

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-One

“The Inevitable”

Morning had come and Jeff was still trying to wake up as he gave direction to Na'Mara, concerning the coffee maker they had brought with them. The power cord had already been converted to Elazi standard polarized two pin after it had been determined that the brewing device would run just fine on what was one hundred and four volts, fifty-two cycles per second alternating current.

“This smells very good!” the buff femme offered up as she was taken through the process of getting the correct amount of ground beans into the basket after a filter had been placed inside. When Jeff wasn't looking, she had to take a small taste of the fresh grounds for herself, just to see if the grounds could be used in another way. Water was added to the machine and the button was pressed, followed by the rich aroma of freshly brewed coffee filling the morning area of the kitchen. Na'Mara inhaled deeply of the scents coming from the pot and smiled.

“This, I could learn to enjoy in the morning.” she commented.

“Na'Krista certainly consumes her fair share in the morning.” Jeff replied. “Me, I only need two or three cups, tops.”

“Is three cups of coffee considered heavy consumption?” Na'Mara asked.

“Some might say that.” Before he could say more, they were joined by the two young femmes. Na'Krista and Sa'Densa were discussing something that had to do with the watering schedule as they entered the kitchen, wearing nothing but smiles. Krista stopped as they entered, sniffing the air.

“Is that coffee?” she questioned.

“It is.” Jeff confirmed. “Um, I see both of you took quite some time to get dressed this morning,” he added, trying not to smile. His *One Love* walked up to him and hugged him.

“Jeffrey, this is normal for mornings around here.” she offered between kisses. “You will need to get used to it but just so you don't get any ideas, we will cover up.”

They disappeared back into the hallway but moments later, they were coming back, securing some thin, knee-length robes around their bodies. At least the fabric was opaque.

“I told Sa'Densa, you would probably say something about our nakedness.” Krista commented.

“I will have to work on that.” Jeff agreed. “Now, Na'Mara wanted to know what we would like for first meal.”

“Waffles!” Na'Krista and Sa'Densa both blurted out at the same time.

“Waffles?” Na'Mara questioned.

“I brought a new waffle maker with me.” Krista explained. “My brother gave me a converted recipe that his ships' cook came up with. I think we should have everything we need.”

“Um, Na'Krista, I do not know how to make waffles in this waffle maker, whatever it is. I am not familiar with its function.” their housekeeper offered up.

“I know how.” Jeff stated with a smile. “If Na'Krista will bring together the ingredients, I think I can make the waffles.”

First meal taken care of, Jeff dressed for the day in a kilt and a hot-weather shirt, considering how warm it was supposed to be according to the weather services on Elazia. Kamram had sent out a communications device for him, sort of a smart-phone in a way. It had already been loaded with all of the contacts that he might need to reach and any apps that he might have a use for. That's where he had found the weather report.

Sa'Densa was dressed and waiting for him, wearing what would be the official House Andrews'lan garb. Her *Trasdera*, a loincloth of sorts was done in the County Tipperary tartan and the *Visdera*, a long vest, had embroidery around the edging that matched the tartan hues. Her breast wrap was a solid hue, matching the red base color in the tartan. She had on some sandals and she had her hair done up nicely.

“If you are ready,” she put forth, “We need to get going.” she spoke in English.

“I'm ready.” Jeff replied. “And, it's odd to hear you speak English. I've learned to speak Elazi well enough that I use it as my conversational language instead of my native tongue.”

Sa'Densa smiled, then replied to him; “I like to speak English so once I can return to Earth, I can go back to my job at the visitor's center. I have been told it will be held for me, since I am still Krista's chattel for the time being.”

“You know, I think you should ask her to release you.” Jeff suggested. Really, Krista had no actual need for an assistant. This was just ritual, a matter of *Old Customs*. She could do without Sa'Densa but maybe there was some underlying reason that he did not know about.

“No, I will not ask.” she replied as they went out to her transportation. “I was taken as chattel fairly. It would be an affront to ask for release.”

Sa'Densa's roller, their slang term for a ground vehicle, was a Bil-manufactured Tafra retractable hardtop in a very understated dark blue color. It was an interesting piece, having a style that might have been at home on Earth in the late 1940's.

