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“Scribe”

by Kellan Meig'h

Chapter Thirty-Three

“Fall From Grace”

Na'Krista's sight issue had finally been attended to at the Kas'madelle Regional hospital and it was unfortunate nothing could be done at the moment about the situation. It really upset her when she was directed to set an appointment with her regular doctor, which would be a few days away, at the least. After being discharged by the staff doctor on call, their small retinue was escorted by the local District Police to the space port and ultimately, a hearing room of the Orbital Controller's Department.

That was where there existed was a mound of paperwork for all involved to deal with, certainly at least twice the paperwork for Jeffrey, since his bride was blind and unable to read and respond to questions at the moment. Some items were digital and others were on good old fashioned paper, a good portion of the information being requested of them. There was a somewhat lengthy wait for all of them afterward while the officials studied the reports given by the various beings involved and pass judgment, if needed.

Krista was still worried the authorities would throw the book at her and she could be looking at some jail time, too. It was not so much the attempt to teach as they went situation, it was the discharge of weapons that really concerned her. Both ships were entirely too close to the surface and the Trade Station, something that should have been taken into account. While she pondered the situation, she heard a side door open to allow several beings to enter the room. While she could not see them, Krista could hear what must have been three beings walk across the room.

Two of the three that entered the chambers were officials from the Orbital Controllers' office, followed by her superior, Flank Commander Jerret Vansar'lan. They all sat down at the long table opposite the detainees, then the commander rang a small chime.

“All Stand,” an adjutant by the exit door stated, waiting until everyone was on their feet. “This informal hearing is called to order. Please be seated.” Once they had done so, Krista heard one of the authorities begin to speak.

“I am Harren Sevvit'lan, Chief Inspector and my assistant is Jonnet Tavvit'lan, Inspector Junior Grade. The adjutant from the military is Flank Commander Jerret Vansar'lan.” the smoke-gray male on the left end of the table stated. “We just want to clear up a few things, here. The general consensus by the three of us, based on the reports we have read are as follows; the *Dosh'vann'zang* fired a warning shot across the bow of *The Ghost Of The Lake*. That was for some unknown reason that we really don't want to pursue the reason why at the moment. In return, the *Ghost Of The Lake* returned fire, one pulse from her Phased Particle cannon, damaging the main cooling and environmental systems on the *Dosh'vann'zang*.

“The crippled ship was forced to SCRAM their main core due to runaway overheating and a call was made on the emergency frequencies for help due to a failing environmental system. *The Ghost Of The Lake* then gave assistance based on the crew being taken as chattel in return for said assistance. Is that agreeable?”

Once all present agreed the narrative was good, Saar Sevvit'lan continued;

“Who were the pilots at the time of the accidental hull breaching?” he asked. “I'm throwing caution to the cardinal points, here by suggesting it was accidental and not intentional in nature.”

“I was piloting the *Dosh'vann'zang*.” Na'Cira offered up. “I hold an Elazi-issued Seven *Zed* license, Saar.”

Jeff knew he was up now and it wasn't looking good, either. He was hoping they didn't just throw him in jail without hearing his explanation.

“I was piloting the *Ghost Of The Lake*, Saar.” the Earth man stated. “I'm sorry, I do not hold an Elazi pilot's license. My *One Love* was directing me, Saar. She is an instructor in the military.” This statement caused the Chief Inspector to raise an eyebrow, right before he decided to clarify the situation.

“Let me get this correct in my mind; you were being directed in how to pilot a *Fast Lighter* by Sub-Commander Andrews'lan? Am I right in this thought?” Saar Sevvit'lan asked. He shook his head, hoping this was just a prank, nothing more. The smoke gray male then looked at his military contemporary for input.

“Sub-Commander Andrews'lan instructs in our video wing. The Sub-Commander is an excellent instructor and I hope things will work out, since she is to oversee the department training curriculum shortly.” Commander Vansar'lan offered up in Na'Krista's favor.

