

*The characters Jeffrey Alan Sakaar Andrews, Na'Krista Nahala Christina (nee Keth'lan) Keth'lan, Kamram Keth'lan, Na'Kesta (nee Cern'lan) Keth'lan, Tegram Keth'lan, Traci McDonald, Talram Keth'lan, Bosteg Haas'lan, Kestam Ramm'lan, Treman Baze'lan, Merret Treet'lan, Tascal Hone'lan, Hallett Trasc'lan, Hammet & Na'Kayla Nahala (nee Keth'lan) Craine'lan, Gillat Deen'lan, Marlett Blane'lan, Sa'Densa Nasia (nee Deen'lan) Andrews'lan, Argess & Arrissa Wrraal, Rellen Sandren'lan, Sa'Jenna Nasia Deen'lan along with the characters Torvald and Victoria Svensen are the properties of Kellan Meig'h and may not be used without express written permission.*

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## “Scribe”

by Kellan Meig'h

### Chapter Forty-Two

#### “Appointment With Destiny”

Na'Krista sat up on the edge of her own bed for a change, finally rested after her mother had found a way to get them out of detention. Her Grandfather Cern'lan had quite a bit to do with their release, from what she had learned last night on the way home. He had talked with Jeffrey for some time once they had arrived at the station, trying to feel him out if she had her guess. At least he had not turned down an offer to stay the night at their home.

Temmer had been to their home last eve late to let them know about the poor progress in finding the documents they needed, asking them if they would be good with a postponement for a few rotations. It was probably for the best if they allowed that, seeing how they desperately needed those documents for their defense.

Her mother had tried several times to get in touch with Tegram or Talram, hoping for some good news. She knew they might have been stranded somewhere from the bad weather and the two brothers might be in the air at the moment. Still, some news would have cheered everyone up.

“Krista?” Jeff called out from the bathroom, “Kitten, are you awake?”

“I'm up.” she replied. Standing up, she carefully made her way to the bath area of their home. Well, technically it wasn't their home due to that paperwork they had signed for the Trans-Atmospheric Forces. Hopefully, they would prevail in court and their land deed would be returned to them. Finding the sink, she carefully located a wash rag and turned on the water.

Jeff stepped out of the shower, still dripping a bit as he dried off. He smiled as he watched his *One Love* try to clean up this morning, doing what she could despite her diminished sight. She had heart, he had to give her that. Just by what he could see, Krista still had very limited vision this morning.

“Would you like help with cleaning up?” he questioned, taking a moment to hang up his towel to dry.

“Please?” she replied, setting her rag back on the counter. “I still can't see much at all. I can make out your outline in the light coming through the window behind you but I can't discern any of your features at all.”

Jeffrey guided her into the shower, turned on the water and began to work on her pelt with a soap-laden wash brush while she lathered up her hair. While he helped to clean up his wife, he thought about the discussion last night, concerning a possible guilty verdict.

Father Taffet had suggested almost the same thing Krista had, centering around leaving the planet for Earth. They had discussed the finer points of such an endeavor, such as passports and the need for Krista to dye herself to appear to be her sister. The elderly Elazi had also stated there were no extradition agreements between Elazia and Earth, as far as he could tell.

One point he wanted to be sure of was their monetary situation. Taffet wanted to know for sure they would be okay with with what funds they would have at their disposal to live off of. Jeff knew that was not an issue, since he had his military pension and a 401k that he had been squirreling away money into. He also had his job with the walk-in clinic and he was sure Na'Krista would be able to find some kind of employment locally. Maybe the Svensens would know who needed an employee.

Once Krista was clean to her satisfaction, she dried off in the drying booth and with a bit of help, put on her daily wear semi-dress khaki uniform after they put some bandages on her neck injuries. There was a possibility they would have to be in court this afternoon if a postponement was not granted. Her husband stood behind her and assisted in tying her tie, then carefully putting in some slack without messing up the knot in it so she would be comfortable. That's when she turned to face Jeff.

"Sweetheart, do you know where my nasal spray medicine is?" she asked, breathing a bit hard as she held him tightly and grimaced, the skin inside her ears showing a flush red coloration.

"Right here," he replied, picking it up off of the dressing table and handing it to her.