“Father was never happy when I bought this Tafra. He is one of those that doesn't like the Bil race at all. He thought I should have bought a Lestim Saa'Vich instead.” Sa'Densa offered up while she started the car and headed down the driveway to the main road.

Jeff was curious about something so he decided to ask. “This Saa'Vich; is it a good vehicle or is it not so good, based on being a Lestim product?” He had heard so many bad things about Lestim products, they must not be a very successful manufacturer.

“They are passable, I guess.” she replied. “I know Father has his in the repair shop all too often. Little things, too like doors that won't open properly and powertrains that shut down for no reason except faulty manufacturing. If you buy a new roller, get a Tafra or a Simmon. They will not let you down.”

They followed the road down to a major highway where Sa'Densa merged onto the South-bound lanes and set what must have been the cruise control. As they traveled along, the scenery really could have been back on Earth, somewhere in the central valley. Jeff had picked up a timepiece while he was on Pharrpoint so judging by the time, they should be at the Space Port in about an hour or so. He was practically zoning out to the scenery when Sa'Densa touched him on the arm, bringing him back to the present.

“Jeffrey, I was asked to work with Customs on something Na'Kayla was shipping home. It's something called an Eff two-fifty. Would you know what that is?”

“It is a truck like mine.” he replied. “I'm not sure exactly what trim level it is, but it's like mine.”

“Trim level?” she questioned.

They took the remainder of the trip discussing the idea of different trim levels for the same vehicle and just how absurd that idea sounded to her. The Lestim, Tafra and Simmon rollers all had just one trim level since the idea of a luxury vehicle wasn't as important as a luxury skimmer.

Argess and Arrissa Wrraal sat in a diner at the Kas'Madelle Space Port, discussing the issues at hand in their native tongue. This was a conversation that probably should have been taken care of in a private space but there was an urgent need for Arrissa to pass on some information to her mate. Once she had conveyed the news to him, Argess sat his cup of tea down hard and looked at his wife with fire in his eyes.

“No! I will not accept!” he blurted out. “You will tell the Planetary Council that I will not serve as Adjudicator! They know I am a mercenary, a former soldier! I cannot serve!”

“Argess, they are willing to overlook your past.” she offered up. “I was told you will return with me in ten and four days time. After planetfall, you will present yourself to the Planetary Council and accept the commission put before you.”

“It is a fate not fitting of my abilities.” he stated sullenly. He was a warrior, a soldier. Argess Wrraal was not a politician by no means. Just because his family all served as Adjudicators, it didn't mean he had to follow their path. He was a mercenary, paid by the highest bidder to do their bidding. He was also *Tah'Nash*.

“Argess, your father said you had to . . .” The male across from her glared back in a malicious way from the mere mention of his male parent.

“Do not use that *Frakking Grakker's* name in my presence! He is dead to me!” Argess growled.

“Sweetheart, I didn't mean to offend, but your father said . . .” The huge male felid cut her thoughts off in mid-sentence as he served her a litany of bullet points, counted off on his fingers.

“He only serves as Adjudicator because he can serve! What real use is he to our planet as a whole? He only votes on issues that he was paid to vote on! He has no spine, as shown by his failure to search out criminals of the Democracy! He didn't even fight with our people in the Varpur Wars! He sought immunity through a special vote to keep his sorry arse safe on our planet while I fought on the Front line! Both on Varpur Prime *and* on Comeria!” It was clear Argess didn't care much for his progenitor. “Let our son serve in my stead. He has the education for it. I do not.” He picked up his cup of tea and looked out the window at the port. Why did this have to happen? Who decided he needed to serve?

“You know as well as I do, Argess. Gresh cannot serve unless you serve before him or you're killed in a war before you could serve.”

“Then I will present myself, take the title and immediately relenquish it.” he offered up. “I will promote Gresh to Adjudicator and things will be back to normal.”

Arrissa rubbed the temples of her head, trying to alleviate the headache that was coming on. If there was a fact that could be counted on, it was the fact that her husband was irrational at times.

“Argess, listen to me. You have to serve three solar cycles before you can step down. You do know what the options are if you don't serve?” That struck a chord with the huge leonid.

“No. They would not dare to promote . . .” Arrissa broke into his diatribe.

