

The characters Jeffrey Alan Sakaar Andrews, Na'Krista Nahala Keth'lan, Kamram Keth'lan, Na'Kesta Keth'lan, Tegram Keth'lan, Traci McDonald, Bosteg Haas'lan, Kestam Ramn'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'Jemma 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-Five

“For Love And Honor”

Na'Krista sat on the couch in the gathering room, gazing through the patio windows as the sky became brighter while the morning came to full light. She felt great apprehension this day concerning her future *One Love's* ability to defeat her nemesis, Temmer Frain'lan. Her Uncle Tegram felt this was a non-issue, even if she felt otherwise. Even if Jagram said she shouldn't worry herself over this, this did not seem to be a sure thing in her eyes. If Tem were able to get in a few carefully placed blows, incapacitating Jeff, this would all be for naught.

She knew she could never love Temmer, especially after all of this had transpired. Krista knew she would find some way to return to Terra Prime in the event Jeffrey lost, leaving Elazia behind. She would be with her true *One Love*, even if she had to resign her commission. The issue with that would be the need to get her father to intervene with the Trans-Atmospheric Corps. They would not let go of their newly minted officer without a fight.

Wiping at the tears in her eyes, she tried to compose herself as a plan was being worked over in her mind. There had to be a way to make this event a winning proposition and that plan was coming together. She knew there would be hell to pay for this but there was only one way to make damned sure this would be a triumphant day for them. Well, knowing this was what had to transpire, she picked up her personal communicator and went out onto the patio to place a call.

Jeff woke with a start, momentarily disoriented from a very vivid dream that once awake, he couldn't seem to remember much of it at all. Sitting up on the edge of the bed, he rubbed his face to wake up further from his night of disturbed slumber. The chrono indicated it was just past the top of the fifth *heth* in the morning, meaning in less than three *heth*, he would find himself facing off against Temmer Frain'lan.

He turned on the lights in the bed chambers and made his way to the bathroom, firstly to take care of business and secondly, to clean up before trying to consume something to settle his upset stomach. The impending melee with Temmer had his stomach tied up in knots over this.

Stepping into the shower, he turned on the water, forgetting it would take a moment to warm up. At least it wasn't ice-cold like back at the cabin. While he lathered up, he mused about the pending issue. It concerned him that Na'Krista might follow him back to Earth I he were to lose this engagement. While he would welcome her to his home on a permanent basis, he had a guess

that her father would send Orange Detachment to round her up and return her to Elazia. Knowing Krista, that would be the battle to have a ringside seat to.

Jeff dried off and wrapped a robe around himself to thwart the chill from getting out of a steamy shower. He hung up his towel to dry and reluctantly headed back to the bedroom to dress for the day. He just wished his stomach would play fair this morning and settle down. He did not relish the idea that he might lose his morning meal before the engagement.

The Earther slipped on his briefs, black kilt socks and a black t-shirt with the Marine Corps Eagle, Globe and Anchor in white outline on the front and “Semper Fi” in bold white letters on the back. He then wrapped his Irish County Tipperary tartan kilt around himself and buckled the three straps that would hold it tight to his waist. A black two and one-half inch wide belt was added next, then his sporran last. The sporran would have to go for the battle, though.

His black service boots would be his chosen footwear for the day, since the lugged soles would give him the proper traction on the fighting surface. He added the proper sock garters that matched the red in his kilt and slipped his Sgian Dubh, Gaelic for “black knife”, into his right sock top. Looking at himself in the mirror across from the bed, he looked the part for the battle; ready to go do some damage as only a Marine could do.

Jeff walked out to the kitchen and sat down at the breakfast bar in the kitchen, making an attempt to put away the light repast fixed for him by Na'Krista. The *Zefra* eggs were good, it was his gut that was in a knot at the moment, preventing him from enjoying them. The rolls seemed to go down easier but his future wife made him eat more of the eggs and a portion of the slice of *Targ* meat for energy. Even his morning coffee was trying to rebel on him.

