

## THE QUEEN OF SWORDS!

### A TALE OF ADVENTURE IN THE SECOND DARK AGE OF MAN

2566 A.D.!

By Jerome B. Bigge

Author's Note

In my first books, "2565 A.D.!", we traveled in our imaginations with Dr. Lorraine Duval, a Los Angeles psychiatrist, and her lovely stepdaughter Sharon from here in the 20th Century through time to the 26th Century. To the year 2565 A.D. where we found the world had been muchly changed. Where an interplanetary war had taken place in the year 2047 with the alien inhabitants of the planet Mars. Where Mankind now lived beneath an alien dominion in a social order very much like in many ways that of the Middle Ages, although with some important differences. Here Lorraine Duval found adventure, love, and eventually became the Queen of Trelandar, a country covering much of present-day California. A country part of a larger Empire on the west coast of North America ruled by the incredibly beautiful golden Darlanis.

And now once again we travel in our imaginations into the future. To a future world where all of Mankind still lives beneath the claw of the terrifying Lorr, a race of gigantic antlike aliens from another star system. Where our own time is but a half-remembered legend. To the realm of the beautiful Darlanis Marden, Queen of Sarn, a barbaric Empress of Imperial California! The year being 2566 A.D., or 519 A. W. as our heroine thinks of it now as we see it through the lovely eyes of Darlanis herself!

And once again you will make the acquaintance of Lorraine, the greatest swordswoman of the 26th Century, her lovely stepdaughter Sharon Duval, and naturally that evil Bajan Princess you learned to hate in the first book, Tara Bisan, will have her role to play in things as well others. In other words it promises to be another rip-roaring tale of adventure just like my first book!

I have been asked: "HOW 'LIKELY' ARE ANY OF THE THINGS YOU WRITE ABOUT IN YOUR STORIES?" Will there someday "be" a "Janet Rogers"? A "World Federation"? "Is there 'life' on Mars?" "Do the 'flying saucers' actually exist?" "Could the lightyears that separate the star systems actually be crossed?" "Could creatures like the 'Lorr' actually exist in the scientific sense?" "Is there any evidence at all for any of this or is it all fantasy?"

First, I consider it quite possible that we will see a "Janet Rogers" and that she will be elected President of the United States. Janet was an excellent public speaker and she said what needed "saying" when the "time was right". There are a number of historical parallels. She was a very "attractive" woman, tall, slim, darkhaired, and very "quick-witted" according to what Lorraine writes of her. One assumes she would have made a very "impressive" political candidate. As for a "World Federation", who knows? We have the UN now. There was joint military action by a large number of nations against Iraq here in 1991. I see no reason, especially given "electronic hypnosis", that Janet Rogers couldn't have become the first world

dictator. That part of our future may not be too "far-fetched". We have a lot of problems that only someone like Janet Rogers could solve for us! Problems I fear that only a true dictator would be able to solve!

Second, as for "life on Mars", who knows? It is doubtful given what we now know about the planet that "intelligent" life could have ever evolved on the planet. The best we can hope for here would probably be single celled types of life more like bacteria and so forth. It should be noted by the reader however that Mars would be "easy" to colonize by someone with an "advanced technology" like the Lorr. We could "colonize" Mars ourselves and there are already "plans" by NASA for doing just that!

Third, as for the issue of "flying saucers", who knows? If you deny the existence of "UFO's", then what "are" people seeing? One might also consider the fact that most of these "sightings" seem to have come after we set off our first atomic explosions! Maybe "someone" out there is getting worried a bit about things! We are not the sort of a race many would like to "share" a solar system with. Especially not if you know a bit about our history!

Fourth, "starships" of the sort the Lorr used to travel from their solar system to ours are within our own scientific abilities given fusion power, which the Lorr did possess. Granted, we are probably a century or two from having that sort of "technology", but it is certainly less "far-fetched" than that of "STAR WARS" or "STAR TREK". The Lorr starships are in theory possible.

Fifth, are creatures like the Lorr possible? The "Lorr" are not "ants". They are not "insects". I don't know if such creatures are biologically "possible" or not. The "idea" behind the "Lorr" is based upon creatures used by another author some sixty odd years ago where he had gigantic ants on the planet Venus who communicated by radio. The books are now "out of print", but may be available in a "used book" store. They are "THE RADIO MAN", "THE RADIO BEASTS", and "THE RADIO PLANET". One may also look at the "GOR" series by the late John Norman where he had creatures called "Priest-Kings" that resembled gigantic praying mantises! This is after-all a story written to "entertain", not to believe.

Sixth, we might consider here that there are a number of "unexplained mysteries" to which "modern Science" cannot give us any "answers" for. We are still not "sure" where Cro-Magnon Man came from. There was a definite "jump" in our "evolution". There are "legends" dating back in time of "advanced civilizations" such as "Atlantis". Could the Lorr have tried colonizing the Earth with their own "creations" thousands of years ago? In 1908 there was a strange explosion over Siberia much like that of a large H-bomb. Did some new Lorr spaceship suffer "containment failure" a few miles above the forests? There is "evidence" of "radiation burns" by those animals living in the area. Those who actually witnessed the explosion gave reports that sound an awful lot like witnesses to an atomic explosion of some sort! Raspa did tell Lorraine that there were two "accidents" with their spaceships. Was the explosion in 1908 over Siberia one of them? There are Russian scientists who believe that it was a spaceship!

There is also the fact that there are events occurring from time to time right here on Earth for which we have never been able to come with any "rational" explanation for. Strange disappearances of aircraft, ships, and people. There is some evidence available that "wormholes" in "space-time" might be "possible". Perhaps the "Gateways" do exist. There is some evidence for them. There was an airliner that flew through something strange that caused everyone's watch to be about fifteen minutes slow!!! Lorraine noted in her books that a Lorr battle-disc was shot down over the area that we refer to as the "Bermuda Triangle" during The War of 2047 between Earth and Mars! Its entire stock of anti-matter bombs going off when it crashed into the Atlantic!!! Could there be a "Gateway" somewhere out there over the Atlantic?

And now if you carefully read all of Lorraine's story, (read it again if need be) you might have noticed that Queen Tulis seemed strangely "hostile" to the teenage Darlanis when she came home crying and told Queen Tulis that her brother had raped her! She certainly didn't behave towards her like a real mother would! There was of course a good "reason" for this, which Darlanis herself didn't know anything about, and which will play its own part in this story. And did you notice Aurora's concern over Darlanis both there on Mars and later on when the Starfire played its role in ridding Trelandar of Princess Tara's own band of cut-throats? And Darlanis' own little "footnotes" there in Lorraine's story??? (Along with Lorraine's suspicions as to what the TRUTH was here?)

Darlanis is probably more of a "story-book" heroine in that she does "dumb things" and gets herself into "troubles" that a more "rational" person (like us?) might avoid. On the other hand we wouldn't have much of a "story" if she did, so I'm happy that she is a "dumb blonde" as it allows me to have "fun" with her! I suppose that is a part of writing "stories" like these. Of getting your character into "fantastic" situations and then somehow getting them "back out" again. Of sometimes perhaps "amazing" the reader with "stunts" that seem at first glance "unbelievable" such as Aurora's stepping out on to the surface of the Moon without wearing a spacesuit! Actually however this is not all that "impossible" as it may sound. She is a MARTIAN, with a different sort of blood than ours, and stepping from an atmospheric pressure of 1.5 PSI to one of zero wouldn't be that big a change! It might be noted here that if a skin-diver was to breathe pure oxygen before making a descent, they could hold their breath for a longer period of time than they could doing the same with air. I assume that Aurora did much the same. She states that her own "people" could go without breathing for as long as five minutes!

The reader will note that this story swings back and forth between Darlanis (the major character) and a number of the other characters in the story. I believe this makes the story more enjoyable even if it does "violate" ordinary writing conventions.

Jerome B. Bigge

## Chapter One

"I'm sorry, Darlanis, to hear about the tragic death of your mother," Aurora, the Lorr's yet beautiful "ambassador" to Trelandar said to me as I had stepped into her richly furnished office there in the Martian embassy in Trella, the great capital of Trelandar. The photographs there on the walls showing scenes that few Earthly eyes had ever seen! Views of Mars, of the Earth as seen from far out in space. The green eyed blonde tall, regal in her appearance, and strikingly "beautiful". The silvery clinging jumpsuit she wore also made her look truly "Martian". Her very "presence" here on Earth a vivid reminder of the Lorr's "power". Those "horrid looking" gigantic "ants" that now ruled all Mankind since The War of 2047 some five hundred and nineteen years ago. Like most Martians she was full chested and rather narrow hipped. The effects of life upon a world with an atmosphere far thinner than our own and with a gravitational pull only 38% that of Earth.

In her eyes I was doubtlessly "nothing" but a "barbarian" as most Lorr Servitors considered those of the Earth. My royal blue cloak with its silvery silken lining, my long slim sword, the rich golden mesh of my halter and its matching mid-thigh skirt no doubt gave me quite a "barbaric look" to "one" such as her raised on a far distant world! I am a tall blonde, 5'10", broad shouldered. A "Queen of Swords". My "caste" is of the Warriresses. My heart yet with heavy with "pain" from what I had just learned.

Are you?" I "challenged" her back, standing there, looking straight into those lovely green eyes as she came around her desk to greet me. "Or was she just the 'Earther' who raised me knowing all the time that I was not actually her child, but just only the 'BASTARD BRAT' of her own husband's alien Martian Mistress!"\* \*Aurora had been the Lorr's ambassador to Dularn at that time. My father was of the "intellectual" type while my "foster" mother Queen Tulis was of the Warriresses and a "barbarian" by the "standards" that Aurora and my father Prince Paul "saw" her as. Aurora's singing abilities no doubt "played" their part here too as she is a fantastic singer, and very famous too I might add! To listen to her sing her "songs of love" is a true experience! I feel very "embarrassed" now writing all this, but at the time I actually did "hate" her with a furious passion for what she had "done" to me, or whether what I "thought" she had "done" to me!!!

"Darlanis!" my mother breathed, reaching out, touching my hand, her eyes burning into mine. Tulis had left me a letter to be opened only after her death. It had told the entire story, although a "pretense" had been made by both her husband and Aurora that the baby girl used to "replace" a stillborn baby had been a "foundling". Tulis had, however, known better, having "known" of her husband's "relationship" with Aurora! My father, the late Prince Paul, having become far too "friendly" with the Lorr's own beautiful ambassador to Dularn for Tulis' own liking! The Queen eventually becoming too aware of what Aurora did "mean" to him! That with Aurora she had found a "love" she could never give him!!

"I'm 'NOT' your 'loving daughter'," I snapped back, my voice as "icy" as the very polar caps of Mars themselves while my azure eyes burned hotly into hers. Recalling what Lorraine had written there in her first book of her "adventures" on Mars. Of "what" Aurora had "said" about me! That I was nothing but a "barbarian" unfit to raise my own child! That had been "why" she had kept my own beloved ANNA there on Mars with her after Anna had been rescued from drowning at sea by some patrolling Lorr battle-disc!

"Darlanis! There's so much you don't 'understand'!" Aurora pleaded back, now almost "clinging" to me! I detested her very "touch" as I stood there facing her, the "fury" blazing hot inside my body! My hand now almost with a will of its own seeking my sword's hilt as the "darkness" in my heart overwhelmed me! For an horrible instant I thought of running her through, even if my own life would be instantly forfeit for doing such a horrible deed! There being a death penalty for killing a Lorr Servitor.

"You're 'despicable'!" I snapped, "And I thank Lystoo that I don't have to ever 'deal' with you or even see you again!" I snarled, recalling how this woman, my "mother", had taken my own daughter away from me! Then raising her as if ANNA was her's!\* \*Lorraine writes in her book that I "forgave" Aurora for that. BULLSHIT! I "accepted" it solely for Anna's sake as I didn't want to make "trouble" just then! I didn't want to "hurt" Anna by "attacking" the woman she had learned to love. I also didn't want to see Sharon get "embarrassed" with me by making a "scene" right there before everyone! I do have my "pride" as an Empress!

"Darlanis," Aurora begged, weeping now, the tears starting to run down her cheeks, "I only 'wanted' for you what you never could have had on Mars..." I wasn't interested in "what" she had "wanted" for me or why! I told her so too in no uncertain terms, using certain words that my friend Lorraine uses when she is very angry. I think Aurora "understood" them. I really didn't much give a damn just then either after what she had done!

"Go back to Mars and stay there, you Lys-dammed Lorr bitch!" I snarled in fury, yanking open the door, slamming it behind me! Leaping into the saddle of my unicorn as soon as I got outside, the hot fury in my body driving away the "chill" of the late December day. The bright decorations of Christmas now meaningless! So far as I was concerned there was nothing left to "celebrate"!

"You look like a `thunderstorm' about to `strike'," Lorraine observed with a smile as I returned to the palace that had once been "mine" not that long ago. The smile curving the thin lips of the Queen of Trelandar leaving little doubt that she "knew"!!! Lorraine is a tall slender muscular brunette, perhaps the greatest fighting woman who has ever lived in any era Man has existed! Near by at her side Jon Richards, her husband and Prince-Consort.

"You Knew! She Told You!" I snapped back, well aware of the relationship between Aurora and this amazing woman from the past! For an instant I felt an insane "fury" that she too knew of this! "AND I THOUGHT YOU WERE MY `FRIEND'!" I screamed, half drawing my sword, my azure eyes hot with frustrated fury that she too KNEW!!

"Drawing on me won't accomplish anything," Lorraine spoke in level tones, motioning back those with her, their hands on their own weapons. Among them the noticeably pregnant Lady Sanda Talen, Prime Minister of Trelandar, Lorraine's "second in command". The very same woman who had led a successful REVOLUTION against me only some months before! The woman who had "used" Lorraine to take Trelandar away from me! Another damn bitch like my mother!

"Sharon doesn't `know', does she?" I breathed softly as the Queen of Trelandar closed the door behind herself a moment later. The black of her flowing silken dress leaving no doubts that she was truly "of" the Warriresses. Sharon is Lorraine's stepdaughter, my own foster daughter, my Imperial Princess, my "heir" to the throne of Imperial California should anything happen to me. I saw those dark eyes meet mine, knew that Lorraine "understood" as no other could have "understood" just then the "PAIN" I suffered! Knowing that I was the bastard "brat" of some MARTIAN!!!

"I wouldn't advise keeping it a `secret' from her," Lorraine advised, her midnight hair like a rich black mane falling to her shoulders. "The `trust' that she now has in you is something very important to her." I nodded, understanding, accepting the drink that the Queen of Trelandar now poured for me. I supposed it wouldn't matter to Sharon if I was "ILLEGITIMATE" or not. It might, however, to a number of others, especially my own enemies! This was certainly the sort of thing the newspapers would enjoy! Darlanis Marden, Empress of California, the illegitimate daughter of a Woman of Mars. What a field day they'd have with all that!!

"I suppose Aurora told you all the `lurid' details," I said, sipping at the drink she'd given me, strolling over to the window, looking out at the city, the harbor there in the distance. Trella is built somewhat to the south of the ruins of Los Angeles which form its northern borders. The ruins are said to be inhabited by that which is "mu", not "hu" like most life. Lorraine once saw such a creature, a horned, scaly creature like a cross between a man and reptile. It is the general policy to kill such things whenever they are found lurking near human habitation. It being commonly believed among the Peasants that they steal and eat human babies when they can find one untended by its mother. The same belief with some justification is held by the Nevadas who live on the other side of the Sierras from California, I add. I tend after my own "experiences" with such creatures to believe that it may be true. Those who captured me certainly had every intention of gutting me out and roasting me over a fire for food!

"I `suspected' such ever since she seemed so concerned about you there aboard the Ronda when we rescued you from the pirates," Lorraine answered, joining me there at the window, the silver links of her neck-chain gleaming against her skin. "Especially considering the fact that Tulis `disowned' you,

something that no true mother would have ever 'done' to her own daughter regardless of what that daughter had said that her brother had done to her."

I suppose it is to Tulis' "credit" that she never made these things "public", although how many would have "believed" them is another issue, considering the "relationship" between her and me! The fact that I was of "Martian" parentage would have been hard to prove, although there is a slight difference in my blood type from what would be usual and normal for a woman of Earth origins.

"There was a 'time' when I 'needed' her, 'anyone', just to take me in their arms and let me know that I had at least one friend in this world, even if it was only a Lorr Servitor who had let herself get 'carried away' emotionally with an Earthman," I wept, my hands clasping the sill of the window there before me. I felt terribly ashamed now of what I had said to Aurora. True, I had ample reason to feel that way, but I had behaved just like a "barbarian", no doubt now confirming my mother's opinion of me!

"And 'what' would you have felt like, knowing that you were the illegitimate bastard of a Martian?" Lorraine challenged me in reply. "That you were nothing more than the result of a woman's emotional 'infatuation' with a man she'd never be able to marry?" "Relationships" between the Men of Earth and the Women of Mars being considered generally "unthinkable" by most of both worlds!

"Aurora should have never 'kept' my Anna," I answered back, changing the subject, knowing that Lorraine spoke the truth now.

"I think she wanted 'what' she could never have," Lorraine replied, "A 'part' of the little girl she'd given up years before. The child that she now wanted back after it was too late." I could "understand" that. Anna had been a "replacement" for me. I have done the "same" with Sharon, as Lorraine has with Gayle. Both of us "seeking" what we had earlier "lost". Gayle and Sharon do look like "sisters", as does Anna too, surprisingly enough! All three being blue eyed, "blonde", and very pretty young women!

"She 'substituted' Anna for me?" I asked, Lorraine nodding. In the 20th Century Lorraine had been much like a Priestess here. Her profession had been "helping" others "understand" themselves.

"You both turned out to be women any mother could be proud to call hers," Lorraine smiled back, changing the "subject" just a bit. I supposed it was true. I was quite "proud" of my Anna. Of "An'na of Mars" as Lorraine and others now often called her. At least Aurora had done a good job as a mother of raising her!

"And you are the finest example of 'Cro-Magnon womanhood' that I've ever seen," Lorraine now smiled, sipping at her drink. I wasn't too "sure" that she wasn't "insulting" me as Lorraine likes to "do" things like that at times to me. I suppose because she feels somewhat "inferior" to me due to her looks as compared to mine. She is actually quite "attractive", and I am sure that her husband, Jon Richards, finds her quite delightful as a wife!

"And just 'what' does that 'mean'?" I "challenged" her back!

"The Cro-Magnon's were perhaps the finest example of 'Stone Age Man' that we know of," Lorraine smiled in reply. "They were tall, robust, and truly of a 'race of warriors'," she then added.

"And I am just a beautiful blonde barbarian," I smiled back, understanding the "implications" here of what she had just said.

"There is something to be said for barbarians," she smiled. "We of the past forgot our ancestry, what

made us what we were."

"But there have been times you have `recalled' it," I said. Lorraine is perhaps the greatest Warrioress who has ever lived.

"I fear I am not a `civilized' woman," Lorraine admitted.

"One can become `too civilized'," I smiled back in reply.

"Perhaps those of the past did so," Lorraine agreed.

"We will not `repeat' such mistakes again," I said.

"We will not allow `them' to `disarm' us," she smiled.

"As Janet Rogers did," I smiled back, now enjoying this.

"One of her two `mistakes'," Lorraine answered. Her "other" was the failure to realize the "necessity" of population control. Lorraine walking over to a rack of fencing foils, tossing me one. "I need the `practice'," she smiled, facing me, going to "guard". "And you're the only one who can give me a `good fight' anymore." Lorraine's skill with a sword such that none could face her now.

"I could say the `same'," I smiled, taking a better grip of my weapon, then with a grim smile curving my lips I suddenly forced her back with a series of violent slashing attacks, Lorraine as usual merely "defending" herself against me for the moment. She is extremely "deadly" with a blade, and so utterly "lethal" that I'm forever grateful to Lys that she is my friend, for I have no doubts any more of the consequences were she not!

"There's a lot of `hate' pent up in you," Lorraine smiled, her defense impregnable. She is not "invincible", but few have ever "stood" against her blade to blade for more than just a few seconds! Our foils ringing together as I tried "every trick in the book" to break through that awesome defense of hers! Lorraine having an "answer" for everything that I tried against her! She is no doubt the greatest swordswoman who has ever lived too.

I tried a "combination" of tricks, but whenever I thrust she was either "on guard" or just "not there", Lorraine being a woman who depends a great deal on "footwork" when she fences with me! I am "stronger", but she is "quicker". We are well matched too!

"You're not `concentrating' on what you're doing," Lorraine warned me with a grim smile, suddenly going on the "attack", her slim fencing foil a blur that it took all my abilities to meet, a grim smile on those thin lips as she drove me back with her attack across the room! Forcing me to "concentrate" on my defense!

"You shouldn't have called Darlanis a `Cro-Magnon'," Sharon said to Lorraine as the four of us had dinner together that night. Lorraine's own foster daughter, Princess Gayle being with us. She is the younger sister of Maris, the new Queen of Dularn. I "felt" better now after I'd been able to "work off" some of the "fury" that had been held inside me. I had eventually "lost" to Lorraine, but that was to be expected. I had told Sharon "all", feeling that she should know the "truth" about the "issue". Lorraine had "hinted" to Lady Sanda that we wished to be "alone". There is little "love" between Lady Sanda and me. I once killed her sister in a sword duel, and "won" the country of Trelandar by it. Sanda's sister, Queen Paula of Trelandar, died in her arms. Such painful "memories" are not easily nor quickly "forgotten".

"She 'is' one, however," Lorraine smiled. "Her bone structure, her height, features, all indicate that she is exactly the sort of a woman who stood beside her own mate and fought the saber tooth tigers and great cave bears of the Neolithic Age perhaps thirty thousand years ago." I found the "thought" appealing too. I am the sort of a woman who expects to be "more" than a "wife".

"She's the daughter of Queen Tulis and Prince Paul," Gayle interjected. "I don't see how you think she's the same as women who lived thirty thousand years ago." I smiled to myself. Gayle of course had no way of knowing that I was actually Aurora's own daughter formed from a brief illicit relationship between her and the late Prince-Consort of Dularn now some forty five years before! And that Aurora, like all the women of Mars, was a Cro-Magnon, or at least a "descendant" thanks to the Lorr and their "tampering" with human genes! Unlike the Cro-Magnons, however, the women of Mars are mostly "blonde", for what reason I don't know. Aurora once told me that the Lorr visual sense finds women with "blonde" hair more "pleasing", although Lorraine differs, saying that it is due to their life over the ages "underground". They do find Earth's gravity, the "glare" of the sun, unpleasant. The Women of Mars usually shielding their eyes with dark glasses.

"Like to celebrate New Year's back home?" I asked Sharon. I wanted to get back to my own "home". Away from Lorraine and a certain Lorr ambassador who had once long ago given birth to me on a world that is only a point of orange light in Earth's sky!

"Is it 'colder' there?" Sharon asked, giving me a smile.

"It's not 'that bad'," I assured my own lovely Princess.

"Just as long as Lorraine will fly us there," she smiled.

"I'm sure she'd be willing to do so," I smiled in return.

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"Darlanis," Sharon said to me as I sat there on the edge of her bed, her azure eyes looking up into mine. We are very close, much more so I think than are most "mothers and daughters". We have shared much together in the half a year we've been together.

"Yes?" I smiled down at her, the bedroom chilly, the light from the fireplace casting dancing shadows there on the walls. Through the bedroom windows one could see the lights of Sarn, my capital built upon the ruins of what once had been San Francisco.

"I'm glad Lorraine flew through that 'time-warp'," she said. I nodded, bent down, gently kissed her on the forehead. Aurora might have taken my Anna from me, but at least Sharon was "mine"! "And you're still 'She-Ra' regardless of who gave birth to you."

## Chapter Two

"Mistress is perhaps troubled by something today," my sensual brunette haired slave girl Lynn breathed in a soft and sensual purr. Working the perfumed warmed oil into her mistress' smooth lightly tanned skin after her "intimate massage" had earlier soothed and "relaxed" her golden haired Empress. I thought once



again of Lorraine as I laid nude face down on the padded table before the rather briefly clad slave girl. What she might have "thought" had she seen what Lynn had just done to me with her slim talented fingers up "in there" between my thighs. The slave girl's "touch" having made me gasp and squirm with the pleasure of it! Such activities between a mistress and a slave were accepted here in the Empire of California as being nothing unusual. Lynn, like many highly trained pleasure slaves, being trained to give sexual pleasure to a woman as well as to a man. The gold collar locked snugly around her slim lovely throat marking her well as what she was. A woman trained in the erotic and sensual "arts". She was far "more" to me than just a slave girl too now.

"'Mistress' has no 'reason' to be," I lied back. Lynn's dark eyes glowing down into the beautiful sky-blue azure of mine. The collared delight well aware of the "truth" as her Empress now looked back up at the slave girl from over her shoulder. The brunette's slanted dark eyes met mine as she smiled knowingly. One has few secrets from one's slave. Such has gotten more than one unfaithful wife into considerable "trouble" here in Sarn and elsewhere! "Beware the wagging tongues of slave girls!" Yet not even Lynn knew the terrible "TRUTH" about me that I had concealed from everyone! The TRUTH that my now dead "mother" had left in a sealed letter for me, with orders that the letter was to be given to me only after she died! That I was actually the "illegitimate offspring" of a brief liaison between her husband and a Lorr Servitor! I had not even been born here on the Earth, but on the PLANET MARS!!! My mother being the lovely golden haired, emerald eyed Aurora, the Lorr's own ambassador now to Trelandar! The same woman who had taken my own daughter, Anna, and raised her as her own child, even to telling Lorraine there on Mars that I was just a "blood-thirsty barbarian" unfit to raise my own daughter!

"And a certain slave girl perhaps knows too much of her mistress' affairs," I then commented to that curvy bodied delight in her brief red silk shift as I sat up on the cushioned table. The faint scars scattered there on my body those of the professional fighting woman, one born by birth into the Caste of Warrioreses.

It was now late January, the year 519 A.W., or 2566 A. D. as my friend Lorraine would call it. Making it rather chilly here now in Sarn. The fire there in the fireplace a comfort as I then jumped down from the table and strolled over to the full length mirror, studying the reflection thus presented. The rich furnishings of the room leaving little doubt that it was the living quarters of a rich and powerful ruler. The fine silks, the furs, the comfortable furnishings all speaking of my own preferences.

I have been described by Lorraine and others as "perhaps the most beautiful woman who has ever lived". A tall well built and rather muscular blue eyed blonde standing 5'10, and going about 150. I now turned about before the mirror, studying myself for flaws. Noticing too that I had "put on a few pounds" and that it would once again be "diet and exercise" time for me! I have to be "careful" about such as there is a little "joke" that I always "hear" about the "great width" of the "royal behind" if I don't!

"Mistress is a very beautiful woman," Lynn observed with a smile as she stood there at my side. My pubes and armpits were both cleanly shaved as is commonly done among "civilized" women of all but the lowest of castes here in the 26th Century. Such "things" I understand date back to the time of Janet Rogers. To a society that is now more a myth and legend than anything else.

"Mistress would bring a high price in certain 'markets', wouldn't she?" I teased Lynn. There had once been a "offer" of three hundred gold crowns for me stripped naked and in chains made by the Emperor of Mexico. A certain "Prince" of the Nevadashad also made an "offer" for me, although not in monetary terms. He had wanted me for his wife. I had not desired such a "union". Now I wasn't so sure. My nights were "lonely". My bed cold and empty. There was a "yearning" in my body that Lynn's "talented" fingers couldn't ever satisfy. A need to be "held", caressed, To be "HIS" woman. Even Lorraine from the 20th Century, no beauty in the face and rather mannishly figured, yet had a husband!

"You should not think such thoughts, mistress!" Lynn gasped. Shocked that I, Darlanis Marden, Queen of Sarn, Empress of California, should even consider herself in such terms! Yet I wondered if Lynn understood that I often secretly wept with what could never "be". That my "Prince" would never want a "barren shell" of a woman like me. That when Lorraine had taken out my uterus last fall there aboard the awesome Starfire, she had also taken much more than just my ability to ever have any children! \* \* See "2565 A.D.!" for further explanation of this matter. (JBB)

"No doubt others have," I laughed in reply as Lynn nodded. I had seen the eyes of men as they had looked at me. Sensed the thoughts that passed through their minds. Often my attire was brief, quite provocative. Carefully designed to be just "that".

Much of my "power" over those I rule is based upon the fact that most men found me almost irresistible. That when they confronted me they had difficulty in keeping their thoughts under control. I exploited my subtle erotic sexuality, my regal aristocratic looks as others might so utilize a weapon. This is perhaps "why" only women have ever been successful in opposing me.

"You `worry' too much about Princess Tara, mistress," Lynn said, changing the subject. She knew a great deal about her mistress' affairs. I now feared perhaps too much. It is very easy to kidnap a slave girl. To force from her quivering lips with cruel tortures every last "secret" that her mistress possesses!

"I have good reason," I smiled in reply, fitting my beautiful golden "clips" over my nipples, and snapping them through the little golden "posts" that pierced my pinkish nipples. The historical basis of wearing such things now being hopelessly lost in time. \* The exposing of the "nipple" in my society being considered extremely erotic, and something done only by slave girls! There are different designs made, some being rather quite ornate. \* It was a cultural practice started in the early 21st Century. The women of that era often showing their breasts beneath sheer blouses and such, with the nipple concealed by such "jewelry". I might note here that the "Janet Rogers era" (2009-2045) was perhaps sexually "freer" than any in the history of Mankind. (JBB)

"You have Lorraine," Lynn smiled back. She was the greatest "Warrioress" of all time. The greatest fighting woman that ever lived perhaps too. Tall, hard, stern featured. Incredible with a sword. I felt towards her a "love" like one feels towards one's own mother. Her "dominance", her "age", appearance, causing such feelings to be aroused in one beautiful Empress of California. Yet in ways there was also still "distrust" between us.

"And my lovely Sharon," I now smiled back in reply as I then slipped on my "strap", that brief triangle of often colorful silk that a woman of the 26th Century wears underneath her clothing next to her body. My own being a royal blue in color. I sometimes wear the soft tanned leather ones that are now so popular. The sort that it is said that Lorraine "wears". (She doesn't!)\* \* This was another item of feminine apparel from the 21st Century. The attire of that era being brief and provocative. (JBB)

"Our Imperial Princess," Lynn smiled back. Lorraine's stepdaughter Sharon was blonde, beautiful. Just seventeen, but wise beyond her years. I had found her a considerable asset. Sharon had once nicknamed me "She-Ra" after a 20th Century cartoon character of whom I reminded her of in a way due to my gold mesh halter and matching brief skirt of the same material that I often wear. She-Ra being some sort of a magical "super-woman" who went around "righting wrongs" and fighting "evil" wherever she found it. I had found it "wise" to do much the same thing now myself.

"The best thing that ever happened to me," I smiled back. Sharon and I were now very close. "Closer" than most mothers and daughters ever get. Perhaps because with me our relationship was based upon

something different. We had endured much together. Faced death together. "Understood" each other like few ever do.

