

The characters Jeffrey Andrews, Na'Krista Nahala Keth, Kamram Keth, Na'Kesta Keth, Tegram Keth, Traci McDonald, Bosteg Haas, Kestam Ramm, Treman Baze, Merret Treet, Tascal Hone, Hallett Trasc, 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 Seven

“Situations”

Kam looked across the room at the two prisoners, still pondering in his mind what had been said about the rouge Captain in charge of a small detachment, camped not far from their location. Corporal Sean Troyer had offered up some very disturbing information concerning some very unfortunate Elazi prisoners and that information deeply troubled the Ambassador Prime.

“Corporal Troyer, this has happened?” Kamram asked.

“It's a fact, Sir.” Sean replied. “They were all tortured and several Elazi have died as a result.”

“Very well. We will take action while the weather is good. This . . . this mentally unstable disgrace to an officer's uniform must be stopped.” the buff-colored Elazi stated. “Sub-Commander Trasc, please contact Outpost Auburn and request a full squad along with two attack ships. We will go retrieve our troopers.”

“Right away, Ambassador Prime.” Hallett replied. He then contacted the outpost and had a conversation with the commander of that post concerning their needs. After a few minutes, he turned back to his superior. “They will be here within the next Earth hour, Ambassador. I have asked for them to send armor for Jeffrey Andrews, by your request.”

“Now we will get some things accomplished.” Kam stated firmly. “Time for us to show this rogue Captain what the Elazi Forces are all about.”

“Father Kamram, you're not going to go up there and kill everyone, are you?” Jeff asked.

“No, we will kill no being.” the Ambassador Prime replied. “Hurt them, maybe. Embarrass them greatly, yes. Put an end to their lawlessness, certainly.” After a moment, a dark look crossed his face as he continued. “But, if one rogue Captain should accidentally find himself in line with a rail gun barrel, there might be one premature death.”

Krista looked around at the beings assembled and spoke her mind. “I wish this would end.” she stated. “I see war as a loss to both sides, after hearing of the Chinese-American war from Jeff. There were horrible numbers of dead on both sides of a war that ended in a stalemate. Father, please be careful. Do not put yourself in harm's way.”

“I will be commanding the raid.” the elder Elazi replied. “I cannot do so and not be in harm's way.”

Jeff threw his hat in the ring. “Na’Krista, for you, I will go and watch your father’s back for you.”

“If you go, I’m going, too.” she responded.

“Na’Krista, Jeffrey, you will both stay here with Na’Kesta.”

“We will do no such thing!” the young lovers both blurted out at the same time. After Krista nodded to her future mate to continue, Jeff spoke up for both of them. “We will go with you and watch your back. This is the same group that Na’Krista’s squad had a run-in with so we see it as a bit of a payback for injuring her.”

“Yes, she has a right, I would think.” Kam agreed. “You will go as my bodyguards. That means you will both be close enough that I can protect you, if need be. Sub-Commander Trasc and Trooper Crail will be with us, too.”

Kess looked at her family and the one that would soon be her son through joining. She cleared her throat to get their attention before she spoke up softly. The almost white femme Elazi didn’t need to speak loudly; her tone and expression said it all.

“All of you, be careful. I do not relish the thought of a dead family member. Please watch out for one another’s well being. For my sake as well as all of yours.”

Private First Class Ed Tucker looked around to see if anyone was watching them before he slipped an arm around the injured Elazi male and assisted him over to his tent within the prisoner compound. Helping the stricken alien to sit down in his chair, the enlistee knelt beside his charge.

“Teg? Listen, you need to tell the Captain what he wants to hear.” Ed Tucker suggested. “He will keep up this torture until you either talk or you die. He has no problems with killing you.”

“I know this, Private Tucker.” the male responded. “He will have to kill me because I will not betray my brethren.” After a moment to wipe the blood from his lips, he continued. “Your Captain Zamora knows that I have no information for him. I am just an advisor, not the tactician directing the soldiers. He is punishing me in hopes of forcing the others to talk. They would choose death, too.”

A meal was delivered to the prisoners so Ed helped the alien soldier to get his plate situated in his lap and into the still-firm grasp of his surely broken right hand and wrist.