He suspected that she had deduced his situation so she passed him some tablets that were sort of minty in nature. He chewed them up and washed them down with some water at her urging. At least his stomach seemed to settle down a bit. Without a word, Na'Krista stood up, took his hand and urged him to follow her to the garage. It was time to go face his opponent.

Na'Krista had been very quiet this morning, visibly upset over the thought that something could happen, taking her future husband away from her and forcing her into a loveless relationship, if she chose to follow Elazi customs. That, and the knowledge of just to stay near Jeff if he left for Earth, she would have to give up her commission and walk away from her home.

Looking around at the landscape as she drove them to *Saav'Rand Square*, Krista mused about the possibilities set forth. If her *One Love* lost this challenge, would she leave Elazia with Jeff? Would Temmer or her parents allow that?

When they arrived at the square, she was guided into a reserved parking place and they were escorted over to a group of low buildings where one had a sign that read “Andrews'lan” on it. Once through the door, they were met by Na'Krista's parents. Kamram had a *Taan'zaa* in hand and Na'Kesta had a small case with her.

The Keth'lan matriarch began to paint designs on the left side of Jeff's face and his left arm, using a pattern she held for reference. The color seemed to be the same shade of purple that she

had used for Krista's challenge from Sa'Densa. Once the designs had been placed, she used a clear sealant of some kind to make them durable for the match. Now that the markings were in place, Kam took him through a final round of stretching, just to make sure he was ready for the challenge.

Jagram startled Jeff momentarily when he stepped into the room once the warmup was completed, wearing a loincloth in House Andrews'lan markings. He was marked with what appeared to be the same purple paint in similar patterns to those that adorned Jeff.

“Jeffrey, it is time,” the tall one offered up, motioning for him to exit the room. Jeff took the *Taan'zaa* offered by Kamram, took a deep breath and followed his Second to the battle. It was now or never, in Jeff's mind.

“Krista, are you feeling well?” her mother asked, noting the buff femme was very quiet while all of the preparations had been taken care of.

The younger femme looked over at the door when it closed. “Mother, have you thought about my request?” she asked cautiously.

“Yes, I have. I can help you, if this is what you want to do.” her mom replied. It was clear her daughter was very upset at the moment.

Krista swallowed hard, then took a deep breath. “Then you know what I need you to do for me.”

The sky was still overcast when Jeff strode out to the event field, trying to keep his focus on the matter at hand. This match, one that might only last a few moments, would decide whether he would stay with his intended on this planet or return to Earth with Krista in tow. He knew he would rather the outcome to be in his favor and at the moment, he was not above using whatever tactics it would take to win. Jeff thought he knew the rules well enough to work them like a military tactician would.

His side of the square had seats reserved for most of Krista's family but the two that were empty at the moment were Na'Kesta's and Na'Krista's. He knew his future mother-in-law had to put away her items that she had brought with her and her daughter might have been helping her. As he took his mouthguard out of its case, he observed the two femmes headed toward the ring, wearing long tan robes with the hoods up, obscuring their faces. Maybe that was tradition around here, since Tegram was wearing a similar robe.

Jagram urged him to walk to the center of the ring where Temmer and his Second awaited them. An official in black pants and a yellow shirt was with them, patiently waiting for Jeff and Jag to join the group. As they grew nearer, it seemed Temmer's Second was not quite as tall as Jeff but that gray male was heavier built. This might be a problem.

“Jeffrey, Jagram, are you ready?” the referee asked once they were within the center ring.

“We are ready.” Jeff replied.

“Temmer, Kennan, are you ready?” the officiating male asked.

“We are ready.” Tem replied. “Jeff, I will give you this opportunity to concede. Will you take it?”

“I will not.” the Earther replied. Temmer nodded in response, seeming a bit upset that the offer had been turned down.

The solid black-furred official garnered their attention and spoke up; “This match will be for twenty *Munar* or twenty points. If no side has ten points at the twenty *Munar* mark, we will stop the match and ask if both sides wish to continue.” Making sure they understood, he continued. “Strikes below the hips or above the shoulders will be a four point deduction. Both combatants must be in the same ring for strikes to count. Who will open for each side?”