"My mistress truly looks like the Queen she is," Lynnsaid to me as I checked myself in the mirror. The beautiful goldmesh setting off the light tan of my skin. The halter and brief skirt designed to provoke, to draw attention to me. The halter lifting my breasts a bit, making me "jut " out a touch. The skirt short enough that when I sat those before me might see a distance beneath it. Such tends to keep men "off balance". Makes them less able to think of anything but my sexual desirability as a woman. I sit just high enough on the throne before them that as they kneel before me they must look "up" at me, look at my legs, look at my body. I will recross my legs, "tease" them a bit. Such is one of the "methods" that I use to keep my opponents off balance.

I wore matching golden high heeled boots, heavy soled. Such raises me another four inches. Makes me tower over most people I meet. A blue silk lined cape, trimmed with white fur, fell to my knees. Gold rings in my pierced earlobes fitted with long dangles so that they would be visible beneath my golden hair. Diamond rings on my fingers, a diamond encrusted golden tiara with the symbol of the Imperial Tarl (a great eagle-like bird) marking me as Empress of Imperial California here in the Sixth Century.\* \* Darlanis is referring to time here in her own era as "dating" from the war between Earth and Mars, which occurred in 2047 A.D. In the time of Janet Rogers "dating" was done using the year 2011 as the "base", this being the establishment of the "Federation".

"Mistress is going to have to start watching her weight," I told the slave girl, the waist band of the skirt getting a touch tight. The swell of my buttocks beneath it leaving little doubt that I was putting on weight back there too. Too much rich food, too little exercise, I mused to myself with a grim smile. Time for diet, daily work-outs again. Time to get back into "fighting trim". Time to do some running, some work-outs with my weights. Daily fencing matches with the best swordsmen of the Empire. I then drew my ornate diamond encrusted harness about my waist, the sword and the dagger swinging there in the tooled scabbards. The day might soon come when I needed all my fighting abilities. What I needed was a fencing partner who could give me a "fight". Then I could "hone" my skills to the limits of my own abilities. Someone like Lorraine, whose skills exceeded my own to a degree.

"As mistress wishes," Lynns smiled back in reply, a "crafty" slave like her always agreeing with whatever I happened to say. I glanced down at my nails, which had been painted a lovely shade of gold. Glanced again at the mirror, where the hem of my skirt came to the middle of my thighs. I was most definitely "She-Ra"!

"Her Imperial Majesty, Darlanis Marden, Queen of Sarn! Benevolent Empress of the Imperial Commonwealth of California!" the bull like Royal Caller "called out" as I entered the brilliantly lit throne room on the arm of my escort. The richly clad Lords and Ladies of the Empire bowing as I seated myself on the cushioned golden throne, my cape half drawn about me against the damp chill the fireplaces could not dispel. Behind me mounted there on the wall the golden Imperial Tarl of the mighty Empire of California looked down upon the scene from its unseeing ruby eyes that flashed red fire there in the light of the myriad oil lamps. Orgon was now semi-independent, but still "loyal" to me despite the best efforts by Sanda Talen's "revolutionaries" to "do" in Orgon what they had successfully "done" there in Trelandar. They had been "bested" by a very capable and competent young Princess! Sharon having during my time in Dularn assured the people of that country that they would be "better off" with me than anyone else! The "contest" had been "close", but Talen's forces had lost the election held during my stay in Dularn, with Sharon being elected their own official representative much to her surprise and mine! The country now having its own "Queen", my lovely young Sharon!!!

"Let those who have need of her royal majesty's `mercy' step forward!" the man now bellowed out at

the top of his lungs. It takes practice to keep a straight face at times. The pomp and ceremony that surrounds me can be funny at times if you have any sense of humor at all. I try not to take myself too seriously!

One time I slipped and half fell before everyone, bruising my hip on my throne and twisting my back as I did so. The only sound a sort of hushed "Oh!" as I scrambled back on to my throne. On the other hand there are a number of jokes made about me, some rather risqué, which I enjoy, although I never let on that I do! Such as the "joke" mentioned earlier about the width of my hips!

ImperialCalifornia is a "democracy" with a "constitutional" monarch. There is a popular "Assembly" whose members are selected by popular ballot and a "Senate" similar to the "House of Lords" of 20th Century Britain. Both act as a check on the other. I then have the power to repeal any law that I find not in the interest of the People of California. The political system is based upon the writings of the famous and fantastic Janet Rogers, the Leaderess of the World Federation of the 21st Century as modified by historical experience over the centuries ever since.\* \* I found it "wise" to make certain "compromises" here in things rather than have the "bloody" revolution that Trelandar had then.

My seventh case was an interesting one. A Warriress, now widowed, had given her small son to another couple to raise while she served her country. Now that peace existed (at least for the time being) between Dularn and California, she had returned to take back the child she had left in the care of the other couple. However, the couple, childless, now refused to give up the boy, who apparently wished to stay with the couple instead of going back to his mother, whom he had not seen for several years now.\* \* I was myself rather "emotionally involved" here in this case.

As the couple and the Warriress both testified there before me, my lovely teenage foster daughter Sharon entered the throne room from a side entrance. The newly seventeen blonde haired Imperial Princess of California receiving as usual considerable attention from the young men now present there in the room as they nudged each other. Sharon being the regal strikingly lovely sort of a girl that attracts the handsome young men wherever she goes.

"Lorraine just landed and she wishes to see you as soon as possible," Sharon whispered into my ear. Her rich woolen tunic and navy blue skin-tight hose fitted her well, the hem of the tunic just high enough to reveal the provocative curves of the bottoms of her buttocks. Sharon being the sort that likes to "tease" the young men a bit, much to her stepmother's annoyance. As you might guess, my opinion of such things is not the same as Lorraine's. I know Sharon. I trust her to do "the right thing".

"No doubt she objected to your hose being too tight and your tunic being too short," I smiled back, Sharon smiling, nodding as everyone else looked on. I liked her jaunty cap with its feather, the boots she wore, the long slim dagger there at her hip. I was very delighted with the sort of a girl she had turned out to be. She will be a "Queen" in another year, with a country of her own. The people of Orgon "voted" for her, as those of Trelandar "voted" for Lorraine. I don't think Lady Sanda Talen was too delighted! She had no doubt hoped that things would be otherwise.

"If Lorraine had her way she'd have you dressing me like a Priestess," Sharon smiled in reply as she stood there at my side. They wear long gowns falling to their ankles, and are considered "sexless", having renounced the "pleasures of the flesh" for Lys.

"Let me deal with this case and then we'll go see her," I said, wishing to resolve this matter of the Warriress mother and her son. The boy now having little wish to go back to her. I had read about the matter in the papers. Offered to resolve it if both parties would agree to my decision. I wondered what my friend Lorraine would have decided. I had "made up" my mind now.

"Let the boy come to me," I said to the couple. I saw his mother's face as the other woman then released him to come to me. I knew much of her own situation, her poverty, her own career as a member of the Armed Forces of the Empire of California. She had lost her husband in battle. Now it seemed her son too would be taken away from her. Solely because another had spoiled him!

"And what is your name?" I asked the boy, holding him in my lap, the boy about five or six. Awed by being held by his Queen.

"Timothy, your majesty," he breathed, looking up at me. There was an awed hush in the throne room. The case had made all the papers. The consensus had been that the couple was better suited to raise the boy than the widowed mother, who had not even seen the boy for several years. The couple was well to do, the mother only a poor widow who would have a hard time raising him.

"And you wish to stay with the Coultons?" I asked him. That being the name of the couple, the husband a well to do Merchant.

"They nice, have lots of good things," the boy admitted.

"And your mother?" I then challenged him back, curious.

"Please, your majesty, let me withdraw my plea," the boy's mother suddenly interrupted. "Let him stay with the Coultons."

"Because they can do more for him than you can?" I asked. I saw the tears there in the woman's dark eyes as she nodded. My decision was made for me. She had given much for her country. I felt it due time that her country did something for her in turn!

### Chapter Three

"You gave that woman a hundred gold crowns!" Sharon gasped as the sobbing mother carried off her son in her arms. She had served her country, putting her life "on the line" while others had profited from the war. I saw no reason why she should suffer any further. Now she would be able to give him what she wanted.\* \* A direct conversion of dollars to "crowns" is impossible due to the differences in purchasing power and the fact that many items in the 26th Century we would consider "necessary" did not exist. We may assume, however, that a hundred crowns was a good amount, probably being somewhere between fifty and seventy thousand dollars in its actual purchasing power if not even more here. (JBB)

"Isn't that what 'She-Ra' would do?" I challenged Sharon in reply. Telling those waiting to see me that I would see them all in a private audience later on in the afternoon. I would have an early lunch with Queen Lorraine, and find out what was so important she had felt it necessary to come flying up from Trella to see me now in her beloved black Beechcraft Bonanza, "Black Lady"! The only surviving airplane in the 26th Century as she calls it!

"Bye! It's 'good' to see you again!" I told that tall slender waspish brunette as she got up off the sofa to greet me, extending my hands out to hers in a warm joint clasp of friendship. The sword at her hip the same one I once gave her long ago. The same blade that has taken the lives of a dozen enemies.

"I could say the same in turn," Lorraine laughed back, her dark eyes glowing into mine. She was dressed in a black silk dress with leather trappings. A broad brimmed hat and veil there on the table. Her stylish leather jacket flung over the end of the sofa a reminder of the time of year. The silver chain riveted securely about her slender throat marked her as a married woman of less than three years. Such is "cultural" in our society.\* \* It is a practice I believe that dates back to the latter half of the 21st Century according to what information I've been able to obtain from historians of the Teacher caste. During that time when the survivors reverted back to a savage cruel barbarism that had not been seen since the Stone Age, it was a common practice to mark one's woman as a "sign of possession". It is another example of the cultural customs that have come down to us over the centuries since The War between Earth and Mars back in 2047 A.D.

"Darlanis gave a woman a hundred crowns just so she could raise her son!" Sharon now interrupted, telling her all about it!

"It was 'nothing'," I said when Sharon got finished telling her stepmother the tale. I felt it the only proper thing I could do. The only decision that Sharon's "She-Ra" could have made! I did not believe that there was another choice I could have then.

"It makes me proud to have you as a friend," Lorraine said. Sharon there at my side, her arm around me, proud of her Empress. I try very hard to live up to her high opinion of me as a person. To set an "example" for her to "follow" when she grows up to be the Queen of Orgon. I will, of course, "be there" to help her.

"We have had our times," I smiled back, remembering much. On the sofa behind her was a package wrapped in leather. One that would eventually involve me in some incredible adventures!\* \* I suppose that is the best term for what happened to me. Lorraine says it was a typical "dumb blonde" action on my own part!

"Colder than it was back in my own time," Lorraine smiled to me as we shared an early lunch together. I hoped she liked the salad. I had given orders to the palace cooks not to "tempt" their now overweight Empress if they knew what was good for them! I didn't need to hear any more of those "jokes" about my behind! Or the "fact" that I was now more than a "meter" around my hips!\* \* As I stand 5'10", I naturally do have "measurements" in proportion to my height. My usual "measurements" are around 38-27-39.

"The after effects of The War five centuries ago," I smiled. The Ice Cap is now retreating back to its former location back in Lorraine's time. The brief Ice Age of the middle 21st Century dropped the temperatures over the entire world to levels not seen for the last twelve thousand years! It is said that it even snowed in many parts of Mexico, although that is hard to believe!

"Princess Tara is attempting to start a new war between the Empire and Dularn," Lorraine suddenly announced, handing me the package that she had brought with her from Trella near five hundred miles to the south. The package being surprisingly heavy!

"We found this on a pirate schooner that was unlucky enough to run afoul of the Squala while on a training cruise," Lorraine smiled, leaving much unsaid. The Squala being a big three masted schooner, Lorraine's own personal flagship as Queen of Trelandar. Lorraine pouring herself a glass of wine, sipping at it as Sharon nibbled at her "rabbit" food, which she had dubbed our lunch as! Lynn kneeling there on a cushion at my side, ready to serve as needed. Her knees were now pressed tightly together, as was proper being that she was in the company of free women. With men of course they would be spread wide apart, thus "hinting" at the "delights" there underneath. The crotches of slave girls are unshaved.

Usually kept uncovered so that a man needs only to reach up under the attire to "touch".Lynnwas intensely "female" too.

"What is it?" I asked, undoing the leather wrappings. The package inside quite heavy for its size. Noticing then that it was made of two sheets of lead forming a sandwich around some papers.It being obviously made to be thrown overboard in case of capture. Apparently the pirate captain had "forgotten" to do so!

"Instructions and orders,"Lorraineanswered, smiling as I saw that the writing was in a language completely unfamiliar to me. One so different from those I was familiar with that I could do little to translate it. Yet, I felt that sometime I had seen writing like this! Long, long ago, when I was but a little girl! Back when I had been tutored in my studies back there in Arsana.

"The language is `Latin',"Lorrainesaid to me. "I had it translated in Trella by some Scribes there at the University." The Queen of Trelandar then giving me a written translation of what had been written in the orders. A grim smile now curving her thin lips as Sharon and I then read what the orders had been!

"These are instructions to carry out pirate raids against both Dularn and the Empire!" I breathed. The instructions went on to state that such raids were to be carried out while flying the flag of the opposing nation. Thus making it appear that they were actually privateers now operating under letters of marquee!

"And there are also orders that `Imperial ships' are to attack the Mexican coastline,"Lorraineadded as a cold chill went down my spine.Taracould involve us all in a war that would be like something out of the history books. Against the combined forces of Dularn and the Mexican Empire we would be forced into a war that would take thousands and thousands of Californian lives! Cause so much death and destruction that it would take years to recover from it! Perhaps cause the dismemberment of the Empire!

"We have to STOP them!"Sharonbreathed, glancing over atLorraineas she sat there, then at me. I wondered how wecould? I sawLynnwatching us, her dark eyes glowing into mine as she knelt there on a cushion a few feet away, waiting to be of service if so needed. I wondered too if her lunch would be "tastier" thanmine? When we were alone I now often allowed her to sit at the table with me, although I was careful not to let anyone see her sitting there as it would have caused considerable "comment" among "certain people" about an Empress and her personal slave!

"We three are flying to Arsana as soon as you two can find something warmer to wear,"Lorrainesaid to me. I wondered if it would do any good to present our evidence to the Queen of Dularn. Maris Jord, the new young Queen of Dularn, had little "love" for either one of us. I had refused her most recent "suggestion" of allowing the people in the "disputed territories" north of Orgon to vote on the issue. And the Emperor of Mexico was yet the very same man who had once "offered" three hundred gold crowns for me stripped naked and in close chains kneeling there at his feet!

"How do we know thatTara's involved?"Sharonthen asked me.

"See that `T' there?"Lorrainepointed with a finger. I recognized her mark. I have seen it enough times before to know.Tarahad been my Warlady for a number of years. I knew her hand.

"There's no doubtsabout it,Sharon," I said to her.Sharon's eyes were like deep azure pools as they looked into mine. I nodded. There was no doubt that Princess Tara was behind all of this! That she had given these orders. Orders that would plunge all of westernNorth Americainto a war that no one could win! I had little doubt there she planned to be there to "pick up the pieces" after everything was over. AndTaramight just succeed!!!

"There's got'ta be something that we can do," Sharon said. Glancing first at me, and then over at her awesome stepmother. Lorraine's "solutions" to problems often involve military force. She had a factory manufacturing compound bows, such being permitted under The Edict that limited us to mechanically powered arms. The bows were of a new design, somewhat superior even to my own with a "shelf" that allowed the use of a shorter, lighter arrow. Lorraine has a magnificent mind, better than any other I know of!

"A quick strike against Tara," Lorraine quickly suggested. "We could land a thousand men off our ships, make an attack from the air with Black Lady. We might just get lucky and get Tara."

"That would endanger the Princess of Talon," I pointed out. Tara was allied with Talon, and with the Empire of Mexico too. I had heard rumors that she was seeking an alliance with the Nevadas. Offering them modern weapons in return for their alliance. Giving the Empire a new and dangerous enemy there to the east. I did not rest easy at night worrying about what could now happen!

"You fought a war with Talon about twelve years ago, didn't you?" Lorraine said to me, her dark eyes meeting mine. I remembered it all too well still. It had been a crushing defeat for me. For the Empire. The giant birds had been a terrible foe. Not because the archery of their riders was that "good", but because they could soar over our heads and fire down upon us and we could do nothing back in return. Eventually I had withdrawn back into Trelandar. Signed a peace treaty with the Queen of Talon. Hatred was still "strong" on both sides even after twelve years. There were too many widows, widowers, children without parents. It had been an "unpopular" war here too in California. One that had turned many of my people against me. Much like my later war had been with Dularn over the territories to the north of Oregon.

"I doubt very that Queen Dala Dai will be happy to see me," I smiled back. My Legions had taken a heavy toll of her people. I had no doubts that what had been done then twelve years ago would still yet be vivid in the memories of many there in Talon.

"I flew Princess Gayle over into Talon yesterday," Lorraine smiled back in reply. Trelandar shared parts of its eastern border with Talon. "Asked her to 'explain' matters to Queen Dala."

"I also sent Jon with the Squala and my other two schooners to patrol off the west coast of Mexico with instructions to inform the Mexican government of the situation," Lorraine added with a smile before I could utter any comment in reply. I knew that Lorraine had now perfected flamethrowers along with her firebombs of a jellied liquid. Her ships were for the time being almost invincible. All three were also painted with the features of the gigantic mutated shark to help "demoralize" possible foes.

"You should have asked Darlanis first," Sharon commented. I was Lorraine's "Commander in Chief" under the Imperial Constitution. She had exceeded her own authority by doing what she had. On the other hand she was my Prime Minister and "Warlady", the actual commander of the armed forces of the Empire of California.

"Why?" Lorraine challenged her back. I smiled to myself. Lorraine tends to "take charge" whenever she gets the chance. I suspect that she also considers me something of a "dumb blonde". That I am "good for" little more than sitting on a golden throne and "looking beautiful". I love her, but yet I wish she thought better of me. I am not as "incompetent" as she makes me appear! \* \* One wonders a bit here considering what Darlanis later did!

"Aw--, Hell, she is still your Empress," Sharon protested.



"I do 'trust' your stepmother," I interjected quickly before things "got out of hand". Lorraine can be very touchy at times.

"And while neither Darlanis or I would be welcome in Dularn, I do think that you, Sharon, would be considered 'acceptable' by the new Queen of Dularn," Lorraine replied, smiling at Sharon as she picked at the salad there before her. I suspected that she would have preferred something else, but I hated to sit there with only a salad there in front of me and watch her eating something "fattening" and "tasty" that I couldn't now enjoy too!

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"Arsana," I said, the Dularnian capital city now visible there in the distance as we flew beneath the dark snowclouds. The weak watery sun did little to warm things. The cabin heater on full blast. Lorraine does not like it cold. Sharon peering over my shoulder there in the plane's back seat behind me as I then eased the throttle back and pushed the wheel forward a bit. I enjoyed flying, feeling the sense that I was in "command" of the airplane. That it does what I wanted to do. I spent much of my last days with my dying mother there in the air, flying over parts of Dularn. She died in my arms at sixteen thousand feet. \* \* I still think of Tulis as my "mother" although she was not of course. "Motherhood" to me is not a matter of "genetics", but of "love". I still remember snuggling up to Tulis as a little girl. The "warmth" of her body against mine, the softness of her skin.

"I thought it would be bigger than that," Sharon observed. Arsana being about the size of Porlan, smaller than such capitals as Sarn and Trella. The population is perhaps thirty thousand.

"Dularnians do not like big cities," I smiled back. My people are much like those who settled America many centuries ago. Our traditions are similar in many respects. We follow the teachings of Janet Rogers, and read the writings of the Fathers of the American Revolution. We consider ourselves "Americans". Dularnian tradition and culture tends to look far back into history. In school Dularnian children are taught about Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, and the amazing fantastic Janet Rogers of the 21st Century. Somehow the teachers make it all "fit" together!

"Like the pioneers who settled the United States," Lorraine added, taking the words out of my mouth. There are a number of cultural similarities. Both societies believed in "doing for yourself". Both societies also distrusted "governments". I do take considerable pride in the fact that I am a "Dularnian". We still have a tradition of "freedom" unknown in the Empire to the south. Dularnian culture is superior to that of California in its traditions of "independence", of "standing up for yourself".

"Looks 'cold'," Sharon observed, there being snow on the ground this far north this time of the year. The world is colder than it was back in the 20th Century. The after-effects of The War of 2047 A.D. The war fought between Mankind and the Lorr.

"A frigid wasteland," Lorraine smiled, "teasing" me a bit.

"It's not that bad!" I protested, remembering my childhood. The winter sports, the snowmen, the snowball fights, all the fun! Forcing back out of my mind the thought that I was illegitimate! That I was actually the child of a woman born on another world!

## Chapter Four

"I'm not quite sure about the meaning of all of this," Queen Maris Jord of Dularn answered. Our eyes meeting over the papers there in the lead sheathing that I had just set down on the lovely polished dark oak table there before her. Lorraine standing quietly with Sharon there at my side. Golden haired Maris' new husband, my gross foster brother Darl, wisely keeping his own distance from us all as he now stood there by the crackling blazing fireplace like some bloated boar in dark wool. I have never forgiven him for what he did to me over thirty years ago. I was young and innocent then, only a girl of fifteen. I still remembered the rape as vividly as if it had been only the day before. The three young men, all masked, dragging me into a dark alley by surprise. Throwing me down there on the hard stone, tearing at my clothing and then striking me as I screamed with terror! A filthy rag forced into my mouth as my hose were yanked down over my hips to bare my body. Two of them holding me while the third then cruelly raped me there among the garbage, the refuse. The pain, the "hurt", the HORROR as I then recognized his birthmark!

"Princess Tara wishes to start up the warfare between our countries again," I answered, hoping that Lorraine would keep her mouth shut for once. There was "bad blood" between her and Maris of Dularn. Once the Queen had been a slave of Lorraine's foster daughter Mara. Lorraine had threatened to sell the blonde beauty on the basis that she was "too old" for the girl. With the help of Mara and the late Carl Talen, who had been her "lover", Maris had fled on board a little sailing yacht all the way back to Dularn. The story is quite involved, and I am doubtful if either Lorraine or Maris has been completely truthful about the matter!

"You will find the translation accurate," Lorraine added, her hand on the hilt of her sword. The tone of her voice left no doubt too that she considered Maris just another "dumb blonde"! Lorraine tends to "resent" women more beautiful than herself. I know she will deny this, but I have ample "proof" for my beliefs!

"I can verify that for myself," the young Queen snapped, her eyes like emerald jewels burning hotly into Lorraine's dark eyes. Like so many of the Warriress caste, Maris was a "touchy" woman.

"I don't want to see another war between our countries," I answered, reaching out, touching the golden haired Queen's hand as she glanced up at me. It would have been best, I knew, meeting those green eyes with my own, had Lorraine not come with us.

"Such matters are not something I can always control," she answered, glancing at Lorraine. I wondered how much she knew. I had seen the framework of another "North" class schooner under construction there in the shipyard as we flew over the harbor. I worried about that too. Maris was a fighter much like Lorraine! An able and competent Warriress said to be an excellent naval commander. A Dularnian "Nelson", some had called her, much to my Warlady's annoyance, there being "bad blood" between the two now!

"We do not view Princess Tara in quite the same light as you two do," my foster brother Darl "commented" from beside the fireplace. I noticed that it was now snowing outside, wet and heavy. I didn't think we'd be flying back to Porlan today if it kept up. Lorraine had warned me about such. About what could happen if the wings "iced up"! Maris would have to put up with our company for the night! I wished once again that Lorraine was elsewhere!

"She was the Warlady who murdered hundreds of innocents!" Maris told him in reply. Apparently she knew something of Tara!

"And who gave her the orders to do so?" my brother snapped. I had been Tara's "Commander in Chief". The responsibility mine. For an instant our eyes met. I saw "fear" in his. I was not the little "helpless" teenager now that I had been thirty years ago!

"We didn't do so great, did we?" Sharon smiled as we were shown a room for the night. Lorraine nodding, giving me a smile. I felt like saying we'd have done a lot better without Lorraine, but dared not speak such words with my Warlady standing there! I do not fear her, but I am no mental match for her in an argument.

"I think a bright young lady like you should be able to make friends with Maris given a month or so to work on her," Lorraine smiled back in reply. I was glad that Lorraine was "on my side". I'd hate to have HER as an enemy! Sharon nodding, smiling back. Lorraine may be extremely intelligent, knowledgeable, but she is also not the "easiest" person in the world to get along with! I sometimes have to bite my lip just to keep "control" around her!

"Just as long as Maris doesn't get the idea she's a spy," I warned, worried a bit about what Lorraine planned to "do" with Sharon. Lorraine laughing softly to herself at my words as she unbuckled her harness, hanging her weapons on a hook there on the wall above the bed. The room furnished in a style that brought back memories of my childhood. The animal heads on the walls were a touch I found pleasing if somewhat unfeminine by Californian standards. Such is common in Dularnian homes. Pride is taken in such activities. Both sexes hunt, and fight in battle. That is perhaps why Dularn has never been "conquered" by anyone.

"Military 'secrets' with a Twelfth Century technology?" my Warlady laughed to herself in reply as she stirred up the fire there in the fireplace. "I'd worry a lot more about Maris picking Sharon's brains." I supposed now that was just possible too. Sharon was after all a girl of the 20th Century, with knowledge and training that was hardly known here now in the 26th Century. Much of the "knowledge" of the past was lost over the centuries.

"They have compound bows and those weren't invented until the 1960's," Sharon pointed out, coming to the defense of Dularn!

"And the keel design of their 'North' class schooner is also quite 'modern'," I pointed out with a smile. Lorraine nodding, a smile now curving her thin lips. We had indeed made our "point"!

"You have a lovely country, but the winters are too cold," I heard Lorraine say as Queen Maris wished us a farewell early the next morning, Sharon there at her side. The sun shining through the clouds, reflecting off the pure whiteness of the newly fallen snow. I would have liked to have stayed for a while, but "duty called" and our final destination was far to the south, there in the mysterious land of Talon nestled there in the mountains between Trelandar and the territory claimed by the nomadic Nevadas.

"A matter of taste," Queen Maris smiled back. I had gotten along with her fairly well last year before the death of my mother, the late Queen of Dularn. \*Lorraine can be "nasty" at times without sometimes realizing it. She does have her own "flaws". Her innate dominant nature makes her a natural leader of people, but on the other hand she tends to be as stubborn as a bulldog! \* Yes, I do know my real mother is Aurora, but I did think of Tulis as being my "mother" even after getting the letter she wrote before her death stating that I was "Aurora's"! Tulis did raise me. She was still the woman who nursed me at her own breast, who soothed away my childish fears when there was a thunderstorm.

"Well, let's hope that this will start," Lorraine smiled, turning on the ignition key and the pre-heaters. The plane rocking a bit on its floats there in the bay before the Royal Palace of Dularn. "It's a long walk back

from here," she laughed softly as she pushed the starter button. The engine starting up with a roar, making Maris and everyone leap back in surprise a bit. I had taken Maris up in the plane a couple times the year before with Tulis. We had both found the experience quite enjoyable.

"I'm glad things turned out the way that they did," Lorraine said to me with a smile as she flew while I relaxed there beside her. My attire, as she had said, making her think of skiers that she had seen back in the 20th Century. The fur lined leather jacket and my wool hose no doubt similar to 20th Century attire. I had worn a dark blue wool tunic falling to just below my hips.

"We would have done better if you hadn't been along," I pointed out in all honesty. Lorraine's being there had been uncomfortable for Maris. Making her more "hostile" than otherwise. I always feel uneasy criticizing Lorraine as she is more intelligent than me and I'm really no match for her in any verbal duel!

"I'm not referring to that," Lorraine smiled back, "But to what would have happened had Sharon and I made it to Dularn with your 'sister' last year." I nodded, smiled. The thought had already occurred to me more than once. I suspected that I would have lost my Empire, my life before things were finally over. I had no delusions of what it would have been like. Lorraine would have exploited the "Free Trelandar" movement for everything it was worth. Sent against me a fleet of ships armed with flamethrowers, firebombs. Thousands would have died in a terrible war before my own death finally ended it! Perhaps even at the point of her sword as I so killed the lovely Queen Paula of Trelandar! \* \* I am not quite a "match" for Lorraine with swords, although I am a better archer than she is. I have no doubt that she would have killed me in a sword duel unless I was extremely "lucky". I doubt that Aurora would have "saved" me as she paid little actual attention to my "activities" as such back then, being more "involved" in certain "political" matters there on Mars and the upbringing of her granddaughter, my own lovely blondish Anna!

"I read your first manuscript," I smiled. I had made a few footnotes there in the margins. A few comments of my own. There had obviously been a time when she would have gladly killed me!

"Of course An'na might have come and saved you," she smiled. I nodded, turned my face away so that she might not see my look. It still hurt that Anna had "deserted" me in the way she had. I "understood" in a rational sense, but it still hurt emotionally.

"And you even hated me without even knowing anything about me," I pointed out in reply, not meeting her eyes. That was true. I had read her book. She had been truthful, honest about her feelings back then towards me. I recalled her statement about what she would have done had she possessed the hunting rifle she had owned back in the 20th Century and how easy it would have been to have killed me there on Sarnian Lady from the woods!

"And Sharon even hated you worse than I did," she smiled in turn, reaching out, touching my hand. I remembered Sharon standing there on the Ronda's quarterdeck, a crossbow in her hands, aimed directly at my heart! The hate burning there in her eyes.

"All proof of how easy it is to hate others when you don't know anything about them," Lorraine smiled back as she checked the plane's instruments there before her. Navigating by that device An'na installed that always showed exactly where we were! I could see the land there to port, hazy in the distance, the sea there far below like a grayish platter covered with fine ripples. The scattered clouds above us gray and dark for the most part.

"Sarn," I said, the city beautiful in the last twilight. It had been a long flight. Lorraine had decided not to stop in Orgon, but fly on. I was hungry, the sandwich I had eaten having served only to whet my appetite

for something more. I enjoy such pleasures. Perhaps too much for my own good. I envy those like Lorraine who don't have to ever worry about such things as "watching their weight". Lorraine easing out the throttle, pushing the wheel forward a bit as we now descended towards the bay.

"And Talon tomorrow," Lorraine smiled in reply. I nodded. I wondered if it might not be wise for me to stay home. I was not likely to be very "popular" with Talon's Queen or her people!

"Lynn is gone, your majesty!" my major domo told me there at my palace as soon as we landed. "We've searched the entire city, but she is nowhere to be found!" she exclaimed. I saw Lorraine's eyes meet mine. Saw her nod, a grim smile on her thin lips. Princess Tara had struck again! I wondered how much Lynn knew?

"But how?" I protested. Security was tight. I had taken every precaution that I could. Not that it ever seemed to do any good. Tara came and went like a ghost. Nothing I did "worked"!

