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## “Scribe”

by Kellan Meig'h

### Chapter Thirty-One

#### “Fox And Hound”

Jeffrey was exploring the suite he was most likely imprisoned in, cataloging the items that might be of use to him in an escape. He still wondered how he had gotten here in the first place, since he had no recollection of being in a trans-atmospheric ship. From what he could remember, he was taking a shower to remove the mud he was covered in when his head started to bother him, but nothing after that point. That was the last thing he remembered before waking up in this suite.

What was odd to him was the luxuriousness of the living quarters. The living area was very formal, yet “*Old School*” to him. Nice, yet formal. The Dining room was large, fit for a dozen persons around the large dining table. A very nicely appointed kitchen was present along with a warm, homey bedroom suite. This whole spread seemed like it was too much for just one person. He wondered if Na'Krista was to be imprisoned with him at some point in time.

He had found the tan jumpsuit he had donned in the bedroom closet, one that actually fit rather decent as if tailored to fit him. Further examination turned up his house shoes, some moc-toe leather slippers that he had brought from Earth. Whoever had abducted him had also been through the cabin he and Krista had used at the lake. This was becoming somewhat alarming to him, that someone had been that thorough.

What really bothered him was two things; one was the light weight metal collar he had on. It was locked in place, as evidenced by the key slot on the part that was supposed to be the back of the collar. Without the key this damned collar was not coming off, no matter what. There were two flashing red lights, on on each side that were blinking at the moment, proving it was powered by some means. Odds were, it was waterproof, too. Jeff had found no provisions to protect the collar from getting wet, from what he had found in the suite. His thoughts were, that meant he was stuck with that collar for the time being.

The second thing that bothered him was the fact some scumbag had dyed his hair and eyebrows blue! Effing Smurf Blue! The dye must have been just poured on his head, as there were still azure stains all over his ears, neck and upper torso. He was even fairly sure one arm had reverse outlines of someone holding him during the procedure, keeping the dye off of his arm in the pattern of a hand. This stuff, whatever it was, wasn't coming out of his hair and only continued scrubbing removed most of it from his dermis. He was not sure if his skin could survive a full scale cleaning without the right surfactant.

The food-stock that he had available to him, both cold and in the cabinets consisted of Elazi fare that he was familiar with and some food from some other planetary origin, as indicated by the odd printing on the containers. It seemed like some dialect of low German, but with a few unknown characters mixed in. Just off enough to made it indecipherable.

His search of his quarters had proved beyond a shadow of a doubt, whoever had detained him had done their due diligence, as far as he could tell at the end of his reconnoiter. After a thorough sweep of the suite, no weapon was found that was sharp or handy short of the weighty cast metal skillet he found in the back of one kitchen drawer.

Giving up his search for the time being, he put a small skillet on the induction range and opened a container of canned meat, sort of an Elazi version of Spam<sup>®</sup>. As any good soldier knows, eat when you can because you never know when the next meal will come. As far as he was concerned at the moment, just as well let the being or beings that had abducted him make the next move.

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Kam ended the call from Marlett Blane'lan, not happy with what he had heard. His daughter had been abducted along with his *son-through joining* at some time during the day. He was not letting this set lightly, knowing in his heart who he suspected was behind this. He had conferred with Marlett at length, concerning what they should do as a next logical step to find his daughter and son-in-law.

Kam had given Marlett clearance for Orange Detachment to use his *Lestim Orbital Fast Lighter* to go up to the *All Worlds Trade Station* and see if Na'Krista had really been taken there and in turn, *Orange Detachment's* Number One, Sa'Vesi Derrel'lan had been advised that she and her one-half of Orange Detachment was now under the direct control of Kamram.

Kam really hoped they could get this straightened out as soon as possible. Certainly before there was loss of life or limb.

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Trooper Ronmet Crail'lan carefully inspected Na'Krista's skimmer, searching for some forensic clue as to who had moved the air ship back to her property. It had been parked carefully in the garage and the garage door shut afterward. The activation card was sitting on top of the instrument console and the doors were unlocked. Quite odd, indeed.

