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“Scribe”

by Kellan Meig'h

Chapter Thirty-Nine

“Endurance”

Late in the evening after last meal, Jeffrey had sent a InfoWeb message to his mother-in-law, concerning the quality of their meals, or lack thereof. Apparently that message did some good, since the first meal they were served just after sunup was quite good. *Targ* cut and prepared like bacon, some kind of scrambled eggs and warm toast with butter and a sweet spread. The coffee that was provided was brewed properly and it was served hot. Someone had shown some care in preparing their fare.

“A squeaky wheel always gets the grease.” Jeff offered up between bites of food. “I knew your mother could get this issue straightened out.”

“What made you think that?” Na'Krista questioned. While the meal was quite tasty, maybe the other less than edible meals were served to them in error.

“I just see how others treat your mother. They tend to give her a wide berth.” Jeff had received a reply to his message shortly after sending his request, saying she would take care of the problem. It seemed someone must have owed her a big favor.

“I agree; my mother should be in the Global Senate, not wasting her time in the local House system.” After she thought about it for a minute, she added this snippet; “Once, when I was still in upper school, mother asked me to become a diplomat. I thought that was so ridiculous, to be a law maker. Now I see the wisdom in her thoughts. This would not have happened if I were a diplomat. No being dares to cross a diplomat without possibly risking repercussions.”

“I think I agree with that.” Jeff put forth. “This meal, for example. Had I not complained, we would have been eating who-knows-what this morning.”

The couple finished their meal and put the trays in the shelf below a slot so they could be removed by the staff. Just as they sat down to decide what needed attention concerning their charges, a male jailer made his way into the room. It was the supervisor of the cell blocks for medium term detention.

“I am Block Commandant Willit'lan. I came to apologize for the food that was served to you last day. It would seem a few of my kitchen staff were making their personal opinions known by serving you food that was unfit for consumption.”

“Apology accepted.” Krista replied. “Those meals were some very difficult to consume fare.”

“I spoke with Ambassador Na'Kesta Keth'lan this morning, early.” the male in charge stated. “She was not happy to hear what was happening and I have to say, I was not pleased to hear that information either. Your meals from now on will be edible and palatable. I also have to find three new kitchen staff, since the perpetrators were sent home as soon as I arrived.”

“I'm sorry to hear they were let go but I guess it was necessary.” Jeff put on the table.

“I do not tolerate my staff judging detainees. That is for the Adjudicator to decide, not them. And, I should ask if you would like a carafe of coffee or tea? I see one has not been brought to . . .” The male in charge was interrupted by one of his staff entering the cell.

“Saar, I brought tea and coffee. I didn't know which to bring so I brought both.” The kitchen staff member had two carafes and two cups in his hands, seeming a bit embarrassed by just barging in without warning.

“Just put both on the table for them.” he indicated. “Um, next time, do you want tea or coffee?”

“I would like coffee.” Krista offered up. “What we had with first meal was very good.”

“My staff does prepare a great cup of coffee.” Commandant Willit'lan agreed. “I understand your arbiter will be coming around at mid-day. I will have your clothing brought to you within the *Heth* so you can get changed at your leisure and be presentable.”

The male in charge quietly left the cell, leaving the couple to discuss what needed to be done. What they really needed was to be out of this cell so they could assist with their own defense.

There were now six arbiters working on the search for the documents needed and all of them were getting disgusted by the disarray they were enduring. It was now becoming apparent some being had been randomly moving tubs around just to make things difficult.

“This was not like this when I was doing my research.” Sallen offered up. “Everything was where it belonged, not scrambled like this.”

“I agree with you.” Gammal retorted. “When I did the research for the House Arbiters, things were generally where they belonged.” After a moment, he turned to the gray male and asked an important question; “Sallen, what research were you doing, may I ask?”

“I . . . Um, I was doing some research on the law we're working on.” he put forth sheepishly.

“Who were you working for?” the white arbiter asked carefully.

"I claim Client-Arbiter confidentiality. And, I will be honest, I did not find the tally sheet at that time. That entire Cycle range of documents were not here when I was researching them."

"But you do know what we're searching for?" Commander Carver'lan questioned.

