

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, Hammet & Na'Kayla Nahala (nee Keth) Craine 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 Ten

“Welcome To The Flagship Korrallid”

Staring out the portal at the enormous matte-black chunk of technology, Jeff was shocked by the sheer size of *The Flagship Korrallid*. According to Kam, the ship was about three miles long, give or take a few yards. Well, that number would be hard to refute, since the landing bay they were lined up on was slowly swallowing *The Oraskinal* like it was nothing. In fact, Jeff was informed that there were three more ships just like the one he was aboard in the other main landing bays. That didn't take into account the fact that the space in the hanger was holding numerous scout ships, armed attack ships, utility craft and other various types of equipment.

The former material transfer ship slowed to what seemed like walking speed as it slowly made its way to its designated docking berth. Once there, it sat down upon the deck so gently that the landing was almost imperceptible. After a few moments, an announcement was heard throughout the ships' intercom;

“*The Oraskinal* is now berthed. You may now de-board the ship.”

Jeff followed Na'Krista down several decks to a central open corridor in the core of *The Flagship Korrallid*. Scanning the vast open space, it seemed to be just like a promenade on a cruise ship. There were shops, dining establishments and what appeared to be bars or entertainment venues interspersed between what must have been offices and maybe quarters. Just down the walkway, Na'Krista stopped at what might possibly be a transportation stop.

“We need to go further than I care to walk in my armor,” she commented as they got into the line to board whatever it was that would come along and pick them up.

“This is mind-boggling.” Jeff pointed out.

“It was for me, the first time on board.” she agreed.

After a short wait, a tram that was running on roller-coaster-style rails just outboard of the walkway came into view. It was like a small city bus, only with the upper half of the body removed. The vehicle stopped, the gate on the side of the walkway opened, then the door on the tram opened to allow boarding.

“This is really something.” Jeff commented. “I would have never thought of putting a tramway

system in a ship.”

“Would you care to hike an Earth mile in an armor suit?” the Elazi male behind Jeff asked.

“You have a point.” the Earther replied. “Yes, I think riding a tram would be better.”

The smoke-gray male smiled. “You must be Jeff Andrews. I am Al'Ressen'an Trale'lan, formal name. I am very happy to have met you.”

“Jeffrey Alan Andrews the Third. I am pleased to have met you too, Al'Ressen'an Trale'lan.”

“Please call me Ress Trale.” the male Elazi put forth, offering his hand in the way that two Elazi males would, sort of a fist bump of the right hands.

“Call me Jeff.” the human replied, doing a proper bump with his new acquaintance.

They sat down in some empty seats just as the tram began to move. It wasn't traveling very fast, possibly near a jogging speed but it did beat walking. No sooner had the tram reached cruising speed, it began to slow down. At the next loading portal, a very interesting being stood in line to board the people mover.

Jeff tried his best not to stare, but this being stood out amongst the Elazi. It was female, no doubt, but the thing that made this particular being stand out was the fact that the creature looked to be an anthropomorphic bipedal leopard appaloosa horse-being.

“Jo-Linn!” Na'Krista shouted out as she stood and waved the being over. “Jo-Linn! It's so good to see you again!” she squealed out as the two females met and hugged one another. “Jo, I want you to meet Jeffrey Andrews, my future *One Love*. Jeff, this is Jo-Linn Farnissen. She is a Pak'Saa'naani citizen.”

“Pleased to meet you, Jo-Linn.” Jeff offered up.

“It is wonderful to finally meet you, Jeff Andrews, warrior doctor.” the spotted femme replied.

“My reputation precedes me,” Jeff quipped, giving his future wife a sidelong glance. “I can't imagine where that 'warrior doctor' moniker came from.”

Jo-Linn smiled. “I cannot divulge that it was Na'Krista that gave me that information.” Jo shrugged her shoulders at the buff female Elazi, then she made a comment. “Jeffrey, you speak Elazi very well. Your accent makes it sound like you're from Central Arrl province.”

“I didn't know I had an accent.” he admitted.

“It must have been the training audio Jeff used to learn our language.” Krista suggested.

“No doubt the speaker on the training audio was from Arrl province.” Jo-Linn offered up. “Let's see; Jeff, please say, “My water tank is leaking”,” the Pak female asked.

“My water tank is leaking,” Jeff stated clearly, causing both females to giggle.

“Central or South Arrl.” Krista commented.

“South Arrl.” Jo corrected. “He rolls several hard sounds like a Southerner.”

Krista smiled at that comment. “Yes, you do have a point.”