While Sa'Vesi looked over the captured video from the site's security system, he continued to try to dig up a clue, any clue. Just as he was ready to give up on discovering a lead of any type, a fingerprint appeared on the port side baggage compartment when he was using his Differential Wavelength lamp to illuminate any bio-signs. A quick search through the planetary database turned up a name; Na'Mari Dannen'lan.

The oddity to that was her name being associated with two known mercenary groups, she had served in the Elazi Trans-Atmospheric Forces, been jailed for acting as a mercenary on *Fask-aal'zaa* and she was a distant relative to the Keth'lan family. This didn't make any sense at all to him. A relative? The search also indicated her ship was currently docked at the *All Worlds Trade Platform*. Another clue that now actually made sense, now that he pondered it for a moment. Maybe Na'Krista had met up with Na'Mari and on a lark, took Jeffrey up to the Platform, just so he could see what Elazia had managed to construct without Bil assistance. At any rate, he needed to let his *Number One* know what he had discovered.

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Jeff had made himself a meal, consumed it, cleaned up his culinary mess and decided that he would clean up himself afterward. The Earther had been looking out the viewport earlier as he consumed his fare and that had finally bored him so a trip through a real tub seemed a better option for something to do. As he was preparing his bath, he opened his toiletry bag to retrieve his razor. As luck would have it, one more item was found; his Amp-Light knife! Now things were on a different footing. He decided to take that bath anyway but he hid the knife in his jumpsuit pocket first.

It felt good to clean up in that tub, even if it was a bit on the hurried side. At least the wash puff was a bit bluer than when he started, a good thing. And just as he thought, that damned collar was actually waterproof.

He dried off, quickly shaved and put his kit bag back together. He still didn't like the tan color of the suit he had found but it was clothing. Putting the garment back on, he went to hang out near what seemed to be the main door to the suite. He found what was a Kettvan fermented kebra wine in the wine cooler nearby, so he opened it and poured a stem glass to partake of. Sitting down on the sofa, he relaxed and enjoyed the drink while he waited.

That wait turned out to be about half of a glass worth of wine when the portal opened and a female leonid, probably *Fask'aal* by the black leather clothing, entered the room. She was somewhat slender with a tiger-stripe pattern of sorts, altered to grays by a melanistic color shift. Her copper eyes regarded him with curiosity as she smiled widely.

“*You are a very interesting toy for me?*” she asked in her native language. When Jeff's look of confusion caught her off-guard, she asked the same in Comeri.

“I speak English, French and Elazi.” he replied in a cool tone, right before he sipped his wine. He really had no idea what she had said.

“I speak . . . some Elazi.” she replied in a heavily accented voice. “Hhess say you my . . . pet. Stand up.”

Jeff just sat there patiently, wanting her to play her cards and it was no surprise when the femme didn't waste any time in doing so. She produced a fob from somewhere in her clothes and pressed the button on it as she smiled wickedly at him. Jeff felt a mild but bearable discomfort but it didn't hurt to play it up. The Earther stiffened up and faked a very bad full body convulsion for her viewing pleasure. That made his captor let go of the fob and drop it.

“No mean to hurt!” she blurted out while trying to see where the fob had went to. “Only make you do for me!” she added, turning away from the actual direction the fob had traveled while in search of her device. Jeff used that as his opening, springing off the couch to tackle his captor to the floor.

“You had better understand Elazi very well!” he hissed in her ear as the Amp-Light knife in his left hand came to life just inches from her face. “Where is

Na'Krista? Tell me or I'll cut your muzzle clean off!" He punctuated that by scorching a few of her whiskers on that side of her face.

"I take you!" she pleaded. "No mean you hurt! No hurt me!" she begged as she put her hands out in front of her, showing they were empty.

"Hold Still!" Jeff demanded as he roughly searched her clothing for weapons. A small disruptor pistol and a stiletto knife were removed from her possession before he hauled her to her feet by one arm. Once standing, Jeff noted that she was barely taller than his shoulders. He used a sash from a window treatment to tie her hands in front of her, criss-cross fashion to keep her under control. She could work a padd on a wall but would be quite unable to effectively use a weapon. "Now, take me to my *One Love*. Go!"