"Yes, I do. And since I have dissolved my agreement with my former client, I have no problems helping to find the documents and bring them to light."

Dassan was attempting to oversee his impromptu drilling operation, almost getting in the way of the workers that were setting up the drill head. He was making sure the workers had the borehole trajectory correct because he had to know this information for himself.

"Saar, this is highly irregular." the crew chief offered up as the workers were tilting the drill to a very steep angle. "Saar, this bore hole is going to end up on Trans-Atmospheric Forces land by the angle you want me to bore at."

"Well, I think you can overlook that." Dassan retorted, giving the one in charge another thousand Crown worth of notes.

"I think I can overlook that, Saar. You didn't tell me to bore this direction." He indicated the head should have been facing Trent'lan property. "My mistake."

The buff tan male stood by while the workers set up the machine head and began to drill at a steep enough angle to go under the roadway and end up under the early ripe trees across from his property. At first, it was easy goings but after the third section of drill pipe had been attached, the drill rate slowed down greatly. The crew chief sampled some of the tailings in his hands to see what was up concerning the slow drill rate.

"What's the holdup?" Saar Trent'lan asked.

"Cap stone." was the reply. "This rock is miserable to drill. Probably find Tavserinite, too. Always found with Cap Stone."

"Very well." Dassan offered. "I will just stand by and be here when you get down to the right depth. I'm sure you'll find Tav . . ." He was interrupted by his *One Love*, Sa'Zerren, who had driven around the property to find her *One Love*.

"Dassan Ventar Trent'lan, what are you doing?" she questioned loudly. "I received a call from *Post Fontaneauz* concerning a drilling operation you had mounted! Would you like to explain yourself?"

"Just drilling a well, that's all." he replied. That answer didn't impress the ebony femme at all. It took her a moment to calm down before she could speak again.

“That, I suspect, is not a well.” she offered up as she indicated the drilling rig. “Where were you going to pump water from, out from under what used to be the Andrews’lan property? Was that your plan? You know it’s illegal to irrigate from a well in our sector!”

“I was not going to . . .” The crew chief interrupted their discussion.

“Saar, I’m still hitting Cap stone. It’s looking more and more like we will find Tavserinite.” After a moment, he remembered to be courteous. “Excuse me, Mere. I’m Vernan Tasfet’lan, the crew chief for the rig. Sorry for being rude.” Sa’Zarren pushed her husband aside to talk with this person.

“Vernan, I’m Mere Trent’lan. Where are you drilling to?”

“Your *One Love* said to drill to forty quatre under the land on that side of the roadway. Is that a problem, Mere?”

“That is a big problem, Vernan. Please remove your equipment, you are done with this project my *One Love* set for you. Please send me an invoice with your charges on it.” She then turned to Dassan and gained a tight purchase on his left ear. “Dassan, we are going to go see your doctor and if needed a psychologist. You are not stable right now.”

“Zarren, please let go!” he begged, forced to follow her to the utility vehicle. She got in on the passenger side and scooted across so he would have to follow her or possibly lose an ear to her sharp claws. Once behind the wheel, she turned and glared at him.

“We are doing poorly as far as this harvest goes and you’re drilling bore holes under property that’s not yours! I don’t believe you have done this!” she blurted out. “This is money out of our account that we can ill afford! We can’t weather these expenditures you’re making that don’t seem to have a vendor attached to them.”

“Zarren! Listen to me!” Dassan blurted out. “There has to be Tavserinite under that property. I’m working with Sallen to gain ownership so I don’t see why I can’t . . .”

“Dassan! Shut Up!” his *One Love* demanded angrily. “I am taking you to see your doctor. If he says there’s nothing wrong with you, then you can go ahead and try to gain possession of that property. If you are not well, then you’ll stay within my sight until you’re deemed mentally healthy and able to be in public.”

Sa’Zarren was irritated to no end over this situation. First, Dassan had blamed his sister many cycles ago for not having good enough land to grow on and now, he was trying to obtain lands he had no claim over. She was sure he was being affected by the Phasic disease, making him extremely irrational. Well, maybe his doctor could prescribe something to help his thought processes. As it stood, she really shouldn’t let him outside without an escort.

