

*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 Three

#### “Snow Day”

Commander Ramm looked out of the passenger window of the Ford Excursion they were using for this mission, worried about the weather conditions ahead. It was raining rather hard at the moment and with the temperature dropping steadily, it would be snowing soon.

The commander gave thought to the mission at hand. That location they were headed to was up in the mountains at a higher altitude that would guarantee snow. That was not in their favor. On the other hand, the meadow was just off the pavement so that would work in their favor. The roadway itself was not steep and Trooper Treet was very good at operating one of these land vehicles in bad weather. Kestam had to have faith in his subordinates, since they would be the ones that would save his behind in a bad situation, should he get into one. His musing was interrupted by Trooper Baze in the back seat.

“Commander, I have a weather announcement. It is snowing very heavy in that city known as Penren, between Loomis and Auburn. Shall I contact Outpost Roseville for updates on our orders?”

“I think that would be wise.” Commander Ramm agreed.

While their communications tech called for instructions, the medium gray Elazi noticed that the rain was turning into snow as they drove up the freeway. He knew that they would have modified instructions now that the weather had turned. Besides, he did not like snow in any way, shape or form. As far as Kestam Ramm was concerned, the humans could keep their planet. It was pretty, he had to give it that, but it was just too cold for his likings.

“Commander, our orders have been modified.” Treman Baze put forth. “We have been instructed to hold at Outpost Auburn. Quarters have been arranged and we are to stay put until it stops snowing and Ambassador Keth arrives.”

“Ambassador Keth,” Kestam muttered, shaking his head. “Yes, we will hold at Outpost Auburn. Please acknowledge our orders.”

Tascal Hone spoke up from the back seat. “Commander, do you think Technician Keth still lives?”

“Cal, I do not know.” the commander replied, turning to look back at the medic. “All I know at this point is that it's snowing, which I do not like and her father is headed here here to join our

search, which I care less for.”

“Sir, is Ambassador Keth not pleasant to be around?”

“Cal, it's not that. He will be on edge and he will bring his Dah'Trat troopers with him. They are not pleasant at all.”

Merret Treet blurted out his thoughts. “Not the Dah'Trat! I have been assigned as secondary to them. They are not pleasant at all and they look down upon Trans-Atmospheric regulars, literally.”

“I realize that.” Kestam put forth. “It is their upbringing. They are trained as soldiers practically from birth. Their Far-North cities are a tough place to live because of the cold and wind.”

Merret nodded. “They will probably feel at home here, in that case.”

“You might be right.” TacscaI agreed. “I have been to Outpost Dah'Hazimelet as a first term soldier, before I was accepted into the Ground Forces as a medic. It was as cold as it is here. I learned to adapt to the locality from that assignment in the North. The humans have a clothing item called 'Pepper Skins' that have been very acceptable in taming the cold. I wear them between my environmental suit and my pelt. I stay warm and I don't think my mesh even activates.”

“Where can we get such clothing?” Commander Ramm asked.

“Those places called 'Sporting Goods' shops. I think there might be a place in Auburn to acquire these skins.”

“Treman, you're assigned to find us such clothing.” the commander put forth. “Search their computer web for a source.”

“Yes Sir!”

Kestam looked back out the window to see that the snow was starting to blanket the ground. A quick check of his navigation device showed the Auburn exit was some thirty miles ahead. The snow seemed to be slacking off, so maybe they would make it to Outpost Auburn without incident.

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Jeff added some wood to the fire in the fireplace, preparing for a night on the living room floor. He had helped Krista to the bathroom earlier so it was now time to bed down for the night. He knew if they stayed in the living room, they would be warm, at any rate. With the outside temperature hovering around zero, the warmth from the hearth would be welcome.

