

*The characters Jeffrey Andrews, Na'Krista Nahala Keth, Kamram Keth, Na'Kesta Keth, Bosteg Haas, Kestam Ramm, Treman Baze, Merret Treet, Tascal Hone, along with the characters Torvald and Victoria Svensen are the property of Kellan Meig'h and may not be used without express written permission.*

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## “Scribe”

by Kellan Meig'h

### Chapter Two

#### “Unexpected Visitor”

Field Commander Bosteg Haas stood in front of his troops, staring at them when the body count was short one soldier upon return to Outpost Roseville. The Commander, a buff color, looked at the middle-gray Elazi standing at the head of the line, knowing the Sub-Commander could probably feel his steely gaze. His troops, all as dirty as the ground, armor scuffed up in places and looking worn out, were all trying to show a brave face, even the one infantry soldier that was injured, being held up by the two soldiers on either side of him.

“Sub-Commander Kestam Ramm, Report! Where is Technician Keth?” he asked in a strained voice.

The squad leader, using military precision, walked up to the ranking Elazi and held out his hands, holding a clear bag containing the remains of a video recording device.

“What is this?” Commander Haas asked carefully.

Kestam swallowed hard, steeling himself. “This was all we found of Technician Keth.”

“I cannot accept this outcome.” the Field Commander put forth. “We do not leave our dead behind. I assume that you suspect the video technician was killed in that engagement?”

“This equipment was all we found that belonged to Technician Keth.” Sub-Commander Ramn retorted. “We did not find a body.” He momentarily looked up at the sky when the rain began to fall on him. “Sir, we can go back and look for the body again, if that pleases you.”

“That would please me greatly.” the Field Commander stated. “If we do not find a resolution, I will have to answer to Technician Keth's father. I am sure this will sadden him and he will want to speak with every soldier that was on that patrol, at length. At a very high volume, too.”

“We will find a resolution for you, Field Commander.” the troop leader stated firmly.

“Be careful and alert.” The Field Commander saluted to signify the end of the conversation, turned on his heel smartly and strode off toward his office, which was located in an abandoned Plymouth-Desoto dealership just off of the Douglas Avenue exit on Interstate 80.

Sub-Commander Ramm finally remembered to breathe once his commander was out of earshot. He turned, looked at his troops and began to give orders.

“Get our injured to the medical bay and you, Treman Baze, go requisition a scout craft.”

“Sir, the rain. You know we're grounded until it stops.” Trooper Baze shot back.

“Then requisition a land vehicle, a large one. An all wheel drive SUV-thing if you can.”

“Yes Sir!” trooper Baze stated to his superior. “Merret Treet, Tascal Hone, you're with me.” he directed, motioning for them to head to an office where they could check out a vehicle.

Merret, the smoke-black Elazi, came up beside his buff-colored squadron partner while they jogged toward their destination. “Treman, are you sure we didn't overlook the body?”

“I'm positive.” Trooper Baze replied. “We either need to find Technician Keth or the body. I do not want to talk to Ambassador Kamram Keth. He will no doubt be bent for blood when he hears of this unfortunate turn of events.”

“No doubt.” trooper Treet agreed.

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Field Commander Haas sat down at his desk and pondered the note handed to him on his way in. It was just a few words in Elazian, a message to contact Ambassador Keth at his earliest convenience. The tip-off that it was important was the 'earliest convenience' part. Touching the screen, he woke his computer and tapped the comm link app icon.

“Who do you wish to contact?” the system asked in a female voice.

“Ambassador Keth aboard *The Flagship Korrallid*.” Bosteg replied.

“Contacting Ambassador Keth.”

He sat there, fidgeting some, feeling very uncomfortable at the moment. The ambassador had no doubt read the field report from earlier today.

“Commander Haas,” a voice came through the speakers as the face gained resolution on the screen. “I will make this short. I have read the report concerning my daughter. I will be there in two full planetary rotations to lead an expedition myself.”

Bosteg had a hard time swallowing. “Yes, Honored Ambassador. I will have your living suite and an expedition party ready for you when you arrive.”

There was a momentary lag due to the distance the signal was traveling. “Commander, what are your feelings?” the buff-colored male on the screen asked.

“Ambassador, I have sent a detail to look for your daughter.” he replied. “Kam, if she's there in any form, they will find her.”

“Bost, be honest with me; did you see any of the helmet camera feeds?”

“I did, Kam. It was not pretty.”

“I feared that. Tell me, this planet, I have been briefed that it rains on a regular basis?”

“It does, Kam.”