“I see.” the Inspector mused. “Sub-Commander Andrews'lan, do you have anything to offer in your defense?”

“Saar, I hope I can explain,” Na'Krista began, not exactly looking directly at him; “I have over one thousand certified *Heth* in a *Block Nine Lestim Mark Twenty-one Veh Orbital Fast Lighter* and I have over six hundred certified *Heth* in the prototype *Block One Mark Twenty-one Ahn Orbital Fast Lighter*. I know the all-glass instrument panels like the back of my hand, Saar. We were in a bad situation so I thought I could teach as we went. My *One Love Jeffrey* is a very fast study.”

Saar Vansar'lan turned to look at the Earther. “Flank Commander Andrews'lan, is this true, You were being taught as you went? Was that working out well in your opinion?” the Commander asked.

“Yes, Saar. I will admit I was apprehensive about the situation at first but Na'Krista was doing a great job of instructing me.” Jeff conveyed. “After the Dannen'lan siblings were on board, I prudently relinquished all piloting duty and allowed them to pilot us to the surface.” Saar Vansar'lan then turned his attention to his subordinate.

“And Sub-Commander Andrews'lan, you are still blinded, I am guessing?” her superior asked. He had noticed her rather blank stare that seemed to have no focus.

“I am still blind at the moment, Saar.” she admitted. She knew the other shoe was going to drop any moment, now that she had shared that snippet of information with everyone. Na'Krista gritted her teeth as her Superior spoke again.

“Well, as much as I do not like to do this, your license will be suspended until such time you have been cleared by a board-approved ophthalmologist and your sight has been checked and certified as fully recovered. Is that understood?”

“Yes, Saar.” she glumly replied as the lead inspector jotted some notes down. Saar Sevvit'lan then directed the next question at Jeff;

“And Flank Commander, do you hold any type of a pilots license at all?” the Inspector asked.

“I have a commercial pilots license on Earth with over one-thousand hours of seat time. I am rated for multi-engine and instrument flight rules, basically night flying on instruments only with no outside visual cues. I also have some training with rotary wing craft, helicopters. About two hundred hours in a turbine powerplant civilian craft.” Jeff put forth.

“Very well.” the Inspector stated. “You will obtain at least a Class Three *Vaand* license within the next nine ten-days. I'm sure this will not be an issue for you, since you seem to be knowledgeable. That way, this circumstance will not cross my desk again.” He looked at his documents, then continued. “Commander Marinna Rreal, as owner of *The Dosh'vann'zang*, do you have a pilots license?”

“I have a *Fask'aal Class Eighteen Ahn* license issued by the *Fask'aal* Planetary Protectorate. I am certified for any class ship up to a *Kass-Vaal-Ahf* classification *Fast Interdiction Ship*.” That was a very big, heavily armed, trans-atmospheric ship. That class of battle cruiser was more than capable of slugging it out with the biggest war ships in the quadrant. Its Phantom Rift Drives gives that design ship *Faster Than Light* capabilities, too. Not a ship to underestimate.

“I will check on that.” the Inspector offered. “I will point out your ship will be dirtside at the *Harb'ness'al* shipyard just North of here by tomorrow. Do you have the funds or insurance to repair your ship?”

“I have insurance and funds.” she replied.

“Just so you know, they have a main core to refit your ship with. That is the reason that yard was chosen by the recovery crew.” he added.

“Thank you, Saar.”

“Don't thank me yet.” he retorted. “I am fining each ship owner ten thousand Crown for discharging weapons within a three hundred thousand *Hazecan* radius of the planet surface during peacetime operations. I am also fining each pilot in charge at the time of the incident five thousand Crown for allowing said weapons discharge. I will refrain from other fines, such as a civilian ship that has been weaponized. I expect said weapons to be removed within the next ten-day. You will have a certified inspector re-certify your ships and confirm they no longer have weapons in place. Is that understood?”

“Yes, Saar.” Mevelia replied.

“Yes, Inspector.” Marinna stated.