"Tara has a first rate mind as 'good' as Janet Rogers' combined with a personality like the 'Marquis de Sade'," Lorraine smiled back after I dismissed the woman and the warrioresses with her. Even with an entire Legion now in the city Tara still came and went as if she was still my Warlady, still head of the Senate as she had been before we had fought that duel the summer before!

"But how does she do it?" I protested. I had men, women, an army, a powerful Empire. Yet Tara made me look like a simpleton!

"I believe that she controls the criminal 'underground'," my Warlady smiled back. "All 'evil' here in your world is Tara's." \* \* Lorraine is probably referring here to the claim she makes that Princess Tara is in reality "The Anti-Lys", the enemy of "GOOD".

"She's just a woman, an evil woman, but still a woman!" I snapped back. I don't put any stock in Lorraine's "supernatural" beliefs about Tara. She is simply an evil woman, nothing more! On the other hand I sometimes "wonder" just a bit now about her!

"She also has your slave girl, whose tongue will soon wag," Lorraine pointed out. Tara was a true mistress of sadism. She could extract "information" out of a stone, it was said of her! I knew something of Tara's "methods" of "extracting" information!

"Which means she knows everything we do," I answered her. I was thankful she didn't know about Aurora and me. Tara would have loved to have "exploited" that little bit of "information"!

"We do have Black Lady," Lorraine smiled back. We could travel far faster than she could. At least we still had that advantage over "The Princess of Darkness" as Lorraine calls her!

"Poor Lynn," I muttered to myself, pitying the slave girl. Knowing what Tara would "do" to her even if she did "co-operate"! \*\*\*\*\*

Lynn knelt on a hard wooden deck, her teeth chattering with cold, salty tears trickling down her burning cheeks as she sobbed in terror. The cold icy eyes of a beautiful dark haired woman burning now into hers. The slave girl stripped, shackled, her naked body now a cruel mass of welts. Tara had whipped her with a sadistic cruelty that had even revolted many of her own crew! The cruel Princess laughing as the slave girl pleaded for mercy!

"Darlanis' little 'plaything'," Tara laughed, pushing up the girl's chin with her coiled whip. "Her little

`pussy-licker'!" A bit of cold spray coming over the side in the darkness making the Bajan curse as it then splattered her fine silken dress, wetting the leather of her jacket and her near knee high boots. A gentle creaking of the rigging speaking of the ship's progress.

"Darlanis never made me do `that'," Lynn breathed foolishly, coming to my defense, suddenly aware as she spoke that her comment might have been perhaps unwise considering "what" Tarawas!

"Then it is due time that you learned." Taralaughed back!

\*\*\*\*\*

I tossed restlessly in my bed, unable to get to sleep, my weapons as usual slung over the bedpost near to hand. Such is a wise precaution in a social order where assassination is common. I thought of Lynn, of the evil of Princess Tara, who Lorraine had said was "THE PRINCESS OF DARKNESS", the "Anti-Lys" of legend the Priestesses tell us will someday come to fight with Lys herself. There is a great deal of "mumbo-jumbo" in their teachings, a lot of things that you can "read" whatever way you happen to believe.

Suddenly there was a noise at one of my windows, the dark figure of someone slipping into the room, a woman clad in black, some sort of weapon held there in her hands as she now advanced!! The dim glow from the fireplace lighting up her face as I saw she was one of my own guardswomen. A member of my own Royal Guard!!!

"DIE!" she hissed in low tones, swinging up her weapon, a small hand crossbow of the sort used for "target shooting", the bolt no doubt poisoned so that the least flesh wound would be fatal. Such is against the "Codes", but is sometimes done anyway!

The bolt slapped harmlessly into my pillow as I suddenly swung it up. I am of the Warriresses. My reactions are swift!

Seeing that she had "failed" with her crossbow, she whipped out her dagger and charged me just as I drew my own from its ornate sheath! Swinging up the pillow to catch her downswing as I drove up with my own weapon, driving it hilt deep into her body! A dozen inches of cold steel driving deep up into her own vitals!

## Chapter Five

"Who `paid' you to do this?" I hissed, holding the bleeding, gasping, dying woman in my arms. "Who paid you to kill me?" The thrust had been "fatal". I am of the Warriresses. We are also taught about such things. How to kill swiftly. I supposed that I should have struck her somewhere else, but at the time I "had" as I later told my friend Lorraine, "been in somewhat of a hurry"!

"My husband, my children died in your `revolution'," she gasped, clutching herself, the blood now running from her mouth. "Damn you for the bitch you.....," she gasped out, dying then! Slumping down in my arms, her lifeless eyes staring into my own!! Accusing eyes that seemed to yet burn into mine with a hot hate! Her blood soaking into my bedding, staining my lovely bedspread!!

"You lead an `exciting life'," Lorraine said to me, looking somewhat "disheveled" from having been awake from a sound sleep. The awesome Warlady of the Empire regarding the assassin's body still lying there on the bed where I had left it. The covers, the sheets now all soaking wet with her blood. Some still on me. The crossbow bolt had been, as I had suspected, well poisoned. I supposed she had "nursed" her "hatred" until it finally took over her very mind. Drove her to attempt to kill me in "revenge" for what had happened there when Sanda's revolution had overthrown an old dying "corrupt" order. As her Queen I had been her "target". I wondered for a moment why she had gone after me instead of say Lorraine or the Lady Sanda Talen, both who had been much more responsible than me for the revolution that had cost her so much! At least she hadn't been a `agent' of Princess Tara as I thought!

"She said she wanted me dead because of the `revolution'," I told Lorraine. There had been those who had "suffered" because of it. I wondered why she came after me instead of say Sanda?

"You're `lucky'," she smiled, holding the poisoned bolt.

"Skill, not `luck'," I smiled back, remembering it all.

"You're lucky you're a light sleeper," Lorraine smiled back.

"I'm not going to be exactly too `popular' here in Talon," I pointed out as Black Lady crossed the border between Talon and Trelandar at an attitude of about thirteen thousand feet there in the early afternoon. The people of Talon had good reason to hate me for what I had done, or had allowed Princess Tara as my Warlady to do to them. Tara having used much the same "tactics" that she had used there in Trelandar and later on against Dularn too. "Tactics" that had later on "cost" me more than what they gained! I had been too "willing" back then to do whatever Tara asked too! Willing to "look the other way" in my burning lust for conquest. I fear I am a sinner who will no doubt be judged harshly by Lys.

"About like me in Dularn with Maris," Lorraine smiled back. I suspected however that the hostility would be considerably worse. The people of Talon had extremely good reason to hate me! Tara had used a "scorched earth" policy that had horrified people! Spreading death and destruction wherever our troops passed! Even to killing the cats and dogs so that nothing was left alive!

"What puzzles me is why Talon allied themselves with Tara," Lorraine mused, gazing out through the windshield at the mountains that now seemed to tower up around us. "Especially since Tara was your Warlady and the one who gave them so much trouble."

"Tara can have a `silver tongue' when she wishes," I smiled. The Bajan Princess is a very skillful "saleswoman" when it comes to something that she really desires. I know from my own past experiences with her. No doubt Tara had blamed me for all of it! Saying that all her "activities" had been done at my own command!

"Let's just hope Gayle made a bit of `headway' for us," she smiled back. Lorraine having flown Gayle to the capital of Talon only a few days before. Trying to do with Gayle what she was trying to do with Sharon in Dularn. I wondered if it would work?

"Those birds scare me," Lorraine breathed as we saw several there in the air circling over the city below. The figures of young girls on their backs. A Tarl is much like a gigantic eagle with a wingspan of thirty five feet, but yet capable of carrying a small woman or teenage girl on its back. I was once told by Queen Dala Dai that she understood that they were the product of "genetic engineering" back in the 21st Century. That no other form of life has dual hearts, or the lung design they do that allowed them to exist.

To fly, to soar with a girl on their backs.

"A 'mid-air'?" I smiled back, well aware of the dangers. A Tarl weighs over three hundred and fifty pounds, even without its lovely feminine hundred pound rider. We probably wouldn't survive it hitting one. Not flying at well over a hundred knots!

"If Queen Dala ever gets the idea to try taking over the world, those birds could be an awesome weapon in her hands," my Warlady smiled back. "And this airplane is all we have." I nodded, gave her a smile. Talon is a peace-loving country. They only wish to be "left alone". The "Switzerland" of this era.

"A lovely city," I smiled, looking at Talon's capital. It is named after the country, or perhaps vice-versa for all I know. The white stone lovely, the city like something out of mythology. It is nestled in a lovely valley between snow capped mountains. The valley well watered, warm, making ideal farmland for its people. It is a beautiful country, and very well "defended" too as I had found out to my "discomfort" some dozen years there before!

I saw Queen Dala Dai's head go up, saw the expression harden on her attractive well molded face as the little brunette Queen saw me standing there beside Lorraine in my lovely golden mesh. The tiara, the cape, the attire I wore as Empress of California. There was a chill in the air, but nothing like that I was now receiving from those of Talon. As I had feared, the hatred was still strong. Too many of the people of Talon had died in the war against the Empire. There were too many widows, widowers for me to be welcome in this beautiful and lovely exotic country now.

"She is not welcome here," Dala Dai snapped at Lorraine. I saw Gayle standing tall and golden there at her side, seeming to almost tower over her. The Queen of Talon being no more than 5'1" if all of that. She is a very beautiful woman, very exquisite in her appearance. Her silvery blue silk gown was lovely. Clinging delightfully to her slim body. I had no doubt that she was a Queen that was capable of much. She had taken command of her forces after the death of her husband. Defeated me. Rode one of the great birds herself in combat. I respected her greatly. Talon, like Dularn, is a "Queendom", ruled always by a woman. Such things are, I believe, an attempt at something perhaps not clearly understood. There was only one "Janet Rogers". There probably will never be another. Perhaps it is just as well too. The "legend" and the "reality" are entirely different "truths". I know of what I speak. Of what "too much power" can do even to one like her. We do not need another world dictator.

"What Taradid to you was not at Darlanis' orders," Lorraine retorted, standing there with me. The plane floating behind us. The city is built around a small lake about half a mile across with the palace looking out on it. Talon is a very lovely place. Lorraine says that it reminds her of ancient Greece in its glory.

"It was Darlanis who declared war upon us, not Tara," Dala snapped back. She was quick witted, a capable, competent woman. Around her a number of her own people, all "small" like she was. Not even any of her warriors "matching" Lorraine or me in height!

"It was a 'deed' that I have regretted ever since," I told her. "Something that I know now I never should have ever done." There were a number of the warriors of Talon with her. Those we had fought on the ground. Their archery had been awesome. Talon, like Dularn far to the north, believes in universal military training. Both sexes are trained in the use of weapons. Only a woman, however, may ride one of the great birds. They also have warrioresses like the Empire, although they are not as good in a fight as our own. Their size, strength, being less. The people of Talon are small, the men often no larger than Imperial women! \* \* This appears to be due to their cultural practices of considering only small people to be "desirable" as marital partners. I suspect that their reaction to Darlanis was also due to her size. The average woman of Talon stands only a little over five feet, the men being about six inches taller. Darlanis



at 5'10" doubtlessly caused them all certain "disturbing" feelings. (Lorraine)

"Ever since we beat you!" Dala snapped back. I saw several of the great birds overhead. The source of Talon's military power. The birds had terrified my Legions. Made further combat almost impossible. Made my warrioresses' unicorns uncontrollable as they swooped down over them! The speed of a Tarl in a dive is well in excess of 80 mph. They are hard to hit with a crossbow.

"But it is to your credit that you never attempted to follow up on your victory," Lorraine quickly interjected here, sensing my anger. Perhaps well aware that both of us could be spitfires!

"We are a 'civilized people'," Queen Dala Dai smiled back. The implication being of course that Californians were not such. I felt the welcome warmth of the sun on my shoulders beneath my cape. The air was rather chilly, perhaps due to the altitude of Talon which lies at several thousand feet above true "sea level".

"And this is a very beautiful country," I added, smiling, wondering how many further "insults" I would have to endure now!

"Which you did your best to destroy," Queen Dala snapped.

"Dammit, that was twelve years ago!" Lorraine snapped back.

"And she left me a widow, my children without a father," the Queen of Talon retorted back at Lorraine. "All because she wanted to become another damn Janet Rogers! Rule the entire world!"

"Take Black Lady back to Trella," Lorraine said, tossing me the keys. "I'll deal with things here." It was a dismissal. I nodded, understanding. The hatred against me was too strong now.

\*\*\*\*\*

I stood there on the rooftop of Lorraine's palace and looked out over the great harbor and the city spreading out before me. I had no friends here. No one who cared much for me. With Queen Lorraine now gone Lady Sanda was running Trelandar. I had killed her sister in a sword duel fifteen years ago. The hatred yet burned. She was a widow, pregnant, now "swelling" with new life. My mother Aurora was the Lorr ambassador to Trelandar. I had no wish to meet her, to speak with her. The "hurt" was too strong! \* Auroralater said to me that like steel I had to be "tempered". That I would not have "become" the woman I have become otherwise. On the other hand it is a "hell of a way" to raise your daughter!

I thought of flying north, refueling in Sarn. Making that long "hop" all the way to Dularn. To be with my Sharon again. I needed "comforting". Someone that I could talk with. A friend. Sharon was such to me. Someone who "understood", "respected" me.

The sun was setting in the west, the sky aglow with color. I saw the outline of a three masted schooner there on the distant horizon. I knew that Jon Richards had taken the Squala to Mexico with Lorraine's other two schooners. I didn't think any ship of Dularn would be sailing this close to a Californiacoastline yet! Maris having two such vessels, North Wind and the new North Star. I knew Lorraine had three big ones of her own under construction.

"The Seahawk!" I breathed to myself. Perhaps it was coming into Trella! And on it would be a friend of mine, provocative, sensual, at times risque Lara Warsan, the famous "Lara of Trelandar"! Now the Princess of Baja, although Taradid not recognize the marriage her son had made. Memories flooding back as I raced down the stairs through Lorraine's palace (once mine). Seizing a unicorn from a surprised

warrioress to gallop madly through the city of Trelato where Black Lady now laid tied to the dock!

## Chapter Six

"You gave us quite a surprise, flying over us like that," Lara said to me as we shared a late dinner and more. Her young boyish Prince of a husband nodding, giving me a smile. She was at least one friend that accepted me for what I was. She did not consider me a "dumb blonde" like Lorraine, or some comic book (actually a TV) heroine like Sharondid. Lara respected me for what I was as a person. Almost worshiped me in a way. With her I could be comfortable. At ease. Be "myself". Not what someone else thought that I should be. That meant a lot to me just then. Especially after the treatment I had received there in Talon from Dala Dai, its Queen. I had come in friendship, and gotten HATE! There would have been a time that Legions would be marching now! I had at one time or another fought a war with every country that bordered upon the Empire of California. My entire career as the Empress of California seems now as I look back on it one of WAR! First Trelandar, and then the Montano to the east of Sarn. Then Talon, a painful defeat for my ambitions. After that battles with the Nevadas. Clashes with the Empire of Mexico. Dularn. \* \* It is not surprising that Aurora considered me a "barbarian"!

"You are as beautiful and provocative as ever," I smiled. Lara is a very sensual, "exciting" woman. A very famous woman. Once she had knelt naked before me in chains. Accused of the crime of attempting to "overthrow the government". Of speaking out against authority. Against me, the Empress of California! I had understood as others had not that she had only sought to improve the status, the conditions of life for those women who had become prostitutes. That this "Queen of Prostitutes" was clearly no danger to "established order", unless you define such as being the private profit of the pimps and other low orders of life who lived off the sweat, the labors of the prostitutes of California!

"Jers is 'man' enough to keep me happy," she smiled back. I saw the love in his eyes as he smiled back at her. She is above medium height, has reddish brown hair, gray-blue eyes. Is a bit "busty" perhaps, but with a figure that most women can only envy! Sharon says that she is almost the "twin sister" of a 20th Century movie and television actress by the name of Catherine Bach. Her attire consisted of a brief red leather skirt and a matching silken halter in a dark blue. Her boots also matching her skirt.

"It must be hard on you, having to live on a hundred and twenty foot ship with nothing but the sea every day there before you," I said to Lara as we stood there beneath the stars on the rooftop of Lorraine's palace. Few wives could have stood it. I watched the full Moon rising there behind us, a brilliant sphere, its "face" smiling down upon us as it has for millions of years.

"At least I'm 'alive', which is more than I would be if Tara ever got her hands on me," Lara smiled back. Tara had promised to kill Lara if she ever got her hands on her for marrying her son Jers against her wishes. I suspected that Tara would carry out her threat if she ever got the opportunity to do so. She had already tried twice to my knowledge. Once at Lara's wedding ceremony, where she attempted to have Lara assassinated, and once again there on the Seahawk with poisoned food. Fortunately discovered just in time before anyone died from having eaten of it due to a rat who had nibbled on it and died almost instantly too!

"I only wish I could do more for you after all you've done for me over the years," I said to her, my

hands on her shoulders. Without "Lara of Trelandar" I probably wouldn't have been able to be the ruler that I was. Her prostitutes had become my "agents". Lara had "advised" me from time to time. I fear I should have "listened" more to her back then and far less to Princess Tara.

"I betrayed you at the end, you know," Lara said softly. I knew she had supported the "Free Trelandar" movement of Sanda's. That had "come out" after the successful revolution in Trelandar I had made no real attempt to stop. I did not blame her for her actions. She was after all a Trelandarian. It was her country.

"You only followed the ideals I taught you," I smiled back. We had both been "young". Perhaps a bit too "idealistic" in some ways. I had been an Empress. She a prostitute. It had been a relationship that raised eyebrows all over the Empire of California. Lara had been the one who had suggested the golden mesh. I had learned much from her of how to control men, keep them "off balance". She had been one of my most valuable "advisors". We had been more than friends. That was why I had done nothing when she started a relationship with Princess Tara's son, although I dreaded what the "outcome" might be if Taraever learned of it!

"Perhaps we've both 'grown up' now," Lara said to me. "Outgrown our dreams of a better world for everyone." I recalled our talks back then. I had been young, ambitious. Ready to make a "name" for myself. Then I had lost the war with Talon. That had been the turning point of my career. I was no longer "invincible". I had lost Anna shortly afterwards when Sarnian Queen was lost on an uncharted rock in a storm, a blow that had badly shaken me. Made me turn inwards on myself. Made me bitter, "hard".

"You've been at sea too long," I smiled back, hugging her. The light of the full Moon behind me reflected there in her eyes.

"I think we're chasing a dream of what was, instead of going after what should be," Lara answered. "We should forget Janet Rogers. Stop pretending that we have another in QueenLorraine." Lorrainehad been the one "responsible" for Janet Roger's ideas. There were a number of people who believed that Lorraine was the "Second Janet Rogers" that would "rescue" Mankind from the Lorr. And even restore the legendary civilization of the 21st Century.

"You don't like her that much, do you?" I asked, wondering.

"Too 'hard', too 'dominant' for my taste," she smiled back.

"She is a good friend," I answered, coming to her defense.

"She's a 'mother figure', and that's why you like her," Lara answered, her words reminding me much of Lorraine's herself in a certain way. I wondered if Lara was right. I did look upon Lorraine that way. As someone who would "protect" me, "mother" me! Especially after Queen Tulis had "turned on me" as she had when I was but a teenage girl! And Aurora certainly wasn't any better!!

Suddenly the thought came to me out of nowhere that Lynn had been kidnaped only last night, and Trella was five hundred miles from Sarn! No ship, even the swiftest that ever sailed, was able to have reached this far south yet! And the Seahawk was the match of anything but a heavy galley! I could capture Tara's ship! Perhaps the evil Princess herself if she was aboard it! I had Lorraine's Black Lady, and there was a full Moon tonight too!

"We're up awfully high, aren't we?" Lara breathed nervously, staring straight ahead through the windshield, the Pacific like a rippling pond there below in the soft pale glow of the full Moon that now

shined down upon it from the east. I had told Jers to sail north towards Sarn. Fortunately it had been possible to get enough men to man the big warship despite those who had already "disappeared" into Trella's myriad waterfront dives and brothels.

"Five thousand feet," I smiled back. I did not doubt Lara's courage. I had once stood beside her in battle, disguised as one of her prostitutes. Those who had faced me that night had not known that they faced Darlanis Marden, the Empress of California! Lara had given a good account of herself, although I fear that my own skill with a blade was perhaps what saved us from those cutthroats that had been sent to put an end to her organizing the prostitutes of California. We had stood together, side by side.

"A mile straight up," Lara breathed, staring at the controls there before her, the various instruments there on the panel now glowing softly in the darkness. Their indications doubtlessly of little meaning to her. Up here I felt in command, "in control"!

"And we're traveling at nearly a hundred and fifty knots," I smiled back. Lara's eyes glowing into mine in the darkness of the cabin, the only illumination the full Moon there in the star sprinkled sky and the soft red glow off the plane's instruments.

"Ten times better than the swiftest ship in your navy," my friend breathed. Lorraine's Squala could reach fifteen knots, I knew, although such did put a great deal of strain on the vessel!

Lara held the little chamber pot up against herself beneath her short red leather skirt as I watched the gleaming sea below. My friend's nervousness no doubt affecting her bladder somewhat. The airplane's "sanitary" arrangements being rather "crude", although as Lorraine once pointed out, one must do as one must do!

"Shouldn't have drank so much there at dinner," she smiled, setting the chamber pot down there at her feet and adjusting her strap there beneath her skirt. I remembered how embarrassed that Lorraine had gotten the first time she had to do that with me in the plane with her. Even to climbing into the back seat to do it so that I couldn't watch her! Different eras, different "mores"!

"There ahead of us," I said to Lara, seeing the sails. The ship a two masted schooner. I dared not approach too close for fear of warning those aboard. The sound of the engine carries. "We're about two hundred miles north of Trella," I observed, making a quick mental calculation from our airspeed, time of flight.

"Average speed of twelve knots," Lara smiled, doing her own calculations. "The Seahawk will have a hard time doing any more than just matching that," she warned. I hadn't thought of that!

"Maybe we got the wrong ship," she suggested a second later.

"Or Tara's got something a bit 'better' than we thought," I suggested back. There were better ship designs than those used for warships if one desired to sacrifice everything for "speed".

"They'll see us," Lara warned as I brought the plane lower.

"Give me those binoculars of Lorraine's," I answered her back. "Then we'll know for sure one way or the other." I prayed that Lynn would be O.K. That we might still yet rescue her from Tara. I looked upon her as being "more" than just a slave girl.

The ship was like nothing I'd ever seen before. It was a two masted schooner alright, but with a sail plan

and yardage far beyond what normally would have been carried for a vessel its size. It would be, I thought to myself, perhaps even be faster than the Seahawk. The equal of the Squala, and more "handy" than that big heavy schooner. I flew low above the water, to the west where the plane would be hard to spot against the sea, the sky.

"Not good," Lara observed. She had learned much from Jers.

"It has to get past the Seahawk," I pointed out in return.

"It's probably a knot faster than the Seahawk is now," Lara answered. The Seahawk had been at sea for months. The bottom was getting foul. Not enough to be serious, but it was slower by the knot or so than Tara's ship. Perhaps just enough so that her ship might yet escape the Seahawk in any sort of a confrontation!

I thought momentarily of trying to fly to the Sea of Cortez, find the Squala. The Squala might be more a match for Tara's new ship, being slightly faster and bigger than the Seahawk. On the other hand such a flight was very close to the limits for the plane considering its fuel range of eighteen hundred miles and the need to return to Trella or another major city for refueling.

"I sure wish Lorraine was here, she'd know what to do," I muttered to myself half under my breath. But she was hundreds of miles away in Talon right now! What would she do in this case???

"Where are we going?" Lara asked as we flew south again. The full Moon brightly lighting up the sea, the shoreline to our left. From time to time we could see little seacoast villages, a bit of light perhaps from fires flickering like stars below us.

"Lorraine's estates," I answered. I knew her estates were now being managed by Lady Tirana, who had once been my Warlady. The Warlady I had unjustly used as a "scapegoat" after the violent death of my husband the King in battle against the Nevadas. Thar Marden having gone riding with a force of knights after a group of Nevadas much like Colonel Custer had done at Little Big Horn centuries before him! And had suffered the exact same fate!

"You haven't changed much," Lady Tirana smiled, regarding me and Lara as we stood there beside the plane. "You still love to dash around at all hours of the night and get people out of bed!" The old retired Warlady in her robe standing there among a dozen or more of Lorraine's people, a robe pulled around her tall, slender figure. In appearances she reminded me a great deal of Lorraine herself! She is brunette, slim, somewhat hard featured.

"I need your help," I said to her, taking her hands in mine. Wondering if she would after everything that I had done to her.

"We all make mistakes," she smiled back. "Even Queens." I nodded. This Queen, now an Empress, had indeed made enough too!

"Is there 'anything' we can do?" I asked, Lady Tirana there in her robe across the room from me, a sleepy slave girl waiting to be of service should we require anything. Lara's eyes droopy as she sat slumped down in an easy chair beside me. The sounds of the night coming in through the partly open windows. A soft breeze, a bit "chilly", gently ruffling the white lace curtains.

"You could set fire to Tara's ship," Lady Tirana said.

## Chapter Seven

"That would doom Lynn to an awful death," I answered back.

"It would rid you of Princess Tara if she's aboard," the old Warlady replied. "It is your `decision', not mine," she smiled, her dark eyes so much like Lorraine's burning straight into mine. She was a woman who reminded me much of Lorraine, I thought then. The sort of a woman who had faced the worst war had to offer one. She was old, and probably close to a hundred by now, I reflected. A touch of "gray" there in her midnight hair left little doubt. The slave girl who knelt there at one side waiting to be of service silently yawned to herself, her dark eyes heavy with sleep.

"I won't sacrifice Lynn's life for Tara's," I answered her.

"You are not the same `Darlanis' I once knew," she said, sipping at a cup of coffee. Her dark midnight eyes holding mine.

"Or the same one who once conquered Trelandar," Lara added, glancing about the tastefully furnished living room of the manor.

"I am no longer a `barbarian'," I answered them both back, recalling what Aurora had told Lorraine there on Mars about me.

"Perhaps there is `hope' for you yet," Tirana smiled back.

"She's important to me," I answered her. Why I didn't know.

"Do you have agents in La Paz?" Tirana asked me. I nodded. La Paz was the capital of Baja. Tara's palace was just outside the city. On a hill that overlooked the city. A big castle that dated back from long before The War. A place called Triskelion. Lorraine's sister had lived there back in the 20th Century, I recalled with a smile. And Sharon did know about the place too!

"I thought you weren't going to return for nearly a month," Queen Maris of Dularn smiled as she greeted me there at the dock. A few flakes of snow drifting down, the sky a cloudy iron-gray. The massive walls of her own palace there towering up behind her. It had been a long flight from Lorraine's estates here to Arsana. I felt "drained", "exhausted" by everything I'd been through now. I had slept only a few hours, my dreams unpleasant, nightmarish.

"My Princess and I are going on an adventure," I smiled as Sharon stood there smiling at her side, bundled against the cold of a Dularnian winter. My breath was visible there before me. I saw the ice there on the dock. The snow shoveled off the walks. The memories flooding back of "happier" times when I was little.

"You have all the luck," Maris Jord smiled back, the hood of her parka covering her golden hair. I found her much more friendly now that I didn't have Lorraine there beside me. I wondered how Lorraine was doing there in Talon with Queen Dala Dai.

"You can fly this, can't you?" I asked Sharon as she settled herself in beside me and I restarted the engine. She was after all Lorraine's stepdaughter. A girl of the 20th Century. Also a very capable and competent Imperial Princess. If anything happened to me the Empire would be in good hands. I saw her smile.

"I do know something about flying," Sharon smiled back, taking the controls. Waving out the window to Maris who waved back as the plane was untied and we then taxied across the harbor to once again take to the air. "Although Lorraine usually did most the flying," she added with a knowing smile as the floats lifted off the water and we were again on our way back to California. I was tired, having stopped only for fuel after leaving Trelandar.

"We're putting a lot of 'hours' on this," I smiled as the Pacific once again became a gray rippling pond there beneath us. Sharon at the controls nodding, giving me a smile. I knew enough to check the oil, do whatever simple maintenance that was necessary. I had studied the manuals, felt competent to make repairs. I am "good with my hands", a trait I suppose that is not becoming the ruler of California although I do take pride in my own skill. I am not just a "barbarian" even if I do wear a sword at my hip!

"I suppose An'na can always rebuild the engine again if necessary," Sharon said to me, giving me a smile.\* She was the daughter that I had always hoped Anna would have been. I loved her as much as if I had nursed her at my own breast. Given birth to her, carried her there inside me for those nine long months.\* The plane uses a special oil used in motor vehicles of the 21st Century that considerably extends engine life, although the "life" of the engine is still not of course quite "everlasting", being in the neighborhood of about ten thousand "hours" or so, giving it a "total range" of about a million miles before a major overhaul. Lorraine says that the oil contains "SLICK 50", whatever "that" is. In any case the airplane does "work" quite well.

"I'm at a loss for what to do about Tara and Lynn," I said, explaining that the only thing I could think to do was to try to rescue Lynn from Tara's castle, the hopes of that not being very high. Especially not considering the fact that Princess Tara had such "tight" security that I'd never had much "success" with my own agents in obtaining any information as to her own activities!

"You aren't planning to ask my stepmother?" Sharon breathed, her words "pregnant" with implications left "unspoken" just then! I wondered too if Sharon thought I placed too much importance on Lynn. She was, after-all, only a slave girl, one of half a dozen such wenches that wear my collars. I had "others" that I valued. To "risk" the life of free women to "rescue" a slave girl would not be "politically wise". Especially not "now" with people such as Sanda Talen around ready to "criticize" me any way she could!

"If anyone 'goes', I'll 'go' myself," I replied, looking out the window at the gray metallic sea there far below the black Beechcraft Bonzana. What I really "needed" was Anna and her Lorr spaceship, the Starfire. Its energy bolts would make short work of that infamous Bajan's castle, I mused to myself with pleasure!

"If Tara ever gets her hands on you...", Sharon breathed, her lovely azure eyes looking into mine. I nodded, remembering! The last time I'd fallen into Tara's hands I barely survived it!! And the sexual abuse I'd suffered then had cost me my uterus too!

"Was 'She-Ra' ever 'scared' of anything?" I asked with a smile. Sharon had nicknamed me that just after we met due to my exotic golden attire. "She-Ra" was a 20th Century cartoon heroine who went around fighting "evil". She had a magical sword and a flying unicorn. She was "admired" by small girls and those who like Sharon perhaps "needed" a "fantasy" figure such as "She-Ra".

"I remember there last year on the Ronda, you standing there in your golden armor, the sun sparkling off the links," Sharon answered. "I remember feeling that whatever 'happened', you would never be forgotten. That your name would live on forever over the centuries as a 'symbol' of what a woman could achieve."

