

Chapter 17

Chapter 17 delves deeply into the dark legacy of Alan Manikova and his controversial experiments in creating "multiples," which are cloned versions of individuals designed for dangerous tasks. At first glance, the idea of producing multiples seemed promising, offering the potential to reduce human casualties by sending replicas into hazardous environments. However, as history unfolded, the flaws in the technology became undeniable. Early bio-printers, which were initially developed to replicate human forms, failed to duplicate the full range of human consciousness, leading to the creation of simplistic, unaware clones. These early attempts were far from successful, and tragically, many families seeking to revive their loved ones encountered horrific outcomes when the replicas lacked the emotional depth and behavioral complexity of the originals. These errors in replication resulted in severe emotional pain for those who had hoped to bring back deceased relatives.

Manikova, born into a powerful political family, was a highly intelligent but deeply troubled individual. After the suspicious deaths of his parents, he inherited a vast fortune and used it to launch Universal Eternity, Inc., a company focused on advancing human cloning technology. His work reached an astonishing milestone when he succeeded in replicating human minds, allowing him to duplicate not only human bodies but also human consciousness. After achieving this breakthrough, Manikova abruptly dissolved his company and left Earth for Gault, an off-world colony. This colony, known for its isolated and self-sustaining nature, had attracted the wealthy elite looking to escape government taxation. It was in this secluded environment that Manikova began to use his new cloning technology for self-replication, which sparked a series of events that would ultimately lead to catastrophe.

Upon arriving in Gault, Manikova began replicating himself at an alarming rate, consolidating more and more power as he created an army of identical copies. The

people of Gault soon began noticing the sudden disappearances of individuals, raising suspicions about Manikova's actions. As he continued to amass power and resources, resistance from local clans grew, but Manikova's clones, equipped with advanced technology, crushed any opposition with ruthless efficiency. His reign of terror was built on the control of both his clones and the society itself. With each new version of himself, he increased his dominance, leading to violent clashes between his forces and the locals. These events set the stage for an explosive confrontation that would ultimately spiral out of control, as Manikova's unrelenting pursuit of power drew more enemies.

The Union government, upon learning of the situation, saw Manikova as a growing threat and attempted to intervene. Their efforts, however, ended in disaster when their military vessel, Eden's Justice, was destroyed by missiles launched from Gault. This military failure escalated the conflict, and as tensions mounted, a neighboring colony, Farhome, decided to take matters into their own hands. Farhome launched "The Bullet," a devastating relativistic projectile that struck Gault with such force that it destroyed the entire colony. This catastrophic event marked the end of Manikova's reign and brought the curtain down on his ambitious, yet ultimately destructive, use of cloning technology.

The aftermath of Gault's destruction had far-reaching consequences. Manikova's attempt to achieve immortality through the replication of himself and others left a legacy of destruction and fear. His actions led to a widespread rejection of cloning technology, as society saw the potential dangers of manipulating life in such a profound way. Manikova's experiment, which once seemed to hold the promise of overcoming death, instead proved to be a dangerous and reckless venture. The fall of Gault served as a powerful reminder that the pursuit of immortality, when divorced from ethical considerations, can lead to catastrophic consequences. Manikova's legacy, marked by his reckless ambitions, solidified his place in history as the embodiment of the dangers of unchecked scientific experimentation and the human desire to control life and death.