“That is the end of this inquiry.” the Inspector stated as he picked up his documents. “I expect all fines to be paid before you leave the building.”

As they all turned to leave, Argess Wrraal came into the room, looking very perturbed. He walked straight up to his brother and stated very softly, “We need to talk. Right now.”

They waited until everyone else had exited the room before the elder Wrraal spoke up; “Will you tell me what's going on? You're trying to raise a Bil Mercenary army and you took an Elazi and her mate as chattel?”

“I . . . I'm sorry I disappointed you again,” Hhess began, “I only took Na'Krista as temporary chattel. To be honest, I actually wanted her to cook for me. You know how I love Elazi food. There was to be no sex involved, just a beautiful femme cooking and serving meals, that's all. It wasn't meant to be a permanent thing, either. She would have been released if her family came to buy her back at the same price I paid for her.”

“Okay, you know very well that's not legal by any stretch of the imagination on our homeworld but that's one down.” the elder brother put forth. “Continue.”

“The Bil squad was for a valid reason that I think you will agree with; I know where the Marshall is. I was going to get him before he could skip out on me.” Hhess pointed out. “As much as I never liked our father, he did not deserve to die like that. I wanted to drag Marshall Zzaan in front of the Planetary Senate and demand blood repayment for our father's death.”

“Why would yo do that?” the elder Wrraal needed to know. This was not like his brother at all who was generally a pacifist at heart.

“I want to show the Senate I'm not worthless.” Hhess put forth. “I hear that quite often, that I don't have the skill or nerve to be in the Senate. I want to prove them wrong.”

Argess thought about this; he had heard the same things but maybe this would make his brother look more important to others.

“Let me help you capture the Marshall.” Argess put forth. “You would take him back to our homeworld and it would warm my heart if you tore out his throat

right there on the Senate floor and showed it to him as he died. That is all he deserves.”

“Okay, my brother. You may help me capture Marshall Zzaan. I'm moved by your offer to help me with this task.” the younger sibling replied. “There is one issue; we will need to ask Na'Krista if I may do this deed, though.”

That surprised the huge felid. “Why is that, my brother?”

“Because I am Na'Krista's chattel for the next solar rotation.”

Talram, Tegram and Kamram Keth'lan walked into Dassan Trent'lan's office unannounced, making a bee-line right up to his desk after pushing the furniture in front of it out of the way. Talram swept the desk top clean in front of him so he could lean across it, bearing his teeth and claws.

“What is the purpose of this vis . . .” Dassan began, stopping when the rust-colored brother growled deep in his throat, scaring Saar Trent'lan.

“This is a personal visit from relatives, Dassan,” he said in a low, threatening tone. “I understand some being has decided to terminate the life of my least niece. I do not take that lightly and since we all feel you are involved in some way, we came to discuss the matter with you, personally.” he put forth.

“She is family!” the one under scrutiny blurted out “I could never . . .” Kamram shoved the items on the desk in front of him off into Dassan's lap, including a steaming cup of coffee so he could lean in closely.

“I hope you're not thinking of killing her over land, as I suspect you are attempting to do.” the buff colored brother growled out. “I would relish stripping you of your pelt and tearing the flesh from your bones while you still lived.”

“Kam! How could you even think I would . . .” Tegram swept the table clear in front of him so he could lean almost completely into Dassan's face, making him try to back up a bit more in his chair for comfort.

“I'm sure you killed our mother, your very own blood sister.” Teg put on the table in a hateful tone. He punctuated that by raking the desk hard with his claws, damaging the highly polished wood top. “I have no direct proof you did so but your actions have always been contrary to how a proper family member reacts to a death

in the family. You showed no sadness or grief for her passing.” After a moment to let that sink in, he added this snippet; “If anything happens to Na'Krista *or* her *One Love*, we will be back and I will leave with your bloody hide in my possession. *Is That Clear?*”

The brothers stood back up, all of them taking the opportunity to rake the desk again in the process. They then turned and left Dassan's office without another word said to the focus of their anger. Dassan heard the front door to his office open, then in a few moments it slammed shut, followed by the sound of shattering glass.