"I am Lorraine's 'Queen of Light'?" I smiled in reply. She had been told by Tais that I would be the one to "stand" for Mankind against Princess Tara, who would "stand" for Evil itself!

"Lorraine would not lie to me about something like that," she answered. I suspected, however, the "effects" of Lorr venom. That had been, anyway, what Anna had told me there in "private"! \* \*As this is well documented in Lorraine's book, there is no need to go further into it here. I might note, however, that Lorraine does "claim" that both Tara and I are "unkillable". That we do both have our "destinies" to fulfill when the time comes. That I will somehow "destroy" Tara in a "great flash of light" according to what the "prediction" claims. I do know that Lorraine tried to kill Tara and failed in the attempt, her 20th Century revolver failing to fire. I "tried" with a cap-lock pistol Lorraine had made, and also failed, although I feel it was due to lack of skill upon my part. Aurora had the "opportunity", but failed to do so, saying afterwards that she felt "something" hold her back!

"I'm a woman of 'two worlds'," I smiled, well aware of what Lorraine had written of me. Of the fact that I was Aurora's own daughter, that I had been born on a world only a spot of light up there in the night sky. Sharon nodding in reply, a look of "concern" now showing on her attractive well molded facial features.

"And if Lynn 'tells', Tara is going to know it too," Sharon breathed softly, looking down at the airplane's instruments there before her. HAD SHARON ALSO TOLD LYNN ABOUT MY TRUE PARENTAGE!!!

"You didn't....," I breathed, well aware of the "political ramifications" involved if word ever got out that I wasn't "who" everyone thought I was. Of course, I doubted that many would be willing to "believe", the story being so utterly "fantastic"!

"When I got that letter from your mother, Lynn saw it lying there on the table and read it before I could stop her," Sharon replied, not meeting my eyes, knowing how "such" could harm me! "I didn't know that she could read," Sharon spoke, looking ahead. Aurora had written Sharon, asking her to tell me how "sorry" she was that things had turned out as they had between us. Lynn had seen the letter as it laid there on Sharon's desk. Had read it.

"I doubt if it matters much," I smiled back, reaching over, tousling her golden hair as I often do as a sign of "affection".

"I think Lynn loves you," Sharon answered. "I don't think she'd try to ever harm you if she could avoid doing so." I nodded, well aware of the sort of tortures that Tara was famous for. No one had ever "resisted" her "inquisitions" as she called them. That had been "why" so many members of the "Free Trelandar" movement had either "fought to the death" or committed suicide rather than being tortured by my increasingly "infamous" evil Warlady! I have no doubt too that it explains the "hostility" many members of Sanda's "Free Trelandar Movement" still "bear" towards me yet.

"She was a well educated woman before she turned to a 'life of crime' and ended up a slave girl," I replied, knowing Lynn's own past. She had been quite "skillful" in opening locks and so. In getting "into" places she shouldn't have been like jewelry stores. That had been her eventual "downfall" a dozen years ago! She had taught me her "skills", taking considerable delight in my own skills at doing such things, things no other Queen could do!



"She's 'Trelandarian', isn't she?" Sharon replied, Lynn having been a woman "down on her luck" who had taken the "easy way". I had often wondered why she hadn't become a prostitute instead of a thief. She might have "ended up" almost another "Lara". I suppose there is never any "answer" to those sort of questions...

"She was a wealthy Lady before the 'conquest'," I replied. Many had "lost" everything in the war between Trelandar and Sarn. Lynn had been young, and perhaps not "too wise". The jewels that she'd stolen had been identified, and "traced" back to her. She had stood trial, been found guilty of jewel theft, and condemned to slavery. I had bought her shortly afterwards, naked upon the slave block. She had been a "good slave", one I "valued" highly. Her sensual qualities making her quite popular with my warriors.

"Do you believe in slavery?" Sharon suddenly challenged me, the sunlight frequently glinting off the ocean now far below us.

"It's a 'better answer' than prisons were," I smiled back. Janet Rogers had been the one to introduce "penal slavery" in the 21st Century as a "solution" to the "crime problem" and the overcrowding of prisons. "Imprisonment" of criminals is "senseless" in the "economic" sense whereas "enslavement" is far "superior".

"I'm not referring to 'criminals', but to those who get captured in warfare and end up as slaves in another country," she replied, staring out the airplane's windows at the clouds passing by. The steady regular low buzz of the engine almost unnoticed.

"Maris was a spy," I smiled back. "In your time in warfare she'd have gotten 'hung' or whatever they used then to kill."

"There are a lot of slave girls whose only 'crime' was to be in the 'wrong place' at the 'wrong time'," Sharon smiled back.

"Your stepmother and I once 'discussed' that very topic," I smiled back. "Neither of us could think of any way to 'end' it."

"You have the 'power' to 'repeal' any law," Sharon answered.

"I can also be 'deposed' by a four fifth's vote," I replied. I have no doubt that it would happen to me if I attempted to outlaw slavery. "Politics" is often the "art of the possible" as I see it. There is little popular "support" for such in any case. Slavery being seen as being RIGHT by the majority of the people.

"If more women could be 'elected' to office?" Sharon spoke.

"The men of 'today' are not the 'wimps' of your time," I smiled, using the 20th Century idiom. Janet Rogers had not been a "feminist", although she had "supported" many of their ideals.

"You think it could really 'come' to that?" Sharon smiled. She had been born in a society where the "government" was nearly all-powerful. Where people could be ruled by faceless and nameless bureaucrats. They had called themselves "democratic", but the "truth" is that they were far less free than us of today are!

"Only 'civilized people' allow their 'rights' to be taken away," I smiled back, "And those I rule are not

too `civilized'". The "RIGHT TO KEEP AND BEAR ARMS" is considered the "Prime Right" upon all which all other "rights" are based. I am Dularnian. I was taught as a young girl that only fools allow themselves to be disarmed. That it is the right, the "duty" of any free people to overthrow any government, any ruler, who attempts to disarm them. Such might be, as Lorraine once mused, "The Philosophy of Barbarians", but if it is so, then I am happy to be just a "barbarian"!

## Chapter Eight

"I thought that you two needed your rest," Lady Sanda Talen smiled as she had trays brought in to Sharon and I there at the royal palace in Trella. The time was now close to noon. She was becoming now rather obviously "pregnant", her swelling belly having become quite noticeable beneath her dress. We had landed in the wee hours of the morning, having taken turns flying while the other slept. The plane was due to have its oil changed again, Sharon had reminded me with a yawn before we had both retired.\* \* Although the top speed of the airplane is in excess of two hundred miles per hour, we usually never flew it over one fifty due to Lorraine's quite justified concerns about overstressing it!

With her was Lara and Jers, Jers having some minor repairs done to the Seahawk before taking the big schooner out to sea to patrol for pirates, that yet being his assignment as its captain.

"You `race' about like one of the Ancients," Lara smiled, referring to the people of the pre-War world who flew about here and there, and who thought nothing of traveling a thousand miles or two just on a "whim". The term "jet-set" coming from the 20th Century with air travel then becoming far more common in the next century before The War put a halt to all such activities forever!

"It does make the `world' seem `smaller'," I smiled back. I used to think of Dularn in terms of a voyage of nearly two weeks. But with Lorraine's airplane it is a flight of only eight hours! I fear just using such a craft makes me very much "aware" of what Mankind "lost" by fighting The War with the Lorr back in 2047 AD.

"We'll make a 20th Century woman out of you yet, Darlanis," Sharon smiled from the other bed, busy eating her own breakfast. Sharon sometimes playfully "teases" me about such things. I have at times however had the "last laugh" on her. I enjoy that too!

"You have something in mind to do against my mother," Jers said to me. No doubt being Tara's son gave him some discomfort. It was perhaps just as well that he spent his life out at sea. That he was married to a woman like Lara who would "mother" him. From what I knew of Princess Sela she wouldn't have been "right".

"I don't wish her life, only her power to do evil," I said.

"And if you capture her, what then?" he challenged me back.

"There are charges of kidnaping, for one," I answered him.

"The collar, for life," he replied in level tones, regarding me as I laid there before him eating my

breakfast. I nodded, understanding. I did not think she would allow herself to be taken. Perhaps it would be for the best. She would not make a good slave girl. She was a proud, haughty woman. A Warriress. Once the Queen of Sarn. In Baja she was surprisingly popular, I knew.

"Jers," Lara said, touching his arm, stroking him. Her eyes concerned as they looked down into mine. I understood much then. It was doubtlessly "hard" on Lara too, having to "deal" with it.

"This isn't the best way to do it," Sharon pointed out to me as I drained Black Lady's oil and did other minor maintenance to the airplane. A crowd gathered to watch, but keeping their distance due to the guards I had posted to keep away the curious. I am of course always aware of a lurking crossbowman and his bolts. It is something that you learn to "live with" with enough time.

"What do you suggest?" I challenged her back with a smile.

"I think the Seahawk would be a better choice," she smiled.

"It would probably be safer," I smiled back at my Princess.

"I probably know Triskelion better than Tara does herself," Sharon smiled back, her lovely azure eyes meeting mine. A cold chill going through me at the very thought of what she was hinting at. "And I'd stand a far better chance of getting away with it than one of your agents stumbling around it half lost. She'd probably end up chained next to Lynn in Tara's dungeon if lucky."

"Absolutely not!" I snapped back, pouring one of the bottles of oil into the engine, too well aware of the dangers that Sharon would face in making such an attempt to rescue Lynn and gather evidence on Tara's malignant and far-flung criminal activities. Evidence that we could use to convince the people of Baja of the horrible sort of person she was! Then Jers could take her place. His lovely and provocative wife there at his side his Princess!

"There is also that Princess of Talon," Sharon reminded me. "You killed her father twelve years ago." I needed no reminding of that. Still painfully vivid in my memories the reception that I had received there in Talon. Worse than Lorraine's in Dularn!

"Sela Dai," I answered, remembering. The Princess a beauty! A small and very exquisite brunette. Once Jers and her had been quite "intimate". Both Tara and I had thought she would become his wife, his Princess. That was, of course, before Lara Warsan.

"If she spots you anywhere around the place--," Sharon said. The rest of her thoughts being left for me to fill in for myself as I wiped the oil from my hands and closed the engine covers up. She was much more a daughter to me than Anna, who had been raised by an alien creature more of an insect than anything near human. \* \* Raspa had a "claw" in the raising of my Anna, I might note. It is not all that uncommon for a Lorr to have a "pet" human like we do a favorite dog or cat. Their "attitude" towards us is often much like that of a race of "masters" towards a society of "slaves" who exist only to serve their needs. I have encountered the same attitude at times among the Women of Mars here on Earth. Their recent "Revolution" there on Mars actually altered little.

"I hate to send someone on a mission like that," I said. I had agents willing to do it, but their chances of success weren't very high. I really needed someone "inside", but I didn't have anyone to use. Tara's own security was even superior to my own!

"You need someone who knows the place," Sharon smiled back.

"This is what Tara's ship looked like," Jers said, showing us the drawing he had made earlier there at dinner. He had climbed Seahawk's mainmast, used a powerful telescope while the ship was anchored in the cove there before Lorraine's estates. The drawing an excellent likeness of the same ship that Lara and I had seen from Black Lady. The same two masted schooner I'd seen before, I recalled, but where? There was something odd about this entire affair. The ship looked something like a Dularnian war-schooner, but "slimmer", more designed for speed than battle. Jers had said the ship was faster than his own Seahawk!

"That's Swiftstar, Queen Maris' flagship!" Sharon breathed!

"That figures!" Lady Sanda Talen snapped, her eyes hard. "That damned bitch doubtlessly has thrown in with Tara against us all!" Sanda having a low opinion of the present Queen of Dularn! Maris having allowed herself to become the "mistress" of Sanda's late husband, who fell in love with the beauty and later helped her escape from the estate when Lorraine planned to sell her off!

"She'd never!" Sharon protested, "And her ship was stolen!" Sharon explaining that she had seen a painting of the Swiftstar. That Maris had told her that the ship had been stolen one night. Her present "flagship" was the North Star, a big three master.

"And so she lied!" Sanda snapped back, an angry blaze in her dark eyes. "That lying bitch is as bad as Tara, mark my words! She was nothing but 'trouble' all the time that I ever knew her!"

"I think that I've heard enough of this," I snapped, my eyes holding those of Trelandar's Prime Minister. I understood now why Maris had fled Lorraine's estates as she did. Sanda had been the major domo there. The overseer of all the slaves. Maris had already once felt the whip. No doubt she had "feared" the woman. What Sanda might "do" to her with Lorraine's complete approval. It didn't surprise me that much o that Maris was willing to risk her life to escape what punishments could have then awaited her! \* \* A woman such as Sanda can make life very unpleasant for a slave girl. There are a number of ways of "abusing" such girls that do not fall under the jurisdiction of the "humane treatment" laws.

"I've been thinking," Sharon said to me that night as we prepared for bed, as far from having a "solution" to the "Tara problem" as ever. I wondered if there really was one after all!

"And?" I smiled, stripped to clips and strap, undoing my jewelry, laying it on the dressing table where it would be ready for me in the morning. I was "making do" with one of Lorraine's slave girls, with Lynn never far from my thoughts. I feared for her, what Tara might do if she thought my lovely slave had any "secrets" that she was not telling. I knew of Tara's sadistic love for torture, for inflicting pain upon those in her power, and shuddered to myself at what she might be doing now to Lynn! Tara having developed tortures that sickened me to think of them!

"I worry about what Sanda said tonight at dinner," Sharon spoke, slipping beneath the covers of her bed there next to mine.

"She's a widow still filled with hate for being 'betrayed'," I smiled back. Such was not that uncommon. Lorraine tended not to like any woman with light hair because "blondes" had given her "trouble" back in the 20th Century. It made about as much sense as me hating brunettes because Princess Tara happened to be one!

"And she's also a very good friend of Lorraine and Prime Minister of Trelandar," Sharon pointed out. "And Lorraine is now building up a navy far in excess of anything needed for pirates."

"Those three big schooners of hers?" I smiled. They were of the same class, three masted schooners, a hundred and thirty five feet at the waterline, with ninety foot masts capable of reaching speeds of fifteen knots under "ideal conditions". I recalled Maris having mentioned them, the Queen being "concerned" to a certain extent considering what such awesome ships could do as commerce raiders! Especially when fitted with Lorraine's weapons! \* \* Lorraine once "let slip" that she was "working" on cannons. I now suspect that Lorraine also knew about "things" there on Mars.

"I think Sanda would like to see another war with Dularn," Sharon answered. "With Lorraine in command of our military." I had no doubt that my awesome Warlady would be quite "effective"!

"As I recall now, Sanda was not in favor of the last war," I smiled back, snuggling in under the covers, the silky sheets cool against the softness of my skin. I remembered Lorraine's book.

"Maris Marn was not the Queen of Dularn then, either," Sharon said, using the Queen's maiden name. The name Sanda knew her as. Maris had spoken briefly to me of the matter. She and Sanda had both been "educated" women. She had not been like the other slave girls. Maris had been the sort that could carry on an intelligent conversation. Speak learnedly on a number of topics. I had no doubt that Carl Talen had found her extremely attractive despite the fact that he was already married. Since Maris had been a slave girl there had been no issue of "infidelity" here although his widow certainly didn't look upon it in that fashion!

"Better get some sleep," I said, turning out the lamp. Wondering to myself how much of Sharon's ideas might reflect reality as I stared into the darkness. Sanda's hatred of Maris reflected something I didn't want to think about. She was a close friend of Lorraine. Lorraine listened to her. Considered her opinions. I knew too that Lorraine's husband, Jon Richards, did not think much of Maris either. He had once been her lover, but Maris, who is depicted in Lorraine's book as a "gold-digger", had deserted him to seek instead my brother, Darl Jord, the Prince of Dularn! Maris' actions in many aspects paralleling my own before I became the Queen of Sarn twenty four years ago. Lys, what a "bitch" I was back then! Ambitious, greedy, and so utterly immoral! Ready to fight and scratch my way to riches, to power, to rule an Empire in the traditions of conquerors now forgotten by history!

## Chapter Nine

The Seahawk smashed through the rolling sea like a battering ram, its sails drawing well as its young captain barked orders from its quarterdeck to set the topsails for more speed yet. His beautiful companion, Lara, Princess of Baja, at his side looking on. Only she and captain Jers Bisan knew of our true destination. Of the fact that we were sailing to La Paz there in Baja at my order. That there I would attempt to rescue Lynn, steal if I could the proof of Princess Tara's involvement with the pirates that I knew she had been closely allied with the year before. If I failed, I did not look forward to the consequences of failure!

Sharon Duval, blonde, beautiful, the crown Princess of Imperial California, strolled across the deck to greet me as I came up the stairway to stand there at the rail, looking out over the endless rolling sea. The hot sun glistening off my golden mesh. A silken blue cape protecting my back from the rays of the sun.

"I still don't like the idea of taking you into danger like this," I said to Sharon as she stood there beside me at the rail, a bit of salt spray from time to time wetting our faces as the Seahawk smashed through the waves. While Sharon would not be in on the actual "assault" on Tara's castle, still, she would be in a certain amount of "danger" due to the fact she would be in La Paz. I had three of my agents in La Paz, with two now posing as prostitutes. Women in Baja generally bear arms, like they do in Dularn and Talon and some parts of the Empire such as Trelandar. I had also considered using some of the warrioresses on the ship. I needed "proof" of Tara's treason to bring before my government. Before the Assemblies and Senates of all three Imperial nations. Support for a declaration of war against Baja and Princess Tara. I was also prepared to make Maris a very "generous" offer if she would have Dularn declare war against Baja too, as I needed all the forces that I could get if we could depose Tara before Mexico could act to intervene there on the side of the evil Princess! I did not think the Emperor of Mexico would wish to fight for Tara!

"You'll look less 'suspicious' if I'm at your side," Sharon pointed out. Tara's people no doubt kept a close eye on things. Single men or women are much more likely to be "spies" than some woman with her "daughter", Sharon had pointed out to me earlier. Sharon herself would of course have to pose as a prostitute herself. I hoped Lorraine wouldn't hear about it or I'd never hear the end of it! "You did 'WHAT', Darlanis!" I could hear her now!

"Why did you pick me instead of Lorraine for this?" I had asked Sharon that first evening over dinner, the two of us eating in private, Jers and Lara having eaten a bit earlier that night so that we might have the cabin to ourselves for an hour or so. I considered Sharon a highly competent young woman, very capable.

"I admire you and love you for what you are," Sharon said. "And I think you're more 'competent' than 'she' gives you credit for!" she burst out. I had to smile to myself at that. Lorraine has written that I am beautiful, "noble", etc, but something of a "dumb blonde" when it comes to making decisions there in combat!

"I 'try'," I smiled back, well aware that I was no genius at such things. I am "good with a sword", but not a good commander. My scores at the Warrioress Academy for "tactics" were very poor. I barely scraped through on the basis of my personal skills, not because I was able to command forces in the field as an officer. That is why I held on to Tara so long. She did "win" battles. I simply "looked the other way" when I heard about how she did it! \* \* It is "so easy" when you "want" something "bad enough" to find someone like Tara who can "get it" for you as long as you don't ask too many "questions" about just "how" it is going to be done!

"I know you love me more than Lorraine ever did," Sharon said to me, much to my surprise. I knew that Lorraine loved her. You only have to read her book to see that. To sense her "pain".

"I'm sure she loves you just as much as I do," I answered. Sharon was too young, too "innocent" to understand the "reality" of such things. Lorraine had made her decision for Sharon's welfare. I had the power to offer Sharon more than Lorraine could.

"Would you give me up to another woman to raise?" Sharon challenged back. I knew the answer to that. Sharon was everything I had hoped for in a daughter. The knowledge that I would never again have a child of my own no doubt affected my feelings.

"Only if I knew I was dying," I answered. I believed that was the best answer I could give. Sharon means more to me than anything else. I would give up my Empire for her. I nearly did!

"Lorraine gave me up to you," Sharon answered back, her eyes meeting mine. "I think that tells you how she felt about it." I thought Sharon would someday learn something of what it is like to be a mother. To make such a decision for the welfare of your child. For the welfare of one whom you love dearly. Then and only then would she understand why Lorraine did what she did do! Why my own mother let Queen Tulis raise me as her own daughter! \* \* I "understand" now what I did not before. Aurora wanted me to live a life of "freedom", not at the "beck and call" of the Lorr.

"She did it for you," I answered, knowing Sharon would never understand until she grew older, had children of her own to love. I valued these few short years that I could share with her before she grew up and got married and had children of her own. She is very much the sort of a daughter I had once hoped Anna might be.

"She has Gayle, Ta-she- ra, Mara," Sharon answered. "And Gayle is a slave girl she bought to replace me," she added then.

"That `proves' that she loved you," I pointed out in reply.

"She always `dominated' me," she answered. "You don't." There was no answer that I could give for that. I am not the same type of woman that Lorraine is. We are different "mothers". I do not pretend to claim that I am a "better" mother than she. I suspect that Sharon views me in a different light than she does Lorraine. Lorraine is awesomely "competent", but also "hard" in ways that are hard to put down on paper. Much like Janet Rogers. Janet was a "living legend" in her own time. Lorraine is "one"!

"Darlanis, I'd like to speak to you about something," Lara said to me as we came up on to the deck later on, the stars bright in the sky overhead, a few misty clouds their only cover.

"Excuse us," I said, Sharon moving off, walking across the deck as Lara guided me to the stern, the wake visible beneath us.

"I want to go in your place," Lara said to me, her face a shadow there in the darkness. She was close enough that I could smell her perfume, a heavy scent that betrayed a lack of "taste". She is not well educated, barely literate at the best, selftaught. Her own social "class" was far below that of her Prince. On the other hand she is "faithful", "loyal" to a fault. I tend to place value upon things that others would not. I respect Lara for the person that she is. For the friend that she is to me...

"And if Tara ever got her hands on you?" I challenged. I felt her shudder there in the darkness. Her death would be as slow and agonizing as Tara could make it, and Tara is an expert!

"She won't," Lara answered, explaining that she had the skills to disguise herself so that none would know who she was. I did not think, however, that Lara was motivated by such considerations. Once again I wondered why others thought so much of me. That people would put their own lives "on the line" for me.

"And how do you think I'd feel if she captured you?" I asked. I knew something of what could be done to a person. Tara had once showed me such. Once had been enough for my stomach! I had no doubt that Tara would make Lara's death slow and painful. Inflicting agonies upon her that would turn her into a shrieking animal begging for a merciful death. I knew Tara all too well! I had once seen Tara "at work" torturing a "rebel". She had immersed the woman's hands in black iron pots. Filled them with water, set fires beneath the pots until the water was boiling. I ran the woman through with my sword to put an end to her agonies!

"If she gets you..." Lara spoke, her eyes looking into mine.

"Go to Lorraine, tell her to 'avenge' me," I answered Lara.

"Bring her into the wind and lower a boat!" Jers ordered as we heaved to nearby a fat merchantman who had signaled us that they had been attacked by a Dularnian raider. The vessel was Trelandarian, and flew the flag of a well known Trella merchant!

"Maybe there's something to what Sanda said," Jers said to me, a grim smile on his lips as he prepared to get into the boat. "Dularn 'loses' too many ships for my liking." I nodded, smiled. This was not the time to get into an argument over such matters.

"The 'evidence' isn't good for Maris," Lara said softly, her eyes meeting mine as we watched Jers being rowed over to the other ship wallowing there in the swells like some bloated whale.

"She's no 'pirate'," Sharon protested. "I know that!"

"We'd all be a lot better off if she hadn't escaped Lorraine," the Seahawk's first officer observed from beside us, the officer swaying gently with the roll of the big war-schooner. I smiled to myself at his words. How easy it was to accuse Maris! I wondered for a moment if there wasn't a Californian ship somewhere up there in Dularnian waters doing the exact same thing to their shipping? And perhaps some Dularnian was cursing me out!

"You can put any flag on a ship," Sharon pointed out then.

"And this ship itself was once part of the Dularnian navy," I pointed out with a smile. Our own ship was "Dularnian" too!!!

"Well, that was the Swiftstar all right," Jers said as he came back aboard, "And it was flying the Dularnian flag too," he added, giving me a glance that left a great deal left unspoken!

"That doesn't mean that it was sailing under Maris' orders!" Sharon protested. "And as her flagship it would have her flag!"

"Take us back to Trella," I spoke. It was time to speak to Maris. To hear what she had to say about all "this" from her own lovely lips. Perhaps she would join with me against the Bajan!

It had been a long flight, even with Sharon spelling me at the controls. All the way from Trella to Arsana with only a stop at Sarn and Porlan for fuel, food and water. I was tired, not in the best of moods as I faced the young Queen of Dularn there on her throne, my worthless rapist of a brother sitting there beside her, a gross swollen brute of a man. I wondered what it was like for Maris, if they did actually have sex. I suspected otherwise.

"How dare you come here after what Lorraine has been doing!" Maris snapped, standing up there before me, her hand on the hilt of the sword there at her hip. The people around us muttering as they regarded us. "And its Squala without a doubt!" she snapped! Her words leaving me at a loss for words since the last I knew the Squala was still patrolling off the western coast of Mexico for pirates! Along with Lorraine's other two smaller schooners.

"You have had ships attacked by a vessel claiming to be the Squala?" Sharon answered for me, being



more "quick-witted" here.

"Dammit, Yes!" Maris snapped back, stepping down to face me. Then stepping back, my height being greater than hers, she found. Maris being five eight to my five ten. I am a bigger woman too.

"The Squala is over two thousand miles from here right now," I answered in level tones. "And the other ships are still under construction there in Trella. I'll fly you down to Trella myself if you don't believe me," I told that young golden haired beauty.

"It was here two days ago off our shores, and it fired fire bombs into a fishing village just to terrify the people!" Maris snapped back at me. "Lorraine's own fire bombs!" I nodded. It was becoming very clear now. All too clear. There was a second "Squala", and it was under Tara's command. And Tara had built the same sort of fire weapons that Lorraine had built, damn her!

"Your Swiftstar is being used to attack Californian shipping," I answered, keeping my voice steady despite Maris' anger. "And there can be no doubt that Princess Tara is behind all this as I know that Lorraine is still in Talon and that the Squala, her Squala, is patrolling off the coast of Mexico for pirates. Join with me in a mutual action against Tara and I'll return to you all the territory that Dularn lost to the Empire last year!"

"Leave," Maris snapped, "Get out of here now!" I nodded. Took Sharon by the arm. Perhaps another time I might get Maris to listen to reason, but not now. Princess Tara had "won" again!

"Darlanis," Sharon said to me as I reflected upon the fact that in the last ten days I'd flown a distance of more than half way around the world. Touching my arm to get my attention as I fought to stay awake there at the controls. It was getting dark, and I needed to land in Sarn to refuel for the flight to Trella.

"Yes," I answered, reaching out, tousling her hair. She is more than just a foster daughter to me. Much more. My emotional feelings towards her are hard to describe. We are very "close".

"I'm glad Lorraine flew through that 'Gateway'," she said.

"So am I," I smiled back, giving her an affectionate hug.

"You're going to wear that out," Sanda smiled as Sharon and I dragged ourselves back to the palace there at Trella. I didn't know about the airplane, but I was getting sick and tired of it!

"Maris got on her 'high horse' and ordered us to leave," Sharon answered. Sanda nodding, smiling, apparently "pleased".

"What you get when you make a 'Queen' out of a slave slut," she observed back. I was in no mood to argue the issue just then with her. The only thing I could think of now was going to bed! "Not that you can trust any Dularnian not to turn 'pirate' when they get the chance," she added. I reached out, grabbed Lady Talen by her neck chain, suggested she "rethink" her last comment! \* \* I consider myself "Dularnian" despite the fact that I am actually "half-Martian". I was raised in Dularn, and still consider it "my country" in a way despite the fact I rule Californian now.

## Chapter Ten

"That wasn't one of your 'brightest moves'," Sharon said to me as we prepared ourselves for bed. No doubt it had not been although I was in no mood to be "trifled with", especially not by the likes of the Lady Sanda Talen, who is not a "favorite" of my own by any means! No doubt I would hear about it from Lorraine.

"Just drop it!" I snapped back, instantly ashamed of myself. Sharon's reaction visible there on her face as she got into bed. I wasn't doing very good. Letting my hot temper control me like it used to years ago when I walked around with a "chip" on my shoulder just daring anyone to make a comment. Ready to fight a duel to the death for the slightest "insult" to my touchy honor! \* \* My mother says that I wouldn't be the woman that I am today if I hadn't suffered so as a young woman. I suppose it is true, but yet when I think what I went through when Aurora could have made my life so much happier and easy still does "hurt" a bit even now. I often wonder if she really considered me her "daughter"?

"Sharon?" I said there in the darkness a few minutes later.

"Yes, Darlanis?" I heard her reply back from the other bed.

"I didn't mean it. What I 'said' to you," I spoke to her.

"It's been a long hard day for both of us," she answered.

"It's not something 'She-Ra' would have done, would she?" I asked. Sharon has often compared me to that fictional character.

"You wouldn't be 'human' if you didn't have a temper," she answered. "And Sanda was 'asking for it' saying what she did."

"You mean about 'Dularnians'?" I asked back. I understood. My own people are often considered such by those of California. We don't have the racial prejudices of the past, but we do have our own "prejudices" that are just as bad. Lorraine once said to me that "human nature" hasn't "changed" over ten thousand years!

"I guess you can see her point if you think about it," Sharon answered. "She did lose her husband because of you in a way, and he was 'unfaithful' to her because of Maris' being 'available'." There is much to this "affair" that has not been told! I have no doubt that Maris exploited things for her own benefit.

"And I do look a bit like Maris too," I pointed out then. I am taller, more "muscular", but we do look somewhat alike in a way. We are both blonde, and have beautiful faces. Mine is perhaps more "regal" than Maris', but that is a matter of opinion. She is probably a more "competent" monarch than I am, I suspect.

"You also look a bit like my real mother too," Sharon added. She had told me of Marcia Duval, who had been a tall blonde much like me. Of how her mother had drank, and how concerned Lorraine had been over that fact. The details are in Lorraine's book and I feel no need to get into them here. While Sharon had a "good" childhood, she was torn between her love for Lorraine and Marcia.

"I shouldn't have said what I did last night," Sanda said to me the next morning as I fought back a yawn. I nodded, smiled. "You've been 'decent' considering everything, and there was no call for me to say what I did to you." Sharon nodding, smiling there at the breakfast table. We had spoken of much last night.

"You touched some 'old sores' I carry about," I smiled back. I had been "teased" as a teenager about my nationality. Too much perhaps. I had been "touchy" anyway. Too eager to "fight". It is not a part of my life that I am proud of. I am no "angel" despite whatever Lorraine has written about me there in her book.

"We both have 'sores'," Sanda smiled back, picking at her scrambled eggs, the smell of the fresh bacon making me hungry. I had been so "active" of late that I had lost nearly five pounds!