"Thank you," she replied, wasting no time in administering two metered doses in each nostril. "I can't tell you how badly I've needed to do that," she offered up, leaning against her hubby's chest so he could hold her tightly while she wound down. "I have almost went mad this morning with lust. I, um, . . . I either needed some medication or I needed you to help me out of this situation."

"Well, we could have . . ." she interrupted him by putting her fingers to his lips.

"Yes, we could have gone back to bed but then we wouldn't have gotten anything else done today." she put forth. "We might need to be in court this morning, not in bed making love. I hope you can see my point. Trust me, once this is over, I'm putting this medication aside so you and I can spend a ten-day in bed."

"Well, based on the aromas coming from the hall, Na'Mara must be making pancakes." Jeff suggested. "Ready for first meal?"

"Yes, I'm ready." she agreed. "Guide me to the table, please?"

Jeff did as he was asked, making sure his wife didn't trip over anything on the way to the dining room and a hot breakfast with her family. "*This might be one very interesting day,*" he mused.

His grandfather through joining seemed like a real character from their conversation last eve. They had even went to the garage so he could see Jeff's International Harvester Corporation pickup in person. Taffet had commented that International could do well on Elazia. He seemed to think Lestim needed a bit of competition to keep them on their toes.

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Dassan sat at his desk, scanning through the daily reports for production. From what he could see, Sa'Zarren had been doing an excellent job of running the harvest. A few times however, he had to sit back from his work and rest his head. Whatever was in those new pills he had been prescribed, they had a very negative effect on his ability to focus on a task.

He had found his stash of stimulant tablets and taken two pills in hopes they would help bring him out of this medicinal fog. If anything, not only was he still sleepy, he was loopy too. Actually, hallucinating might have been more like it, since his father and sister had been sitting on his office couch across the room for more than a *Heth*, discussing a matter of some kind. What irritated him about the situation was the fact he couldn't overhear whatever they were talking about. Most likely they were conversing about him. Finally tired of this irritation, he turned to his visitors from beyond the veil.

"Father, Sister, what are you two talking about that's so interesting?" he asked.

"You." was his sibling's short reply. "Dassan, you are what humans call "A Hot Mess." All you think about is profit and Krista's lands. Did you even once think not everyone dies a rich being? It's a good bet you will not. You burn up resources that don't pay you back. For example, the three males you hired to kill Na'Krista while she was in detention."

"What do you mean?" her brother asked, seeming to be confused about what his sibling had conveyed to him.

"You didn't read the early news?" his father asked, almost laughing at him. "Two of the males that assaulted Krista and Jeffrey died just moments after the beginning of the attack. The third male, Kavval Conner'lan took his own life in his cell to avoid prosecution. Whatever you paid them, that was money thrown to the four cardinal points."

Dassan turned to his monitor and brought up the early news feed, only to see he had been told the truth. Not only had his assassins failed, Na'Krista and Jeffrey had been released from the Detention Center last eve. That made things just that much harder. He knew Orange Detachment had a camp on the station grounds, the fence the Forces had put up was electrified and one would have to pass through a checkpoint to gain admittance to the home.

"So you see," Sa'Kalya began, "You have failed miserably. How many times have you paid mercenaries only to have them fail you?"

"That is none of your business!" her brother practically shouted. "Both of you stay out of my business!" he added firmly.

“Sorry, we can't.” Rallen Trent'lan put on the table. “We are waiting for you to make that last terminal mistake. When you do, we will stand by while *Od'Tra The Wise* sends you to burn in the eternal fires. Only then, may we pass over.”

“I will not make a mistake!” he put forth, knowing he was right. “You will be waiting for naught. I will gain Na'Krista's land, despite what you think!” That made his father smile before he replied to his child's brash outburst.

“I cannot believe you will not make a mistake. You have made so many bad decisions, Dassan my son. It makes my soul ache to see what you've done.” Rallen offered up. “An example would be that corner of the orchard where you dug up highly productive Kebra trees only to plant the Zafferat variety of Orlemberries! You cost the station many Crown with that decision.” After a moment, before Dassan could form a reply his father continued. “Had it ever occurred to you, you might be better off to just be a farmer and let go of all of you aspirations of riches? I knew I would never be rich as a farmer. You need to learn that.” That suggestion made Dassan expose his inner desires to his deceased family.