“Our flight craft will be grounded in the rain. Do we have adequate ground based transportation?”

“Yes, Kam. What I really fear is the fact that it will snow where the engagement happened.”

“Snow?”

“Yes, Kam. You remember when we were young, we went to the Southern Pole and played in the snow?”

“I do, Bost. That much snow?”

“Yes, we had ninety catres of snow last year, right where I sent our detail.”

“Ninety? That is ten catres more than the height of two beings!”

“Yes, ninety.”

“Will they be safe?”

“I think so.” Commander Haas smiled slightly. “I have sent my best troops who are familiar with the weather. They will know to put these chain-things on the vehicle wheels if it snows too much.”

“I will be there soon. In the meantime, do what you can to find her.” The screen slowly went black as the connection was cut. At least Ambassador Keth didn't seem like he was after blood.

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Kamram sat back in his chair and took a deep breath before he looked over at Na'Kesta Keth, his mate. She was still looking a hole through him, her anger barely veiled.

“Kam, if they find Na'Krista, she is going home with me, whether she is living or dead. She is not a warrior, despite what you think.” the pale whitish-gray female stated very firmly.

“Kess, my love, her service to the Elazian Trans-Atmospheric Forces . . .” His thoughts were cut short by Na'Kesta's stare, right before she blurted out her feelings.

“You can take the remainder of her service to our blasted Trans-Atmospheric Forces and . . . and . . . Oooh! I should have made her become an advisor or let her go on to be in video-

reporting.” It was clear to all that the female parent was upset.

Kam pursed his lips, giving thought to the situation. He spoke up before Kess could start her tirade in earnest.

“Kess, dearest, If she still lives, I will pull some strings to get Krista into the Diplomatic Corps.”

“You would?”

“If it will keep our child safe, I will.”

Na'Kesta turned to look out the window while she thought this over. Her husband's house, House Tal Hassanai, was a warrior clan with deep ties to the military. Her birth house, House Tal Rimestai, were politicians. It was preferable that the child followed in her father's path, but to keep Na'Krista safe? Would it be objected to in the Hassanai House Senate?

“Kam?”

“What is it, my mate?” the paternal leader of Sub-House Keth asked, walking up behind his wife and wrapping his arms around her.

“Will this cause trouble in the Senate?”

“You know as well as I, that my brother and I can influence votes. Not many, but enough. Our lineage sits on all of the important boards. No one will openly object.”

Now it was Kamram's turn to look at the stars, colored brightly by the distortion inside of rift space, trying to convince himself that it would work. He was Ambassador Prime of House Tal Hassanai, so who would dare object openly? Maybe in private, a personal objection, but not openly.

He just hoped his old friend Bosteg Haas of House Tal Hassanai, the Commander he personally put in charge of the Northern Division, would find his daughter alive and well. Both for Na'Kesta's sake as well as his own.

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Jeff stood there for a moment, staring at the fallen female, somewhat shocked by this sudden turn of events. Once his brain dropped back into gear, he knew he had to do something for this female alien, since it appeared that she was bleeding from the right side of her torso. He kicked her weapon away from her reach and knelt down beside her, deciding on what to do.

Jeff knew he could work on her right where she lay but it would make things better if he had her on a hard surface under better lighting, like his dining room table. He went to the hall closet, found that waterproof tablecloth and quickly spread it onto the table top once the two extra leaves to the table had been inserted. He then picked up the Elazi and carried her over to the impromptu examining table.

He noted that although she didn't look all that bulky in her armor, she did weigh more than he had expected. Glad that he had asked about their armor suits when he had his chance meeting with Rommer, Jeff proceeded to remove the suit, following a sequence told to him by Tammatt and the doctor.

Former Doctor Andrews began to systematically remove her armored suit, first releasing the sleeve sections and removing them. The ring that would adapt a bubble helmet to her suit was next, followed by her upper torso sections. Jeff marveled at the various latches that could be worked even with gloves on. He then removed the three segments that covered her lower torso. When the last one was removed, a bullet, probably of 5.56 NATO caliber, fell from her suit.

Knowing it was a bullet wound, Jeff inspected her carefully. In the process, he noted that the female Elazi was not that far off physically from a human. What he did note was the fact that she was bra-less, wearing only a mesh bodysuit like the soldier that he had examined earlier. A closer examination of that mesh proved that it was a cooling suit of some kind, since it felt cool to the touch.

