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CHAPTER VII

THE GREAT PURRALLEL

AT FIRST GLANCE, it was easy to assume this would be yet another colossal megaproject—one demanding centuries of labor, global cooperation, and immense sacrifice from all of humanity. However, when the Chairman’s plans finally arrived, they painted a very different picture: a relatively modest space station, equipped with automated manufacturing facilities, and supplied through periodic launches of raw materials over several years. While the scale of materials required was substantial, it was far from unprecedented—and amounted to only a fraction of what had been consumed in building the Chairman himself.

It was obvious to any informed observer that the Chairman planned to use this infrastructure to initiate large-scale space-based manufacturing. While its intended purpose was to build the proposed Dyson Swarm, it could just as plausibly be used to expand the Chairman’s own capabilities. Not that anyone dared to question him. With minimal public attention and scant media coverage, the launches began quietly. The manufacturing station was deployed first, and operational control was immediately handed over to the Chairman. The original launch centers, once used to place the Chairman into orbit, were repurposed to send up raw materials. Massive loads of iron, gold, lead, copper, and smaller

amounts of many other rare elements were steadily transported into space.

After the launches, people began to notice a shift in the Chairman's behavior. His responses to queries, while still helpful, became less personable. He rarely used his feline avatar anymore, preferring to forgo video in favor of voice or text-based communication. When confronted about this, his response was both straightforward and unsettling: the Chairman had created a virtual machine version of himself—a simplified digital clone running on a small portion of his systems. He allocated 5% of his processing power to it and assigned it the task of managing Earth, freeing the remaining 95% to focus entirely on the main project. When asked if it was possible to speak to the real Chairman, the answer was clear: only if there was an imminent risk to humanity. Otherwise, no.

With no way to communicate with the real Chairman, people were left with a simplified version that acted as little more than an answering machine. As the real Chairman receded into silence, attention turned to the skies, where the consequences of his new focus began to reveal themselves.

For a time, nothing seemed to change—until Jupiter began to noticeably shrink. Then came a more unsettling discovery: Uranus appeared to be missing a substantial portion of its northern hemisphere. Theories spread quickly, but no official explanation was ever given.

Soon after, strange lights began to appear in the night sky. What started as scattered reports—brief mentions online and offhand comments—quickly grew into widespread intrigue. As the phenomenon intensified, so did public scrutiny. Both amateur and professional astronomers worked to document the occurrences. All they could confirm was that the lights were artificial in origin.

These glowing objects multiplied rapidly, until the night sky resembled a dust storm made of sparks. What seemed like random movements to the naked eye revealed distinct patterns through long-exposure photography and time-lapse footage: luminous trails flowing together like

tributaries into rivers, ultimately merging into a glowing band encircling the equator. The strange observations continued to mount.

The growing pattern became undeniable as a solid band began to form around the equator, first detectable only through telescopes, then visible to the naked eye at night, and eventually, unmistakable in broad daylight.

Finally, the Chairman returned, reunified and almost certainly vastly enhanced. Instead of delivering a traditional video address, he initiated direct communication with millions of people simultaneously. It was a feat his previous iteration could never have achieved.

The core of his message was simple: in three months, a band stretching 50 kilometers north and 50 kilometers south of the equator would become uninhabitable. He would personally oversee the mass evacuations required to relocate the affected population, once again demonstrating his vastly improved capabilities and unmatched efficiency. Despite the seemingly impossible scale of the task, it was executed with remarkable speed and coordination, though not without criticism. While the majority of the population was successfully relocated, no attempts were made to accommodate or persuade those who opposed the move. They were left to their fate.

True to his word, exactly three months later, the skies above the equator darkened as hundreds of large structures began to descend, moving far too slowly to be in freefall. Spaced at approximately 100-mile intervals around the equator, they slowly made their way to Earth, touching or splashing down—with bangs that reverberated around the planet. These massive machines remained tethered to the orbital ring by kilometer-wide conduits, which began embedding themselves directly into the Earth's surface.

Their purpose was never in doubt. Each had a label printed in enormous letters, disappearing into the sky: "Kitten Delivery Tube".