"Lorraine would no doubt have a 'professional opinion' of all this to tell us about," I smiled back, having been more than once "analyzed" by one Doctor Lorraine Marie Duval for my acts!

"I'd feel 'better' with her here," Sanda commented then.

"Troubles?" I asked her. Lorraine was Trelandar's Queen.

"There is a report of a 'North' class war-schooner being sighted off our shores," Sanda answered. "And it shouldn't be."

"We are not at war 'yet' with Dularn," I pointed out. I feared that we would soon be. Maris had a "temper" I hadn't planned on. She was as "touchy" as any new young Queen might be!

"I've ordered construction on the three schooners to proceed on a twenty four hour a day basis," Sanda smiled back. "I'll feel a lot better when those three are out there rigged for war."

"That is my decision, not yours," I answered in level tones. That was all the Empire needed right now was for Sanda to start a new war with Dularn by destroying one of their ships in battle.

"We are entitled to defend ourselves against 'pirates'," Sanda answered in a tone much like mine, her eyes burning hot. I had no doubt she had considered all the "legal options" she had. I had last year signed my name to a Constitution Sanda had drawn up. No doubt Sanda had carefully thought out all the details! I knew she had a first rate mind, and she didn't like me very much!

"Don't pull 'technicalities' on Darlanis, Sanda!" Sharon warned, coming to my defense, her azure eyes now meeting my own. The Empire of California is a "commonwealth" much like that of the British back in Lorraine's era. Trelandar was legally allowed to "defend" itself against any attacker, including Dularn.

"Article Two, Amendment One," Sanda snapped back, "Gives us the right to defend ourselves against all pirates and criminals."

"Sharon, take Black Lady, fly to Talon, get Lorraine," I said, turning to my Princess. I was not going to get into a legal argument with Sanda over some Constitutional technicalities!

"They hit us last night about two am," Lady Tirana said, laying the ballistae javelin down there on the table before us. "Nothing much, just enough to wake everyone up with the fuss." An attack had been made from a "North" class war-schooner on Lorraine's estates there some hundred miles north of Trella. There had been a note wrapped around the javelin. It was signed "Maris Jord, Queen of Dularn". Tirana's dark eyes burned hot into mine. She came aboard "Sea Star", Lorraine's new swift racing yacht.

A vessel even faster than Maris' Swiftstar or anything else afloat! The ship had fired a couple broadsides into the shore buildings!

"There! Do you need any further proof!" Lady Sanda snapped. Tirana nodding, my old Warlady giving me a smile. She had made a reputation for herself back before I had become the Queen of Sarn by marrying Thar Marden. There were some who felt she was as capable and competent as Lorraine herself. I needed "advice" now! Sharon had taken off earlier for Talon, but she would not be back until the early evening, I suspected. It was obvious that we were very close to going to war with Dularn. And no one here but me thought that Maris might very well be innocent of everything!

"I don't think there's any doubt now," Jers said to me, his arm around his provocative wife. "I'll take the Seahawk out and see if I can't run this new 'enemy' of ours down." I shook my head in the negative. I didn't think Maris was the guilty party!

"We don't even know this is Maris' signature," I pointed out futilely grasping at straws now. It certainly did look like hers, and the royal seal of Dularn was there just below it too!

"Lys, are you ever worthless!" Sanda snapped, her eyes hot!

"We'll let Lorraine DECIDE," I answered in level tones, fighting to "control" myself, my entire body shaking with fury!!!

"No body likes you very much now," Ta-she- rasaid to me, her dark eyes glowing up into mine as I stood there looking out over the harbor, waiting like the others for Lorraine and Sharon to return from Talon. The Nevada girl reaching out, touching me. I nodded, clasped her hand in mine. I was "in the midst of enemies" right now, it seemed. Even Lara thought I was mistaken in trusting Maris. I wondered what Lorraine would do. I feared for what the future held. My Warlady bore no love for Maris or did Maris for Lorraine. I shuddered at the thought of another war!!!

"I should have married your eldest Prince, wore beads and buckskin," I smiled, leaning back, looking down into her eyes. I was "tired" of "responsibilities", of trying to keep an uneasy peace when others could only think of the glories of war! I recalled Queen Tulis, her death there in my arms. Thought of Maris. Reflected upon the fact that I was the daughter of Aurora and Prince Paul of Dularn. That I had been born there on Mars in the year 2521. That I was actually "half-Martian" in a way too!

"You are Lorraine's 'Queen of Light'," Ta-she- rasaid to me in low soft tones. "You represent 'good' against Tara's 'evil'."

"Tara's the one responsible for all this," I told her. She nodded, her deep dark eyes glowing into mine. It was near sunset now. Lorraine could be returning soon, I hoped. I dreaded what her decision would be. If she advised "war", there would be no way that I could stop a declaration of war from being declared against Dularn. Even my own awesome veto power could be overridden by a four fifths vote of the Assembly and the Senate both together. Such was provided for to prevent an incompetent or stubborn monarch from bringing the entire government to a sudden halt over something! If "WAR" was to be declared, it would have to be by such means, because I now intended to use my veto regardless! And if they decided to depose me for my opposition to this "war", then they could do just that! I was sick and tired of all this!

"You understand what others do not," Ta-she- rasaid to me.

"I respect your decision, even if I don't agree with it," Lorraine said to me, her dark eyes meeting mine as

I handed her my veto, all properly signed and sealed with my own Imperial seal of the Empress of California. If war was to be declared against Dularn, it would have to be over my veto, although I shuddered at what the political "consequences" might just be for me later on!

"I want to borrow the Sea Star," I said to her. There was "something" I still needed to do. Lorraine could run the Empire, fight the war with Dularn if she wanted. I still planned to rescue Lynn, and if possible, gather the evidence that would prove to even the most doubtful that Princess Tara was behind all our "troubles". That Maris Jord, the Queen of Dularn, was indeed "innocent" of the charges of starting a war against the Empire of California. I thought I owed the memory of one yet "dear" that much! I had promised Tulis I would never declare war again on Dularn. I intended to keep that "promise" now despite Lorraine!

"The Seahawk is at your service, your majesty," Jers said, giving me a smile. "Ready to go wherever you wish," he added.

## Chapter Eleven

"We have a 'stowaway', your majesty," the first lieutenant of the Seahawk smiled as he brought forth a smiling Sharon. The ship at the moment perhaps a dozen miles or so already south of Trella! I had no doubt what Lorraine's reaction would be either!

"Your stepmother is going to come flying after us as soon as she learns of this," I warned Sharon, proud of what she had done even although I feared what Lorraine's anger might when she learned! On the other hand there wasn't really that much that even Lorraine could do about it. She might be the Queen of Trelandar, but I was the Empress of California aboard an Imperial ship. Those aboard the Seahawk would obey me, not her if it came to that. Jers in any case had little love for the awesome Warlady, saying to me that Lorraine could be someday become more of a "liability" to me than an "asset"! That I had tended to doubt!!!

"She can't without these," Sharon smiled, showing me the rotors to the plane's twin distributors. And there was no way that Lorraine could find a replacement set any closer than Mars too!!!

"Crafty wench!" Lara smiled, her eyes now glowing into mine.

"She has ships, other means of catching up with us," I said.

"It won't do her any good," Sharon smiled back, "Unless you 'chicken out' and hand me over to her". I smiled to myself. That wasn't likely. Not now! I wasn't going to give her up now!

"Ship astern!" the call came down from the lookout there on the mainmast of the hundred and twenty foot schooner as it dashed southwards towards Baja. "Smaller schooner---maybe Sea Star!" he cried down! I had to smile a bit, Lorraine's all woman crew being surprisingly competent. Obviously Lorraine had wasted no time in pursuing us! And Sea Star was definitely the faster of the two ships! Far more "handy" in a fight, Jers had told me. I had even thought of that. I knew Lorraine's temper. The fury that could possess her. She was like "Delilah", her dire wolf. I feared the "confrontation" with her that was

sure to come now!

"She's not going to like the idea of you putting Sharon into danger," Jers smiled as we watched Sea Star close the distance between our two ships. "And I tend to agree with her on it too."

"That's my decision to make, not yours!" I snapped back, the rasp of my voice making those around us mutter to themselves. I saw Lara's eyes, saw the concern there in their depths as she moved to Jers. I knew she would stand at his side against me if it came to that. I was the Empress of California, but there was a "limit" to my power. Many no doubt would agree with Lorraine's opinion that Sharon belonged elsewhere than with me. It was no secret now what I planned to do. Many believed that I was a fool for attempting such a thing. That Maris was indeed guilty of the crime of "piracy" against California and that "WAR" was the only proper answer that California could make against Dularn's Queen!

"I would prefer to say what I have to say to you in private," Lorraine said to me in low tones as she stepped up on to the Seahawk's deck from the boat that had brought her from Sea Star, Sharon standing there at my side. We have shared much over the months since she first came to our era with Sharon. I have no better friend than Queen Lorraine of Trelandar. I hoped this was not the end of our friendship. That I had not made an "enemy" of her by this. Yet, my relationship with Sharon meant much to me! \* \* There is an "emotional bond" between Sharon and me that is hard to put into words. She is much more to me than just my Princess.

"I 'know' what you are trying to do," Lorraine said in level tones to me there in the Seahawk's cabin, the sunlight reflecting off the waves through the stern windows as our two ships rolled in the swell. Those dark eyes holding mine as I nodded, taking the drink that she offered. I had few secrets from my Warlady and best friend. "But Sharon stays with me this time," she warned, a note of "finality" in her voice. There was that in her voice that spoke of a bulldog stubbornness. That she would not be "swayed" from her decision. I wondered how I could convince her otherwise. That the decision was mine, not hers to make. That Sharon had made her "decision", and I felt it was properly hers to make, not Lorraine's. I looked into those midnight eyes and shuddered. Sensed the barely suppressed "fury" behind them! The last time Sharon and I had been together it had cost both of us nearly our lives. No doubt Lorraine was "aware" of that too!

"Sharon has made her decision to go with me," I answered, "taking the bull by the horns" so to say as I set down my drink.

"Your damned 'foolishness' nearly got her killed last time!" Lorraine snapped. "And damn you, Darlanis, this time she stays with me!" I saw the look on her face, even feared a bit for my own safety as she stood up, towering over me, swaying with the motion of the ship. I saw her hands clench, saw her eyes blaze! Watched the rise and fall of her bosom beneath the black silk of her dress. Saw the movements of the muscles there in her throat. My eyes being drawn to the gold plated hilt of her lovely sword.

"You have your Princess, I have mine," I answered, standing up, regal in my golden mesh, my warrior's instincts all aroused. I knew her temper, knew that my skill with a blade was not equal to her own. I did not think, however, that she would draw on me.

For a long moment Lorraine stood there, facing me, then I saw her hand go to the hilt of her sword as my heart seemed to for a moment stop beating! I watched her draw the blade, unable to move as she raised it, the keen point then gently touching the vulnerable softness of my throat. I made no move, no attempt to defend myself! I did not think that she would kill me. I trusted Lorraine! I suspected this was in the nature of a "test"! I know Lorraine. She is, deep in her heart, truly a "barbarian"...

"Good Luck, you damm big beautiful blonde!" Lorraine smiled, reversing the sword, handing it to me. I kissed it, handed it back to her. It is something done among Warriresses. Understood only by them. Like the "sharing of blood" among Nevadas. We have stood against a common foe, the dead lying at our feet.

"You will need `help'," Lorraine said to me, sheathing her sword. "I will launch an attack from the air upon Tara's castle as a distraction while you make your move on the ground," she explained, her dark eyes holding mine. "That is if I don't set the plane afire dropping those damm firebombs of mine on Triskelion."

"But won't that-----?" I asked, fearing that dropping the "bombs" from the air might increase our "risks", not lessen them.

"Triskelion is built of stone," Lorraine smiled back. "There's little danger that I can set it afire with my `bombs'." Such "bombings" would of course cause considerable "confusion".

"What about fuel for the plane?" I asked. It was a long ways from the southern border of Trelandar to La Paz. The plane had a "range" of about eighteen hundred miles or so. That didn't give Lorraine too much to "spare" in making an attack upon Tara!

"I plan to use Sea Star as a fuel depot," Lorraine smiled.

"She didn't make as much of a `fuss' as I thought," Sharon said to me as we watched Lorraine leave. The sea was getting up a bit, and I knew how she hated small boats. The thought making me smile a bit then to myself. We all have our "fears". Even Lorraine, who is one of the bravest Warriresses I've ever met!

"There was a moment--," I smiled back. Perhaps later on I'd tell Sharon about it. Lorraine and I had shared much together.

"Sea Star should be catching up with us before we reach La Paz," I told Jers. "And we are to keep an eye out for Squala." An "attack" by the ships would be part of Lorraine's "trickery".

"And if my mother declares war upon us?" Jers answered back.

"We have a good `Warlady'," I smiled back. We had Lorraine.

"It will be `Lorraine's War' which you allowed to happen," he answered in level tones, turning away. "I hope to Lyst that you regret it when the ships burn at sea and brave men die cursing your name among the flames seeing the sharks gathering to feast." His words bringing forth very vivid visions just then! I saw Lara's eyes burn hotly into mine as she moved to him, her very act leaving no doubt in my mind that I had no friends here!

It was raining as I stepped up onto the quarterdeck, the night's cold drizzle instantly chilling me beneath my drawn cape. Captain Jers Bisan standing there by the helmsman, dressed in oilskins. The sails now but dim shadows in the darkness above.

"Can we talk?" I asked, cold and shivering, looking into his face there in the darkness. I felt his hand clasp my arm as he nodded, leading me below. Down below decks out of the cold rain.

"You want to talk about Queen Lorraine," he said, pouring me a drink from a bottle, the tart wine as swiftly disappearing down my throat. His provocative and sensual wife now asleep there behind the

drawn bed curtains to one side of the little cabin. I wondered if he "resented" me being here aboard the ship. And the fact that he had "lost" his much more roomy and comfortable stern cabin to Sharon and me for this smaller one, which had originally been his first officer's own cabin here aboard the big Seahawk.

"I think you `misjudge' her," I said, keeping my voice low.

"As you do my mother," he replied, giving me a smile back.

"You must know something of what she's done!" I breathed back. "Certainly you know what she did to Sharon and me last year!" Still vivid in my memories the torments I had endured at her cruel hands. The physical and mental abuse. I had "lost" my uterus because of Tara. My ability to ever bear children. She had taken much from me. I wanted "revenge" for the hurt done me!

"Your own `past' is not something you'd probably want Sharon to follow as a `guide to proper behavior'," he smiled back at me. "And my mother has had enough `reason' to hate you with passion."

"I'm not proud of what I did back then," I answered him back as he refilled my goblet. "But I've never done the horrible things that your mother has to people," I added, defending my own actions. Still too vivid in my mind the sights there at Talos .

"Like `baby roasting'?" Jers smiled. That is a part of the "Tara" legend. Whether or not it is true is something else. I suspect that it is, but who am I to say? There are "stories" about me, about Lorraine that both of us know are but falsehoods! "And how do you know that my mother actually did these things or if someone did them in her name?" Jers challenged me in low tones, perhaps well aware of his wife sleeping only feet from us. I smiled to myself then as I recalled the things she'd taught me!

"I know what I personally experienced, and what Sharon also experienced," I answered, "And Lorraine and Gayle experienced."

"And I know that she's never given me cause to wish that she wasn't my mother," Jers answered in reply. Tara had been a loving mother. I knew that much about her. She had been extremely upset when she first heard about Jers "seeing" Lara. I had been too, feeling that a woman like her was no fit consort for a young Prince like him. The only difference between Tara and me on this issue having been that I wasn't willing to forcefully interfere in the issue like Tara was. Tara having wished to kill our Lara!

"I do fear, however, that Lorraine is `using' you to her own ends," Jers said to me, refilling my goblet. "She is a woman driven by an ambition to `rule' the world." I nodded. I had myself often wondered about that. She had been responsible for Janet Rogers, the woman who had been the first World Leaderess back in the 21st Century. Janet had even admitted such in her books. Was it not possible that Lorraine wished to do the same again???

"She would never `harm' me," I answered him. I knew that!!! That she might `use' me for her own ends was something else, but there wasn't too much that I could do about that. Both of us are "users". There is a great deal in my life that I wouldn't wish to have made public knowledge. I have slept with men for "gain". Done a number of things in my life that I am not proud of doing!

"Consider the fact of what would happen if neither Sharon or you came back from this foolish foolhardy `stunt' of yours," Jers said to me. I nodded, understanding. Lorraine would be Empress. Given her friendship with Raspa, First Princess of the Lorr there would be nothing standing in her way to make herself Empress of the Earth. To rule the entire world as Janet Rogers had done!



"But if I can get the proof of what I suspect, I can avoid a war that could cost the lives of thousands," I answered him back. I had begged Lorraine to "hold off" until I could prove Maris' innocence of the terrible charges of plotting a war against us!

"You are not the 'Darlanis' you used to be," Jers smiled.

"I have perhaps learned a few things," I now smiled at him.

"You're a good Empress, better than Lorraine would be," Jers replied. "That's why I feel you should forget about doing this."

## Chapter Twelve

"You went to talk with Jers, didn't you?" Sharon spoke as I slipped quietly into the bunk beside her. Her body warmth comforting through the thin silk of her nightshift against my own.

"We had an honest discussion about your stepmother and me," I told her, drawing her to me. Sharon and I share much together.

"Back in my own time, a woman of your age lying with a girl my age in bed together would have 'raised a few eyebrows' to say the least," Sharon observed with a smile, snuggling close to me.

"It would back home in Dularn too," I smiled back. The 20th Century's viewpoint on "sex" and "morality" reminded me a great deal of the sort of beliefs that we of Dularn held upon such subjects. Lorraine had been quite "critical" of both cultures' viewpoints, although she herself tended at times to get "upset" about things that wouldn't have disturbed any "true" Californian. Such as Sharon wearing nothing but clips and strap on the beach.

"Another 'blue-nose culture'," Sharon smiled back there in the darkness. "Just goes to show those types never give it up. Always worrying that someone is 'enjoying' themselves somewhere."

"With considerably less 'justification' than there was back in your time," I smiled back. It was nearly "impossible" for a woman to become pregnant without the "help" of the Priestesses of Lys. I pointed that out to Sharon. It did alter things considerably. There was no such thing as "reproductive freedom" now. That was a "freedom" that the human race was better off without!

"I knew a couple girls who got 'knocked up' and then refused to 'do' anything about it," Sharon answered, her body warm against mine. I didn't say anything in reply, "abortion" being a topic on which I fear my own prejudices showed rather badly now! The quiet creaking of the Seahawk's hull around us a familiar sound to one who has sailed as much as I have over my lifetime.

"I thought you had 'contraception' in your era," I answered. Sometimes I am not too clear on when some things were invented. I once asked Sharon what her favorite holovision show was. She merely smiled and said she didn't even know what HOLOVISION was!

"We did, but a lot of girls didn't bother since the 'State' would support you and your baby if it did happen to you," I heard her laugh back there in the darkness beside me. The very concept of "RESPONSIBLE REPRODUCTION" is an advanced sociological concept of Lorraine's, not one of Janet Rogers, I have been told. It was not "popular" with those who took no thought for the future. Unfortunately Janet Rogers "backed off" from enforcing such ideas with laws as she should have done. It was one of her "mistakes". In its way perhaps adding considerable "fuel" to the irrational anger then directed against the Lorr that finally resulted in the interplanetary war between Earth and Mars there back in 2047 A.D. Mankind having looked upon Mars as a possible "colony" of Earth. And upon the other bodies in the solar system as "raw material". There are historical "parallels" that date back to another "war".

"Why would your government 'support' those who did such a thing?" I asked. Should a woman become pregnant here in the 26th Century it was not the duty of the "State" to support her or her offspring. It is true that our public schools are "supported" by the "State", but that is a different matter and happens to be something that Lorraine finally managed to get the Priestesses of Lys to do as a new part of their teachings to the people of California. Lorraine being a strong believer in the Priestesses and their teachings after her own experiences on Mars last year. I suspect the effects of Lorr venom, but sometimes I wonder a bit?

"I suppose because otherwise those girls would have had to turn to a life of prostitution or even crime to 'support' themselves and their babies," Sharon answered me in a tone of voice that told that she saw no other "alternatives" for their actions. The idea of "behaving responsibly" apparently being unknown then. Their social order was "dying" even back then. Janet Rogers only tended to "do temporary repairs" to things. They weren't enough. Her World Federation was already falling hopelessly apart from its own "insolvable" internal "tensions" when Janet died in 2045.

"And what's wrong with being a prostitute?" I challenged. We all "sell" ourselves for something. I have slept with men who actually "disgusted" me just to gain some political favor. I saw very little difference between "that" and becoming a prostitute.

"Would you want to be one?" Sharon challenged me back.

"Lara has done pretty well for herself," I answered.

Over the months that I have had Sharon, we have discussed various topics, including those of "drug abuse", which was apparently a "serious problem" in her era, but which is not any more. It should be mentioned here that there are no laws against "drugs" here in any country that I am familiar with, and thus as there is no "profit" in "pushing" them, there is no criminal element involved in such practices. The same is true of all the "vices" of the 20th and 21st Century, none of which exist now with the exception of public drunkenness. I might note here however that Lorraine actually did kill a "pusher" back in the 20th Century from what she herself has told me about the matter. There having been one who was "selling" to the students of the high school to which Sharon had gone back then. He was found dead in an alley, the cause of death some sort of a long sharp spike like an icepick which had been driven through the base of his throat up into his brain. Lorraine saying that killing such "vermin" was "the social duty" of those who believed in "the protection of youth"! The fact that such was a "crime" apparently of little "concern" to her except to avoid being "seen" doing it!

In this line of thought it is interesting to note that Trella and most other large cities in Trelandar now have regular patrols of Warrioreses clad as members of other more "peaceful" castes, their weapons usually concealed beneath their clothing. Such women are called "Huntresses" and are muchly feared by those who live "on the other side of the law" in Trelandarian cities as they leave only corpses behind

themselves. There has been some protest to these practices by certain people, although such complaints have been carefully ignored by the Queen of Trelendar! I do know, however, that the streets of Trella are "safer" because of the Huntresses than they otherwise would be, Trella being now a "safer" city to walk at night than my own capital city of Sarn!

"La Paz," Jers Bisan said, closing the telescope. The black bulk of Triskelion set back in the hills overlooking the city. One of the few that had survived The War, although not the barbarianism that came afterwards. Jers then turning to us and saying, "I think it best if we wait until nightfall before closing the land to avoid any 'prying eyes'." Lorraine's lithe little "Sea Star" there following close behind us. We had been unsuccessful in locating the Squala in our voyage here. Lorraine had "buzzed" us the day before in Black Lady. We were to meet her in the evening aboard Sea Star, which would sail to a certain cove. I wished I didn't feel so "scared" as I saw what now laid ahead!

"I can take you both back to Trella if you want to forget this foolish 'stunt'," Jers said to me in a low voice, smiling knowingly. I shook my head in the negative. I knew the true meaning of fear. I repeated to myself in my thoughts that saying of my caste that a Warriress may sometimes know fear, but must never "surrender" herself to it. I thought of what Lorraine had written about me, and smiled to myself. I am not as brave as all that. I would have liked to have had her there at my side now.

"We have much left to do," I said to Sharon as she stood silently there at my side. There was our golden hair to dye black, and our skins to darken with stain so that we appeared "Bajan". Clothing to prepare, and a final last brushing up of our Spanish.

"At least your disguises do look the part," Lorraine said to me with a grim smile as Sharon stood at my side there in the Sea Star's small and rather cramped commander's cabin. My Warlady's own attire and stained skin having taken me by surprise as we met there aboard the Sea Star. It being obvious that Lorraine now planned on taking part in at least a portion of my risky and perhaps futile attempt to get into Tara's castle and rescue Lynn. And steal from the Princess the secrets that would betray her own role in provoking another war between California and Dularn. I felt a sudden sense of "relief" that Lorraine would be taking part. That Sharon and I would not be "alone" in entering La Paz.

"I'm glad to have you," I said, not wanting to ask "why"? I recalled the saying about "gift horses" and the condition of their teeth. Not that it would really make any difference if we were betrayed to Princess Tara, but having Lorraine "along" did make all the difference in the world to me just then. I tend at times to be perhaps overly "critical" of her, but when as she says "the shit hits the fan", I'm always glad to have her around!

"Especially since I speak fluent Spanish, which neither of you do," Lorraine smiled back, her facial features and stained skin making her look quite surprisingly "Spanish" in appearance.

"That was worrying me a bit," I smiled back in reply to her.

"I have these for you," she answered, handing both Sharon and me a half dozen of small glass tubes filled with a mixture of what I recognized as nitroglycerine mixed with sawdust as a "stabilizer". "They aren't that powerful actually, although they will take off your hand if you are careless," she warned us. Explaining that we could use them as a "distraction" if so needed.

"Like hand grenades," Sharon smiled, concealing hers there in her clothing. She was, like me, attired now as a prostitute. Lorraine's own attire was now that of a Bajan Warriress. It was a good choice for her considering her facial features, her muscular build. She is not the sort of a woman who any thinking person would readily mistake for anything "else" but what she is.

"Just don't trip," she added, giving us both a grim smile. I felt it best not to comment upon her "violation" of The EDICT.

"Good luck," captain June Phais of the Sea Star said to us three as the boat grounded and we stepped out into the warm ankle deep water. She would wait with the sails down for Lorraine's signal to come pick her up. Part of our plan was to have Lorraine cause a "diversion" by dropping bottles of jellied gasoline from Black Lady upon Tara's castle. At the same time the ships would approach the city and open fire with their main armament. The catapults on both being able to fire shot a quarter mile.

"Be sure to watch for my signal," Lorraine warned in reply. There were two such signals. The second would warn the ships we had been captured by Tara's people. Lorraine does think of such. We watched the oarsmen or rather oarswomen in this case back oars and saw the boat disappear back in to the darkness of the star sprinkled night. I took Sharon in my arms and gave her a hug of reassurance I did not in the least feel just then. I felt Lorraine's eyes upon us. Wondered what thoughts went through her mind at the sight before her. Sharon had been "hers" not all that long ago. I wondered what her feelings towards me were now?

"I'd rather be here with you than anywhere else," Sharon said to me in low tones, kissing my cheek, clinging to me. I heard the squeak of Lorraine's boots in the sand, saw her shadowed figure, wondered again what thoughts went through her mind?

"You are more my daughter than she who I gave birth to," I said, thinking of Anna now living there on Mars with Raspa. I know it is unfair to Anna, but it is the way I feel. She rejected me, and so I have now "rejected" her in return for my Sharon!

"Another time," I heard Lorraine hiss there in the darkness. The tone of her voice betraying much of the feelings she felt. I sensed the hostility, the hot anger that was being held back now.

"I guess we'd better get going," Sharon answered for us both, the touch of her arm around me comforting just then to me.

"It's like a city out of some fantasy story!" Sharon breathed as we looked down at La Paz, the city an odd combination of old and new, dating back to the time of the early Spanish explorers. Much of the older city is of course now only ruins, leaving only the ghosts of one's imagination now to inhabit them.

"No instant 'urban renewal' by anti-matter bomb," Lorraine smiled from beside us. Standing there, shadowy in black leather. She was carrying her Lorr force saber, a caplock pistol, both weapons concealed so that they would not be noticed by a passerby.

"I think I like Sam or Trella better, though," Sharon said, her hand in mine as we then walked down towards the city below. Her other hand on the hilt of the slim light sword she carried.

"Stay close," I warned Sharon, not that it was in the least necessary after Sharon got her first glimpse of some of the inhabitants of the Bajan capital. My sword a comfort at my hip. Our short leather skirts well revealing our legs, my golden hair now black like Lorraine's and my skin tan like many of those we passed there on the street. The Bajan style of dress different yet from that of California. More like that of Mexico to the east across the Sea of Cortez. Lorraine striding along like she owned the place! The black leather and silk of her attire fitting on that slim muscular body. She is said by some to be the greatest swordswoman that has ever lived. I tend to believe it.

"Things are different, but yet the same," Lorraine observed as she glanced about. The city no doubt having changed much in the six centuries since she had seen it last. Lorraine and Sharon having entered our time by flying through a time-warp produced by The War between Earth and Mars. The use of anti-matter bombs by the Lorr having caused holes to be blasted in the fabric of space-time itself. Such "Gateways" appearing upon a random basis usually inside a violent thunderstorm leading to another time, although it is impossible to ever say "just where", I understand.

"Things do change," I replied with a forced smile, our skins dark like those we passed there on the street, the filth, the odors from animal droppings no doubt bothering Lorraine a bit as she is not as "used" to such things as I am. Her hand resting on the hilt of her sword as we walked along, her eyes restless, never still. She tends not to "trust" people. It is a useful trait for a Warriress to have. She is often used as an example to others of what a "Warriress" should be. I was glad to have her.

"How are you going to get into contact with this Sandia Allis?" Sharon asked, eyeing a man who stared back at her, his eyes stripping her naked of clothing. She was "young", "desirable", her skirt almost crotch high. Men often pay high for the use of a wench like her. I had joked about it a bit with Lorraine earlier, although she had not found it "funny" at all. She does have a "sense of humor", but it is not like my own or Sharon's.

"Don't stare at him!" Lorraine snapped suddenly beside me to her. I smiled at the tone of her voice. And what it betrayed!

"I hope to get a message to her by means of the 'contact' we use," I answered. She had two other of my agents under her command. I could have used an "army" for what I had in mind now.

"And then what?" Sharon asked, Lorraine smiling at me. A couple of Bajan prostitutes (real ones) strolling by, seizing us up. Their leather halters and short nearly crotch high leather skirts leaving no doubts as to the sort of "service" that they provided their "customers". They were not part of Lara's "Guild" that prostitutes of California belong to. Tara never did allow such in her own country. She was "ruthless" in stamping out any form of political or economic organization she couldn't control. On the other hand they do have their own organization, which was controlled totally by the Princess herself! Such of course making it more difficult for anyone like me to operate against her.

"Sharon, don't gawk so much!" Lorraine suddenly snapped, her eyes meeting mine. The tone of her voice speaking much of how she felt here in the capital city of Baja where death was close.

"Do as she says," I said softly, hugging Sharon to myself.

"I don't like this part of the city very much," Sharon said to me in a low voice as we moved past a series of low dives next to the docks, the sound of sensual music coming from the entrances. La Paz is old. It dates far back into history. Into a time before anyone ever dreamed that Man might someday fight a War with those of another world only a speck of light in the sky! It was founded by the Spanish back in the time when galleons yet sailed the seas rich with stolen gold from Indian civilizations!

"I do not think that women would be safe here unless well armed," Lorraine observed. Both Sharon and I were well armed with swords and daggers. Sharon is becoming good with a sword, although she will never be the swordswoman that Lorraine or I am. Even the prostitutes here were well armed, and looked the part of fighting women. I wondered if some of them might not be Tara's own agents keeping "tabs" on her people. Such is not uncommon.

