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“Scribe”

by Kellan Meig'h

Chapter Sixteen

“Request”

Jeffrey looked down at the pale blue femme that was kneeling at his feet, still trying to digest what had just transpired. Sa'Densa had just been defeated by his future *One Love* and forced to serve as a personal assistant, whatever those duties might entail. Now the defeated femme was asking for admittance to his House!

The Earth man put out a hand and helped the sky-hued femme to her feet. After a moment to compose himself, he asked what seemed like a very important question;

“You want admission into my House?” he questioned, still failing to see the case in point. There must have been some reason Na'Krista suggested this. “Sa'Densa, you have to know my House consists of me, and Na'Krista will be a part of it when we are married. We are dirt-poor as far as Elazi House wealth and status are concerned.”

“I know that.” she replied. “Regardless, I am *Esed-Zaa* now, which puts me at somewhat of a financial and status disadvantage at the moment. If you will admit me into your house, I will bring my personal wealth into House Andrews'lan, wealth that is held from me for as long as I am without a House to swear fealty to.”

Jeff made Sa'Densa sit down in a seat and he took up a seat across from her so they could discuss this issue. Not wanting to miss this conversation, Na'Krista sat down next to Jeff and made herself at home. “So, tell me how this will benefit you and I.” he wanted to know.

“You seem like a good person, Jeffrey Andrews'lan. By the fact that Na'Krista wants to be your mate, you must be very understanding to be involved with a mixed joining. I think you would be receptive to growing your House.”

“Is that all?”

“No, I feel bad that I let my family put me up to this. I am especially angry that I was told to win or be permanently banned from my birth House. Besides, I owe Na'Krista a great debt. After all of the bad things I had done to her in the past, she refrained from taking my life when she had the chance. In exchange, I owe her my life for that.”

“Okay . . .” Jeff was mulling this over. There has to be something to this after all. “How will this benefit House Andrews'lan, if at all?”

Sa'Densa smiled and answered. "As a single female, unattached, I could join with a male in another House, bringing a strong alliance for House Andrews'lan. I am willing right now to pledge my life to your House. Please give me a chance?"

"You make a good argument," Jeff commented. "Anything else?"

"If I am a part of House Andrews'lan, I could make myself useful by doing crop analysis on Keth'lan produce production. While Na'Krista's holdings are not that big, they still warrant careful analysis. I have been trained in that, since House Deen'lan is a major fruit producer. Just so it is clear to all, I will never return to House Deen'lan. I was betrayed by my birth House so that shows how little worth I was to them. They can just go burn in the *Eternal Fires* for what they did to me."

This was all very confusing to Jeff, to have to deal with the intricacies of an alien society. He wasn't sure if this would work out for all concerned or if it would be a bust. He looked to Na'Kesta for guidance.

"Mother Na'Kesta, I don't know what to do here. Could I ask for your thoughts?"

The pale gray femme smiled back. "You would be growing your House. Sa'Densa would change her House name to Andrews'lan if she were allowed to join, in keeping with our customs. Also, you would seem like a stronger house than you are at the moment, with an eligible female to marry into another house and build strong alliances."

Jeff nodded, digesting this information. "Okay, how do we do this, admit Sa'Densa to my House?"

"She has already asked," Na'Kesta replied, "You must admit her, stating that she is now part of your House and giving her the new name she will be known by. Once on Elazia, we will file the proper paperwork."

Jeff looked at his future *One Love*, noting she was smiling ear to ear. "Na'Krista, you're good with this?"

"I am pleased we would be growing our House." was the reply.

The human stood, and motioned for Sa'Densa to do the same. He held out his hands, taking her hands that were offered in reply. He cleared his throat and made this statement;

"To all concerned, I, Jeffrey Alan Andrews'lan, do hereby admit Sa'Densa to my House. From now on, she will be known by the name Sa'Densa Nasia Andrews'lan."

"Thank You!" the blue femme blurted out, first hugging Jeff, then Krista and her mother in turn. "You will not regret my admission to your House. I am now free of my birth family and just so you are aware, my family no longer has any legal ties to me."

