

The characters Jeffrey Andrews, 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, Sa'Densa Nasia Andrews'lan (nee Deen'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.

Copyright© 2012 - 2014 Kellan Meig'h All rights reserved, both USA and World.

“Scribe”

by Kellan Meig'h

Chapter Fifteen

“Pharrpoint Station”

Jeff, Krista, Na'Kesta and one-half of Orange Detachment waited patiently for the air lock of the utility shuttle *Cholaine* to cycle, allowing them access to Pharrpoint Station. *The Flagship Korrallid* had arrived the evening before and Na'Kesta suggested a shopping trip was in order. Jeff had no clue what he would find that he would want to purchase but a chance to visit and explore an actual space station was something he wouldn't pass up.

The door finally cycled, so Hallett stepped onto the station, followed by the remainder of the group. Just down the corridor, the Comeri equivalent of a Customs checkpoint presented itself. The checkpoint was run by an Elazi female, a Pak'Saa'naani male and a being that must have been a Bil, according to what Krista had told Jeff. The Bil male, just a bit shorter than Jeff, greeted them as they approached the counter.

“Welcome to Pharrpoint Station,” he stated in clearly enunciated Elazi, “Please show your credentials and if you are armed without a station or military permit, please prepare to surrender your weapons.”

Na'Krista, who was garbed in her military dress armor, presented her credentials to the Bil attendant. He scanned them with a small hand-held device, looked at his screen, then handed them back to her. Jeff did the same, offering up his credentials that had been created for him just hours earlier on *The Korrallid*, and waited for his clearance.

“You are Hoo-man from the planet called Earth?” the lavender-scaled being mused as he entered some information by hand into the system. “We have never had your kind aboard Pharrpoint, Jeffrey Andrews'lan. My name is Talan Escree, Second Adjunct of Pharrpoint Security. It is very pleasing to meet a new species. I see you have been issued a weapons permit by an Elazi High Ambassador. What type of weapon are you carrying?”

“It is a weapon from my homeworld, a percussion ignition projectile weapon.”

The scaled one 'smiled' at Jeff. “May I examine the weapon in question?”

Jeff removed his 1911-pattern Colt from his improvised holster attached his armor, removed the magazine and racked the slide open before handing it to the attendant. Talan examined the weapon, had Jeff close the slide, then he put it under a scanner with the magazine. After a few moments, he gave the weapon back to Jeff.

“That is a very common pattern for projectile weaponry,” the Bil Adjunct offered up. “It is very close in design to a Saa'naani Quizzledaire MKX close combat piece. Please refrain from discharging it on the station. I am sure, while it would not puncture the outer skin, it would do a great deal of damage.”

Jeff nodded. “I will take your advice.”

“Please enjoy your stay on Pharrpoint.”

Once the small party had taken care of their legalities and pleasantries, they headed off toward the retail and dining area of the station. As soon as they were out of hearing range of the checkpoint, Hallett made his feelings known;

“I know there are many that do not care for the Bil race as a whole. I realize they have agreed to cease hostilities, but they still bother many of our race.”

“I agree,” Na'Kesta put forth. “All of those hostilities are now history. We should let it go.”

“Yes, we should,” Hal stated. “It's hard to do so, but I think you are right. We should let go. Allowing it to fester will only lead to more death and destruction.”

The group made the journey down a long hall that was lined by what seemed to be operations offices, to the juncture that the hall widened and finally opened onto the retail and entertainment area of Pharrpoint. It was five floors high and it seemed to go on forever. The main promenade was lined on each side by shops of all description but there was one that caught the female Elazi's attention. Jeff was guided by Krista to an establishment that seemed to be a clothing shop for females.

They went inside and from all appearances, he was correct. There was clothing of all manner, from utilitarian to erotic, all under one ceiling.

“We are doomed,” Hal muttered just loud enough for Jeff to hear, giving the Earther a nod and wink to confirm the situation.

“It doesn't look too bad from my standpoint,” Jeff stage-whispered back. “Back home, my late wife would take me into some of these types of shops. Eventually, I would just find a seat and nod in the affirmative to anything she tried on to model for my approval.”