Temmer had returned from a meeting with his clients and he was now waist-deep in storage bins, searching out a date range he thought he had just observed a few *Munar* ago. The area they

were working was slowly becoming arranged properly but they still had not found a particular date range from ninety-three Cycles ago. This was becoming tedious, because the dates they thought would have the tally sheets or proposal documents were not the correct ones. It didn't help that the photo-scanned document they had on Kennan's tablet had the date obscured by another document that had been inadvertently laid on top of the tally at the time of the scan.

Commander Carver'lan had returned to the Law Library not long after Saar Frain'lan, his job was to seek out one of the remaining Arbiters that may have voted to approve the new law. Although the arbiter he met with today remembered discussion of the law, he was not sure if it did pass the vote. He also confirmed a general date of the vote, which mostly corresponded to the time period they were searching for.

The crew worked through the evening, trying to get things in order so the search could go forward. The bins labeled in the old hand script were a nuisance to read, since many that used that script were not proficient with their penmanship. This left labels that would make them take turns trying to read the information on them. That was the reason a simplified hand script was adopted, just to make all documents easier to read.

Gammal looked at the time, noting it was quite late in the evening. After placing the tub he was holding on the correct shelf, he turned to his cohorts.

“Saars, it is late. I'm sure the rest of you are as tired as I am. Let's return to this in the early hours.”

“Good idea, I'm tired too.” Temmer agreed. “Tomorrow at early Ten?”

“I will be going to *Tefal* in the early *Heth*.” Commander Carver'lan put forth. “I wish to meet with Arbiter Connen'lan. He has agreed to see me early.”

“Very well, we will see you when you return.” Tem stated. “I am going to go take a hot bath, find some fare to eat and go to bed.”

The arbiters filed out of the building, waiting outside the doors just long enough to see them locked and sealed by a trooper assigned to the detail. As Tem made his way to his roller, he hoped they could get further along tomorrow and hopefully find the date range of tubs they needed to look at. They were slowly running out of time to keep the Andrews'lans together on this planet.

Na'Kesta had been pacing back and forth in her study for most of the mid-day on through to the evening, ranting at everyone and nobody in particular. It was clear she was bent on finding the perpetrator that started this whole thing in motion and tear them into little shreds while they still lived.

Kamram and Tegram were sitting on the couch in her study, actually afraid to interrupt her tirade. They could see her anger, punctuated by her unsheathed claws that appeared to have been sharpened by the tight hook to the ends of her personal armament. Kam offered his brother a shot of *White Fire*, which he did not refuse.

“She is on the warpath, Kam. I have to be honest; I am not feeling particularly safe sitting here.” the gray one offered up.

“I'm afraid to say something or try to interrupt.” the younger brother replied. “She has been like this all day and when the Senate Second over the Finance Committee called earlier, she cursed him out and told him to either help her with this situation or quit calling her. She is raving mad.”

“We need Talram or Na'Kayla here to defuse her.” Tegram offered up as a solution. “You know she listens to them. Other than that, I don't know what to do.” Before Kam could reply, he was brought to his feet by his *One Love*, forcibly making him stand to look at her.

“Kam, recall all of Orange Detachment, Now! We are going to go to the detention center and I'm going to use Regulation Seven *Vaand* Six One to have them released!”

The buff-colored male stood there, looking into the eyes of an enraged Elazi femme that might not be thinking straight at the moment. She had her claws through his shirt and vest, holding him in a manner he had no way of getting free of. This was a frightening situation, to say the least.

Kesta, my love, calm down.” he offered in a soothing voice. “That regulation won't work for your needs. An adjudicator has to issue a demand for that law to be effective.”

“No! That will . . . will work . . .” The fire went out of her eyes when Kam held her tightly to his chest and put his forehead against hers. “We need . . .” She paused a moment, then continued quietly. “I realize I'm not thinking straight, Kam. My daughter and *son-through-joining* are in jail, charged with crimes that I don't think exist.” she offered. Taking a few deep breaths, she put this forth. “We need to have our arbiters figure this out. This can't be true.”

“There are six arbiters working on this and two of them are our own.” Kamram stated for her edification. “If this law doesn't exist, they will prove it so. There is nothing gained by getting upset. The laws clearly state that non-Elazi born cannot post release deposit with the court and those involved with the same individual's charges are bound by that same law. We will have to pursue other avenues to defeat this issue.”