It had been some time since the small retinue had disembarked Pharrpoint Station but an issue in the landing bay Port Upper had put them in a holding pattern for approach to *The Flagship*

Korrallid. It was boring for Jeff but his future mate found it a perfect opportunity to nap. She had curled up on a couch-like seating area, put a seatbelt loosely around her waist and closed her eyes, getting a moment of rest in.

Sa'Densa had taken some time to carefully read the account of Jeff's life, as transcribed by Na'Krista. After reading it and asking pointed questions of her new House patriarch, she sat back and seemed to be lost in thought, occasionally looking at her hands and arms.

“Sa'Densa, are you feeling okay?” Jeff asked, concerned for her health since he was now somewhat responsible for her.

“I . . . I was just lost to my musings. I was thinking just how good that dye covered my smoke gray. It even covered my black skin with a blue tone. If I didn't know better, I would believe I was born this color.”

“So, It bothers you, to be colored that hue?”

Sa'Densa looked up at her new Head Of House. “No, I knew this would happen to me. I am no good with a Bantra'saa'laa, never have been to tell you the truth. I was positive Na'Krista would defeat me once she had chose the weapon. Besides, I will carry my defeat with pride. I fought against a superior opponent and I lived to tell about it.”

“I know this might not be proper, but you look good in that color.” he offered with a smile.

“I will agree with you. I will ask Na'Krista if I may apply a bit of white highlights.” she looked down at the floor, then back at Jeffrey. “I am sure by tomorrow, all of my possessions will have been burned and my room turned into some new useless area of the house by my father.”

Marlett Blane spoke up from the front of the shuttle. “We will recover your possessions. When we knew the match between you and Na'Krista would transpire, I sent a message to Elazia via HyperWave, secure channel by Na'Kesta's orders. Another message was sent moments after the match was called. There will be an Auxiliary Gray Detachment with an order in their hands to recover your possessions. You will lose nothing.”

“Thank both of you, Na'Kesta Keth'lan and Marlett Blane'lan. I do not know if I can ever repay your kindness.” Sa'Densa offered to the pale gray Ambassador and the warrior.

“You may repay me by being a model member of House Andrews'lan.” the pale gray femme replied.

Sa'Densa then looked over at Jeffrey with a worried look on her face. “Jeffrey, I do not know if you realize what making me part of your House has done.”

“Go ahead,” he replied, noting the concern on her face.

“I am now Na'Krista's chattel for the next Elazi year. By my becoming part of your House, my holder now has connections to your House, too. By the old laws, Na'Krista is now has legal ties to your House.”

The human looked over at the Ambassador. “Mother Na'Kesta, is this true?”

She smiled widely in return. “Krista knew this and this is the reason she took on Sa'Densa as chattel *and* urged her to ask for admission into your House.” The mother looked over at her daughter who was napping, smiling at her before she looked back at Jeff. “She is securing her interest in you, in a legal fashion. I know you two love one another deeply. She is just making sure that any legal challenge to your joining would be diminished.”

“I'm not sure I understand this.” Jeff offered up.

“It is as if you are almost joined right now. When we get to Elazia, it's merely a formality to join House Tal-Hassanai, then once that is accomplished, we will all go to the House Keth'lan vacation compound for your joining.”

“Na'Krista had said that you would take care of all of the arrangements.” he mused.

“That is the way it is.” she replied. “When you have a daughter of age, Krista will take care of all of her arrangements.”

There was one thing Jeff wanted to know; “How about the Earth custom of having a Honeymoon? Would that be wrong to ask for such a thing?”

“No, that would be quite acceptable.” Kess replied. “There are a number of places you might go, just the two of you. There are some mud baths near Lake Teresk that are quite enjoyable.”

“I will have to look into that,” Jeff mused, tapping on Krista's padd to find that information. There was one thing for sure; he needed to better learn the intricacies of the Elazi written language. Just trying to find Lake Teresk on a world map was proving to be an issue. Well, maybe between Na'Krista, Sa'Densa and the language program, his command of the Elazi language would improve.

Finally back aboard *The Flagship Korrallid*, the small retinue was headed to their new assigned berthing, one deck down from their original digs. New lodgings had been requested by Na'Krista so they could accommodate her new assistant being added to their group. They had just left a clothing shop minutes ago that was going to make new apparel for Sa'Densa, since she now had to wear House Andrews'lan markings on her togs.