The femme slowly went over to the wall, stopping in front of what might have been a closet. Jeff had been unable to open it earlier but his prisoner just popped open a small panel and used a code to override the lock. The door slid open, exposing the other part of the suite.

It was much larger than the side Jeff had been on, done in the same *Old World* style. He followed his captive across the main room and down a side hall that led to an open doorway. Just beyond the portal, there was a bed and that was where his wife was situated. At the moment she was breathing but Krista was not moving at all. The shocking part was her pelt was now a smidgen brighter shade of blue than Sa'Densa's fur.

Jeff started to go to her but his prisoner went ahead of him, kneeling by the bed and checking Krista's pulse quickly. She then carefully checked her forehead temperature. All the while the femme Elazi lay motionless.

"What's wrong with her?" Jeff practically shouted, going to the other side of the bed to begin examining his *One Love* for injuries. "Furthermore, what's this harness surrounding her? What does it do?" He looked for some way to remove the metal encircling her body but there didn't seem to be one. Shaking his head, he offered up his initial opinions of things; "Wow, is she gonna be pissed when she sees what somebody did to her pelt!" he commented to nobody in particular.

The femme leonid got his attention so she could convey her thoughts; "She breathe too much Trinn gas. Make her knock out. Might be out for while."

Jeff was just about to ask what they could do to help bring her around when his wife stirred on the bed.

“Uuugh! My head *fracking* hurts!” she slurred out, reaching for her face to rub the sleep away. “Jeff, are you here? I need something for my headache.” She was looking around the room but there was obviously something not right.

“I'm right here,” he offered, taking her hand in his.

“Turn on the lights, please? I can't see you.” she asked in return. Krista was looking almost directly at Jeff but obviously she was unable to see a thing.

“Sweetheart, the lights *are* on. You're saying you can't see?” he had to know.

“Oh no!” she blurted out, trying to see something, anything around her. “I'm blind!”

The femme *Fask'aal* reached out to touch Na'Krista on the arm. “*You were breathing Trinn gas. You're temporarily blinded.*” she offered in her native tongue.

“*Who are you?*” the femme Elazi asked in *Fask'aal*.

“*I am Mevelia Wrraal, the owner of this suite. The male here was to be my toy and you were to be the toy of my mate, Hhess Wrraal.*” was the reply.

That name seemed all too familiar to her so she asked a pointed question; “*Are you related to Argess Wrraal?*”

“*Hhess is the younger brother to Argess. Do you know Argess?*” Before Na'Krista could reply to that, she continued with her thoughts. “*The more I think on it, I am sure you do not belong here. I knew Hhess was doing something underhanded and this is that deed. I will get you out of here and to a hospital where they can help you see again.*”

“*How are we getting out of here? I can't see a fracking thing!*” the azure femme blurted out. “*Furthermore, what is this on me? I need this off of me now!*”

“*It is Bil restriction harness. It is not turned on right now so you can move. I need to find the key so we can take it off of you.*” Mevelia offered. “*I need to be untied, please?*”

“Jeff, please untie Mevelia?” Krista asked of her *One Love*. “She will find the keys to this suit. I want out of it, now!”

The Earther did as he was asked, first unfettering the femme, then keeping her under observation while she swept the suite in search of the required items. After a few moments, the box that should have contained the keys was found, only to reveal the keys were not in it. All it held was the fob that controlled Na'Krista's suit of metal.

*“Blast the Gods!”* Mevelia blurted out. *“Hhess must have the releasing key in his possession! Damn him to the corners of the galaxy!”*

*“Can we get out of here without the keys?”* Krista asked. While Mevelia was searching for the tool needed to unlock the suit, the blue-hued femme had checked out the metal surrounding her. It was smooth, it didn't grab at her pelt and it wasn't that restrictive. She wondered what it looked like on her while dyed azure.