“I will open.” Jeff put forth.

“And I will open,” Kennan put forth, giving his opponent an intense stare.

“Openers, step back one ring.” the ref ordered.

Temmer and Jagram went to their sides, taking up a somewhat rigid stance just outside of the fighting surface. Kennan hefted his *Taan'zaa*, seeming a bit unfamiliar with it as he prepared to do battle with Jeff. The Earther took up his position in reply, using a wide grip, small end down with a nice wide stance to keep balance with. Once the yellow shirt had stepped out of range, a gong sounded the start of the match.

Kennan charged at Jeff but by some fluke, he slowed his charge when Jeff didn't backpedal as it was probably expected of him. That confusion was not lost on the protagonist, who brought the small end of his *Taan'zaa* up between Kennan's legs, scoring a direct hit on his family jewels. The gray one went bolt upright, then toppled over on his side in a fetal position.

“Minus four points for the defending side!” the referee shouted, then when Kennan didn't get back on his feet right away, the judge for the match went to see about him. The official was quickly joined by Temmer and the medics.

Jeff stood there patiently, keeping his focus on the job at hand. Temmer would now have to face off with him and the thought of him holding Krista in his arms was getting him into that mindset that was needed. He watched as Tem picked up his *Taan'zaa* and took up a spot in the first light ring from the center. Jeffrey was sure he could see some fear in his opponent's eyes, too. The Earther took up his spot opposite his nemesis and waited for the gong to sound.

At the signal, Jeff was all over Temmer in a flash, taking him to task. The smoke-gray male found himself backpedaling to try to keep Jeffrey out of striking range but his defense was not working so well. Taking a chance, he sprinted away from Jeff and took up refuge in a corner square to get a moment's rest.

Tem watched as the one whom he had challenged took up the center point, staring at him with pure hatred in his eyes. It was hoped that Jeff would lose his focus but that seemed a moot

point now. Temmer knew if he didn't take this very seriously, he would be the loser in today's battle and his last chance to gain Krista would be lost.

“Jeffrey with five!” the ref announced when Tem began to advance again, trying to flank Jeff on what should be his weak side, the left side. Once in range, Tem accomplished two strikes but the Earther responded with a quadruple tattoo to the Elazi male's left-hand ribs, giving him something to think about. Before he could move out of range, Jeff jabbed him real hard in the solar plexus, staggering his opponent backwards. Using this opportunity, Jeff jabbed his nemesis hard in the right shoulder joint area, knocking him down.

The referee made Jeff take a corner square while Temmer shook off his cobwebs and returned to his feet. It was obvious Tem was rattled by this full-on frontal attack. Once the gong sounded again, Jeff advanced toward his target, preparing to work on that shoulder again. He thought if he could do enough damage to that region of Temmer's body, he would have the match.

The smoke gray male watched the human advance on him again with fire in his eyes. It was clear he needed to do something, just to even up this match. Right as Jeff started to swing on him, the Elazi male brought up his *Taan'zaa* to block. It was unfortunate that Jeff had put his leg in the way, causing Tem's weapon to strike him hard in the knee, taking Jeff down.

Jeffrey heard the referee stopping the match momentarily when he came in to check his condition. The protagonist was fairly sure his knee was severely injured or sprained, since he was unable to move it without almost blacking out from pain. The medics checked his appendage once they arrived, then helped to put him on a stretcher and carry him off the field for further medical attention.

Jeff watched from the stretcher as Jagram picked up his weapon but something was odd; he turned to Na'Krista and gave it to her! She had taken off her robe, showing the battle markings painted on her fur! That, and the fact that she only clad in a House Andrews'lan loincloth and her fighting footwear. What was she thinking? All Jeff could do was to watch on in horror, since he had no way to stand up and stop this at the moment.

Temmer looked up to see a visage he hoped was just an optical illusion; Na'Krista, with a weapon, striding out onto the field with the most determined look on her face. He could see the fire in her eyes and her body language said she was ready to take him to task.