Once Jo-Linn had sat down with them, the tram began moving again. While the two females chatted with one another, Jeff took the opportunity to try to decipher the various signs along the way. Some made sense but others, even though he could make out the words, didn't register. Maybe that was because he still had a limited measure of language at his disposal.

The promenade became less glitzy and more utilitarian as they continued along their way, probably a mile or more from where they had boarded the coach. At a stop located in an area of what looked like office spaces, they exited the tram and headed up one deck to an area that was clear in its function; the Billeting Office.

At a small terminal, Krista entered Jeff's information and took the opportunity to check the status of her own. Apparently, there was something about her accommodations that made her giggle, right before she looked at Jeff and smiled widely.

“We need to pick up our access cards.” she said with a smile, making Jeff feel like something was afoot. They formed up in a queue that was not too long, waiting patiently for the Elazi male at the counter to take care of the some dozen beings ahead of them that were also awaiting his attention. Eventually, they made it to the head of the line.

“Na'Krista Keth, I didn't expect you back so soon.” the Billeting officer stated with a smile.

“Tanner, I hope my cabin is available.” she replied. “I know I'm very early. I was not to board until two days from now.”

“Well, I'll have to see.” The housing specialist mused. “Uh, I will have to move you, according to my database. I will redirect your baggage to your new room.”

“Do you have Jeffrey's room ready?”

“Yes, Na'Krista. Here is his access card and ID badge.”

Tanner gave Krista two badges and two cards, smiling just slightly at some possible inside joke. He then nodded at Jeff. “Mister Andrews, please enjoy your stay on *The Flagship Korrallid*. If you have a problem with your billeting, please call my receiver at the number on the back of your ID badge. You are designated as a passenger with credentials, so I have been instructed to assist you in any way possible.”

“Passenger with credentials?” Jeff questioned.

“That is what has been tagged on your file. It doesn't say why, though.”

“Okay, Thanks, um, Specialist Tanner Stile,” Jeff offered up, hoping he had read the name badge correctly.

“Ah, you read Elazi!” the gray male blurted out.

“I read it some but not perfectly, I have to admit.” Jeff countered. “I’m still using the learning program to improve my vocabulary.”

“You speak it well, even if you do sound like you’re from Southern Arrl province.”

“The learning program.” Krista brought up.

“Yes, the program.” Tanner agreed with a nod of the head. “You would think they would have had a Dah’Trat voice the program.”

Jeff and Krista had taken the tram back toward the bow of the ship, about half-way to the point where they had started out their trip. They de-boarded the transit unit, crossed the Promenade on a bridge to the starboard side, taken a nearby lift up several levels and walked a short distance through the ships’ corridors. Eventually, they arrived at Jeff’s accommodations.

“Present your badge to the reader,” Krista instructed, watching to make sure her future husband faced the data side of the badge to the scanner. Once he had done that, the door slipped into the door frame, allowing them entry.

Stepping inside, Jeffrey was stunned by the sumptuousness of the unit. There was a large bed off to the left, an area to the right that seemed like a mini-bar of sorts and straight ahead, a small kitchenette area. The latrine, as he was still in a habit of designating that type of room, was off of the sleeping alcove. In the center of the room was a cozy seating arrangement of low, overstuffed settees.

“This is too nice, Krista.” he commented. “I could see someone with status staying in this suite, but not a simple passenger . . .” He stopped talking when he remembered what Technician Stile had said about his status. Now it made perfect sense to him; Kamram and Na’Kesta had pulled some strings for him.

Krista smiled. “I would not complain about my accommodations. The general unjoined crew billeting is small, utilitarian and cramped. You have to share a shower and toilet room with at least twenty others, too.” she informed him.

“Is that where you’re staying?” Jeff asked.

“No, I have a very nice room, it seems. I’m sure my parents had something to do with it.”

“Is it this nice?” he questioned, motioning to the room in a sweeping gesture.

“Yes, it is.” she replied with a smile.

“Is it nearby?”

“Yes.”

“Okay, I give.” Jeff admitted. “Where are you staying?”

“Right here.”

Jeff's jaw dropped. “Here?”

“You make it sound like this is a problem.” Krista suggested as the smile on her face faded.

“No, it is not an issue.” Jeff retorted as he took Krista in his arms and hugged her. “I just didn't think you would want to . . .”

“This was Mother's idea.” she pointed out. “She thought we might like to stay close to one another. There was not a pair of adjoining rooms for us, so I said it would be okay. We know how to control my occasional urges with your deodorant, so I think we will be just fine.”

“I hope you're right.”

“I think I'm right.” she agreed. “Besides, you will be working with me on our assigned duty.”

“And what is that duty to be?” Jeff asked out of curiosity.

