

*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, Gillat Deen'lan, Marlett Blane'lan along with the characters Torvald and Victoria Svensen are the properties of Kellan Meig'h and may not be used without express written permission.*

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## “Scribe”

by Kellan Meig'h

### Chapter Thirteen

#### “Uncomfortable Situation”

Krista looked up from her work assignment and sighed, thoroughly disgusted with the situation. Poor Hallett Trasc was probably completely bored out of his mind from watching over them, to the point that he had taken a dust wipe and began to get this little errant pile of dust or that little spot overlooked by his charges. And just as she had thought, the armor, set up for vacuum incursions, did not make their job any easier. The only saving grace was the fact they could be on a private talk-around channel, using the second of three channels available to them via the suit's integrated intercom system.

Jeff turned to look at his future *One Love* and asked a question;

“Krista, is that bulkhead one-seventy up ahead?”

“Yes, that it the end of our zone.”

“So, we've only been at this maybe five hours or so.” Jeff mused.

“The duct was sort of clean where we had been yesterday. Wait until we have our one day off. This ducting will be a dusty mess.”

“I guess you're right.”

while Jeff waited for a wipe to cycle through the cleaning device, he watched Krista go back to cleaning the ductwork. He could hear the irritation in her voice and she was not wrong to feel that way. Some being or beings had make an attempt at taking their lives so she had a reason to be upset. Just the same as he was upset by the situation. Even though they were wearing armor that kept them safe from another depressurization, the suit itself didn't allow for unrestricted movement, making things that much more difficult.

*That* little issue had made for an interesting day, especially when he had taken his first tumble wearing armor. Although it only hurt his pride, he thought Krista was going to bust a gut laughing at him trying to stand back up. At least Hallett had graciously helped him back to his feet.

Krista had explained to Jeff how the land and her home had become part of House Keth'lan and how House Trent'lan had been very upset by that. As far as she could see, it must have been something personal concerning her land. Why would someone kill other beings over something as

trivial as three hundred and eight units of land? If it was that important to House Trent'lan, why didn't Dassan Trent just ask for it back in trade for some other plot of land? A land trade was not all that unusual on Elazia, from what he had been told.

On one hand, it seemed stupid to fight over this land, since this was her Grandmother Sa'Kayla's land to do with as she pleased. Krista was pretty sure the stipulations were put in place so she would join with a male and take an active hand in running the property. Jeff didn't think this was too much for a grandmother to ask of her least granddaughter.

On the other hand, maybe there was some underlying reason in attempting to regain ownership of the property. Well, very soon they would be settling in to run the property full-time, and maybe that would give him a good cover to use while he snooped out a reason why House Trent'lan would want that land back. If there was some significance to the land, he would find it out.

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Later that evening, Hallett Trasc had suggested to Krista that they needed to go blow off a little steam and unwind. The head trooper could see the pent-up irritation that Na'Krista held as they took care of the ducting. They had went back to Jeff and Krista's suite, dressed up just a bit and headed off to a place known only as "Bulkhead One-Ten."

Jeff stepped into the small, non-descript establishment behind his future wife and stopped cold, taking in the general feel of the room. It had the appearance of some place that a Viking *Jarl* would have called home. The tables were made of rough-hewn wood with benches and plainly built chairs to sit on. Holographic projectors did a wonderful job of simulating burning torches and the wait-staff were dressed in what seemed to be proto-Norse garb.

The trio took a table off to the side and Hal set himself up to be able to overlook the crowd from his seat. A waitress appeared and took their orders, with Krista ordering something for them called *Escra'la*, a Targ meat sandwich for each one of them that he didn't quite understand what she asked to be added on the side and a tall iced orange juice for the Dah'Trat warrior.

"Nice place you have here." Jeff commented.

Hal nodded. "It was designed to emulate our planet, some three-thousand years in our past. Your Vikings would have been very much at home on Elazia at that time. That's why I brought you here."

"I like it." Krista offered up.

Their drinks came quickly and Jeff learned that *Escra'la* was another very potent drink, made with Orlem berry wine as a base. It was amber in color, fruity in flavor and it had a burn that went all the way down. Apparently, his future farm had over fifty square units of Orlem berry trees in full production. According to the waitress, the bottle of Orlem wine stated it was from Keth'lan production.

"Has a kick to it." Jeff commented.

“Orlem wine is over one-quarter alcohol if it's fermented correctly.” Hal pointed out. “It can be distilled into *White Fire* which is eighty percent alcohol.”

Jeff thought about that for a moment. “Does House Keth'lan have any distilleries?”

