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## “Scribe”

by Kellan Meig'h

### Chapter Thirty-Two

## “Morals”

Na'Krista turned her head toward where she thought Mevelia was standing and for a moment, she was gobsmacked, unable to form a thought. Had she really heard that statement correctly?

“Mevelia, tell me you didn't just say you're not a pilot?” she questioned. If she wasn't a pilot, this was all for naught.

“I not pilot. I tactical and communication.” the femme *Fask'aal* replied. “Jeff is not enough pilot?”

Na'Krista thought this over for more than a few *Munar* in her mind; She was an excellent instructor and she had flown her father's *Fast Lighter* and the prototype version enough that it was like rote to her. She had also taught Jeff to pilot her skimmer, to some degree. They needed to be away from this situation and the obvious was the only way for them to do so.

“Jeffrey, put me in the co-pilot seat, you take the pilot's seat and Mevelia, you're tactical and communication.” she ordered.

“Maybe I didn't hear you right; what did you ask?” Jeff queried, momentarily stunned by that request. There was no way he could pilot this craft back into the atmosphere! He thought about the size of it, far larger than two Earth articulated transit buses parked side by side! How the hell would he manage this feat without killing all of them?

“You heard me.” his wife retorted in a level tone. “I have over sixteen hundred *Heth* in this design and I know these *Fast Lighters* like the back of my hand, as you would say. I'll talk you through what needs to be done. Trust me this one time. For us.”

Jeff knew this was a bad thing but he accepted their fate, whatever it may be. He placed his *One Love* in the right seat and he took the left, still feeling very uneasy at the moment. That seat was also very uncomfortable feeling for some reason. Watching on, he observed Krista deftly feeling her way around the hard switches, powering up the ship. Once the main drive was running at an idle, she took a deep breath, then started teaching like there may be no tomorrow for them.

“Jeffrey, what do you see on your glass screen?” she asked.

“A box open, close to me. I can't read it, it's in a language I can't read. Seems to be instruments of some kind.” After a moment, he added, “There are six boxes, I guess, minimized above that open box. A gray one, then a yellow one, a green one, a blue one, a purple one, then a red one to the right, smaller than the rest.”

“The gray box is actually the locator for the window that's open right now. It's actually a white box when it's closed. Double tap the yellow box.” she requested.

Jeff did so, making the screen reconfigure a bit. “Now the yellow one is open with some menu items, seven of them.”

Krista nodded. “Now, follow me. There are actually nine items, two you can't see at the bottom of the list. Those are for maintenance personnel. Double tap the ninth one.”

The Earther did so, making a smaller box open inside the bigger one. “It looks like I opened something like a combo box that you scroll up or down.”

“Scroll up until you see 'Elazi' and double tap that.” The azure femme crossed her fingers, hoping this computer had the ship's native language loaded in the main computer core and had not been deleted.

Jeffrey did as he was asked, making the various languages scroll by. Eventually he found 'Elazi' near the top of the list so he tapped the entry. Another box popped up with a blue button and an orange one.

Na'Krista hoped he had found the right entry. “Tap the orange button to accept the changes.”

He tapped the orange button and the screens wobbled for a moment before switching to Elazi. Now the previous box that was open showed the ship's power and systems status in a language he could read to a fair degree.

“Krista, we appear to be blue across the board. Looks like all systems nominal, main power at idle.” Jeff announced.

“Very good! Slide that screen to the left, then double tap the green box. That is navigation.” She was so relieved when things seem to be looking up for them.

“Navigation screen is up. Now what?” he asked.

Krista turned toward the tactical and communications seat behind Jeff. “Mevelia, contact the station, relay our wish to depart for dirtside.”

The femme leonid turned to her console, cracked her knuckles loudly and danced her fingers across the virtual keys on the screen. “Station Traffic Controller, this is the *Ghost Of The Lake*, a *Lestim Fast Orbital Lighter*. Request clearance to disengage docking clamps and leave the station for dirtside.”

“*Ghost Of The Lake*, you have clearance. Have a safe trip.” was the disembodied voice's reply.