“I know who we need to bring in.” she offered. Looking straight at her brother-in-law, she stated a name; “Al'Janess Kett'van.” That made her brother-in-law give her a crooked smile in return.

“Al'Janess had been retired for many tens of cycles now. I'm not sure where to look for him.” Teg replied. “Sure, he was among the best in his time but he must be almost two hundred cycles old now. I would admit though, he would be the one to figure this out for Na'Krista and Jeffrey. He was an adjudicator during that period of time and Janess always took up the position of the demon's foil when it came to decisions concerning new laws.”

“Can you find him?” she asked of the gray one.

“I will do my best, Na'Kesta. I will make some inquiries and try to set out in the early hours to find him, if it means that much to you.”

“Teg, see if Talram will go with you.” Kam offered up. “You know he still has connections with the House senate.”

“Yes, that makes sense.” Tegram mused. “Tal always knew where to find someone if he needed them. Besides, he was good friends with Janess for as long as I can remember. He might actually know where to find him, now that I think about it.”

“Do what you can.” Na'Kesta offered up. “If you need funds, we can provide them.”

“I will be fine.” Teg retorted. “I will let you know what we find out tomorrow.”

The middle Keth'lan sibling hugged his family, then took leave of them to start on this new project. Watching him close the door behind himself as he left the room, Na'Kesta turned to her husband.

“Kam, will this ever end?” she posed.

“This will end and we will be victorious. Remember Jeff's battle for Krista. Things were going bad until another stepped in to take over. Krista did what was needed to correct the situation for them. Now it is Tegram's turn to correct the situation for them.”

While Kam held her lovingly, she mused about the situation. This law, if it were real, would have been used many times before this. For it to come to the forefront now just didn't seem correct. While Krista and Jeff had been the first mixed species couple officially joined on Elazia, there were many couples that had been joined on another planet that Elazia observed some agreed-upon laws with, couples where one of the joined *were* Elazi. Why hadn't they been prosecuted before now?

The name 'Dassan' kept coming to her mind, the thought that he was behind all of this. That was reinforced by a conversation with Dangris Fellen'lan, concerning Dassan trying to purchase Na'Krisa's station even before she was tried and convicted! Well, there were those that were keeping an eye on him, including his *One Love*, Sa'Zarren. Na'Kesta had even heard from Sa'Zarren earlier in the day, advising her to keep an eye vigilant for trouble. She had found the need to take Dassan to see his doctor after she caught him drilling toward Andrews'lan property. That meant he was probably now very unstable as far as his thought processes were concerned.

Na'Kesta hoped with all her soul this would be over with soon. To her, this was absolutely heartbreaking.

Krista was sitting on the bed next to her *One Love*, listening to the nightly regional news on her favorite information channel. This broadcasting group was very neutral about the information they offered up, not putting a spin on it like some of the other major news channels seemed to be known for.

At least they had not put a spin on their plight, their run-in with the legal system. The news anchor had laid it out very plainly, not dismissing the fact this law, if it did actually exist, had not been used in the past. As far as the channel was concerned, they thought this law was nothing more than a rumor that became pseudo-law by mass repetition.

The news went on to other things, particularly a new super-roadway that was skirting the Northern-most zones of the North Sweptlands. The Sweptlanders were petitioning the global government to realign the roadway so it would bring traffic through the major Northern cities and therefore increasing their commerce. The lead engineer from the design bureau was against the realignment, stating massive cost increases due to the geographic nature of the lands they would have to cross. A member of the Sweptlander government was rebutting that information, stating the cost would most likely be less because the roadway would be more of a straight line, rather than a wide arc past the four cities in question. Just as the engineer was going to offer his thoughts, the lights in their cell went out, followed by the monitor on the wall.

Loud shouting and the sounds of fighting were heard down the hall, then the hallway lights went out, replaced by reduced level safety lighting. They clearly heard small weapons fire and the possible sounds of bodies hitting the floor. Jeff put Krista behind him as he backed away from the door to their cell, picking up a chair to use as a barrier or an improvised weapon, if need be.