Na'Krista smiled. “My, I mean what will be *our* property has a distillery. It is not very big but we do a good volume each year. Father's distillery is much larger but I like to think that my distillers make a superior product.”

“I see. Sounds like a little family rivalry going on, if you ask me.” After a moment, he had to ask, “Is our *White Fire* available onboard ship so I might sample it?”

Krista got up from the table and went to the bar where she spoke to the keep. He nodded, brought forth two shot glasses and filled them with a bright white fluid. The femme Elazi signed for the refreshments and returned with them in her hands.

“This *White Fire* is from Father's distillery. Please drink carefully.” she directed.

Jeff took a small, cautious sip of the spirits, carefully sampling the flavors on his tongue. That is, until his tongue began to protest from having been assaulted by the very potent liquor. As if on cue, the waitress returned to their table with a tray covered in glasses of ice water. Quickly sipping the refreshment offered, that seemed to put out most of the intense burning.

“Now that has some kick!” the Earther blurted out.

“It is an acquired taste.” Krista offered up.

“It's not that bad,” Jeff retorted, taking another sip of his water afterward to try to kill off the residual fire in his mouth. “I can taste the berries, and maybe a smoky maple flavor, like it was aged in wood casks. There's some component that seems like cinnamon and maybe a black pepper hinted in there. It does have a burn, though. Worse than that *Escra'la*.”

“It is aged in fire charred Sedrim wood barrels and I'm surprised you noticed that. I think you will enjoy running our farm, winery and distillery,” the future Mrs. Andrews put on the table. “It will be a great new adventure for us.”

The wait staff brought them some open-faced sandwiches that had chopped spiced *Targ* meat on toasted bread, a shredded vegetable like lettuce that was on top of the meat, some tomato slices and a mild, sweet dressing on top. On the side were french fries, done to perfection with a fiery dipping sauce to go with them.

While Jeff enjoyed his meal, he thought about the situation; Here he was, on an alien space craft, headed to a planet that he knew very little about. His intended sat across from him, a female that he loved deeply but again, he knew very little of her past. They were on somewhat even ground, though. She probably knew about as much about him as he did about her.

Once they had finished their meals, Krista decided she wanted to dance. She led Jeff onto the small dance floor off to the side and the house band shifted instruments from mostly woodwinds

to stringed instruments of various types. One musician that had a Taylor acoustic guitar began the next song, something that seemed familiar. Once they had played a somewhat modified introduction, the tune became recognizable; "Stairway To Heaven."

This was the first time Jeff had shared a dance with his future wife. She snuggled up to him, allowing him to hold her close to his body. Jeff noted just how fluidly his intended moved, quite unlike a human female.

"I didn't know you could dance." Krista commented.

"I can dance a little, I'm just not very proficient at it."

"But you haven't stepped on my feet, very unlike an Elazi male." she commented.

"Are you saying Elazi males can't dance?"

"Most cannot."

"Well, I would guess this is a treat for you."

"I'm glad my future *One Love* can dance because I love to dance."

While they danced to several songs, Jeff gave thought to this; Even though they were totally alien races, there were many things that were the same. Maybe being an Elazi citizen would be a good thing. With the exception of the attempt on his life, this had been a very nice passage. In fact, that was the only thing that bothered him at this point; someone had taken a shot at ending their lives. Well, if what Hallett said was true, the perpetrators would most likely be in custody before they reached Elazia.

Jeff was curious about something, so while they danced to a slow song, he had to ask what seemed like an important question; "So, Krista, who's running our enterprise while we're not there?"

"We have employees that run the operations. Most of them have been with the facilities since my Grandmother owned the property."

"So, it is a profitable operation?"

"The only reason I'm serving is the fact that it was compulsory." she stated. "Well, not the reason that I re-enlisted. I have already told you why I did that."

"And I understand completely."

"I'm glad you do." Krista hugged Jeff and settled her head against his shoulder. "I hope this all works out for us."

"Why would you say that now?" Jeff questioned. He had felt that Na'Krista had been very positive concerning their imminent joining. Now she seemed somewhat apprehensive.

“Well, I'm concerned you might not want to be joined to me after that incident in the ductwork. I was afraid you might think it to be a bad omen.”

“Krista, if you think that little incident would run me off, and I will admit that while it was scary, I will tell you that you're wrong. I will not leave you.”

“I was sure . . .” Jeff interrupted her train of thought.

“Krista, I love you more than you could ever know. I love you enough to leave my homeworld and live wherever we end up, just to be with you.”

The buff-colored female looked up at her future husband. “You would? I mean, leave your world behind?”