The gong rang, she ran at him but at the last second, Krista used the weapon to vault past him, into his ring. Before he could turn to block her attack, Krista used the big end of her *Taan'zaa* in a two-handed baseball bat swing to strike him on the side of the head, taking Temmer off of his feet.

“Minus four points!” the referee shouted, checking on Tem while Na'Krista took the center point. Once her opponent was standing again and the gong sounded once more, she laid into the focus of her aggression, building six more points to her side before she used the big end to take him down again.

“Net gain of two points!” the ref signaled while Temmer slowly got back to his feet. The gong sounded again and this time Na'Krista took great relish in taunting the male, staying just outside his reach while she built up the points once more.

Jeffrey was assisted in standing by a medic so he limped over to stand by Jagram, shaking his head at the sight of his future *One Love*, fighting Temmer. She was better than any of them at this game, from his viewpoint.

“I see what she is doing.” Jagram brought up. “Her tactic is to gain enough points so she may take a cheap shot. Very effective and it is not against the rules.”

“I noticed that.” Jeff agreed. “She looks pissed off, too.”

Jag nodded. “I would not wish to fight her right now. She would win and I would be in a world of hurt, I think you would say.”

“I’ll agree with that.” Jeff put on the table. “She would take me out without any problems.” Temmer went down a third time from another head strike and it looked like he might have hit the ground hard with his cranium, too. “That has got to hurt.”

“You are right.” the tall one agreed. “She will wear him down, forcing him to concede. He would be foolish to continue this match if she demands his concession. He is badly outclassed at the moment.”

“Get up! Fight me you Fracking B'Taagh! You want me as your mate? Then fight me for it!!” Na'Krista screamed, taunting the gray male from the center ring while he shook off his concussion with the fighting surface. At the gong, she ran up to him, locked shafts and pushed them to a juncture of rings. “Concede! I will kill you if I have to!!” she growled in his face, right before she shoved him into a dark ring, joined him and viciously swept his feet out from under him at the knees.

“Minus four points!” the referee shouted, going over to see about Temmer. The gray male made several valiant attempts to stand, falling back down each time when his left leg would buckle under his weight, failing to support him. “Temmer, can you continue?” he asked.

“I will continue!” he growled back at the official, using the shaft as a crutch to get back to his feet. He was favoring the left knee greatly, obviously unable to put very much weight on it. He thought the medics had come to see about him but it was Na'Krista, still looking pissed off.

“Concede!” she growled in his face, her hot breath hitting his nostrils with a scent of pure anger. “I will maim you permanently or if I have to, I will kill you! I will not concede! I will not lose this match to you!!”

Kennan joined them, walking very carefully and slightly hunched over, too. “Temmer, you must concede. I cannot step back in for you. I am too greatly injured to continue.”

Jeffrey had limped over to join them with Jagram's help so Tem looked at Kennan, Krista and Jeffrey in turn. He knew he could not continue this battle and if he had his guess right, Na'Krista would follow through with her threats. Admitting defeat, he offered his *Taan'zaa* to Krista and made his announcement. "I concede and offer myself and my services as chattel."

The group had retired to a meeting hall adjacent to the tournament ring and finished up the official part of the challenge. A table had been set up by the door and a large tarp had been laid out nearby. While Temmer was assisted into the middle of the tarp by Kennan, several cordless electric razors and a few buckets of blue pelt paint were set out for them.

Na'Krista took two razors and gave one to Jeff. She helped him over to where Temmer stood and made sure he was steady on his feet before she let go of her future husband.

"You must shave me." Temmer put forth to the Earther. "Everything above the waist. Then you must mark me as chattel with blue paint." When Jeff didn't respond right away, Tem took the razor from him gently and indicated how to hold it against his fur. "Like this. Hold it just like this, the sole of the razor flat to my skin. You must take off as much of my pelt as you can. That is tradition on Elazia."