Saar Trent'lan sat there, finally remembering to breathe once he heard their skimmer leave the parking ramp and head back in the general direction of the Keth'lan compounds. As soon as his heart slowed down, he knew he really needed to go change his underwear. The Keth'lan brothers had driven their point home but it still seemed like a possibility that he could still obtain Na'Krista's lands somehow. This required a fool proof plan of attack and some muscle to bring said plans to fruition.

And his desk need to be repaired yet again.

Na'Krista's small retinue had been given a lift into the retail and services sector of Kas'Ma'delle by Orange Detachment, where a particular fur salon had remained open after hours by Na'Krista's request. She had subsequently been dyed by her personal stylist as best as was possible, back to something that attempted an approximation of the number seventeen coloration that was her natural fur tones. It was not perfect though, not by a long shot.

“Sa'Densa, tell me what you think of this color?” Na'Krista asked, worried that it looked terrible on her. The lead stylist had made a number of comments while the coloration process had been under way, comments that led Krista to believe a problem existed. Since she was without sight at the moment, there was no way for her to access the situation. Her assistant took a very deep breath before tentatively answering her boss.

“Na'Krista, it's too light, more like a number fourteen. Worse yet, it didn't cover the Blue Six chattel color completely. I can still see a blue cast in the lighter shades.” Sa'Densa replied. “Maybe after a few ten-days, you can have them touch up the color. It's not that bad looking, really.”

The Sub-Commander thought about this at length; How could she do her job if she was a very strange-looking hue? She was really concerned that the soldiers might not follow her orders and make fun of her instead. That could be a bad thing.

“Na'Krista, it looks better than Chattel Six Blue.” Na'Cira offered up. “I'm just glad you chose Chattel One for our coloration.” she added. Chattel One was a very light blue-green with gray overtones. If one had to be dyed a chattel color, this was possibly the least obnoxious one to choose. They were joined shortly by Na'Mari.

“Well, not the color I would wear on a permanent basis but it's not bad.” the elder sister stated. “Um, why hasn't Hhess had his turn to be dyed?” she asked, noting the felid was still his normal color.

“Hhess has a job to take care of, one that needs stealth. He will be dyed when he returns to the station in a ten-day.” Na'Krista clarified. “Hhess, where are you standing?” she asked.

“I am right here, to your left.” he offered.

“Hhess, I need the keys to unlock this harness and Jeff's collar.” She put on the table.

“That might be a problem,” the younger leonid replied, hesitant to continue. “I, um, I didn't ask for the releasing key to be made for either device. It was my plan to ask for them to be made once I knew both of you were leaving our chattel agreement. I'm sorry, Na'Krista. I'll give you the name of the maker on Bil-Cmela and the pass codes to have the keys made.”

“Thank you for being honest about it.” the buff femme stated, knowing it wouldn't do any good to get angry about it. “Well, you will return in one ten-day, correct?”

“He will return.” Argess stated. “If he does not, I will serve in his behalf until Arrissa finds him and drags his dead carcass back here.”

“Don't worry, I will return.” Hhess blurted out. “I may have done some deeds that aren't exactly legal but my word is my word. I will return and serve my one solar rotation as your chattel.”

Jeffrey made it back to the waiting lounge after his turn in the stylist's chair, now devoid of that nasty blue coloration. While no longer a Smurf color, Na'Krista's stylist didn't have a clue as to what a graying human coloration should

look like. Even with the help of a drawing by Jeff and some images found on the Elazi Web, she had somehow missed the mark.

“I don't know if I like this or not,” he mused, looking at his hair in a mirror. They had put a fade-away patch of gray at his temples that sort of matched the crude drawing the Earther had provided. “The lead stylist said this is Permanent Black Two and Gray Ten. I guess it's a blue-black instead of a brown-black.”

“I can't tell at the moment but I think you would probably look very striking.” his *One Love* put forth.