The medic had taken a moment to pull out the divan for his patient, making sure she was covered with two blankets. Krista was pleased with the bed but she was not so sure about wearing the pajamas that he had rounded up for her. A vent for her tail had been opened in the back seam of the pants but she had made it clear that the vent was not the issue. On her planet, because of

how warm it was, she usually slept in the buff. She really didn't understand the need for night clothing. Eventually, she had finally given up on arguing with her benefactor, put the pants on and went to bed on the couch.

Jeff bedded down on the self-inflating sleeping mat he had put down, snuggling into the sleeping bag that he had rolled out, hopefully to get some rest. He felt kind of funny, though, since it was a double sleeping bag, meant for two people. He had bought this one when his late wife complained of being cold when they went to Yosemite in the springtime. Now it seemed very empty. Maybe it was time to retire this bag and get a regular one.

The former soldier had taken a peek outside before he had gotten into bed, just to analyze the situation. From his best guesstimates, about three feet of snow had fallen. At least it was slacking off and maybe by tomorrow, he could get the tracks back on his old International pickup. Once that was taken care of, he could get Krista back to her people.

Jeff wondered if the Elazi would put an end to the Reformed United States Army. They were a dangerous rogue element that would be the downfall of their country. If they could come into power, what would stop them from going back after China, in a retaliatory move? He could only hope Na'Krista's people would prevail.

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Kestam Ramm stood at the windows of the improvised cafeteria, looking out at his troops, playing in the snow. Granted, they had never observed this much snow, all in one place but they would be cold once they had tired of throwing balls of snow at each other. The snow was still falling but it was slacking off. Tam wished the order to hold for Ambassador Keth had not been given but now that it had, he was bound to follow those orders.

He sipped this unusual brew, something the humans called 'Coffee', and pondered the situation. It had been very cold since the engagement where Technician Keth had been lost. This did not bode well, since she would no doubt have froze to death if she were unable to find shelter. If a protected place to stay in were found, her environmental suit would keep her somewhat warm, since its environmental package was rated to an earth temperature of twenty degrees below freezing.

Kestam thought about this at length. What would shelter amount to on this planet? Were there caves that she could seek shelter in? Was Na'Krista injured, unable to find a place to stay warm? These thoughts bothered him, since he would have to deal with her father if they found a lifeless body. That was something he did not look forward to. Hopefully, she was alive and safe, sheltered in a safe place.

Watching the soldiers playing in the snow, he hoped the troops did not make themselves sick from the cold. There was nothing worse than having to deal with subordinates that could not function efficiently while not at full capacity.

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It was just starting to get light outside and Jeff looked at his watch, just to get a sense of what

time it was. Noting that it was just past seven in the morning, he knew he should have gotten up earlier to put some additional wood on the fire. That was just about the time that a warm, furry arm went across his chest.

Looking carefully to his left, he observed his charge, snuggling into her pillow. It was obvious that Krista was mostly asleep and it was clear that she was naked, since he could feel nothing but warm fur against his left arm. Jeff pondered what to do; wake her up or let her sleep? Well, sleep was best, since it would speed her recovery but her proximity and nakedness made him feel very uncomfortable. Making a decision, he touched her arm gently to rouse her.

“Mmmm . . .” was her reply, snuggling closer to him in the process.

“Krista?” Jeff said softly, hoping she might be partially awake.

“I’m cold.” she replied sleepily. The femme Elazi snuggled just that much closer to her benefactor, then her eyes shot open. “Oh . . . Um, have I done something improper?” she asked as she backed away from him, as far as the double sleeping bag would allow. She did take a moment to pull the top of the bag over her exposed shoulder to keep it warm.

“No, what you have done is not improper if you’re cold.” he replied, rolling over to face her. “I would have preferred that you had kept your pajamas on, though.”

“Would you please tell me, why is my being naked a problem?”

Jeff looked at her, eyes full of innocence. “Well, I was married to a very wonderful woman but I lost her in the America-China war. My wife and our daughter were killed when Monterey, California was bombed. I’m uncomfortable with your naked closeness because I haven’t been with a woman in some eight years.”