"Since it is required of me to do this, I will do so," Jeff finally replied, taking back the razor and turning it on. Na'Krista started by cutting around Temmer's waist so Jeff began to work upwards on the back, noting how it was cleaning off the fur nicely. In not much more than ten *Munar*, Temmer was devoid of fur from the navel up with the exception of his head of long hair. Another few *Munar* later, Temmer matched colors with Sa'Densa.

"I must provide victory refreshment." Temmer offered up. "It is customary for my House to provide food and drink due to my loss in the square. I have disgraced my good name and the name of my House, House Frain'lan."

Refreshments and a light repast were brought in by members of Tem's family and sat out on tables that were set up for the occasion. The now-blue male filled tall cups with bheer or water and distributed them to the assembled extended Keth'lan family. He then carried trays of finger foods around, offering them to each individual. All the while he carried himself with dignity, all that he really had left that had not been stripped from him this day.

Once everyone had settled into chairs that Temmer had sat out around the tables, he brought two chairs to Jeff and Krista's table, sat them down and took up a seat. They were joined shortly by Kennan, who brought more drinks with him.

Temmer looked at Krista and Jeff with a very sad expression, now that the match was over and he could let go of his emotions. "I am now your chattel for the next full solar cycle. Because of the regulations surrounding the challenge, Kennan Frain'lan, my Uncle's eldest, is also your chattel for the same period. Kennan is my legal assistant, doing the research we need for cases that go before a magistrate."

Before Na'Krista could speak her mind, he continued.

“Kennan and myself could reside at your station for the duration. There is nothing active on my dockets so I would be able to devote my time to your needs. Kennan has training in the major accounting methods so he could assist with your records, if you wish.” He took a sip of bheer, then continued with his thoughts.

“I would not be a good law specialist if I did not anticipate the slim possibility of losing the match today. I have taken the liberty of preparing your joining papers for you. Saar Andrews'lan, I understand you have taken an Elazi name. Would you like that on the forms?”

“I would, Temmer. I have taken the name 'Sakaar' as my Elazi name.”

“I will annotate that.” the blue one put forth as he began to do some input on a tablet given to him by Kennan. “Na'Krista, sign your name here,” he directed giving her a stylus once he had handed her the tablet. “Jeffrey, your name goes right above hers,” he added as he made sure the document was digitally signed by both parties. “You will have a document to print once we return to your station, if that is what you want me to do.”

“We have guest quarters.” Na'Krista put forth. “You may stay there for the duration. The guest house has a kitchen so you may cook your own meals or you may eat with us. That is up to you. Sa'Densa has her meals with us so if you wish, I can have our cook make your meals, too.”

“Thank you, Mere Keth'lan.” Tem acknowledged. “I also wish to say this openly. I am sorry for the trouble I have caused. I was misled by others that possibly wanted me to break up your joining. I heard you wanted me back in your life. After the thrashing you gave me today, I can see I was lied to. I am sorry for all the pain I have made in your lives.”

“Your apology is accepted.” Na'Krista replied. “Now, if there is no other items to take care of, I need to get all of you cripples to a doctor. I need to be sure there is no lasting injuries, with maybe the exception of your injured pride.”

Temmer smiled slightly. “My pride is greatly injured, that a femme defeated me in battle. I am sure, however, that it will eventually heal up.”

It was late in the evening when Jeff and Na'Krista finally returned to the station, their day finally completed. The emergency room that checked over the three males was very similar to one on Earth. It had taken six *Heth* for them to be examined and medication dispensed. Temmer now had a soft cast on his left leg and Jeff's leg was wrapped with compression bandages. He had been given instructions to take it easy the next few days and not to overstress his ankle and knee.

Temmer and Kennan would move to the station in the morning, once they had what supplies they would need packed up for shipment. She hoped they had no need for Temmer's services but it felt good to have a law specialist on staff, even if it was for only one solar cycle.

Na'Krista took off what little clothing she wore and went to the bathroom to clean up. Tomorrow would be a very special day for her so she wanted to look her best. She knelt down and turned on the faucet for the soaking tub, setting the water to a very warm temperature. As an

afterthought, she added some bath beads that would provide some essential oils for her fur. That would make her pelt feel very silky to the touch.