“We have been put on ventilation ductwork cleaning detail.”

Jeff raised an eyebrow. “Ductwork cleaning?”

“Father could not sufficiently influence the right staff members to get a better assignment.” Krista stated. “I think someone was upset that we have this room, so they gave us an undesirable assignment.”

“So, is it a bad detail?”

“I don't think so. The ductwork where we will be cleaning is big enough to sit up in the small spaces and you can walk upright in most of it.”

“Is it dirty?”

“We will wear antistat suits and we will have a small wipe cleaning unit with us. As our wipes get dirty, we cycle them through the cleaning unit.”

“Okay, I guess that doesn't sound bad.”

“It's actually pretty decent, as you would say. No one will come to bother us, since they would

have to put on the antistat suit first, before they set out to find us.”

“I'll reserve judgment for the moment.” Jeff stated. “In the meantime, I think I need to stow my gear,” he added, pointing out his bags on the floor.

“I call Earth dibs on the left side of the bed.” Krista blurted out.

“Dibs?” Jeff questioned.

“I understand you have to let me have the left side, now that I have called dibs.”

“Okay, you can have the left side.”

Jeff began to stow his clothing in the closet on the right side of the bed, finding the drawers to have more than enough room for what he had brought. He then hung up his kilts and kilt jackets in the closet along with his regular clothing. It wasn't until he had almost finished his work when he realized he still wearing his armor.

He removed his alloy protective suit and stowed it on the stand meant for that purpose, making sure that it was secured properly. He then wiggled his way out of the pressure suit, once Krista had unzipped it for him. Since they would not be returning dirtside until tomorrow afternoon, Pacific Standard Time, Jeff thought it would be a good idea to take a nap, then do some exploring of his temporary home. Looking up from taking off his pressure suit, he smiled as Krista laid down on the bed, looking tired herself.

“Let's rest for a moment, then we will have an early third meal with my parents.” she suggested.

“That sounds good,” Jeff replied as he laid down next to his intended. “Uh, is there an alarm clock we can set?”

“Right here,” the buff colored femme replied while she made some adjustments to the unusual chronometer beside the bed. “I will set it for two hours.”

Na'Krista had quickly dozed off, but Jeff was still wide awake, keyed up from the morning's happenings. It was still hard for him to believe that he was in orbit around Earth, something not many other humans had ever done. Better yet, he was in orbit aboard a spacecraft that was alien to this system, something only four other Americans had done before him. He really wished his parents could see him now.

Al'Dassan'an looked out the huge windows of his office and study, taking in the sight of his vast farming venture. This property had been in the possession of and under production of the Trent'lan house for more than two hundred years. All of that time, the lands had been very productive, making the House exceedingly rich. They were known throughout the Northern and Central regions for the high quality of their fruits, vegetables and nuts.

If the head of House Trent'lan could have been able to see far enough, he could see the one

thing that stuck in his craw; some three-hundred or so units of land that was given over to House Keth'lan through a joining. That was prime land where House Keth'lan grew their celebrated Kebra fruit. Their production, while not the highest volume per square unit of land, was certainly outweighed by the superior quality of the fruit. Not even House Trent'lan could match the superior size and taste of the Keth'lan-produced harvest.

While he pondered that thought, his intercom buzzed, garnering his attention.

“Dassan,” he stated after he keyed the 'talk' switch.

“My Lord, An'Retten'af Trent'lan has arrived.” the disembodied voice announced.

“Send him in.”

Al'Dassan'an returned to gazing out the windows and pondered the situation further. It was his hopes that good news arrived with the messenger.

“Dassan?” the smoky-gray male asked as he stepped into the room.

“Retten, it is good to see you again.” the pale gray male replied. “Have you good news?”

“I do not, Das. Na'Krista still lives.”

“I see.” the pale-hued mused. After looking at the courier for a few moments, he continued. “You look like you have more information for me, Retty.”

“I do. Na'Krista is to be joined to an Earther. Kamram has been in touch with the House Tal-Hassanai representatives concerning this matter. I understand there will be no open public objections to this Earther being admitted into the House.”

“This is bad.” Dassan stated as he sat down behind his desk and mulled this situation over. “Retty, you know what must be done. See to it that this very disagreeable matter is rectified.”

“Yes, Dassan. I knew you would feel this way. I have sent instructions by Hyperwave, Secured Channel. Our contacts will know what to do.”

An'Retten'af bowed slightly, then left the room in a quiet manner. Dassan looked up from his desk when the door closed, thinking about what had been said or not said. The Earther very well could be the spoiler that would derail his plans. With the impending joining, Na'Krista and her mate would solidify the Keth'lan claim to that land. This would not do. That property, while not much to argue over, rightfully belonged in Trent'lan hands.