“This is not fit for feeding to an *M’Taagh*,” the Elazi commented as he sampled, then slowly consumed his nourishment. “I will sustain me but it is not gourmet fare.” he added as he wiped some food off of his lips with a paper towel.

Ed sat back and looked at this battered but still proud soldier. His pale gray pelt was filthy and his clothing, what was left of it, was ragged beyond recognition as to what they were to begin

with. Ed remembered how he had looked when they had shot down his scout craft not far from Granite Bay, by Folsom Reservoir. He was proud and indignant with them then. Well, he was still proud now. Even with his numerous injuries, he carried himself like a true warrior, a warrior that no man in a RUSA uniform could ever hope to be.

Private Tucker remembered the first evening, when Captain Mike Zamora had asked the pale one a few simple questions that he had refused to answer. The company commander then allowed a half-dozen soldiers to 'soften him up' for an hour. How this Elazi was still standing after that abuse, he could not fathom. After the alien had refused to speak again, Ed had watched a guard strike the male in the ribs brutally with his rifle butt. When the prisoner did not fall, but merely turned his head to look at his attacker in amazement, the next two blows had broken the captive's hand and wrist.

Now his charge sat before him, both lips busted open in several places, what he knew to be several broken ribs, his right eye swollen shut, maybe damaged, too and a broken hand and wrist on top of it all. Despite this, the alien still had his pride. His spirit was not broken, not by a long shot. And the alien was right; Captain Zamora would have to kill him to keep him silent concerning the travesty that was occurring here. Teg was not about to give up his brethren.

The Elazi spoke up, breaking the soldier's musing.

"Private Tucker, you may have the tray back." he said evenly. "Please tell your cook that his skill as a chef needs honing."

"I will tell him." Ed replied. "So, you're not going to talk, are you?"

"If your Captain wishes to converse about the weather, I will indulge him."

"Teg, you know what I mean." Ed could see the resignation on the alien's face. Teg knew his time was short.

"Yes, I know exactly what you mean, Private Tucker. Trust me, I am not afraid to die. I understand the hereafter is a very nice place with no war or strife to burden one's soul. My family will meet me there someday and we will all be together again."

"You scare me, Teg. You really do. How can you be so calm at a time like this?"

"Ed Tucker, you must understand. I see no other logical way out of this for me. Death is my only choice. On my planet, in the old days before *The Awakening*, I would have been given a chance to redeem myself in combat. I would have fought with your Captain Zamora using keenly sharp fighting knives. Only one warrior would have walked away. The other would have found himself on the final journey to *Os'Kad M'Tra*.

Teg sipped his water, then continued. "To enter *Os'Kad M'Tra*, you must know the answer to the question of war."

"Okay Teg, I'll bite. What is the question and the answer?"

The pale one smiled, somewhat lopsided from possible facial nerve damage. “The question is, who is the winner and who is the loser in war? The answer is simple.”

After a moment or two, Ed asked his question. “So tell me; what is the answer?”

“When you get to *Os'Kad M'Tra*, you will find *Od'Tra The Wise*, God of the warriors, standing at the gates. He will ask you this riddle which you must answer correctly. His voice will boom in your ears as he asks, “Who is the winner and who is the loser in war?” I will answer him, that it is as plain as the nose on my face. There are no winners. Both sides gain nothing from war. War is only death and destruction, pain and loss. Then *Od'Tra* will smile upon my meager, humble soul and let me pass over into *Os'Kad M'Tra*.”

“That sounds nice but it still scares me to hear you talk like this.”

“Ed Tucker, we all must die someday. Some, far before their time. Like me.”

Ed frowned. “Look, I know this isn't right, Teg. Maybe, just maybe I can arrange something. We think some of your people are nearby, to the North of our position. You know, I could have a lapse in judgment and leave the compound unlocked tonight. It's very possible that I might forget protocol and set your equipment beside my tent, too. Head North, parallel to the road. Stay in the treeline for camouflage. Take all of your people with you.”

“I think you are a noble human, Ed Tucker. Thank you.”

“Look, just get out of here tonight. Don't look back. Just . . . just go. Save yourselves from our bat-shit insane commander.”

“There is something else I wish to tell you, Ed Tucker.”

“What is that?”

“I think you know the answer to the question of war.”