At some point in time, Krista had taken his Irish County Tipperary kilt, the one that he most associated with due to his father's lineage, and had it scanned for reproduction. Jeff mused at what a rabble rouser his Grandfather Andrews was. Sean Alan Andrews was born in Knockanrawley, County Tipperary, Ireland and he had immigrated to the Unites States after World War Two. As the stories go, he was banned from a number of bars due to his propensity to brawl. Still, Jeff remembered the gentle man that was his Grandfather, the one that prompted him to join the military.

The clothing shop had somehow weaved that tartan in just about a half-hour, giving them time for Sa'Densa to be treated to some accent coloration. When they returned to meet Jeff at the

clothing shop, besides the new white accents, Sa'Densa was wearing a light silver necklace with a tasteful tag on it, proclaiming her terms of service if any being questioned her about it.

While they made their way to their quarters, a number of Elazi first bowed to Na'Krista, then clasped hands with Sa'Densa. This seemed odd, so Jeff had to ask about it.

“Na'Krista did me a big favor.” Sa'Densa offered up. “By not killing me, she has shown to all that I am important to her, that I have worth. By claiming me as her personal assistant, she is telling everyone that I can be very useful to her.”

“I did not wish to seriously injure Sa'Densa,” Krista stated, “I only wanted to achieve a clean win over her. It was expected that we each draw blood. When Sa'Sensa did not bring blood before the end of the match, that was bad for her. When I ended the engagement by threatening a fatal blow to her, I had to allow her some redemption. By making her my assistant, that redeemed her status, to some degree.”

When they arrived at their new lodgings, they each checked their new badges, just to make sure they would work. After that was taken care of, they examined their quarters. Jeff and Na'Krista's side of the two adjoining units was very similar to their old one. Sa'Densa's side was smaller in size but similarly appointed. There was a door between the rooms but at the moment, there was a beaded curtain hanging in such a way that the door could be closed if they wanted to.

The two females sat down on the couch and began to set up a padd with Na'Krista's agenda, so Jeff went to the bar and put together a glass of ice water for himself. He sat down at the end of the bar and watched the two femmes talking, noting how Sa'Densa was being so focused on getting her mini-tablet set up correctly. There was one thing he needed to know. Making his way over to the couch, he sat down next to his *One Love* before he garnered the blue femme's attention.

“Sa'densa, I guess I should ask you; are you in service to the military? And if so, how will this 'chattel' affect your service?”

“My service was over with more than an Earth year ago. I was last employed at the *Merced Elazi First Contact Museum And Visitor Center* when my family directed me to book passage on *The Korrallid*. Once I had boarded, thinking I was going home to visit, my father told me what I needed to do. I have to tell you, I was very angry when he told me I was either to win or be disowned.”

“So, you need gainful employment, I take it?” he asked.

“Not right away.” was her answer. “I have quite a bit of personal savings and I have some tree and vine crops that return a good dividend for me. I will be able to provide for myself for the next year or more. Who knows, maybe I will enjoy being Na'Krista's assistant.”

That evening, Jeff was laying in bed, thinking back over the last thirty-one hours. His future wife had been in a combat with Sa'Densa, taken her on as an assistant and his House now had one more member to it. If someone had told him all of this would happen to him just a few months

ago, Jeff would have deemed that person insane. Now here he was, preparing to go to sleep on a spaceship with the one he loved with all of his heart, not born of the planet Earth.

He kept thinking about the conversation he had with Sa'Densa; she had some wealth and it sounded like her family had some connections. He really hoped this whole 'Chattel' thing would work out and his new House member wouldn't bring retribution down on House Andrews'lan.

AfHarral'an Deen'lan stood in the waiting area outside Dassan Trent'lan's office, seething from the happenings this morning. The secretary sitting at her desk had politely asked him to sit down several times but the rage he felt inside made it hard to even think straight. When the door to Dassan's office opened, he just barged right in, forcing an aide to either step aside or be knocked down. Looking around the room, he spotted Dassan Trent'lan sitting at his desk.

