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A movie poster for 'Invisible Alliance'. The central figure is a woman with blonde hair, wearing a dark, tactical leather jacket, looking directly at the viewer with a serious expression. Behind her, three soldiers in full combat gear stand in a city that is partially destroyed and on fire. In the sky, several military drones are visible, some with red lights. In the foreground, the back of a man's head and shoulders is visible as he looks at a large, glowing blue and red digital map or interface on a wall. The overall atmosphere is dark and intense, suggesting a high-stakes action or thriller genre.

**INVISIBLE
ALLIANCE**

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The fear and reaction of States in the face of the strategic and military rise of LGBT armies, combining military power, psychological intelligence, and strict respect for civilians.

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PREFACE

I've always found it fascinating: how people marginalized for centuries could one day flip the table without even raising their voice. Not with bombs. Just with discipline, networks, and a hell of a lot of patience.

This book isn't some candy-pink utopia. It's a cold extrapolation: what if fear changed sides? What if the ones we've called weak became the most effective strategists in the world?

I wanted it to stay dirty, human. No perfect heroes. No easy morals.

In a world where assaults against LGBTQ+ people keep multiplying relentlessly, and where their legitimate desire to live freely in fairer societies is systematically twisted into an attack on "traditional values," the image of a massive LGBTQ+ coalition transformed into an invincible—but strictly non-lethal—army gave birth to this novel.

It is, of course, pure fiction.

A journalist by trade and someone who had never written a novel—let alone science fiction—I was assisted by artificial intelligence and various tools to bring my initial idea to life as faithfully as possible.

Here's hoping you'll take as much pleasure as I did in dreaming of an ultra-powerful yet pacifist LGBTQ+ army... Let's go!

PROLOGUE : THE AWAKENING OF FEAR

03:17.

The screens at the continental command center started flashing as if someone had dumped a bucket of glitter across the radars.

Colonel Matthias Verhoeven—forty-eight years old, back rigid, chin scar that itched whenever stress hit—stared at the real-time feeds. Bright dots appeared, vanished, reappeared elsewhere. Too regular. Too clean. No known signatures, no registered units.

His pulse kicked up—not the combat rush, but the deeper jolt when you realize the threat is no longer abstract. His son was sleeping ten kilometers away, in a room with shutters closed tight. That seventeen-year-old kid—Sunday choirboy, diligent student—had suddenly become a data point on a holographic map.

Thousands of miles away, on an offshore platform rocking gently in the black swell, Ariane Solberg crushed her cigarette in an improvised ashtray despite the no-smoking signs.

“Kade. First demonstration. No blood. Just noise in their heads.”

Kade nodded without a word. Stealth drones lifted off, jamming frequencies, simulating massive deployments across three fronts at once. Conventional forces panicked: invasion? attack? exercise? No one knew.

No one died.

But everyone started to feel afraid.

And in the radio silence that followed, a message arrived on Verhoeven’s personal secure channel—one that didn’t exist in any official registry:

We are everywhere. We choose not to strike.

For now.

Respect civilians, and we will do the same.



CHAPTER 1

GRAY ZONE

The electric armored vehicle rolled with lights off for exactly twenty-seven minutes. The cabin smelled of hot polymer, rancid sweat, and a faint whiff of cold coffee forgotten in a cup.

Noor, seated next to Kade, stared at the flexible screen mounted on the dashboard.

“Beacon three offline. Third family this month.”

Kade didn't answer right away. He ran his thumb along the grip of his compact carbine—pointless gesture, but reassuring. The passive night-vision scope blinked softly. He thought back to his first missions, before the “moral security” laws, before the reorientation centers, before the word “family” became code for extraction target.

Outside, the suburban street was frozen in darkness. Sector-wide power outage. Officially: technical incident. Unofficially: a trap to force them to move.

The thermal drone showed the target house at the end of the dead-end alley. Shutters closed. Inside: two adults, one

eight-year-old child—a small warm spot huddled against the mother.

Then the rooftops. Four signatures. Parish militiamen. Light weapons, cheap helmets, but expanded mandate for two years now.

“We’re expected,” Noor whispered.

It wasn’t a question.

Kade stared at the image a second too long. The child.

“We go anyway.”

The vehicle stopped fifty meters out. Doors opened silently. Deployment in a fan pattern. The shadows swallowed them as if they’d rehearsed it a thousand times.

Kade advanced along a low fence, motion sensor beeping softly in his earpiece. Team breathing steady.

A shot cracked—silenced, suppressed. The bullet ricocheted twenty centimeters from his temple.

“Contact, north roof.”

Two controlled detonations from his left. One silhouette tumbled, rolling down to the sidewalk.

The others returned fire. Methodical. No panic. Kade locked a target, adjusted the angle, squeezed. Impact. Fall.

Then a scream—not military. Human.

The house door flew open. The woman on the threshold, child clutched against her. Harsh interior light exposing them. Fatal mistake.

A militiaman burst from the blind corner, shouldering his weapon.

Kade fired before he even calculated the distance. Thoracic hit. The man crumpled, gun clattering.

Silence. Fragile.

“Extraction now,” Noor ordered.

They crossed the street in tight formation. Kade went in first. Smell of fear, sweat, waxed wood. The woman stared at him for a split second—her eyes flicked from the discreet patch on his shoulder (a segmented circle, no rainbow) to his face.

“We’re getting you out of here,” he said. No grand speech.

They were gone in under four minutes.

Inside the accelerating armored vehicle, Kade removed his helmet and leaned his head against the cold wall.

Tomorrow the state channels would scream “attack on a citizen patrol.” Sunday sermons would call it further proof of moral assault.

In certain operation rooms, analysts would add one line to a map: confirmed presence, threat level elevated.

Kade closed his eyes for a second. He could still see the kid’s hands trembling on the door handle.

The war hadn’t been officially declared.

It already existed.



CHAPTER 2

NATIONAL NARRATIVE

Capital City – 06:40

Colonel Matthias Verhoeven had never liked wall screens. Too clean, too cold. He still preferred old glossy paper maps, the kind where you could plant a pushpin and feel the little crunch under your thumb, where you could see the front lines and weak points at a single glance. But since the command reform, everything had gone digital. Real-time feeds. Classified alerts. Radicalization indices projected in elegant curves.

At 06:12, the alert appeared as a discreet red dot in the upper-right corner of the unified interface.

Level 3 incident – Saint-Barthélemy cul-de-sac – territorial militia engaged – confirmed losses: four.

He first thought it was a classic screw-up: a citizen patrol gone bad, isolated anarchists, maybe a local score-settling. Then the preliminary report came in.

Consistent tactical signature.

Clean neutralizations, at distance, no wasted ammunition.

Successful extraction in under four minutes.

No civilian casualties.

Verhoeven enlarged the frozen satellite image. The bodies on the roof were already covered with silver thermal tarps gleaming under the first rays of sun. Journalists would arrive in less than an hour. Cameras aimed at the widows, at the crying children, at the parish flags waved in front of the lenses.

“We have confirmation of a low-signature electric vector,” Major Rinaldi said from behind him. “Technology not inventoried in our national stocks.”

Verhoeven nodded without turning.

He dragged the screen to the regional map. Three similar incidents in six months. Always in zones where reorientation centers had been reinforced. Always with successful exfiltration. Always clean.

He thought of his son.

Seventeen years old. Model student. Parish choir on Sunday mornings. Silent for the past few weeks. No more long evening discussions around the table. Just “yes, Dad,” eyes lowered.