While she soaked herself and allowed the heat to work on her sore muscles, she tried to unwind from the stress of the day. They had been triumphant but she still heeded her father's decision to have her joining tomorrow, before anything else could come up to delay the important day. Everyone that would be in attendance had been contacted so that issue was taken care of. Her sister repeatedly assured her she would be able to do her part so that was out of the way.

Na'Krista was happy to see the purple paint wash away this time, leaving no staining behind. Her mother had purchased the paint recently to replace what was used at Phaarpoint station. She was just about to call out to see what Jeff was up to when he came into the bathroom to join her in cleaning up. He had a towel around his waist and he was still limping from his injury.

Jeff got in the shower and turned on the water full hot, enjoying the heat as it quickly warmed up for him. Adjusting the temperature to his likings, he began to wash off the purple coloration. He washed his hair with that minty-smelling shampoo, then he used his personal body wash to finish up. He did take a few *Munar* to soak his knee using the hand-held spray wand, massaging it while he used the pulse action to help with some therapy to the joint.

Na'Krista finished her bath so she stepped into the drying booth and began to dry her pelt, using a brush to keep the fur from being too fluffy. Jeff had finished his shower so she had the bathroom all to herself at the moment. Once her pelt was dry, she sat down at her makeup station and took the time to hone her claws and paint them a bright shade of red. Her future husband seemed to like the color so this was for him.

The Elazi femme checked her appearance over, using a small razor with an adjustable guide to even up the fur on her face. She smiled, happy with how she appeared in the mirror, a perfect appearance for her joining day. Wrapping herself in a sheer nightgown, she raised the temperature in the bedroom to help them sleep easier before she joined her soon-to-be in bed. He was already asleep, probably tired from all of the stress they had been under for the past five days. Krista turned off the lights and snuggled up next to Jeff, happy with the day's outcome.

Dassan Trent'lan looked at the map that showed the property that was Na'Krista's land being part of his holdings, still very upset with the day's outcome. Jeffrey was to lose and be headed back to Terra Prime in the morning and Krista was to be forced into either taking part in a loveless relationship or leaving with Jeffrey, giving up her holdings in the process.

Because the joining date had been moved up by Kamram, there was no way to derail that so that left only one or two possible courses. One of those courses of action sat at his desk, enjoying a glass of *White Fire*. Na'Krista was family but this was extreme wealth he was in hopes of obtaining. Wealth that would give him power beyond anything the Keth'lan family knew.

“Sevran, I have an assignment for you.” the old one put forth. “I need you to stop Na'Krista's joining by whatever means you see fit. She cannot be joined tomorrow. Is that understood?”

“You want me to murder her, am I right?” the pale gray male replied.

Dassan grimaced. "Your words, not mine."

Sevran Varren'lan sipped his liquor before he spoke. "Well, how else would you suggest I stop this joining? Besides, isn't she blood relation to you?"

"This has nothing to do with blood or the fact that she is a relative." Dassan tabled. "This, my friend, is something that has bothered me for more than sixty cycles. My father should have allowed me to choose that land first, not my sister. There is great wealth under that property, Sevran. More than you could count on all of your family's fingers and toes. Wealth that should be mine." The elder male sat at the desk and sipped his liquor before continuing.

"I will pay you a fortune." the old one put forth. "Land, if you want it. Crown, if you would care for that more. All I need from you is a stoppage to this insanity. That land should have been mine to begin with and I will not rest easy until it is part of my holdings."

"Very well, Dassan. I will do your bidding for fifty units of land that has water rights for that many units of orlemberries. And a distillery, too."

"You bargain well." Dassan retorted. "I will deed you this section," indicating a plot on the Northeast corner of his property. "It has full water rights and direct access to his water canal that borders the South side. It is currently in vegetable production but you can do what you want after the harvest, which will be yours to profit from."

Sevran looked at the map, pleased with that parcel. "I must be clear on your orders. I may do whatever it takes?"

"Yes you may. I expect it of you."

