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“Scribe”

by Kellan Meig'h

Chapter Forty-One

“The Search For Truth”

The arbiters had worked very hard from the early morning to well past mid-day, placing the bins in the proper order on their shelves. Each shelf was meant to hold all fifteen *Saens* worth of document containers for that cycle and it was clear now that all the bins were arranged, there were a number of bins missing. Particularly, the documents for cycle four thousand two hundred and eighty-six, missing in their entirety.

“This is not looking good,” Arbiter Zannel Tanret'lan mused, standing with the others. He had been given access to the library, under the ruse he needed to find some information on this supposed law. In actuality, he wanted to assist in finding the Andrews'lans innocent. The solid black lawyer looked at the nearby shelving carefully, noting another tub, not particularly the one they were searching for, located on a wrong shelf.

“Saars, we have an issue here,” he offered up as he took the tub in question off its resting place, “we need to patrol this entire section of the library, hopefully finding the bins we're looking for.”

“I agree.” Temmer put forth. “If somebody really didn't want us to find those documents, they could have had an entire crew in here, shuffling the bins around. I do not know what else to do at this point.”

Zannel and Kennan went to find some carts to use, since these bins were of an archival grade and therefore, they were not light at all. While they were moving some carts back into the area they were reconnoitering, Kennan posed a question.

“Zan, the three remaining arbiters; Saar Treet'lan was no help as to whether or not the vote actually happened and Saar Connen'lan seems to think there was no vote, but he couldn't remember the reason why. Are we just making busy work now, since the information we are after doesn't exist?”

“No, I have this gut feeling about the situation, that our last arbiter Saar Kett'van is the key.” the ebony barrister replied. “This law that was purported to exist needs a proposal document, notes from the talks as to why we needed a law like this or to go ahead and shelve the motion and finally, a tally sheet for the actual vote. All laws have these documents, except this one, apparently.”

“It is odd, if you ask me.” Kennan put forth. “When I went through law school for my certification, this was driven into us from the very first day. Without the documents to back it up, a law is not a law.”

“You just said it right there.” Zannel agreed. “This either has documents to make it a law, or it doesn't have documentation and therefore, it cannot be law. That one piece we have, a photographic scan that is incomplete, is not sufficient to use in a trial.”

“In that case, it could be dismissed.” Ken posed.

“Or, it could be set aside, pending further review.” Zan offered. “That would mean someone like me, for instance would be tasked with searching these shelves until the documents were produced or a review board put a stop to it. Most likely after I searched for three or four cycles, anyway.”

“I would lose my mind if I had to search these boxes for that long!” Kennan blurted out.

“Now you know why I want to find said documents.” Zannel stated. “I do not want to end my career as a document chaser.”

They finally made their way back to the general area they were working, meeting up with the others. The extended search had turned up more misplaced bins and some that had been opened but not resealed and charged back up with the required conservation-grade gas.

“You know, this is odd.” Commander Carver'lan offered up. “I've left several messages for Saar Kett'van and he has not returned even one. I wonder what's up with that? I really don't want to travel to the Carren'al community where he lives if he's not going to be there.”

“He might be out flying that old Dartha Heavy Bomber he resurrected from a scrap heap.” Temmer put forth. “I know he does put a few *Heth* on it each *Saen*. Probably found a few old males that were crew aboard one during the Syndicate Wars so they're out enjoying the day. Besides, he can't legally take a call while flying. New laws as of late, you know.”

Kennan and Temmer took over the task of sealing and recharging the opened bins, making sure the documents within had not suffered deterioration. From the looks of it, these bins had been opened just recently as proven by the lingering smell of the microbial disinfectants still present in the tubs. They knew they had to find the needed papers and soon. Time was running out.

“Janess, the weather south to Kas'Madelle is very bad.” Talram offered up after he had checked once again with the Landing Strip Operator of the *Tef'al* spaceport for an update. The femme behind the desk had printed him a sheet with the latest information concerning the storm that was raking past the coast, causing the bad weather inland. Winds were too high for takeoff and there were some strong downdrafts detected not far south of the spaceport.

