you would come back victorious," Alaric said, his voice steady yet tinged with a rare warmth. "But remember, this victory is only the beginning. The Solari masters trained you well, but the real test is yet to come."

Kael: *"Father. It's good to see you. But why are you here? Civilian family is not allowed to visit during the trials."*

Xal: *"Yeah. I was wondering the same thing,"*

Alaric: *"As another part of your reward, the Solari have granted me permission to take you home and pay your mother a short visit."*

Commander Rhenar: *“And I might add the fact that I doubt the Solari would survive the wrath of your mother.”*

The ceremony had ended, and the stronghold's great hall was slowly emptying as the guests departed. Kael and Xal, now officially promoted, stood among the remaining Solari warriors, their hearts still heavy with the weight of the victory they had earned. The celebrations had been brief, but meaningful.

Their father, Alaric, had quietly watched them, his sharp eyes taking in the scene as always. As they made their way out of the facility, the echoes of laughter and conversation still lingered in the air. The twins were deep in thought, reflecting on the next steps in their journey when something caught their attention.

In the distance, at the outer courtyard gates, they spotted Princess Lysara. She stood poised and regal, flanked by her all-female Solari and Mer'Kuri entourage. Her striking beauty, more radiant in the light of the setting sun, seemed to shimmer as she stood tall, like an embodiment of Venus itself.

Despite the chaos that had surrounded her capture and rescue, there was a calm serenity about her that made her appear untouchable.

For a moment, their eyes met across the courtyard... Lysara's piercing gaze locking with Kael's and Xal's. The recognition was mutual, and there was no need for words.

The princess' expression remained composed, but there was something in her eyes, a subtle hint of something... perhaps gratitude, perhaps something deeper... that flickered for the briefest of moments.

Kael and Xal exchanged a glance between themselves, understanding without speaking. They gave a small nod in acknowledgment, a silent farewell to the princess and the woman who had, despite everything, left a lasting impression on them.

Princess Lysara nodded back, a slow, deliberate movement of her head, her gaze unwavering. Her entourage moved with her; their steps as synchronized as their ranks.

The princess did not linger, and neither did the twins.