“Did she ever figure out you were just doing that to please her?” the ebony male asked.

“I think she knew.”

“Ah, I see.” the ebony male replied. “I think that's a seating area to our right.” he added.

The two males sat down while the remainder of Orange Detachment hovered around just outside the front door to the establishment. Meanwhile, Na'Krista and her mother began to

examine the clothes, occasionally holding them up to see them better. Jeff could tell they were definitely power shoppers, quickly taking the inventory to task.

"Excuse me," a blue-scaled Bil female spoke softly, taking the two males by surprise, "Would you like some refreshments?"

"If you have something sweet, non-alcoholic and non-stimulant laden, we would be honored to accept your offer." Hal replied.

The female said something to the ebony warrior in her native tongue, then bowed deeply before she departed for an area behind a screen.

"She seems nice enough," Jeffrey commented after the scaled femme had went behind the screen. From what he could see, the Bil race were very humanoid, having a build that seemed very human in design. The attendant's facial features were somewhat muted, with a less pronounced nose and very thin lips. Her eyebrows and hair were a white tone, making them stand out from her medium azure scales. Her ears were smaller and they seemed to be set a bit lower on the head than a human's ears were. Her eyes, however, seemed very human with a copper colored iris.

"She is civilian." Hallett replied. "The civilian Bil are some very nice beings. It's the military types that are the ones my race does not care for. The war and all that."

"I think I understand." Jeff stated. Before he could elaborate further, they were interrupted by the Bil female again, bringing them refreshments on a small portable table. That was when Jeff noticed the fact that she had four fingers and two thumbs, one just a bit smaller than the other.

The blue-hued femme placed the table between them, uncovered a plate of snacks and poured them some liquid refreshment before she bowed and went to tend to the two Elazi females. Jeff sampled the magenta-colored beverage, then the small filled pastry segment. He smiled, enjoying the flavors teasing his taste buds.

"Do your refreshments suit you?" the black Elazi male asked.

Jeff nodded. "Hal, to think that I would find a fruit punch made from what must be an Earth-manufactured drink mix, and of all things, Strawberry Pop-Tarts on a station out in the middle of our Galaxy, well, it just boggles the mind."

"This thing you call a Pop-Tart. It is very tasty." the leader of Orange Detachment commented.

"It isn't normally cut up into four pieces like this." Jeff put forth.

Before the two males could discuss the matter further, Na'Krista made an appearance, wearing a full body suit of polished metal scales. There were several interlocking rings at her neck that flowed down into the suit, made of various sized steel segments almost like the scales on a fish. Down the front, the scales were wide bands that spanned over one-third of her torso, like a snake's belly. As she turned, the suit made a soft sizzling sound when the plates worked over one another.

The helmet on her head fit her nicely, generally following the curves of her cranium. The face guard seemed to be made of welded wire, allowing good forward vision. Her gloves were articulated metal, allowing her great dexterity. The gauntlets had three back-facing hooks per glove, possibly for use as weapons. The fingers were set up oddly, with only two fingers and thumb per glove. Krista was forced to put her index and middle fingers together in one sheath, then her ring and little fingers in the other. Although it looked like Jeff could wear the footwear if a pair existed in his size, even her boots looked to be made of the same polished metal material.

“This is an Ansi ceremonial fighting suit.” she offered up while she modeled it for the two males. “The Ansi fight with war hammers, so this suit was designed to absorb the impact without being damaged severely.”

“It looks heavy.” Jeff commented.

“It is not as heavy as it appears,” a voice behind them offered up. Jeff turned to see a very tall Bil, a deep pink hued female in full Bil combat armor, smiling at them. “Total weight may not be more than thirty Sem for a regulation fighting suit.”

She stepped around the chairs that the males were seated in and approached Krista, running her pale rose-colored hand over the armor, tugging at a scale here and there to judge the fit. “This suit fits you well,” she offered up to the much smaller Elazi femme, taking Krista's right hand in hers. “Grip my hand, strongly.” she requested.

“Okay,” the buff-colored female replied, slowly increasing her purchase on the Bil's appendage.