I see that in my screen, Talam.” he agreed. The former arbiter had been checking the weather in real time on his padd, hoping to see the storm blowing itself out. As it stood, that storm center just west of them was an ugly purple color on his screen, meaning only a fool would fly into the eye of that turbo-storm. The skies over the port were green, with an occasional yellow to orange color working its way through and an occasional blue lightning bolt marker popping up. It did appear they were grounded for at least the next three *Heth* at *Tefal* until the worst of the storm was past.

Al'Janess had several messages on his communicator from a Commander Carver'lan, a being he didn't recall ever meeting. He would have liked to have answered the voice messages but the electrical storm was causing trouble with the normal communication channels. He wondered what this commander wanted of him so he placed a priority note on his padd to call the Commander at the first possible time.

Sitting down by his *One Love* in the pilot's lounge, she offered him a light meal to get them by to last meal. Mostly fruits with a few nuts and vegetables, something she might have fixed at home. It was amazing what you could find in the vend machines in an LSO lounge. Watching the storm while he consumed his fare, Al'Janess was not a happy individual at the moment. This was slowing him down greatly.

And he wished this storm would just get the *frack* out of his way. He had work to do.

Jeffrey and Na'Krista were trying to relax, doing their best to ignore the thunder storm raging outside. That was a little difficult due to the detention center running on backup power. Their cell and the hall beyond was on emergency lighting, low enough that lightning bolts lit up their room like a flash unit on a camera. At one point in time, the jailer for the block had manually unlocked their cell door so they could get out if they needed to evacuate the center.

Even with her diminished sight, Na'Krista had folded up a towel and put it over her eyes to block out the lightning flashes and Jeff had just put his arm over his face while they lounged on the bed. It wasn't late, not quite time to receive their evening meal so they were startled by one of the kitchen staff delivering them something that was brought in from a local food vendor.

“Sorry for intruding and my apologies for the earliness of your meal.” he offered up as he put their food on the table. “The latest through the back channels has this storm lasting another two *Heth* or so. The power grid is down just north of here so we're going to be on generator backup power for a while. No emergency personnel are stupid enough to be out in this weather working on power systems.”

“I can understand that.” Jeff put forth. “I think I would stay indoors myself.”

“This is a bad storm for this time of year.” Krista commented. “I hope we don't have a problem with berry rot from the rain.” That made their attendant nod in agreement.

“Mere Andrews'lan, there has been almost no rain at all, just wind and lightning. It is raining hard up by *Tefal*, though. The spaceport is closed to all traffic except emergency landings.”

“I know about the occasional winds they get, the Kaeder winds off the coast.” Na'Krista offered up. “I've heard of Kaeder winds strong enough to blow large craft off the parking ramps and take roofs off of buildings. I know it's better to build a spaceport on open land but they should have put it east of the town, not right at the coast.”

The kitchen staff excused himself, leaving the couple to eat in semi-silence. The thunderclaps were deafening, far louder than on Earth. They were strong enough to make the Earther jump, bothering Jeffrey to no end. While he tried to enjoy the meal, a meat and vegetable pasta with a salad and some fruit, he thought about the discussion they had carried on earlier in the day, using English to avoid being overheard.

They had held a conversation concerning a possible guilty verdict. Naturally, he would have to leave for Earth within a ten-day and Krista would go to jail. Well, the court system would allow her a ten-day to get her affairs in order before reporting for her jail term. Krista had come up with a novel idea to avoid jail time so they could remain together.

She would go to her stylist and have her pelt dyed to match her sister Na'Kayla. They would then book passage for Earth, Krista using her sister's passport to avoid detection. If the timing was right, she could board before the authorities were wise to her plan. Na'Kayla and Hammet would go on vacation somewhere, using lodging that didn't require both of their identification cards, such as the Keth'lan vacation compound. Krista was positive once they were back on Earth, there would be no extradition treaty to allow Earth authorities or the Elazi military stationed there to send her home. Technically, once found guilty she would no longer be a member of the Elazi forces so they would have no jurisdiction over her.