He pushed the mental image away like closing a drawer.

“Minister’s statement in thirty minutes,” Rinaldi reminded him.

“I’ll be behind him,” Verhoeven replied. “Always behind.”

He entered the briefing room. The screens were already playing footage captured by neighbors: dark silhouettes blending into the night, precise movements, almost inaudible shots. News channels looped the same slowed-down clip, enhancing shadows, artificially coloring edges to make it more dramatic.

A red ticker ran across the bottom of the screen:

IDENTITARIAN COMMANDOS STRIKE CITIZEN MILITIA.

The minister arrived, face grave, thin Bible tucked under his arm like an accessory he hadn’t chosen but accepted.

“Colonel, how many are they?”

Simple question. Impossible answer.

Verhoeven chose the operational truth, the one you give civilians in suits:

“Enough to coordinate across multiple continents. Enough to strike where they want. Not enough to hold territory long-term.”

The minister clenched his jaw. A vein throbbed at his temple.

“But enough to inspire,” he said quietly.

Yes.

That was exactly the heart of the problem.

The Alliance—or the International, as conservative media called it with a mix of contempt and fascination—wasn’t yet seeking open conquest. It was seeking demonstration. Every successful operation fed the myth. And myths mobilize more than Sunday sermons.

They stepped in front of the cameras at precisely 07:15.

The minister spoke in a measured, almost solemn voice:

“Last night, organized extremist forces murdered citizens engaged in protecting our fundamental values. We face a coordinated attempt at moral and political destabilization. The state will respond with firmness and unity.”

Verhoeven remained motionless behind him, gaze fixed on the lens. He added nothing. He didn’t need to. His presence was enough: the loyal soldier, the rampart.

But inside, he felt the ground cracking a little more.

Later, alone in his office, he opened a classified folder he kept in the bottom drawer—the one you open only when things get serious.

Projection 2052: risk of territorial fragmentation if the Alliance obtains external state logistical support.

A state that funds them.

A state that arms them.

Then they would no longer be a shadow.

They would be an army.

He looked again at the satellite image of the cul-de-sac. Four bodies under tarps. A child who no longer appeared in any official registry.

And for the first time in a long while, a thought he hated crossed his mind:

What if the fear we've been feeding for years is exactly what makes them stronger?

He closed the folder with a sharp motion.

In forty-eight hours, Parliament would vote to expand military powers in domestic zones.

He would sign the technical opinion without hesitation.

Budgets were already increasing.

Militias would be more deeply integrated into the chain of command.

Protocol Seraphim had been ready for months, waiting for its moment.

Verhoeven stood up and walked to the window.

Below, the city was beginning to wake. Cars honked. Hurried people crossed crosswalks. Life went on as if nothing had changed.

But he knew.

Every Alliance operation was a small crack in the wall.

And cracks, if left to widen, eventually bring down entire sections.

He sat back down.

Opened a new secure feed.

Stared at the real-time maps.

Searched for any sign, anything, that could tell him where they were really hiding.

Nothing.

Still nothing.

Just dots that appeared and disappeared.

Like ghosts.

He closed his eyes for a second.

Thought of his son.

And wondered, for the first time, if the rampart he had defended for twenty-five years wasn't becoming a prison.



CHAPTER 3

ARCHITECTURE

Offshore Platform – Undeclared Sector

23:12 UTC

The structure swayed gently, a steady rocking that became hypnotic after a few hours. Officially, it was a maintenance station for undersea cables. Unofficially, it didn't exist on any map, any civilian satellite registry, and the military aircraft that occasionally overflew it looked the other way—either out of ignorance or because someone paid them to.

Ariane Solberg stood on the upper level, behind the armored bay window overlooking the black Atlantic. The sea was calm tonight, almost oily. She liked these in-between places: neither solid land nor open ocean, neither legal nor fully clandestine. It was in these gray zones that lasting things were built.

She lit a cigarette—bad habit she couldn't shake despite the detectors that beeped softly—and watched the holographic projection in the center of the room. Bright dots blinked across four continents: autonomous cells linked by a common doctrine, an invisible thread making them move like a single organism.

Malik entered without knocking, tablet in hand.

“Saint-Barthélemy incident exploited at 63% on conservative networks. Sharing rate higher than expected. Hashtags already trending: #IdentitarianAttack, #MoralDefense.”

Ariane didn't turn right away. She took a drag, exhaled slowly.

“And on our side?”

“Recruitment up. Mostly former military medics and logistics people. Folks tired of watching their patients disappear into the centers.”

She nodded. Visible violence fed fear. Fear fed both sides. Known cycle.

She finally joined the holographic table. Zoomed in on the map of a Central European country. Three new reorientation centers under construction. Emergency parliamentary vote in ten days.

“Status of the extraction network?” she asked.

“Stable for now. But saturation likely if the centers keep expanding at this rate. We're starting to run short on safe peripheral drop points.”

Ariane stayed silent for a moment. She knew escalation dynamics by heart—she had written entire reports on them, back when she worked for an international military coalition. Irony intact.

“The Structured are becoming a myth,” Malik said. “It’s starting to slip away from us a little.”

“No. A myth can be shaped.”

She pulled up a new data layer: global public perception. In some countries, they were labeled terrorists. In others, resistance fighters. In a few quiet capitals, an opportunity.

That was what worried her most.

“We must not become a tool for a third state,” she said calmly.

“Too late,” a voice said from the shadowed entrance.

Kade stepped into the light. He had traded the neutral uniform for dark civilian clothes, but his gaze was the same: steady, hard, a little more worn than two years earlier. His operation report was already transmitted.

“They want to talk to us,” he continued.

Ariane understood without needing more. A state. Probably the one already contesting the moral sanctions imposed by

Western democracies. A strategic rival ready to fund any force capable of cracking the current order.

“Conditions?”

“Heavy logistics. Advanced anti-drone weaponry. Extended jamming capabilities. In exchange... targeted operations on specific infrastructure.”

She closed her eyes for a second.

There it was—the threshold.

Protecting families, extracting people, documenting disappearances: that didn’t require hitting power plants or critical data nodes. Overthrowing governments did.

“We are not an army of conquest,” Malik said, almost to himself.

Kade didn’t answer. He thought of the rooftops in the cul-de-sac. Of militiamen better equipped every month. Of the children they hadn’t gotten out in time.

Ariane studied the map.

If the Alliance remained strictly defensive, it would be slowly suffocated.

If it accepted state support, it would change its nature.

“How long before regular forces fully integrate the parish militias?” she asked.

“Eighteen months in the high estimate. Twelve if budgets accelerate.”

Twelve months.

She knew how to read a trajectory. At this rate, the centers would become sealed zones. Extractions impossible. Disappearances untraceable. Humanitarian resistance would turn into asymmetric warfare, whether they wanted it or not.

She activated a secure channel with a sharp gesture.

“Open the unofficial diplomatic line.”

Malik stared at her.

“You sure?”

“No.”

She looked at Kade.

“But I’m certain of one thing: if we stay purely defensive, they win without ever having to declare war.”

Kade held her gaze.

“So we change doctrine?”

Silence.

The dull thud of waves against the metal hull echoed like a slow, almost heartbeat rhythm.

Ariane spoke the words with precision that left no room for doubt:

“We shift to active deterrence posture.”

It wasn't a declaration of conquest.

But it was a step.