“Your gloves must fit correctly to be able to wield an Ansi war weapon properly,” the tall warrior female stated while she examined the grip being applied to her hand. “I would not change sizes of gloves. A smaller size would hamper your grip and a larger one would make the glove too loose.” She smiled at Krista and bowed slightly. “I am Second Shift Commander Anjra Mav, Station Security. When I observed you wearing that Ansi armor, you reminded me of myself, as a young whelping.”

“It is nice to meet you, Commander.” the buff-colored Elazi replied. “The males with me are Jeffrey Andrews and Sub-Commander Hallett Trasc.”

“I believe I have met Commander Trasc before.” Anjra offered up with a smile, then she turned to look at Jeff. “You are Comeri, If I am not mistaken.”

“I am from the planet Earth.” Jeffrey corrected. “I'm pleased to meet you, Commander Mav.”

“Ah, an Earther. I am very pleased to meet you.” The rose-hued female stated as she offered her hand to him. “I was sure you were Comeri. You really do appear to be Comerian.”

Jeff politely shook her hand. “The Comeri; are they on this station?”

“They built this station. The Cormerian race have been space-farers for longer than any other civilization can remember.” Anjra replied.

Hal spoke up after clearing his throat. "Do not let Anjra lead you to believe we do not know one another."

Anjra smiled widely. "I do know Hallett very well. I trained under him at the Elazi Ground Forces training center. He was my inspiration to become a security specialist." the femme Bil admitted.

The ebony hued Elazi stood and cleared his throat. "Jeffrey, Na'Krista, will you both excuse the two of us? I wish to speak with Specialist Mav privately."

"That would be fine." Jeff offered.

"We will be right here, shopping." Krista replied with a smile.

Hallett and Anjra stepped outside and walked a short distance to a small alcove between two businesses. Once out of view from prying eyes, they embraced and kissed one another with meaning. Once they had broke their embrace, Hal spoke up.

"Anjra, what are you doing here?" he asked.

"This is my employment. I am now commander of Second Shift on the station." she explained. "If I remember correctly, you were the one that prompted me to make something of myself. Well, here I am, in a position of authority. Have I not pleased you?"

"It pleases me greatly, Anjra. I am merely concerned about our future joining. Will you give up your position here to live with me on Elazia?" Hal had to know. It was clear this turn of events bothered the Elazi warrior.

"I have less than one Elazi rotation left on my assignment." Commander Mav admitted. "I look forward to returning to Elazia, the planet that I call my homeworld. I also look forward to our joining."

"As do I," Sub-Commander Trasc agreed. "I am concerned that we will be the first Elazi and Bil joining. I do not know how our union will be received."

"I think you worry too much. I am a full Elazi citizen, so what could they say to our joining?" Anjra put forth. In her heart, she hoped there would be no issues with their joining. Not long ago, a mixed joining had been negated by a House Senate, even though no laws would prevent it. Their joining hinged on this, that their request would not be negated. whether or not this would happen, would not be known to them until they officially asked for sanction. "When will you ask for your house to sanction our joining?" she wanted to know.

"I have sent a request to my House last week," Hal replied, knowing it might take a while to get an answer. "We must be patient, my future *One Love*."

Anjra looked at her timepiece strapped to her wrist frowning at what she observed. "I must be going. The next shift starts soon so I must be there to brief them."

The two lovers kissed once more, then Hallet watched his future mate head off to her duties. The ebony warrior was sad to see her go for now, but later on this cycle they would meet for last meal. That, he looked forward to.

By the time Hallet had returned to the shop and his charges, Na'Krista was modeling a Bil body harness. By Earth standards, the garment, if it could be called that, would have been considered lewd. The gloss black leather did cover her private bits and although there were yards of leather straps covering her pelt from her neck to her ankles, there was still a considerable amount of her buff-colored fur visible.

"What do you think?" Na'Krista asked her future husband while her mother adjusted the strapping encircling her daughter's body here and there. "You thought the Ansi garment looked heavy. Do you feel the same about this one?"

