

PLANET X91 THE PLAGUE

Book 7

CHAPTER ONE

“IT SURE does feel good to breathe fresh air,” mentioned Clay, recounting the memories of the stale oxygen in the shuttle while waiting to be rescued. He trembled at the thought of waiting to die seven hundred feet underwater.

Josh stood military style next to him deciding to remain non-committal. Instead of looking at him his gaze appeared to be transfixed on a small round light hovering three feet off the ground near the middle of the grassland.

“They found us.”

Florian tore her stares away from the wrecked shuttle wondering if they might ever be able to get the craft operational again. She glanced at where Josh was looking. Something about how he said the three-word line made her feel uneasy. A sudden chill showered her body. The hairs on the back of her neck stood straight. The feeling made her shake.

Clay looked to where Josh pointed. At the same time, Florian’s mouth opened. The boys expected a scream. Instead, they heard only silence.

“What is it?” whispered Clay.

“What do you mean they found us?” mumbled Florian.

A vortex the width of a finger started forming. The phenomenon looked to be growing at an alarming rate. A third of a minute later the trio saw the vortex starting to revolve.

Josh looked sideways at his two shipmates. He didn’t know what to say.

“We’re waiting for an answer Josh boy,” snarled Clay.

Florian watched him gulp before he moved his feet so he could step away from the other two.

“Don’t you dare run off,” growled Florian. “Clay and I demand an answer.”

“The future ME told us about the plague coming.”

“You know it’s not what we heard,” growled Florian.

“I’m thinking along the lines the plague probably represents creatures of some kind. I believe they’re from the alien spaceship.”

Florian eyeballed him. Since they first met on the shuttle right before crashing on Planet X91, she’d believed all his excuses. Now she sensed the opposite. Something seemed amiss.

“I think you know critical information which you’re refusing to tell us.”

“I recommend we get back inside the Piper for safety,” advised Clay, leading the charge.

“Good idea,” echoed Florian. “When the hatch is locked, we can watch the vortex as we devise a plan of attack.”

Josh ran after the other two, hitting the hatch close button the moment he stepped over the threshold and into the Piper spaceship. By the time the teenagers were standing on the bridge the hatch finished closing.

All the while the vortex grew.

The computer monitor reported the bright light measured four inches across its girth.

Florian folded her arms across her chest. “Right Josh Quinn, spill what you know.”

“You mightn’t like what I’m about to say.”

“Like it or not, we have to know. The shuttle is a broken derelict. It’ll take months to get her flight ready if at all. The Piper has a hole in the dome. Unless we can discover a way to fix the shuttle we’re stuck on this planet. We are about to face something called a plague; we know nothing about. I’m betting you do.”

Josh leaned against the bench in front of the monitors sweeping his gaze between Clay and Florian. They resembled a lynch mob. “It’s not too hard to understand.”

“Tell us so that we can discuss the knowledge,” growled Clay Silver.

“They want the Piper back.”

“Who wants the Piper back?” growled Florian and Clay simultaneously.

“The aliens Captain Rowark stole the ship from.”

For several moments, Florian and Clay analyzed the fact, slowly digesting what he confessed. They portrayed an unhappy couple.

“So, you’re admitting this ship we have called our home since crashing on this planet makes up one spaceship in a vast fleet which belongs to an alien culture?”

“Yes.”

“I reckon you know exactly what’s going on Josh,” hissed Clay. “Tell us more.”

“The so-called plague, which will be coming through the vortex are small creatures made of metal. The aliens have launched them.”

“The same ones who want the Piper back?” asked Florian.

“Yes.”

“How do you know this?” questioned Florian. Her brown eyes were ablaze. She swept her dark fringe from her eyes so she could keep up her murderous stare.

Josh pushed his blonde hair from his face. “They’re the ones we met in the mountains. Evelina and Briana were in charge of the scouting party. They suspected the Piper is here. When the ship dematerialized and us along with it, they couldn’t see where we were. They stuck around to discover more. They must have sent a message back to their home planet requesting for the creatures to come here.”

“You didn’t answer Florian’s question. How do you know all this?” questioned Clay, poking Josh in the chest.

Josh sighed heavily. His shoulders dipped at the ends. Before answering he stared at the metal floor at his feet. “I have no idea,” he mumbled.

“I don’t believe you,” growled Florian.

“There’s more to you than we know,” snarled Clay. “I reckon you went through time, placing Florian and myself in the shuttle. It’s your entire fault we’re here on this planet named X91. If you didn’t do it, we’d still be on the USS Lock in cryogenic sleep dreaming about what adventures we might have when we reached planet X188. I should have known there’s more to you than a thirteen-year-old kid who seems to know everything. You have always known too much.”

“It’s my consciousness traveling from the future to planet X91. Satisfied?”

Before Clay and Florian could respond, Josh ran for the glass tube lift, pushing the ascent button when he entered.

“We have to stop him,” mumbled Florian, making a move to run after Josh.

Clay reached out, stopping her.

“Let me go. Someone has to stop Josh.”

“It’s already too late,” he said, seeing the glass cover closing. “We can either wait for the lift to descend back to the bridge or we can run outside and climb the metal rungs to the roof. Being on the roof, the clever Josh Quinn has nowhere to run.”

Florian didn’t bother to say what she decided before running down the corridor to the outside. Clay sprinted after her.

Doc. Henry materialized. Florian didn’t stop, deciding to run right through him. Clay thought the opposite. He wanted to hear the reason why the hologram chose to materialize on his own accord. He stopped running when he stood in front of Henry.

“I have some important information the three of you need to know.”

“So, tell me first,” growled Clay.

“What I have to say must be told when Florian Fawkes, Josh and you are sitting quietly.”

“You’re a little late on the idea. The way I feel right at this moment I want to squeeze the life out of Josh’s body.”

“I will not allow such a horrendous thing to happen,” warned Henry.

“How are you going to stop me?”

“There are many ways.”

“Tell me one; I dare you.”

“I will not communicate a single word which might lead to the harming of one or the three of you.”

Clay pointed his finger at Henry. “Admit you don’t know.”

Henry raised his hand above his head, coiling his fingers at the same time. “A mere demonstration of my ability to do what I have told you. Attempt to run; I dare you.”

Clay tried to move his feet. He lost balance before toppling over, sprawling face first onto the floor. He could almost hear Henry chuckling.

“Okay, I won’t throttle Josh. Satisfied?”

