

The characters Jeffrey Andrews, Na'Krista Nahala Keth'lan, Kamram Keth'lan, Na'Kesta Keth'lan, Tegram Keth'lan, Traci McDonald, Bosteg Haas'lan, Kestam Ramm'lan, Treman Baze'lan, Merret Treet'lan, Tascal Hone'lan, Hallett Trasc'lan, Hammet & Na'Kayla Nahala (nee Keth) Craine'lan, Gillat Deen'lan, Marlett Blane'lan, Sa'Densa Nasia Andrews'lan (nee Deen'lan), Argess & Arrissa Wrraal, Rellen Sandren'lan, Sa'Jenna Nasia 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.

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“Scribe”

by Kellan Meig'h

Chapter Twenty

“Welcome To Elazia”

Once again, Jeff found himself in the left seat of *The Za'rrah*, assisting his future One Love in ferrying the diminutive craft to the surface of Elazia. This was probably the high point for him on this passage, to finally see Elazia through the front windows of the small ship. And what a view it was.

Some of Elazia reminded him of the Earth's Middle East, due to the dryness of the areas North and South of the Equatorial zone. He could see rivers and lakes, just not as many as there was back home. The oceans seemed smaller, with a higher land mass to water ratio than his home planet. There were mountain ranges and deserts and quite a large area of land with agriculture being performed.

“Jeff?” Krista questioned, bringing him back to the business at hand.

“Sorry, I was zoning out.” he replied. “Kas'Madelle Approach, this is *The Shuttle Za'rrah*, call sign Zed Fa Deh Four Two Vandd, requesting clearance to land.”

“*Shuttle Za'rrah*, cleared to land on Pad Seven One Deh. You have a direct glide path from your current location.” the controller informed them.

“Copy, cleared to land on Pad Seven One Deh.”

Krista looked over at Jeff with a smile. “Would you like to land the shuttle?”

“What do I do?” he asked in return.

“Input our landing location into the computer. The system will fly us right down to the pad. Just keep your hand near the joystick, just in case the navigation computer has trouble.”

Jeff did as he was asked, first inputting the coordinates of the pad at Kas'Madelle, then engaging the flight computer's landing routine. The blue light on the console let him know everything was okay, but the fact that Na'Krista was sitting with her hands in her lap didn't make him feel any easier about this.

Below and not that far away, the spaceport loomed larger as they approached their landing spot on the ramp. The ship slowed down, extended the landing gear and powered up the repulsors to

set them down ever-so-gently. Once the blue light went out, they hurriedly went through the shutdown checklist. Jeff spotted a small ramp vehicle headed their way, most likely to pick them up and take them to the terminal. When the rear door to the shuttle finally cycled open, who was in that ramp vehicle became apparent. Kamram and Na'Kesta were standing on the tarmac, smiling widely.

“Welcome to your new home,” Kam offered up to Jeff after he helped the human to remove his helmet. “We couldn't miss this opportunity to make you feel at home. Na'Kesta and I have some business to attend to, so we will come by next evening to welcome you to your new home properly. Until then, my skimmer is in my personal garage across the spaceport. It is being readied for you as we speak.”

“I'm . . . I'm touched.” Jeff replied. “I don't know how I'll repay your hospitality.”

“You will think of something,” Na'Kesta replied, giving him a hug. “We will see you again next evening.”

Jeff and Na'Krista were dropped off at what would be 'Customs' on Earth, so he could get his Earth passport stamped and obtain what amounted to a visa to be on Elazia. It was a low building on the edge of the spaceport with signs directing individuals to either material importation or citizen entry.

Heading toward the one that seemed the logical choice, they stepped through an automatic sliding door into an almost empty space. There was a counter that said to 'Start Here' in Elazi so they went to the window and prepared to go through Customs.