“Yes. Your dear, sweet brother Hhess would take the commission. He is already talking about how he will redecorate his offices.”

“***I will not allow Hhess to serve as Adjudicator!***” Argess shouted as he slammed a fist into the table, startling those around them. “He is far more worthless than my father, of all people! He wishes for non-*Fask-aal* born to serve in our political arenas!”

Arrissa let her husband settle down before she continued. “If this is settled, I need to contact the council this evening. What will I tell them, Argess?” she asked carefully. She could see the anger behind his eyes as he looked up to reply.

“You may tell them, I am not happy with their decision, but I will serve as Adjudicator.” After a moment, he glared at her and added, “You will tell them that I will serve one term, three rotations. That is it. I will have discharged my duty to the planet. Then, I will promote Gresh. They will have to accept that set of terms.”

“Good,” she said as she brought some things out of her market bag. “Now, here is your Adjudicator's crest, your signet ring which I have already had sized for you and your official stamp. You are provisionally Your Honorable Adjudicator as of now, with all privileges and powers.”

“What? Huh??” he said reverently. He was totally gob-smacked by this turn of events. He put the emblem around his neck, slipped the ring on his left index finger and put his stamp into his possessions pouch on his belt. One thing he had to know, though. “Why? Why am I now Adjudicator? You must have known . . . something . . .”

“I hate to tell you this, Argess.” she admitted, “Your father was killed in the senate chambers two ten-days ago. Marshall Zzaan murdered him for a vote of no-confidence concerning the current financial statements filed to the Council by Marshall Zzaan's office. I was awaiting confirmation of your approval from the Council before I approached you with this.”

“And who killed Marshall Zzaan in turn?” he asked.

“He is on the run.” she replied. “Head Council Grree has asked that you put together a task force to find him. It is suspected that he has misappropriated millions of Chaat from the treasury over the last few solar cycles. That matter is only secondary to your father's murder.” After a pause she added, “Before he expired, your father said to tell you he was sorry to force this situation upon you. He said he did not want your brother to become Adjudicator. He wants you to find Zzaan. He said he knew you could and would find him.”

“My father may have been useless, but he didn't deserve to be murdered.” Argess said softly. “I will see to it that his murderer is brought to justice.” It was obvious, even though he did not like his father, he still mourned his passing. And, if he had the chance, he would tear Marshall Zzaan's throat out with his claws and watch that *Grakker* die a slow, painful death. That would right his father's disgraceful death and return his honor.

“So, my Love, maybe you will order dinner for us?” Arrissa asked.

“I will do that.” After he waved over a waiter for some menus, he brought up something he needed help with. “Arrissa, I require your assistance to find this person. Quickly, before we leave for our home and my new position.” He showed her a holographic image of a buff-colored Elazi male on his communicator. “Her Esteemed Ambassador Keth'lan needs to speak with this individual, concerning a family matter.” That thought made her smile.

“Well, Your Honorable Adjudicator, do you realize you now have the credentials to hunt this individual legally?” she offered up.

“I do?” This would be different; a legal hunt where he didn't have to keep looking over his shoulder for the law-keepers, hot on his heels.

“Is this a diplomatic issue, I would ask?” Arrissa tabled.

“I guess it could be.” Argess mused. “I was asked by an ambassador's daughter to attend to this. I suppose the problem could be diplomatic in nature.”

“There you go, problem solved.” Arrissa stated with a smile. “You have the power to deputize me and give me direct orders to assist you. It's all above board, for the most part. Besides, who would argue with the Adjudicator of *Fask-aa!*?”

Jeffrey was relieved to finally see his truck being loaded onto a trailer, its destination being his new home. It had taken over two hours to gather the appropriate paperwork and obtain a temporary identification plate for it. Oddly enough, Na'Kayla's Ford F-250 Crew Cab had taken about fifteen minutes, tops. Sa'Densa suggested it was her House name that had made all the difference. The inspector had told Sa'Densa that an identification plate for Kayla's truck would be sent by standard courier, their version of the Postal System. That figured.

One thing that he did notice, was how the people they were in contact with treated Sa'Densa. They all seemed to acknowledge her standing, that she had survived a challenge and she was thought of highly enough to be taken as chattel. Just about everyone had clasped hands with the azure femme.