“I'm here, aren't I?” Jeff kissed her on the lips, then he continued with his feelings. “I would leave all of that behind in a heartbeat. You are the one and only thing in this universe that I care for.”

“Jeff . . .” she started to say something, but when she looked up at him, he could see she was ready to start crying. Krista pulled his head down so she could kiss him, then she held him tightly. “Let's go sit down.” she asked in a small voice before leading him by the hand, back to their table.

They sat down at their table, Krista buried her face in his chest and did her best to get her emotions under control. She didn't know why she was second-guessing herself, since Jeff had professed his love to her multiple times. Maybe she *was* afraid of losing him.

She was going to say something to Jeff when a voice, loud and gravelly, garnered their attention.

“You! Earth Man!” a pale gray Elazi male shouted at them. When Jeff looked over at him, the male continued. “What gives you the right to join with one of our females? You are not worthy!”

Jeff stood to approach the male and defuse the situation. “Listen, I hold you no ill will.” he stated.

“I hold ill will toward you, Earther, alien!” the male shot back. “You and your kind are not worthy!”

“Whoa, fella. Let's not get hasty, here.” Jeff said as he sized the male up. He was just a bit taller than the Earth man but it was clear the Elazi was in better shape.

“What? You think yourself worthy?” the male asked with a surprised look on his face.

Several security police officers had showed up at the doorway to the pub but Hallett had held them off, asking them to least hold back until it looked like it would be turning into a bar-wide brawl.

Jeff was going to make his attempt at defusing the situation. “Now listen, I don't know you but

Na'Krista and I are going to be joined . . .” the aggressor interrupted Jeff.

“So, you think yourself worthy to join with this beautiful female before us? Show me you're worthy, Earther!”

Before Jeff could move, the male had taken a run at him and tackled him around the waist, taking them both to the floor. Once they were that close, Jeff could smell the alcohol on his breath. Using his military training, Jeff managed to use his momentum to toss the aggressor on over his head and onto the floor.

The Elazi male surprised Jeff by getting to his feet first and taking the unfortunate human to task. Before Jeff could dodge it, a right cross sent him to the floor.

“Good move, Earther, but not good enough!” the male spat out, grabbing Jeff by the shirt to bring him back up for more punishment. What the Elazi male did not expect was a martial arts-type move, an open palm to the chin. That staggered the attacker and made him let go of Jeff, so the Earther added a left handed sucker punch for good measure. That didn't seem to have as much effect as Jeff thought it should.

“That was better, human! Now show me your best!” the pale one put forth, smiling evilly at the focus of his aggression.

The fight in earnest was on, the two combatants giving it their best. It was obvious that Jeff's military training might have made things even, since the Elazi male was far stronger than he. For a while the pale one was on top, then Jeff would rally back. At some point there seemed to be some betting going on, too.

Eventually, the Elazi male had Jeff by the shirt front, lining up to administer a punch but what he didn't see coming was Jeff's right uppercut. That landed just a bit before an Elazi right cross took Jeff's chin to task. Jeff hit the floor, sprawled out on his back and the pale one ended up on one knee nearby, shaking his head to clear the cobwebs.

The room hushed as the gray one got to his feet and went to stand over this fallen opponent. What nobody expected to see was a hand put out to help the fallen human back to his feet. Jeff accepted the help, and everyone seemed surprised when the Elazi male began to laugh.

“I want everyone present to know,” the gray warrior put forth so everyone could hear, “I Dallen Frain'lan, do hereby deem this human worthy.” He then clasped Jeff by the shoulders. “Anyone wants to question your worthiness, you send them to me for clarification.”

Dallen helped Jeff back to his table and even held Jeff's chair for him. He then shouted across the bar that was still almost silent, “Bartender, bring us some bheer!”

Once Dallen had sat down with them, Na'Krista gave the gray one a scowl. “Dallen Frain'lan, you just show up from out of nowhere like a bad copper coin and proceed to beat up my future *One Love!* What the blazes is that all about?”

“Na'Krista, I did this for a reason.” the gray ships electrician quietly put on the table. “Your

father tipped me off. If I had not done this, publicly deeming Jeffrey worthy of your affections, there are those on this ship, *The Old School*, that would have used him for a punching bag." He then turned to Jeff. "I hope I didn't hurt you too badly, Jeffrey Andrews'lan. I had to make it look real."

"I'll be sore in the morning."

"As will I." Dallen replied. "You really are a worthy opponent. That palm-thing to the chin . . . that really staggered me."

"It's an old Earth fighting technique. You use the heel of your hand. Transfers more energy that way." He showed Dallen how to hold his hand to exert the most energy transfer.

"I will have to remember that." the gray one put forth.