"I . . . I really don't know how to answer that." Jeff replied. "It is very sexy, well, erotic at the very least. I don't think you would want to wear that harness in public, though. It seems more like something that would be best worn at home or in the bedroom." He walked up to her and examined the harness closely, observing the rings, mounted to small stanchions at almost every strap juncture. He wondered what their original purpose was and mused about what could be done with them.

Krista smiled at his embarrassment. "This is perfectly acceptable on Elazia. I will not refute your personal opinion, however. I really think you need to get used to seeing scantily clad femmes once we have completed our voyage to what will be your future homeworld." she suggested with a smirk.

"You are probably right." Jeff agreed. "I will just have to get used to it."

While Krista and her mother went back to shopping, Jeff pondered what had been said; this was after all an alien culture that he was going to try to assimilate into. Things like clothing, or the lack thereof in public, were things he would have to wrap his mind around. At least he still felt at home in the Elazi culture, to some degree. He had even gotten used to the food and drink, including *Haad N'ga*. Jeff was still anxious about his meeting with the House Senate. Would he be accepted or would they show him the hatch to the next transport headed for Earth?

Later that 'day', after Krista and her mother had managed to spend about two thousand Crown between themselves, they had found a place on the upper-most level of Pharrpoint that served a decent approximation of hotdogs, potato chips and a drink that seemed to mimic Royal Crown Cola[®]. It was nice to sit down, relax and enjoy some conversation with his future family members. While Na'Kesta was recounting a rather embarrassing Na'Krista moment involving something called a skimmer board and a rather deep mud puddle, a smoke gray Elazi female sat down with them, quite unannounced.

"Good day Ambassador, Na'Krista, Commander." she greeted them, then she turned to Jeff. "I am Sa'Desna Deen'lan, Technician Level Five. Na'Krista was in my class on the Bil-Cmela

homeworld.” She extended her hand in an Earth gesture, awaiting his acceptance.

“Jeffrey Andrews, Patriarch of House Andrews'lan. It is nice to meet you.” he replied as he shook the dark femme's hand.

Sa'Densa smiled a devious-looking smile at Jeff. “I had heard Krista was joining to an Earther. I know I would make a better mate for you.” She then looked straight at Na'Krista and made her intentions known; “I, Sa'Densa Deen'lan, challenge you for the right to be joined to Jeffrey Andrews.”

“What?!?” the two Keth'lan females blurted out at once, obviously shocked by this.

“I will cite *Old World Provincial Laws* that allow me to challenge you. You must accept my challenge or relinquish your right to join with Jeffrey.” Sa'Densa put forth.

“Can she do that?” Jeff asked, pondering this situation. Sa'Densa was taller and more robustly built than his future *One Love*. He was concerned for her safety in a challenge and the possibility that he would have to join with another Elazi femme, not his chosen one.

Krista looked at him with a dejected look on her face. “Yes, she may challenge me. And I must accept her challenge.” She turned to the smoke gray femme and cleared her throat. “I accept your challenge. Full Bantra'saa'laa combat, all sharps in use.” she said with a malicious tone.

“Very w . . . well.” Sa'Densa replied, seeming to be shocked by the acceptance and the type of combat requested. “Tomorrow, nine-hundred, deck five, tournament bay two.”

Jeff watched the challenger walk off, then he turned to Krista; “Uh, what is a Bander . . .”

“Bantra'saa'laa.” she corrected. “It is kind of like that fictional Klingon weapon. Two grips, many edges, six points. Very easy to kill a being with one.”

“And you plan to fight her with that?” he wanted to know. This seemed suicidal at best. He wondered if there was another way to settle this.

“I will fight her.” Krista blurted out. “Densa has been a pain in my side, ever since we were young. She has always wanted what I had, even though her parents could buy her the whole province if she had wanted it. I will show her what I'm made of.”

At last meal, the family seemed somewhat subdued over the challenge, all except for Tegram. He seemed to be unfazed over the whole thing. He took a sip of his coffee, Kona blend, then looked over at his niece and addressed her.

“Na'Krista, just remember your training. You will prevail in this challenge.” he offered up.

“That is why I challenged her to full Bantra'saa'laa combat. She has no training that I know of.” the buff-colored femme replied. “She may have height and strength on me but I have training and speed. She will lose badly.”