Private Tucker walked over to the gate, stopped, looked back at the proud Elazi who was now praying and shook his head. He knew this had to be done or there would be five more deaths where he would have to deal with the bodies afterward. Stepping outside the compound, he closed the portal and made it look as if he had locked the gate.

Ed remembered the others that had been murdered in the name of the RUSA. The tall, black one, Mossett Trasc, died a slow death, hung from a tree by his wrists with his feet just inches off the ground. That Elazi slowly suffocated to death, gasping loudly while he begged for his life with his last few breaths. The next one, Ed never knew his name, was slowly crushed by a Deuce and a Half driven over him from crotch to head. Ed remembered the loud continuous shriek that ended in a jarring silence.

The latest one, Tallett Baze, a solid white Elazi, was killed in the most brutal manner of all.

Captain Zamora had decided to remove his pelt while he still lived. It was a horrible sight and the alien's pelt was more off than on when he finally expired from excruciating pain and blood loss.

What was the most heartbreaking thing for Ed to watch was Teg, broken hand and wrist, digging graves for his fallen comrades. No complaints, no obvious discomfort, just a steady, paced movement of dirt out of the hole and after the body was placed in it, a steady covering of the corpse in a very reverent manner.

In Ed's eyes, these Elazi were more than any RUSA soldier could ever hope to be. Because of that, he had to get them out of here and he had to try to take out Captain Zamora before any more Elazi lives were forfeit. There were others in their squad that felt the same way so he would try to gather them tonight and take action. He knew he had to.

Jeff rearranged his rail gun sitting between his legs one more time as they lifted off, still feeling very uneasy about this engagement. True, he had never fought in close combat but that was a direct result of being a doctor. What he had seen of war, the aftermath, made him not look forward to being an intimate part of it.

Krista sat in the seat across from him, looking out the windshield of the armored shuttle they were riding in, deep in thought. Jeff wondered what his future wife was thinking. She had yet to don her helmet so he had a clear view of her side profile and that view made him ponder.

Jeff smiled when he thought of how anthropomorphic artists had drawn various creatures, giving them a long, animalistic muzzle. If anything, Krista's face was not much longer than a human face, maybe less than an inch at best. Granted, the bridge of her nose was wider and she had that smooth, leathery nose tip of hers but Jeff was sure that she could wear a conventional full face motorcycle helmet with no problems. He backed that up with the knowledge that he was wearing an Elazi battle helmet at the moment. The fit was better than his own motorcycle helmet and with the bullet resistant face shield down, he could just barely get his hand inside to wipe his nose.

He looked down at his rail gun, a true piece of technology that he still didn't fully understand. The troopers that had briefed him on the proper operation of the rifle had made very sure his ammunition was not of the less-than-lethal variety. The rounds in the magazine were tubular, about one inch in diameter and two inches long. Hallet Trasc had confirmed they would be very lethal. Considering just who he would be protecting, he agreed with that choice.

Na'Krista was armed with a Squad Impulse Rifle, once again a piece of Bil-Cmela technology that even she could not fully explain. Her weapon would fire a compressed ball of static electricity at staggering velocities. Anyone struck by that round would be knocked to the ground by its force and stunned by the discharge of the energy to ground. She had imparted upon him that the rounds would kill on occasion. They had decided to stay as close as possible to her father, in hopes that the sight of four troopers, armed to the teeth, would dissuade any soldier from trying to take the Ambassador to task.

Jeff was startled out of his reverie by a nudge from Trooper Crail, offering him a flask of

something. He smiled, sniffed it and asked what seemed like a silly question to several Elazi within earshot.

“So, what is this stuff?” he asked.

“That is *Haad-N'Ga*. Take a sip to guarantee our safety.” the ebony trooper replied.

Jeff nodded, saluted his fellow soldiers and took a generous sip. He swallowed, then his eyes shot wide open. He passed the flask to Na'Krista while he gasped, trying his best to get his breath back. Once he could breathe some, Jeff realized that concoction had a very potent kick and an incredibly nasty aroma to go with it.

“Oh . . . Effing . . . Brimstone!!” Jeff blurted out, once the flavor and aroma hit his taste and olfactory nerves solidly. “That . . . that tastes like a Durian!”

“Durian?” Kam questioned from the row of seats where he and Sub-Commander Trasc had been working on a strategic plan of attack. “Do you know where we might find a Durian?”