"I made out well," Hallett mused as he sat down with his charges. He had a big handful of Elazi paper currency in his hands that he was counting.

"What were the odds?" Dallen asked.

"Fifty to one that you would deem Jeff worthy and two to one that you wouldn't."

"How much did you bet?" Krista asked carefully.

"Five hundred Crown against. I saw a good sucker bet in the making. Jeffrey's actions when we went after that Rogue Army commander made me suspect that he would be a worthy opponent."

"That's twenty-four thousand and five hundred Crown you made on that wager!" Krista blurted out.

"And that is enough to buy a new vehicle once we get to Elazia." he put forth with a smile.

"Why would you need a new vehicle?" Krista asked. "You're a guard that rarely has his own free time."

"I am thinking of retiring." the ebony male put on the table. "I have several recruits on Elazia that are good enough, so any one of them could fill out an empty slot in Orange Detachment. I am sure there would be several of my squad that would step up and take over as Orange One. Marlett would be my choice for that position."

Jeff was curious. "So, what would you do once you retired from military duty, if I might ask?"

"I have studied my options." he replied. "I have a family member that will be retiring from an agricultural station coordinator's position shortly. His position will be open and I plan to apply for it. I am sure I would be given preferential treatment, based on my military service."

Krista spoke up. "Hallett, are you talking about Merrett Trasc'lan? Is he related to you?"

“He is my father.” the dark one offered up. “I do hope I might receive some preferential treatment in the matter because I'm related to him and you know my qualifications.”

“Krista, what's going on?” Jeff asked.

The buff-colored femme gave her future husband a crooked smile. “Merrett is my station coordinator. I was not aware he was going to retire on me, though.”

“We were hoping to surprise you.” the dark warrior admitted.

“Well, this is a surprise.” Krista agreed. “I would have thought Merrett would have contacted me first.”

“He is waiting with that bit of news until you arrive at your home. I think I have spoiled the surprise, though.”

“Hallett, you may have spoiled the surprise but you know what, if you want the job, it's yours.” Jeff stated with a wide smile. “I hope I'm not speaking out of turn here, I'm sure Na'Krista will agree with me on this.”

“I agree with Jeffrey.” she confirmed, patting the tall Elazi on the back of his hand. “Consider yourself hired.”

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Later that evening in their suite, Krista prepared to administer an old-fashioned medicinal cure to the various parts of her future husband's body that had been taken to task by Dallen. They had pried the lid off of a roughly one gallon pail full of some thick paste-like material, used a spatula to scrape some up and the femme Elazian was currently working it in her hands to soften and heat it up.

“I don't see how that stuff is going to work.” Jeff offered up.

“It will soften to a consistency that I can spread out onto your body.” she replied. He watched carefully, noting it did seem to be thinning some. Na'Krista could already see the bruises coming up so she transferred some material from her hand onto that spatula and spread a thick layer over the largest bruise on Jeff's back.

“I can feel it heating up.” the Earther commented.

“It will become very warm in a bit.” she countered.

Each time she spread some material out, she retrieved about the same amount from the pail to add to the softened batch she held. By the time she was done with his back, practically the whole thing was covered in this amber-colored paste.

She worked on his chest and upper arms, then his left hip and thigh. Jeff mentioned his right wrist hurt, so she gave that a layer of paste, too. She then stepped back and smiled, thinking how



funny her future *One Love* looked.

She scraped the remainder of the material off of her hand, then she began to wrap Jeff in what looked like an Elazi version of Vetwrap bandages that were elastic and only seemed to adhere to themselves, not to his skin. Krista was being careful not to get wrinkles in her work, so after a half-hour of effort, Jeff's injuries were taken care of.

"This sounds odd, but I think I'm feeling better already," Jeff commented, looking at himself in the mirror. "How long do I leave it on for and I guess more importantly, how will I get this stuff off of me?"

"I'll cut through the bandaging tomorrow evening and you can stand in the shower with the water set very hot, as hot as you can stand it. It will melt off, leaving you feeling refreshed."

Earlier in the day, Marlett had found them a free-standing privacy screen that he had positioned to block views into the sleeping alcove from the rest of the suite. Now that they had a bit of privacy, Krista stripped down and put on a thin night shirt for bed, taking a moment afterward to put up her hair and place a sleeping cap on her head. She then helped Jeff to lay down, since the wrappings around his torso, hip and thigh made it hard for him to bend and flex. Once she had him covered with a light sheet, she joined him in bed.

"This goo has a nice minty smell to it," he commented while he poked at his bandages with his left hand, being able to move it freely because it was his mostly unfettered one.