Jeff took her hand and asked a very pertinent question; “Na’Krista, are you sure to can win?”

She frowned, then looked at her *One Love* with her reply; “I have to win. There is no other option.”

The human could see the uncertainty in her eyes. “What would happen if you didn't win?”

“I would have to forget about joining with you.” she answered softly. “Sa'Densa would claim you and you would be more of a pet to her, nothing more. It's not about joining with you, it's about hurting me.”

While they finished their meal in silence, Krista thought about the situation. Sa'Densa had tried to take away everything that Na’Krista found dear to her heart. Sa'Densa's family were rich enough that they could buy all of the province is they felt like it. I just didn’t make any sense to challenge for Jeffrey. None at all. Tomorrow, she would fight for her *One Love*. Fight to the death, if need be.

The next morning, Jeff assisted N’Krista in dressing as best he could, helping her to secure the ceremonial leather armor that only covered her torso front and back. She had on a short loincloth made from the same leather and a pair of knee boots that were laced up the back. The last pieces to adorn her body were laying on the bed, a pair of arm bracers made from that same leather.

The situation really bothered Jeff, to know his future *One Love* would have to fight another over him. What particularly bothered him was the actual weapon to be used. It bore some similarity to the Klingon Bat’leth, although the one he held the last evening seemed too heavy for him to use even as a defensive weapon.

The three tines on each end were razor sharp but the flat area in the middle, opposite the grip area was rounded to use as a striking weapon. The two long grip areas on the convex side were wrapped in some sort of synthetic material with a very high grip factor to it. Watching Na’Krista go through her training routine with her uncle Tegram, spinning, whirling and successfully blocking every blow sent her way, she made it look too easy to wield that cumbersome, heavy weapon. He had to remind himself that his future wife was nearly twice as strong as he. That was directly attributed to the higher gravity of her homeworld.

They had spent the 'night' on Pharrpoint Station, just to allow them some extra preparation time that would have been used up to shuttle over from *The Flagship Korrallid*. Krista decided to skip first meal altogether, having a tall cup of something that tasted like a cross between hot chocolate and Italian roast coffee with a splash of orange juice added in for her breakfast.

While they walked through the station to the arena, Jeffrey noticed the disturbance they were causing, most likely from the appearance of the femme Elazi carrying her Bantra'saa'laa in a ceremonial fashion. She had been very quiet this morning, even when her mother had arrived at their lodging to finish her preparations.

Na’Kesta had brought a small tote with her that contained some ceremonial fur coloring,

something that seemed very important to the proceedings. Krista had to be told to sit still several times while her parent carefully applied the bright purple coloring in a particular pattern to the left side of Krista's face, her left upper arm and left thigh. She then applied some bright purple lipstick on her daughter's lips, per the old customs of their planet.

The final touch gave Jeff the willies when Krista put some purple eyedrops in her eyes, looked down at the floor and blinked her eyes rapidly for a minute or so. When she looked back up at them, her eyes looked like they had a glossy opaque film over them. Kess assured him that she could see just fine, the reason for this was to keep Sa'Densa from seeing any change in her pupil size, giving away her thoughts.

They arrived at the designated Tournament Bay, an area that was possibly big enough to play Shinty on a regulation sized field. There were a number of others in attendance, including several Orange Detachment members and Anjra Mav. A ring had been marked out on the floor, some ten meters in diameter with a low curbing surrounding it. The surface looked like it was covered in ground cork that had been rolled smooth, compacted but not adhered to the flooring. Sa'Densa was already in the circle, waiting.

The challenger was painted in black designs, not that visible against her smoky gray fur. She had not used the drops so her pupils dilated at the sight of Krista stepping into the ring, betraying her emotions. It was clear she was nervous or possibly scared of the smaller femme. That went doubly so when Krista stopped about one meter from her and removed the six point covers from her weapon, making a show by throwing each one to the side without looking where they landed.

The crowd parted to allow three Elazi males in ceremonial robes to stand stoically at the edge of the arena, no emotion showing. The one in the middle looked at the others, then back at the two femmes.