In capitals, analysts would soon notice a new coordination. Non-lethal strikes on military infrastructure. Temporary paralysis of surveillance networks. Demonstrations of capability.

A message.

We can strike.

And we still choose to limit.

For now.

Ariane deactivated the map with a gesture.

“Prepare a graduated escalation scenario. No civilians. No religious targets. We stay strategic.”

She knew, though, that control over an armed movement grows more fragile the larger it becomes.

Myths attract idealists.

Wars attract extremists.

As she left the room, she wondered how long the Alliance would remain faithful to its original doctrine.

Save.

Not dominate.

But in a world where every side speaks of survival, the line between defense and conquest becomes thin.

Very thin.



CHAPTER 4

SIDE EFFECT

Varga Energy Complex – 02:03

The target wasn't a church, a school, or a residential neighborhood.

It was a data node buried inside an aging thermal power plant, used for the past six months to host an extension of the national civilian surveillance network. Officially: energy optimization. Unofficially: massive biometric aggregation, cross-referencing faces, voices, movements. One more eye on the population.

Ariane had personally approved the operation.

Objective: temporary neutralization of the servers.

Estimated duration: ninety minutes maximum.

Civilian impact: zero expected.

Message: we can reach your vital points. We choose not to destroy them.

Kade was positioned on a wooded hill eight hundred meters away, thermal scope stabilized against his shoulder. Two teams infiltrating from the south, a cyber cell already in place to trigger the software overload on signal.

“Weather window confirmed,” Noor said in his earpiece. “Low fog, partial satellite coverage.”

Everything was clean. Too clean, even.

Regular forces had beefed up security in recent months. Fewer improvised parish militias. More former professionals recalled on special contracts.

“Unplanned movement, west sector,” Kade murmured.

A utility vehicle entered the site. Not military. Irregular thermal signature in the rear—three people.

“Identification?”

Silence on analysis side. Then:

“Civilian maintenance. Subcontractor team. Not in the transmitted schedule.”

Ariane came on the priority channel. Her voice stayed calm, but the tension was there.

“Possibility of manipulation?”

“Low,” Malik replied from afar. “Registries look consistent.”

Kade adjusted the optics. Three figures stepped out: fluorescent coveralls, light helmets, tool bags. Ordinary technicians.

One of the infiltrators whispered over the channel:

“We can delay.”

The digital window was already open. The cyber cell had breached the first firewall. If they aborted now, the trace would be detected. The site would be hardened for months.

Ariane took three seconds too long.

Three seconds during which momentum carried the operation forward.

“We proceed,” she said finally. “Minimal interruption. No explosives, targeted overload only.”

Kade felt a dull tension in his chest. He didn’t like unknowns.

The signal went out.

Inside the plant, screens flickered. Servers entered protection loops. Infiltrating teams triggered directional micro-EM charges.

Then something went wrong.

An electric arc jumped in a secondary gallery. Not massive. Not spectacular. But enough to ignite an old, cracked insulation conduit that should never have been there.

On Kade's thermal scope, one of the civilian signatures turned into an unstable white halo.

"Unplanned fire!" Noor shouted.

Internal protocols kicked in: automatic fire doors. But smoke built up faster than expected in the maintenance section.

"Civilian evacuation!" Ariane ordered.

Too late.

A secondary explosion—minor but brutal—hurled debris outside the annex building. One of the technicians collapsed near the utility vehicle.

Kade didn't think.

He left his position and sprinted down the slope despite the protests in his earpiece.

"Immediate withdrawal, Kade!"

He ignored the order.

The infiltrators were already retreating south. Internal sirens screamed. Military units would arrive in under ten minutes.

He reached the perimeter, neutralized a guard bursting from a corner with a precise shot, then rushed to the fallen technician.

Man. Around forty-five. Severe abdominal hemorrhage.

Not a soldier. Not a militiaman.

A technician.

The man's gaze locked with his for a fraction of a second. No hatred. No ideology. Just shock, and rising pain.

"Medical, need civilian extraction," Kade panted into the channel.

Silence.

Then Ariane's voice, lower than usual:

"Impossible. Forces incoming."

He understood.

If he stayed, he was captured.

If he carried the civilian, he slowed the exfil and endangered the team.

The technician tried to speak. Blood at the corner of his mouth.

Kade pressed an emergency compress to the wound. Maximum pressure. Automatic gestures learned in another life.

Military headlights appeared at the end of the road.

“Kade. Now.”

He hesitated one second.

Then he activated the anonymous civilian emergency beacon—a signal sent to local medical services without any identifiable signature.

He stood up.

The man’s gaze followed him.

He left.

At 06:12, the images were already looping on every national channel.

“Terrorist attack on strategic infrastructure.”

Tight shot on the burned-out vehicle.

Photo of the technician: father of two children. Frozen smile in a family picture.

Minister's quote: "Ideological barbarism has crossed a threshold."

Colonel Verhoeven watched the footage without blinking.

One confirmed civilian death. Two serious injuries.

It was the tipping point he'd been waiting for.

"Prepare activation of Protocol Seraphim," he said calmly.

Extension of arrest powers.

Warrantless surveillance.

Full integration of militias into the chain of command.

Public opinion would follow.

Fear had just changed sides.

On the offshore platform, no one spoke.

Data scrolled: media impact, international condemnation curve, loss of support in two neutral countries.

Ariane stared at an invisible point on the holographic table.

"It was a strategic target," Malik said, almost to himself.

Yes.

But war isn't measured only in targets.

Kade entered silently. He removed his helmet and set it on the table with a dull thud.

"He had an alliance in his hand," he said simply.

Ariane closed her eyes.

The doctrine had just cracked.

Save.

Not dominate.

But now a civilian name would be tied to their deterrent message.

She drew a slow breath.

"We publicly assume partial responsibility," she declared.

Eyes turned to her.

"We acknowledge the technical error. We express regret. And we reaffirm that our targets are exclusively military."

"That weakens us," Malik said.

"It humanizes us."

She knew, though, that this gesture wouldn't reverse the national narrative against them.

A single image of a civilian body was enough to erase ten clean operations.

Kade looked out at the ocean through the bay window.

Waves struck the structure in a steady, indifferent rhythm.

The war had truly begun.

Not because they struck.

But because they failed to remain impeccable.



CHAPTER 5

PROTOCOL SERAPHIM

Capital City – 04:30

The decree was signed without ceremony.

No solemn music, no raised flag, no camera to immortalize the moment. Just a digital signature placed on a thirty-seven-page document drafted months earlier and kept in reserve like a loaded weapon.

Protocol Seraphim: Level 1 activation.

Immediate extension of preventive arrest powers.

Administrative detention without charge for up to ninety days.

Temporary suspension of judicial oversight in internal security matters.

Full integration of territorial militias under unified military command.

Colonel Matthias Verhoeven reread clause 12 one last time:
“Structured ideological threat aimed at altering the
constitutional order.”

Wording vague enough to encompass almost anyone. A
shared link, a private conversation, a donation to a cultural
association. Doubt was sufficient.

He validated it.

In regional command centers, screens changed color.
Surveillance indicators opened like carnivorous flowers.
Lists were unlocked.

Names.

Addresses.

Cross-referenced correspondence.

Some were active members of extraction networks.

Others had simply shared an article classified as subversive.

Others had done nothing at all.

But in a logic of prevention, doubt was enough.

East District – 05:12

The first doors were kicked in before dawn.

