

ROME'S REVOLUTION

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The Rome's Revolution Series

Rome's Revolution
The Ark Lords
Rome's Evolution

The Vuduri Universe Series

Tales of the Vuduri: Year One

*Tales of the Vuduri: Year Two (not yet in publication)

ROME'S REVOLUTION
Year 3455 AD
Sixth Planet, Tabit System
(26 Light Years from Earth)

"I don't think I would want anybody living inside my head, listening to my thoughts," Rei Bierak observed.

"It is not anything you can imagine until you have experienced it." Rome replied, standing up. "Come," she said. "I have the time. I will show you."

"What?" Rei said. "How?"

"You will see. Let us put away our trays first."

After bussing their dishes, Rei followed Rome down a different corridor and then around one of the curved hallways stopping at a door which opened automatically.

"These are my quarters," Rome said as they entered. "Sit down over there." She pointed to a sofa off to their right. Rome retrieved something from a dresser and sat down next to Rei, placing a pair of square boxes, one white and one black on the small table in front of them.

"What are those?" Rei asked, pointing to the boxes.

"Please wait," Rome interjected. She flipped open the white box and removed the white band contained there. She placed it over her forehead drawing it snug against her brow. She grimaced slightly, then shuddered, shivering all the way down to her hips. After that, she seemed to relax.

"So what is it?" Rei asked, looking at her.

"This," she said, tapping the band, "is called a T-suppressor."

"What does it do?" Rei asked.

"It creates a reverse transceiver resonance, negating it," she explained. "I am now disconnected from the Overmind."

"What?" Rei exclaimed, slightly horrified. "Why did you do that?"

"Do not worry," Rome said. "The effects are only temporary and I can tolerate it for a short period. To answer your question, I did not want the Overmind listening in, as you called it, while I demonstrate."

"Demonstrate what?" Rei asked.

"These," Rome said, reaching down and flipping open the onyx box. Inside was a pair of bejeweled bands, one on each side. "These are called espansors. They are external links. They allow the mandasurte, the mind-deaf, to communicate mind to mind, like Vuduri who are not part of the same samanda."

"What's a samanda?"

"It is a seed, the core group forming an Overmind."

"You mean there is more than one Overmind?" Rei asked.

"Oh yes," Rome replied. "On each world where we reside, each has its own Overmind, its own samanda."

"This is too much information," Rei said in an exasperated tone. He leaned back on the sofa. "I'll never understand you."

Rome reached down and picked up one of the bands. She handed to Rei and said, "All will become clear. Put this on your forehead."

Rei took the band from her and examined it closely. The inside of the band was rough.

"Where did you get these?" Rei asked. "Why do you even have them?"

“My mother gave them to me before I left to come here. She used to use them with my father.”

“What? Why?”

“Because my father was mandasurte, like you,” Rome said, lowering her eyes.

“So why did she give them to you?” Rei asked.

Rome frowned then looked up again. “My father is gone. His ship disappeared many years ago. My mother informed me she would never use them again. She gave them to me as a keepsake.”

“A keepsake? I thought you weren’t into things like that.”

“I... I wanted these,” Rome replied, slightly defensively. “I cannot explain it. Sometimes I just like to look at them.”

“But you don’t need them,” Rei pointed out. “You are already connected.”

“No, I do not but you do, if you are to understand. Please place it on your head.”

“OK,” Rei said. “Hearing aids for the mind-deaf,” he muttered to himself. He placed the band over his forehead. He could feel the band tightening, just this side of the point of discomfort. He felt tiny little pricks all the way around his head. While odd, it did not actually hurt.

“How do they work?” Rei asked.

“They have sensors that pick up the electromagnetic activity in your brain,” Rome replied, placing her own band on her forehead, nestling it against the white band already there. “They transmit the activity back and forth creating a synchronizing effect.”

Rome leaned back and took a deep breath. Rei looked at her face and observed her for the first time as a woman, rather than a human from the future. She was stunning. She had high cheekbones and an aquiline nose, not prominent, but not inconsequential, either. Her forehead was perfect. Her tanned, olive-colored skin was flawless, her hair lustrous. Her dark eyes radiated not only that peculiar glow, but with an intense intelligence that he had not noticed before. In profile, her face had a noble character about it. Her lips were full, very alluring.

Rome smiled. It was a beautiful smile, the first Rei could remember. He felt a flood of warmth. The sensation was confusing.

“Why are you smiling?” he asked.

“*You think I am pleasant to look at,*” she replied, but her lips did not move. “*It is so peculiar seeing through your eyes. Your optics are so simple.*”

“*And yours...*” Rei put his hands up to his mouth. “*I’m not speaking, not moving my lips, am I?*” he thought.

Rome’s smile got bigger. “*No.*”

“*Wow, this is pretty sleek,*” he thought.

“*I think you are ‘sleek’ too.*” Rome’s thoughts came streaming into his head but the perspective was wrong. Rei could see that Rome was measuring his boyish good looks, his strong chin, his piercing blue eyes. His tousled sandy brown hair, never properly combed amused her. To Rei, it seemed like he was looking at himself as if he was looking through Rome’s eyes. He could magnify, push away. Suddenly he realized the 24th chromosome had changed humans in subtle ways beyond the Overmind. Their eyes were different. That tiny dot in the middle of her pupils was actually a catadioptric lens. They literally had a telescope built into their eyeballs. The back of their retinas was a reflective surface, a tapetum, like that of a cat. No wonder her eyes seem to glow.