“Here is the cell!” a male voice, possibly *Fask'aal* in nature stated loudly. The door pivoted outward and a male being began to enter the cell, armed with a hand weapon.

“Stay here.” Jeff told his *One Love*, pushing her under the table as he went into action against the antagonists. He charged that armed male, glad he had the chair in hand. It absorbed the discharge from a Neural Disruptor, right before he used it to take a swipe at the pale gray leonid in front of him. That caused the antagonist to lose purchase of the disruptor which slid under the cot, out of reach at the moment. One leg of the chair had also caught the male on the right temple, knocking him out of the cell and possibly out of play for now.

The next male to enter the cell, a solid black Elazi, charged in past the falling form of his comrade, wielding a short bat in one hand and a dagger in the other. Jeff caught the bat with the chair but he was forced to jump back from a swipe of the strange-looking blade that was aimed for his abdomen. Before the Elazi male could recover, Jeff used the chair to slam the offender against the wall by the door, then smashed the top rail of the chair into his throat, damaging his windpipe enough to stop his assault. When the aggressor dropped his weapons to grasp at his throat, Jeffrey used his martial arts training to pull off a roundhouse kick to the side of the head, knocking the male down and potentially breaking his neck.

The third male, a pale gray Elazi, was not as tall as Jeff but probably evenly matched in strength. He also seemed familiar to Jeff in some way. That male ran in with a knife in his left hand, trying to stab at Jeff. The Earther stopped the downward swing of the cutting implement, glad the sharp side of the blade was upwards, away from his grip of his attacker's arm. This set the two combatants to grappling with each other, no quarter given.

Na'Krista had stayed put under the table by Jeff's request but a club of some sort rolled up against her knees, an item she could use. Seizing an opportunity, she took up the weapon, upset

she couldn't see much but she knew something needed to be done to even things up. She was trying to follow the action by hearing alone and at the moment, Jeff and another male seemed to be fighting right in front of her.

Carefully, she reached out to touch the leg of the male nearest to her, finding Jeff to be the one in front of her. Moving out from under the table, she looped the thong on the bat handle around her left wrist so she couldn't lose her weapon, quickly touched the head of the person in front of her to make sure of her target, then she put the bat across the throat of the aggressor and locked her elbow around the other end, choking their attacker.

Na'Krista added leverage by putting her knee into the small of the attacker's back, leaning back to put as much pressure as she could on the quarry's throat. This gave Jeff the opening he needed, punching the male in the lower abdomen twice, taking away his breath completely. Once the knife hit the floor, the Earther threw his best roundhouse left hook, followed by a right uppercut with an open palm to the chin. All this time, his *One Love* was still choking out the male. That was until the first male, that leonid came back into play.

The *Fask'aal* male pulled Na'Krista from her focus and spun her around, putting his hands around her throat to choke her to death. In his haste, that male should have remembered some important things about Elazi physiology that would have prevented his fatal mistake. Krista reached up and almost completely ripped his right ear away from his head before using both hands to rake her claws down his face as hard as she could, leaving ten deep debilitating scratches behind. Clipped or not, her strength under duress proved her claws to be more than a match for his hide.

The leonid tried to wipe at the blood spilling from his face with one hand while pushing her away with the other but that wasn't good enough to save him from further injury. Krista raked her claws down his bare chest with all of her strength, tearing deep grooves down his body in multiple places. Her attacker did not fall immediately so she kned him in the groin area multiple times until he finally caved in. Once he dropped to his knees in front of her, clutching at his jewels, she grabbed his thick mane and gave his head a violet twist that produced the loud snapping sound she was hoping for.

"Jeff?" she shouted as she stepped away from the dying body in front of her, trying to see what was happening. "Jeffrey!"

"I have that bastard with the knife on the floor." Jeff offered up. "He's not going anywhere."

Just as she began to move to assist her husband, another male attempted to enter their cell. Krista, still high on adrenaline, charged that male that she really could only see as a shadowy outline and lunged at him. The unknown male grabbed her wrists to hold off her claws so she kned him in the jewels and head-butted him in the chin hard, just to gain an advantage. Her adversary fell backwards against the wall opposite the cell door, Krista riding him down to the floor.