Not by disorganized militias in improvised uniforms. By mixed units in regulation gear: black helmets, national insignia clearly visible, body cams rolling for legal documentation.

Clean procedure.

“By order of the Ministry of Internal Security, you are placed in administrative detention for verification.”

The words were neutral.

The consequences were not.

In a third-floor apartment, a student was dragged from his bed. His crime: participating in a fundraiser for an organization now classified as “dissident logistical support structure.” He had never carried a weapon. He had never protested. Just donated twenty euros through an anonymous app.

On another street, a sixty-year-old woman was handcuffed in front of her neighbors. She had run a community discussion group in a parish hall for twenty years. She was accused of “spreading subversive ideology.”

On national radio, a ticker ran continuously:

“Preventive security operation following the Varga attack.”

Arrests multiplied. Targeted, according to official statements. Surgical.

Verhoeven followed the feeds on the central screen in the crisis room.

“Numbers?”

“One hundred twenty-two arrests in the first three hours,” Rinaldi replied. “Minimal resistance.”

The colonel watched the real-time biometric data: pulse, location, fingerprints. He knew that among those names were probably peripheral members of the Alliance. Maybe even dormant operators.

He also knew that most had never held a weapon.

“We must strike before they consolidate,” he said.

He believed in strategic logic. Neutralize networks before they became structural.

He also believed he was protecting his country.

But one line in the internal report caught his eye:

Projected secondary radicalization index: +28% following public arrests.

He remained still.

Repression feeds clandestinity.

Clandestinity feeds mythology.

Mythology feeds engagement.

Known cycle. Theorized. Documented.

Yet applied anyway.

Offshore Platform – 09:47

Screens lit up red.

Confirmed arrests in four major cities. Targeted bank freezes. Freezes on cultural associations. Suspension of several independent media outlets.

Malik spoke too fast, fingers clenched on his tablet.

“They’re exploiting Varga to justify a purge. We’ve lost at least three urban logistical relays. Two support cells compromised.”

Kade stayed silent. He watched the faces scroll on the screen: some recognized. Others unknown. Civilians.

“How many of our operators?” Ariane asked.

“None confirmed yet. But we’re too close.”

Ariane analyzed the trajectory.

This was no longer a point response.

It was a strategy of social scorched earth.

“They want to provoke a reaction,” she said.

“Then we hit harder?” a voice suggested from the back of the room. A newcomer. Former infantry captain, hard gaze.

Kade turned his head slightly.

The internal fracture was beginning.

Ariane answered without raising her voice.

“No. They want us to validate their narrative. We won’t.”

“They’re locking up innocents!”

“Exactly.”

Tense silence.

She pulled up a map of the arrests.

“Look at the targeted zones. Not just our relays. Mixed neighborhoods, open community spaces. They’re broadening the definition of threat.”

She zoomed in on a bright dot.

“If we respond with military strikes, every arrest will be seen as legitimate. We need to shift the battlefield.”

“How?” Kade asked.

She looked at him.

“By exposing Seraphim.”

Capital City – 18:22

The images leaked simultaneously on several foreign platforms.

Internal recordings of preparatory meetings for the protocol. Documents showing the decree had been drafted well before the Varga incident. Tables forecasting a “catalytic opportunity.”

The word was there.

Catalytic.

International channels began relaying the information. Legal experts spoke of manipulation. Neutral governments demanded explanations.

In his office, Colonel Verhoeven watched the screen without expression.

“Source of the leak?”

“Unknown. Multi-hop encryption. Professional.”

He knew.

This wasn't an explosive strike.

It was more dangerous.

They were attacking legitimacy.

He stood and walked to the window.

Below, in the street, protesters were beginning to gather.
Not thousands. A few hundred.

But visible.

He thought of his son.

Then of the sentence he had read years earlier in an
insurrection report:

“A movement becomes truly dangerous when it masters
both force and narrative.”

He wondered if he had just handed them both.

Offshore Platform – Night

Ariane watched the first international reactions.

They had avoided shooting.

But they had struck elsewhere.

“It’s only the beginning,” Malik said.

“Yes.”

Kade watched the waves crash against the metal structure.

Arrests continued.

Tension rose.

The war was no longer just clandestine.

It was becoming visible.

And when a war becomes visible, it attracts unpredictable actors.

Very unpredictable.



CHAPTER 6

SON IN THE CROSSHAIRS

Capital City – 21:16

Colonel Matthias Verhoeven had never imagined the war would strike at his own door.

Not in the streets. Not on tactical maps. Not on the crisis room screens.

But in the life he believed was protected, isolated, far from the battlefield.

His personal phone vibrated on the desk—unknown number, encrypted, no local prefix. He answered on reflex, like grabbing a loaded gun.

“Colonel Verhoeven?”

Calm, neutral voice, almost polite.

“Who is this?”

Military tone, hiding the rising worry.

“Your son.”

A short pause, letting the word settle in.

“...What?!”

“He’s not injured. But he has been identified as participating in a civilian initiative deemed ‘subversive’ by Protocol Seraphim. We wish for your cooperation to avoid any incident.”

Verhoeven felt the floor drop out from under him. His son. Model student. Sunday choirboy. Nothing that had ever been suspicious. Nothing that had ever justified surveillance.

“Where is he?” he asked, voice lower, almost a whisper.

“In a provisional detention facility. You know him under the internal code name ‘Seraphim 07.’”

He stiffened. The protocol he had validated, the decree he had signed, had just turned against his own blood.

“Why?!” he shouted despite himself. “He hasn’t done anything!”

“We are simply applying the established protocols,” the voice replied with almost mechanical patience. “Everything is under control. Your cooperation can reduce the risks.”

Anger and terror mixed in his chest. The order he had imposed on his country, the security he thought he guaranteed, was collapsing around him. Every word from that invisible voice weighed like an accusation.

"Give me his exact location," he ordered.

Silence.

Then:

"Access is conditioned on your commitment to suspend any interference in Seraphim operations."

Verhoeven froze. The dilemma stood before him, brutal and naked: his principles, his duty to the state... or his son's life.

He thought of Ariane Solberg, of Kade, of all the names he had classified as abstract enemies in reports. Not anymore. Their actions were no longer statistics. They had struck at the heart of his family.

He stepped back from the window, gaze fixed on the city lights twinkling below. Arrests continued somewhere, the protocol advanced. But now every decision, every order could kill or save his son.

He hung up without replying.

The silence in the office became deafening.

Offshore Platform – 22:48

Ariane Solberg watched the holographic maps, data feeds, and secure communications. Her face tense, but cold as always.

Malik entered quickly.

“Priority report. Intercepts indicate internal movement on Protocol Seraphim. Colonel Verhoeven. Son involved.”

Ariane didn’t move immediately. She had known the son’s name for a short time—the algorithm had classified him as “secondary non-priority target” during the first arrest lists. Until now, he had never been activated.

“The situation is getting delicate,” she said finally. “The colonel can no longer remain strictly within his protocol if he believes his son is threatened. We need to exploit that.”

Kade frowned.

“What do you want us to do? He’s a civilian... and we can’t just free him without triggering a full-blown crisis.”

“Exactly. That’s where deterrence makes sense. If we intervene subtly, we can create an indirect negotiation channel. No military attack. No visible strike. Just a signal the colonel can’t ignore.”

Malik checked the real-time data.

“Local military communications surveillance: temporary vulnerability in encrypted transmission protocols. We can insert a targeted, secure message, only for him.”