Na'Krista remembered to breathe again and continued with her impromptu training. “Jeff, tap Station Keeping, lower left side of the nav box.”

“Done, it's got an orange ring around it now.”

“Good.” she practically blurted out. “Now the control stick at your right hand has three buttons on top. Left one is a single function, that's dorsal thrusters to go down. Right one is the same, but Ventral thrusters for up. Makes sense to you?”

“Yeah, I have that. You can keep going.” Jeff requested.

“Okay, the center button moves fore, aft, left, right. Those are thrusters for the respective directions. If you twist the stick, it will turn the ship in that direction. If you push forward in Station Keeping mode, the nose will tip down. Pulling back tips the nose up. Mevelia, are we clear all around?”

“We are clear ahead, above and below. Is one hundred quatres clear to left, station is to right.” the melanistic femme replied in Elazi.

“Okay, so far, so good.” Krista muttered. “Mevelia, please release the docking clamps.”

Jeffrey heard the environmental system evacuate the air in the lock, then he heard and felt the docking clamps slide free of their purchase on the station.

“We are released.” Mevelia offered up.

“Jeff, you're up again.” his wife pointed out. “Tap the four way to the left, gently. Just a blip.” Jeff followed his orders, making the ship begin to coast to Port ever so slowly. “If we're clear of the docking port, two blips ahead.”

Jeff was keeping track of things via the smaller camera displays below the view screen. He could see every direction so once they seemed to be clear, he nudged the switch ahead twice to create forward motion. They really weren't going that fast once they started moving and to tell the truth, he was really trying to keep from soiling his flight suit underwear at the moment.

“We are clear of the station.” he offered up once the view showed they were nowhere near the station on any screen.

“Jeff, tap the 'Maneuvering Thrust' mode, just to the right of Station Keeping.”

“Maneuvering Thrust engaged.” he called out.

“Jeff, now the stick is active. Nudge it ahead a few times until we reach fifty *Hazecan per Heth*. Speed indicator box is at the top of your Nav screen.”

“Okay, is fifty-three *Hazecan Per Heth* okay with you?” Jeff replied after nudging the stick a few times.

“Just fine.” the femme Elazi replied. She then reached up and carefully found the master propulsion lockout switch to bring the mains on-line and up to full power. “Going live with main propulsion pods. Jeff, just so you know, the flight controls are a bit heavy when we're in Main Propulsion mode. Mevelia, please contact Elazi Orbital Control. Request coordinates and clearance to Kas'Madelle Regional Hospital landing pad for large ships.”

While the femme *Fask'aal* requested the required items, Krista remembered to breath once again. This wasn't as easy as she thought it would be, instructing someone to fly a *Fast Lighter* without being able to see. Well, as soon as the flight computer had the coordinates, the ship would almost fly itself. That was becoming her mantra, “Soon.”

Mevelia made her requests and Orbital Control came back with their question; “*Ghost Of The Lake*, do you have a medical emergency on board?” Before Krista could stop her, the leonid responded to that request.

“No, is not emergency.” she offered. “My co-pilot has become temporary blind. We need medical attention for her but not emergency.”

“*Ghost Of The Lake*, please keep us advised, should this become a real emergency.” Control asked.

“We keep you advised. *Ghost Of The Lake* clear.”

Na'Krista sat there, giving thought to this. Yeah, it was an emergency of sorts but she thought it might be under control at the moment. Well, they would see shortly just how all of this would pan out for them.

Jeff spoke up. “Kitten, I have the coordinates on the screen, it's asking if I want to input them.”

“Yes, Sweetheart. Hit the accept button, the communications computer will transfer the coordinates to the flight computer. You should see the numbers in the destination box.”

“Numbers are . . . there and they appear to match.”

This was it, as far as Krista was concerned. It would either work or fail and honestly, she hoped *Odra The Wise* was smiling down on them right now. Only he knew how much luck and intervention they really needed. Just as she was going to tell Jeffrey to engage Main Propulsion, a voice came over the speakers.