During his search of her upper body for the damage, he noticed a small puddle forming near her right side at her waist. Following that lead he found the wound channel, a deep gouge in her side and a quick check of her suit pieces showed the shiny spot where the round had forced its way between the tempered alloy segments. The seal at that joint had also been compromised by the projectile.

Not knowing what else to do, he ran upstairs and retrieved his beard trimmer. Jeff hadn't worn a beard in ages but the trimmer would do its duty just fine for this purpose. Returning with the implement, the charger and an extension cord, he began to trim the fur around her injury. The noise of the trimmer combined with the touching of her body near her wound with the electric razor brought her around.

*"Wha . . . Where am I?"* she asked in Elazian as she tried to sit up. Jeff had to really put his body weight into it to get her to lay back down.

"Sorry, I don't speak your language." he replied, holding her down until she got the idea to stay put. "Do you speak English? I thought I heard you speak to me in English earlier?" he asked.

"Excuse me for . . . for my rudeness. Where am I?" she asked again in decent English. Jeff could see the pain in her eyes, causing them to look slightly glazed to him.

"You're in my home." he replied. "I'm Jeff Andrews and you are lucky that I'm a former medic, since you will obviously need my assistance."

"My side," she stated as she grimaced, reaching for her injured body. Jeff barely stopped her from getting her hand into the wound, catching her wrist in his hands. Once again, he was surprised by her strength, forcing him to use both hands to restrain her. He slowly put her hand on the table above her head, holding it for a moment so she would get the idea to keep her hand still.

"Keep your hand above your head, please." he suggested in a level tone. "Allow me to treat your injury without getting your germ-laden fingers into it."

“Am I a prisoner?” she asked.

“Hardly.” Jeff replied while he finished clearing the area around her wound. “Right now, you're my patient and I'm your doctor. Be still while I get my field kit.”

“Yes, Doctor.”

“Call me Jeff, please.”

“If . . . if you wish,” she responded, grimacing again.

The former soldier retrieved his medical field kit from the hall closet and began to remove the items he needed. First line of action was to finish trimming her fur. Some sterile saline solution was used to flush the wound, causing the Elazi to grit her teeth. Moments later, she almost passed out when he used some Betadine solution to disinfect the wound channel.

“Sorry, I didn't think it would hurt you like that.” he offered up while he dried the channel. Jeff had decided to use some medical grade instant adhesive to glue the wound closed, since it was only about five millimeters wide and about thirty millimeters long. Using small amount of the adhesive, he carefully pulled the wound back together. He finished by putting a series of Steri-strips across the wound and a gauze covering over that.

“There, I think I have it fixed and I do apologize if I have some of your fur stuck to the tape.” the medic offered up. “Now, I want you to stay right there for a bit to allow that wound to begin to heal.” Jeff went to the couch, grabbed a throw pillow and brought it over to his patient. “If you want, I'll take your helmet off of your head so you will be more comfortable.”

“Please?” she replied, taking the pillow from her doctor.

Jeff was curious now. “If I might ask, what is your name?” he asked while he removed the helmet, once he had found the catch for the chin strap. Once her helmet was off, exposing her dark brown, shoulder length hair that complimented her buff coloration and her tiger-shaped ears, he put the pillow under her head for her.

Once the female made herself comfy, she responded to his question concerning her name. “My name is Na'Krista Keth. I am a Trooper, Rank Seven video technician for the Elazian Trans-Atmospheric Forces.”

“That's a mouth-full. May I call you Krista?”

“That would be acceptable.” She thought for a moment before she continued. “I need to get back to Outpost Roseville. I will be missed.”

“You need to stay right where you are, at least for a few hours. That injury is in a bad place for you to just up and take off right now.” Jeff countered.

“I should be on my way.” she retorted.

"No, you need rest, Krista. Now be still while I put this pack back together." Jeff then busied himself with repacking his very thorough field medical kit.

Krista tried to get up from the temporary exam table when her benefactor was busy putting his medical kit back together, only to have the room spin violently on her, making her nauseous. Jeff heard the sounds behind him and turned around just in time to see his patient lean her head over the edge of the table and throw up the meager contents of her stomach.

"I thought I told you to stay still!" he admonished his charge, setting his medical kit back on the floor to take care of his patient further.

"I . . . I needed to get up and prepare myself to be moved to Outpost Roseville. I must be in worse condition than I initially thought."

"Krista, you aren't going anywhere for a while. I suspect you've lost a lot of blood by the looks of it."

"You may administer 'O' Positive blood or universal plasma. Those will be compatible with my system."