“Yes I do, Father Kamram.” Jeff admitted. “The Svensens have obtained it on occasion for my neighbor, Stan Galli. Where they get it from, I do not know.”

“We will speak of this more after our duty is done.” Kam stated as he observed the HUD display on the windshield. “We are here. Troopers first, then my detachment form up on me once we're clear of the craft.”

The small group of thirteen soldiers were in the midst of removing their RUSA insignias and marking their uniforms with white grease-pencil when they heard that familiar sound of Elazi attack craft overhead. They all looked to Sergeant Mitchell Nixon, their Ad-Hoc leader for direction.

“Tucker, Pedersen, get the Elazi out of the prisoner compound and get them to their people. The rest of you, go after the junior officers and the ranking NCO's. You know what to do.”

“Yes Sir!” the group blurted out in unison.

Sgt. Nixon watched with sure resignation as his comrades scattered to their tasks, hoping in his heart that they were doing the right thing. Racking the bolt on his M4 carbine, he headed in the general direction of Captain Zamora's tent.

Jeff looked up to see an attack craft make a strafing run right through the middle of the RUSA camp, forcing the numerous outlaw soldiers to duck and scatter. All in all, the Elazi troopers that had landed a few moments before them were already stopping the rogue soldiers from fleeing into the snowy woods. Maybe this engagement would end without loss of life.

The sound of a HMMWV starting garnered Na'Krista's attention, especially since it was headed directly at the retinue surrounding her father. She knelt down and aimed her Impulse Rifle, aligning the X in the digital scope with the radiator opening. Depressing the trigger, the rifle shrieked from the discharge of energy. Krista fired a second follow-up round for insurance but the original discharge had rendered the vehicle inoperative. The soldiers in the vehicle surrendered quickly when they observed four very lethal weapons leveled at them.

Things seem to be settling down when a partially dressed soldier, carrying a squad carbine, stepped into view from behind a tent. From his stance and actions it was clear what was about to happen. They could not hear what he had shouted at them but his fiddling with the rifle indicated that it might have jammed. The soldier quickly cleared his belt-fed fully-automatic weapon and began to aim the rifle in their general direction. Jeff knew this would probably come back to haunt him later but he knew what he had to do.

The former Marine shouldered his railgun from the ready position, depressed the stud above the trigger to bring the sight on-line and put the aggressor's body in the center of the X. Depressing the trigger, the rifle whined sharply and recoiled heavily when the round was discharged. An impact was heard, parts fell from the squad carbine, then the soldier dropped to the ground. It actually angered Jeff that he had to kill that soldier but it was either that or a future family member or loved one might get killed instead. Some shouting off to the left brought Jeff back to the present.

"Ambassador! Over here!" one of their units called out. Turning to look that way, some humans seemed to be helping some injured Elazi toward them.

"By The Stars!" Kam shouted out, breaking away from his detachment to intercept a pale Elazi male being helped along that seemed to be somewhat the worse for wear. Before Jeff could ask what was going on, Krista followed her father to join into a hug with her father and that being.

"What's going on here?" Jeff asked in Elazi.

Kam turned to him and answered with tears in his eyes. *"This is my brother, Tegram Keth."*

"Your brother?" Jeff asked, looking carefully at the slightly taller Elazi's condition. "Does he need medical attention?"

"Yes, I am in need of attention." Teg replied. "First, the soldiers with no RUSA emblems and white X's on their uniforms are no longer claiming affiliation to the RUSA. Treat them fairly. Further, this man here, Ed Tucker, please treat him as one of us. He has done much to ease our suffering. He has brought us medicine and extra food when we have needed it. He is not RUSA, even though he has worn their emblem."

"We will do so." Kam agreed.

Some shouting in English and Elazi could be heard from behind the tents on the downhill side of the small encampment and as the owners of those voices came closer, the words could be distinguished.

"You let go of me, you dirty, fucking animal!"

"I will not release you, you blasted *M'Taagh*!" the Elazi retorted. "You will pay for your crimes!!"

"I am a Captain in the Reformed United States Army! Get your grimy paws off of me!!"

Another voice, American and angry, spoke his mind from somewhere out in the dark.