Jeff went to get the fob to his collar and grab his toiletry bag while he was at it. That was a sentimental piece given to him by his brother and he was not going to leave it behind. Once back in the main area of the suite, the femme leonid was waiting with something in her hands.

*“We must make this look proper.”* she offered up. *“You must look like my slaves until we get to the ship.”*

Jeff was sort of shocked when Mevelia took a metal chain leash and snapped one end of it into a hidden recess in Na'Krista's harness, making it click into place. Giving the femme Elazi the leather loop end to hold for now, she approached Jeff. *“Please. This make look right.”* she offered in Elazi. Jeff nodded so she did the same for him. *“Jeff, Hhess is on lower level of station. He in talks all day so we leave. Now.”*

*“Are we ready?”* Na'Krista asked as she was urged to stand. *“I'm naked, if that's okay for now.”*

*“No, you will look like a proper slave. Jeff needs to wear less, though. Much less.”* Mevelia went to a closet and came back with a garment that was a fair approximation of a Roman gladiator's segmented leather skirt. *“Put this on. Fast.”* she urged the Earther.

Jeff changed as he was asked, putting on the very airy dark purple garment. Once it was situated as best as it was going to be, considering Jeff had on no

underwear, Mevelia took the leashes in one hand and guided her “slaves” to the main door.

“Both of you. Look down, no talk unless I say. Jeff, you help Krista. Guide her. We need go two decks up.”

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Marlett Blane'lan looked out the view screen of Kamram's *Fast Orbital Lighter*, shook his head and thumbed the “Talk” button again.

“Kas'Madelle Port Control, we need to launch now!” he growled, not bothering to use any diplomatic aplomb. “This is important and I have clearance from Ambassador Kamram Keth'lan himself!”

“Commander Blane'lan, I have already explained the situation,” the disembodied voice replied. “We are under a 'No Launch' order due to incoming diplomats. There is a two *Hazecan* radius 'No Fly' zone in effect so consequently, you cannot launch. Have I made myself clear, Commander?”

Before Marlett could reply, the tower operator continued. “The diplomats will be on dirt in less than twenty *Munar*. Is that good enough for you?”

“Yes, that will have to do.” the leader of Orange detachment agreed. “We will hold for next available launch window.”

He was honestly exhausted, dealing with this. Marlett wondered if Hallett had the same issues when he was in charge of the detachment. All he needed was to get off the ground, get up to the station and retrieve Na'Krista and her *One Love*. Was that too much to ask? Being a farmer seemed less stressful to him at the moment.

“Commander?” Ronmet called out. “Commander, I have an idea.”

“Alright, *Number Two*, let us hear it.” Marlett replied. Probably some hair-brained scheme that would get them all in hot water.

“Saar, maybe we could just taxi over to the wash ramps, then kind of . . . taxi out back gate Vaand Six and maybe a few *Hazecan* farther down that road. You know it's not really in use at this time of day.”



Marlett looked at his third in command with one eyebrow raised. “Are you saying, make our way out of the 'No Fly' zone in a rather unorthodox manner so we can take off?”

“No in so many words, Saar.” Ron shrugged his left shoulder in embarrassment.

Marlett turned back to the main console and thumbed the “Talk” button. “Port Control, request permission for a *Lestim Mark Twenty-one-Veh Fast Orbital Lighter* to taxi from Pad Ahn Eight to the washing facilities.”

“If that's what you want to do, Commander. Cleared to taxi.” was his reply.

“Trooper Kevvit'lan, taxi us please,” Marlett ordered, getting a coordinates fix so they would know when they were just outside the 'No Fly' zone. This would take five *Munar*, tops. While they made their ground movements, being careful to keep the landing wheels on the ground, Ronmet Crail'lan spoke up again.

“Saar, if we get dinged, I'll take the heat. It is my idea, after all.”

Marlett regarded his trooper; “No, this one is on me.”

It didn't take long to get to the wash ramps, using the perimeter roads around the space port. They did have to ask permission to cross a runway for conventional craft but once at their intermediate destination, they continued past the wash stations to a gate that was manned by a civilian.