Since they didn't have time to return to the compound, it was decided to head to the House Tal-Hassanai Senate Chambers instead. Jeff had brought a change of shirts, a jacket and waistcoat, some black dress shoes and his semi-formal kilt accessories. They would be just fine to stand before the House that he would soon be part of, if things went his way.

They headed past the spaceport and on into Kas'Madelle proper, a city that really made Jeff pay attention. Other than the vehicles that had that Art Deco look to them, this could be any big city on Earth. Even the citizens moving about reminded Jeff of home. Maybe that's why he felt at ease here.

Before they had left the spaceport, Sa'Densa had put the retractable hardtop down on her Taфра, allowing them to enjoy the weather. According to Sa'Densa, the temperature would probably be cooler for a few days. After he made the conversion using an app on his communicator, it was currently eighty-three degrees Fahrenheit.

Sa'Densa found them a parking place in the garage across the street from the House chambers, something that might have seen use as a city hall on Earth. They signed in at the desk after being noted to have an appointment, then they were checked for weapons before being allowed deeper into the building. The interior was done in fine stone, highly polished on the floors and heavy blonde woodwork. They obtained directions to Kamram's offices, where Jeff used a side room to change clothes. When he stepped out into the main area, Kamram and Na'Kesta were waiting with Sa'Densa.

“You look good today,” Kam offered up, checking his future son-through-joining's garb over, straightening his tie and sweeping a bit of lint off his jacket. “Not too formal or too casual. Just right.”

“Thank you, Father Kamram.” Jeff replied.

“Well, let's go to the Senate chambers. We will have to wait through one item ahead of your application. It should not take long.”

The Senate chambers turned out to be a very interesting room. The general audience would sit in tiered gallery seating set in a half-circle around one half of the room, a dozen tiers high. The officials would sit in tiered seating on the other half, only four tiers. Those seeking an audience would sit at tables that were situated in the middle of the floor. There were some tables that were situated to the sides, slightly raised up from the rest. One of those belonged to House Keth'lan.

They sat down, leaving two empty seats to Jeffrey's left. They were joined by Tegram and just moments later, Na'Krista. They sat down, Teg giving him a nod of acknowledgment and Krista giving him a kiss.

“I hurried as fast as I could. I did not wish to miss this at all.” she explained. That would also account for her garb, her military dress uniform. Her jacket was a khaki color, styled somewhat like Earth uniforms with several medals and ribbons adorning the front. Her pants were dark olive with a red stripe up the outside of each leg, cut to fit her just right. She wore an olive-colored blouse with a black tie of sorts under her jacket, nicely accenting her pelt color. Her black boots were highly polished as was the belt around her waist. She had a khaki garrison cap tucked into a loop attached to her jacket, on the right side.

“Aren't you hot in that uniform?” Jeff asked.

“It is very hot.” she explained. “I would take off my jacket if it were not for regulations.”

“Military regulations.” Jeff agreed. If there was one thing about being in the military, your clothing was always called out by whatever protocol the regulations put forth, disregarding the weather conditions.

All of the dignitaries and officials had taken their seats so the session was called to order. They all stood for a reading of The Declaration of Unity, then the Elazi male in line ahead of them went to a dais and began to plead for an increase in water. It was clear that he wanted additional water so he could open up twenty more units of Kebra fruit production.

At first, it seemed that an agreement between the nine House leaders would come about but it seemed someone from the gallery had an objection. The smoke gray Elazi male came to the dais, stated his name and began his rebuttal. It was clear he had some knowledge of law, since he quoted sections of various codes, all in perfect form.

“I know him. He is Temmer Frain'lan,” Krista pointed out quietly, “He wanted me to join with him when I was at the university. I do not care for him, so full of himself. He was not particularly upset when I turned him down. He said I would be back for him.”

They listened to Temmer make his objections, then another smoke gray male came up to the dais and stated his name as Harral Deen'lan.

“That is my father.” Sa'Densa told Jeff. “If I know him right, he will approve of this increase of water.” She was surprised by his statements to the House.

“We should not allow this increase.” he stated calmly. “You did not allow an increase when I requested to add ten units of Orlemberries and you denied House Keth'lan an increase to put over one hundred units of Kebra fruit in their orchards. Why would you allow this?”