Krista got out what was her version of a passport and opened it to the correct page, showing she had originally left from Elazia before going to Earth and back. After a moment, what appeared to be a Bil female came to the window to help them. While Jeff's *One Love* answered a few questions, he took the opportunity to examine the official.

She was more-or-less human shaped with a frosty black color to her but what seemed odd to Jeff were her scales. They were small, compared to the other Bil he had been close to. She also had a jet-black head of hair that was closer to a homonid style and her green eyes were very human in appearance. In fact, her face was sort of a cross between human and Bil. The female's nose was almost human but with vertical nostril slits and she had eyebrows, which he didn't remember other Bil females having. She also spoke with an accent that sounded like she was native-born on Elazia. Once Krista was done processing her documents, he stepped up to the counter and presented his credentials.

“I am your official, Na'Sira Tirellan and I will be processing your documents.” she stated with a slight smile. After looking at the first document, she smiled widely. “You are an Earther. I should have known. I had been told of several Earthers that were due to arrive. Tell me; are you the one that is to be joined to Na'Krista Keth'lan?”

“That would be me.”

“How wonderful!” Na'Sira offered up. “It is good to see inter-species joinings, as I am a product of an inter-species joining. My father is a Bil ambassador and my mother is from Comeri Prime. I was born here on Elazia and as such, I am a citizen of Elazia.”

While Na'Sira checked over his documents, Jeff gave thought to what she had said. It was apparent mixed joinings were not that common on Elazia. He hoped theirs would go smoothly with no issues to speak of.

Sa'Densa had picked them up in a small utility vehicle after she had hurriedly processed her documents. She took them on a circuitous route around the spaceport, avoiding the ships that were either incoming or outgoing. Eventually, they had arrived at the garage areas that were for private craft. Oddly enough, the buildings would seem right at home on Earth. Up ahead, there was an open set of doors that proved to be their destination.

The blue femme pulled the small vehicle into the garage and plugged it into a charger before she helped to ready the skimmer for flight. The skimmer, built by Lestim Industries, was an odd-looking affair. It was about the size of a large sedan, oval in outline with a cabin that might have been automotive-influenced. Short fins extended from each side and it had a vertical stabilizer in back. The skin of the craft was polished to a high sheen and it may have been aluminum or something similar.

Once the group had changed into flight coveralls, they stowed their bags in several small compartments after weighing them, putting the tally from each bag on a weight distribution form. Na'Krista did the calculations and inputted them into the flight computer, allowing the craft to compensate for the added weight. The two maintenance men helped to push the craft out onto the tarmac outside, then they helped go through the final checklist. Once the trio had made themselves comfy in the cockpit, a dark gray male put on a headset and pressed a button on the headpiece.

“Na'Krista, can you hear me?” he asked.

“I copy you, Framm.” she replied.

“Cleared for powerplant start.”

“I copy Framm, cleared for powerplant start.”

Na'Krista held down a very prominent orange button on the center console, putting the Ion Drive into the startup routine. As the powerplant gained speed, the multiple thrusters on the front and rear of the craft started to kick up dust. Now Jeff knew why that headset mouthpiece looked like a respirator. The gauges on the virtual consoles looked good, showing what must have been nominal systems health.

“Na'Krista, you're clear to taxi. Be careful and don't scratch your father's craft.” Framm offered up.

“Thank you Framm. Switching to tower ground control frequency Zed Eight.” After a quick switch of frequencies, she continued. “Tower Ground Control, this is a Lestim Mk Seventeen-

Ahn Skimmer, call sign Zed Zed Fah Vandd Nine Six. Request vector clearance bearing Plus twenty-three North at four hundred Quatres.”

“Na'Kayla, is that you?” the femme voice asked back.

“This is her younger, prettier, smarter sister, Na'Krista.”

“Welcome Home, Na'Krista!” the voice almost squealed with glee. “You're cleared plus twenty-three North but stay at two hundred fifty Quatres. I have a heavy cruiser at six hundred, Vector plus twenty-four inbound. Use Pad One One Zed for liftoff.”