“*Mevelia, Honey. Where are you going in the ship?*” a male voice asked in Mevelia's native tongue. One that seemed all too familiar to Na'Krista.

The femme leonid thumbed the “talk” switch smartly. “*I am leaving for the surface to go shopping, Hhess. I'll be gone a few Fractionals.*”

“*Who is with you? I see only you and my slaves on the ships cameras. Who is piloting?*” he asked in return. Mevelia had entirely forgotten the ships internal sensors could be remotely activated if one had the proper codes.

*“Just the three of us are on board and Jeffrey is our pilot. By the way, this is my ship and I can do with it as I please. I will see you in a few Elazi Heth.”* That statement seemed to rile her mate.

*“You are not going dirtside without an escort! Return To The Station! Right Now! That Is A Direct Order!”* Hhess demanded loudly.

*“That will not happen! I am going shopping whether you like it or not!”* Mevelia shouted back. Before she could add more to those thoughts, a bolt of blue plasma shot across their Starboard bow.

*“That waste of oxygen is trying to shoot us down!”* Mevelia growled in her native tongue. Her fingers danced across the virtual controls again, activating defensive systems and bringing up a rear view of an approaching ship. She tapped a spot just off their Port flank to place an aiming reticle and pressed a physical button at the bottom of her glass display. *The Ghost Of The Lake* shuddered and a sharp whining sound was heard by all. The video showed a green lance of energy shoot out from the dorsal defensive turret, followed by a gout of sparks and material flying away from the hull of the pursuing ship.

*“How do you like me now?”* she blurted out on the ship-to-ship connection as she smiled an evil grin.

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Aboard the *Dosh'vann'zang*, Commander Marinna Rreal was trying to get a handle on just how badly they were hit while the Dannen'lan siblings brought the craft back under control. She also felt the need to question Hhess' plan of attack.

*“Damn you Hhess! You said she wouldn't fire back! What in the Eternal Fires was that, a Skechin ball she just lobbed at us? She did frakking fire back at us, you idiot and she meant business!”* the pale buff colored *Fask'aal* femme screamed, giving the focus of her attention a very feral look of anger.

*“Marinna! We are Grakked!”* Na'Mari blurted out. *“We have lost primary cooling on the Port side! The main core is getting a bit too hot for me! Seventeen hundred Decit and climbing and the secondary cooling on the Starboard side is not keeping up!”* she shouted.

*“It's worse.”* Na'Cira offered up. *“Life Support is down to thirty percent and falling from a non-auto seal capable hull breach. I can't seem to seal off the flight*

deck from the rest of the ship, either. We will need a rescue since it's no joke we need to SCRAM the core and evacuate this bucket of bent hardware. Either that or become a new star in the sky."

"I'll SCRAM the core." the femme *Fask'aal* offered up. She then opened an emergency channel that would be heard by all. "This is the *Dosh'vann'zang*, a *Bil medium Scout and Expeditionary ship* calling a trans-atmospheric emergency. We have to SCRAM our core and our environmental is failing. Request any and all assistance."

The small crew felt the main power core being blown away from the ship, trailing white-hot plasma behind it. The scary part was the physical shielding glowing red-hot, indicating an imminent explosion. Marinna thought about it for a minute as she scanned for a nearby ship that could assist them with a rescue, then made her thoughts known once the only ship nearby was determined.

"Na'Cira, will you please call Na'Krista. Ask her nicely for assistance."

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Jeff and Mevelia watched the antagonist's power core trailing off into space, getting brighter by the *Munar*. The femme leonid put all available power to hull integrity just as the core went critical and turned into a white-hot expanding ball of light and debris. The momentary burst of energy buffeted them but did no real harm to the ship other than momentarily taxing the shields. That was when the radio came to life again.

"Na'Krista? This is Na'Cira Dannen'lan, Kalmit Dannen'lan's least daughter. We are asking for assistance. We're dead in space."

"Na'Cira, what is your status?" Krista asked in return.