"I like it, too. It's nice without making my nose itch," she admitted.

"So, how do you know Dallen?" Jeff wanted to know.

"He was my father's adjutant on Elazia for a number of years," Krista allowed. "When I was sixteen, Dallen resigned his commission and struck out for the equator to mine gold. I actually do not know if he fared well but now he works as a facilitator."

"facilitator? Explain that to me," Jeff asked while he tried to make his pillow fluff up one-handed.

"A facilitator '*facilitates*' things that do not have normal channels to go by or have an unusual sequence of events not covered by standard law and custom," she put forth. "Let's say you want to import some Trellian brandy. It is not illegal to export off of Trellia and it is not exactly illegal to import onto Elazia. It will have to come through Customs on Pharrpoint station and be declared, where it is patently illegal and would be subject to confiscation."

She rolled over to look at her love interest and fix his pillow for him. "A good facilitator would hold talks with Customs on Pharrpoint station on the shipper's behalf and work out a monetary exchange, sort of a fine in a way. They get their credits, you get your brandy, everyone is happy."

"That sounds like an interesting line of work," Jeff mused.

"It is a dangerous line of work," Krista corrected. "There have been times, when even a good

facilitator does not work out every last detail right to everyone's satisfaction, some being from one side would perceive a 'shortage' in the deal. That's when they come looking for you with a vibroknife to discuss that shortage.”

“I understand how that could happen.” Jeff put forth. “Well, scratch that one off my list of jobs to hold on Elazia.”

They settled in and Krista used the controls at the head of the bed to turn down the lights in the sleeping alcove to a low setting for them. She then activated a music player and found a channel playing soft woodwind music. Setting the music to a low setting, she then pulled up the sheet over herself and tried to get some sleep.

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Kamram was sitting at a video terminal, having a quiet discussion with a contact back on Elazia. The gray Elazi male on the screen, known only as Tal, was relaying some information he had worked to uncover for the Ambassador Prime.

“Kam, I think you have two problems aboard *The Flagship Korrallid*. There are *Old School* operatives that I can name off for you and there seems to be a contingency of Tah'Nash, too.” Tal explained.

“I am more worried about the Tah'Nash.” Kamram stated. “House Trent'lan is directly associated with them, even though the House head vehemently denies all ties to them. I still think this to be the work of Al'Dassen, although I have no solid evidence to present to Tal Hassanai Senate. I have part of my Orange Detachment watching Krista and Jeff but I fear that will not be enough.”

“You are right to have those fears, my old friend.” Tal put forth. “I will do what I can from my end. I have several operatives that I can put into action for you. I will send you their dossiers by secured channel.”

“Thank you, Tal. I owe you more than you could understand.”

“Kam, I'm sure I understand, since I have three small ones of my own. I will have my operatives begin covert surveillance with the orders to step into view if need be.”

The buff-toned male ended the conversation, put his terminal on standby and went into his bed chambers. Kam undressed, climbed into the bed with Na'Kesta and tried his best to find some sleep. It truly bothered him that this issue had surfaced again. Whoever was behind this, and he suspected Dassen Trent'lan was behind this, would pay for this. Possibly with their life. This time, there would be no House Senate hearing that would give the perpetrator a simple fine to pay off. This would be handled outside normal channels.

Flexing his claws to their limit, he hoped it was Dassen at the heart of this matter. He was positive it was that bastard that had killed Sa'Kayla so many years ago. Because of that, Kam would take great pleasure in making him suffer for ending the life of such a wonderful person.

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Marlett woke up, or it was more like he came to, prone on the floor, face down. His vision was blurry, his mouth was dry and the back of his head felt like it had been caved in. The room was spinning on him and it was hard to keep down the contents of his stomach.

A few feet from him, Hallett lay on his back as if he had been knocked over or had fallen away from the door to the suite. The leader of Orange Detachment still had a Neural Disruptor in one hand and an Impulse Pistol laying by the other. He was not moving.

“Hal! Hal!” the junior member of the detachment shouted weakly, hoping to stir his leader. When that didn’t work, he crawled over to the prone body and checked for a pulse. That’s when he found a dart embedded in his superior’s neck. Checking himself, he found one stuck in his clothes by his shoulder, unactivated.

“Orange Detachment! Converge on my location! Emergency Level Alpha!” Marlett ordered into his comm link as loud as he could while he checked for another dart, hoping his squad would make it here quickly. Another dart was found by the weakened warrior, stuck in the side of his face, so he ripped it out while he prepared himself for what might lay ahead. He then crawled to the young couple’s sleeping alcove only to make a startling discovery;

Krista and Jeff were missing.