

□ PROLOGUE

IT was a future time of angels, saints, and heroes in a distant place where they should no longer have existed.

The New World Order ushered in after a time of despair and economic hardship a period of transformation. A transitional period documented by universal longing bourn out of almost three hundred and thirteen years of hard won freedoms.

Once transformed under the rule of law the old customs and the older traditions gave way to the unfolding progression that was the One World Republic. As peoples of nations already linked by a global network of new ideas and information formed a unified alliance, they thrive and grew in wealth and power under the protection of the Guardians.

Such was the Republic at its inception. Like a halcyon image able to reflect the magnificence of the nations, the Republic shone in the sun while its internal weakness lay hidden upon a foundation of miry clay.

Swept to power on a planet-wide wave of change, the charismatic Nidal bin Amaso accepted the nomination for President of the Republic. She promised to end the Global Conflict and administer an unprecedented period of peace and security for all the remaining inhabitants of the world.

Once in office, she secured the signing of the One World Declaration of Dependence and founded the Guardianship as a branch of WorldPol. During the Global Conflict, guardianship responsibilities included only internal security affairs. Soon the organization was controlled by the very government administrators and ambitious technocrats the POTUN had appointed to run it.

Wielding tremendous control through legislation and bureaucracy over the Guardians, the self-proclaimed stewards of their Shadow Dancer's enhanced abilities and power, the Republic made good on its promise of peace with safety through the force of its new elite global security service. Seeking to expand its sphere of influence, the Guardianship used their newfound political power to extend the organization's responsibilities to include counter-espionage and the monitoring of suspected separatists.

No small number of formerly independent peoples chafed under the rule of the New Order. Opposed to the breakup of their sovereignty, oppressed, and already beaten by the new system, they steadfastly resisted the change that was sweeping the global community.

Early on, their voices and concerns were driven underground by the will of the United and Free Peoples of the One World Republic made hopeful