Krista also thought the detention center shouldn't allow her to have InfoWeb access to research such things using her virtual proxy settings to avoid detection.

While they would have to live on his Earth based pensions for a while until Krista found some work, they would do all right. The only thing he worried about was getting medical care for his wife, should she need it at some point in time. Well, they would just have to cross that road when they got to it.

At least he had left Auburn in a good way, no burnt bridges and he was sure if worse came to worse, he could open a small family practice in Auburn or Loomis. He was still in good standing with the American Medical Association so all he would need would be a small space set up with a few offices inside to convert to examining rooms. He still had his medical practice insurance, so that was already taken care of.

Another thought crossed his mind; since he had been on Elazia, he was positive his health has been improving. Jeff knew his hands no longer hurt from arthritis and his knees weren't giving him grief on a daily basis. In a way, he didn't want to leave here, if it meant he felt better every morning. Besides, he knew Elazia and its inhabitants were growing on him.

There were two more reasons he wasn't in a hurry to leave, namely Harvey and Susan. He was the reason they were now on this planet, serving as members of the planetary military reserve forces. Harvey was tasked to teach Spanish and Susan was teaching German in the same section he was assigned to. If he left, he wouldn't see them again unless they used their yearly leave to

travel to Earth and back. To ask them to do that wasn't fair at all. He was hoping his legal team, headed by Temmer Frain'lan would get them acquitted of the charges against them.

Na'Krista was gathering wool while she consumed her fare, thinking about the whole situation and just how absurd it was. She had worked hard to get to where she was now and some low-life *Slag* was trying to take all of that away from her. She knew if she was aware of who this person was, he or she would be shredded into small bits over this. Krista was concerned this would be damaging to her military career since she had decided to serve her full twenty cycles to draw a military pension.

The two of them had discussed this at length, because Jeffrey had shown an interest in doing the same. By the time twenty cycles were over for him, he would be ready to retire fully and be a gentleman farmer. If her husband served his twenty, she thought she might continue to serve until he retired, just to sweeten her retirement pay. That is, if they were found innocent of all charges.

Na'Kesta was headed Eastward, taking a secondary highway to see somebody who might help her with the situation at hand. It had been quite a while since she had visited with her father, the one that wanted her to serve in the Global Senate and not waste her time with the local House workings. He had been upset when she had turned down a nomination to the Global arena, choosing to cease communications with her for several cycles. They had just began to talk again when Na'Krista announced she was going to be joined to Jeffrey. Once again he was angry over his granddaughter wasting her time with an Earther, ceasing communications with his daughter a second time.

Kesta Keth'lan didn't know what she would say to her father or if he would even talk to her at all. Looking over at the center stack display, she noted another call from Marlett, probably wanting to know where she was. She actually expected to see him in a skimmer or Kam's *Fast Lighter*, following her every move from the air. She mused if Earth diplomats had the same problem with their assigned bodyguards.

Even her choice of vehicle had upset her father. She had purchased a custom bespoke Bil-manufactured Simmon two-door roadster, done to her specifications. It was low slung, long and lean with a vastly oversize turbine powerplant under the hood. It could out-accelerate a *Fast Lighter* from a stand-still to over one hundred *Hazecan Per Heth* and its top speed was faster than any law enforcer's cruiser in the area. He father thought she should have bought a Lestim luxury sedan instead, since the Keth'lan family held controlling shares in the company.

Arriving at her destination, she turned on her right signal and turned toward the exit for *Kerfsan*. What she hoped for would be a productive talk. Kesta prayed she didn't just waste her time coming out here.