Krista and Sa'Densa bowed to them, then faced one another. They touched the upper forks of their weapons together, then took two steps back. Na'Krista, by ceremonial rules, then made her request.

“Sa'Densa, I offer you the right to take back your challenge so you may avoid injury and shame. If you do not, then we must battle until one cannot continue or until one surrenders. I do not plan to surrender. You will have to greatly injure or kill me.”

“I do not retract my challenge. We will fight.” the dark hued femme replied.

“Very well.” Krista growled out. She then took up a fighting stance and readied herself.

Sa'Densa took up her stance and nodded, at which point an electronic gong rang out, signaling the beginning of the match.

Sa'Densa opened the engagement by attempting a downward swing on her opponent. Krista countered by blocking the swing, catching the challenger's Bantra'saa'laa in the inner fork with the concave side of her weapon. She then turned her Bantra'saa'laa ninety degrees to grip the end of Sa'Densa's, pulling her forward and making her fall face-down on the floor. As she stepped away from the smoke hued femme, she raked the back of Sa'Densa's right thigh with the outermost lower tip of her weapon, bringing a bright stripe of blood.

Sa'Densa had to use her Bantra'saa'laa to get back to her feet, making that injury seem serious. The blood was slowly making its way down her leg, matting the fur down as it went on its way.

“Relinquish your weapon and kneel now, Sa'Densa. Your surrender will bring no shame to your house.” Krista shouted. Sa'Densa countered by making another move to attack the buff-hued femme.

The attempt by Sa'Densa to swing her weapon at Krista's torso was thwarted by the smaller femme's reflexes. Her Bantra'saa'laa came up to block, then as her opponent's swing was nullified, she used the flat side of one of the tips of the weapon to strike Sa'Densa in the side of the head, knocking her down. Before the smoky femme could get her bearings back, Krista swung down with the points of her weapon, trapping Sa'Densa's neck in the outer fork, neatly pinning her down.

“Surrender! You now bring shame to your house!” Krista shouted at her adversary.

“I will not!” Sa'densa replied. “If I am bringing shame to my house, I will die before I surrender!” She then grabbed the smaller femme's foot that was nearest her, using it to pull Krista off of her feet. Leaping to her feet, Sa'Densa flipped the weapon in her grip, placing the concave side towards her body. She brought it up, then swung down with it to impale Na'Krista. Sa'Densa was not fast enough, finding her quarry had rolled out of her way and was now on her feet.

The protagonist used the back of her weapon to drive Sa'Densa to the floor, face down so she kicked the antagonist in the ribs, right before she raked her weapon across the smoke-hued femme's lower back, opening another injury. It was the smaller femme's mistake to stay too close to her aggressor for way too long, allowing Sa'Densa to use her weapon to hit Na'Krista in the back of the knees, knocking her down to the floor

The larger warrior leapt to her feet and raised her Bantra'saa'laa to swing down in a killing blow but she stopped in mid swing with a look of surprise on her face. The outermost point of Krista's weapon was imbedded in Sa'Densa's chest armor. Not real deep, just deep enough that while not fatal, the blood was starting to make its way to the floor, dripping from the bottom edge of her armor.

“You must surrender! I will prevail in any case! You have lost!” Krista growled loudly. She punctuated her demand by giving the weapon a shove, pushing the tine just slightly deeper into her attacker.

“I . . . I surrender!” Sa'Densa replied, throwing her battle weapon to the side. “I surrender to you, Na'Krista Keth'lan. Do with me as you see fit to do with your chattel.” She then extended a hand to help her champion to her feet.

Krista tossed her weapon away, then allowed Sa'Densa to help her to her feet. She then began to remove the smoky femme's armor, slowly and carefully. She then removed Sa'Densa's loincloth and boots, placing them on the pile of discarded items. She finished by putting their Bantra'saa'laas on top of the pile, Krista's on top.

The smaller femme then took care of the losing femme's injuries, cleaning and tending to them carefully. The chest wound seemed to be harder for her to staunch the bleeding, requiring what must have been a medic to assist her. During all of this, Sa'Densa stood motionless, trying not to show any emotion. Krista pulled a small lock of Sa'Densa's hair out from her scalp and carefully cut it off with a very sharp knife. The taller femme helped out by carefully tying a ribbon around it, making it a trophy.