“And the risk?” Kade asked.

“Low,” Ariane replied, “but the psychological reach is maximum. It’s a demonstration of control. No violence. But a clear message: we know where he is.”

She brought up a detailed diagram. Three teams: digital infiltration, discreet ground surveillance, cyber-defensive cover to erase all traces. Objective: create indirect pressure on the colonel without exposing his son to real danger.

“Prepare the operation,” she said. “Timings: insertion in thirty-five minutes. Message transmission in forty-five. Full simulated extraction by diversion drones.”

Kade nodded.

“I’ll oversee the ground team. We’ll make sure nothing touches the son. Not a single misstep.”

“Malik, you handle the secure channel and digital signals. No leaks, no alerts.”

“Understood.”

Ariane watched the feeds. She knew this was the moment the war turned psychological. No exchange of bullets. No deaths. Just a demonstration of power—subtle but total.

“Everything has to be perfect,” she said finally. “The colonel needs to understand he no longer has control, but that we have no intention of killing.”

“Understood,” Kade replied. “We don’t make mistakes on this kind of pressure.”

Time passed slowly. Minutes felt long. The waves against the platform were a constant reminder of isolation, but also relative safety.

Then, at 23:23, the first signal went out. A series of encrypted transmissions intercepted only by the colonel’s personal network.

A simple, clear, commanding message:

We know where your son is. He is safe. But your next decisions will determine the rest.

In the capital, Colonel Verhoeven received the signal on a channel that didn’t exist for official systems. He immediately understood he had lost control.

For the first time, he was no longer master of the situation.

And Ariane knew this small act would change everything:

Not only would the colonel be forced to negotiate indirectly, but the dynamic of the war had just shifted.

Fear now had a human face and an invisible voice.



CHAPTER 7

PLAN IN MOTION

Offshore Platform – 22:48

Ariane Solberg barely slept anymore.

Not from some heroic insomnia, but because when sleep did come, it was haunted by flashing maps and vanishing names. She sat at the holographic table, sleeves rolled up, a mug of cold tea forgotten beside her. The blue glow from the projections gave her an almost spectral look.

Malik entered without a sound, as usual.

“The colonel hung up without answering. But he read the message. The channel stayed open seventeen seconds longer than necessary. He hesitated.”

Ariane nodded slowly.

“He’ll negotiate. Not right away. But he will.”

She spun the projection: a cross-section view of the provisional detention center where the colonel’s son was held. Not a classic prison—an administrative building repurposed, cameras everywhere, rotating guards, no

visible bars. Seraphim 07. One code name among hundreds.

“We don’t touch him,” she said. “Not a hair. We protect him, even, if necessary.”

Kade, leaning against the back wall, crossed his arms.

“Protect the son of an officer who signs our arrest orders? That’s risky. If we pull him out now, we lose the leverage. If we leave him too long, we risk a screw-up on their side.”

“We don’t pull him out. Not yet. We create a channel. Indirect. Subtle.”

Ariane zoomed in on the capital’s map. Military surveillance feeds blinked red intermittently—temporary vulnerabilities in encrypted transmission protocols.

“Malik, prepare a new data packet. Not a direct threat. Proof.”

“Proof of what?”

“That we know exactly where he is. Cell number. Guard routines. The kid’s schedule. And at the same time... reassurance. We have no intention of harming him.”

Malik frowned.

“You want to show him we could, but we’re choosing not to?”

“Exactly. Deterrence isn’t in violence. It’s in the capacity for violence, and the choice not to use it.”

Kade stepped closer to the table.

“And on the ground? We position a team near the center?”

“Discreet. No intervention. Just surveillance. If internal guards start mistreating anyone—including him—we step in. But only as a last resort.”

Malik tapped quickly on his tablet.

“Secondary message insertion in thirty minutes. Same channel. Content: precise location + recent photo of the kid taken from an internal surveillance camera. Plus one line: ‘He is safe as long as you remain reasonable.’”

Ariane nodded.

“Add a proposal. Not a demand. An opening: ‘An indirect dialogue channel remains possible. Conditions to be discussed.’”

Kade shook his head, almost imperceptibly.

“He’ll see it as blackmail.”

“He’ll see it as reality. He signed Seraphim. He knows what it entails. Now he has to live with it.”

Silence fell again, broken only by the soft hum of servers and the lapping of waves against the hull.

Ariane stood and walked to the bay window. The ocean was black, moonless.

“Prepare the next phase,” she said without turning.

“Simulated maneuvers on three continents. No real action. Just enough to make their radars go crazy. Fictitious troop movements, targeted jamming, coordination signals.”

“To force him to react?”

“To show him the scale. He needs to understand we’re not an isolated group. We’re a structure. And if we move to real action, it will be coordinated, fast, and without unnecessary bloodshed.”

Malik nodded.

“Scenario ready in one hour.”

Kade stayed quiet for a moment, then:

“And if the colonel chooses the state over his son?”

Ariane turned to him. Her gaze was calm, almost tired.

“Then it will be total war. But I don’t think he will. Not yet.”

She returned to the table and placed her hands flat on the holographic surface. The bright dots danced under her palms.

“We don’t want to destroy his world. We want him to stop destroying ours.”

Kade didn’t reply. He thought of the kid in his cell. Of the wedding ring the Varga technician had clutched when he died. Of all the names scrolling through the arrest lists.

The platform rocked gently.

Ariane murmured, almost to herself:

“Every minute counts now.”

And in that starless night, the plan went into motion.

Subtle.

Invisible.

Inevitable.



CHAPTER 8

THE COLONEL'S DILEMMA

Capital City – 00:17

Colonel Matthias Verhoeven remained seated at his desk, the pale glow of the screens reflecting his drawn features. Minutes slipped away like grains of sand in an invisible hourglass. The encrypted message was now just a faint halo on his personal screen, but it weighed like an entire army.

We know where your son is. He is safe. But your next decisions will determine the rest.

He rose slowly and walked to the window. The city slept below—or pretended to. Every streetlamp, every empty street, every distant passing vehicle reminded him that life went on—for others. Not for him. Not tonight.

He thought of his son: the childhood laughter he hadn't heard in years, the flawless report cards, the Sunday morning choir where he sang with a clear voice that always brought a tear to his mother's eye. Everything he thought he knew about him. And now an international clandestine network held the power to decide his fate.

He thought again of Ariane Solberg. Of Kade. Of what he had always regarded as abstract enemies in reports, dots on maps. Not anymore. Their actions were no longer statistics. They had struck at the heart of his family.

“What can I do?” he murmured, alone in the room.

His staff waited for his orders somewhere in the building. Mass arrests continued under Seraphim. Political, media, and military pressure was at its peak. Every decision could trigger public chaos.

He knew any action against the Alliance risked endangering his son. But inaction risked signaling weakness, fracturing state authority, and provoking imitators elsewhere.

He pulled out his secure phone. Internal number, direct, no trace on regular channels.

“Rinaldi. Prepare the crisis room. We need to... negotiate.”

He spoke the word aloud, as if convincing himself.

He reviewed his notes: laws, protocol, international precedents. All of it seemed trivial against a family dilemma that transcended rules and strategy.

In the following minutes, he contacted his main advisors. Their response was immediate: caution, firmness, refusal to yield.

“Colonel, we don’t negotiate with terrorists,” one said in a tense voice.

“They’re not classic terrorists,” Verhoeven replied. “They haven’t caused a single intentional civilian casualty.”

