

# Chapter 22

Chapter 22 introduces readers to the concept of antimatter, a fascinating but dangerous material that behaves similarly to regular matter in most situations, yet becomes deadly when it interacts with normal matter. This interaction triggers violent reactions, releasing harmful gamma rays and high-speed subatomic particles, which can lead to catastrophic consequences. The nature of antimatter makes it a substance that must be avoided by all living organisms, as even the smallest contact could result in disaster. The development of antimatter technology occurred long before the Diaspora, on old Earth, when scientists first succeeded in synthesizing and containing antimatter for the purpose of advancing interstellar travel. This achievement was crucial in facilitating humanity's escape from the destructive conditions that plagued Earth, particularly during the chaotic period known as the Bubble War, which led to the planet's devastation.

Throughout history, new technologies are often initially adopted with the intention of addressing immediate needs but are later exploited for vanity or destruction. Antimatter was no exception to this trend; although it was initially developed with scientific aspirations, it quickly became a tool for devastating warfare. The invention of the magnetic monopole bubble allowed antimatter to be stored and detonated safely, leading to the creation of "bubble bombs." These bombs were capable of wiping out entire populations without leaving behind the radioactive residues typically associated with traditional nuclear weapons. This made them particularly lethal, as invaders could take control of valuable territories with minimal long-term environmental or health consequences. The "clean" nature of these bombs—able to annihilate enemies efficiently without the usual fallout—made them a terrifying weapon of choice during the Bubble War. The threat posed by antimatter bombs became emblematic of the dangers that come with unchecked technological advancement, where weapons

intended for survival can quickly be turned into instruments of mass destruction.

The introduction of these devastating weapons coincided with a profound environmental crisis on Earth, one marked by severe overpopulation, scarce resources, and political instability. With nearly two hundred competing political entities struggling for control, the use of antimatter weapons only exacerbated the existing tensions. The resulting Bubble War, a rapid and brutal conflict, lasted only three weeks but had catastrophic consequences. It led to the depletion of Earth's antimatter reserves, while over half of the global population perished in the wake of the war's destruction. This catastrophic loss prompted humanity's exodus into space, symbolized by the launch of the **Ching Shih**, a desperate attempt to escape the planet's impending collapse. This mass migration to the Diaspora was more than just an evacuation; it was a profound acknowledgment that humanity's violent history had brought Earth to the brink of ruin. The realization that their destructive tendencies had contributed to the near-collapse of their civilization catalyzed this moment of reflection and action.

Although the escape to the Diaspora offered hope for humanity's survival, it did not completely erase the fear of antimatter weapons and their potential resurgence. The Union, the new governing body formed in the aftermath of the Diaspora, established strict rules prohibiting the use of antimatter weapons, believing that their society had learned from the violent mistakes of the past. These prohibitions were enforced with unwavering determination, as the Union sought to differentiate itself from the destructive Earth societies that had nearly obliterated humanity. However, despite their efforts to avoid repeating the past, the reality remained that the Union was not entirely immune to the same patterns of conflict. While the Union might have banned antimatter weapons, tensions continued to exist between the colonies, and the temptation of such powerful weapons could still be a looming threat. The fear of their misuse cast a long shadow over the fragile peace that existed among the various colonies. The stringent laws against antimatter use served as a constant reminder of the devastating potential of this technology and the high stakes involved in maintaining peace. Should these rules ever be broken, the consequences would be dire, and the remnants of humanity's violent history would resurface with devastating

effects.