“Oh . . .” Krista looked down at her pillow, then back at Jeff. “If I put my pajamas back on, would that be better?”

“That would.” he agreed. “While you do that, I’ll put some wood on the fire. That way, the house will warm up.”

Krista began to dress while Jeff put some fuel on the fire. Once that was done, he turned the mat so it was parallel with the fireplace. Putting her on the side towards the fire, he got in behind her, zipped up the sleeping bag and allowed the female Elazi to snuggle up against him. He just hoped that he could remain a gentleman with her, since her proximity and pheromones had somewhat of an effect on him.

“I am warmer now,” Krista commented.

“Good, then. If you can, get some more sleep. It will be good for you.”

“I will try.” she replied. “Your presence makes it easier for me to fall asleep.”

“Sleep now.” he reminded her.

Krista slipped off to sleep, leaving her benefactor awake with his mind unable to quiet itself. Jeff knew that his charge needed her rest so she could recover properly. With the amount of blood loss that she suffered, the female Elazi might need a few days to get back up to speed. That left the final thing that kept bouncing around the former USMC doctor's head.

Jeff knew in his mind that he was becoming attached to her. Shaking his head, he wondered what he was thinking. She was from another planet and when her job here was done, Krista would be leaving. When she left, he knew she would never return and that would be the end of their relationship. Jeff knew he had to get these wild thoughts out of his mind before they drove him crazy. Besides, there was probably some Elazi male that had an eye for her. In his personal opinion, she was a very beautiful Elazi female.

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The insistent beeping woke Kam, who rubbed his face to wake up further. Staring at the secondary time display on his night stand, he had to mentally convert the Earth Pacific Standard Time displayed to the words in spoken English.

"What time is it?" his wife asked, rolling over toward her husband, who was currently facing the clocks.

"I believe it is Six A.M., my mate." He yawned widely, then continued. "I am told this is an appropriate time to begin the day. I still don't quite understand the A.M. and P.M. designations, however. I do not grasp the concept. Their military time makes more sense to me."

Kess snuggled up against her mate before she spoke up. "A.M. is an abbreviation for *Ante Meridiem*, which in Latin means '*before noon*'. P.M. is the abbreviation for *Post Merideim*, which is Latin for '*post noon*'."

"Latin? Is that not a dead Earth language?" Kam asked.

"It is." the female replied. "It is not spoken as a common language by any of their tribes but it is still used in their scientific and medical professions."

"I also do not care for adapting to Earth time. We could have gotten by just fine without this interruption in our sleep cycles." Ambassador Keth put forth, right before he yawned widely again.

*The Flagship Korrallid* had been put on Earth time one week prior to arrival for those who were going down to the planet, just so they would be 'in sync' with the inhabitants. This was standard operating procedures for the Elazi fleet. It was also difficult for some, since Elazia had a planetary rotational speed of almost thirty-one Earth hours per rotation and a yearly revolution of their sun of four hundred and eighty seven Earth days.

Kess kissed her *One Love* on the cheek, then offered her view. "You would be asleep in the daytime too often, my dearest if we did not condition our bodies to their time conventions. We should get up, eat our first meal, then go get some exercise to stay limber."

"Kess, as always, you are right." Kam agreed.

The two Elazi got out of bed and in a personal ritual, took turns in brushing out each others pelts. This was something they had done for one another since they had become a marital unit. It was a way, in their minds, to keep their union alive by close, very personal caressing of each other. Finishing that task, they dressed and headed for the communal eating hall for some morning sustenance.

“This food is strange.” Kam offered up as they sat down with their trays to eat.

“I think it smells delicious.” Kess retorted.

The male Elazi looked at his *One Love* and shrugged his shoulders. “If you say so. The meat strips appear to be totally over-cooked to me.”

“That is called 'Bacon', Kam. It is the meat from a certain part of an animal called a hog. It has been prepared by packing it in solimi for a period of time.”