Jeff woke from his nap with a start, seeming to be a bit confused until he realized exactly where he was. Sitting up on the edge of the bed, he rubbed his face to clear his mind further. Once he was fully awake, Jeff could hear the shower running in the latrine. That could only be Krista, cleaning up before dinner.

Jeff stood and stripped off his T-shirt, taking a moment to stretch out his shoulders. While not too hard, the bed was a bit firm for his likings. At least it was big enough that Na'Krista could spread out without crowding him too badly.

Na'Krista was in the shower, working on her dark brown head of hair when Jeff walked into the room. She smiled at him, stopped what she was doing and opened the door to the shower just slightly with a mischievous smile.

“Care to join me?” she asked in a sultry voice.

“I would like to, but I think I can wait.” Jeff replied with a wide smile. “I’ll just use that shower over there,” he added, indicating the booth to the left of the one she was using.

“That is a drying booth.” she said with a wide smile. “No water, just a lot of very warm air.”

“I see.” The human went to the sink and proceeded to wash up while Krista finished her shower. While Jeff used the minty-smelling soap to clean his upper body, he noticed his future wife exiting the shower and slipping into the drying booth. With her fur all soaking wet, her body outline was very humanoid in appearance, with the exception of her ears and tail.

The Earther gave thought to the possibility of having offspring with Krista. How would their children appear? What characteristics would they gain from each parent? Well, that information would only be discovered if they actually managed to procreate at some point in time.

Na'Krista had finished drying her pelt and she was getting dressed when Jeff returned to the sleeping area to join her in dressing. The female Elazi had put on a narrow wrap of dark red cloth that covered her breasts and a thong of sorts, what might have been underwear. She turned, smiled and made a request of her future *One Love*.

“If you would, please, wear one of your kilts this evening?” she asked.

“Okay. I’ll wear my regimental Black Watch tartan. That one always looks good, no matter how hastily I packed it away.”

“You don’t need to be too formal.” Krista offered up.

“Very well.” Jeff replied.

While Jeff dressed, Na'Krista put on a loincloth, one that had some very fancy embroidery on both front and back, using a very wide, sturdy belt to hold it in place. There was a cutout in the back of it to allow clearance for her tail. She then put on a vest, one that had needlework similar to her other garment. The loincloth hung down to her knees and the vest was almost as long.

“That looks very nice.” Jeff commented.

“It is a semi-formal attire.” she pointed out. “Once I fix my hair, we can be off to dinner.”

The human male watched on as the Elazi femme did up her hair in the mirror, very similar to the way an Earth-bound female might do. The more time that he spent around the Elazi, the more Jeff had come to understand them. All in all, they were not that much different from his people.

“Are you staring at me?” Krista questioned, looking at her intended with a slight smile on her lips.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to stare.” Jeff offered up. “I was just thinking, despite the distances between our worlds, we are not that much different.”

“There are some differences.” Krista offered up. “I will agree with your observation, though. Our two races have a lot in common.”

Na’Kesta arranged the plates on the table once more, getting them positioned to her likings. She then arranged the glasses just so, per the old customs. This was not a high formal affair but it was an important one. One that meant volumes to their family. This was an old ritual, one that dated back to *The Awakening* and one worth carrying out properly.

The pale femme made a lap of the room, turning on some mood lighting that mimicked candles, making sure they were all illuminated before she extinguished the main lighting. Na’Kesta then powered up the lighting for the table; some carefully placed overhead fixtures that created pools of light on the eating surface.

Looking up at the chronograph on the wall, she smiled, knowing the room was ready just in time for the occupants and the events to follow.

Jeffrey was amused at the reactions his kilt was garnering, since it wasn’t that much different from an Elazi killentra. Some seem to know what his garb was and others seemed intrigued by the eight yards of sixteen ounce worsted wool wrapped around his waist. They were equally intrigued by his sporran, a black leather hunting style piece. The only part of his gear that no being had questioned was his Sgian Dhubh, or ‘Black Knife’ that was tucked into his right sock.

He and Krista had crossed paths with Jo-Linn again and the spotted female Pak had commented on the kilt. Apparently, she had one coming up from the planet for her mate. When Jeff had commented on the issue of a tail, he was told the tailor was putting a special tail vent in the kilt, per her request. That he wanted to see.

Jeff was somewhat concerned when they walked past several cafeterias but he had an idea something was up, since his future wife was being entirely too quiet and somewhat evasive. The truth of the matter was apparent when they approached a door marked for ranking officials only.