“I need a large amount of funds so I can be cured of this Phasic Disease!” Dassan blurted out.

“We know that.” his sister agreed. “You would never be able to afford that cure, if it would actually work as cure on an Elazi. Even if you had what used to be my lands to mine for Tavserinite, you could never afford that medication. The exchange rate from Elazi to Comeri funds would be cost prohibitive. You need to turn your life around, atone for your sins on this plane of existence and maybe in the afterlife, we can help you cross through the gates.”

Before he could fire off a retort to her suggestions, they were gone. He sat there, somewhat upset, wondering just how correct they really were about his situation. Had he failed? Would he die poor? Did anything matter anymore? He felt so confused right now and he actually missed his deceased family members for some reason. Maybe they would come back soon so they could talk again . . .

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The Keth'lan-Cern'lan-Andrews'lan family were gathered in the family room after breakfast, letting a rather heavy first meal settle to some degree. Trooper Grade Nine Sa'Vesi Derrel'lan had prepared their repast, proving a senior Non-Com could indeed cook food with the best of them.

Na'Krista and Jeff were both on edge, since they had not heard whether or not they would need to be in court this day. Several messages to Temmer had gone unanswered and Kennan had replied to his message with the news he had not heard from his uncle. That was about one *Heth* ago. Krista in particular seemed ready to either fight or flee, based on her nervous pacing until her husband had made her sit down.

To be truthful, Jeffrey wasn't that calm, either. He found it hard to keep a conversation with Taffet with all the other things that were going through his mind. Just the thought of leaving these good people bothered him because as he began to know them better, he realized what great individuals they really were.

At some point, Taffet has asked Na'Mara to make them some therapeutic tea to help settle their minds. It was sweet, very aromatic and it did its job, soothing Krista's jangled nerves. Jeff, on the other hand, was not affected by the drink. It did settle his upset stomach but that was the extent of it. Finally, his *Grandfather-Through-Joining* took him out into the patio, then off into the orchards to try to walk off his upset mind.

“Jeffrey, this is not as bad as it looks.” Taffet put forth once they were on the patio. “For point number one, Na'Krista and yourself have somehow won over the heart of the public with your plight and I'm sure House Tal-Hassanai knows that, too. For point number two, you have the backing of a very powerful family and the military. The Trans-Atmospheric Forces know if you're found guilty, House Keth'lan might stop all future sales to the military. I know Kamram has said as much. For the Forces to switch to a Bil, Comeri, *Sa'naa'ni* or *Fask-aal* designed *Lighter* or ground vehicle, that would really hurt the military budget.”

“Would they do that?” Jeff questioned. He knew this would be devastating to their operating capital because of all the support equipment, supplies and training that would have to be done.

“I'm not saying they would for sure but I would not take that thought off the table.” Saar Cern'lan offered up. “For point number three, you also have the support of my House, House Tal-Rimestai. The communications liason offered that information to me this morning.”

“I'm honored.” the Earther replied. “Still, from my standpoint as a former United States Marine Corps Major, it's like I'm looking straight down the bore of the Grand holy mother of all court-marshals. I'm just hoping Krista doesn't do any jail time. She would not do well at all.”

“Agreed, she would not do well in confinement.” Taffet stated as they sat down at a picnic table not far from the house. “She is like her mother in that way. I am very sure she would do something quite rash within mere days of being confined.” Jeff nodded on agreement.

“I would be afraid of that, too. You know, when we were attacked, she took on a *Fask-aal* male taller than me and killed him without a weapon in hand.”

“That is something her mother would do.” his grandfather-in-law mused. “That is another Cern'lan trait that was passed down to her through her mother. Na'Kesta would not let a male attack her for no reason whatsoever.” His communicator chirped so he looked at the message that was sent. “That was an old friend. I asked him to go see if Al'Janess Kett'van was at home. It appears he has went somewhere in his Dartha Heavy Bomber. If it would ever be possible, you should ask him if you could take a ride in it, if it would be convenient. I have heard it is similar to some Earth bombers that your race deployed during your World War Two.”

“That would be interesting.” Jeff offered up. “I know Mother Na'Kesta sent Tegram to find him. I do wonder if he was successful.”