"You shut the fuck up, you fucking asshole!!" was blurted out, followed by the sound of a rifle butt striking a body. "Here, let me help you with that trash." the owner of the voice offered up.

"Yes, that would be appreciated." the Elazi replied. In just a few more moments, Merret Treet and Sergeant Nixon made their appearance, dragging Captain Zamora by his feet.

"He is the one that ordered the Elazi deaths. His name is Michael Gooding Zamora." Tegram Keth offered up.

Kam looked very upset. "How many have died, my brother?"

"Three. Troopers Mosset Trasc, Sanmet Hane and Tallet Baze. The *M'Taagh* had Tallet's pelt removed while he lived." That information made Kam's temper boil over.

"*Wake that sand snake! Now!*" The Ambassador shouted as he removed a very evil looking fighting knife from its leg sheath and headed toward Captain Zamora.

"Kam! Stop!" Tegram bid, grabbing his brother's arm before he got very far and turning him so that he could look his family member in the eyes. "Kam, I have first rights to redemption. I am calling age before rank over you."

Kamram calmed down as he nodded. "Yes, you have first rights, my brother." He then gave his knife to his battered sibling.

Someone had followed Kam's direction and thrown water on the officer, which had brought him around. Two of his former troops then helped the injured officer to stand so he could face the Elazi that would most likely take the captain to task. Sensing what was going to happen to their commander, the soldiers backed off to give the two beings some room.

"One of you soldiers get this snake a knife." Teg asked as he slowly advanced on his objective. Once Captain Zamora had a small hunting knife in his possession, the Elazi continued. "You and I will have this out, right now, in the *Old Way*. I stood by while you hung my personal bodyguard in a tree and allowed him to suffocate to death. I kept my mouth shut while you crushed my adjutant under a vehicle and I tried to show no emotion while you removed my medic's pelt while he still lived. How do you plead to these charges against you?"

There was silence in the camp with the exception of Krista, who was losing her lunch in the trees from the mental images of the deaths just described.

"There are no charges against me, you mangy, talking animal." the captain retorted while he

played with the knife in his right hand. "I was just killing unwanted vermin, that's all."

"No, you are wrong." Teg interjected. "You have done unspeakable acts to sentient beings and you have tried to torture me and my remaining crew into giving you more ammunition against our people. Ask for the redemption of your soul or fight me and go to spend your damnation with with *Emra'Tra*, demon of eternal fire."

"I'm going nowhere, you furry asshole." was the reply.

"Very well." Tegram said softly. "I will do my best to kill you and send your unworthy soul to suffer eternal torture."

"You're fucking mad! You can't kill me!" Captain Zamora blurted out, right before he ran up to Teg and stabbed him in the upper chest on the right side.

"I am not mad, you fool. In fact, I am far from it," the pale one replied as he quickly reached up and grabbed the soldier by his neck with his good hand, sinking his claws deeply into his quarry. "You are the mad one. You have insulted my intelligence by stabbing me in an area which did not contain easily-damaged organs. You probably thought my heart was there, which is pure Internet fiction. My heart is right where yours should be," Teg added, thrusting his knife up under Mike Zamora's ribs, piercing his most vital abdominal organ.

"You're . . . I'll kill . . ." the captain gasped as he made a last attempt to regain his weapon.

"You will kill no more," Tegram replied, waiting until the life had left his victim's eyes. Once that had happened, the pale Elazi ripped his knife from the dead body and allowed the corpse to fall to the ground. Turning to the nearest Elazi trooper, he made a simple request; "Burn his body. Do not allow his tainted soul to reach the gates of *Os'Kad M'Tra*. Through fire, send his unworthy soul to be with *Emra'Tra*."

Onboard *The Oraskinal*, Tegram Keth lifted the sheet that covered him so he could observe the extent of his injuries. A large patch of pelt had been shaved from his upper torso to allow for surgery on his punctured lung and his chest had been tightly taped due to his fractured ribs.

The most annoying injury was his right wrist and hand, surrounded by a moulded clear cast to hold his lower limb immobile. Most of the fur on his appendage had been removed and he counted seventeen incisions in all to repair the broken bones. That bare skin seemed like it was sticking to the clear polymer from his sweat, making the cast less than comfortable.