Krista keyed in a code, the door opened and they stepped into a room that had a very warm,

inviting feeling to it. Inside were his future in-laws, Tegram, Na'Kayla and Hammet. There was one more pale hued male present, one Jeff did not know. They greeted the ones that Jeff knew, then Na'Krista introduced the unknown male.

“Jeff, this is my younger brother, Kalram Keth. Kal, this is my future *One Love*, Jeffrey Andrews.” Kalram smiled and offered his right hand to Jeff in the way of an Earther.

“Ah, to meet the human that owns Krista's heart. It is good to meet you, Jeffrey.”

“Kalram, it is good to meet you, too.” Jeff replied as he shook his future borthor-in-laws' hand. “I didn't know you would be here on *The Korrallid*.”

“I arrived yesterday on the *Dresh-An*, a supply ship. I regret my *One Love* Sa'Kimsa is not able to be here. She was regrettably detained when the primary waste pumps aboard the *Dresh-An* began acting up.”

“I see,” Jeff mused. “So, are you a soldier?” he asked.

“Oh no,” Kal replied, waving his hands in a dismissing manner. “I am what you would call an electrician. I hold the prime technician, um, you would probably say, the lead position on the *Dresh-An*.” After looking at his father, Kelram continued. “Since there are enough of us present, we will take this opportunity to officially welcome you into House Keth'lan.”

Na'Krista led Jeff over to the head of the table, where a clothing stand was positioned. On that stand was a vest, adorned like identical to the clothing the others in the room wore and what looked to be a large panel of cloth that was similarly embellished. Tegram took the honors of helping Jeff don the vest while Krista tucked the top of the cloth into the waist of Jeffrey's kilt and straightened it out.

“Now I see why you had me wear a kilt.” Jeff mused.

Krista smiled. “You would have been suspicious if I had asked you to wear the traditional semi-formal House Keth'lan garb.”

“I would have.”

“Do not worry,” Kamram offered up with a smile, “We have a full *Trasdera* for you. It will go with your *Visdera* just fine. The length is perfect, too.”

The assembled beings sat down at the table, then Kam poured some dark Elazi wine into a large metal bowl. He stood up from the table, lifted the vessel and spoke up.

“Today is a very important day, the day that House Keth'lan welcomes a new member and sub-house to our ranks. Jeffrey Alan Andrews, Patriarch of House Andrews, we have gave thought to your request to join House Keth'lan.

“House Keth'lan has primarily been a warrior house, even though our wealth comes from farming and light industry. Jeffrey Alan Andrews, you are a good fit in our house, since you too

are a warrior. We are also honored that you are doctor, a noble art.

“All present that will sanction Jeffrey Alan Andrews' admission into House Keth'lan and recognize his Sub-House that will be known as House Andrews'lan, please stand and welcome our new member.”

Everyone at the table stood with no exceptions, so Kamram continued.

“Jeffrey Alan Andrews of House Andrews'lan, welcome into House Keth'lan.”

Kam drank from the dish of wine, then he passed it to Jeff. After the Earther took a sip, it was passed around the table. Once the offering had returned to Kam, he passed it back to Jeff and spoke again.

“You are now an official member of House Keth'lan, Jeffrey. We may not be the oldest or largest House on Elazia but we are possibly the strongest politically.” After a pause to look at his wife momentarily, the Keth'lan patriarch continued. “It would be our hope that your military expertise would be shared with our politicians, with the thought that your knowledge will help alleviate future wars.”

The females served the meal, which seemed very rich and decadent to Jeff. The soup was very thick, if not a bit too spicy and the roast, something that was called a Targ, seemed very good, almost like venison. Even the dessert was unusual in that it seemed to be some sort of a fruit pie. Whatever this Kebra fruit was, it seemed to be like a peach, from what he could see.

That evening, after much wine and what could only be described as white lightning had been consumed, Kam asked Jeff to make a speech. The slightly intoxicated Earth man stood, straightened his clothing and pulled his thoughts together.

“I am honored to be admitted into House Keth'lan,” he began, “If someone would have told me just three short months ago, that I would fall in love with an alien and be right here, celebrating my future joining to her aboard a spaceship in orbit around Earth, I would have told that person that they had lost their mind.”

Jeff had Krista stand with him, then he put his arm around her waist as he continued his speech.

“I am deeply in love with Na'Krista and I know she feels the same about me. I hope and pray that our joining will be an asset to House Keth'lan and to the Elazi race as a whole. May peace visit all of us often.”

Jeff then lifted his glass and offered a toast, glad that Na'Krista was there to help hold him upright.