“My daughter has not heard from Tegram or Talram. I do know the communications between Al'Janess' home and *Tef'al* can be spotty at times. If they had to make an emergency landing, the group may well be out of communicator service.” That made Jeff smile.



“Oddly enough, I thought on a planet as advanced as the Elazi are, I would not hear the communications systems would not be superior to those of Earth.” he stated. “My cabin on Earth is situated in the foothills of Northern California. From my front door, I can see a cell tower that belongs to my cellphone carrier with my naked eyes. There are times I had no service, even though the blasted tower is almost within rock throwing range.”

“That is a communications tower right over there,” Saar Cern'lan put forth, indicating a structure less than half a *Hazecan* away on Tegram's property. “Right now, I have minimal signal but that might be due to being under the horizon for the signal path.” Taffet was going to say more when they were interrupted by Na'Krista, sending both of them a voice message. They were due in court in two *Heth*.

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Jeff and Na'Krista were trying to remain calm as they waited out their turn to be put before the Court Adjudicator and the Prosecuting Arbiter. Several times Jeff had to hold his wife to help calm her down, she was that upset. He honestly thought she might step into the anteroom hallway and go berserk. Krista was currently wound tighter than a clock spring, ready to do something, even if it was rash and uncalled for.

Jeff couldn't say he wasn't upset and on edge because in fact, he was. Temmer had met with them just momentarily, letting them know things might not go their way. No documents were found last evening that would help their case and that might be problem. Their arbiters were just going to go forward with what they had and hope for the best.

Jeff gave thought to the conversation he had with Taffet concerning their escape from the planet should they be found guilty. It might be necessary to go to the *Fask'aal* home world and lay low for a bit until a ship was headed to Earth. The *Fask'aal* have started doing security work at several key Elazi bases on Earth, so they run a fairly regular route according to his *Grandfather-through-joining*.

All of this would have to be coordinated with Na'Kayla and Hammet, so they would know not to show up on anyone's radar until after Na'Krista was settled in on Earth. In his mind, this whole escape plan was sketchy at best and it all hinged on being able to get off the planet without being detected. Those chances were becoming very slim in his eyes.

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Al'Janess sighed, then straightened his clothing as he composed his thoughts. This delay was not a delay he could afford to have happen, not at all. Turning to the Regional Lawkeeper that had detained his group, he tried to reason with him again.

“You have observed my credentials, Lawkeeper. Why are you continuing to detain us?” he asked, not knowing what else to do. “It is very critical that we be in the district court today. Two people are relying on us to serve the court with those documents. If we are not there, they will be separated, never to see one another if it all goes wrong.” He hoped this would buy them the release from their situation.

“Saar, I am still awaiting approval to release you.” the gray male replied. “I have placed a call with Arbiter Sanden’lan and as soon as he returns my call with a positive response, I will allow you to go about your business. Not a moment before.”

Tegram had lost his patience with this officer of the law many *Munar* ago so he had taken the opportunity to reach out to an individual that could help out their situation. He would just have to hold his anger in check until they were ‘rescued’ from this mess.

The foursome had been detained as they left the Law Library some three *Heth* ago and there seemed to be a lack of communication going on. Janess had a valid permit to enter the library with his ‘aides’ to assist him but this lawkeeper was just not convinced it was indeed a valid permit. That was the reason he had made a call to verify the letter with its author. Teg, however felt the officer was deliberately delaying them from their task at hand.

“Lawkeeper, this is not very dignified,” Janess complained, trying to parlay with the one that had them under arrest. “I am an arbiter so I demand you . . . uh . . .?” He stopped his diatribe when most of Orange Detachment made their way through the doors to the auxiliary meeting area the Lawkeeper was using as an ersatz detention room.

“Lawkeeper Covvet’van, I am Commander Marlett Blane’lan.” the leader of the detachment put forth as they swarmed the room. “I have an order to detain these individuals and take them to the District Court. Please stand down and allow us to do our job.” That bothered the law officer, to have his charges taken out from under him.

“Commander, these individuals were in the Law Library without . . .”

“I believe that’s their pass to be in the library, in your hands.” Marlett put forth.