An'Taffet'af Cern'lan was working in his courtyard garden, watering the plantings and pulling the important weeds that might take over the planters. Some of the small plants, weeds actually, were beneficial as ground cover to reduce moisture loss between waterings. These planters were his daughter's idea, something to make the courtyard inviting. He had to admit, it was far better than the normal gray gravel most people used out this way. He actually thought this might be wasted time in the courtyard if the storm reached this far out.

He kept thinking about what he had heard on the news concerning Na'Krista and this Earther named Jeffrey she was joined to. It was his opinion the charges against them were false. Such a law would be idiotic on any level, proscribing a law that says people can't be joined if they loved one another, despite being different species. He wasn't sure about Krista's joining, though since he didn't know this Jeffrey human. She was headstrong when it came to matters of the heart. He just hoped his granddaughter hadn't made a huge mistake with this joining.

Taffet couldn't remember the name of the young Elazi male Na'Krista had first joined with, a very level-headed young being. He had great hopes for them, only to have that joining annulled by his untimely death in a Singularity Drive explosion on Earth. Sighing, he also thought he should have had more of a role in Krista's life, rather than staying away like he had done. That was just like he had kept out of Na'Kesta's life when he should have been there for her.

The aging gray male went to the planter next to the one he was tending, taking a break from bending over by moving around and resetting the position of the watering hose to the other side of the bed. He dusted off his hands and went to the shaded side of the courtyard to get his cold glass of Kebra fruit juice. He had made an effort to find juice that was processed from Keth'lan orchards, since he thought it just tasted better for some reason.

He wondered if he should get involved with this situation, since he would almost be an outsider, really not knowing Na'Krista that well, and certainly having no knowledge of this Earther she was joined to. He sat down on the edge of a raised planter bed and pondered how to approach Kesta with his request. It had been a long time since he had been an Arbiter but he was sure he would be able to get back into the stride in no time. He had done his digging around and found out they had a little more than a rotation left before the fact-finding began.

He remembered their arbiter, this Temmer Frain'lan as a brash young male ready to take on the best arbiters and win every case sent his way. He was green, very unseasoned and had only tried one case a *targ* could have won when Taffet had retired. He remembered Temmer was confident, though and from what he could recall, he knew to do his due diligence before trying a case. Well, maybe he would have help from Kamram's arbiters and they could be triumphant. The sound of a vehicle coming from down the driveway brought him out of his musing, making Saar Cern'lan get up from his seat to see who this was.

Whoever it was, they might have been operating a Bil-designed roller, one with a grossly oversize turbine powerplant from the sounds of it. Once he was at the corner of his garage, he could see who this was approaching his home; it was his daughter.

Taffet waited until Na'Kesta had shut down her roller to approach the vehicle, opening the door for her. She stepped out and wasted no time in hugging her parent.

“Father, it is good to see you again!” she blurted out, trying to keep a solid grip on her composure.

“It is good to see you again, my daughter.” her father replied. “What brings you all the way out here? You could have just called me.”

“Father, let's sit down. I have much to say.”

Father and daughter went back to the courtyard where Na'Kesta took a seat in the shade while her parent brought over a low table for some refreshment. He went inside and brought forth some Kebra juice, ice cold, and poured her a glass. Sitting down in the chair beside hers, he spoke up.

“I suspect you are here concerning Na'Krista and this Jeffrey person.” he put forth.

“I am, Father.” she agreed. “We are having trouble finding the documents we need to prove this law false.”

“The Port Provincial News has said as much.” he agreed. “Kesta, I'm sorry I haven't been an active part of your life. And, after much thought, I'm regretful I have not been an active part of my grandchildren's lives. I'm torn over this, Kesta. I want to help but I have no idea where to start.”

Na'Kesta had sat there quietly while her father spoke to her, working hard to keep her composure. What he has confessed had struck a chord in her heart, elated that he cared but heartbroken it took this long for him to see the situation. Finally she dared to offer her thoughts.