Teg wondered if this was all worth it. Maybe Sanmet Krol was right; they should have just packed up, left and marked Earth off-limits due to a high propensity for war. He thought Sanmet was wrong in the beginning but his opinion had changed now. Maybe Ambassador Krol was right.

Looking through the window to the hallway with first his right eye, then his left, Teg decided that no permanent damage had come to his right eye. He could clearly observe Na'Krista and her future *One Love*, sitting on a bench across from his door, asleep. Smiling just slightly because they

were leaning against one another, still in their armor, he wondered what it was about Jeffrey that made Na'Krista love him so. He could see it in her eyes while she told him of falling in love with the Earther on the way to *The Oraskinal*. Teg knew he wanted to get to know this human.

Teg watched with trepidation as a red-headed human female wearing an Elazi utility suit walked past the window, turned into his room and walked up to his bed. Taking his left hand in hers, she gently kissed his fingers.

“Teg, I should have never let you out of my sight.” she stated firmly as she looked over his injuries. “Whatever possessed you to try to negotiate with the RUSA, I will never know. I told you it was a trap.”

“You were right, Traci McDonald. It was a trap. We flew directly into a large number of anti-aircraft missile launchers.”

“So, what will you do now?” she asked.

“I will return to Elazia to recover from my injuries, my future *One Love*. You may come with me, if you so desire. We would be gone about six of your months.”

“You think you're leaving this rock without me so you can lounge around all day, by yourself, for half of a year?” the flame-haired woman asked, raising an eyebrow at the thought.

“Then you will come with me?” Tegram asked.

“Yes, I will be coming. You are not about to get away from me that easily.”

“Traci, I have a request.”

“Okay . . .”

“Traci, will you wake the two soldiers in the hall? That is my brother's least daughter Na'Krista and her future *One Love*, Jeffrey Andrews. They were very concerned for my well-being.”

Jeff woke up from his troubled sleep, thinking this was a dream, since it was a human that had roused him to consciousness. Blinking his eyes to clear them, he looked again to see that it was indeed a human, wearing an Elazi uniform. Remembering what Na'Krista had taught him about the her alphabet, the patch that this human wore on her sleeve indicated she had something to do with computers.

“Uh, what's going on?” he asked the flame-haired female as he stood up and helped his future wife to her feet.

“Teg asked for me to wake you. I guess he wants to talk to you.”

“He's awake?”

“Yeah, he's a tough old *targ*.”

Jeff picked up his helmet and rifle, still feeling extremely drained from his emotions and stress. He waited until Krista was ready to go, then he followed her into Teg's room.

“*Om'Da* Tegram, how are you feeling?” Krista asked as she took a moment to read his stats from the monitor over his bed.

“I have felt better.” the pale one replied. “It would take more than just that *M'Taagh* to kill me.” he added.

“You didn't look well when we found you.” she countered.

“Agreed. I was not in my prime state when you arrived.” Teg offered. When the red-headed female standing on the opposite side of the bed from Jeff and Krista nudged him on the shoulder, he looked at her and smiled. “I'm sorry, I should introduce you,” he suggested as he turned his head to look at the young lovers. “This is Traci McDonald, my future *One Love*. Traci, this is Na'Krista Keth and her future *One Love*, Jeffrey Andrews.”

“Nice to meet you.” Jeff offered up.

“*May peace follow you wherever you go.*” Krista said with a smile.

“*And may peace visit both of you often.*” Traci replied.

“Traci is my Earth Internet computer analyst.” the recovering Elazi put forth. “We spent so much time together, analyzing what was occurring on the Internet concerning the war, there came a point in time that we knew we were falling in love with one another.”

“Teg proposed to me one night when we were tired and just a bit tipsy.” Traci stated. “Well, the next morning I made him propose again, just so it wasn't something two drunks would do from too much alcohol.”

“We plan to be joined on Elazia.” Tegram allowed. “Na'Krista, Jeffrey, what are your plans?”

“I still have to be properly welcomed into Sub-House Keth and I need to be admitted into House Tal-Hassanai. I will be going to Elazia with Father Kamram and Mother Na'Kesta on *The Korralid*.”

“Then you will have good company for the passage!” the pale Elazi stated with a wide grin. “Traci and I will be going back to Elazia so I can recover from my ordeal. Not that I really have to.” He shrugged his shoulders and smiled. “But I have been accumulating leave that I have not used. I was instructed by my doctor to rest, so rest I shall.”