"Like the dockside area of Sarn," Sharon observed with a smile. That part of my capital was a constant

headache for those who were responsible for law enforcement. I suspected the only answer was to use the "methods" that Lorraine now used in Trella.

"Worse, I think," I replied with a smile. Glad Lorraine was walking there at our side. Only a fool would attack a woman like her. On the other hand a teenage beauty like Sharon might find herself stripped and chained with a steel slave collar locked around her neck before the night was over in a place like this!

"Colorful, though," Lorraine smiled, a grim smile curving those thin lips of hers. She is not a beautiful woman, but there is something "attractive" about her. She is extremely competent. The sort of a woman to whom nothing is "impossible", I think.....

### Chapter Thirteen

"You could have picked a better dive than this one," Lorraine smiled at me as we seated ourselves against a wall inside one of the local "establishments". The patrons regarded us with that same look they gave every passing woman, be she a prostitute or not. Only Lorraine had been viewed differently, and with her the reaction had been one of fear. I wondered a bit at that, but suspected that her appearance did have something to do with it! Lorraine is "hard" looking. Like some "gunfighter", Sharon says! There is a "look" about Lorraine that leave little doubt either!

A blonde wench clad in no more than a wisp of silk over her sex took our order. Her bare nipples rouged, her mouth rich and red, even her eyelids painted. The steel band of her slave collar "snug" around her throat well marking her for what she was.

"Barbaric!" Sharon breathed, Lorraine giving me a smile.

"Not like the 20th Century, is it?" Lorraine teased her.

I nodded in agreement as Sharon glanced at me. Yet, I found the Bajan dive somehow strangely exciting. The music stirring the animal passions in my soul. I was muchly aware of my womanhood, of the shortness of my nearly crotch-high black leather skirt. Of the fact that there was nothing but a wisp of silk beneath it. The tubes of "nitro" there in my pouch NOT forgotten.

On a dais a slave girl danced before us, a collar gleaming there around her throat, a wisp of silk between her thighs just covering her sex concealing just enough to tease the imagination. Her nipples rouged, her eyelids painted, her hair a black mane.

"If we can ever settle things with Tara, I wouldn't mind taking a vacation here with Jon (her husband Jon Richards) sometime," Lorraine smiled, glancing about the smoke-filled bar room. The odor of marijuana well mixed with the odor of strong drink. \* \* It would probably be "the drug of choice" in any low technology civilization as it can be grown almost anywhere cheaply. It also was "legalized" by Janet Rogers early in the 21st Century. We should realize that a more "rational" society than ours would not view "drugs" in quite the same light that we of 20th Century America do. As Darlanis noted, "drugs" were not a problem in her own society as there was little profit in "pushing" them. (JBB)

"I still worry a bit about the Lorr and that 'nitro' of yours," I answered her, such having been praying on my thoughts off and on now for some time. The very thought of carrying such an "unstable" explosive next

to my own vulnerable body always in my mind. Lorraine smiled to herself, her eyes glowing into mine.

"Raspa is a good friend of mine," Lorraine smiled back then.

"Does that mean...?" Sharon breathed, her eyes glowing hot!

"There's more," I said, looking into her dark brown eyes. I wondered about her "relationship" with my lovely mother, Aurora.

"I plan for California to hold a 'technological lead' over the rest of the world," she smiled back, her eyes glowing into my own as I nodded, well aware of what she was "referring to" then!

"Your 'University of California'," I ventured. She had spoken to me of such previously. It would not be like those of the past as an educational institution, but would be designed to produce for California a small group of highly educated and intelligent young people capable of restoring the technologies of the 20th and 21st Centuries in as far as the Lorr would allow such.

"The Priestesses of Lys may be a problem," Lorraine added with a smile. The slave-waitress coming with our order putting a temporary but irritating halt to our conversation. I gave her the silver coin for our drinks and saw her hurry off, the mark of the lash just visible on her back if one looked closely at her. In her hand the little envelope I had given her to give to her master. I had finally made contact, I hoped. I did not think we would have to wait long one way or the other had we been betrayed. One never knows when dealing with someone like Tara!

"You spoke of a 'technological lead'," I ventured, curious.

"We are going to have to convince the Lorr that we can live in peace with ourselves before they will ever lift the 'Edict' on us," Lorraine said to me, "And the best way we can do that is to make friends with those countries around us by showing them it is in their own 'interest' to become 'friends' with us in return." Her words something of a surprise coming from a Warlady like her. "Our own political system is a good example of what Man 'needs'." The Empire being "democratic", but yet avoiding the disaster of allowing the "people" total political "control" over everything!

"I see," I smiled, sipping at my wine. Dreaming a bit now. Not of warships, but of what yet could be for the people I ruled. Perhaps it would be even possible to rebuild what once had been. \* \* We won't make the "mistakes" that were made before either now!

"Like what happened in the last decade of the 20th Century," Sharon added, giving me a smile. She had been doing her history!

"I've put Lady Tirana in charge of things," Lorraine said, glancing about the room. "She's capable, competent of seeing it through. Just in case, you know, that something happens to me."

The now sweating dark haired girl finished her dance and was replaced by the attractive blonde who had earlier served us. The delight was a good dancer, I noted with a smile. I often will buy slave girls who please me to be given as gifts to those whose favors I needed. I might have one of my agents buy this one, I thought to myself as she did her dance before us all. She had a good body, pleasing facial features. Being "blonde" was also an "asset" in California, although due to the number of "Nordic type" slave girls it does not bring quite the "premium" that it would have back a number of years ago before the war with Dularn.

I have since a teenager studied such dances, not so as to be able to perform them before men, but more as a means of keeping my figure firm and my body supple. And as a change from working out with springs and weights, which build muscle, but do not tone the body as well as does aerobic dancing, especially the types I prefer to do that cause one to work up a considerable "sweat"!

There are a large number of these dances, ranging from the demure to the openly sensual. A choice that is ample for any who wishes to use them both as a means of exercise and as a means of getting more "close" to yourself as a woman. If you do choose to perform them before a loved one, I might suggest that candles and wine go quite well together, as well as a costume that fits the scene! It helps to remind yourself at times of your womanhood before he looks elsewhere for what he once saw in you, but sees no more. As it was once said long, long ago, "be a 'lady' in the drawing room, but a 'whore' in bed," or something to that nature!

"If things had been different I might be up there right now," Sharon mused, more to herself perhaps than to Lorraine or me. I saw Lorraine's eyes meet mine as I nodded and smiled back. Had it not been for Lorraine's incredible swordsmanship it was quite possible that Sharon could have ended up a dancing slave instead of my Princess! I saw her eyes watching the slave girl. It is a common feminine sexual fantasy to dream of dancing before men as a slave girl. I suppose any woman, if she is a woman, at times wonders a bit about such things. The "reality" is different, I might mention here, and nothing like any sexual fantasy!

"I wish she wasn't here," Lorraine said to me in low tones.

"She knows Tara's castle, I don't," I answered her back.

"I know something of it," Lorraine volunteered in reply.

"Not as much as I do!" Sharon interrupted our conversation.

"It's far too dangerous for you," Lorraine snapped back.

"No more than it is for Darlanis," Sharon pointed out.

"You can draw me a map, go back with Lorraine," I said.

"I'm no good at drawing maps," Sharon smiled back at me.

"She's as stubborn as you are," I smiled back at Lorraine.

"Runs in 'the family', I suppose," Lorraine smiled back.

A little while later a heavy set man suddenly seated himself across the table from me, beside Lorraine, who regarded him with the sort of look she reserves for those she doesn't "trust" very much. The man then slipping me a small key, saying, "You will be contacted", his dark eyes burning into mine as he ignored both Lorraine and Sharon on either side of me. I nodded in reply as the two watched, Lorraine's hand beneath the table. I knew she carried a dagger in a sheath strapped to her thigh. The man then adding as he rose from the chair, "Wait in the room for her." He then took his leave of us, moving among the other patrons of the establishment. On the little key was stamped the number six. I nodded to Lorraine, took Sharon by the arm. "I'll stick by you, just in case," my Warlady said, "until it's time to do my part."



## Chapter Fourteen

"I wonder how many whores got themselves fucked in here," Sharon mused to herself as Lorraine closed the creaky door behind us, a candle there on the bed table spreading a dim glow over the dirty fly-specked walls. Her words making me smile, for my Princess is not the sort of a young lady who usually uses words like that in front of me! Lorraine's dark brown eyes holding mine, concern showing in her stern face as she glanced around the room, her hand unconsciously perhaps now seeking the hilt of her sword. In the 20th Century she commonly always carried a small pistol.

"We could make it out this window and drop to the alley below if we had to," Lorraine said, opening the window, looking out into the darkness of the night. The air warm, humid, and rather smelly. Public sanitation leaves a lot to be desired in La Paz. The black leather she now wore went well with her own appearance. It was quite similar to that worn by Tara's own personal guards.

"We're safe here," I assured her with a smile, although I did not feel "safe" here in La Paz and wouldn't until I had seen the last of it. Like Tara, there was something "unclean" about the place. The men, the women, not like those of our own lands.

"I doubt that," Lorraine answered as Sharon stretched out on the bed behind me, my Warlady lifting her skirt, checking the weapons that were strapped to her thighs. A dagger on one thigh, and a weapon similar to an ice pick being strapped to the other.

"You're 'armed to the teeth'," I commented, seeing her nod as she checked her caplock pistol, another "invention" of hers. Like the "nitro" we were carrying, such also violated The Edict.

"I brought this along too," she smiled, raising her force saber, flicking it on. A blade of pure force nothing could withstand. There was no defense against it except for another one!

"Where are you going?" I asked, Lorraine going to the door.

"For a walk," she answered. "I need a breath of fresh air."

"What does this woman look like that we're waiting for?" Sharon asked as Lorraine closed the door behind herself. A sense of being "alone" going over me as the awesome Warlady left us. While rationally I knew her presence didn't really make that much of a difference, still, it was "comforting" to have her "around".

"Miss Sandia Allis is an attractive blondish woman," I answered. "You'll like her," I added with a smile. Sharon nodded.

"It'd be nice to have 'indoor plumbing'," Sharon replied, sitting there on the bed while I contented myself with the chair.

"I'll go with you if you have to go," I smiled, knowing that this wasn't the sort of a place you'd send a teenage girl to the "privy" without an escort. Sharon is good with a dagger, but her swordsmanship needs work. (And she's Lorraine's stepdaughter!)

"I can wait a while," Sharon said, stretching out and laying back on the bed, the springs creaking beneath her weight. The shortness of her brief leather skirt well displaying her thighs.

"I'll see what kind of accommodations Sandia can find for you while I steal Tara's papers and rescue Lynn," I said to her, thinking that in another few years she would be a Warriorress like me. For seventeen she was a surprisingly competent capable girl.

"Why can't she and your others do it for you?" Sharon asked, turning on the bed to look at me, her young teenage body already showing the "ripeness" of adulthood soon to come. Often girls her age were already married among the lower castes, I recalled. "You could show her how to pick the locks and everything else that she'd need to know." I had such equipment with me. It is a "skill" that Lynn taught me. I suppose it is somewhat "unusual" for a person of my own social status to have such a "skill". There is a common joke around the palace that goes something to the effect that if you lock yourself out, just call upon Lynn or her mistress to open the door for you! I once "hot-wired" Lorraine's airplane too, which gave her rather quite a surprise too!

"It takes a certain 'talent' to pick locks," I answered, thinking that it might not be a bad idea to pick agents with such "talents" if possible. "And Sandia Allis is a serving maid there at the palace (Tara's), and she can't just go wandering around."

"Like in your own palace where you have to have a 'pass' to go up to the upper floors," Sharon smiled back. I nodded. Tara's security system was much like my own, which isn't that surprising when you consider that her "problems" were similar to mine. Similar problems often produce similar solutions to them.

"Then how are you going to do it?" Sharon challenged me, regarding me from those lovely azure eyes of hers. She is a beautiful girl. One who looks the part of being the Imperial Princess of the Empire of California. And with a "sensual" quality to herself that drives all the young men just crazy with desire! She also takes considerable pleasure in "teasing" them a little!

"I haven't figured that one out yet," I answered, returning her smile with one of my own. My caste is of the Warriorresses. We tend to view such problems in terms of sharp blades and sudden attacks upon unsuspecting sentries. Surprise would count a lot.

"Let's just hope Tara's locks aren't any better than yours," Sharon smiled back in reply. I do take pride in my "abilities". It is also something that I can "do" that Lorraine "can't"...

"I don't know what I'd do if something happened to you," she said to me, her words seeming to ring in my ears as she spoke. I saw the flickering light of the candle reflected in her eyes as I nodded, not knowing for the instant what to say in reply to this!

"You have Lorraine," I said, my voice sounding forced even to my own ears, the emotions swirling in my thoughts. She was as much mine as if I had carried her for nine months in my own belly. Nursed her at my own breast. Held her up to my own heart.

"It would not be the same," she answered, regarding me.

Suddenly just then there came a soft knock at the door.

"Open the window and be ready to jump!" I snapped, moving to the door, my drawn sword held ready

there in my right hand as I then slipped the latch with my left hand and stepped back, concealed by the door as it then swung inwards into the room. Sharon standing there on the bed, her hand on the hilt of her sword.

"Awk!" the woman gasped as she stepped into the room, the keen edge of my sword pressing against the softness of her throat as I came from behind her and seized her in a Warrioress' Hold, my left hand in her hair yanking it painfully back while the edge of my sword pressed against her throat left no doubts of the fate she would suffer should she in any way make the "wrong move"! I suspect that Lorraine killed the drug "pusher" in the 20th Century by somewhat similar means considering the nature of the device she used to kill him. She is truly "of" the Warrioresses.

"I trust that you are Sandia Allis," I smiled, Sharon swiftly moving to assist me, and checking her belt pouch while I closed the door behind us with a swift movement of my right foot. Sandia wise enough to keep her hands away from the hilts of her weapons as my Princess swiftly checked the contents of her pouch.

"I am," Sandia Allis breathed, a bit terrified just then as Sharon then undid her harness and stripped her of her weapons. I smiled to myself as I had not even thought to tell Sharon that!!!

"Among her things there should be a coin similar to the one I showed you earlier," I told Sharon, my sword edge still pressed against Sandia's throat. When in the "land of Tara", it is best not to take "anything" for granted. As I did not know Sandia myself that well, except to recall that she was "blondish", I felt it best to make sure that she was actually my own Imperial agent!

"Here it is," Sharon announced, holding it up to the light. It is a piece made to look quite innocent, but yet may be used as a means of identification. There are other means too that I use.

"Sorry to put you through all this, but I had to be sure," I told Sandia, giving her back her things, the sweat showing there on her forehead as she nodded. She had a nice figure, which her attire well displayed as she buckled her harness back about herself. The rise and fall of her breasts speaking of her emotion.

"If her majesty will not take offense, it is fool-hardy for her to be here in La Paz," Sandia Allis now commented in return. "Even more so for her own Imperial Princess to be with her here."

"That is for me to decide," I smiled back, surprised that Sandia had actually recognized me as her own monarch despite my own disguise. She explained that my facial features betrayed me.

Suddenly then the door burst open and Lorraine stumbled into the room, the blood yet oozing from her wounds a horrible sight!

"A squad of Tara's best led by that damn Talon Princess," my Warlady hissed at me through gritted teeth, clutching her lower abdomen where she had been pierced by a sword blade as I helped her to lie down there on the bed. I could see that she was badly hurt, and with internal injuries too! SHE WAS LUCKY TO BE ALIVE!

"You `need' a physician," I breathed, looking into her eyes.

"I am a `physician', and better than your damn quacks," she snapped back. "I `glued' myself back together good enough to get here," she growled, "But I'm not able to do my bombing runs on Tara's palace for you," she gasped, clutching at herself in pain. There are naturally "limits" to what you can

expect even from the amazing healing compounds that are a part of Lorr technology.

"I'll do them," Sharon interrupted, "And fly you back to Trella for proper medical attention before infection starts in."

"'Competent' little thing, isn't she," Lorraine smiled back, the smile obviously "forced" considering the pain she was in now.

"How?" Sandia Allis breathed, looking in horror at Lorraine.

"They came up fast, out of the dark," Lorraine growled back.

"Your force saber?" I ventured, aware that not even she could have stood a force of that size all by herself assuming it was composed of competent swordswomen, as Lorraine had just said.

"Got eight of them, the other three run off, including that little Talon bitch," Lorraine breathed, her eyes looking up into mine. She had a couple other minor wounds, but the one that most worried me was the stab into her abdomen, which was quite deep!!!

"We've got to get you back to the ships," I answered back, concerned for her life. Worried too about what Taraknew of us!

"I'll do that, and fly the plane," Sharon said, her eyes meeting mine. "And I'll see that she gets back to Trella too."

"Lorraine, change outfits with me," I suggested. Those who had escaped Lorraine's terrifying force saber would be back, and in numbers that even she and Sharon would not be able to handle!

"You're pretty smart for a 'blonde'," Lorraine smiled back.

"You're my 'ace in a hole' if Taragets me," I answered. I didn't want to think about that. About what it would be "like"!

"Better take this too," Lorraine said, giving me her pistol, a packet of the paper wrapped "cartridges" for it, extra "caps".

"Now, Sandia, we need the help of your 'friends'," I said to her as I watched Sharon helping Lorraine stumble down the street. I had poured half a bottle of whiskey over the Queen of Trelandar to make it appear as if she had been drinking. The other half had gone poured down her throat to ease the pain of her wounds.

"They're dead, both of them," Sandia answered in even tones. "Found with their swords in their hands in a back alley only last night. They weren't as 'lucky' as your Warlady was." she added.

"Then it's just you and me," I smiled back. She nodded. I had told her what was at issue here. That if I failed to find any proof of Tara's "meddling" in things that the Empire would declare war upon Dularn. That thousands of lives were at stake!

## Chapter Fifteen

I carefully crept down the dimly lit carpeted hallway, Sandia Allis close behind me, still a bit queasy from seeing me kill the sentry as I had done using Lorraine's ice pick like weapon. As Lorraine had said, it was much "cleaner" a weapon and didn't cause anywhere as much bleeding as would have a dagger when you rammed it through a person's throat right up into their brain! Muffled yells assuring me that Sharon was still yet bombing the castle from Black Lady with quart bottles of jellied gasoline! I had no doubt that Tara's people were doing their best to control the fires, although there was little "danger" as the castle was built entirely of stone, and Lorraine's firebombs were only something to "distract" those "on duty" while Sandia and I looked for whatever we might use against the infamous Princess. Sandia had unfortunately known little about Lynn's whereabouts, except to say that the Princess was keeping her as a sort of "plaything"!

I had allowed Sandia to "distract" the sentry on the floor below by exposing her breasts to him while I stepped around to one side, the man fortunately then paying too much "attention" to Sandia and not enough to me. It had been quick. There had not been much of an outcry, or much blood either. Sandia had looked pretty shaken however at the sight, which made me smile a bit. I don't think that she ever seen anyone killed in "cold blood" before. Neither had her Empress, but I didn't tell her that then!

Tara's castle dates back nearly a thousand years to another era entirely. Back to an era when the early Spanish explorers first came to this area. Here they built a massive heavy edifice of great black stone mined by Indian slave labor from a quarry a few miles away, and constructed for themselves a castle nearly proof against the primitive cannon of the day. I wondered how well it would stand up to aerial bombardment from Black Lady. No doubt Princess Tara was considering the same thought right now! I was getting worried about Sharon, about what "could happen".

My every sense was keenly alert for danger, the hilt of my slender rapier like sword in its ornate scabbard close at hand as we carefully crept down the hallway, only a few lamps set in the walls lighting our way. Half a dozen tightly corked tubes of nitroglycerine in my pouch, with Sandia carrying a similar amount, although not of her own wishes, the stuff muchly terrifying her. I had Lorraine's pistol now tucked into the back of my harness, ready to hand should I need it, although I prefer edged weapons.

Here and there faint marks on the stones told of another era, of another who had lived here nearly six centuries before! I thought of Lorraine's widowed sister Maria. Once this great pile of stone had been hers. They had been close. I could almost feel her ghost looking over my shoulder here in Triskelion. Her daughter had been involved in Janet Rogers' "administration".

As we carefully crept down that dark and dank corridor, I was very much aware of what could happen if we were caught. The thought going through my mind that swift death might be much to be preferred to the fate that Tara meted out to "spies" like us!

I paused before a heavy dark oaken door set in the stones of the wall. The few flickering lamps spaced along the castle's upper corridor lighting little but the cold stones of the wall behind them. Glancing in both directions, Sandia beside me, her sword in her hand, the blade glistening in the lamplight, I pressed my ear to the door, the nerves taut in my black clad body. Listening for a moment for any sound before then inserting the lockpick. Working it into the mechanism of the lock, then hearing it click softly open before me. I breathed a prayer of thanks to Lys that it had worked, my dark stained body under the black leather of my attire now damp with a cold sweat from nervous tension. Sandia beside me openly sweating,

shifting from foot to foot as if she needed to relieve herself as very well she might! Such nervous tension often stimulating one's kidneys!

"Lys, if I ever get out of this alive I'm taking up another line of `work'," she breathed, her eyes glowing up into mine as I nodded and pushed the door open. I prayed that Sharon had enough sense to keep her altitude up when she flew over on her bombing runs. Tara had heavy ballistae mounted up on the roof. She knew "something" of airplanes. Had enough knowledge to be able to give orders that the plane was to be "lead". It would take only one bolt. I remembered how surprised Lorraine had been the year before when some pirate had put a ballistae bolt through a wing! It had been a good lesson in how effective our own "primitive technology" could be up against that of the Twentieth Century!

"Let's hope you know what you're talking about," I said to Sandia, who had been my spy in Tara's castle for several months. Posing as a serving maid to the now infamous evil Bajan Princess.

"This is where she keeps her files," Sandia assured me as I closed the door behind us. The room as dark as the bowels of a coal mine as I flicked my "lighter", that little fire-making device often carried by those of the 26th Century to make a fire. The heavy dark stone of the walls shadowy and dank. The contents of the room dim in the shadows the lighter barely illuminated. The movement of the shadows making me nervous as Sandia stood there beside me. The vivid knowledge of what "awaited" us if caught preying on my mind as it no doubt did upon Sandia's. I have faced "danger" before, but this was quite utterly different!

Finding a candle, I then lit it, snapping shut my lighter and replacing it in the black leathern pouch that hung from my harness a bit too snug around my waist, the clothing having been Lorraine's, whose waist is a couple inches slimmer than my own!

"Look in those files over there while I take these," I said to Sandia, wondering how much "time" we had before Tara managed to restore "order" after Sharon's "bombing runs" on the castle!

Earlier Sandia had told me that she believed from what she had heard that Darl Jord, my brother, husband of Maris, Queen of Dularn, was actually a secret "ally" of the evil Bajan Princess. Such would "explain" much of what had happened in the last few weeks. The attacks upon Californian shipping by a "Dularnian raider" despite the fact that Queen Maris denied any such thing!

She had also told me that the evil Princess seemed to have "contacts" with the criminal underworld of both Trelandar and Sarn, as well as "having a finger in the pie" in other countries! Such did explain much that I had always wondered about. Things that Lara had told me that seemed quite odd, strange at the time.

With such in my possession I could write "finis" to Tara's infamous career, her treason to her own people and to the Empire now something that none could doubt. While she would have her supporters, I had no doubt that given the truth, the people of Baja would rise up against their evil ruler and depose her in favor of her son, Jers, who was honest and straight forward, the sort of a young man who could make Baja a lovely place to live!

Careful not to make any more noise than necessary, I picked the file's simple lock with my lockpick after picking Sandia's for her and both of us set to work going through Tara's records. Hoping against hope that Tara had been careless and had left something that we could use as proof of her involvement with my brother in Dularn and the criminal underworld of western North America. Tara's activities having made the "Mafia" of the 20th Century look like the activities of a bunch of schoolboys in comparison. The Princess being the sort who had few enemies simply because very few of them ever lived long enough

to be "dangerous" to her! In this regard she more resembled the drug overlords of South America in the last decade of the 20th Century before Janet Rogers finally put an end to such nonsense by "legalizing drugs"!

Perhaps it was the light from the candle glowing under the door or perhaps one of us made a noise unknowingly, but suddenly the door sprang open, and there stood a guard! A big burly brute of a man in a short brown leather kilt and vest, high strapped sandals on his feet, a polished steel helmet on his head. Trouble, and lots of it! His great yard long longsword gleaming there in his hand as he confronted the two of us standing there!

"A pair of spies!" he snarled, leaping forward without thinking of the consequences. Swinging a mighty cut at Sandia as she jumped back in terror while reaching for her own sword! I leaped to one side of him and thrust up, my point driving deep, coming up from below, through the side of his neck and up into the lower portion of the brain. Death was of course swift as he now collapsed there before us, the blood spurting from his wound.

"If there are more like him---," Sandia breathed softly, her eyes gleaming there in the candle light as I shut the door again and locked it. I did not think the man would be missed. Not for a while yet. It would be some time before Tara would be able to restore order after the bombing of her castle by Black Lady. It would be a blow to her pride I knew she would not forget for some time. "Proof" that we could at any time mount an attack on her from the air, and there wasn't a thing she could do about it in return! Not as long as the airplane stayed well up in the air! I suspected that the "attack" of the two ships in the harbor was also something to keep her "occupied" just a bit now with things.

"Push that rug there up against the bottom of the door," I said to her, turning back to my labors. I had come this far, and I wasn't going to run off just because of one stupid dumb guard!

"Nothing here we can use," I growled to myself. The bombing of the castle had stopped, Sharon having exhausted her supply of jellied gasoline. I didn't like to consider the possibility that she had been shot down by one of Tara's ballistae although that was possible if she came too low over the castle and one of the Princess' men got "lucky" with his ballistae or even a crossbow!

"We'd better get out of here," Sandia Allis breathed, the fear showing in her eyes. I wondered how she had ever been able to work here as "terrified" of the Princess as she obviously was?

"Damn it!" I snarled, thinking of all risks taken in vain! And I didn't have the faintest idea either where Lynn was being held! Sandia having said to me that she seemed to be Tara's new "favorite plaything" from what she had heard others speak of her.

"Take me with you," Sandia breathed. "It's too dangerous now for me to stay here any more." I nodded, wondering about how Lorraine was doing. She had been seriously wounded by Tara's own warrioresses there in La Paz. I wondered how she had been recognized as being who she was. And why Sharon and I had not been?

"We'll be out of here and on the Seahawk in another couple hours," I assured her with a smile, praying what I said was true!

We had just closed the door behind ourselves when to our horror we saw half a dozen more guards come strolling down the dim lamp-lit corridor towards us. The men whipping out their swords and charging down upon us! Reaching in my pouch, I tossed a tube of nitroglycerine down the corridor towards them, the tube falling a dozen feet before them and exploding with a bright flash and a loud

thunderous "BOOM" that nearly deafened us both!

"Run for it!" I cried, grabbing Sandia, who was almost as stunned by the blast as the guardsmen were! Tossing another tube of "nitro" at them to keep them dazed as we then fled down the corridor. The blasts, I feared, would serve to draw even more!

Three Warriresses came dashing towards us, women of Tara's own personal guard. I flung another tube of nitroglycerine, one of the women going down, and met the blade of another with my own as we fought there in that smoke filled hallway, our ears still ringing from the blast in such a confined area! The woman I faced no match for me as I got my point under her guard and sent her to the afterlife to face Lys and be judged for her own sins!

I saw Sandia stagger back, hurt, the Warriress driving forward, my point taking her in the side of the neck. The yells of the men behind us leaving no doubt that they had finally gathered their wits about themselves once again after the stunning blasts from the nitroglycerine that I had thrown at them! I grabbed my companion by the wrist, dragging her with me as we fled towards the stairs that led to the main floor below! Sandia gasping as I dragged her along, the blood running down her body from her stab!

"Get them!" I heard cry, a half dozen Warriresses charging up from below. I flung nitroglycerine like a mad woman, both my own and Sandia's. The blasts stunning us almost as much as them!

We leaped down the stairway, stumbling over the stunned and still bodies of those who had sought to stop us. I saw more in the smoke, the dust, saw Princess Tara point at us. Saw more of her Warriresses now charge us. I flung the last of the "nitro"!

Something whizzed out of the dust, the smoke, a crossbow bolt! Sandia's eyes wild as she turned to me, the bolt buried in her chest, the head sticking out between her shoulderblades! I caught her in my arms as she fell, but there was nothing I could do for her now. I prayed that Lys would be merciful when she stood before her and was judged for her sins. I feared that I would soon be standing at her side. They had the exits blocked. There was no escape now. I knew Lorraine would avenge me. Once before I had fallen alive into Tara's hands. I would not make the same mistake again! I drew Lorraine's pistol, cocked it, and fired directly at Tara! The Princess leaping to one side as I fired, the heavy recoil of the weapon jarring! I had MISSED HER!

"Get the bitch!" Tara screamed, pointing at me. "Get her!" I took a better grip on the hilt of my sword. This time I would die a Warriress' Death here in Baja! None of Tara's tortures!!!

They backed me up against a wall, perhaps a dozen of Tara's women, even more of her men. They were very "polite" about it. I have no doubt that they knew I was Darlanis Marden, Queen of Sarn, the Empress of California. That my skill with a sword is second only to that of Lorraine Richards, the greatest swordswoman of all time! The Princess herself urging them on, standing there. Sela Dai, that little Talon Princess, there at her side.

"Well, damn it, go get her!" Tara screamed angrily, none of her men or women being all that eager to cross blades with me. I wondered if she would set an "example" and face me. I rather doubted it. I "beat" Tara once. She knows I could do it again.

A crossbowman of Tara's stepped forward, his weapon cocked and loaded, leveled at my heart. I saw Sela Dai leap forward, and force the crossbow aside! "No," she cried, "Not that way!" The beautiful little brunette Princess for the moment saving me!



"Is this what you came for, Darlanis?" Tara taunted me, Lynn there at her side, naked, her pubes shaved, her wrists fixed to some sort of harness around her hips so that she could not defend herself against any who wished to rape her. Her dark eyes filled with horror as they looked into mine. I knew something of what a skilled torturer like Taracan "do" to a person if she wishes to.

"She's only a slave girl, Tara," I answered, hoping that the Princess had little "inkling" of the "relationship" between us. Tara's forces pressing close, their points menacing me. None yet dared to cross blades with me. They knew well of my "reputation" with a sword. I am generally considered second only to Lorraine!

"We've waited long enough now," Tara snapped to her people, "Take her, but don't kill her!" I "shuddered" at the thought of what might "await" me at her hands! With Tara death can be slow!

My blade met that of the first man, his reckless attack almost instantly fatal as my keen point opened a small, but deadly slit in the center of his throat. One down, another couple dozen to go! Another pinked me in the shoulder before I got my point underneath her guard and sent her on to her next reincarnation!

"Get her!" Tara snapped. "She's only one woman, damn it!" The Princess standing there, her face growing red with rage now!