“It is, but I . . .” Again, his diatribe was stopped cold.

“Are you questioning my authority?” Commander Blane’lan stated firmly. “If you are, be prepared to be arrested for interference with Trans-Atmospheric Forces and Orange Detachment functions. Is that clear?”

“Very clear, Commander.” the officer agreed, not wishing to end up in a military prison. “You may take them under arrest and be off with them.”

Two of the troopers put handcuffs on the four under scrutiny and they were summarily directed out of the building and down the steps to a waiting military passenger van. Once they were inside, the van took off, their destination the District Courts.

“Thank you, Marlett.” Teg offered up. “You were playing your part perfectly.”

“You’re welcome, Saar Keth’lan. I do think the officer was rather frightened by our presence.” Marlett turned around and offered them a key to unlock their manacles. “We will be at the court house in about fifteen *Munar*. I understand Jeffrey and Na’Krista have not been called to the courtroom and for some reason, the guard that was sent to call them to the courtroom has been detained by several Orange Detachment troopers until we arrive.”

“That seems rather unfortunate for that baliff.” Al’Janess offered up.

“I try to do my best to keep things under control.” the detachment commander offered up.

“Well, let us hope we’re in time to get this trial put to bed.” Al’Janess put forth. “I hope we have not just wasted a night in the Law Library for nothing. I am in hopes this will draw out whoever is trying to disrupt Na’Krista’s joining. That being needs to be taught a lesson about messing around with true love.”

“I think that Lawkeeper was in on it.” Tegram stated. “He seemed to be there only to stall us. He made no efforts to verify our credentials other than one audio-only call to Saar Sanden’lan. That doesn't seem right to me.”

As they made their way to the courthouse, Tegram gave thought to the situation at hand. Someone had made several attempts at taking Na’Krista’s life and has most likely hired mercenaries at some point to take her out. He still pondered why Dassan kept coming to mind as a suspect. Maybe it was that attempt to buy the Andrews’lan station before they were even found guilty. That seemed to be the thing that stuck out most to him. It was almost as if Dassan knew something they didn’t. Like he was in fact the mastermind.

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Jeff made sure Krista’s uniform was trim and inspection ready, right before they stepped through the portal into the courtroom. Looking around as they were seated, he noted the large number of beings in the courtroom. Nobody was standing in the wings, probably to keep a riot from erupting should this go the way he thought it might turn out. Almost everyone present was seated or taking a seat, patiently awaiting the beginning of the trial.

Looking to his right, the prosecuting arbiter and his assistant were already seated, going through what little paperwork that could be found concerning the charges against them. The Elazi male’s assistant was a silver scaled Bil femme with silver-white hair. Her skirt suit she wore wouldn't be that far out of fashion on Earth, a darker gray to compliment her natural scale hue.

They were joined just moments after they were seated by Temmer, looking a bit worried. He sat out his padds, turned them on and organized his paperwork. Once that was accomplished, he turned to his employers.

“This may not go well.” he offered up. “We have next to nothing to go forward with and to tell you the truth, this may not take long for you to be found guilty.”

That thought really upset Na’Krista, making her start sobbing softly. This morning was going very wrong in a hurry. At least they would have a few rotations to be together before they were separated by court order. She knew if that happened, she would leave for Earth just as soon as she was out of jail. To *The Eternal Fires* with Elazia.

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Dassan entered the courthouse and quietly slipped into the courtroom where the Na'Krista and Jeffrey would be prosecuted, taking a seat in the rearmost far left corner of the upper seating section. He has gotten away from the station before his *One Love* had noticed him missing, using a utility vehicle so his roller would still be on-site, making it harder to find out where he had gone.

He wanted to be present for this court action, just to watch his niece go to jail and her human pet be sent off-planet, never to return. Maybe after today, there would be some angle he could use to obtain what would no longer be Na'Krista's land so he could mine it for wealth. Wealth that would cure him of this dreaded Phasic Disease.

He was momentarily distracted by a femme making her way from the aisleway to the seat just to his right. He paid her no never mind while the arbiters were preparing for the trial to begin. Just as he was beginning to mentally form up a plan to gain Na'Krista's land, the femme next to him spoke up.

