



The Time Dilated Generations

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Chapter 17: Shattered Time Dilated Dreams



Chapter 17: Shattered Dreams

The dark fate of Rigel One played out in a slow-motion nightmare across the network of time-dilated generational ships. From the perspectives of the distant spaceship colonies, what took over a century on Rigel One unfolded in just over a decade for those watching in horror. Millions perished, writhing in agony, their bodies betrayed by the invisible poison that had built their world.

At first, the people of Rigel One fought with relentless determination. When the first cases of excruciating pain could no longer be hidden, doctors and scientists worked tirelessly to find a cure. Laboratories remained alight through endless nights, desperate hands scribbling formulas, testing theories, and pushing the boundaries of science itself. Temporary palliatives were discovered—medications that dulled the agony and extended life—but they were not a cure.

For almost a decade, hope endured, a fragile ember against the encroaching darkness. Every official statement carried the same promise:

"The cure is coming. We are getting closer every day."

Across the interstellar fleet, the brightest minds pooled their knowledge, racing against time. Entire research stations aboard the generational ships were dedicated to decoding the biological mystery of Zelthane poisoning. Every remaining human in existence worked toward a singular goal: to save the doomed world. But the enemy was insidious. The contamination was too widespread, the exposure too severe. Every test led to the same inescapable conclusion. There was no cure.



Then came the second blow—one that shattered even the illusion of hope. A decade after the first public acknowledgments of the crisis, the final, irrevocable truth emerged:

There were no more births.

At first, the phenomenon was a mystery. Fertility rates had been declining, but no one dared to connect the dots. Then, doctors confirmed the unthinkable—Zelthane had ravaged cellular division so thoroughly that embryonic development could no longer occur. Every pregnancy ended in failure. No child had been born in years.

And none ever would be.

Humanity had already perished on Rigel One; the people just hadn't died yet.

The decay of civilization followed swiftly. As the reality sank in, as the last ember of hope flickered out, the social order collapsed. Mass suicides swept through the population, entire families choosing to end their suffering on their own terms rather than endure years of slow, torturous decay. The organized government crumbled, and in its place, desperation reigned.

What came next was worse than extinction.



Tribalism took hold. Survivors formed fractured clans, driven by madness and despair. Lawlessness became the new rule, and the worst of humanity emerged. Murder, brutality, and unspeakable atrocities spread like wildfire. The weak became prey. The strong became predators. Cities that had once stood as monuments to human ingenuity turned into nightmarish killing grounds.

No rescue would come. No salvation.

From the distant ships, the generational fleet watched in fast-forward as their brothers and sisters met their extinction. The time dilation only made it worse. For every year they experienced, seven passed on Rigel One. They bore witness to an entire civilization wither and die in what, to them, felt like a handful of years. Messages from Rigel One grew less frequent, then erratic, then horrifying.

And then—silence.

By the time eighty years had passed on Rigel One, the final human succumbed to the relentless agony of Zelthane poisoning. A single, broken figure in a world that had already become a graveyard.

Rigel One was dead.



And with it, a piece of humanity itself had been lost forever.

For the vast network of generational ships, the entire saga of Rigel One unfolded in less than a century. A mere fraction of their journey. Life aboard the vessels had slowed, grown more contemplative. The restless energy that had once fueled cycles of revolutions and social upheaval began to wane. The anxieties of deep-space enclosure eased as attention turned outward, focused on the great experiment unfolding in fast-forward—a planetary colonization playing out at an accelerated pace, a living, breathing chronicle of human perseverance.

For those aboard the generational fleet, Rigel One was more than just a distant colony. It was a spectacle.

At first, the excitement was unparalleled. The initial years were a thrill unlike anything humanity had experienced since leaving Earth. The grand arrival at Rigel's exoplanet, the historic first landing, the struggle against the cataclysmic gravitational event—each moment was relayed back to the fleet, serialized into updates that felt like episodes in the greatest story ever told. Weekly, monthly, and yearly digests curated the events for those aboard the ships, allowing them to watch history unfold from the safety of their artificial worlds.



For a time, Rigel One was the event of the century. The fleet followed every challenge the settlers faced, every triumph they celebrated. They cheered as the colony overcame adversity, mourned their losses, and even indulged in the human stories—the romances, the rivalries, the friendships born under alien skies. This wasn't just news. It was hope. It was the future made tangible.

And for many, it was a promise.

Someday, when their own ships reached their respective destinations, they too would step onto new worlds. They too would shape history. Rigel One was the first to do it, but it would not be the last.

Over time, the intensity of the fascination mellowed, but never disappeared. Rigel One had flourished into a world of its own, and with it came a cultural explosion that captivated the generational fleet. For centuries, the settlers tried to preserve the common language of the fleet, but the relentless march of time dilation made disconnection inevitable. Eventually, they abandoned the effort, forging their own identity, their own languages, their own art.

Rather than diminishing the fleet's interest, this evolution only deepened the intrigue. Rigel One was no longer just a colony. It was an alien civilization—human, yet different.



New dialects emerged across the planet, each carrying the unique cadence of a world shaped by forces the fleet would never fully understand. From these new languages, entire artistic movements took form, stories and music and philosophy that felt wholly unfamiliar, yet undeniably human. The fleet watched in fascination as Rigel One bloomed into something unexpected, something fresh.

For almost a century, life aboard the generational ships was peaceful, with Rigel One serving as both inspiration and entertainment.

Until the final ten years.

That last decade twisted dreams into nightmares. The thrill of progress turned to horror as the reports became darker. The exhilarating updates on expansion and culture gave way to grim statistics and medical warnings. At first, they clung to hope. The scientists aboard the fleet pooled their knowledge, desperate to find a solution. But as time passed, as the news grew worse, reality set in.

They were witnessing the death of a civilization.

There was no last-minute rescue, no great scientific breakthrough. The final transmissions from Rigel One carried only echoes of suffering and despair. Then, one day, there was nothing at all.



Rigel One was silent.

A hundred years had passed in the eyes of the fleet. In that time, they had seen an entire world rise from nothing—only to wither and die before their very eyes.

And they swore, they would never allow it to happen again.