"Maneuvering thrusters only, Main Propulsion and Environmental are bent. We have breathing air in our suit packs but no heat. It's getting cold in here from a Port side full hull breach." the gray femme replied. "Please?"

Na'Krista thought about for a moment; she *was* related and she guessed they were the only ship within range to help out. She also surmised her relative was in on her kidnapping, too.

“Very well, Na'Cira. I will rescue you and your crew on these conditions; by the *Old Customs*, I claim you and your crew as chattel for the next solar cycle.”

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Over on the *Dosh'vann'zang*, Hhess looked first at the ship ahead of them, then at Marinna in shock. Someone was trying to claim him as chattel? A *Fask'aal* dignitary?

“Hhess, we have no other choice.” the femme leonid pointed out. “We have at best one *Heth* of air left. That's if you don't get all excited and breathe too fast. The nearest rescue tug is almost two *Heth* away. You do the calculations.”

“Marinna! Chattel? Me?” he blurted out. This was not what he thought would go down. The leonid knew his idiotic actions had brought this all on himself and there was nobody else to blame. He *was* the one that ordered that shot across Mevelia's bow to get her attention. He should have known better than to mess with a former *Fask'aal* attack ship weapons control officer.

“Show of hands.” Na'Mari put forth. “All in favor of chattel over death, raise your hand.” Three hands went up right away, followed by Hhess slowly raising his hand to signify agreement. “Good, I'll let Na'Krista know. She will be fair about our chattel.”

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Na'Krista thought too much time had elapsed so she was going to repeat her offer of chattel to her relative. Just as she prepared to touch the “talk” button, a voice came across the speaker.

“Na'Krista, by the *Old Customs*, we agree to your conditions. We will all serve as chattel for the next solar cycle.” Na'Mari offered up. “If you will go to Station Keeping, All Stop, I will dock on your Port side because I'm fairly sure my Port side docking flange is bent, non-functional. I still have full thrusters at the moment so I can dock safely.”

“That will be fine. Dock on the Port side.” the azure femme offered. “Jeff, press Station Keeping, then All Stop. The computer will keep us in a stationary orbit.” Just as she began to relax, Krista then heard a clicking sound in her helmet, followed by Mevelia's voice. “*Na'Krista, we were transmitting on the Emergency*”



*frequency Mid-Band. Everyone heard that full conversation. The demand for chattel, everything.”*

“Oh Great! That is what I didn't want to do!” she growled. Now she knew the Orbital Control officials would want to have a talk with everyone involved and that meant everyone. Maybe if she were lucky, she wouldn't lose her Pilots license. If that were to happen, that would restrict her to ground transportation only and that would suck big time, as Jeff would say.

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Marlett Blane'lan had heard the full conversation over the radio and this was very upsetting to him. His charge seemed to be in the middle of something serious and he needed further information. Selecting a side frequency he knew Na'Krista would monitor, he called out.

“Commander Na'Krista Andrews'lan, this is Commander Blane'lan, do you copy?”

“I hear you, Marlett.” she offered up.

“What is your situation?” he needed to know.

“Situation is as follows; I am temporarily blinded by Trinn gas, can't see a *grakking* thing. Jeffrey is with me, we are on the *Ghost Of The Lake*. Currently taking on passengers from a crippled ship *The Dosh'vann'zang*, four in total. We are stable at the moment but one or more of the passengers will have to take on pilot duty. I can't see and I'm not confident I can get us back in the atmosphere by teaching Jeff as we go.” she related.

In truth, she was trying her best not to break down sobbing or soiling her flight suit from nerves. This was the hardest task she had ever attempted and her confidence in her abilities had fallen quite a bit in the last ten *Munar*. She didn't want to be the one that caused others to die needlessly. Marlett speaking again snapped her out of her introspection.

“Na'Krista, we are over three *Heth* out from your position. Do you want us to provide assistance?” the leader of Orange Detachment asked. That's when a new voice broke into the conversation as an override on the emergency mid band.

“This is the Recovery Ship *The Valkep*. I am one and one half *Heth* out. If a ship would hold station on the *Dosh'vann'zang*, I will be able to take control of the ship when I arrive. Advise if it is powered down and status of the environmental systems.”