“We will take this under advisement.” the eldest member told Harral with a nod of his head, signifying something unspoken. “You may step down.”

On his way back to his seat at the table several rows behind them, he stopped near Sa'Densa.

“I wish to speak with you, after session is over with.” he whispered. “Your mother said I must do this.” He then went and took his seat, giving his attention back to the dais.

It was indicated that the issue of a water increase would be held over to the next session, just to allow a survey of the available water. The male that was in charge of keeping the session running smoothly, nodded to Kamram that it was his turn. Jeff and Kam got up, walked a prescribed route to the dais where the Elazi male sat a tablet on the stand, making sure it was set to English as a courtesy to Jeff. It was apparently displaying an outline for Kam to work from. He nodded to the eldest member of House Tal-Hassanai so that pale gray male began the segment.

“I have in front of me, a request by Kamram Keth'lan for a . . . a Jeffrey Andrews'lan, to become part of House Tal-Hassanai. I realize this is very unusual, for a non-Elazi to ask for admittance. It was pointed out to me that this individual is both a doctor and a soldier. Those are admirable traits for a member of our House. However, this situation has never come up before. I ask you, Jeffrey Andrews'lan, what would you do if we denied your application?”

Jeff cleared his throat. “If I am denied admittance, I will challenge for admission.” he stated firmly.

The Elder spoke again. “Very admirable. You have heart, it would appear. Do you think you would have the ability to defeat our House champion?” A very big Elazi that was seated off to the side, stood up and bowed in Jeff's direction.

“I would give it my all.” Jeff explained. “The bigger they are, the harder they fall.” he added. That statement garnered a quiet murmur throughout the chambers.

“Very well. If we admit you to House Tal-Hassanai, what would you do to support yourself on our planet?” the elder asked.

“I would join with Na'Krista Keth'lan and help run her agricultural station.” Jeff replied. That caused further rumblings in the gallery.

“I see.” the elder mused. “Besides Kamram, do I have further sponsors?” he asked of the chambers. Tegram, Na'Kesta, Na'Krista and Harral, of all beings, stood in reply. The speaker

noted the beings standing on a padd, then he spoke up again. "Please allow us to confer for a few moments."

The Council elders gathered off to the side after they took off their microphones, keeping their conversation private. One pale gray male motioned to Jeff and another buff-hued male pointed both to Tegram and the House champion. There was some further conversation, followed by what must have been the vote. They took up their seats, then the Elder in charge made their decision clear to all.

"Jeffrey Andrews'lan, We the Council, have decided that you must be worthy of admittance, based on your credentials and those who sponsor you. You are now a full member of House Tal-Hassanai as a sub-House under House Keth'lan. What will we know your House as?"

"My House will be known as House Andrews'lan." Jeff responded.

"Very well. Welcome to House Tal-Hassanai. May peace follow you wherever you go."

Jeff and Na'Krista were still holding one another, tears of joy running down their faces as they were ushered through the building to a reception hall that Kam had reserved. They knew they were just that much closer to being joined. It would not be long now.

"This is just so . . . I can't believe this!" Krista offered up. "And why did Harral stand?" she questioned. Before she could say more, her thoughts were answered by the one in question.

"I stood because my daughter is part of House Andrews'lan. I would not want my daughter to be forced to serve as a Freelancer House member." Harral replied.

"Father!" Sa'Densa blurted out "You didn't have . . ." He interrupted her train of thought.

"I still love you and I wish to ask your forgiveness. I have made a deal that I cannot get out of. That bad decision forced this situation. I am so sorry." He then took her in his arms and hugged her tightly. "Will you forgive me?"

"I forgive you, Father." Sa'Densa sobbed out. "I will forgive you, since you asked my forgiveness."

"Thank you, Daughter." Harral spoke quietly in her ear. "If you need something, whatever it is, let me know. I will facilitate it. I hope you will stay here on Elazia. You have skills that House Andrews'lan can use to further their production."

"I may stay but I will have to see how I feel in one year's time." she offered.

"And please, come visit your mother. She wanted to be here but something came up at our station. She needed to be hands-on with the issue."

"I will do that, Father."