“They have solimi?” the ambassador asked.

“The humans call it 'salt', if I remember correctly.”

The ambassador was poking at the various food items on his plate with his fork. “We will have to consume this fare while dirt-side? And with these odd utensils?” He looked up to see Kess, failing to mask a smile at her husband's situation.

“Kamram Keth, I find it amusing that you still have issues with assimilating into another planet's conventions.” She sampled her hash browns, then continued her thoughts as she put their variation of pepper on them. “You know it our directive to assimilate. We must, to better understand the various races that we encounter. Would you rather we be like the Bil-Cmela and just barge in, take over and wipe out other civilizations by supplanting it with our own?”

“That is the very reason we fought back against the Bil-Cmela. We were slaves to them, nothing more. They were destroying Elazia and her culture.”

“Very well. Now that we both see that clearly, why can't you assimilate quietly?” she asked.

“I miss roast Targ for first meal.”

“Kam, please try the bacon. You might like it.”

The Elazi male took a bite of his bacon and chewed it thoughtfully. His mate could see the confusion, then the acceptance in her *One Love's* face as he examined the strip of goodness in his hand.

“It is not Targ, but it is very acceptable as a substitute.” he commented.

“I'm glad you think highly of it.” Kess offered up. “At mid-meal, the kitchen will be serving up something called BLT sandwiches. I hear the B stands for bacon.”

Kam raised an eyebrow to this information. “So, what do the other designations stand for?”

“The L stands for lettuce, which is a leafy vegetable similar to our creladit plant and the T stands for Tomato, which there seems to be some issue as to whether it is a fruit or a vegetable. It is a round thing, like a sphere. I hear from our kitchen that it is very tasty. They have been brought to us fresh by that supply ship from Earth that docked with us last day.”

“How can these humans not decide exactly what this 'tomato' is?” Kam asked, shaking his head. “From my studies, it would be a fruit if it came from a . . . Oh, a tree. A vegetable would come from a shrub, as they call it.”

“It is like our Bras fruit. It is not a fruit but a nut. We still call it a fruit, though.”

“You are right, Kess.” the male acknowledged. “I do hope to find a fruit that is called a Durian while we are dirt-side. I have been told it has a smell and flavor like our N'ga berries.”

“Enjoy your meal, my love before it grows cold.”

“Yes, Kess.”

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Jeff had finally gotten out of bed around ten in the morning, his sleep over with. Standing at the stove, he checked the heat in his griddle before he started the first of many pancakes. He looked out the window while he waited, noting that the snow had begun to fall once more after a brief moment of sunlight about an hour ago.

He had checked on his charge a few moments ago only to find her still asleep. Krista was no doubt recovering from blood loss so sleep would be good for her. Jeff was in hopes that she could consume some of the pancakes that he was preparing, since his charge would need sustenance. He didn't know when she had last ate something.

In all of the excitement of the previous day, Jeff had forgotten to put the truck back in the barn so now it was a very tall snowdrift right outside his back door. That would take a while to dig out, as long as the snow did not return with its fury of a day ago. This was a bad mistake to make, since it was not a good thing to allow a vehicle to become part of a snow bank. Once he had made sure Krista had a morning meal, he would dig out the truck.

While he was starting the second pancake, he heard a noise behind him. Looking to see what the sound could be, he observed his charge standing in the doorway, watching him while she unbuttoned her pajama top. Krista stopped what she was doing and spoke up.

“Jeff, would you please tell me what is so upsetting to you for me to be naked?” she asked.

“You haven't been around humans much, have you?”

“No I have not.”

“Krista, on our planet, a male and a female are for the most part, naked around each other only if they are a marital unit.”

Krista frowned. "On Elazia, being naked indoors is very acceptable." She looked at the floor, then back at her benefactor. "I do not pretend to understand, but I will remain clothed in your presence."

