

LIBRARIAN CHYKA TALKS MASHIVA

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Part Four Changing Fortunes

So, you still want to know more about Mashiva? Okay. Where did we leave off last time? Ah! Right! It's the year 4304, and tensions on the Maria Prefecture frontiers are at a height!

Well, at least they were at a height until, in a completely unexpected turn of events, the Mitanni decided that, perhaps, joining the growing Fey'li Empire was a better idea than trying to compete against it for the sake of... um... tradition? Honestly, I still have no idea what all the rivalry was about. Not that it's ever really gone away. It's just different now.

With the conversion of Mitani and its environs, along with a considerable expanse of lightly inhabited space around it, into the new Mitanni Drift Prefecture, much of the justification for the secret Macharri naval base vanished virtually overnight. Any major surface naval base is an expensive thing to run. An underground naval base of similar proportions was a huge budget breaker.

In 4306, operations at Macharri were curtailed. Only the shipyard and secured command facilities were kept fully active, while the rest of the base was shut down and mothballed with an eye to potential future reactivation. This resulted in a major exodus of military personnel, particularly from New South City and South Spaceport, as they followed their units and operations to other surface naval facilities all over Maria.

Though the military exodus resulted in a large volume of housing becoming available for civilians, there was a surprising lack of immediate interest. While Mashiva was a major urban center at this point, it lacked the volume of recreational amenities one would typically expect or a city its size. In particular, the lack of tourist friendly, economy driving attractions served to severely hamper economic opportunities for newcomers to the city.

In 4309, the Prefectural Government authorized a number of new projects in order to rectify the state of stagnation. Foremost among these were the expansion of the Ey'lon University campus to the east of the New City, a series of new rapid transit rail and subway projects to reroute trains from newly established park land to the north of the New City, and the establishment of a new urban resort district between Ey'lon University and the bluffs to the east.

Of these projects, the Resort District was the most immediately visible. This was to become a vast expanse of retail, hospitality, and recreational space, built with an eye to tourists in mind. Within two years of the authorization, the first hotels began to rise among the growing road grid. With the hotels came the first restaurants, the first interstellar emporiums, and, of course, the first casinos.

What? You've never heard of Mashiva being a major gambling destination? Really? Sheesh! You should get out more. Specifically, you should get out to the Resort District and stimulate the economy a bit. Who cares that the odds aren't even remotely in your favor? It'll be fun!

Okay. Let's be honest here for a moment. You've never heard of Mashiva being a major gambling destination because we don't do the kind of 'pure odds' games that let you just sit there and push a button or pull a lever and watch your money vanish in the vain hopes of winning. Some level of personal skill, or dexterity as the case may be, is required. If you can't affect the odds of winning in some way, then no dice.

All that makes the casinos a bit less popular than those found elsewhere in the Empire. On the other hand, they're generally regarded as being a lot more fun. Especially now, with all the kinky xenoexperience games you can play, if you dare. And I'm sure you do. Do you?

Anyhow, the Resort District wasn't going to be successful without easy access. As the other districts had developed, it was rather uncommon for people to live very far from where they worked. The Resort District wasn't going to have much in the way of residential space. Both workers and tourists were going to have to get in and out, generating lots of traffic. The old subway systems had been designed to get people around their own districts, and accommodate a relatively low volume of cross-district travel. Now, a new system was going to be needed to move lots of people around, all day, every day.

The modern subway system was begun right along with the first construction in the Resort District. Work would progress rapidly in the northern parts of the city. While nearly the entire new system would use new tunnels, the old tunnels

were retained for alternative uses, such as postal freight. In the south parts of the city, work would be far more difficult. Existing subway tunnels had been built into the fabric of Macharri. No one riding the trains would ever know they were traveling through the middle of a major military base. Now, however, the new tunnels were going to have to cut through existing constructions.

In 4312, the decision to shut down the Macharri subterranean shipyard was made as the new spaceport crossing subway tunnels approached the canyon-like cavern containing the main shipyard production line. The ending of work was so abrupt that everything was left in place with the assumption being that workers would come back to scrap and salvage what was left behind once the new construction moved past the area. That would never happen, and the remains of the shipyard can still be seen from trains crossing over the open bridges that cross the cavern beneath Anwae Arena.

Surely you've seen the ship-lift that used to bring complete ships up into the hangar that got converted into the Arena? They built the subway bridges right through the middle of it. Neat, huh?

Anyhow, problems were far more serious to the east, in the midst of Macharri itself. If you've ever wondered why the tunnels go up and down and make some odd turns, it's because they had to be built in such a way as to avoid forcing the demolition of critical infrastructure that the military wanted to preserve in the even of future needs. While the rest of the new subway was completed by 4358, that zone wouldn't fully open until 4404. In the meantime, connections were made to the old subway tunnels there, so some level of service could be maintained throughout the process.

While the Resort District and subways definitely got the economy going, the new parks were what the locals seemed to appreciate the most. With multiple railway lines removed from the valley north of the city, the area became known as the Northway Park. It's mostly just wilderness now, woods and grassy plains, streams and ponds, and then the river. There's a few villages on the slope up to the mountains to the north of the river, but otherwise there's only rest stops on the walking, hiking, and riding trails where you find food, water, and facilities. A few even have cabins you can reserve for overnight stays.

The other major new park feature is the rocky precipice called Kiam Rock, at the east end of the Ey'lon University campus. It was always a lure to hikers and climbers, and it, along with its immediate environment, were designated as Natural Monument to ensure it's permanent preservation for the enjoyment of all. Given its accessibility from the Resort District, it's also the first, and

sometimes only, slice of nature that visitors from afar experience during their time in Mashiva.

The Resort District as we see it today was pretty much finished by 4374. Further expansion of the city into the Commercial District, comprising the zones south of Ey'lon University and the Resort District, up to and including the Secondary Spaceport, would be completed in 4397. At that point, the modern city of Mashiva would be more or less complete. That's not to say that there wouldn't be a need for more urban development in the area, which brings me to the city of Runai. But that, I think, is a story for another day.