“I'm just not sure. It makes me look odd in my opinion.” he countered. “Hhess, do you have the keys for her harness and my collar?” he asked of the younger Wrraal brother. Before Hhess could answer, Na'Krista broke in.

“He doesn't have keys. We will need to order them.” she put forth.

“I'm sorry for the inconvenience.” Hhess offered up. “I purchased the items on the *All Worlds Trade Station* from a vendor of odd and unique wares. He gave me a discount, since he didn't have the keys. I suppose I should have passed on that offer.” He then gave Jeffrey the information to get the keys made on Bil-Cmela.

They were finally joined by Marinna Rreal, now a matching shade to the Dannen'lan siblings. “Well, I guess I can cross this off my list of things to do before I cross over.” she mused. “At least they did a proper job and not a blotchy, half done coloring. I guess I'll have a full rotation to get used to this.”

Later that evening, Na'Mara Treet'lan was finishing up with her task of settling in the Dannen'lan sisters to their quarters after she had made sure Marinna Rreal was good with her lodgings. She was thankful the guest quarters had been kept up all these rotations so a light dusting was all that was needed. Na'Mara shook her head, thinking of the situation; Na'Krista had added three more, soon to be four to the roster of House Andrews'lan and that meant four more mouths to feed. At least the sisters offered to help in the kitchen when they were not on some assignment put on them by Na'Krista.

As the housekeeper was returning to the main house, she took stock of Orange Detachment setting up a small city of tents out by the vehicle maintenance garage. She was told they were to patrol the area and escort Na'Krista and Jeffrey

everywhere. There were to be two of them in the house, on guard at all times. At least that tall femme, the second in command seemed nice and also offered to cook on occasion.

Shrugging her left shoulder, she pondered just how strange things had become since Na'Krista had returned to Elazia.

After working through the ins and outs of the Elazi communications system, Jeff had finally made the connection to the Bil craftsman that had constructed the metal devices they now wore. As luck would have it, it was morning on the Bil homeworld where Joren Avtinn the metal master was located. Once the situation had been put forth, the artisan seemed to have some knowledge of the circumstances.

“I was informed by a vendor I deal with that a . . . let me see . . . a Hhess Wrraal bought the display harness, a display collar and a few more items from him a few rotations ago. I was told he didn't seem to be upset about no releasing keys being available.” the silver toned Bil explained.

“Joren, can you make the keys for us? I have the pass codes if you need them.” Jeff offered up.

“All I need are the serial numbers off of each item.” he responded. “Na'Krista, allow Jeffrey to scan your harness at the nape of your neck. The code is there.”

The Earther detached a small auxiliary camera from the side of the main screen and took an image once Krista had moved her hair out of the way. He then turned his collar around and obtained an image of that serial. He completed that task by sending the images to Joren for his approval.

“I can read both serials. Good work.” the Bil offered up. “I see Na'Krista's harness is not active. I am guessing it has not been two planetary rotations yet since it was placed on her body. We need to do some things right now.”

“What do I need to do or have ready?” Jeff asked.

“You need the fob for her harness.” was the Bil artisan's answer.

Jeff rummaged through his pockets until he found the two items in question. Taking what he thought to be the correct one, he got it in hand. “I'm ready.”

“Here are your instructions; On the back of the harness by the serial number, there are five buttons. Each one has a tiny light above it to indicate settings. Press the second from the left and hold it, then press the fob twice, real fast. Release the harness button and the tiny light should flash twice.”

Jeff did as he was directed, only to get a nasty shock when he pressed the button on the fob two times in a row.

“I got shocked!” the Earther blurted out, rubbing his neck. “Dammit, that hurt!” he added.

“You have the wrong fob in your hand.” Joren explained, trying to suppress a smile. It was a fifty-fifty chance Jeff would pick the wrong one and he certainly did choose wrong.

Jeff repeated the instructions, this time with the correct fob. Once he released the button on the harness, its light blinked twice.