“Thank you, Sa'Ransa. Come see me before I have to return back to Earth.”

“Someone you know?” Jeff asked as his future bride taxied the small craft toward a designated pad.

“I went to school with Sa'Ransa. She found this employment straight after her enlistment in the Trans-Atmospheric Forces. She was a Forward Traffic Controller on Earth.”

“I see.” Jeff mused. He watched how Na'Krista was controlling the craft, especially the flight controls. They seemed to be deceptively like a helicopter back home. There was a stick that seemed to be for direction and pitch and another that controlled powerplant output and altitude. The pedals in front of their feet might have been for yaw. Right now, they were rolling on a four corner swivel caster landing gear, most likely meant for smooth tarmac. Once at their destination, Krista keyed up her microphone.

“Ground Control, this is Lestim Mk Seventeen-Ahn Skimmer, Call sign Zed Zed Fah Vandd Nine Six. Ready to take off from pad One One Zed.”

“Takeoff cleared, Na'Krista. Have a safe flight.” Sa'Ransa put forth.

“Taking off,” Krista stated as she twisted the power control handle on the power quadrant beside her seat, pushed forward on the stick and lifted up on the power quadrant. The craft gently lifted off and began to climb out to an altitude of around five hundred feet. Jeff helped out by raising the handle that would stow the landing gear.

Once at cruising altitude, Na'Krista pressed a button on the stick, engaging the autopilot. That gave her a chance to sit back and enjoy the view of home, a view that Jeff was almost enraptured by. Actually, this could almost be any city back on Earth, by the way it was laid out. Kas'Madelle was done in a gridwork format with only the larger traffic arteries traveling at odd angles. Taking a guess of their current air speed, they would be home quite soon.

As they traveled Northward to what would be Jeff's new home, he took the time to enjoy the scenery. The city gave way to the suburbs, low one and two story homes and what must have been shopping malls. The lots seemed big enough with quite a bit of space between the dwellings. There were also buildings that might have been apartments or townhomes. At the edge of the suburbs, a new development was being constructed followed by a zone of what seemed to be light

manufacturing and warehouses. After another mile or so North, the agricultural zones took over the landscape.

It was odd to see farms that would be right at home in the California Central Valley. Carefully tended rows of vegetables and orchards stretched for miles, broken only by the roadways that allowed access to them. They flew over more orchards, then more vegetable fields before Krista got his attention.

“Those are Uncle Tegram's orchards to our right.” she offered up. “He has Kebra, Orlemberry and Zerrem fruit orchards. A Zerrem is like an apple.”

“So, we're getting close?” he asked.

“Yes, we are close.” she confirmed. “The road up ahead bisects Father's and Uncle Tegram's lands.” She was going to add more to that statement, until the Heads Up Display flashed their landing information on the windscreen. “We need to go through the landing checklist.”

Jeff deployed the landing gear while Na'Krista made sure they were good for landing. She slowed the craft, then she initiated a slow turn to the East. After just a moment, another slow turn back to the West lined them up on her landing pad. Krista slowed the craft to a crawl as she descended and brought the craft to a hover at somewhere around fifty feet before sinking down to the pad. Just a minor jolt later, she was shutting the craft down.

“We are officially home!” Na'Krista blurted out, right before she kissed Jeff on the cheek. “We can wait to unload the craft until later. I want to show you around.”

Once out of the skimmer, Sa'Densa stopped her boss. “You two go ahead. I'll bring our things in.” she offered up. Before the buff-colored femme could reply, Sa'Densa gave her a kiss on the cheek. “Please?”

“Okay, we will go ahead of you, then.”

They went on ahead of Sa'Densa, walking past the garage to enter the interior courtyard that had plantings, trees for shade and several seating areas. Going around to the left, Krista headed to a door that was situated in the glass-walled hallway that seemed to sweep around the courtyard. She put her hand against the scan plate, allowing it to confirm her identity. Momentarily, a blue light illuminated and the door unlocked.