“Father, I . . .” She had to wipe at her tears that were stinging her eyes. “Father, I want you to be involved. More than ever, we all need you right now to help find a way out of this. I've been so upset, I've even suggested quite irrationally that I should go personally to the magistrate and demand their release under Section Seven *Vaand* Six One.”

“I see . . .” her parent mused. “You wanted to give that direction a try?”

“I was irrational at the time.” she confessed. “I wasn't thinking clearly.”

“A Cern'lan trait.” her father put on the table. “I also agree with you. Section Seven *Vaand* Six One is pretty clear in its wording, nothing ambiguous about the conditions for release. The young ones aren't just some odd persons wanting out of jail, they are members of the military, very high profile beings. Give me a little bit of time to change into more appropriate clothing and we will go see the District Magistrate. We will demand their release under Section Seven *Vaand* Six One.”

“Father? You're serious?”

“Very serious, daughter. Who do you think wrote that section of the law?”

“Um, I'm guessing you might have had a hand in that section?” she put forth.

“I wrote most of it and I had some help from Saar Denna Tavvet'lan, supporting me on it.” Taffet explained. “The law passed first tally, only one objection. I am sure I can argue this one to the Magistrate.”

While her father went inside and changed his clothing, she thought about this at length. Why hadn't she contacted her father sooner? Maybe this pile of nonsensical charges could have been thrown out early on, putting an end to the family turmoil. Well, maybe this will work after all.

“Are you ready to go?” her parent asked as he locked up the patio doors.

“I am ready.” she replied. “I hope you're good with riding in my roller.”

“I'm good with that thought.” he agreed. “How about I drive? Maybe I might like to see just how fast your roller can go.”

“As long as you keep it down to some reasonable speed.” she stated as she gave him the activation card.

“Okay, is one hundred and twenty reasonable enough for you?” he asked, smiling at the look of horror on his child's face. He knew this was going to be an interesting drive to Kas'Madelle.

While her father drove them back toward Kas'Madelle, Na'Kesta tried not to get stressed out about the situation. Her parent, bless him, had a very heavy throttle foot. The limit on this section of roadway was sixty-five but her father preferred one-hundred *Hazecan* per *Heth*. Right about now would be a good time to take some motion sickness pills if she had them.

All she had wanted to do was to bounce some thoughts off of her father, not have him get involved deeply with the issue. It was a nice gesture but she didn't know how this was going to end up. Her musings were interrupted by her father asking a question.

“Daughter, is it possible to meet this Jeffrey? It would be nice to know who I'm representing when I go argue section Seven *Vaand* Six One to the adjudicator in charge of the case.”

“We might be able to meet with them tonight, if we return to Kas'Madelle early enough.” she replied. “I agree with that thought. You need to meet Jeffrey, to see he's a warrior. He also loves Na'Krista deeply. I'm not sure what would happen if they're found guilty.”

“They could go back to Earth.” her dad stated calmly. “They would have a ten-day window to make good on leaving the planet. She would no longer be a member of the forces so there's no extradition agreements between Earth and Elazia that could be used against her. Her land has already been deeded over to the forces so they would still hold her lands after she left this planet.”

“Father?!?” she blurted out, not sure she had heard what he had suggested.

“Hear me out, daughter. She would have to apply for political asylum once they reached Earth. I'm sure they would grant that to her, since some of our soldiers have done the same with

no issues. It's a given she would have to find some work to assist their living budget but if this Jeffrey had been living well on his pensions, then Na'Krista would only need to generate enough income to offset her added budgetary burden."

"Father, how do you know all of this?" she asked. "It seems like you have done your due diligence in the matter."

"I have." he agreed. "Being retired, I have excess time so I have to find things to occupy that time with. I have to keep busy to keep my mind sharp, you see. I had heard Na'Krisa and Jeffrey mentioned in the news so I became curious. I did my digging and this is what I came up with. To be honest, I was going to suggest Seven *Vaand* Six One to them. I'm fairly sure it will work but it never hurts to have an alternate plan."

"I'm not sure I like this alternate plan, father."