“You have dishonored your House!” the enraged smoke Elazi male bellowed out as he crossed the room with purpose. Quickly making his way to stand opposite the focus of his wrath, he continued his diatribe at less than an arm's length away, pushing things off of the desk so he could lean across it. “You told me that my daughter had nothing to worry about! Now she has been dishonored, she has been forced to be a personal aide to Na'Krista for the next year and an Auxiliary Gray Detachment has carried off her belongings by House Tal-Hassanai order, including her roller and her landstriders! This has cost our House a very eligible daughter, considerable wealth and our honor! What say you in return?!?”

“You are being too hasty.” the buff-hued male retorted. “I still have a retinue aboard *The Korrallid* that can . . .”

“You have *nothing* aboard the flagship!” Harral growled. “My brother's least son was forced to swear allegiance to House Keth'lan or take a vacuum walk! You have failed to hold up your end of the bargain, Dassan. It would please me to no end to eviscerate you right here and now, spreading your filthy insides all over your office. Since that would be against House Tal-Hassanai customs to do so, I suggest you watch your back fervently in the future.”

“Harral! My friend!” the head of House Trent'lan began as he stood and spread his arms in a welcoming gesture, “I can make this up to you! Just let me . . .” He was silenced by a hand-held projectile weapon being thrust into his face.

“You cannot make this up to me, ever!” Harral snarled. “I have lost a daughter, a substantial amount of funds, over two hundred units of *N'ga* berry and Kebra fruit fields that were deeded over to Sa'Densa and most importantly, my House honor! How would you propose to compensate me for these grievous losses?”

“I . . . I cannot.” Dassan conceded. “I could transfer funds to you, a substantial amount, but they would not make up for your daughter nor your honor.”

“Do not cross my path again, you honorless *B'taagh!*” Harral growled. “If you do, I will kill you in the most agonizing way possible, in public view, then I will put your head on a staff outside the House Tal-Hassanai Senate chambers!”

“You would not dare to think such a . . .” The buff-hued male was literally dragged across his desk by the enraged Harral, ending up nose to nose with him.

“You think I would not?!?” the smoky male hissed back, “If you think I would not do so, try me. I will kill you right here, in your office, and I *do* have the connections to make it look like an accident! It will take them weeks to clean up the mess I will leave behind!”

Dassan had to catch himself when Harral let go of his shirt, turned and walked out of his office in a huff. He heard the front door to his office space slam shut, then the sound of glass breaking and falling to the floor. Looking out of his window, he observed Harral leave the property in a personal skimmer, not being particularly careful not to blow dust everywhere from full thrust being applied.

Looking at the top of his desk where Harral had stood, he noted the deep claw gouges in the polished wood surface. It was safe to say, AfHarral'an Deen'lan was pissed and he did have a right to be mad at him. Giving it further thought, it may be possible that the head of House Trent'lan had overstepped his boundaries, letting this whole thing get out of hand. He was running out of things he could do to regain those three hundred and eight units of land that Na'Krista had a claim to without bringing retribution down on himself and his House.

Well, maybe it was high time to call in a favor, one that was very old, indeed. Maybe this particular being could finally put an end to all of this insanity.

The chronometer playing a woodwind tune roused Jeff from his sleep, starting what would be their last day at Pharrpoint Station. He sat up in bed, noting his One Love was already in the shower from the sounds of it. She also sounded somewhat perturbed, too. He decided to see what was bothering his future wife, since she sounded exasperated by something.

“Na'Krista? Is there a problem?” he asked once he could see her in the shower, lathering up her right arm with a scrub puff.

“Blasted colorant!” she blurted out from inside the shower enclosure. “It must have been old! It will *not* wash out!” she added after rinsing off her arm, only to see the purple designs were still quite visible.

“Is there anything I can do to . . . help?” Jeff was interrupted by Na'Kesta and Sa'Densa making their way into the room, making it kind of crowded for the Earther.

“Krista, I have some pelt wash for you to try,” her mother offered up, “I am afraid it might strip the oils from your fur, though.”

“Thank you, Mother,” the purple-accented femme replied as she took the bottle that was offered. Moments later, the latrine smelled like cinnamon rolls when the new soap began to foam up. After a minute or so, a low growl came from Na'Krista when she rinsed off her arm, only to see it was still covered in purple designs. “Mother, I think that colorant was very old. It's not washing out.”