Stepping into the hall, the interior seemed a bit Spanish in architectural style to Jeff. The walls were smooth, sort of like stucco, portals were arched on top and the corners of the walls were rounded. The floors were wood, reminding him of old growth Long Leaf Pine. It was clear someone had been keeping the house clean, since there was no dust that he could observe on any surface.

“Jeff, wait just a moment.” she asked once they had made it to what must have been the living room. “Na'Mara? Na'Mara, are you here?” she called out. They were joined momentarily by an older Elazi femme that was dressed casually. She was a buff color but her facial fur and hair were shot through with gray. The older femme's face lit up with joy to see her employer again.

“Na'Krista! It's good to see you home again!” she offered up. “I received your message so I cleaned the house . . . thoroughly . . .” Her voice trailed off when she observed Jeffrey standing by the couch. “Uh, are you Krista's future *One Love*?” she questioned carefully.

“Na'Mara, this is Jeffrey Andrews'lan. Jeffrey, this is Na'Mara Treet'lan, our house staff.”

“Nice to meet you,” Jeff offered, noting her slight distress.

“Na'Krista told of your arrival.” the keeper of the house offered up hesitantly. “Are you Comeri?”

“I am an Earthling, Na'Mara.” That information made her face light up again.

“Welcome then, Jeffrey Andrews'lan.” she offered. “I am sorry if I seemed upset for a moment. I served during the War Of Varpur Prime. We were overrun by a full battalion of Ezed-Comeri with no way to defend our mining outpost properly.

“The Ezed-Comeri were a race that had left Comeri Prime thousands of Centons ago. They decided for whatever reason that their future lay in taking Comeri Prime back from their distant relatives. Varpur Prime was a mining outpost that we shared with the *Fask-aal* and the Comeri. When the Ezed-Comeri made landfall, they took over control of all mining on the planet. They needed the metals and minerals for war production.

“I was a trooper, a Sub-Commander at that time.” she continued. “As much as we tried to hold them off, even with superior firepower, I lost almost all of my detachment and I spent several rotations in a Ezed-Comeri prison ship. I was not treated well, but I managed to survive. Even though the combined *Fask-aal*, Comeri and Elazi forces eventually prevailed, I still have trouble with being near a Comeri, even though I know they are not one of the dreaded Ezed-Comeri.”

“I'm sorry if my appearance bothers you.” Jeff offered.

“No, do not apologize. I will have to get used to you being around. Even more so since you are going to join with Na'Krista.” Na'Mara stated. She then looked at her boss and asked, “Will I need to set up the guest bedroom?”

“No, Na'Mara. Jeff and I will be sleeping in the Owner's Suite. We are still waiting, though. We wish to honor *The Old Customs*.”

“*The Old Customs*.” The elder femme chuffed in annoyance, and continued her thoughts. “So many young ones ignore the customs of our ancestors. They would be wise to do as you two are doing. It makes the moment special.”

“Na'Mara, I wish to show Jeffrey around. We might end up in the orchards at some time during the trip. Just so we don't end up muddy, wet or sprayed, is the watering crew working today?”

“When did getting muddy ever stop you, Na'Krista?” Na'Mara blurted out, trying to stifle a laugh. “I still remember your attempt to ride a hover board over that deep mud puddle!”

“It was not that deep!” Krista shot back.

“So, muddy head to toe and a need to use a trencher to recover your board was not deep?”

“So it was just a little deep.” Na'Krista offered up in an embarrassed tone of voice.

Na'Mara looked at Jeff with a smile. “It was over chest deep. A hover board needs something solid for the repulsors to push against and soupy mud is just not firm enough. She just slowly sank into the puddle, yelling for anyone to help her. She tried to jump for firm ground at the last moment but the board went out from underneath her when she did so. She was totally submerged in the mud at one point.”