Jeff frowned. "Sorry, I'm just a simple country doctor, not a full-service emergency room." He brought a blanket over to her and covered her with it. While he was doing that, the view out of any of the windows showed big snowflakes that were falling rapidly. "I apologize if the table is hard but your injury needs a bit of immobility to begin healing. With this snow falling like it is, we will be very lucky if we're not snowed in for a while."

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Several hours had passed so Jeff decided that his patient deserved a softer bed to lay upon. He went over to her to help her up, only to find her asleep. He hated to wake Krista but she needed better rest than she was getting at the moment.

"Krista? Krista, are you awake?" he asked, gently nudging her shoulder.

"Uunngh," she responded, turning her head to face her doctor. "I am not comfortable on this table." she suggested.

"I'll help you to a bed in the downstairs bedroom," Jeff told her, taking the blanket off of her so he could assist her with standing up. "Legs off the table first, then you put your arms around my neck while I help you up."

Krista followed his directions, allowing him to assist her to her feet. Even with his help, the injury site hurt greatly. They stopped momentarily once she was standing, literally nose to nose. Na'Krista, feeling a bit embarrassed, turned her head away from Jeff. When the room stopped spinning, she held onto his neck with one arm while he guided her to the spare bedroom but he stopped short of the bed.

“We need to take off the rest of your armor so you can be comfortable in the bed.” Jeff offered up.

“Do you know how to remove my suit?” she asked, then she rolled her eyes as the realization sank in. “I think you already know how, since I am no longer wearing the upper part of it.”

Jeff removed her boots, then he disengaged the leg sections from the hip section. She held up her legs, one at a time, allowing him to slip the pieces off of her. She then released the hip section and allowed her benefactor to remove it, helping by guiding her tail from the sheath that surrounded it. That's when Jeff discovered that she had a thong panty on under her mesh undersuit, a black one that was sheer, barely disguising her womanhood. The last thing to go was her mesh suit, stretchy enough that she pulled it down from the neck opening without unzipping or opening a single fastener, allowing Jeff to help her with that job.

“Okay, in the bed with you,” he stated, helping her to lay down. He covered her with a blanket, not knowing just how much covers she would need. “Is this enough or are you still cold?” he inquired.

“This is sufficient.” she replied. “Will you stay in the room, for a while? Your company helps me to get to sleep.”

“Okay, I'll stay for a while, until you're asleep.” he replied, sitting down in the recliner in the corner. Putting the footrest up, he reclined the back just a small amount and closed his eyes for a moment, exhausted from the day's events.

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It was still daylight out when Jeff awoke from his nap. Yawning widely, he sat up and rubbed his face to wake up further. By all appearances, Krista seemed to be sleeping soundly with the covers pulled up over her head with only her face poking out from under the blanket.

Standing up, the graying male looked out the window to see the landscape covered in fresh snow and the flakes were still falling, not as heavy as they had earlier but they were still coming down, regardless. Listening to his stomach growl, he decided it might be time to grab a bite to eat.

Jeff decided that he should try to contact some of the Elazi to let them know where Krista was at the moment. Pressing the button on his Motorola Droid to wake it, he was greeted with the “No Service” warning on the screen. This was possible, since the cell tower closest to him was in the vicinity of the area where the fighting had ensued.

He slipped on his boots and jacket before he trudged out to the mailbox, where he was sure to get service from an adjacent tower. It only took a moment to see that there was no signal available so he turned to the next available communications mode in his kitchen, his Citizen's Band radio. Turning the unit on, he went to the usual agreed-upon channel and broadcast a short message.

“This is Jeff, calling Stan up the hill. You got a copy?” he called out several times, waiting a few moments between attempts. On the fourth try, he received a reply.



“This is Stan up the hill, buddy. Need something?”

“Yeah, Can you get a cellular signal up there?” he asked.

“No signal since today around noon. I was talking to my family when the signal went away.” Stan related to Jeff.

“Yeah, no signal here, either.” Jeff admitted.

“Okay, was that what you needed to know?” Stan Galli asked.

“That was it.” Jeff replied. “I’ll keep my set on channel twenty-three upper side band.”

“Ten-four, Jeff.”

“I’m clear.” the retired doctor stated, letting Stan know he was done.

Jeff knew from what he could see out of the windows, they were snowed in unless he put the Mattracks<sup>®</sup> back on his truck. That was the problem; he really didn't want to leave his patient unattended while he did that chore since it would take several hours to accomplish. Jeff did have one ace up his sleeve; Stan Galli would stop by in a few days to look in on him. Maybe with both of them together, he could get the tracks installed on his truck in a short span of time.