"Na'Krista! Commander! Stop! Please!" he shouted, trying his best to get her attention without hurting her and avoiding being kned again. "It's me, Commandant Willit'lan! Stop!"

“Wha . . . Huh?” she blurted out, relaxing in his grip. “Oh Gods! We were attacked!” she offered up as she slowly rolled off of her jailer and sat up against the wall. “I’m sorry if I hurt you, I didn’t know who you were. I couldn’t see your face.” she said softly.

“Only my pride was injured, Mere.” Saar Willit’lan replied. “Jeffrey! Are you injured?” he shouted, unable to stand at the moment for obvious reasons.

“I’m not hurt but there’s a dead *Fask’aal* male in here and one Elazi male that might be critically injured or dying. I have another Elazi male under my control on the floor that’s going to answer a few questions for me.”

“I’ll tell you nothing, *Slag!*” the male under Jeff blurted out. He then screamed loudly as his left hand was pushed up between his shoulder blades, putting damaging tension on the tendons in his wrist.

“You will talk or you will be eating your own hand, one finger at a time.” Jeffrey replied. “I’m a doctor, a surgeon, so I know what I’m doing. It wouldn’t take much more effort to remove your hand right now.” He punctuated that by twisting the wrist just a bit.

“I. Will. Not. Reveal . . .” He didn’t finish growling out that sentence due to the ligaments beginning to give way in his wrist, forcing a gut-wrenching scream from his mouth.

“Speak or you will lose this hand. Then I start on the other.” the Earther put on the table. “You tried to kill us. I want to know the slime’s name that hired you. Speak!” Momentarily the lights came back on, revealing a startling revelation to the human. “I know you! You work for me in the mechanic shop!”

“Who is he?” Na’Krista asked from the hall. This worried her so she got up to go find out what was going on.

“He is Kavval, the one that services the Kebra harvesters!” Jeff said angrily. “Alright Kavval, you will talk! I don’t care if I have to tear off both of your hands, I will make you talk!”

“Commander Andrews’lan, please stop.” another voice stated, one that seemed very commanding in nature. A strong pair of hands removed him from the male he was interrogating, placing him off to the side, standing. “It is not your place to interrogate him. That is my job.” the tall smokey-black Elazi Regional Lawkeeper put forth. “I will take this piece of garbage into custody and see what he may have to tell us.”

As jailer and prisoner left the cell, the lawkeeper deliberately slammed his detainee into the wall just to the right of the cell door opening, then he did the same with him on the wall opposite the cell. They were sure they heard the hapless Kavval hitting the walls several more times before footsteps could no longer be heard.

A short time later, Na'Krista and Jeffrey were sitting on examination tables in the dispensary attached to the detention center, being checked over for injuries. They were mostly concerned with Krista, since she was covered in blood from her encounter with the *Fask'aal* male.

Standing guard at the door were six members of Orange Detachment, ready for action. They were all wearing heavy battle armor that would be resistant to almost any squad-served weapon, let alone a small hand held firearm. Each one was carrying a Squad Impulse Rifle, fully charged and ready to fire.

"I don't think this is my blood." she offered up to the medic examining her as she stripped out of her clothing. "Gah, I don't like being naked like this when I can't see who is with me that I don't know."

"I am Medic Hannen Fressen'lan, Mere Andrews'lan." he replied. "I'm sorry I have to ask you to do this for me but your clothing is soaked in blood. And, excuse me for saying this, your pelt down your front side is soaked, too." The medical tech was embarrassed that he had to do this in front of Jeffrey, her *One Love*.

"How bad is it?" she asked, touching her upper body to confirm she really was soaked. "It seems I'm saturated in blood. May I shower up to get this off of me?"

"In a moment." Saar Fressen'lan replied. He guided her to a sink in an island and set the water running for her. He assisted Krista with some anti-bacterial soap so she could clean the gore off of her hands. Once they were clean and the technician confirmed her claws and the cuticles around them weren't damaged, the medic showed her to the shower and made sure she knew where the soap dispenser containing the liquid cleanser was located.

"Saar, how are you feeling? Any injuries?" the medic asked while Krista began to work on getting cleaned up.