“Well, is the watering crew working the orchards?” Na'Krista asked again.

“They are off today. The last place they worked was the North-West quadrant.”

Jeff and Na'Krista were headed down a paved road in a small two seat electric cart, using an avenue that separated her property from her sister's place while the buff-colored femme pointed out the different crops growing. He couldn't get over just how much this all could be back on Earth, somewhere near Modesto. Jeff had some distant relatives that grew almonds and if you didn't look too close at the fruit, the Kebra trees looked just like almond trees. Na'Krista stopped just past the Kebra trees by some low bushes that were growing in rows.

“These are N'ga berries.” she announced with a smile. “From the looks, we are just in time to harvest enough for what you would call a cobbler. Some of these are early ripe so they will be a bit tart. Just right for dessert.”

“So these are the infamous N'ga berries,” Jeff commented.

“Pick the ones that are dark blue.” his future bride directed while she handed him a basket. “If you nibble on a few of them, do not eat the seed, just spit it out. The seeds are not good to eat unless they have been dried and roasted.”

“Ah, a multi-use fruit.” Jeff mused. He sampled one, finding it to be somewhat berry flavored. It was a bit tart, too, just like Krista said it would be.

Jeff picked almost a basket-full, then he helped Krista to finish filling hers. While he did so, he took in the way their fields were laid out. Every other group of six rows of plants had extra space at the end of the rows, meant to allow equipment to turn around. The ground itself was somewhat sandy with a slight yellow tinge to it. Trenches that were dug out right next to the plants facilitated watering without wasting water.

Once back on the road, Jeff was given a tour of the perimeter of the property, noting the fact that the paved roads, for the most part were very smooth and well-maintained. The bulk of the traffic consisted of the farm workers, doing various chores. Some of them recognized Na'Krista so they either waved or shouted a greeting at her when they drove by. After they had made a few left turns, she pulled over to the shoulder of the road and gave her future husband a little tidbit of information.

“This land to our right belongs to Dassan Tren'tlan, my Grandmother Sa'Kayla Keth'lan's brother. When their father Rallen Trent'lan divided part of his lands, Grandmother chose what is now my property and since she was the younger sibling, she should have allowed her brother first choice. The fact that her father gave her first choice instead never set right with Dassan.”

“I see. Is Rallen still around?” Jeff asked.

“No, he is deceased. He died before Sa'Kayla, just a few years after the lands were divided. Some say he might have been poisoned by someone that knew him. Just like my Grandmother, there was no signs of forced entry to his home.”

“It seems land is something worth killing over.” Jeff commented.

“Land that you can farm in a sustainable manner is very valuable.” she retorted. “There have been those that tried farming to the South, where the water is hard to pump from the ground and evaporation rates make watering problematic. Our scientists studied what was done in your Imperial Valley but the issue of inadequate water still makes it hard to sustain.”

“So, where does our water come from?” he asked.

“We pump it from the *Kaan'Zand River* to the East.” she replied. “Still, we try to use as little as possible. Dassan uses electronic metered watering whereas we use watering crews that control the watering pumps by hand. They even use small tankers to do spot watering in areas that don't get enough from the trenches.”

They got back into the cart and started down the road, headed back to the house. Na'Krista wanted to give him a tour of the home and actually, he looked forward to it. Jeff wanted to see just how much like Earth his new second home could be.

It did bother him though, hearing about another murder related to land. He hoped Sa'Kayla's murderer would be found, before any other family members were injured or killed.

Dassan went into his office to log his daily water tallies but he stopped short, wondering why the automatic lights didn't turn on when he walked in. He palmed the light plate by the doorway several times, somewhat bothered when the lights still refused to illuminate. Shrugging his left shoulder, he went around his desk to turn on the desk lights. Tapping the switch, they refused to illuminate, too. Just as he decided to go check the circuits, a female voice spoke up from somewhere in the darkness.