“Hmm, I can send Sa'Densa for a number seventeen coloring kit.” the elder Keth'lan femme offered.

“Number sixteen.” Na'Krista corrected. “I will wait until this evening, though. I still need to see what's in the shops on levels four and five before we have to be back on board.”

Na'Krista finished her shower, then she allowed her mother to refresh the designs on her face, which would be visible to all. The small group dressed in their utility armor and made last preparations for heading out, such as scheduling a shuttle. While Na'Kesta was doing that chore, Sa'Densa asked Krista an important question.

“Should I draw an impulse rifle from the armory?”

Krista sighed before she replied to her charge. “No, you are my personal assistant, not my bodyguard. It is not your job to protect me, it is your job to keep track of places I need to be and things I need to do.”

“I can do that for you.” the blue femme responded. “Na'Krista, I am truly sorry for all the bad things I have done to you in the past. I want you to know, it was my father that put me up to the things that I did to you. I think he doesn't like your father for some reason.”

“I know there is no love lost between them.” Na'Krista stated. “Your father wanted a seat on the Global Senate but my father was chosen instead. Your father didn't like that at all.”

“Well, I am no longer a part of that House. My parents can burn in *The Eternal Fires* for what they have done to me.”

Argess Wrraal walked through the shop areas of Pharrpoint Station, scanning the walkways for his mark. He had been contacted about a small 'job' that needed attention, so here he was, doing a careful search of Pharrpoint for that 'job'. At least security had not questioned his credentials too closely. It would not do for a mercenary to be detained on the station. The Comeri took a very dim view of mercs as a whole and the prospect of spending many cycles in a Comeri jail did not set well with him.

It still bothered him that beings would willingly live on a space station, millions of parsecs from any hospitable world. As far as he knew, only three mining operations were within a day's travel by slipstream. Without *FTL* drives, it would be months. Pharrpoint was well defended, having recently repulsed an invading race that had more than one thousand warships. The fleet was destroyed with the station in turn receiving mere scratches. Still, he preferred planets, jungles particularly. His kind had evolved on a jungle planet and that was where he felt most at home.

Argess wondered to himself why the being that asked for this job didn't do his due diligence. Had he done so, the huge *Fask-aal* born warrior would not be here. Nevertheless, he had been paid in advance, a royal sum, so it only made sense to complete his duty. He hoped to find this particular being shortly and complete his mission before Station Security was on to him. He really hoped he would not have to shoot his way out of here afterward.

Na'Krista, Jeff and Sa'Densa were sitting in a small bistro, enjoying something that was a second cousin to an Earth-manufactured pizza with some bbeer to wash it down with. Jeff was thinking to himself that the brewed concoction would have probably gone over well on Earth, since it seemed to have a kick to it like strong malt liquor. The pizza-thing wasn't bad, either. It had a tangy taste, like hot peppers but it wasn't overpowering. One of the 'vegetables' on it tasted a bit like pineapple and the crust had a decided cinnamon zing. Somewhat an odd combination of flavors to Jeff but the ladies seemed to enjoy it. Just as he reached for another slice, a huge being, sort of a bipedal lion in a black jumpsuit and leather armor, sat down with them.

“Na'Krista Keth'lan?” the being asked in a low, resonant voice.

“That is me.” she replied as she sat her slice of pizza back on her plate. “Do I know you?”

“You do not know me but I have some business that involves you.”

“Some business?” she questioned.

“I was paid to kill you.” the being said in a low, quiet tone. “It would seem some being wants you dead. Who have you crossed that would pay me four-hundred-thousand Crown to kill you before you reach Elazia?”

“I . . . I don't understand!” she blurted out in return. “I have crossed no being! You have no basis to kill m . . .” The being held up his huge hand to stop her diatribe.

“I know you are Amassador Na'Kesta Keth'lan's least daughter. You have nothing to fear from me. I am Argess Wrraal, at your service.”

He showed them the ring he wore on his left hand, the insignia of the Tah'Nash.

“Argess, what are you going to do now?” Na'Krista asked.

“I must complete my mission. Honor, you know.” the *Fask-aal* replied. When the buff-hued femme gasped, he continued. “I was told to coat my knife in your blood. That is what is expected of me. You do know, the *Fask-aal* tend to take things literally at times, too. Please give me your left hand.”