Silence on the other end.

“And your son?”

The question hung there.

Verhoeven hung up without answering.

He returned to his desk and reopened the message. Reread every word. Every nuance.

He took out a blank sheet—classic method, offline, no electronic trace—and began drafting his response. Every sentence had to be calibrated: show readiness to talk without appearing weak; protect his son without yielding to pressure; maintain state authority without provoking open confrontation.

He wrote slowly, crossed out, started again. A misplaced comma could be read as defiance.

Finally, he reread it one last time:

Your action has been noted. You have demonstrated impressive strategic capability and control. My son is a

citizen under my protection, and any threat against him will be considered a violation of national law. I am willing to open an indirect dialogue channel to clarify intentions and limit damage. Any further action will be evaluated under my direct responsibility.

No emotion. No embellishments. Just cold military precision.

He folded the sheet, slipped it into a secure envelope, and sent it through a physical channel to the encryption center.

Offshore Platform – 03:42

Ariane received the response almost immediately—the channel was still open, like a phone line no one had hung up.

She analyzed it quickly. Every word revealed a subtle mix of respect, implied threat, and personal vulnerability.

“He’s playing,” she murmured. “But he’s not panicking. He understands the stakes.”

Malik leaned over the screen.

“Every sentence is calibrated to keep the tension without triggering open conflict.”

Kade watched Ariane, face closed.

“Now we have to decide the next step. One misstep, and we lose the psychological initiative.”

“Exactly. We send a subtle but clear signal: we can protect, but we can also strike if necessary. And we begin to create neutral ground for future negotiations.”

Ariane brought up a holographic projection: a plan for indirect exchanges, a series of coded messages and movement simulations to test the colonel’s reactions.

“He can’t know exactly where we are,” she said, “but he must feel our capability. Fear is a powerful tool. Not to destroy him, but to make him act.”

On his side, the colonel felt the effect almost immediately. The tension that had paralyzed him for hours began turning into sharp focus. He knew the Alliance had no intention of harming his son. But every future action would depend on his next move.

And in this invisible dance between control and threat, power and vulnerability, the rules of war were changing.

The battlefield was no longer merely military. It was moral, psychological, intimate.

And both sides had just crossed a threshold there was no going back from.



CHAPTER 9

CONSOLIDATION AND INTIMIDATION

Offshore Platform – 04:15

Ariane Solberg hadn't moved in hours.

The holographic table projected a slowly rotating world map: blinking bright dots across four continents, each representing an operational cell. Not massive units. Teams of five to eight—trained, autonomous, linked by an encrypted network that changed keys every twelve hours.

Malik entered with a tray: two mugs of black coffee, a pack of dry biscuits.

"You haven't eaten since yesterday."

She took a mug without looking up.

"The colonel replied. He's opening the door. But not wide open."

"That's already something."

She zoomed in on the federal capital. A fixed red dot: the detention center where the son was held.

“We keep 24/7 surveillance. If any guard crosses the line, we intervene. No discussion.”

Kade, who had just arrived, set his helmet on the table.

“Simulated maneuvers are ready. Three continents, fifteen strategic sites. Fictitious troop movements, diversion drones, localized electromagnetic jamming. Nothing real, but their radars will see a phantom invasion.”

Ariane nodded.

“Launch at 05:00 UTC. No strike. Just noise.”

“Objective?”

“Consolidation. Show we’re everywhere, that we can hit any critical point, but choose not to. For now.”

She stood and walked to the bay window. The ocean was still black, but a thin gray line announced the distant dawn.

“Fear becomes a geopolitical control tool when it’s mastered. Not when it’s blind.”

Malik activated the sequence.

Capital City – 05:03

The screens at the continental command center lit up all at once.

Dozens of signals appeared simultaneously: massive movements over air bases in Eastern Europe, logistical disruptions near strategic ports in Asia, jamming on communication lines in North America.

Verhoeven was awakened by the priority alert on his personal communicator. He threw on his jacket in under thirty seconds, nearly ran down the stairs.

In the crisis room, the team was already in place.

“Report,” he snapped.

Rinaldi spun toward him, face pale.

“Multiple anomalies. Coordinated displacements across three continents. Troop signals, drones, minor cyber intrusions. No physical contact. No casualties. But... it’s massive.”

Verhoeven approached the main screen. The bright dots moved with surgical precision: simulated encirclements, feints of penetration, synchronized withdrawals.

“How many real units?”

“Impossible to tell. Signatures too jammed. Could be ten thousand. Could be a hundred.”

The colonel felt cold sweat down his back.

Not the soldier's fear. The fear of a man who knows his adversary can strike anywhere, anytime, and chooses not to.

"It's a demonstration," he murmured.

"Yes. And it's global."

He thought of his son. Of the cell. Of the photo the Alliance had sent him hours earlier: the kid sitting on a narrow bed, reading a book, looking calm but tired.

No direct threat.

Just proof they could pull him out in minutes if they wanted.

Offshore Platform – 06:47

Ariane watched the real-time returns.

Conventional armies were repositioning forces. Bases on alert. Satellites redirected. But no counterstrike.

"They've understood," Malik said.

"Not fully yet."

She activated a new secure channel to Verhoeven.

Short message:

We have demonstrated our reach. No civilian was harmed. We can continue this way. Or we can discuss terms for mutual de-escalation. The choice is yours.

No signature. No emoticon. Just facts.

Kade stepped closer.

“And if he refuses?”

“Then we move to the next phase. Visible but non-lethal movements. Temporary neutralization of critical communication systems. Disruption of military logistical lines. Always without blood.”

“That risks pushing them into a mistake.”

“That’s the point. Fear makes them predictable.”

She sat back down, placed her hands on the table. The bright dots continued their silent dance.

“We don’t want war. We want them to stop hunting us like animals.”

Malik murmured:

“And if it’s already too late for that?”

Ariane didn't answer right away.

She thought of the arrests. Of the reorientation centers. Of separated families.

"Then we become what they accuse us of being. But not without having tried everything to avoid it."

The waves struck the hull steadily.

Consolidation continued.

Intimidation too.

And in both camps, they were beginning to understand that the next step would no longer be a simulation.



CHAPTER 10

REDEFINITION OF POWER

Offshore Platform – 14:18

Ariane Solberg watched the holographic projection of the planet the way one studies a chessboard after a decisive move.

Every bright dot represented an operational unit of the Alliance: trans commandos deployed for remote neutralization of strategic systems, lesbian units maintaining surveillance and infiltration on key infrastructure, gay forces handling logistics and global communication. Everything moved with a precision that no longer had anything amateur about it.

Malik entered, tablet in hand, a faint smile on his lips.

“Neutral governments are starting to send unofficial diplomatic signals. Not alliances, but requests for clarification. They want to know how far we’ll go.”

Ariane didn’t answer right away. She zoomed in on a cluster in Central Europe: three military bases that had just

repositioned their defensive forces after the night's simulations.

"They're adapting," she said. "That's exactly what we wanted."

Kade, sitting across from her, crossed his arms.

"And the colonel?"

"He received the last message. No direct reply, but his orders have changed. Dispersion of units, reinforcement of surveillance systems, preparation for targeted defensive maneuvers. He's opening a window. Not big. But it exists."

Ariane deactivated the tactical layer and brought up international media feeds. Headlines scrolled:

"Unexplained movements across multiple continents: who's pulling the strings?"

"A clandestine force challenges conventional armies without bloodshed."