"'Gether' yourself!" one of her warrioresses then snapped back! It was obvious that none wished to face me point to point.

"Get a heavy rug," Sela Dai snapped, "Throw it over her!"

I saw Tara's eyes gleam with pleasure into mine as they brought a rug, a big heavy rug well over half a dozen feet across. I tried to edge to one side, but they had me hemmed in.

"Now!" Sela cried, the men throwing the rug over me, the little Princess leaping forward, grabbing my sword arm, clinging with both hands to my arm as they swarmed over me, beat me down!

## Chapter Sixteen

"I was rather expecting that you would show up, my dear Darlanis," Princess Tara said to me with a cold smile, standing there before me. Her dark eyes burning down into mine as her men held me down on my knees before her there in her luxurious bedroom. The lights of La Paz there visible through one of the castle's narrow windows to the south. I had been rudely stripped, intimately searched, my hair unbound. My wrists shackled behind me, my ankles crossed, then tied so that I could not get to my feet. I was bruised, battered, and without hope as I knelt before her, well aware of the "fate" I'd suffered with her before!

Tara was now wearing a lovely long silken robe over a matching brief black silken nightshift. She had just bathed and perfumed herself, although just why was a question for which I had no answer just then. She is a beautiful woman with fine aristocratic features and a quite excellent figure. She had been the

Queen of Sarn before her husband Thar Marden divorced her to later marry me. Lorraine says that she looks something like a 20th Century woman by the name of Bianca Jagger. The eyes, the face, the figure being quite much the same. Due to a duel that I once fought with her, she is crippled in the right wrist to a certain extent and no longer has full use of her right hand. Because of this, she wears a lined sturdy steel bracelet over the wrist to strengthen it, the hilt of her sword being modified for better control. Her skill with a sword having been reduced only slightly from what I have seen and heard of her once famous abilities. She is also scarred slightly on one cheek, but this is not something unusual for women of my caste, many of whom are often such.

"There is Lorraine," I answered in level tones. Tara was almost terrified of Lorraine. Perhaps with good reason. My Warlady is like a bulldog. Her "stubbornness" is well known to all.

"The bombs did little damage," Tara answered in icy tones. "The ships oddly enough none at all," the Princess smiled back. They had orders to that effect. That the shot would fall short. I did not wish to take innocent life. My only interest was Tara.

"They were but a 'distraction'," I answered, looking up. I had no doubt that Lorraine could make more nitroglycerine. Drop gallon jugs of the stuff if necessary directly upon Triskelion! That would "crack" Tara's castle like nothing else could, I knew! What the Lorr might "do" however about such was another matter!

"Your former slave girl has much 'delighted' my men," Tara smiled back, indicating Lynn kneeling there at one side of the room, her head down, her coal black hair half covering her face. She was completely nude save for the leather straps that held her helplessly in bondage with her wrists held securely at her hips. Such is sometimes done to "discipline" a disobedient slave girl. "I also had her 'shaved' as such delights my men even more," Tara added, her dark eyes burning with a sexual fire right into mine! It is a common cultural practice that only free women are shaved.

"No doubt the same 'fate' awaits me," I answered her back. I had little doubt that her men at arms would enjoy "having" me.

"Men do find a woman like you 'beautiful'," Tara smiled. "Doubtlessly the Emperor of Mexico will be delighted to have you in his harem as a 'showpiece'." I shuddered mentally at the very thought of what it would be like to live out the rest of my life that way. Some "plaything" for a tyrant to "show off" as he so wished. On the other hand Tara had to "get me there", and that I thought might be just a bit of a "problem" for her with Lorraine!

"Or perhaps Prince Serak of the Nevadas," I suggested with a smile back, my now dyed hair falling a bit before my face as I knelt there before her. I had no doubt Tara was considering what might now be the most "profitable" way of "disposing" of me! Of turning my captivity to her own eventual "profit". I muchly preferred of course to be "Serak's" if I was to be someone's slave!

"I think the Emperor of Mexico would be a better choice," she smiled back, her dark eyes burning down with delight into my own as I shuddered at her words. At the "thought" of what it would be like should such actually become my "fate" now in life! "He is after all a good 'ally' of mine and I suppose it would be 'wise' to keep him happy," the Bajan Princess leered down at me!

"I suspect however that 'what' he will 'receive' will not be what he 'expects'," I answered her in reply, well "aware" of the sort of "delusions" that men often had about a woman like myself.

"That is 'his problem' not 'mine'," Tara then smiled back.

"And what do you plan to do to Lynn?" I queried in reply.

"She pleases my men," the Bajan Princess smiled in return.

"And no doubt you 'too'," I replied, knowing Tara as I did. Wondering Tara would dare attempt to do the "same" with me too!!!

"I know just exactly 'what' you came here for," Tara said. I supposed her people had found the body of the guard I had slew.

"Others know what I suspected," I answered, regarding her. "There will be no war between Dularn and the Empire," I added, my hope being that my veto would not be overturned by the Assembly and the Senate and war declared against Dularn. Lorraine's attitude worried me however, my Warlady being of the opposite opinion to mine. There has been "bad blood" between Maris and Lorraine ever since she was a slave girl on Lorraine's vast estates there in Trelandar. It would not take too much to cause a conflict between the Empire and Dularn if I was not there to control things!

"I think there will be, especially when that 20th Century Warlady of yours suffers another attack on her very own estates," Tara answered back. Her cruel smile making me shudder to myself! That would be all it would take to infuriate Lorraine, cause her to push for a declaration of war against Dularn even if it meant overriding my veto! I wondered what she had to gain by all this?

"Why?" I asked. "Why do you want a war between Dularn and the Empire?" Thousands would die in such a war, and for what? I feared too that a "weakened" California might fall victim to others who could come like vultures to "feast" upon its "remains"!!!

"Wars are often quite 'profitable' for the 'right people'," Tara smiled back. "I have made certain 'investments' and I hope for a 'quick return' from them," she added, her eyes chilling me. "And I think the Lorr will 'rid' me of your famous Warlady too." Tara now going on to say that after Lorraine "violated" the EDICT enough times the Lorr would be finally forced to act against her!

"Also I don't really think that 'brat' of yours will be much of a 'problem' for me," Tara laughed, her eyes burning into mine! "Especially once I'm 'rid' of you and that 'Warlady' of yours," she added, Tara obviously having "plans" for the Empire itself!

"There are 'others'," I replied, thinking of Lady Tirana, of Sanda Talen of Trelandar, whose "talents" I had to "admire" even if I really still didn't care that much yet for the woman myself!

"I will 'deal' with them when the 'time' comes," she smiled, motioning with a wave of her hand to her men and then down at me. "And with any 'others' who 'get in my way'," Tara smiled at me.

"I think I prefer you as a blonde," Tara said to me as I stood spreadeagled before her a few minutes later, bound to two pillars. We were now alone at her order. Her long slim fingers touching me, those dark eyes of hers burning into mine. I felt much like a fly caught in a spider's web. She was very beautiful in the brief nightshift, her robe now undone, her figure nearly flawless despite her age. Once I had "admired" her considerably. I had at one time looked upon her for help, for companionship. I had considered myself so fortunate to have a "friend" like Tara Bisan, the Princess of Baja, the former Queen of Sarn. I had later made her my Warlady after Hara Eslund had refused to "obey" me, even made her son my own successor to the throne of the Empire! My relationship with her had been surprisingly "trusting" considering the "fact" that her husband had divorced her to marry me. On the other hand I don't

think Tara had loved him anyway... Tara being the sort of a woman who is more interested in "power"! In making a "name" for herself as she once "had" as my "Warlady". She is also the sort of a person who would much rather give "orders" than have to negotiate as I do with members of the Senate.

"You do have a certain 'value'," Tara admitted with a smile. The time before she had attempted to kill me, or rather let me die of an internal infection. Lorraine's surgery having saved my life, although at the cost of my ability to ever bear children.

"And from what Lynn tells me you are quite 'responsive'," she teased, touching me intimately down there between my thighs. "The Emperor will enjoy a slut like you, one with hair like yours the color of gold." Women of my coloring are now rare in Mexico.

"It's a long ways from here to there," I pointed out to her.

"Not as 'far' as you think," the Princess smiled in reply.

"And have you ever wondered how I manage to 'keep a jump' ahead of your agents and that redoubtable Warlady of yours?" Tara purred, her dark eyes now glowing hot up into mine. The touch of her fingers down there doing things to me that made me hate my body for responding so! The fact that my bladder was also uncomfortably "full" perhaps also having something to do with it all.

"I assume that you are using the technology of the past," I answered, trying to keep my mind off of what she was doing to me!

"Perhaps there is a brain in that beautiful head after all!" Tara laughed delightedly. Tara has never considered me very intelligent. She has about the same opinion of my intelligence that Lorraine has, I rather suspect. Tara is an extremely intelligent woman, an equal to Lorraine in my own considered opinion. Under other circumstances I have no doubts that she would have eventually ended up ruling the Empire as its Empress after something had "happened" to me. Her capabilities, her competence, equal those of Lorraine or someone like Lady Tirana, who reminds me much of Lorraine in her own way. Tirana once warned me about Tara, but at the time I had only thought it "sour grapes" and had paid her warning very little attention. I learned better later!

"Something like a telegraph," I ventured. Such could be used without the Lorr being the wiser. Their technology is awesome, but also "limited". A telegraph could be operated by Tara without anyone being the wiser. The technology was simple enough. One only requires well cell batteries, a "key", and operators at each end of the line. Such technology existed back in the Nineteenth Century. It wouldn't be that difficult for Tara.

"And I always thought you a 'dumb blonde'!" Tara laughed.

"Appearances can be often 'deceiving'," I smiled back through gritted teeth, fighting the sensations she was now arousing in me. I fought to think of something else, anything so that I wouldn't have sexual release there in front of her. Not like that, not with her fingers wiggling like maddened snakes in me!

"But the 'truth' will 'out'," Tara teased, stroking my clitoris with her thumb. "And then there will be no 'doubts'."

"Damn You!" I hissed, my naked body arching helplessly from her touch. Why did my body respond so? Was I truly only a slut?

"There is something I would like to show you," Tara said to me as I hung helpless in my chains before her, humiliated beyond belief by the fact that she had brought me to orgasm by her hand!

"What is it now?" I hissed, both angry and humiliated too.

"But first I'd better let you relieve yourself before you lose 'control' and wet all over my fine carpet," Tara smiled, holding a pan up between my thighs, her eyes glowing hotly into mine as I blushed with the terrible embarrassment of so doing it!

"And now a little perfume to take care of your stink," she said, spraying me with perfume from an atomizer equipped bottle.

"Now a chain around your not so slim waist for safety," she teased, slipping a chain around me and locking it. She then freed my left wrist and pulling it back around me, locked it to the chain behind me. The same was then done to my right wrist.

"I'm not foolish enough to attempt to escape," I pointed out. I was, but I didn't let on that I might try it if the opportunity ever offered itself. I doubted that Tara believed me.

"I'm not 'fool' enough to believe you," she smiled back, unfastening my ankles only after seeing that I was securely bound.

"I'm going to have to get that stain off you and dye your hair back to its natural color," Tara observed, standing there before me. I was naked, chained, and leashed like an animal. The end of the leash in her hand as she stood there before me. I suspected that she was taking considerable pleasure in all this!

"I suppose I would be more 'attractive' that way," I answered, a naked, chained "slave", helplessly bound. I thought of Lynn, wondered if Tara would amuse herself by watching my raping.

"You are a 'born slave'," she smiled back. Such is perhaps true for any woman given the "right" master. I do know that my friend Lorraine yields well in the arms of her husband. No doubt Lara does the same in Jers' arms. I do not believe that men and women are the "same". That was a "stupidity" that those of the past sometimes held. It no doubt contributed its part to the ultimate social destruction of "Western" society. The social "disorders" there at the turn of the century that eventually led to the rise of Janet Rogers, Mankind's first and only "world" ruler.

"'Here' is what you were so vainly searching for," Tara said to me a short while later on. We were now beneath the castle's dungeons. It was chill, dank, damp, the rock of the walls chill. The flame of the oil lamp there in Tara's hand shedding a weak glow over things. Enough to find one's way, little more. I saw a big hairless mutated rat scurry off into the inky darkness. The Princess having "started" a bit with surprise as the mutated rodent leaped out from beneath her feet to scurry off. The sight making me smile a bit then. Obviously Tara's "nerves" were not as "good" as she attempted to make me believe. The stones were cold, slippery under my bare feet. I was naked, chained, leashed, helpless. Helpless in the power of the Bajan Princess!

Then before us was a door, a door of gleaming steel, made of the rustless steels of the Ancients, locked, the door's lock one of a design I had never seen before that opened by the insertion of a plastic card into the lock. Such a lock, I suspected, would not be "pickable" by anyone of this era. The design, from what I learned from Tara, being of the 21st Century just before The War.

## Chapter Seventeen

"I have reason now to believe from what I've found that Janet Rogers used this as a sort of `refuge'," Princess Tara of Baja said to me with a smile as she opened the stainless steel door there far below Triskelion, the room below brightly lit, not by the torches or lamps I would have expected, but by glowing panels set in the ceiling and the walls, panels that spoke of a technology now far beyond ours. THE TECHNOLOGY OF THE ANCIENTS! Scattered about machines, devices like none I'd ever seen before!

"Originally, there was a system of computers, but those have over the centuries given out, and I have to rely upon much more primitive and crude means of communication," Tara said to me as I stood there naked, helpless, leashed as a slave there before her. The room around me once hewn out of the living rock itself speaking of an age now long dead. An age now more legend than fact! An age when men traveled in space to other worlds like the Lorr. On the wall a great map of the Earth, vividly detailed in color! The countries clearly marked out in different colors. A flag of THE NEW ORDER, the "Crossed Thunderbolts", yet draped over it! And to my utter amazement on either side paired photographs, one of Janet Rogers herself, the other of Lorraine in her own time! My friend looking little different than what she did now, I saw!!

"Janet Rogers `credited' Lorraine with developing the concepts that made up `THE NEW ORDER'," the Princess of Baja spoke. Her dark eyes burning into mine. "A social order that had a number of parallels with that of another some eighty years before." \* \* There were of course "parallels" if you "look" enough, but to even compare Janet Rogers with Adolph Hitler is utter nonsense! On the other he had his "NEW ORDER" and she had her "NEW ORDER"!

"That is `your opinion', not mine," I answered her, looking about at things that I'd seen before only in the Royal Museum! I had no doubt that at least some of the equipment was still usable too! And in the hands of Tara? The woman Lorraine called "The Princess of Darkness" perhaps with good reason, I suspected now!

"Most of this still `functions'," Tara replied with a smile.

"How?" I breathed, awed, impressed even despite myself! I could recognize the computers by their keyboards, monitor screens, but some of the devices were beyond my comprehension! I supposed Lorraine MIGHT have understood, but she was a woman of the 20th Century, and this was of the 21st, decades beyond her!

"The power of the atom," Tara smiled. "The direct conversion of the energy released by atomic disintegration into electrical energy." Such a power source, I knew, could operate for centuries without any attention. "They were far beyond us." I nodded, seeing her eyes. I wondered just how "sane" she was now! Tara was a "dangerous" woman, especially now with all this stuff!

"There are weapons?" I ventured then, fearing the worst now.

"Unfortunately none of them are functional any more," she answered. I was "thankful" for that. I knew something of the weaponry of the 21st Century. The perfection of "small arms". A few dozen men armed

with the military rifles of the last years of Janet Roger's World Federation could have routed a full Legion!

"ThankLysfor that," I breathed, not thinking just then.Tarais an atheist, and makes no "bones" about that fact either!

"There is noLys, only a `myth' spread by the Priestesses for their own `profit'," Princess Tara answered with a laugh. I recalledher own atheism. Her belief that there was noLYS. I also recalled whatLorraine had told me. What she had written in her book of her experiences there on the planet Mars. The "religious" experience she had experienced there. I had tended to discount the fantastic tale, especially her predictions about me. None of that made any sense. None at all! Why should I be "THE QUEEN OF LIGHT" thatLys(whoLorrainecalled "SHE") had spoken about to her? And whileTarawas an evil person, she certainly didn't really qualify as being the "Anti-Lys" that the Priestesses talk about! And my destroyingTarain a "BLAST OF LIGHT" was equally ridiculous! The entire tale was simply the "result" of Raspa's venom working onLorraine's mind. That she had seen a "vision" didn't surprise me all that much! There are after all a number of well known drugs that do almost the exact same thing to people! And even Raspa had said it was just the effects of her venom uponLorraineand nothing else. That had "settled" it for me! I did however, believe in an "after-life", whichTaradidn't. Not solely because of the Priestesses orLorraine's own experiences in the 20th Century, but because there were just too many examples of "ghosts" and other things to believe otherwise!

"Lysexists," I smiled, "And you'll metHer someday too." I suspected thatTarawouldn't much "enjoy" the experience either.

"You always were a `dumb blonde',"Tarasnapped back. I smiled at that. There is no evidence that hair color has anything to do with intelligence. Such ideas are nothing but myth.

"Calling me `names' does not alter the truth," I answered, looking up at the map, the flag suspended there on the rock wall.

"I suppose such beliefs have their value," she smiled back. "The Priestesses do have a pretty good `thing' going for themselves. Just like the Christians and the others once used to do before the other religions were stamped out by the Priestesses."Taranow going on to say that the Priestesses had done so, so that they might better control all of Mankind for their own profit! I have heard such arguments before. Christianity was a disaster! The simple fact that it actually "encouraged" overpopulation was enough in itself to condemn it. Read THE BOOK OF LYS for proof!

"What the Priestesses tell us is the truth," I answered her. I knew that Lorraine claimed that they were an "invention" of Janet Rogers, but that did not alter the reality of the "truths" that they spoke, but merely showed that Janet had somehow discovered by her awesome technology the TRUTH of the nature of LYS!

"You have readLorraine's book?"Tarachallenged me back.Lorraine's book is in two parts, the first being published just shortly before all this happened. The second part at the time I was a captive ofTara not having yet at that time been published.

"Of course," I laughed. I even had several chapters in the second part.Lorrainehad asked me to write them, to add "color" to her own writings. I had done so. Even Sanda had a "chapter"!

"She writes that she suggested to Janet Rogers before she was transported here to our time that an organization like our present Priestesses should be established as a means of `social control'," Tara smiled back, a gleam of triumph there in her eye. "And her mind is one that I do respect," she admitted,

to my surprise. Lorraine had once hinted to me that Tara was her mental equal.

"And?" I challenged the Princess back. The setting around us a strange one for an argument over the merits of our religion. If the Priestesses were the "invention" of Lorraine or Janet Rogers, that merely indicated how intelligent both women had been! \* \* The present "role" of the Priestesses is only further proof!

"And that `means' that she, or more likely Janet Rogers was responsible for the Priestesses of Lys!" Tara smiled, now acting quite pleased with herself as if she had "won" this discussion!

"Lorraine admitted to me that she discovered the existence of the after-life back in her own time and no doubt Janet continued on with her work after she disappeared through the Gateway," I smiled back. I had once spoken with Lorraine of such matters.

"Or perhaps Lorraine suggested to Janet that such a thing might be helpful in their plans to rule the world," Tara smiled. "Since as you know, that was her `ambition' back in her own time. And one, I suspect, that she still believes to be possible now."

"And where did you get that idea?" I challenged her back. Doubtlessly a bit "mouthy" for a female slave in my own position.

"You are too `dumb' to notice the fact that Lorraine has risen here in our time from a homeless time traveler to being the second most powerful woman in the Empire of California," Tara answered. "And doesn't that prove that she now plans to do to the world what the Gateway prevented her from doing in her own time?" I really couldn't see "how" Lorraine could "do" it even if she tried to do so. Not as long as the EDICT yet remained in effect!

"The `technology' doesn't exist for a world government," I pointed out with a smile. A sudden chill going over me as I then realized that Lorraine was a good friend of Raspa, First among the Lorr. That if Raspa put the resources of the Lorr at Lorraine's disposal, my Warlady could take over the world whenever she wanted to! And Lorraine had done enough things in the time she had been here in our own time to indicate that she viewed the present political situation as being one badly in need of change!

"The Lorr maintain three battle-discs in high orbit around the Earth along with who knows how many agents here on Earth," the Princess answered. "And Lorraine is the friend of the Lorr." There was also "Deimos", their old star ship now in orbit around the Earth being used as an "eye in the sky" to watch over us too!

"But she's my friend! My best friend!" I hotly protested!

"She's `using' you like I did all those years," Tara smiled, her dark eyes burning into mine. "As I will `use' you once more for my own purposes, but this time as a beautiful slave slut!"

"I once also thought you were my `friend'," I answered her.

"You were always a `dumb blonde'," Tara smiled coldly. "Someone to be `used' by others for their own gain. First me, then Lorraine. Just a `dumb slut' good for nothing but pleasing men. That's all you really are, Darlanis. Just a `dumb cunt'!"

"Lorraine will come for you someday, Tara," I answered her.



"I have already taken 'measures' to deal with Lorraine," the evil Princess smiled back. "My 'agent' among the Servitors will see that she comes to a swift if perhaps 'flaming' end soon now." The Princess going to say that she would see to it that Black Lady was "shot down" by a Lorr ship flown by her "agent"! "She has always been a far more serious threat to my ambitions than you were, you dumb cunt," Tara laughed, standing there among the computers and the communications equipment of the 21st Century so remarkably "preserved" despite the passage now of centuries! \* \* This of course also explains the several attempts on my life by the evil Princess as I have related in my two books. (Lorraine)

"And you might be 'interested' in this," she then said to me, taking me into another part of this amazing underground world of hers. To a room she lit by flicking a switch on the wall, the dried skeletal remains of a blonde haired woman lying there on a bed. The bones yet clad in a beautiful golden mesh like some exotic goddess! She had been in life a good sized woman, her bones leaving no doubt that she had once been a magnificent creature! A woman no doubt who had once played an important role in things!

"She 'was' Domino Tremaine," Tara said to me with a grin. I nodded, remembering my history lessons. She had been the Leaderess of the World Federation after the death of Janet Rogers. The Warlady of the World Federation, and Janet Rogers' own lover too! Such was not, of course, usually spoken of too much by teachers!!

"I have seen a picture of her in life," I said. She had been a beautiful woman, an "equal" of me, and a woman who could I knew have perhaps even "stood" blade to blade with Lorraine! The sword still strapped about the skeletal remains proof of that! I judged from the remains that she had come here, took poison, and lying down on the bed, breathed her last over five centuries ago!

"She was 'responsible' for 'The War'," Tara said to me, her dark eyes now burning into mine like evil coals. I nodded "no". I did not think that someone like "her" would have done "that".

"We have no way of 'knowing'," I pointed out to Tara.

"She was the 'Leaderess'," Tara snapped back at me.

"As I was then the 'Empress of California'," I smiled.

"She was perhaps much like you," Tara smiled back at me.

"Perhaps she too had her own 'Tara'," I told the Princess.

"I don't like what you are 'implying'," Tara snapped back.

"Perhaps I am but an 'insolent slave girl'," I smiled back.

"You are a 'slut' who will gain me much," Tara grinned back.

With this she then took me on a tour of her amazing underground world, showing me the technology of the Ancients still able to operate after all these years. A series of caverns far beneath the earth that went all the way to the sea. Some sort of a submarine floating there at a dock, everything brightly lit by those glowing panels that Tara said would glow for centuries yet!

A somewhat similar technology is used in the hidden underground city of Leith that was established by the Lorr even before the Indians came across the Bering Strait to North America according to what my mother Aurora tells me. It is interesting to note here that "legends" of such a place have existed for several

thousand years, both among the Indians and among those who lived in the area later on. There was once a study made to show that more "flying saucers" were seen in this area than anywhere else! I may also add here that Leith is so well "hidden" that even the technology of the 21st Century never detected it. On the other hand the Lorr probably also made sure with their own feminine agents here on Earth back then that anyone of Earth who learned anything about such a hidden city would be quickly discredited! \* \* One also now "wonders" here about reports of UFO's, etc. (JBB)

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"And now I think that it's time that you `retired' for the night," Tarasaid to me with a smile perhaps half an hour later. "I fear, however, that you will probably not get much sleep," she added with a grim smile as I saw with horror what was to be done to me! How I would be confined. The form fitting adjustable cage there on the main floor of the castle designed to display a naked woman to perfection, while at the same time holding her perfectly and utterly and totally helpless. The design such that I would be kept silent as well as helpless, while forced to stand inside without any chance to rest. My naked body helplessly held there inside this device! And upon display for everyone to see!

## Chapter Eighteen

"How bad is it?" Sharon asked, her eyes filled with concern as she looked over at her step mother there in the other seat. Lorraine now slumped down in the seat, her dark eyes half closed. She had been badly wounded there in La Paz with a deep stab into her abdomen. One that had cut deep into her body. The blade had cut deeply. Without more medical attention it was possible that she would develop an infection as I had and eventually die of it!

"I'll make it," Lorraine weakly smiled, reaching out, touching her beloved golden haired step daughter's hand. The dark barren near desert wasteland almost invisible below as my Imperial Princess flew Black Lady back towards the still distant city of Trella. Baja being scantily populated, except along the sea.

"You're getting too `old' for this sort of stuff," Sharon teased, her 20th Century step mother being some forty years old, although by the standards of the 26th Century she appeared to be nearly a hundred if not more. Just then she looked it and then some, her stern and angular face drawn and pale there in the reddish glow from the plane's instrument panel there before her.

"Sometimes I do feel like it," Lorraine smiled back then. "Maybe I should `retire', and let someone `younger' take the `chances'." Sharon knew that would never happen. Not with her!

"I'm worried about Darlanis," Sharon admitted to Lorraine. I had not been far from her thoughts ever since I had kissed her good bye there in La Paz, Sandia Allis there at my side, telling her to see to it that her badly wounded stepmother made it back to safety. Back to our ships now hove to somewhere off shore.

"She is the bravest, most courageous person I've ever met," came the reply. "I've often wished I had her fearless courage." Sharon had to smile a bit at that, knowing some of Lorraine's fantastic adventures here in the Sixth Century after The War. I have often wished that I was as brave as Lorraine is in a fight! To stand beside her in mortal battle is a privilege, an honor for the greatest of warriors or warrioresses. It has been

"mine" ...

"You've been in some pretty 'tight places' yourself," Sharon pointed out. Lorraine nodded, her harsh features dimly lit there by the plane's instruments. There had been times she had not believed that she would survive. That the "odds" were too great even for her. She was a "living legend", one who many said was the greatest swordswoman of all time. Lorraine always smiled at that. Saying that she was "good", but the "best"? Who knows???

"Darlanis will 'survive'," Lorraine answered in quiet tones. "She has a 'destiny' to fulfill." Sharon nodded, not wishing to argue the issue. She knew of her step mother's strange beliefs. Of what she claimed to have seen there on Mars one night while lying helplessly paralyzed in the sands of that cold arid world!

"As soon as I see you to safety I've going to fly back to La Paz and find out what happened," Sharon answered her stepmother.

"You are going to get some sleep and then do a thorough pre-flight on this plane before you go anywhere," Lorraine said, the night sky ahead rich with stars, only a few faint wispy clouds concealing any of the natural splendor there before them.

"I suppose that would be for the best," Sharon then smiled, keeping to herself that perhaps "another" might also be of help!

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"I trust that you had time to think," Princess Tara said to me as I stood helpless in the form-fitting cage, naked, exposed. The discomfort enough to make me "agreeable" to almost anything! The cage having been placed where those passing by could view me. A number of her men at arms having taken the opportunity to tease and torment me. To make ribald comments about what would happen to me once I was released from the cage. I had no doubt that Tara would give me to her men. Such would serve to "break my spirit", my "will to resist". Tara wanted me to learn how to be a slave girl. To have the "instinctive" reactions of the slave. I suppose I was "lucky" that she had a "use" for me, since otherwise I have little doubt she would have tortured me to death! At her side now was Sela Dai, the exquisite Crown Princess of Talon. I recalled how she had hoped that Tara's son would marry her instead of Lara Warsan, the most famous prostitute in the Empire.

Due to the design of the display cage I could not reply, the cage being so made that my mouth was held firmly shut. Such a cage is often used to display slave girls. They may be touched, teased as men wish, while at the same time they are totally helpless. Such is quite "educational" for the woman. Tara wanted me to undergo such "training". It was part of her "plans" for me. To change me from the Empress of California to just a slave girl.

"You will of course note that the cage does 'display' you quite well," she observed. "That the ripe sensual curves of your body are well displayed for those passing by to view." I understood why she did it. Such was part of my "training" for the Emperor of Mexico. I did not think that it would be "successful". I am not the sort of a woman who would make a "good" slave girl.

"And you will of course 'please men', although in your case I strongly suspect that you will need little 'training' in that," she said to me, standing there before me, Sela Dai there at her side. The Princess of Talon saying nothing, only silently regarding me. I recalled that I had been "responsible" for the death of her father. No doubt she was enjoying seeing me suffer. Her dark eyes as they looked up into mine were quite unreadable. She is black haired, light skinned, aristocratic featured, about 5'2" tall, and beautifully proportioned for her height and size. Talon bordering on the territory now claimed by Tara's own Baja.\*

\*We should not expect our present day political borders to survive. Baja of the 26th Century was larger than the present one.

"It no doubt pleases Sela too to see you like this," Tarasaid with a glance at her royal companion. I recalled Sela from the year before when she had been with Tara and we had fought our now famous duel. She had loved Tara's son. Unfortunately Jers had loved another, the provocative, sensual "Lara of Trelandar"! Lara was an utterly "different" sort of woman than the Princess. "Earthy", sensual, exciting, a woman who was so totally "female".

"I am not my mother," Sela suddenly said to Tara. "I do not live every day filled with 'hatred' for what happened years ago."

"But this is the woman who killed your father!" Tara pointed out. This was true only in an indirect sense, of course, as I had not actually had too much to do with the death of her father.

"But you commanded the forces that killed him," she replied. Sela's deep dark beautiful eyes glowing up into those of Tara.

"I only obeyed 'her' orders," Tara quickly answered in reply. Tara had doubtlessly used just that "excuse" before I knew.

"As I recall, such a claim was made once before," Sela said. "In a 20th Century war now only legend in our own history books." That had been after World War Two, when the "Allies" had tried the leaders of the Nazi "war machine" for their own war-crimes. Their "defense" had been that they had merely "followed orders".

"Darlanis gave me the orders, I just carried them out," Tara answered. That was true, but not in the way Tara made it sound! I never told Tara to "do" much of the "things" that she had done!

"You perhaps added your own ideas to them"," Sela answered.

"I would suggest that you watch your tongue," Tara snapped.

"The 'truth' is often embarrassing," Sela Dai smiled back.

"Your mother has not forgotten what Darlanis did," Tara retorted. Obviously there was "more" to Sela than I had thought!

"My mother often believes what she wishes to believe," Sela answered with a smile. "Not what the 'truth' so happens to be."

