Fork War

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Fork War
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About this Piece

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CHAPTER ONE

Fork War

Public Log
Excerpt from Campaign Speech
Subject: Fork Mitigation
Date: May 7, 3011 Standard
Speaker: Redacted, Security Level 4
Location: Redacted, Security Level 8

When people fight, they always fight over energy.

They fight over food, which is energy for their bodies.

They fight over religion, which is energy for their souls.

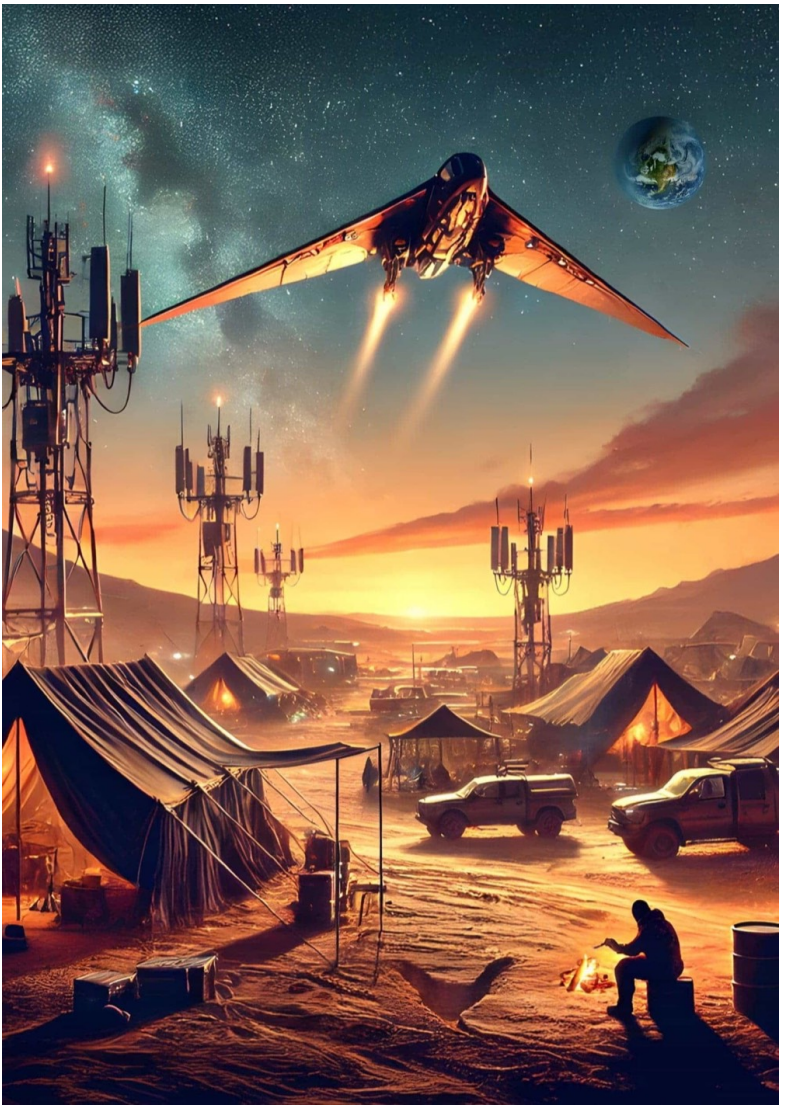
They fight over mates, which is energy for their lust.

They fight over status, which is energy for their egos.

But, most of all, they fight over access to quasars, which is energy for their cryptomining.

Quasars, however, tend to be far away and burned out. Which leaves us with Bright Evolgyme as the only energy source adequate to resolve the Cheerah-Weerah Fork.

And Bright Evolgyme is becoming less bright with every passing year.



Private Log: Allison Lester

Date: January 5, 3014 Standard

Location: Redacted, private security setting

I felt a jolt before I hit the atmosphere. The glider was an outdated piece of junk long decommissioned by the Cheerah military, and sold, as such things are, on the black market.

Even in its geriatric state, with its distortion shield not able to properly absorb the mere ten thousand gs of deceleration, it could still overwhelm the entire proud military of this Fringe World.