"The LGBT Alliance: threat or new geopolitical reality?"

"The narrative is shifting," Malik murmured.

"Yes. And it's more powerful than any strike."

She stood and walked slowly around the table.

“Consolidation phase: neutralization of structural weaknesses without civilian contact. Strengthening our influence on vulnerable governments. We continue non-lethal demonstrations, but make them more visible.”

Kade nodded.

“Concrete examples?”

“Temporary disruption of reconnaissance satellites over key zones. Selective jamming of military communications during exercises. Visible movements of our cells near sensitive borders—no incursion, just enough for drones to pick them up.”

Malik added:

“And we leak proof of our doctrine: no civilians harmed, regret expressed for Varga, public commitment to limiting damage.”

Ariane stopped in front of the bay window.

“We are no longer a shadow. We are a power. Not a classic army, but a force that commands respect through mastery and restraint.”

Capital City – 15:02

Colonel Verhoeven sat in his office, his son facing him for the first time in days.

The boy—seventeen, thin, tired but steady gaze—had not been mistreated. Just questioned. Isolated. Then released under tacit conditions after Verhoeven accepted the indirect channel.

“Dad... I didn’t do anything wrong,” the young man said in a low voice.

“I know.”

Verhoeven placed a hand on his son’s shoulder. The gesture felt awkward, almost foreign after months of distance.

“But the world has changed. And I have to adapt.”

He turned to the wall screen. The maps showed repositionings: reinforced bases, secured logistical lines, but also zones where analysts noted “non-hostile anomalies.”

“They can strike anywhere,” he murmured. “And they don’t.”

His son looked up.

“Because they don’t want war?”

“Because they want something more lasting. A new balance.”

Verhoeven fell silent for a moment.

"I signed Seraphim to protect values. But if those values become chains..."

He didn't finish the sentence.

Offshore Platform – 16:47

Ariane gave a slight smile—rare, tired, but satisfied.

"The first phase of redefinition is successful. The colonel and his state are now aware that we are not a myth."

Kade studied the map.

"Next step?"

"Maintain pressure while consolidating. Dialogue will continue, but every move must strengthen our position. Always without civilians. Always strategic."

Malik added:

"Conventional armies are reorganizing. Not to crush us. To dialogue. To anticipate. To understand the new rules."

Ariane deactivated the projection.

"We have proven that power can manifest without unnecessary violence. That coordination and moral discipline can reshape the world."

She looked out at the ocean.

“War has changed. Fear has become a lever. Respect, a weapon.”

Night was falling over the continents.

In the shadows, Alliance units continued to move with precision and restraint.

Invisible to most.

Unavoidable to those who knew where to look.



CHAPTER 11

FINAL CONFRONTATION

Capital City – 08:25

Colonel Matthias Verhoeven settled into the crisis room, face set, body tense from accumulated fatigue and an anxiety he no longer showed anyone.

The screens around him displayed real-time feeds: defensive repositionings, minor alerts, accumulating non-hostile anomalies like clouds before a storm.

He opened the secure channel—the one that didn't officially exist, the one the Alliance had kept open for days.

A synthesized voice, calm and without identifiable accent, answered almost immediately.

“Colonel Verhoeven.”

He drew a deep breath.

“Ariane Solberg, I presume.”

Brief silence. Then:

“You accepted the channel. That’s already a step.”

Verhoeven placed his hands flat on the table.

“I accepted because you hold my son. Because you’ve shown you can strike anywhere without killing a single civilian. Because you’ve shown me the protocol I signed can turn against me.”

The voice remained neutral.

“We never intended to kill your son. We protected him, even when your own guards could have made a mistake.”

“Protected?” Verhoeven repeated with a hint of bitterness.
“You used him as leverage.”

“You put him at risk by signing Seraphim. We simply reminded you of the consequences.”

He closed his eyes for a second.

“Tell me what you really want.”

The answer came without hesitation.

“We want the arrests to stop. The reorientation centers closed or transformed into voluntary support structures.

The 'moral' laws revised so they no longer criminalize identity. We want a real ceasefire, not a temporary truce."

Verhoeven shook his head slowly.

"You're asking for the state's surrender."

"No. We're asking for an end to systematic persecution. We've proven we can coordinate globally, strike surgically, and choose not to destroy. You've seen our capabilities. You know we could do much more."

"And if I refuse?"

"Then we move to more visible actions. Prolonged neutralization of critical networks. Paralysis of military logistical chains. Targeted economic disruption. Always without civilian casualties. But the pressure will become unbearable. Your economy, your army, your public opinion will eventually crack."

Verhoeven stood and walked to the window. The city was waking under a gray sky.

"You speak of morality. But you're threatening a sovereign state."

"We're threatening a system that threatens our lives. There's a difference."

He turned toward the screen as if he could see his interlocutor.

“And my son?”

“He’ll come home as soon as the first concrete measures are taken. Release of non-violent detainees. Suspension of the centers. Public dialogue on reforms.”

Verhoeven remained silent for a long moment.

“I need guarantees.”

“You already have ours: we’ve never lied about our intentions. No civilian has been intentionally harmed. We will honor the terms if you do.”

He returned to his seat.

“I can’t decide alone. The government, Parliament...”

“You are the military pivot. Your technical opinion carries more weight than any speech. And you know public opinion is starting to turn. The leaks on Seraphim, the Varga images, our demonstrations... fear is changing sides.”

Verhoeven placed his hand on the screen, as if to touch the voice.

“Very well. I accept an indirect dialogue channel. We will establish clear parameters to avoid any incident. But I warn

you: any action against civilians or against the structure of the state will be considered aggression.”

“Agreed,” Ariane replied. “We never intended to strike innocents. Our maneuvers serve only to demonstrate our capability and persuade you to negotiate on our terms.”

Offshore Platform – 09:02

Ariane cut the channel.

She turned to Kade and Malik.

“It’s done. The colonel has accepted dialogue. He now knows we can strike surgically. We’ve won psychological and strategic control without spilling a drop of blood.”

Kade studied the holographic map. Every bright dot represented a unit ready to act: perfect coordination, intact discipline.

“Next step?”

“Maintain this pressure while opening negotiations. We can talk, but we must show we have the strength and organization to command respect.”

Malik added:

“Friendly governments are starting to listen. Some are even proposing neutral mediation.”

Ariane gave a slight smile—a real one this time.

“We haven’t won the war. We’ve won recognition.”

She looked out at the ocean through the bay window.

“The final confrontation wasn’t a battle. It was a dialogue. And we just won it.”

Tension still lingered in the air.

But a fragile balance had settled in: the invisible war had crossed a threshold where fear, strategy, and morality defined every decision.

In this new order, the Alliance was no longer just a legend.

It was a military and geopolitical force to be feared, capable of redefining the rules of modern warfare while honoring its own principles.



CHAPTER 12

FRAGILE BALANCE

Offshore Platform – 11:30 (a few days later)

Ariane Solberg stood on the upper deck, back to the sea, hands resting on the cold railing.

The salty wind whipped her face, but she didn't move. For the first time in months, she had no tablet in hand, no holographic screen to monitor. Just the sound of waves and the distant cry of a seabird.

Kade joined her, a mug of coffee in hand—his, not hers. He leaned beside her without speaking for a long moment.

“The colonel has issued the first concrete orders,” he said finally. “Temporary suspension of new detentions. Conditional release of one hundred twenty-seven non-violent detainees. Opening of an independent commission of inquiry into the centers.”