"Don't you think Na'Krista has already pondered this same line of thought?" Taffet put forth. "I think she would have given this a great deal of thought by now and I know the Detention Center wouldn't be able to stop her from scouring the InfoWeb for information. She would use her private login on the military servers, bypassing any security protocols the center may have."

"Well, maybe." Na'Kesta put forth. In actuality, she had thought the same things. Go to Earth, since Jeffrey has a home there. Yes, she would lose her lands but it was certain Krista would suffer without her *One Love*. She just wondered what kind of backlash there would be if her daughter and *son through joining* actually left Elazia? Would Kam and her have to step down, too?

"There would possibly be backlash from the Global Senate and maybe House Tal-Hassanai." her dad offered up. "You could weather it, though."

"I was just thinking the same thing." she admitted. "Do you think we would have to step down?"

"No, I think your status might be harmed a bit in the short time but in the long time, you would be fine."

Na'Kesta thought about that, how she had worked hard to get to where she was. Now that might be in danger due to this situation. Knowing she would have to weather it for her daughter's sake, they would continue to press on. This had to be done.

Al'Janess checked his weather radar again, making sure he was still clear to Kas'Madelle. They had found a lull in the storm that allowed them to get airborne long before the three *Heth* window that was given to them earlier. The controllers at *Tefal* had not been happy with their decision to continue on but with a high ranking commander and a dignitary on board, they had little recourse to use.

"Jan, I think you need to contact Kas'Madelle." his *One Love* informed him. "We are fifty *Hazecan* out right now."

“Thank you for reminding me, Demi.” he replied as he put his headset on the correct frequency and settings for voice activation. “Kas'Madelle Spaceport, this is the Jarek's Revenge, a Dartha Heavy Bomber. Request clearance for landing on Runway Seven *Ahn*.”

“Jarek's Revenge, please state your call sign.”

“Control, this is Jarek's Revenge, call sign *Vaand Zed* Nine Three Six.”

“Nine Three Six, you are cleared for Runway Seven *Ahn*. Enter the landing pattern from the North and pick up the beacon at One Eight Eight Magnetic. Beacon will squawk One Four Six Point Five Two Zero. Crosswinds are sporadic to Twenty *Hazecan* from Two Seven Five Magnetic. Local altimeter is Two Four Nine Quatre.”

“Copy, pattern in from the North, beacon at One Eight Eight, squawk One Four Six Five Two Zero. Crosswinds sporadic to Twenty and local Altimeter is Two Four Nine.” Janess repeated. “Teg, bring turbines down to seventy percent, pitch to eighty.”

“Copy, turbines to seventy, pitch to eighty.” Tegram repeated.

Al'Janess banked the bomber left, holding their turn to Zero Magnetic. While they flew the up leg to get into the landing pattern, they dirtied the craft up by deploying the flaps and lowering the landing gear. Janess took a moment to turn on the formation marker and landing lights so they could see to land and be seen by local traffic. They followed up by banking around to the right onto One Eight Eight magnetic at the proper I.P.

“Control, this is Nine Three six, I'm Ten out from the fence, on glide path beacon. Landing will be manual.”

“Nine Three Six, copy Ten out, manual landing. You look good from here, on glide path.”

“Control, runway conditions, please?”

“Runway is mostly dry, a small amount of rain fell fifteen *Munar* ago.”

“Thank you, Control.” Janess then switched to the cabin intercom. “Teg, turbines to sixty percent.”

“Turbines to sixty.”

They descended on path, Janess keeping the two red lines level with the indicator ball in his modern Heads-Up display he had added to the Dartha for safer landings. He made a few corrections, then he made his intentions known.

“Teg, I'll take the power settings for landing.”

“You have priority.” the gray one replied.

At about a *Hazecan* out from the port, Janess could see the landing strip illuminated by the landing lights. From his pilots seat, they looked square on the center set of lights embedded in the runway. He reduced power further, allowing the craft to sink at the correct rate for a smooth touchdown. Some additional power and attitude corrections had been made right before the main landing gear made smooth contact with the runway.