“They know, Dassan.”

“What?” he blurted out, turning around in a circle, trying to see who it was that said that.

“They know, Brother.”

“Who said that?!?” he shouted, spooked by the fact that he recognized the voice. The voice of a long-dead family member.

“You know who I am, Brother. You murdered me, remember?” the femme offered up.

“You are dead! You have passed over! You are not here! You cannot be here!” he said firmly.

“I cannot pass over, Brother.” He saw her outline by the door, lit up by the meager light coming in from the hallway. It was Sa'Kayla, by all rights dead but there she was, right in the room with him. “I cannot pass over because you murdered me. You murdered our Father and you murdered me for monetary gain. I cannot pass over until you burn in *The Eternal Fires* for what you've done. That is what the scriptures say and it is a fact. I am stuck here in the nether plane between two existences, helping others of our lineage to either pass over or stay on this side, with the living.”

“I will not burn . . .” She made a move toward him, startling the buff-colored male.

“You will burn for eternity for your acts of transgression! You murdered family!” she said in an angry snarl. “Father is here with me. He also cannot pass over, no thanks to you.”

“He cannot be here!” Dassan blurted out. He knew this was all impossible. They were dead.

“Would you wager your soul on that thought?” a male voice offered up. Rallen Trent'lan stepped out of the shadows, right in front of his son. “I too, have been stuck in the nether plane with your sister. It would make me feel great elation to see your pelt, blazing with fire for all times.”

“That will not come to pass . . .” Dassan was interrupted by his parent.

“It will come to pass. What you have done has broken our very laws and religious tenets. You killed family members for monetary gain. Let me tell you something, Dassan. I gave your sister first choice because she knew what I knew about the lands. She would have taken care of them, Dassan. Sa'Kayla worked at my side, learning to farm the land with respect. She learned to extract the wealth without damaging the soil.

“You, on the other hand, never gave farming a second thought until after you killed me and you had to support your family through farming. You would have destroyed our cropland for riches that you would have squandered. That is why she was given first choice over you.”

“No, neither one of you can be here! This is not happening!” Dassan shouted.

“We will be here, until you are dead. Then we may cross over.” Sa'Kayla brought up.

Dassan was enraged by her outburst. “You lie to me, you *Fracking Spectre!*” he blurted out.

What he didn't see coming was his sister, striking out at his face with an open hand, claws out. He felt the hot sting of five claws, ripping deeply into his right cheek. “How dare you scra . . .” he started to blurt out but he caught himself. Dassan scanned around at his office, the lights now all on and illuminating brightly. He put his hand to his cheek and when he looked, the palm of his hand was covered in blood.

As he left his office, he stopped at the door and looked back, hoping to see something. When no being was observed, he turned to leave. Again a voice spoke up, his father's voice, rattling him further.

“We will be here, watching. You will kill no more.”

Dassan quickly headed down the hallway to find some medication for his scratches. For some reason, they stung worse than any other scratch he had ever been the recipient of. He turned into the kitchen, only to be met by his *One Love*, Sa'Zarren.

“Dassan, what is going on? I heard you shouting with some others and . . . what happened to your face?” she asked. She turned his head to see five very deep scratches, running at a diagonal across his right cheek.

“I was . . . No, you would not believe me if I told you.” he stated, knowing she would think he was addled from too much sun and not enough water intake.

“You were with some beings. I heard the shouting. Who was it? Tell me, Dassan.”

“I . . . I was visited by the apparitions of Sa'Kayla and Father.” he offered up. “I said something she did not like so she scratched me. So like my sister to do that.”

“That is not possible!” the dark gray femme offered up. “They are both long dead.”

“Well, what did happen, then?” he asked.

“I don't know. Intruders in your office?” she suggested.

Dassan nodded. “Yes. Intruders. I tangled with intruders.”