Ariane nodded slowly.

“It's a start. Not total victory. But a start.”

“He’s also requested a physical meeting. Neutral ground. Under third-party mediation.”

She turned her head slightly toward him.

“He wants to see who he’s talking to.”

“Or he wants to test if we’re still bluffing.”

Ariane smiled—a tired, almost resigned smile.

“We stopped bluffing a long time ago.”

They remained silent for a while. The sun finally broke through the cloud layer, casting golden reflections on the water.

“And us?” Kade asked. “What do we do now?”

“We hold. We watch. We continue discreet extractions where still needed. We prepare countermeasures if the wind shifts. But we no longer strike just to strike. We let dialogue do its work.”

Kade set his mug on the railing.

“Do you think he’ll hold?”

“The colonel? Maybe. He has a son to protect, a country to run, and now a conscience that’s eating at him. That’s a lot of weight on one man.”

She straightened.

“But it’s not just him anymore. Public opinion is shifting. International media are asking questions. Some allied governments are starting to hesitate on moral sanctions. The myth we’ve built has become too big to ignore.”

Kade looked at the horizon.

“And if we really win? What do we become?”

Ariane didn’t answer right away. She thought of the families they had extracted, the lives saved, the mistakes like Varga that still weighed on her chest.

“We become what we always said we wanted to be: a force that protects, not dominates. A shadow that no longer needs to be invisible to exist.”

She turned to him.

“But we stay vigilant. Peace is more fragile than war.”

Capital City – 14:45

Verhoeven sat in his office, door closed, light dimmed.

His son had returned the previous evening—pale, silent, but unharmed. He was now sleeping in his room, door ajar, the way he did when he was little.

The colonel stared at an open folder on his desk: the first reports from the commission of inquiry. Testimonies. Photos. Evidence that Seraphim had crossed its boundaries long before the Alliance appeared.

He closed the folder.

His communicator buzzed softly. Incoming message—indirect channel, same one as always.

The first releases have been confirmed. Thank you for this step. We maintain our commitment: no civilian will be harmed as long as dialogue progresses. Next step: proposal for neutral mediation. Location and date to be agreed.

No threat. No ultimatum. Just facts.

Verhoeven set the communicator down.

He stood and walked to the window. The city hummed below—traffic, voices, ordinary life.

He thought of Ariane. Of the calm voice that had negotiated without ever raising its tone. Of the invisible force that had nearly destroyed everything he defended... and that, paradoxically, had forced him to face what he was truly defending.

He murmured to himself:

“Maybe balance is possible.”

Maybe.

Offshore Platform – Twilight

Ariane descended to the lower level.

The teams were in relative rest: some slept, others spoke in low voices, others still checked equipment.

She stopped at a small common room. Kade and Malik were there, around a low table, looking at a simplified map—not holographic, just paper and pushpins.

“Looks like an old-school war,” she said as she entered.

Kade looked up.

“It’s simpler.”

She sat with them.

“Tomorrow we send the mediation proposal. Neutral location. Shared security. No heavy weapons.”

Malik nodded.

“And after?”

“After... we see if words are enough.”

She placed her hand on the map, covering an entire continent.

“We reshaped power without taking it. That’s already a victory.”

Twilight fell over the ocean.

The platform continued to rock gently.

The invisible war wasn’t over.

But it had changed nature.

It had become a conversation.

And in that fragile conversation, the Alliance and the states were slowly learning to coexist.



EPILOGUE

FRAGILE BALANCE

A few months later

The world had not toppled in a grand crash.

No final explosions, no spectacular surrender, no rainbow flags hoisted over capitals.

It had changed in the silence of endless negotiations, cautious communiqués, and mixed commissions meeting in neutral hotels under heavy security.

The harshest reorientation centers had closed or been converted into voluntary psychological support facilities. The most extreme “moral” laws had been softened—not repealed everywhere, but enough for mass arrests to cease. Rainbow symbols were no longer automatically classified as “subversive.”

The Alliance was no longer a clandestine shadow.

It had become a recognized entity—not a state, not an NGO, but a transnational force of protection and deterrence. International observers monitored it. Diplomats consulted it discreetly. Media described it as “the first post-national

army to impose its legitimacy through restraint rather than conquest.”

Capital City – Colonel Verhoeven’s Office

Matthias Verhoeven sat at his desk, sleeves rolled up, a stack of reports in front of him.

His son walked in without knocking—a habit he had picked up since his return. He sat across from him and placed a coffee on the table.

“You’re still working on the de-escalation protocols?”

Verhoeven looked up.

“Yes. And on audits of the former centers.”

The young man nodded.

“You know some people call you a traitor in certain circles?”

“I know. And in others, a man who averted a war.”

He closed the folder.

“I signed Seraphim to protect values. I negotiated with the Alliance to protect my son... and maybe to protect something bigger.”

His son gave a slight smile—one that resembled his mother's.

"You've changed."

"The world has changed. I'm adapting."

Verhoeven stood and walked to the window. The city hummed below. Flags flew over official buildings—the same as before, but sometimes with a small, discreet colored ribbon tied to a lamppost.

Offshore Platform – Same Day

Ariane Solberg had left the platform for the first time in a long while.

She stood on a small neutral island, in a smoked-glass conference room. Across from her: diplomats, international observers, and—on the other side of a secure partition—Colonel Verhoeven via videoconference.

No handshakes. No triumphant speeches.

Just a signed agreement:

Permanent ceasefire.

Mutual surveillance.

Mediation mechanism in case of slippage.

Shared commitment to protect civilians, no matter the side.

Ariane signed last.

She looked at the camera.

“We never wanted to destroy. We wanted to exist.”

Verhoeven, on his end, replied in a calm voice:

“And now, we must learn to coexist.”

The connection cut.

Ariane stepped out onto the island’s terrace. The wind was gentle. Kade was waiting, leaning against a railing.

“Is it over?” he asked.

“No. It’s just beginning.”

She looked at the horizon.

“The real war was getting them to recognize that strength isn’t only in weapons. It’s in coordination, discipline, and the decision not to kill when you could.”

Kade nodded.

“And now?”

“Now we watch. We protect. We continue discreet extractions for those who still need them. And we let the world get used to our existence.”

The sun set over the ocean.

In capitals, conventional armies still trained.

In neighborhoods, families rebuilt.

In the shadows, LGBTQ+ Alliance units continued to move—more discreet, calmer, but always ready.

Fear had changed sides, then transformed into cautious respect.

The invisible war had not disappeared.

It had simply become a new order—fragile, imperfect, but real.

And in that new order, those who had been marginalized had proven they could not only survive, but redefine the rules.

Without a single unnecessary shot fired.

The End.



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Roger-Luc Chayer is a journalist, columnist, and musician. A keen observer of contemporary social and political dynamics, he is particularly interested in power relations, geopolitical issues, and the realities of LGBTQ+ communities.

With *The Invisible Alliance*, he delivers a geopolitical science-fiction novel where strategy, military tension, and reflections on collective fear intersect. His writing blends journalistic rigor with a strong sense of dramatic storytelling, creating a universe that is at once realistic, unsettling, and profoundly human.

He lives in Canada and holds dual Canadian and French nationality.





The Invisible Alliance

They can strike anywhere.
They choose not to.
For now.

A novel by
Roger-Luc Chayer

«True power is not in weapons.
It is in the decision not to use them.»
– Surre