“Teg, reverse pitch, fifty percent.” the pilot asked while he advanced the throttles to eighty percent to slow them down. “Okay, ten percent positive pitch.” he added once the ground speed was down to an acceptable taxi speed and he had retarded the turbines. Just a few *Munar* later, they were shutting down the turbines at a parking space for transient craft.

“My roller is in the transient parking lot, through that gate.” Tegram offered up. “We can be at the Law Library in ten *Munar*.”

Talram held the door open for the rest of his group to enter the library while the troopers stood by, giving them some hard stares. Those soldiers were upset Al'Janess has somehow acquired a letter from the District Adjudicator, authorizing the four of them to be in the building after hours.

It was certainly a big library but it had to be to hold all of the paperwork and digital documents that supported all of Elazia's laws. They were currently standing in the foyer, a grand affair with polished stone flooring and wall treatments.

“Now, for a history lesson,” Janess began with a flourish of his arms, “This was not always a Law Library. Its first use was as a city center theatre. It was then a performing arts hall and when a new performance venue was constructed nearby, the Global Senate decided it would do as a repository for our world's law history.” They stepped through the nearby portal, into the actual area where the books and records were kept. “As you can see, this main area serves as a library for the law books. If you looked hard enough, you could find some tomes penned by myself.”

“That would be over in the section concerning land dispute?” Tegram asked.

“You would be right but there are more here and there. Now, I understand the arbiters have not found the needed documents for Cycle Four Two Eight Six?”

“That's the problem, Janess.” Talram offered up. “The entire range for that cycle is missing.”

“Probably not.” the elderly male retorted. “You remember I said this was a theatre first? Well, what do you need in a theatre?” He went to the back of the room, near a doorway to the newer warehouse areas and stopped.

“I'll concede. What do we need?” Talram stated.

“You need seats, correct?” Al'Janess motioned to the wall with another flourish. “If you will note, there is the evidence this was once the stage, and a very grand stage it was. I once performed the part of Al'Jon'al Gas'van in *Southern Winds* as a young male in The Performing Arts School. I

died about right here,” he said as he walked to a spot that would have been almost center stage, “A glorious death at the hands of my oppressors. The audience stood and cheered for me.”

“And all of that has what to do with . . .?” Demarria asked, seeming to be confused.

Al'Janess reached down to a point on the wall and pushed in on a button that made a handle pop out which he pulled. It opened a low door that allowed access under what was once the stage.

“This is where the seating was stored on carts when they were not needed. I will bet any amount, the tubs we are looking for were put under here when they were running out of storage room, right before this adjacent newer section was completed. That would have been in the right Cycle range.”

He passed a spare hand illuminator to Tegram, turned his illuminator on and began to crawl under the stage. In moments, a tub was being pushed back toward the gray male. Teg worked his way into the opening just past the door and began to relay pass the bins out into the open area beyond the portal. All in all, over thirty tubs had been brought out to the light of day.

They began to arrange the storage bins by date, lining them up by the wall. Once the boxes were in order, Al'Janess offered this up;

“We should open every bin for the cycle we suspect to be the right one, then we can do additional searching once we have some documents in hand. I would suspect this might take a while. Possibly all night.”

“Taffet Vakaar Cern'lan, you always seem to turn up like a bent coin in a vend machine,” the Arbiter in charge of the courts lamented, shaking his head. “Taffet, Na'Kesta, please come in.” he bid, stepping aside to let them into his home. “I would have thought the weather would have forced you into dry cover.”

“This is important, Arbiter Sanden'lan. I seek the release of Na'Krista and Jeffrey Andrews'lan under Section Seven *Vaand* Six One.” Saar Cern'lan put forth firmly.

“Call me Avret, please? We have known one another too long to use titles and family names.” the smoky black male asked.

“Very well, Avret.”