Traci smiled as she added, “As you can tell, he will probably be doing everything else besides resting.”

"I will make him rest." Krista put forth, smiling at her uncle. "Between my sister Na'Kayla and myself, he will have to rest or we will just tie him to the bed and leave him like that. Then he will have to rest."

"That they will." Teg confirmed for Traci. "That they will."

Later that evening, Krista and Jeff waved at the pilot that had brought them back to the cabin, watching him lift off and turn back toward Travis Air Force Base. All in all, it was an emotionally draining episode for both of them. At least the bodies of the unfortunate Elazi had been exhumed and were being prepared for burial in a cemetery set aside for them. Jeff knew they would have to travel down to the city of Galt and pay their respects to three very brave troopers.

Jeff opened the front door and reached inside to switch the lights on for them. They stepped inside with rifles ready, Sub-Commander Trasc right behind to back them up, making sure there were no intruders to spoil their evening. Once they had ensured their safety, Na'Krista waved her parents inside.

After some Elazi tea was brewed and consumed to calm their nerves, Kam and Kess retired to the guest room. Jeff knew they were stressed, too. Who wouldn't be, considering the shape Tegram was in. At least the doctor had informed Kamram that his brother would most likely recover completely. That was good news.

"That was a stressful outing." Jeff offered up while he undressed in the master bedroom after making sure Hallet Trasc was comfortable on the couch.

"I will agree." Krista retorted. She then turned to face her future mate, trying to suppress a grin from watching him struggle with the armor pieces. "Jeff, do you need help with your armor?"

"Thank you but no, I think I have it." he replied. Jeffrey had been quite amazed that some Elazi didn't have a tail or just a short, stumpy appendage which was the reason his armor had no tail sheath. The armor, even though it had not been directly measured for him, fit decently.

While he undressed, Jeff gave thought to the day in retrospect. They had broke up a band of soldiers that were wreaking havoc in the area, he watched a madman go to his rewards, whatever that might be and they had found Tegram Keth along with the remainder of his retinue.

Teg has explained to him about the question of war and that information made him think. He was right; there never were clear winners in war. Whatever was gained in war was offset by the loss of life and property on both sides. At least he knew what to say to *Od'Tra The Wise*, should he ever encounter him.

Jeff was still trying to get his cooling mesh off when Krista quietly slipped under the covers. He knew she was tired, both from stress and her injury, which was healing quite nicely. Even the medic that had looked at his handiwork this afternoon had commented on the craftsmanship.

Slipping into bed beside Krista, Jeff kissed her on the cheek.

“Goodnight, Sweetheart. I love you.” he said softly.

“Good sleep, *As’Ra* Jeff. I love you too.” she replied sleepily.

Krista curled up against her future *One Love*, yawned and slipped off to a deep sleep. The object of her affections was not far behind her.

Kess was looking through photo album that Jeff had given her, an accounting of Jeff from birth to High School graduation. She smiled at the images, noting how even as a young child, he appeared to be very outgoing and loving. She especially liked one photo of him, posing with his parents. They all seemed to be very happy.

“Kam, are you asleep?” she whispered.

“I am awake, my *Am’Ra*.” he answered, rolling over to better see his mate.

“Kam, I am worried.” she offered up. “I am worried the incident today will temper our position with the Earthers.”

“I would not worry.” he suggested. “I am sure the human soldiers that gave up affiliation with the RUSA, when questioned, will give an accurate account of the incident.”

“I hope in my heart, you are right.”

“I think so.” Kam agreed. “Now, put up that album, turn out the light and come snuggle with me. We will have a busy day tomorrow so we should get as much sleep as we can.”

“Kam, does 'a busy day' also include riding around on the snow in Jeffrey's vehicle with the tracks mounted to it?”

“It does.” the male ambassador agreed. “It will seat six beings so he will take all of us down to Outpost Auburn in it. He imparted to me that it will be fun.”

“It sounds like fun,” Na’Kesta offered up as she snuggled up to her *One Love*. “I just hope you do not become ill from riding in a land vehicle.”

“I will take some motion sickness tablets beforehand.” Kamram stated. “Good sleep, *Am’Ra* Kess.”

“Good sleep, *As’Ra* Kam.”