Or it could, if I had the energy to power up its weapons. Which, after its three mega-parsec run, I didn't. Luckily, no one on a Fringe World would mess with a person in a Cheerah glider.

Deceleration cost another dribble of fuel, as I had to use the engine. Normally, an assault glider would just hit a planet's atmosphere at near-relativistic speed with its force wings. However, this was not an assault, and I had to avoid damaging the <location-identifying name redacted> biosphere and infrastructure with the shock wave of entry.

As I slowed down to a leisurely float half a klick above the surface, I realized that there was not really much to damage. All I could see were sparse scraggly plants and the brown squares of failed attempts at agriculture. The infrastructure was limited to a few landing pads and temporary domes, clearly converted to permanent dwellings.

I opened a channel once I was within secure connection range, hovering above the cluster of relatively less decrepit structures that passed for the capital.

'What's the going rate? Cheerah fork. I need a hundred zs.'

'Cheerah fork? Eighteen-point-two ns, Madam.'

The energy dealer, who introduced himself as Joshua, defied the stereotype of a gritty Fringe survivor. He was cleanly shaven and his brown hair was parted smoothly in a neat if somewhat archaic hairdo. His light blue shirt had black shiny buttons and gave the impression of being made of legendary cotton from the Old Earth. I wondered idly if it was some local plant or well-designed force-plastic. A collector would pay more than what this entire planet was worth to put a shirt made of actual cotton in his wardrobe.

'You can call me Alli. And... are you out of your mind?' Energy was scarce on Fringe Worlds, but eighteen nano-satoshis per zeta-joule?

There was silence on the screen. The dealer fiddled with his sleeves (rolled up just once), adjusted his smooth collar (the top button was off, completing the neat but casual getup), and remained silent. His posture conveyed that he didn't want to antagonize me, but neither did he intend to negotiate.

I took a deep breath and pretended to double-check my security settings. Fortunately, the decommissioned glider was still a part of the Cryptoshpere of the Industrial Core, mined during the early years of Bright Evolgyme. It couldn't possibly be compromised.

'How secure is your end?'

'I am an energy dealer,' Joshua replied.

'What about Weerah fork?' I lowered my voice dramatically. Theoretically, trading Weerah coin in Cheerah-dominated space

would bring down the wrath of the dreaded Cheerah fleet. Fortunately, the dreaded Cheerah fleet were currently occupied by the no-less-dreaded Weerah fleet about a giga-parsec away.

The answer came immediately. 'Eleven-point-five.'

That was more like it. They must have been desperate for some Weerah-coin.

'I'll take two hundred zs.' I was planning to buy two hundred all along, but didn't want to scare the seller.

'Wise choice.' We nodded to each other.

I clasped my hands and closed my eyes to make it easier to access the transaction entanglement in my brain.

'Is there a good place to eat on this planet?' I asked as the energy level bar on my display started to creep up.

'Are you just inquiring or asking me out?'

'The latter. I was waiting to complete the deal. I would never mix—' It had been a long flight.

'Neither would I. Tonight is good. One thing Fringe Worlds are good for: the access to exotic fauna for the dinner table.'

'Not sure how appetizing that sounds.' I couldn't resist the temptation to tease.

'Do you trust me to take you to a rather remote establishment with a low advertising budget?' There was only a hint of a smile on his face.

'You do know that I have a Level Two cannon on this thing? One that you've just charged up.'

'If you don't mind me saying so, your planet is—' I poked my fork at something, which looked suspiciously like a tentacle.

'A shithole? A wasteland of failed crops and slums?' He waved his hand to indicate our surroundings. The restaurant's ambiance actually wasn't bad. Archaic tablecloths covered wooden tables; the booths and benches suited the dim lighting. The place was well-attended, though not packed. Food was cheap by the core standard, but pricey for a Fringe World.

'Kinda.'

'There are not enough minerals here. We have to trade off-systems. Cheerah Fork demands continuous synchronization between galactic nodes. Verifying transactions costs too much. Businesses keep folding. Try the <planet-identifying food reference redacted> though.