Jeff went around the house, turning on some lights so he could navigate without tripping over something. He took a few moments to clean up the table, tossing the table covering in a trash bag to go out. Once a tuna sandwich was prepared, he sat down on the couch and turned on the television, reducing the volume so he could listen to it quietly as to not disturb his patient.

Jeff watched the end of an inane sit-com, then he watched the afternoon news. The junior newscaster for the second half of the broadcast was in Roseville, adding color to the daily events concerning the conflict between Krista's people and the Reformed United States Army.

As usual, the young reporter was bringing up the issue with the Elazi aircraft being grounded when it was raining. Jeff was pretty sure that most people knew that fact by now. He followed that by motioning an Elazi soldier into view and introducing him.

“This is Bosteg Haas, Field Commander for the Northern Elazi forces. Commander, I understand you have a missing soldier. Would you care to elaborate?” he asked.

“Yes, I have a missing soldier. I also have a precision team headed that way to retrieve that soldier.” the buff-colored male responded.

“Can you tell us where that soldier is presumed to be?”

“I cannot.” the commander replied. “For that soldier's safety, I will not reveal their position. I cannot allow the RUSA to find my soldier first. I have heard things concerning RUSA prisoners that, well, I am saddened to hear what they have done to their prisoners.”

“So, how do you treat your prisoners?” the reporter asked, hoping to find some dirty laundry to air.

“We use purely humanitarian methods, as prescribed by your properly recognized United States Army regulations. We might be a bit lax on that, too. We allow the inmates to socialize, watch television and we make short video-recordings for their families.”

Jeff really didn't listen to the last of that report, remembering the opening days of the Chinese-American war, the one that many feared would bring nuclear holocaust. He was stationed at Fitzsimons Army Medical Hospital, located in Aurora, Colorado when the first bombardments started. The Chinese had attacked from Canada, Mexico and the Pacific Ocean, destroying major population centers all along the West Coast.

One city in particular was devastated; Monterey, California. That was the city his In-laws lived in and it was the city where his wife and daughter were, visiting her parents. They probably didn't feel a thing, since their bodies were never recovered.

It was considered to be a short war, by some standards. Six and one-half years and over one-half billion deaths. All because the Chinese felt they had a right to drill for oil off the island of Unalaska, Alaska. The town of Unalaska is gone now, the first US soil breached. There were no winners in this war, only bloodshed and grief. His wool gathering was interrupted by Na'Krista, trying to gain his attention.

“Jeff? I . . . I am still bleeding,” she stated, holding a towel to her side while she leaned against his wing-back chair. That towel was dripping blood.

Jeff made his way quickly to her side and guided her back to the table. This time he just put her up on the makeshift operating table and accessed the issue. It was clear that the adhesive had not done the trick so it was time to move on to the next level, sutures.

“Krista, this is going to hurt unless you know for a fact that I can safely administer a local pain killer.” he put forth.

“Nova . . . nova-something.” she replied.

“Novocaine? Is that it?”

“Yes, that is safe.” she agreed.

“Okay, it will take a few moments for the drug to take effect but I need to get going, since you're bleeding worse than before.”

Jeff filled a syringe with some novocaine, asked the Old Gods for some clarity and administered it in a series of injections along the injury. He waited a minute and began to suture up the wound. He could tell the medication had not taken effect yet.

“That hurts, Jeff.” she stated, gritting her teeth and making fists with her hands.

“Hang in there, Krista. The medication will take effect soon.”

“I . . . I think it has.” she commented, visibly relaxing. “I can feel something but it doesn't hurt.”

“That's good.” Jeff replied.

The retired doctor finished his stitching, making a neat line along the injury that any top surgeon would have been proud of. He cleaned the area with some sterile saline before he applied a pressure bandage to help the wound stop bleeding.

“That's it.” he offered up, taking the instruments he used and putting them on the sideboard.

“Thank you.” she returned, smiling at him. “You have obviously saved my life, Jeff. I am indebted to you for that.”

“A simple Thank You is more than sufficient, Krista.”

“You don't understand my ways, Jeff. Some day, I will find a way to repay you. It may not be in kind, but I will repay you for your kindness.”

Skipping the bed, he helped his patient over to the couch and helped to make her comfortable. Once that was done, Jeff looked out the window at the landscape beyond. It was still snowing fairly heavily so they were snowed in until something could be done about putting the tracks back on his truck. Maybe in a day or two, Krista would be better and he could take some time to get the truck ready.

What did worry him, though was the need to feed his patient. Would he have what she could consume? Only time would tell.