"You will not gain her lands." she stated in a voice Dassan knew dearly; it was his sister Sa'Kayla. He turned to observe his sibling, in the flesh, sitting right next to him.

"What are you doing here? You're dead!" he stage-whispered, shocked she was present in the room.

"I am making sure you do not prevail." she offered up calmly, showing him her dagger hidden in her robes. "*Od'tra the Wise* may prevent me from crossing over if I kill you but I'll be damned if I will allow you to win out in this situation."

"You can't kill me!" he almost blurted out but managing to keep his voice low, knowing an apparition would be unable to do such a thing.

"Would you care to wager with me on that?" she replied, taking his hand in hers to show him she had substance on this plane of existence. "I am reasonably sure I have enough energy to stay on this plane until the trial is over. If they are found guilty, you will die, my brother. I will see to that personally."

He made to get up and move to a different spot but his sister pulled him back down into his seat, holding onto his hand firmly.

"Remain in your seat, Brother." she admonished him. "There are no other seats available and I'm sure you do not wish to bring undue attention to yourself. The adjudicator is making his way to his dais to begin this trial. Besides, my claw caps are razor-sharp as you can probably tell. I'm sure you don't want to have serious damage come to your hand."

Dassan tried to make himself comfortable in his seat, spooked by the presence of his late sister who by all rights should not be here. He could feel her claw caps against his hand, five points of sharpness that would do damage if she actually wanted to. He used his left hand to touch her arm, which seemed to be just as solid as his own. Well, now for some reason he was hoping Na'Krista and Jeffrey were found innocent, for his own sake. Knowing his sister, she would follow though with her threat if they were found guilty.

“Dassan, you seem upset,” Sa’Kayla offered up, snapping her brother back from his musing.

“Your presence is scaring me,” he put forth, trying not to show his emotions.

“Das, you have nothing to worry about, as long as Na’Krista and her *One Love* are not found guilty.” she replied. “I could almost forgive you if you just repented your sins. I want you to know, I would try my best to help you cross the veil if you would repent. I know that you are familiar with the question and answer to the riddle of war.”

“I know the answer.” he agreed. “It’s just, well, maybe I’m afraid to cross that threshold. I’m afraid of what lies beyond.”

“I’ve seen beyond the gates.” Kayla put forth. “I can tell you, *Os’kad M’tra* is a very peaceful place and I’m sure you would like it there. There is nothing to be frightened of, Dassan. You give *Od’tra* the answer he wants to hear, then the gates open and you cross over.”

While the Adjudicator in charge of the court made himself comfortable in his seat, Dassan thought about what was just said; would he like it on the other side or would he end up burning in *The Eternal Fires* for all times? He knew the only way to find out was to actually cross over and from what his sibling has indicated, today might be that day to do so.

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“All rise!” the Court Monitor stated, waiting until everyone was on their feet to continue. “In the case of Jeffrey and Na’Krista Andrews’lan, this court is in session, Saar Cavvet’lan presiding. All please be seated.”

Once the room was back in their seats, the adjudicator straightened his paperwork and looked at Temmer before continuing.

“Saar Frain’lan, is the defense ready?” he asked.

“Yes, Saar Cavvet’lan. We are ready for this session.” he replied.

“Saar Tavret’lan, is the prosecution ready?”

“Yes, Saar Cavvet’lan, we are ready.”

“Very well.” the judge mused. “Saar Tavret’lan, opening statements, please.”

The arbiter for the court got up from his table and approached the bench. Looking down at his padd to refresh his memory as to what he would say, he began his opener.

“This matter is in reference to World Law Twelve dash one-seven-seven. The law states an Elazi cannot legally join with an off-worlder and share in profits gained on Elazia. Saar, Jeffrey Andrews’lan is an off-worlder, an Earther. He was joined here on Elazi to Na’Krista Keth’lan, a citizen of Elazia. This is clearly in violation of Law Twelve dash one-seven-seven.”

“Is that all, Arbiter?” the judge asked.

“That is the basis for this case.” he replied. Zannel Tavret’lan then returned to his seat to allow the trial to move forward.

“Saar Frain’lan, opening statements.” the Adjudicator stated.

Temmer got up from the defense table and approached the dais. Checking his notes, he began the defense statements.