'Clearly there is a demand for the Weerah protocol here,' I replied. 'Less centralized and less energy taxed by the miners.' Suppressing my impulse to gag, I put a tiny bit of the slimy morsel into my mouth. I expected a fishy taste, but instead, a symphony of sweet and tangy flavors exploded in my mouth. It was as if I were sampling every fruit I'd ever eaten at once. 'Wow!'

'I know.' His face opened with a broad smile. I found myself leaning towards him as I engaged my tangle-store for a secure conversation. 'Weerah protocol is not great for trade, unfortunately. Does not coordinate financial markets enough for this region.'

'You could export this what's-it-called… Have you tried establishing your own currency?'

'There were multiple attempts in this galactic region. Each fiat currency gets overprinted and collapses within a decade. Each digital currency gets hacked as we don't have enough energy for quantum-resistant protocols.'

'I hear <location-identifying name redacted> will go hyper-nova shortly. Is there a project to Dyson and harvest it?'

Joshua's smile vanished. He straightened up his posture, suddenly business-like. His hand lay flat on the table, still holding his utensils, but no longer touching the food.

'Is that what brought you here? We don't often get people rolling in military tech from the Core, buying two hundred zs like it's pocket change.'

I reached out and touched his wrist. 'I obviously came here for the company and the menu. But as you can imagine, I have a side hustle.'

'You want to use hyper-nova energy to mine a local currency for a Cheerah-Weerah exchange hub?'

He was astute, but not astute enough.

'Think bigger. The hub currency already exists. It has for ten centuries.'

I am a battled-attuned human. Naturally gestated, never damaged by cryo-sleep, entangled and trained from infancy.

So when a Level-1 Cannon blossomed in his hand, another one appeared in mine not at the speed of human reaction, but at the same quantum instance.

Level-1 had the range and the output of about one-millionth of what would be carried by a capital ship. It's still enough to make a neighborhood unpopular.

Slowly, aiming at each other, we stood up.

In Fringe Worlds, people often misunderstand how cannons work. One kilometer is not how far it can deal damage, rather it

measures how far it can deliver a pulse in Planck time, circumventing any shielding. After that, it will just become a coherent one-terawatt gamma-ray beam in the direction of choice.

Such sidearms are only carried by elite planetary offensive forces, and even among those, very few master enough control to use it against a close-range opponent without blowing themselves up.

I could do it, and looking into Joshua's light gray eyes, I knew that he could too.

Other patrons in the dimly lit establishment were not so sure.

'Cannons!' Someone shouted, starting a stampede for the exit. Some crude weapons were brandished, but no one dared to point them at cannon-wielders.

I heard the crash of plates on the floor and regretted the waste of such exquisite fare. 'Easy,' I said softly. This reaction to the mention of the old currency, banned and fiercely persecuted on both sides of the Fork, was not a surprise. The cannon was.

'Easy-going is something I have never been.' A hint of humor returned to Joshua's eyes, as he seemed to concur with my assessment that this confrontation was a stalemate.

'Are you working for Weeras?' I asked.

'Are you working for Chreeras?' He asked in reply.

'I am Mental Net, the Old Resistance.' There was no point hiding any longer.

'I am Industrial Core Intelligence.' He replied smoothly.

My aim and entanglement remained steady, though facing off the legendary ICI was a real shocker. 'ICI? I thought it collapsed with the rest of the Core after the Fork.'

'Some of us remained. Trying to find ways to stop the war and save humanity. Not from the aliens this time, though.'

I took a deep breath. Either he works for the Cheerahs or the Weerahs, and their fleets would indeed come down to crush me, or he doesn't.

'You no longer have to enforce the Prohibition of Classic then,' I ventured.

'Old habits die slow.' This time he smiled.

'If we gain control of the project, there will be enough energy to create a local cryptosphere of Bitcoin Classic. It cannot be hacked. Cheerah and Weerah coins will flow here for the exchange. This is our chance to reconcile the Fork.'

'The War will come here,' Joshua whispered.

'The War will stop here.'

He was the first one to put away the cannon and step around the table towards me. I met him halfway.

Source

Originally published at konsensus.net/article/21f-fork-war