Krista took her by the hand and guided the loser over to a three sided booth and made her stand in a certain place, dead center. A Bil male then quietly instructed Krista in the operation of what appeared to be a spray gun. The male helped her to put on some gloves then stepped aside as Krista knelt down and started to spray her 'chattel' a very light hue of blue.

She was being careful to brush Sa'Densa's fur backwards, making sure all of her fur was toned the same even color. When Krista had finally worked her way up to the loser's face that she had left for last, Sa'Densa closed her eyes tightly, took a deep breath and nodded her head. Three passes later, a pale blue femme stood before the victor. Krista finished her duty by using an oversized blowdryer to set the color. That was followed up by applying black eyeliner, lip coloring and mascara. She then carefully colored the leathery tip of Sa'Densa's nose the same deep black.

Krista held up a mirror so her 'chattel' could see what she looked like. Sa'Densa took the mirror from her and carefully looked herself over, trying desperately to keep her composure. It was clear this turn of events had an effect on the blue femme, to the point she began to silently cry. That's when Krista took her in her arms and held her tightly.

"I am sorry it came to this," Krista offered up quietly in the blue femme's ear.

"I am sorry, too." Sa'Densa replied quietly. "You must state the conditions of my chattel."

"Then you must finish my markings." the smaller femme reminded her.

Krista guided the loser back into the middle of the ring, then she stood to Sa'Densa's left and made her proclamation;

"I, Na'Krista Nahala Keth'lan, declare Sa'Densa Nasia Deen'lan to be my chattel through victory, to serve me for one Elazi year as my personal assistant. As the holder of her chattel, I am responsible for her well-being. She shall maintain this coloration for the duration and have it renewed on the last day of her chattel, before I release her. I proclaim on this day that unless any being shall refute this claim, it will stand unless I decide to break the chattel."

The middle male Elazi waited a moment before he spoke up; "Sa'Densa, do you understand the conditions of your chattel as proclaimed by Na'Krista?"

"I understand my position." she agreed.

Na'Kesta brought Sa'Densa the colorant in an applicator and oversaw the completion of Krista's markings on the right side of her face and limbs. Once that was done, Sa'Densa was given a black loincloth and a matching black upper torso wrap to wear, devoid of any house markings. After the blue femme was dressed, they left the ring with the losing party following a careful one step behind and one-half body width to the right. On the way, Na'Krista grabbed Jeff's hand and

ushered him along with them.

They made the trip back to the docking bay in good time, with the buff-colored femme setting the pace. Na'Kesta and the members of Orange Detachment stayed a respectful distance from them, right up to the docking port for *The Heavy Shuttle Hogue*. They entered the ship but before they could sit down, Krista turned to Densa and gripped her shoulders just as the tears began to flow.

“I didn't want to hurt you!” she sobbed out, gripping her new assistant tightly. “Why didn't you surrender when you had the chance? You knew you had no hope of defeating me!”

“Even though I knew I would never defeat one who trained under Tegram Keth'lan, I could not surrender.” the blue femme offered up in reply. That made Krista look at her strangely.

“Would you care to share that reason? Why could you not surrender?” she asked.

“My family put me up to this.” she admitted, trying to keep from crying. “I was told that I would challenge you and defeat you. If I failed, I was no longer a member of House Deen'lan.”

A chorus of “What?!?” rang out through the shuttle, with all eyes now on the azure hued femme.

“I am now without a house to claim fealty to. I am *Esed-Zaa, House-less.*” she added, looking down at the floor in shame. Krista then held her closely to her bosom and whispered something in her ear that made her perk up.

“Are you sure?” she asked, smiling when Krista nodded in the affirmative. Sa'Densa then went to stand in front of Jeff. After a moment to straighten what clothes she wore, she knelt on her right knee and looked up at the Earther with hope in her eyes. Taking a deep breath, she spoke the words she hoped would save her honor. “Jeffrey Andrews'lan, Patriarch of House Andrews'lan, I request permission to become a respected member of House Andrews'lan.”