"Sore from fighting, that's all." Jeff replied. "I'll take off my jumpsuit so you can take a look at me." Jeff unzipped the jumper and began to pull it down, having to fight it a bit like it was sticking to him. That's when he had a sharp twinge of pain on his right side, near his kidney. "What the hell is that?" he questioned.

"Saar, you are injured. It appears to be a cut from knife, maybe." The medic washed the gash with some disinfectant, then examined it further. "It is deep and still bleeding, Saar. I will need to close the wound for you. It will not heal properly if I just tape it over."

"I must have rolled over that odd-looking knife when I was grappling with Kavval on the floor. It was a three-edged knife of some sort." Jeff stated as he positioned himself face down on the table. That seemed like the only time he could have possibly been cut by something.

"Those Comeri made knives are meant to cut you if you fall on one that's laying on a hard surface." his attending medic offered up. "I am sorry, this will hurt. I am going to staple the incision closed with polymer staples and I do not have a proper analgesic that I can administer."

Jeff tried to be still while the Elazi medical tech closed him up with that tool. It wasn't as bad as a surgical stapler from Earth but it still had a bite to it when the legs of the staple would enter the skin.

"How is it looking?" he asked, wincing from the sharp pain caused by the closure system being utilized on him.

"I do not think it will leave much of a scar." Saar Fressen'lan offered up. "I would say the staples will leave more of a scar than the cut itself." He then put some antibiotic ointment on a thin foam strip and placed that over the site, followed by a wide piece of tape to hold it in place. "I will want to see you in a rotation so I can judge how this is beginning to heal."

"Aaah!" Jeff blurted out as he sat up. "That hurts like hell, now that we've messed with it." he commented. "Krista, how are you doing?" he asked loud enough that she could hear him in the shower.

"Still trying to get clean." she replied. "I still feel sticky down my front from the blood so I'm not sure this soap is doing any good. Actually, I need your help since I can't see to deal with this."

"Saar, use this cleanser." the medic offered up as he gave Jeff a bottle of dark brown liquid. "It will clean her pelt but try not to get too much on your skin. It will leave an amber staining behind. It won't be noticeable on her pelt but your skin will stain, from what I have learned about human physiology. I will be in my office if you need me. Towels are by the shower to the right and the shower will become a drying booth for her pelt. Controls for the dryer functions are by the water controls."

Jeff finished stripping out of his clothes and joined his *One Love* in the shower. He stood behind her and poured a bit of soap on her cleavage. There were some scrub pads on the shelf so he took one and brought around to her grasp.

"Is this too rough for you?" he asked.

"I don't think so." she replied after touching it herself. "Probably a medical cleaning pad. It might pull out a bit of my pelt but that's okay."

"The medic said this cleanser might stain your pelt just a bit on the amber side." Jeff offered.

"Would that bother you? She asked.

"No, I wouldn't care if you were dyed purple. I would still love you just the same." the Earther confirmed as he helped to clean up his wife, the one that was the center of his world.

"Purple? How about . . . the Earth color Pink?" she asked.

"That would be fine by me as long as you liked the color." Jeff stated.

"When I was in normal Upper School, I had my hair dyed pink." Krista confessed. "I was teased mercilessly by my friends. They called me 'Tatra' after a pink flower that grows here." After

she thought about it, she offered up the conclusion to that part of her life. “When I started what you call college, I decided to forego the pink color. I went right to a bright lime green, I think is the Earth color equivalent. I had my stylist make the green as bright as she could, then I had her add a stripe down my back and then my tail was dyed that same color. Mother was furious.”

“How long did that last?” Jeff asked as he worked on a spot that was heavily caked with dried blood.

“My graduation picture shows that green color.” She washed off some soap so Jeffrey could gauge the progress. “I have always wanted to get a color strip job done. Go all white.”

“Everywhere?” her husband mused.

“Well, the tip of my nose and my lips would be black, same as the skin around my eyes. The insides of my ears would probably be pink toned. It would have to be redone every one-half solar rotation to look good.”

“I like your regular coloration, Kitten.” Jeffrey stated as he worked on the top of her left shoulder.

“I'm glad you do.” the Elazi femme in his embrace put forth. “Some day, I'll have to show you the pictures of the time I tried solid black as a young adult. Mother was furious with me that time, too.”