Na'Krista hesitantly extended her left hand to Argess, who took it gently in his right. The huge male removed a short dirk from his chest armor and prepared to pull it across her palm. He stopped, repositioned it against the heel of her hand, under the thumb and gently made a shallow cut. When the blood began to well up, he pulled the flats of the blade through the crimson, coating both sides.

“His mistake in his request, I suppose. I have coated my blade in your blood as I was directed to do. I am sure he meant something different but it is his failure to give me precise directions.” the *Fask-aal* offered.

The mercenary took a small container from a belt pouch, sprinkled some off-white powder on the cut and used several fingers to massage it in. Apparently it was a clotting agent, since the bleeding stopped right away. He wiped the site with a napkin, just to make sure it was no longer oozing, then he looked at Na'Krista with a slight smile and a twinkle in his eyes.

“It would seem your pendant indicates that I must assist you in any way possible. What would you have me do for you?”

Krista thought for a moment, then she replied. “Argess, can you tell me who wants me dead?”

“I was paid through an intermediary to attend to this 'blood letting',” he replied, “I do not know his name, but I do have the physical address of the terminal he used to arrange the job.” He smiled when he added, “The terminal is the Northern residential district of Kas'Madelle.”

“What if I asked you to bring that person to my family compound? So we could 'talk' with him? Would you do that?” Na'Krista asked.

“I have done my due diligence, Na'Krista Keth'lan. I believe this person carries a grudge against House Keth'lan.” he related to her. “It didn't cost much to travel here, so as I see it, I owe it to you and your mother to help out. I will accept your request.”

“What if I could book passage for you on The Flagship Korrallid?” the buff femme suggested.

“That would help but there would be the problem of my ship. I would have to pay some being to ferry it to Elazia.”

Krista gave it some thought. “What if you could ferry your ship in a landing bay of the flagship?”

“That might work.” the *Fask-aal* replied. “I have never been aboard a flagship during my days as a soldier. It would be a great adventure for me.”

“Let me contact my mother. If anyone can make this happen, she can.” Krista stated. Before she could reach for her communicator, Sa'Densa handed her a personal communicator that had an active connection to Na'Kesta.

“Mother? I need to ask a favor. Could you book passage to Elazia for one being and charge it to my account?” she asked.

“Who is it? I'll need to know for the booking.” was the reply.

Krista grimaced before she answered her mother. “It is Argess Wrraal. I think you know him.”

“Tell Argess he still owes me five hundred Crown.” came through the speaker.

The *Fask-aal* smiled widely. “Tell your mother I will pay her the next time I see her.” Once he observed the odd looks on everyone's faces, he added this snippet; “She's standing right behind me, isn't she?”

“Very well, Argess. You may pay me that five hundred Crown right now.” the pale gray Elazi femme stated as she sat down next to him and patted his shoulder. “What reason do you have to be heading to Elazia, my old friend? A job to do?” she asked of him.

“Good to see you again, my Esteemed Ambassador. I was telling your beautiful daughter, I know who paid a royal sum for her elimination. She asked me to bring this being to your family so a . . . discussion of sorts might be held.”

“In such case,” Na'Kesta began, “I will see to it you are onboard when we leave. Do you need berthing for a ship?”

“It is a Lestim Avro-Eight Mk Three. It was slated to be decommissioned some years back, so I bought it at auction.” the huge one replied. “It's hard to find a ship in good condition where I fit into the pilot's position comfortably that has *FTL* drives and an extended fuel supply.”

“Hmm, has it been demilitarized?” the elder Keth'lan femme wanted to know. If it had not been fully demil'ed, it might be hard to obtain a berth for such a craft. It was just one generation older than the front-line fighters aboard *The Korrallid* and every bit as deadly.

“It will appear to be fully demilitarized. A necessary thing in my line of work.” Argess replied. In truth, it still carried roughly ninety percent of its original firepower, hidden behind access panels that were moveable in flight.

“Okay, I will vouch for the craft, Argess. Give me your communicator contact information and I will tell you where to get your billeting information.”

“Thank you, Kesta. I will not let you down.” the former soldier said warmly.

“I know you will not. It is in your blood.”