It was Jeff's turn to frown. "I didn't notice you bringing a pack or anything like that with you. Maybe I have something here you could wear."

"I left my pack in the cargo area of your vehicle," she offered up. A glance outside made her frown once more. "It would appear that your vehicle has been buried in the snow."

"Once you've been fed, I will dig it out," Jeff countered. "Can you eat Earth foods?"

"Yes, I will be fine with everything except grapefruit juice. It does not set well with my physiology."

"That's good, since I don't care for grapefruit juice, either," Jeff stated.

They sat down to eat after Jeff poured up two classes of milk and some coffee to go with their breakfast. Krista was very hesitant at first but after an initial taste of her fare, it was game on. Jeff was nowhere near finished with his plate when the female Elazi sat her fork down, being totally amazed by her hunger.

"Krista, if you were hungry, you should have said something about it," Jeff suggested.

"I was hungry last day but I was unsure of how to approach the subject," she admitted.

"I should have asked if you were hungry," Jeff admitted.

While Krista worked on another plate of food, Jeff put on some boots, his coat and picked up his snow shovel by the back door on his way out of the house. Reaching the edge of the porch, he began to shovel his way to the truck.

It didn't take too long to make it to the bottom of the steps but the snow was almost waist-deep in places, slowing his progress. Eventually he made it to the truck so Jeff began to dig out the back of the bed. Stepping up into the bed, he used the shovel to poke around in the snow, scooping out what didn't contain anything important. After a sufficient amount was removed, he stuck something hard in the bed, up against the front.

Using his gloved hands, he cleared the snow that covered his objective. It was a hard pack, all right, colored the same frosty greyish-white as Krista's armor. It was in a backpack shape and it appeared to be able to attach to her armor somehow, since it didn't have straps. There was a handle on the top so Jeff picked it up, just barely and headed back indoors with his prize.

"You found my pack!" Krista exclaimed with a broad Elazi smile. "I have clothing in my pack that I can wear indoors."

She easily relieved Jeff of the backpack, making it look very light and sat it on the coffee table in the living room. By turning a catch on each side, the cover came off to expose the contents. She carefully unpacked her equipment, setting each item in a particular order until she had located several items that were not much bigger than a magazine, made of something that looked akin to mylar.

Taking the smaller of the two packages in her hands, she pulled on a tab that hung from one side. That tab was attached to a narrow blue strip in the pack, one that cut the outer packaging. A small hiss was heard, followed by the package swelling up. She then pulled out what appeared to be an opaque body stocking. The larger package, when opened, issued forth a tan jumpsuit with military markings on it.

The female Elazi then turned her back to Jeff, trying to follow Earth customs and stripped off her clothing. Krista took a small item from her pack and attached it to the waist of her body stocking, causing it to expand and enlarge to the point that the two of them could have gotten into the suit at the same time. Unzipping the front, she put it on, zipped it up and unplugged the small device she had plugged into it. It began to shrink in size, slow enough that she could get it fitted to her body properly. She followed that by putting on her jumpsuit.

Krista brought out what appeared to be shoe soles, only to surprise Jeff when she pulled on a tab to extract the uppers, making the items turn into boots. She had some socks that she slipped on, followed by her footwear. It did not take long for her to repack her gear, closing the cover back into place with latches that once Jeff had looked closer, they were just like her suit latches.

“There, I am dressed.” she stated, turning around slowly for her benefactor to see the end results. Her suit fit her close enough that it showed off her feminine shape.

Jeff was curious now. “That pack, you attach that to your armor?”

“Yes, it clips on securely. I have a full survival pack inside, all zero-packed to conserve space.”

“Zero-packed?” Jeff asked, confused by her statement.

“The package is sealed with heat once all of the air is evacuated.”

Krista then took a moment to open an outer compartment of her pack and extract what appeared to be an electronic tablet. She fiddled with a few buttons that appeared to turn it on, then she took out a stylus from a side compartment of the device. She made a few strokes and gestures on the screen, then she turned to Jeff and smiled.