Sa'Zarren patched her mate up, then after he went to take care of some other things, she brought up the security program on her terminal in the food preparation area. Finding the feed from Dassan's office, she ran the time back to a point before the shouting. The camera was in infra-red mode when Dassan entered into his office and tried to turn on first the general lights, then the desk lights. He was joined momentarily by two other beings, ones that didn't register well on the screen. They were just murky outlines on the monitor.

The two beings could be heard just fine, however. Sa'Zarren listened to the conversation, shocked by what she had heard. The dark femme had no idea her mate was a killer! When the apparition that was Sa'Kayla struck out at her *One Love*, the glint of ceremonial claw caps were clearly visible in the frame that she froze. Shutting down the playback, she wondered what to do, whom to contact.

“Do not take action,” a female voice offered up, one that she had just heard on the playback. Slowly turning in the direction of the voice's owner, the faint outline of Sa'Kayla was visible by the back door to the courtyard. “Do not get involved. Dassan will only hurt you if you try to do something. Let things fall together. Others are aware. You do not need to risk your life.”

“But I know what he might do . . .” Sa'Zarren was startled by what happened next.

“We are watching.” Rallen offered up as he materialized beside his daughter. “I always cared for you, my daughter through joining. I will not allow harm to visit you.”

Sa'Zarren looked around, noting they had left. Or dematerialized, which was more like it. She had heard rumors, old stories of those who were stuck on the nether plane, coming back to haunt and extract their due from those that had killed family members. Well, if this was so, she would just step back and allow his deceased family members to extract their repayment.

Badly shaken by what had just transpired, she went to the liquor cabinet and retrieved a bottle of *Haad N'ga*. She poured herself a generous portion in a tumbler and slammed it down, hoping it would help settle her nerves. How she wished she could say something to someone but the request, even if it was from the other side side of the veil, would be honored. She would stay out of it.

Jeff had been given the 'Nickel Tour' of the house, finding it to be not much different from a home back on Earth. The villa had four bedrooms, five bathrooms and an Owner's Suite tub that looked to be able to hold three or four people. Their home had a formal dining room and a very spacious family room that they were currently occupying after a nice last meal.

They had the lights down low and some string music was playing, making for a nice ambiance. Na'Mara had brought them some of that N'ga berry cobbler and some glasses of *White Fire*, watered down to make it sippable. They were joined shortly by Sa'Densa, padd in hand.

“Na'Krista, you have a busy day tomorrow. “Sa'Densa put forth. “You need to meet with Merret Trasc'lan after first meal to go over the production numbers, then you need to go log in with *Post Fontaneauz*. They are expecting you to do some training of new recruits on the Mk Seventy Field Camera the day after. They said this class might take two full eight-days to complete.”

“I hate that MK Seventy Field Camera!” Krista blurted out. “The Mk Ninety-one is far superior!”

Densa shook her head. “I know all about that. Maybe you can find enough Ninety-one's on base to change the curriculum. I did that for the one training session they forced me to teach.”

“Maybe that would work.” the buff-colored femme mused. “It's not that the Seventy is garbage, it's just not that sturdy. Well, any camera from Lestim is not that sturdy at all. Give me a good Bil-manufactured camera any day. A Mk One-Zed-Eight, for example.”

“I agree.” Sa'Densa put forth. She then looked over at Jeff. “And you are busy tomorrow, too. First, you need to go get your truck from the spaceport, then you have to be in front of the House Tal-Hassanai senate sometime right after mid meal break.”

“So soon?” he asked.

“It was a chance opportunity. Kamram called me and asked me to make sure your paperwork is ready and help you to get there on time.” She tapped her padd a few times, then she smiled. “This data input will take about five Earth minutes.”

Sa'Densa started to ask various questions, putting Jeff in the hot seat for now. He looked over and noticed Krista was trying her best not to smile, obviously aware of his discomfort. Jeff knew this was coming, so all he could do was just bear with it and answer the questions asked.