“Saar, this law, Law Twelve dash one-seven-seven is questionable. We have found so little information pertaining to this document. What is available, really in all honesty, can’t be used to prosecute my clients. The tally from the votes cannot be observed on the vote tally sheet. It is obscured by another piece of paper that was laying across the bottom of the form when it was copied. This may not be a law at all.” He turned to take his seat but he stopped when an alert came up on his padd. “Saar, may we have a five *Munar* break?” he asked.

“You may have five *Munar*.” the judge responded.

Temmer went to the back of the room and stepped out into the hallway for a few moments. He returned shortly with Al’Janess Kett’van in tow. The pair approached the bench where Tem asked the judge a question.

“Saar, may I add a member to my defense team?”

“You may. I suspect that person will be Saar Kett’van?” the Adjudicator asked.

“I still have my license and all needed certifications.” the rust-toned male put forth.

“Very well. You may proceed.”

Temmer sat down while Al’Janess organized his notes quickly. He gave copies of his important documents to the judge and the prosecuting arbiter, then he began his statements.

“I have provided you with all of the pertinent documents associated with what was a failed attempt to pass a bad proposal into a law. You will note the original proposal, made by the late Af’Renner’af Tallet’lan, proposing the law that would prevent off-worlders from gaining land and wealth here on Elazia. That is the first two pages.

“The next page shows the original tally, a tie at nine votes for, nine against. Saar Tallet’lan was hospitalized in the *Tefal* General Hospital with major cardiac troubles at the time of the vote. He was unable to vote by proxy, as he was under a doctor’s care and on medications. That is shown on at the bottom of the original tally sheet, supported by records from the hospital on the next three pages. Saar Tallet’lan passed the next day, unable to see the actual count on the tally.

“The next page shows the second and final pass for tally some three ten-days later, two for, sixteen against. What seemed like a good idea at the time was shown to be a poorly conceived notion that I personally argued as the *Demon’s Foil* before the vote. The motion was shelved and a

general consensus was to never revisit that chapter in Elazia's history again. So, I'm sure that it is apparent you cannot prosecute Jeffrey and Na'Krista Andrews'lan, since this was not a law to begin with."

"Well said, Saar Kett'van." the judge put forth. "You have brought light to what appeared to be a very dark situation. This court hereby dismisses the charges against Jeffrey and Na'Krista Andrews'lan. Court is adjourned."

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Dassan was still in shock as he drove slowly back to his station, stunned that his plans had backfired on him in a very catastrophic way. This had left him with no possible way to obtain the riches that lay under Na'Krista's land. He remembered how his sister had jumped to her feet along with most of the courtroom, applauding at the end to what seemed like insurmountable odds.

When he stood with the others, he noted his sibling had left without him noticing the occurrence. Why she had done that, he did not know. He could, however still feel her sharp claw sheaths against his hand, pricking the skin ever-so-slightly. He never wanted to feel that again, if he could help it.

What he was not looking forward to was being read the Elazi version of the riot act once he arrived back at the station. He knew Sa'Zarren would be pissed at him for this.

As he drove on, the thought crossed his mind that there existed only one remaining way to obtain those units of land. It would have to be by his own hands.

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Later that evening, there was a celebration in full swing at the Andrews'lan station with a full house of attendees, mostly family. Food had been served, drink had been passed around and several of the males had assisted the Trans-Atmospheric forces in removing some of the fencing that surrounded the property. The party had a very upbeat vibe to it, to the point Na'Krista had decided to model that Bil harness for her family, since nobody had gotten a good look at it but they had all heard about the metallic device she was forced to wear for a few days.

"Kitten, are you sure you want to do this?" Jeffrey asked as he helped her to put on the harness and get it fastened together correctly.

"Well, Kayla seemed intrigued by it and Mother had said she had never seen one in use. I thought, why not?" she replied.

"I think you've had a few too many shots of *White Fire*, if you ask me." Jeff offered up.

"Maybe." Na'Krista snapped the cuffs closed while Jeff closed up the back of her bondage suit and performed an override of the suit functions for his *One Love*.

"I need to use the latrine." the Earther stated. "I'll be out in a few."