“Come to my study, both of you.” he bid, gesturing down a hall toward an illuminated room. “I have been expecting this. You have not surprised me at all with your arrival.”

Once they made their way to his den of relaxation, Avret motioned to his desk. He pulled up a chair for Na'Kesta and held it while she sat down. Once Taffet was seated and the older arbiter was in his chair, he smiled at them.

“As I said, I have been waiting for this.” the arbiter offered. “It was probably an error in judgment that the arbiter in charge of the case has made but rightfully so, a non-Elazi born being cannot post a release deposit. That does not mean an exception cannot be made.” Saar Sanden'lan removed a document from his desk, signed it and gave it to Na'Kesta.

“A Release?” she said as she read the document. “And no release deposit required? Are you sure you want me to have this?”

“Na'Kesta, I want you to have it. To tell you the truth, I have been under pressure by many individuals to do this. It would seem Jeffrey and Na'Krista have won the hearts of the public and the courts were being cast as not being honorable toward members of the military.”

“Thank you, Avret.” she said as she wiped at her tears. “The courts were being fair and you know it. It was an outside thought that you would release them.”

“I'm glad you came to see me.” Avret offered up. “If you had not, I was going to ask your father to find you and deliver this release to you.”

The evening admitting desk attendant looked at the paperwork again, scratching his head as he read the document carefully. He laid it on the counter, and took a deep breath.

“Ambassador Keth'lan, I have called Arbiter Sanden'lan and he assures me this is a legal document. I have never had to process this type of release before so please stand by while I get some procedural information.”

Na'Kesta and her father watched as the young Regional Lawkeeper contacted his superior on a video call, seeming to be a bit uneasy with this. She looked at her parent, who seemed to be entertained by the situation.

“Father, you think this is amusing, don't you?” she asked quietly.

“Yes Daughter, I do. I would guess he has never heard of Section Seven *Vaand* Six One. He probably did not study it in law school.”

“And why would you say that?”

“Kesta, it is a very obscure regulation. A very old law, almost a hundred cycles old.” He started to say something related to that thought when he was interrupted by the lawkeeper.

“Mere Keth'lan, I have been instructed to release the Andrews'lans to you. If you will give us a few *Munar* to have them dress in their street clothes, you all may leave.”

Jeff and Krista were still buttoning up their uniform blouses when they walked into the waiting area of the Detention Center. Na'Kesta was standing by the desk and an older male stood

by her, holding her around the shoulders. Once mother saw daughter, she rushed over to hug her child.

“Mother, did you get us released?” Na’Krista asked. “I hate to ask how much it cost.” she added as she realized what the amount of the release deposit for them might have come to. She knew her mother must have called in a very big marker to accomplish their release, regardless.

“Don't worry about it right now, Krista. Let's get you and your *One Love* back to your station so you can get some rest.”

That thought was probably the best thing she could have heard in the past few days. Being able to sleep in her own bed and be in the safety of her own home were big talking points to her. Once her mother released her, she went to her grandfather and hugged him, too.

“Grandfather Taffet, I haven't seen you in a long time.” she offered up between sobs. It had been a lengthy time, some five or six cycles since she had been around him.

“Yes, it has been a long time.” he agreed. “Na’Krista, is this your *One Love*?” he asked, motioning in the general direction of her husband. She took Taffet's hand and pulled him over to where Jeff was standing, still trying to get his uniform straightened out.

Jeffrey, this is my mother's father, Taffet Vakaar Cern'lan.” she said as she introduced them to one another. “Grandfather, this is Jeffrey Alan Sakaar Andrews'lan.”

“It is good to meet you.” Jeff offered.

“And it is good to finally meet you, Jeffrey.” the gray male replied. “Let's get you two back to your home where we can visit at length. The weather is still a bit unsettled outside so we have the use of Kam's roller, which is far roomier than Na'Kesta's racy, low slung Simmon drop head roadster. Let us take our leave of this place and be off to your station.”