Krista needed to relay her thoughts so she asked for the side channel again.

“Marlett, you may stay in the area if you wish. We might have things under control but if it proves not to be that way, I will call.”

“Marlett standing by.”

Once their passengers had made their way onto *The Ghost Of The Lake*, Na'Cira gave the pertinent information required to the recovery ship. After that was accomplished, she walked over to where Na'Krista was sitting and urged her to stand up.

“Na'Krista, I didn't mean for you to get hurt!” she sobbed out, holding her relative tightly. “I lost track of time getting us into orbit and allowed you to be under that gas for too long! I'm sorry!” she continued, finally crying in earnest.

“I accept your apology.” the azure femme replied. “I'm sorry I was forced to take you as chattel but I have to make this stick now. We were on the Emergency Mid-Band when I claimed all of you. Too many beings heard our conversation.”

“I know. We have to honor your demand now.” Na'Cira agreed. At that time, they were joined by the other Dannen'lan sibling.

“I'm sorry too.” Na'Mari offered up as she hugged Krista. “I was actually hired to kill you, then when my sister told me just who you were, that we were related, we agreed to get you off-planet so you were not in the way when we went to deal with your antagonist. We had no idea it would lead to this.”

“Who hired you to take my life?” Na'Krista wanted to know.

“It's best you don't know for the moment.” Na'Mari put forth. “We will take care of him and once it's done you will know the ugly truth.” After a moment, she continued her thoughts. “We need to get you into recovery mode. Sit over here on the observer's sofa and we'll get you breathing some oxygen-helium mix. That will help you recover your sight quicker.”

The sisters made Na'Krista at home on one of the two person seating affairs and hooked her suit up to the ships environmental system. Na'Cira had went to the storage compartment on the deck and searched out the items she needed. Two bottles were sat next to the sightless femme and the regulators on them were connected to her interface ring for her bubble helmet. First the taller bottle was turned on, then the shorter.

“Is that okay with you?” Na'mari poised.

“It's okay with . . . my voice!” the blue femme blurted out. “I sound silly on helium!” she offered while trying to keep from laughing at her voice, now seeming to be several octaves higher.

“Breathe normally.” Na'Cira put forth. “You will be okay but you may become a little light-headed at times.”

“Okay,” Krista replied, still trying to keep from laughing. Jeff joined her on the sofa and hugged her for assurance.

“I'm right here, Kitten. We'll be just fine now.” he stated. In truth, he was concerned about her sight and her rate of recovery. He hoped that she would be well soon but maybe they could get her pelt dyed before she knew the truth about her current coloration.

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Argess and Arrissa were in a shop at the Kas'Madelle space port, talking with a purveyor of odd and unique items. They had followed leads from stalking their A'Pari 'friend' and after asking around, they were directed to this individual.

“Yes, I sold a personal holographic disguise to a *Fask'aal* male a few ten-days ago. It would make him look like an A'Pari or Comeri. He seemed very happy to finally receive it, since I had to order it from the Bil homeworld.” the aging Comeri proprietor offered up.

“Do you know his identity?” Argess asked. It would be nice if they knew who they were looking for.

“I think I still have his information in my system,” the shop keeper replied. “Yes, here is his image and a capture of his identification card.” The shop owner turned the screen to where the Adjudicator could see the picture, which immediately made him mad. The image was of his brother, Hhess Wrraal.

“My good for nothing sibling.” he spat out angrily.

“I can see a resemblance.” the proprietor offered up. “Is he also a member of your government?”

“He is, a junior Arbiter with the Global Senate.” Argess replied. “I fear, however he is breaking the *Fask'aal* laws here on Elazia. I have to find him now and get some pointed answers.”

“If it helps, Hhess is staying at the *Viza'shan* Suites just outside Gate Vaand One.” the Comeri male offered up.

“Thank you.” they offered as the Wrraals left the shop in a hurry. Now onward to find the younger Wrraal sibling and find out what this was all about.