Na'Krista had to be careful as she made her way back to the family room, since her vision was still greatly impaired. She also wondered who had turned off the most of the lighting, since she was sure it was on when they went into the master suite earlier. Just as she reached out for the light switches at the hall juncture, she felt the familiar sting of a Neural Disruptor. Oddly enough, the Bil harness seemed to soak up the energy, leaving her just slightly dazed.

“Who’s hitting me with . . .” Another burst hit her, not having as much of an effect that time. In her mind, she was sure the harness must be taking the brunt of the hit for her. Another burst of energy went past her and this time she was sure she heard Jeff hit the floor somewhere behind her by the groaning she heard. In a fit of preservation, Krista dropped down behind the entryway couch, listening for whoever this was that was attacking her. She was afraid the person in question may have taken their shoes off, walking barefoot and that would make it harder for her to discern which direction they were traveling.

“Krista! Be careful! Dassan is armed and he’s gone crazy!” Na'Kayla shouted from just beyond the portal to the main gathering area. She was trying to get to cover herself, since her medical brace surrounding her torso had deflected enough of the burst her relative had fired at her that she was not fully incapacitated.

“I can’t see him!” Krista shouted back.

“He’s by the center patio doors!” her sister reported. “He’s got that Disruptor pointed your way! Move toward my voice!”

Krista knew what that meant; move away from her sister’s location for her own safety. If she could make it far enough, her display of Japanese swords in the dining area would provide her with further protection from her insane relative. Her Katana would at least hold Dassan at bay until some of the family recovered enough to take him out. She could only guess he had stunned everyone in the family room before coming after her. That’s when she heard another disruptor discharge, followed by his voice.

“Kayla, you stay out of this! Don’t make me kill you, too!” he shouted. That was followed by the sound of a small bore percussion-ignition handgun being fired, most likely by her sister.

“I will kill you first, Dassan!” Kayla shouted, followed by another round being discharged. Moments later, Krista could see the shadow of Dassan, standing over her with what must be a Bantra’saa’laa in his possession. She could see just well enough to know he was preparing to use it on her.

Na'Krista grabbed his right ankle and pulled his foot out from underneath him, making him fall down away from her. She stood and prepared to run from him but he had taken a swipe at her with his weapon, knocking her down. Thankfully, that harness had blocked the cutting edge from slicing open her leg. At that moment, a female voice called out, one she was not familiar with.

“Run, Na'Krista! Move it! Now!” the femme shouted, then some scuffling was heard. Taking the message literally, she got back up and ran toward the kitchen where she knew she could find a heavy meat slicing knife for her defense. It would not be a Katana but it would be better than nothing.



“Let go of me!” Dassan demanded of someone, then a sound of a body hitting the floor was heard. “You wait until I get up and I will kill you!” he added.

More scuffling was heard, then Jeffrey shouted out from where he had fallen.

“Whoever the hell stunned me, I’m gonna fuck up your life royally!” the Earther put forth as he staggered to his feet. “Hey, both of you! Stop, NOW!” he yelled at the two that were engaged in a struggle to gain control of that Bantra’saa’laa.

Dassan did stop, momentarily distracted by Jeff’s demand but the unknown femme did not. She gained control of the weapon and in a classic move, thrust the longer outer tine through Dassan’s abdomen in an upward motion, deep enough that the tip of the tine was protruding out of his back. She then let go of the weapon, allowing Dassan to fall to the floor, dead.

Jeffrey made a run at the femme he didn’t recognize, at least to detain her and sort this all out. In his current state however, he was still not quite recovered from being hit by that Disruptor. In a move that lacked no grace whatsoever, he generally ran into the femme, taking them both to the floor in the process. He hit his head on a side table on the way down, knocking himself out and the femme had her head bounced off the hardwood floor, putting her lights out solidly.

Na’Kayla was the first to make it to the downed pair, first checking Jeff’s vitals, then she rolled the mystery femme over on her back to check her for injuries.

“I don’t recognize her,” she mused, taking the femme’s pulse. For some reason this obvious diplomat by her garb seemed very familiar to Kayla but she just couldn’t put a name to the face. She knew they had probably met at one time or another, maybe quite recently. She was joined shortly by her father, who gasped when the lights came on. Once Kamram regained his composure, he then made this comment;

“Kayla, I know exactly who she is.”