"What if I do kill her to stop the joining? What will you do?"

"I will deed you the property, as agreed."

Sevran bumped fists with Dassan, then he let himself out of the home. Walking out to his roller, the more he thought about this, the scarier it became to him. The old one must be getting unstable, to think no lawkeeper would investigate Na'Krista's death. Sevran was actually more afraid of Kamram finding out he was behind the pending murder and exact his revenge, outside the law's influence. If it was done right, a body could take torture for a long time before a being would expire.

The traffic was light this evening so it gave Sev a chance to think this over. On one hand, he would have a guaranteed income and a voice on the local Ag Board. On the other hand, he would be looking over his shoulder his entire remaining days, hoping the Keth'lan family didn't figure out who murdered Na'Krista. The pros and cons didn't balance out, as far as he was concerned. Sevran decided it was best to sleep on it and make a decision in the morning.

Na'Kimsa was busy fixing a late snack, unable to sleep due to the excitement of the pending joining of her granddaughter to a very handsome Terran. Jeffrey had taken an Elazi name so she wondered if Krista would take a Terran name in turn. They had talked about it for a few moments but the younger Keth'lan had not committed to it.

Kimsa had made herself a *Vesha* meat sandwich, which according to Na'Krista tasted like an Earth prepared ham, whatever that was. She knew she wanted to go to Terra Prime some day and see this blue-green water world for herself. It sounded like it might be a bit like Comeria Prime, with vast forests of trees and a huge central plains area that was used for agriculture.

The pale buff femme poured herself a glass of cold water and stepped out onto the patio to enjoy her light repast. She sat her drink and plate on the glass-topped table and carefully sat down on one of the chairs, taking the one that gave her a view of the hills to the East. Just as she reached for her drink, a voice spoke up. A voice she had not heard in a very long time.

“Na'Kimsa, do not turn around. Promise me.” the femme voice asked of her.

“Um, very well. I will not turn my head.” she replied. She knew this voice, the sound of long dead warrior in arms

“Na'Kimsa, I am going to join you at the table. Do not panic.” Sa'Kayla Keth'lan came into view and sat opposite her old and dear friend. “It is good to see you again, Na'Kimsa.” the one that was stuck between realities offered up. She then reached across the table and took Na'Kimsa's right hand in her left.

“Sa'Kayla? How? You died so long ago!” the pale buff femme queried.

“I was murdered, Na'Kimsa. *Od'Tra the Wise* made me the keeper and protector of my kin. You are one of my kin, too since you are joined to Jessett.”

“If you are our protector, you have come for a reason. What is that reason, Sa'Kayla?”

The deceased one took a package out of her robes and placed it between them on the table. She unwrapped it to reveal a *Falcos* large bore revolving magazine close support pistol. There was a box of ammunition for it along with several fast loaders. It would have been one that might have been purchased by a former soldier for their personal protection.

Na'Kimsa picked it up to look at it, finding the grips engraved with Sa'Kayla's full name. This was most likely a presentation gift from someone.

“Where in the heavens did you find this?” she queried of her long-dead friend.

“It was where I had put it for safekeeping, all of those cycles ago. It was in the back of the fine tablewear display cabinet, inside that large soup serving bowl that you and I never used.” Sa'Kayla offered up. “I want you to be armed tomorrow. I know if I tell Jessett to arm up, he will just dismiss me as a dream or apparition. I know you will do as I ask of you.”

“I . . . I will do as you ask.” Na'Kimsa replied. “Can you stay for a bit and talk with me?”

“I cannot, Kimsa.” was the reply. “I have been on this side of the mist for too long and I have used up my energy by moving that weapon out here to the table. I must go, but someday we will be together again and we will talk for however long we wish to.”

Sa'Kimsa reached out to touch her friend again but as she did so, Sa'Kayla faded from view. Re-wrapping the weapon and holding it tight to her bosom, she knew this was no dream. Her friend had given her directives from beyond the grave so it was now up to her to carry them out.

Now if she could just get Jessett to arm up, too.