That evening, Jeff and Na'Krista were getting ready to go to bed. This would mark his first of many nights on an alien planet. After thinking for a moment, it wasn't that alien at all. Some things were different but then again, many things were the same, for the most part. Even the bed was very familiar. The corners were highly rounded but it had covers and pillows, just like back home.

He had finally gotten used to the hot water being on the right and the fact that there was a urinal for both sexes in the bathrooms. Jeff washed up, brushed his teeth and pulled out his deodorant for use, something that had become a nightly ritual.

“Don't do that tonight.” Krista asked, taking his deodorant out of his hand and putting back in his toiletry bag. “It's my turn to take care of that issue.”

Before Jeff could ask, she used a spray inhaler to shoot some medication up her nostrils, several shots in each nostril. She leaned her head back, sniffed a few times, then she wiped her nose with a tissue.

“It won't deaden my sense of smell but it will calm my needs. Na'Mara went into town to pick up this medication for me.” she explained. Krista went up to her future *One Love*, put her arms around him and snuggled into his chest. “It is so nice to be able to cuddle with you without wanting to be intimate.”

“Will this work for us?” Jeff asked. He was very apprehensive about this.

“It will work just fine.” she reassured him. “I love how your natural musk smells. It is so different from any Elazi male. Your deodorant is nice, but it's a bit spicy to me. I prefer you as you are, no added fragrances.”

“So we're good? I won't be surprised in the wee hours by something that we might not be able to stop?” he asked.

“We will be just fine. Let's go to bed because tomorrow will be busy and no doubt you are tired from the higher gravity.”

Na'Krista led Jeff to the bed and took up her favorite side of it. He laid down next to her and snuggled up closely, now keenly aware of her spicy scent. It was about that time he noticed she was naked under the covers. Shaking his head, he gave up on the whole naked in bed issue and just tried to slip off to sleep, already anticipating a busy day tomorrow.

Sa'Densa sat down at the small table in the kitchen, waiting for Na'Mara to join her. This had been a rather busy day, getting things ready for tomorrow. She was pleased to see her Land Striders, her roller and her personal things had been delivered to Na'Krista's place, just like she was told would happen. That made things easier for tomorrow, having a vehicle at her disposal to take Jeff to the spaceport.

She hoped the Importation Inspectors went lightly on his truck. From what had been said, there should be no reason not to allow it on the planet without major modifications. She had also been asked to facilitate the importation of something called an 'F-250' for Na'Kayla. She wondered what that could be. Her gathering wool was interrupted by Na'Mara, setting some plates of cobbler on the table, followed by glasses of ice-cold Kebra fruit juice.

“Sa'Densa, now you can tell me how you ended up as Krista's chattel.” Na'Mara put on the table.

“Not much to tell.” the blue femme replied. “My father has made some deal with another house and that deal included disrupting Na'Krista's joining. I challenged her at my father's request.”

“But House Deen'lan has been close to House Keth'lan for hundreds of rotations.” the elder femme pointed out. “Why would they . . .”

“It was not *'they'*, it was my father. My mother is mad at him for this. It could have been worse, trust me. Na'Krista had her weapon placed just so in my chest. If she had wanted to, she could have taken my life if she had wanted to.”

“But she didn't and you are chattel, now.” Na'Mara stated.

“And, I am part of House Andrews'lan. I was accepted by Jeffrey as a respected member, since I can bring strong ties with another House through a joining.” Sa'Densa offered up between sips of juice.

“And that takes you out of your father's sphere of influence.”

“You are right, Na'Mara. You know, let's have some *White Fire* to go with this thing you call a cobbler.”

“I think you are right.” the elder replied. “Just the thing to end a good day with. And I think, if I were you, I would ask Krista if you could dye yourself back to a proper color. You may be her assistant but if she wants to allow it, you may fix that color.”

“I think I will ask. All she could say is no.”