“Very good. We have disabled the shock function.” the Bil offered. “Now hold the third button, press the fob four times. If the command works, the light will blink twice.” Jeff did as he was directed, getting the proper response from the harness. “Good. We have disabled the auto-freeze function.”

“Auto-freeze?” Krista asked.

“If no input from the fob holder is given in two *Heth* or so, the harness locks up until the fob is pressed again.” Joren explained.

“When can we expect the keys?” Krista had to know.

“The keys are part mechanical, part electronic. I will start on them right away but it will take me a few rotations to assemble and program them. I can send the keys to you by fast courier ship so they will be there in four rotations at the most.”

“Four rotations?” Na'Krista and Jeff both blurted out at the same time.

“I am sorry, that is the fastest I can have them to you.” the artisan explained. “As a consolation, I will send the deluxe package of add-ons for the harness with the keys. I'm also sending an electronic manual for you to print out. I'm sure you will find some very interesting uses for it. Jeff, I need you to press the left and right buttons on the harness at the same time and then release them. All the lights should blink once, then the power indicators should flash like your collar.”

Jeff did as he was asked, causing the result that was described by Joren. Small red lights at key points on her harness began to flash on and off in unison at a rate of ten times per *Munar*. Jeff thought it was actually kind of pretty, how they accented her form. The metal master speaking again brought his attention back to the screen.

“Once again, Jeffrey, Na'Krista, I am sorry for the time required to obtain the keys. Please be patient.”

Before Jeff could say more, the connection faded out. Momentarily, an icon for the file containing the manual in question popped up on the view screen. He opened it, doing a cursory skim to locate the important things to know about her harness. Satisfied he had the instructions memorized, he turned to where Na'Krista was sitting.

“Are you tired?” he asked, knowing that he was exhausted from the ordeal.

“I'm worn out.” she replied. “Let's go to bed. I need some rest and maybe my headache will be gone by tomorrow.”

Jeff helped her to undress and then he quickly stripped out of his garments afterward. Helping his *One Love* to the bathroom, he assisted her in freshening up before bed. Once that task was done to her satisfaction, Jeff guided Krista to her side of the bed and made sure her pillow was fluffed up.

Jeff got into bed with his wife and snuggled up to her, draping his arm over her waist. After a bit, he brought her over to himself and began to cuddle and kiss her lovingly. Krista reciprocated, giving her hubby some attention, too.

“You have something in mind, don't you?” she asked before she kissed him some more.

“I do.” Jeff confirmed. He rolled her over on her back, then proceeded to roll over towards her as he continued to kiss and caress her body. Once he had found the position he wanted, she accommodated him by spreading her legs for him.

“Is this what you had in mind?” she asked in a sultry bedroom voice.

“Yeah, this is almost what I had in mind.” he confirmed. “Bring your knees up by my hips and put one hand in the small of my back, the other up by my shoulders.”

“Like this?” she asked, following his directions. “Seems like a very inviting pose to me.”

Before she could say another word, Jeff pressed the fob for her harness three times, fast. All of the red lights on the metal surrounding his *One Love* illuminated for a three count, then went back to flashing.

“Jeff, I can't move!” she blurted out. “What did you do?”

“You can't move? Are you sure?” he asked, just to confirm things.

“This harness has gone rigid.” she pointed out. “Is this also part of what you had in mind?”

“Um, maybe.” Jeff offered up with an innocent tone in his voice. This was in fact exactly what he had in mind all along.

“But I can't move! Not one bit!” the femme Elazi offered up.

“Do you need to move to be able to enjoy my heartfelt love for you?” the Earther retorted.

“Well, I don't know.” she replied. “Um, we could try it to see if I like it or not. I'm just kind of apprehensive, since I can't move until you decide to let me move.”

“Okay, here's your fob.” he stated as he carefully reached around his back and put the item in her grasp. “Press the button three times, fast if you want to release the articulation joints of the harness.”

Only a few *Munar* later, Krista discarded the fob on the bed, deciding there was no real need to press the button after all. That could wait until later.