“I need to see your manifest.” the gatekeeper asked, seeming to be nonplussed by the wash from the left front atmospheric lift turbine that was buffeting him. He also didn't seem to question why a ship would be taxiing on the ground, rather than flying.

“I am Commander Marlett Blane'lan. Open the gate please? We are on official business.” was the return he was given once the cockpit window was opened.

“Sorry Commander, No manifest, no gate. I have to keep it professional, you see.”

“Do *you* see who I am?” Marlett growled again, leaning forward so the keep could see his rank and *Orange Detachment* badges. That got the gate attendants' attention.

“Yes Saar! Right Away!” the gray Elazi blurted out as he literally ran to the booth to open the gates.

“More *Grakking* like it.” the Commander muttered under his breath as the barriers opened for them.

Once through the gate, they continued to taxi along the roadway, staying 'On Dirt' so the tower wouldn't complain about it. The road itself was not as smooth as the ramps so a bit of careful maneuvering was needed to miss the occasional pothole. Once a virtual blue indicator light illuminated on the nav screen, Marlett called a halt.

“Kas'Madelle Space Port, this is Commander Blane'lan.” he announced.

“Go ahead, Commander. What is it now?” the disembodied voice replied in a tired tone.

“Kas'Madelle, current location is Verneria Avenue North, North of Gate Vaand Six by Ground Vehicle Parking Pad seventeen. Request Vector local minus ninety by plus forty-five inclination to go trans-atmospheric.”

There was a moment of silence before they got a reply. “Commander, this is Port Control. I am not going to ask how you got there. Not in my wildest dreams. I'm sure there is an answer but I do not care to hear it at this point. Cleared to minus ninety local at plus forty-five inclination, trans-atmospheric. Hand off to Orbital Control at ten *Hazecan*, please.”

“Thank you Control. Lifting off.”

Trooper Kevvit'lan, a skilled pilot, got them airborne in just moments, using full vector thrust to fly them through a four Gee turn toward the West. He went through the checklist with his co-pilot and between the two of them, had the ship rigged for space in no time.

“Main thrust pods on-line.” he called out, advancing the controls smartly. “Sixty percent power, passing One Point One Sonic, now One Point Two. Course set Two Seventy Absolute Magnetic at plus forty-five inclination. Expect arrival in five *Heth*.”

Marlett put on his bubble helmet, set his environmental controls and finally sagged back in his seat. He wondered if he would get a chance to chastise his two charges once he found them. The gods knew he probably had that right coming to him.

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Mevelia and her two 'slaves' had made it up the docking level without too much trouble and more importantly, not being noticed for being out of place. Na'Krista had faked not feeling well while Jeffrey guided her by his arm under hers. He did note Krista was holding his hand tightly, probably very upset by not being able to see. He just hoped she didn't lose it when she was told of her new pelt coloration.

They stopped at an access port where the femme *Fask'aal* typed in her access passcode on the padd to the right of the door. This let them into the air lock vestibule so she closed that door behind them and coded their way into the ship. When the ship's air lock door opened, two distinctive chimes were heard followed by a familiar-to-Krista synth voice welcoming Mevelia to the ship.

“Mevelia, is this a *Lestim Fast Lighter*?” Krista asked.

“It's a *Twenty-one Veh Orbital Fast Lighter*. Early block eleven, to be exact.”

Krista smiled. “Well, we're better off now. My father's ship is the same thing, only a Block Nine. Mevelia, let's get out of here.”

“*I have some universal space suits for both of you to wear.*” the femme leonid offered. She removed them from a storage compartment and between the two sighted beings they had Krista suited up in short order. Jeffrey hastily donned his suit before they went to the flight deck to get the party started.

“Jeff, you a pilot, right?” Mevelia asked.

“My license is just for Earth aircraft that can't go trans-atmospheric.” he replied. Jeff watched on as the leonid's face fell.

“This bad. I not a pilot either.” Mevelia said sourly. “Now what we do?”