“I have a hobby, I think you call it.” she explained. “I like to write down things about those of different species that I meet. Some day, I wish to put them together in a form that others can read and enjoy.”

“That is an interesting hobby.” Jeff admitted.

“Would you tell me your story?” Krista asked.

“It would be boring.” he retorted.

“Not to other races.”

“Okay, but I hope I’m not going to bore you to death.” he put forth. They made themselves comfortable on the couch then Jeff began his story. “I was born in our year nineteen seventy-one, in a town called Livermore, California . . .”

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At the NORRAD installation inside Cheyenne Mountain, Airman first Dean Gibson looked at the display, not wanting to believe his eyes. He ran a few tests on his equipment, then he finally picked up his handset to notify the watch commander.

“Colonel Tyndall.” the voice on the other end offered up.

“Colonel, this is Airman Gibson. I have either an aberration or a huge target on my screen.”

“Test results?”

“They're good, colonel. This target is just too big to be as far out as my equipment says it is.”

“How big, Gibson?”

The airman gulped. “Sir, how about a mile or more in length?” There was silence on the other end for more than a few moments.

“Gibson, I'll be right there.”

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The colonel stood behind the airman, staring at the display while others in the bunker put their resources into tracking this huge object. The officer was about to ask a question when the sergeant at the screen to his left spoke up.

“Colonel, Doctor Bunce in logistics guesstimates that according to our returns, that object is about two and half miles long and it has more mass than all of the space launches we've ever made, all rolled together.”

Colonel Tyndall frowned. “We need to notify the President. That object may not be friendly.”

The Sergeant was just about to lift the receiver for the hotline when a communication came from a new piece of equipment situated to their right. An Elazi piece of equipment.

“Earth early warning, this is Commander Marset Hone of the *Elazi Flagship Korralid*. We are inbound to your planet and expect arrival in eighteen of your hours. One medium cruiser will be going atmospheric to your planet so we wish to secure berthing rights at your Travis Air Force Base.”

The officer hesitantly picked up the comm-set. “This is Colonel David Tyndall, United States Air Force. We copy your request for berthing. How big is this ship and will this cruiser have landing gear?” he asked, still somewhat apprehensive of the situation.

“The medium cruiser *The Oraskinal* is approximately one hundred and twenty-nine of your yards long and yes, it has landing gear, as you call it. Its weight is one thousand, eight hundred metric tons. We fear it may weigh too much for your facility.” the Elazi Commander replied.

“Commander Hone, I need for our experts to analyze that weight loading.” the colonel put forth. “I may have to have you land at another base nearby. Please stand by while I have our experts come to the comm-set.”

“Message understood, Colonel Tyndall.” the Elazi replied. “I will have my experts calculate the loading weight on each landing pad for you. I have been instructed to notify you that we have Elazian Ambassadors on-board that will be coming dirt-side.”

“Thank you for the advance warning concerning the ambassadors, Commander Hone. We will be in touch within the hour.”

“No, thank you for allowing us to land at your facilities. This is *The Flagship Korrallid*, out.”

The colonel in charge on the morning watch sat the comm-set back on its cradle, pursed his lips, then lifted the hotline to his ear. He waited patiently, then spoke up when his call was received.

“Mister President, this is NORAD, Colonel Tyndall speaking. We have Elazi inbound and the ship is huge. They have contacted us, informing us that they have ambassadors on board, asking to berth at Travis.” He stood still, listening patiently. “Yes, Mister President. I will advise Travis to have escort planes on ready alert.” After a few more moments, he spoke again. “Yes, Mister President. I think, since they have contacted us, this is a friendly action. Thank you, Mister President.”

Hanging up the hotline, he looked at his peers and subordinates. “Looks like we have high-level company calling. Everyone get ready to receive them.”