Harral left his daughter to her duties of attending to the assembly at hand and went to face Kamram. The smoky male cleared his throat and offered his hand to the Patriarch of House Keth'lan.

“Kamram, I am glad to see you growing your House.” he put forth.

“Thank you, Harral.” the buff-hued male replied as he shook Harral's hand. “And I thank you for standing as a sponsor. I did not expect you to do that.”

“I needed to, Kam. Our Houses are becoming linked through joining. I am bound to assist House Andrews'lan if need be. And, I should bury my grudge, that you captured the seat in the Global Senate that I campaigned for. You have done well to fill that appointment.”

“Thank you, Harral. I have only the planet's best wishes in my heart.”

“Kam, when you run for reappointment, I will assist you in any way possible. You let me know what you need.”

“I will keep that in mind, Harral. Tell me, something has been going on with your House. Odd things, such as Sa'Densa's challenge to Na'Krista. Would you care to talk about it?”

“I cannot speak about it, not yet, Kam. Some day, when I am sure it is safe to do so, I will come to you with some information. You will know what to do with it.”

“Very well, Harral.” Kam said quietly, patting him on the shoulder. “If you need my help, you do not waste any time to contact me.”

“I will do that, Kam.”

Once Harral had went to talk with Sa'Densa again, Kamram went to the podium on the low stage and motioned for Tegram and Na'Kesta to guide the young ones to a spot in front of where he was standing. Once that had been accomplished, he tapped the microphone to make sure it was on.

“Everyone, I asked all of you here today so that I can make a very important announcement. As you all know, Na'Kayla and Kalram are both joined. They had been on a new journey with their mates for some time while Na'Krista served our Trans-Atmospheric Forces as a Video Technician.

“Most recently, Na'Krista has been on Earth, in the Sol solar system. Through a chance meeting, she became acquainted with Jeffrey Andrews'lan, a retired soldier and doctor with the United States Marine Corps. They have become very close to one another and they wish to make that closeness a lifetime commitment. We would like to announce the joining of Jeffrey and Na'Krista.”

The room erupted with cheers and shouts, everyone so excited for Na'Krista to be joined to a warrior doctor. The attendees surrounded the future family unit and gave them their best wishes for a long and happy life together. Some *Haad N'ga* was brought out, followed by some Kebra fruit juice and finally, some *White Fire* from Krista's distillery made its appearance.

Later that afternoon, Jeff was talking with Harral when Temmer Frain'lan walked up to them, hand out to Jeffrey. The Earther accepted it, shaking the smoke gray male's hand firmly.

“I am Al'Temmer'an Frain'lan, just in case Na'Krista hasn't told you yet.” he stated with a smile. “I was a former suitor for her hand, back when we were at the University.”

“Nice to meet you. I'm Jeffrey Andrews'lan.” Jeff replied. “Na'Krista had told me who you were when you were at the podium today.”

“I was asked by someone to bring up that objection.” he explained. “You see, unlike other stations, Na'Krista still has enough water credits for another two hundred units of orchards or three hundred and fifty units of Orlemberry or N'ga berries. Not something to trifle with. These credits could be worth quite a bit, to lease them out. There a number of other stations that do not have credits that would pay good money for the lease of those credits.”

“I see.” Jeff mused.

“It would do Na'Krista well to lease out twenty or twenty-five units worth of water credits. That would be worth fifty thousand Crown a year at the minimum.”

“So, law is your line of work?” Jeff asked.

“I try to stay out of the serious cases. Too much work in court, making arguments that are meaningless, since the outcome was already decided. I actually make my living as a facilitator.” After he took a sip of his White Fire, Temmer continued. “Coming from an alien environment, Elazia must seem overwhelming to you, Jeffrey. All of our water issues and other such issues related to agriculture.”

“Not really.” Jeff replied. “You see, our West coast has been in a drought for twenty years. We have farmers that have ceased farming in our Central Valley because they can make more money leasing their water rights to the big cities. Not too unlike here.”

Temmer nodded, waiting until others around them were listening before he unloaded his next statement to Jeff.

“Still, I don't see you as capable of being a proper mate for Na'Krista and helping to make her station profitable. I, Al'Temmer'an Frain'lan, by *The Old Customs*, do challenge you for the right to join to Na'Krista.”