Peter Craddock – synopsis of 'Arpia, Flight of Dawn' (170.000 words)

Can the face of the universe be changed by the actions of a few?

PARMIL (POV), a twenty-six-year-old orphan raised by her late godfather, graduates from the prestigious Prospera School of Space. The galaxy is hers to conquer as she leaves planet Spiciam and the Rablaor Kan star system for the very first time. She and her crew soon realise the galaxy is full of dangers, piracy most notably. After deciding to fight back, she discovers Arpia, an obscure group that has decided to protect traders and civilians through combat, and whose leaders know secrets her godfather never shared with her. Intrigued, she joins them.

As she becomes part of Arpia and feels a growing unease about her chosen career as ship captain, she becomes aware of the many other vices of the galaxy (corrupt governments, slave and drug trades) and becomes a low-key envoy for Arpia, when she is not required to wipe out pirate fleets, transport goods or test hyper-space routes. However, she is not alone in curing the galaxy.

FEZZAN (POV), a young and promising recruit rapidly promoted to the rank of Arpian Commander, becomes an effective weapon against slavery and the drug market: he will stop at nothing to bring justice. **BIRGO** (POV) is appointed Arpian Commander as she grows to become a masterful diplomat and universally renowned warrior, loved by many and especially her recruiter. Yet as her power grows, so does her desire to use that power for herself.

Parmil discovers her godfather was part of the same association, and spent his spare time investigating on her parents' death. But she meets young WADINA, an orphan, and their fondness for each other leads to Parmil becoming her guardian and deciding to leave Arpia. Parmil's urge to avenge her godfather is gone, and with it all her questions regarding her parents.

Before her desire to settle down can come to fruition, the leader of Arpia is targeted by an assassination attempt. He survives, and appoints Parmil and Fezzan as investigators. They discover the spy network of the Yaofskei religious order, their involvement with the power behind a major government and the jealousy that runs in the veins of a highly regarded Arpian Commander. Parmil also stumbles upon the truth about her parents, who were dissidents tortured and murdered by the

Service, the power behind the aforementioned government, and about her godfather's death, for which the Yaofskei are responsible. Parmil avenges her godfather out of self-defence, and decides to let the past rest in peace.

After resigning from Arpia and enjoying a peaceful life with Wadina for a few months, Parmil is called back in as an emergency approaches. She establishes a first contact with an alien life form, the Hogun, near a newly discovered planet full of intelligent life while both Birgo and Fezzan, along with many other Arpian fighters, throw off the assault of the Service fleet and succeed in capturing its leader, Major RASON, after destroying her entire spatial defence. Fezzan goes on to take part in the invasion of the pirate space base, dealing a fatal blow to organised space crime, though Parmil's best friend dies in the operation.

After the Rason trial and the dismantling of the Service, Arpia is under the impression that the Hogun aliens are dangerous and that communication is useless, which leads to a fierce war between the apparent invaders come from nowhere and the remaining forces of Arpia, aided by a new technological breakthrough enabled by the work of Wadina's late mother. Having destroyed the great Hogun battleship, Birgo becomes Arpia's hero, and her lust for power recedes.

A few months of calm follow, but the Service resurfaces after the return of a former power-hungry Head of Intelligence. The major powers unite behind Arpia's lead, and end the Service's chapter of history for good. Fezzan falls into a coma, while Birgo and Arpia are celebrated throughout the galaxy, and Parmil settles down into the calm life she has dreamt of since meeting Wadina.