The knowledge flowing into his head was staggering. “*Freaky*,” he thought to himself and Rome laughed because Rei could no longer think just to himself. The sound of her laughter was musical, magical. The fact that she could even laugh now was a testament to how tightly the Overmind had controlled her thoughts. Rome reached up and ran her finger across his lips. All she could think about was how soft they felt but somehow these thoughts were in his head.

Rei was accessing her thoughts directly. The revelation was profound. He was connecting with her in a way that he had never experienced before. Her surface mind was so clear, so uncluttered. As a good Vuduri, Rome was expected to have very few opinions. She was supposed to allow the Overmind to do much of the thinking for her.

“*Rome...*” he started to say, but he could not even form the thoughts directly. He could peer into her intellect. He could tell that underneath, she really was quite sharp and she knew exactly what she was doing. This was no reckless act. This was the action of a woman who knew what she wanted. Within the world of the Overmind, it was shocking that she would be capable of such independent action. How could he know this? Her mind played her memories of her past as if Rei was living it.

He saw her growing up in a mixed household. Rome’s mother, Binoda was a full-blooded Vuduri, so beautiful, with the same long dark hair as Rome. Rome’s father, Fridone, had only 23 pairs of chromosomes and was mandasurte. Within their house, they spoke words. No wonder Rome was so good at language. And there was love. How was this even possible? The Vuduri devalued interpersonal relationships. Outside the house, Rome was a good Vuduri, allowing the Overmind to supply her with her very thoughts and impressions, even sensations. Yet even at a very early age, Rome had developed the ability to segregate her mind, to have a barrier, and within that barrier was her true self. And she was letting Rei in, to see her personality in a way that no one had ever done before.

He saw the day her mother became aware that her father’s ship had disappeared. Rome was just a teenager. In passing, he noted that all knew that many mandasurte disappeared. The Vuduri did not care. Nothing was ever done. Rei could feel that just thinking about her father caused her pain so he shifted his attention to his own history. Or was that Rome, digging into his memories? When he concentrated on what she was seeing, he could see himself pushing into her mind pushing into his. It was the psychic equivalent of looking at a mirror within a mirror.

Rome looked on with horror as she saw Rei’s past, the overcrowded Earth: the pollution, the poverty, the unending recession. She saw the daily acts of terrorism reduce society into huddled enclaves. She saw the global storms as the world’s ecosystem broke down. There were good parts, too. She felt Rei’s passion for design. She saw Rei’s parents, always encouraging him to reach up, toward the stars. He got a full scholarship to college, and there he really flew. He was an engineer, a pilot and an athlete. During his senior year, the call went out for volunteers to leave his world and start a new one, far away, among the stars, Rei threw himself into the competition. What he did not have in ability, he made up for in effort. She understood Rei’s excitement when he was selected for Ark II. She felt his ache as they dehydrated him, almost to the point of death before the freezing process. She saw his confusion as he struggled to come to grips with this brave new world and all the things in it.

Deeper and deeper, they went. Thoughts and feelings co-mingled, no longer resolvable into anything resembling coherency. Their souls were touching. Rome knew the bands were not supposed to do this. They were connecting them in a way that was impossible. Rome knew she should be frightened but was not, she was exhilarated by this. She embraced it. Rei picked up on this but did not understand. He did not know what to expect. He only knew that he wanted more.

Rome's entire being was coming alive. She was ablaze. The fountain of feelings and sensations were flowing forth in an unstoppable torrent. Rei could see her turn in on herself and marvel at so many of her own memories that were once like snapshots and were now three-dimensional, life-shaping experiences. Suddenly, it came to Rome, what her mother had told her about her father.

"*Asborodi Cimponeti*," Rome's mind whispered to Rei, the words striking in their clarity. "*I have been waiting for you.*" Rei was overwhelmed. He understood what she meant and he knew she was right. Rome pushed even harder and the line between them grew so thin it was no more. She was Rei and Rei was she. And never was she so happy. To be free. To merge with one person and one person only instead of drowning in the sea of all. This is where she wanted to be.

Rei felt the line break free as well. He was Rome and Rome was he. And never was he so happy. To merge with one person instead of drowning in the sea of loneliness. This is where he wanted to be.

There was no longer a conscious self as their souls intertwined and merged. What had been two people was now one, breathing in synchrony. Neither Rei nor Rome could tell any longer whose eyes they were looking through. It didn't matter. He/she looked down and saw that they were holding hands, touching, needing to be touched. One hand moved away and began to caress the back of another, then an arm. Both bodies were in motion. They were drawn together as if by magnets. Closer and closer they drew. The boy knew what the girl wanted. The girl knew what the boy wanted. There was no boy, there was no girl, together, they wanted the same thing. They kissed. It was dizzying and intoxicating. Sensations, images, sounds, memories, all swirled around in a maelstrom of thought and feeling. Now each felt their flesh on fire. Rome put her arms around Rei and he did likewise. They drew each other tighter and tighter, psychic echoes, once again passing through each other's bodies and ending up in the other's head and beyond.

It was unlike anything either had ever felt. Here was this gift from the heavens, this beautiful person, holding them. This was beyond love. Neither could ever let go. They were one. Forever and always.

Read more in
***Rome's Revolution* by Michael Brachman**