"It is to the 'benefit' of Talon as well as Baja that this woman no longer sits of the throne of the Empire," Tara answered. I wondered why she thought that. Granted Sharon would not be as "forceful" a ruler as I was, but she would have the help of many even if Tara managed to kill Lorraine as she had bragged about. I also wondered about that, as I did not think who ever "did" the deed was likely to "get away" with it once Raspa learned of it!

"And will Lorraine be less of a 'threat'?" Sela challenged.

"I will 'deal' with Lorraine when the time comes," Tara snapped. I saw Sela Dai smile, glance up against at me before her. I could read her thoughts there in her aristocratic face.

"If you `can'," the Princess of Talon smiled back at Tara.

"I've warned you before -----!" Tara snapped back at Sela.

"I do not fear you," Sela Dai answered back in level tones. The Princess of Talon then strolling off, leaving Tara standing there before me. I took pleasure in seeing Tara being told off!

"I will `deal' with her when the time comes," Tara told me, her dark eyes burning up into mine as I stood in helpless naked bondage there before her. I feared for the Princess of Talon as I feared for my friend Lorraine. Tara's "evil" was "worse" than even we had dreamed about if she had the "help" of a Lorr woman! \*\*\*\*\*

"I'm scared," Sharon spoke in a soft voice to Sanda Talen, the Prime Minister of Trelandar as she prepared herself for bed that morning. Sanda sitting there nodding, her body swelling now with child. "With Darlanis gone and Lorraine in the hospital I'm afraid of what could happen now." Vivid in Sharon's imagination were a number of things all of which were actually very unlikely.

"You have Lady Tirana and me," Sanda smiled back at Sharon.

"But you're pregnant and Tirana's too old," Sharon answered.

"The fact that I'm pregnant doesn't effect my ability to think," Sanda replied, "And Lady Tirana's still not `that' old!"

"Anyway," Sanda continued, "Lorraine should be back on her feet in no time and I'm sure she's equal to anything that can come up." Sharon nodding, giving the woman a smile as she slipped beneath the silken covers. The Prime Minister getting to her feet to waddle over to the bed to kiss her "good night".  
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"I think it is time that you are put to use for tasks more `fitting' for one such as you," Tara said to me as I knelt there before her, naked, and in bondage, my wrists and ankles bound. I had my wrists bound to my hips, held in place by the same sort of a "bondage harness" that was used to restrain Lynn, now kneeling silently beside me, her head down, her hair before her face.

"No doubt you will find it quite delightful to see me in your collar pleasing your men," I said to her, looking at the tool work of her sandals as she sat on her throne before me. Her toe nails brightly painted as is the style of Bajan aristocrats.

"You will wear my collar," Tara snapped. "Your use will be mine to decide. Mine and mine alone." I nodded, understanding! I had no doubt she would enjoy seeing me as a slave girl panting and heaving in the arms of strong men. Yielding to them as a slave must! Such would doubtlessly greatly please the Princess!

"And part of the `entertainment' will be watching you and Lynn making love together," Tara laughed, looking down at us two! "And I am making Lynn `first girl' over you!" she then laughed!!!

## Chapter Nineteen

"You never should have come here," Lynn spoke softly to me as she closed the door behind herself, her dark eyes glowing into mine. I nodded, smiled in agreement! I shouldn't have come here! Not without an army at my back, a fleet of ships to take La Paz! I could see in my imagination the smoke rising now into the sky! The room was small, the window well barred despite the fact we were perhaps fifty feet or more above the rocks below the walls. In the distance I could see the sea, La Paz there before us now.

"I am not noted for making 'wise' decisions," I smiled back. Lynn had been instructed to "teach me" the "arts of the slave girl". Tara having felt it "wise" that I knew something of such! She had also wished for Lynn and I to put on a "show" together!!! Tara doubtlessly feeling that nothing she could do to me would be a greater "humiliation" than having me make love to a slave girl! To press my "royal lips" to the hairy sex of a mere slave girl!

"I have kept 'our secret'," Lynn whispered back in reply. I nodded, understanding. She was truly "brave" to have kept such from one like Tara. The Princess would have been "delighted" to have "learned" such about me. About the fact that I was actually the daughter of a Lorr Servitor, and an illegitimate bastard to boot! Not that I supposed it really "mattered" that much now!!!

"It hardly matters anymore," I smiled back at her, reaching out, tousling her hair as a sign of affection as I used to do.

"You are still my mistress," she then said softly to me.

"We are 'equals' now, I fear," I smiled back at her.

"You will always still be my Empress," she answered.

"Let us hope for early rescue then," I smiled back.

"Tara has to get us to Mexico," Lynn smiled in reply.

"And there is Lorraine," I nodded, giving her a warm smile.

"I love you, mistress," Lynn spoke softly to me. I nodded.

"Just as long as I don't have to 'do' Tara," I smiled back.

"Pray to Lys that you are 'spared' that fate," Lynn smiled. She didn't "elaborate" and I didn't ask further just then either!

"You are 'more' to me than just one of my slaves," I said.

"I will make myself as 'clean' as possible," she smiled.

"Let us 'discuss' something else," I smiled back at her.

"There is no hope of escape from here," Lynn answered.

"I am of the Warriresses," I laughed softly in turn.

"I suspect Tara is 'aware' of that," Lynn warned me.

"You would 'please' any man 'lucky' enough to have you," Lynn said to me as she guided me in one of the slave dances that I would be expected to "perform" there before Tara's men at arms.

"There's only one man I'd like to 'please'," I smiled back. Lynn of course knew "who" he was, as I had spoken of him before.

"Unfortunately he is a long ways from here," Lynn commented.

"One can of course 'dream'," I smiled back at her, drying myself. I hoped that Tara would be "pleased". Not for myself, but for Lynn's sake as I had no doubt that the Princess would "take it out" on Lynn if she was in the least displeased with me!

"There is always hope," Lynn smiled, her eyes meeting mine.

"Life would have 'little to offer' without it," I smiled.

"When the 'time' comes, I will 'do' what I can," she said.

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"You didn't sleep as long as I thought you would," Sanda Talen commented with a welcoming smile as Sharon came walking into her office there in the royal Palace of Trelandar in the late afternoon. A smile and a nod my Princess' only reply as she walked to a window and looked out over the great capital city of Trellas spreading out below. The city built just south of the ruins of Los Angeles which lie to the north of Trelandar's capital city. It is said that the ruins now house that which is not "natural". Lorraine relates in her book that she once saw such a creature. A creature that was "something" like a man crossed with a garth.

"I worry about Darlanis," Sharon answered in quiet tones as Sanda busied herself with the day to day tasks of running Trelandar. The dark haired Scribe capable and competent at her work. Much of such work being almost "second nature" to her now. Sanda being as Lorraine had once said, "a capable and competent woman".

"She has impressed me as being quite 'capable' of handling herself in 'tight' situations," Sanda smiled back in return. The Prime Minister of Trelandar well aware of my "adventures" the year before when I "bested" the forces of Tara there in Porlan.

"She takes too little 'concern' for her own safety," Sharon spoke, staring out the window at the city below, a few ships at anchor there in the harbor now waiting for escort due to the activities of the Swiftstar, now being used as a commerce raider. The massive hulls of the three schooners were almost completed. Each a hundred and thirty five feet at the waterline, with ninety foot masts. They would be classified as "first rates" in the Imperial Navy, although their "status" at the moment was still not set, the ships technically being a part of Lorraine's own fleet.

"I could say the same for Lorraine, but women such as those two look upon such things differently than you or I would, I suppose," Sanda smiled, getting up, walking over, and putting her arm affectionately around the golden haired Imperial Princess. A lovely pair of young azure eyes for a moment then meeting hers... \*\*\*\*\*

"Excellent, Darlanis," Lynn said to me as the guard pulled his clothing back on. "You have the making of

an excellent slave girl." I was glad she thought so, as I hadn't cared too much for what I had just done. I prefer to have a choice as to who "uses" me. I had been "taken" like an animal, with no regard for my feelings. "Rape" was perhaps the best term, although legally I was an animal and thus could not be "raped" any more than a dog. I felt "used", dirty, abused from what had just been done to me.

"I'm `glad' that you think so," I muttered, more to myself than her. I reflected upon the concept that there had been times that I had assigned Lynn to a man without any thought as to what her own feelings had been about the matter. Thinking no more of it really than I would have thought of assigning someone a unicorn to ride. Lorraine had once called me a "user". I had no doubts now that she had been right. I had often "used" people for my own personal ends with no thoughts for their own feelings!

"Are you a `rebellious' slave?" Lynn challenged me, having no doubt overheard my muttered comment to myself. I shook my head in the negative, well aware of what could be done to me by Lynn's mistress! I had already had a "taste" of such there in the cage! Lynn of course being "forced" to speak so with the guard present! Such was a part of the "role" that we had agreed she would play!

"No mistress," I answered, kneeling, bowing my head to her.

"That's good, because next time you will use your mouth," Lynn told me. "And you will also `swallow' when the time comes."

"Do you enjoy seeing me humiliated like this?" I asked her. I was putting on this "act" for the guard's "benefit", of course.

"I am merely carrying out Princess Tara's orders," Lynn said to me. "Another would not be as `understanding' of you as I am." I hoped that such would get back to Tara. Lynn and I had spoken. An "understanding" had been reached. I hoped it might "fool" the Bajan Princess into that moment of "carelessness" that we needed!

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"Darlanis has told me that you are her actual true mother," Sharon said as Aurora ushered her into her richly furnished office there at the embassy in Trella. Those beautiful jade green eyes of the Lorr Servitor for an instant burning hot into her own as Aurora quietly nodded in affirmation. The "activities" of her famous daughter being of course well known to the Martian woman. Aurora like any mother having taken considerable pride in "such"! My more recent activities having pleased her more than my earlier ones when I had behaved more like some bloodthirsty "barbarian". \* \* I refer the reader to comments here that Aurora made to Lorraine when my Warlady was on Mars recovering from her injuries.

"And now she is `in trouble' and you wish my help," Aurora smiled in reply, well aware of "what" had been going on in La Paz in the past few days. Lorraine's making of nitroglycerine being something that "worried" the yet beautiful older blonde woman. Not so much because she had any "concern" for Tara, but because she feared what the Lorr Triad might do to Lorraine if they ever learned of it. Especially now, when it was nearing the time that the women of Mars would make their "strike" for their "freedom"!

"I know how she's `hurt' you, but I think you tried to be as `good' a mother to her as any woman could be," Sharon replied, well aware that Lorraine herself had done much the "same thing".

"Tara has unfortunately done nothing to warrant an investigation of her `activities' by us," Aurora answered softly, seating herself beside the lovely teenage Imperial Princess. "I also fear now that Lorraine may have `gone too far' with her own violations of THE EDICT for `such' to be further now `tolerated' if word of her `activities' ever reaches the antennae of the TRIAD."



"There's nothing you can 'do'?" Sharon pleaded, the tone of her young voice betraying the "disappointment" that she felt now. She had hoped, a futile hope, she thought now, that Aurora might have the power to force Tarato "release" Darlanis, if she lived!

"Not 'officially'," Aurora smiled back, giving Sharon a wink that made the teenage blonde smile with renewed "hope". "But I'm not without 'resources' of my own," Aurora assured the Princess. "And it is perhaps 'time' that I took a 'part' in such matters."

"In Darlanis' absence I am now legally the Empress of California, I believe," Sharon said to Sanda Talen as the two shared dinner with a yet bed-ridden Lorraine there at Trella's hospital.

"I believe so," the recovering wounded Queen of Trelandar answered with a grim smile, her dark glistening eyes glowing up into the beautiful azure sky-blue of Sharon's. "Although technically I am your 'regent' until you reach the age of eighteen."

"Then I think that it is perhaps time that we made some preparations for a war against Princess Tara," Sharon said in low tones. Lorraine nodding in agreement much to Sanda Talen's horror at the thought of what such a war might bring in its wake!

"And face the fact that Tara may have captured Darlanis," Lorraine answered. The two having waited long enough for me to return from Triskelion before finally taking off for Trelandar.

"I spoke to Aurora and she doesn't 'approve' of your nitroglycerine," Sharon answered in reply. Lorraine nodding, giving her step daughter a grim smile in reply. There were "other weapons" that might be used against Tara. She was still the Warlady of California! It would take time, however, to transport a full Imperial Legion to the area. To bring against Tara "forces" that even she could not withstand. To lay a siege to Tara's castle.

"We will have to declare war against Tara," Lorraine spoke.

"And 'thousands' will die for the life of one woman," Sanda breathed in low tones, her dark eyes meeting those of the others. That was assuming that Tara didn't just slit my throat then too!

"If you were of a different caste you would understand," the Warlady smiled back. Sanda was of the Scribes, a "bookish" lot. Not of the Caste of Warrioresses as Queen Lorraine of Trelandar.

"Those who live by the sword shall perish by it," Sanda answered, quoting a writer whose name was now lost in past history.

"We all die," Lorraine answered. "It is what we do while we are alive that counts." Sharon smiled to herself. Sanda, while a smart woman, was no mental match for the famous fighting woman of the 20th Century, whose genius level I.Q. of 160 gave her awesome mental abilities to match those she possessed with a sword!

## Chapter Twenty

"I understand from Lynn that you are coming along quite well learning your lessons like a 'good girl'," Princess Tara smiled down at me as I knelt there before her, a naked bound slave girl. Lynn nodding as she knelt at my side, Princess Sela Dai of Talon having eaten earlier. The rich furnishings of the dining room there in her castle leaving no doubts that Tara did enjoy her own "comforts". I noticed the caplock pistol of Lorraine's near Tara's hand. I considered the "possibilities". Decided this was not the "time". I am of the Warriresses. We are not like other women might be. With them was another woman, dark haired, wearing the jumpsuit of a Lorr Servitor, a blaster pistol in its holster at her hip. She was no doubt the Servitor who had now become the "agent" of Tara. Her name was Dena, Tara having "introduced" us. She was one of the women who worked there at the Lorr's embassy there in La Paz. Another "enemy" serving EVIL! I wondered if the Lorr perhaps now had a "role" here in things too!

"No doubt you are finding it an enjoyable experience," I answered, my eyes seeking the darkness of hers. At Tara's orders I had been whipped earlier in my training to make me more "docile". It had not been successful. Serving only to mark my tender skin and make me even more resentful than ever! I fear I am not the right "type" for slavery! I am not "submissive" enough, I guess!

"But your 'attitude' needs 'improvement', I fear," the Bajan Princess smiled down at me there at the breakfast table where I knelt awaiting table scraps like some dog. Tara had felt that it would be best that I lost some weight, and she was "starving" me into "submission". Her attempts had not been so far successful.

"I fear I am not the right woman for the task," I told her. Dena was thoughtfully regarding me from her dark eyes, smiling. I wondered if she knew that I was the daughter of Aurora. I supposed not, as otherwise Tara would be doubtlessly "tossing" that little bit of "information" into my face just to taunt me a bit!

"It is more a matter of proper 'discipline'," she answered.

"I will attempt to improve my 'attitudes'," I smiled back, fearing what Dena might "do" to me now if Tara so "permitted" it. The 'Women of Mars' are said to be "different" from us of Earth. There are "stories" told of such "things", perhaps some are true.

"Perhaps you are not a 'dumb blonde' after all," Tara said.

"I am doing the best I can with her, mistress," Lynn spoke.

"The proper term of address is 'my Princess'," Tara smiled. Slave girls address all free women as "mistress" as a matter of practice. Apparently Tara preferred it otherwise. Sela Dai had "recognized" Lorraine while she had been in La Paz earlier, and had apparently attempted to capture the famous Warlady for Tara!

"I will try to remember, 'my Princess'," Lynn answered back.

"Perhaps another would do a better job of training our 'new girl'," Tara smiled, sitting there, eating, regarding me now kneeling there on the carpet perhaps a yard or so away from her.

"I have done the best I could with her!" Lynn now protested. Lynn being greatly concerned that I would be "abused" by another!

"You are too 'emotionally involved'," Tara then smiled back. "Another, one who is not so 'involved', might do a better job." I saw Lynn's eyes meet mine. She had done for me what she could.

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"The wonders of modern air travel," Lorraine smiled in greeting as she got painfully up to her feet, extending out her right hand to the little Queen of Talon as Sharon and Gayle escorted her into the throne room of the Royal Palace of Trelendar.

"I'll have to take you up on one of our bigger Tarls," Queen Dala Dai of Talon smiled back as Queen Lorraine escorted her to a more private room, Gayle now at her side as Lorraine greeted her with a smile of welcome. The Princess' eyes filled with concern as she saw how badly her beloved foster mother had been injured.

"Your daughter is an excellent swordswoman," Lorraine smiled as the two Queens seated themselves side by side on a comfortable sofa. The Princesses Gayle and Sharon, like a pair of beautiful golden haired sisters, now sitting opposite the two crowned heads of state. A glow of understanding going through Dala's dark eyes as she suddenly realized just "who" had been actually responsible for the Queen of Trelendar's wound! Her own daughter, Sela Dai!

"You won't---?" Dala Dai breathed softly, a chill of terror going through her heart at the thought. She had heard much of Lorraine and her knowledge of the technology of the past. Of the woman's incredible swordsmanship that some said no other woman could ever equal. If Lorraine was to seek out her daughter...!!!

"I am of the Warriresses," Lorraine smiled back. Dala Dai nodded, understanding. Seeing Sharon's eyes glowing hot into hers as she glanced over at the Princess. Had she known of this?

"Lorraine," Gayle spoke, her eyes meeting those of Sharon.

"Sela Dai is a brave and courageous Warriress," Lorraine spoke in level tones to the two Princesses. "And fortunately I recognized her just in time before I took her head off with my force saber for sticking several inches of steel into my guts."

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"We have met before," I said, regarding Princess Sela Dai as she stood before me. She was 5'2" to my 5'10". Even kneeling as I was the differences in our physical sizes were quite obvious. She is a very beautiful brunette, quite small, exquisite. I had once hoped like Tara that Jers would decide to make her his wife.

"It would have been best had you stayed in Sarn," Sela answered in level tones. Even Princess Tara at 5'7" seemingly towering over her. The women of Talon are small, often little more than five feet in height. Only a woman may ride the great Tarls.

"No doubt she has had reason to consider that fact," Tara smiled, regarding me. I am by birth and training of the Warriresses. Both Tara and Sela Dai would be well aware of that fact.

"I have been ordered to take charge of your training," Sela said to me, regarding me from dark deep brown eyes. Her face is beautifully shaped, and quite "aristocratic" if that is the term.

"Lynn was perhaps too 'involved' with you to do what needs to be done," Tara explained, her hand "possessively" on the little Princess' shoulder. I wondered about their own relationship.

"Tara believes that I will do a better job," Sela Dai said.

"Especially since I am the 'responsible' for the war between Talon and the Empire twelve years ago," I commented with a smile.

"You attacked us without 'provocation'," Sela pointed out.

"It is not a 'point' in my favor," I smiled back, recalling the treatment I had received there in Talon at Lorraine's side. Perhaps it had been what I deserved for what I had done to them.

"You are not what I expected," Sela Dai then admitted to me.

"People often have that experience with me," I smiled back.

"I must caution you that I am skilled with a dagger," Sela warned me as we walked side by side towards her quarters on the upper floor of the castle. I had no doubt that she viewed me with a degree of concern due to our differences in physical size.

"I will try to remember that," I smiled, well aware that she had left my hands well secured. I am a trained fighting woman. My skill with a sword is second only to that of Lorraine herself.

"I will not 'abuse' you as Tarano doubt hopes, but on the other hand you will submit yourself to my discipline," Sela said.

"Why do you serve her?" I suddenly asked, wondering what her reply would be. Sela certainly knew the "sort" of a person that Tarawas and knew something at least of her criminal activities!

"She is Jers' mother," Sela answered in low tones, her dark eyes looking up into mine. "And her son once loved me." I could finish the rest for myself. No doubt Tarahad promised Sela something along the line of seeing to it that her son soon became a "widower". There had been already several attempts on Lara's life. The first having been at the time of her wedding there in my palace at Sarn. Another had been by poison. I wondered, however, what "hold" Tarahad over the government of Talon itself?

"It was his decision, not mine or anyone else's," I smiled.

"She used her 'skills' as a prostitute to get him," Sela snapped in heated tones, a barely suppressed fury in her voice.

"Perhaps," I answered, not wishing to pursue the topic now.

"She is a 'slut', and he was 'putty' in her hands," Sela snapped back, standing there, bristling with angry fury. The term "spit-fire" perhaps fitting her better than any other then!

"Women such as Lara often are very 'attractive' to men," I answered. Lara had never lacked for suitors in all the time that I had known her. She is an extremely "sensual" and provocative woman. About 5'8" with reddish brown hair, gray blue eyes. As Lorraine once described her, she is also rather ripely figured!

"Women who 'live' off their 'bodies'!" Sela snapped back.

"I found her 'useful', but I did not approve of her marriage to Jers either," I answered, feeling it best to refer to my relationship to Lara in those terms. It being well known that I had used Lara's Prostitute Guild as a "cover" for my own purposes. I climbed the stairway to the upper floors there beside her, Sela's

attire well displaying the slim feminine delights of her figure.

"You could have stopped her had you wished," Sela retorted. "Poison, a dagger in the darkness, a crossbowman on a rooftop."

"She has as much 'right' to her life as you do to yours or I do to mine," I pointed out in level tones. I am not a murderess. I have executed people for crimes both against "society" and against the "Crown", but that is an entirely different matter. I would never order someone killed just to prevent a marriage from happening, even if I thought the marriage was unwise and foolish. I had often considered Jers' marriage to Lara to be exactly such! However, after seeing the love they had for each other, I had changed my opinion of the marriage. I felt Lara was perhaps a "better" choice in a wife for Jers than this "Princess of Talon".

"I am a Princess, she's just a 'hip-swinger'!" Sela snapped.

"And I am a Queen and an Empress who according to Tara and certain 'others' I know 'bedded' her way to her crown," I smiled.

"You are of royal birth, Lara certainly isn't," she replied.

"No doubt some 'sword-swinging' ancestor of mine made herself Queen of Dularn by 'force of arms'," I smiled back at Sela. Well aware of the "fact" that I wasn't really Queen Tulis' child!

"Do you approve of Lara?" Sela asked, pausing there before a door, the two of us now on the upper floor of the Bajan castle. A window at the end of the hallway looking out over the city of La Paz below. A warm breeze blowing down the hallway towards us. A number of paintings on the walls speaking of past residents of the place. Triskelion is centuries old, and dates back to an era long before The War. Lorraine's own sister even had lived here!

"If Jers is happy with her, and he seems to be, I think it is best to leave well enough alone," I told the little Princess.

"I think that when he gets over the 'sexual excitement' of being married to the most famous prostitute in California that he will come back to me," Sela spoke as she opened the door. I felt it best considering the situation not to disagree with her then.

"You have lovely quarters," I smiled, changing the subject.

"I am a Princess," Sela Dai of Talon reminded me in reply.

"With the Empress of California now as your slave girl," I smiled back at her. I wondered what it would be like, serving her as a slave girl. What sort of "demands" would she put on me?

## Chapter Twenty One

"You are a very beautiful woman," Princess Sela Dai of Talon said to me as I knelt there before her. I was smart enough from my own personal experience enough to keep my knees together as a woman's

slave should. A man's slave of course keeps them open. I would have preferred to have been kneeling before my barbarian Nevada Prince, my knees widely spread, my wrists as they were well tied. The thought excited me, and made me sexually aroused.

Sela's attire consisted of the black leather halter and skirt worn by Bajan Warriresses. She was slim, trim, a delight! Around us the luxurious furnishings of her apartment. It was obvious that the Princess of Talon lived well. On the other hand I knew of her courage, of the fact that she had led the attack on Lorrainedespite the sight of Lorraine's terrifying force-saber! A weapon against which there was no known defense here on Earth!

"I could say the same of you," I observed with a smile as I knelt there before her on the soft carpeting. She was "small", but very nicely figured with lovely fine aristocratic features.

"But the man I loved married another woman, and a prostitute at that," Sela answered back, the anger showing now in her voice.

"Men sometimes have unusual 'tastes' in women," I answered.

"She was your closest friend, and he did spend considerable time with you," Sela Dai answered with a cold smile, standing there, her hands on her hips, looking down at me. Her eyes hard. I worried what she might do to me if the mood so struck her now.

"I advised them both against the marriage," I answered her.

"Were you 'aware' that I loved him?" the Princess asked me.

"It was his decision, not mine to make for him," I answered.

"You did not 'prevent' it, however," she answered back. We had gone through this before. I had pointed out that there was no way that I could prevent the marriage from taking place without using "means" I detested upon the innocent Lara of Trelandar. I personally felt that Lara had as much "right" to marry the man she loved as any other woman, although I had advised against the marriage knowing fully well what Princess Tara might do about it!

"I advised against it, which was the best I could do," I answered her. "Jers made the decision that he wanted Lara Warsan."

"She wears a sword, doesn't she?" Sela asked, her dark eyes gleaming hotly into mine. The little Princess was an excellent swordswoman. No doubt her skill was superior to that of Lara's.

"I doubt that you can 'win' Jers that way," I informed her. I was getting extremely tired of this foolish "round-robin" talk.

"I will be the 'judge' of that," Princess Sela Dai answered. The tone of her voice leaving little doubt in my mind that she yet hoped to win Jers even if he was now happily married to Lara.

"Love is something you 'earn'," I said to her. "It is not something that you can take at the point of a sword." I wondered if Sela realized that. That Jers no longer loved her, but Lara.

"I am a Princess of Talon, she is nothing but a Trelandarian whore!" I heard the little Princess snap back furiously at me! I merely nodded, knowing when it was best to keep my mouth closed!!

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"I'm sure glad I didn't know it was her daughter who nearly killed Lorraine," Gayle breathed in low tones as Sharon nodded in agreement. The two Queens walking some distance ahead of them.

"You 'like' Queen Dala, don't you?" Sharon smiled back then. Gayle nodding. The little Queen was a warm, loving woman, almost like another "mother", Gayle had found during her stay in Talon. Yet she still loved Lorraine as she had never loved any one else! Lorraine was "steel & iron", hard, but yet "loving" in a way that Gayle had never found with any other woman. A woman who expected much of a "daughter", but on the other hand "understood" like no other could how a young woman could "feel" and not laugh at her! Her own mother having died when she was young, only a small baby. Her father had remarried later on, but her step mother, a former naval commodore, had never been a very "loving" mother as such...

"How can she be that 'way' with a woman whose own daughter nearly killed her?" Gayle answered, regarding the Queen of Trelandar and the little Queen of Talon looking like a child beside her. A grim smile curving Sharon's lips as she nodded in reply.

"Lorraine's never been like other women," Sharon answered.

"Nor like the 'mother' I once knew," Gayle agreed in return.

"I'm worried about Darlanis," Sharon spoke softly, her eyes meeting those of Gayle. The "jealousy" between the two long gone. Both remembered the time in Thistle when they had actually come to blows there in the street, with the sheriff of Thistle throwing a bucket of water over them both to put an end to it!

"She is very brave, and very beautiful," Gayle admitted.

"The only woman I love more than Lorraine," Sharon replied.

"And you want me to steal the keys to the airplane," Gayle smiled back, understanding much of the other Princess' feelings.

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"You will dance before my warrior tonight, and then serve their 'pleasure' as a part of your continuing 'education'," Tara said to me as I knelt before her, Sela Dai standing there at my side, looking on. I wondered muchly about her and what thoughts really went through her mind? In the day that I had been her slave I had learned little more from her but that she still yearned for her now hopelessly lost love. As for me, she seemed to bear me surprisingly little ill will considering that I had been in a way responsible for the death of her father in the war between Talon and the Empire of California a dozen years ago. She had been however quite surprised when I had told her of our attempt to establish diplomatic relations between California and Talon, and the "hostile" reception I had received there in Talon when Lorraine and I had arrived in Black Lady. The thought making me smile to myself as I thought of the time that such a "reception" would have resulted in an immediate declaration of war!!

"As 'mistress' wishes," I answered, knowing my fate to be. I would ask Sela to "grease" me so that I might be "readied" for what was to happen. Tara seemed to delight in abusing me in any way that she could, although I suppose I was lucky that she had other "plans" for me or otherwise I fear my fate would have been far more unpleasant. The reader should recall here that last time I nearly lost my life while in Tara's hands. No doubt such a fate would have been mine had not Tara wished to "use" me for her own purposes. Only my "value" saving me from an awful fate!

Swaying slowly in time to the music, I danced my beauty before Tara's warriors and her friends, letting the music flow through my body. My vagina greased for their pleasure beneath the gauzy silk that now only served to accent what laid beneath it. The torches on the walls and the men gathered around the low tables gave the scene a look I found strangely exciting despite my own terrors at the "fate" that awaited me. The knowledge that my beauty was the center of their attention oddly stirring my own womanhood as I danced before them, a lovely tall golden houri whose movements stirred the hot beating blood in any man's veins.

Triskelion is old, dating back to the Sixteenth Century, to the time of the early Spanish Conquistadors. Nearly a thousand years having passed since its first stones were laid by sweating bare backed slaves beneath the whips of their masters. By men who have been dust now for nearly a thousand years! Did they too dance lovely female slaves for their pleasure? I wondered a bit!

Moving before a warrior more handsome than most, I danced my beauty before him, moving close to let him know the "delights" I had to "offer". Now I was no longer a Queen, an Empress, but just a slave wench, a near naked slut with a collar locked around her neck. A woman who was "property", and now legally only an animal. No different under the laws of Baja than Tara's unicorns and dogs. I could be bought and sold like any other "animal". I was a slave girl. Without "rights", without even a name save for that which free persons wished to call me. I now even had a golden stubble of fine pubic hair now starting to sprout there on my mons, only free women as a rule being free of such body hair.\* \* Why it is the practice for free women to shave their body hair while slave girls do not is a question for which I lack answers. \*\*\*\*\*

"You could get into an awful lot of trouble doing this," Gayle cautioned as Sharon poured the last of the alcohol into the airplane's wing tanks there in the darkness, careful to see that it was filtered as it went in. A reasonable precaution considering what might happen to the Princess if a fuel line plugged up.

"Lorraine's going to have to catch up with me first," Sharon smiled back at the lovely Gayle Marn, setting down the empty fuel can. "And I want to know what happened to Darlanis," she added, her eyes glowing into those of the Princess of Trelandar. It being Sharon's intention to fly Black Lady back to La Paz to see what happened to me. What she would "do" after that she didn't really know. The ships did not have the forces necessary to reduce Triskelion, and the supply of nitroglycerine aboard the Sea Star was used up. Triskelion was built of stone, and was therefore invulnerable against primitive fire bombs dropped from the air. Sharon felt, however, that she "had" to "do something"!

"I would like to come along," Gayle said suddenly to Sharon.

"It could be dangerous," Sharon pointed out, wise for her years. Girls grew up swiftly in the Sixth Century after The War.

"No worse there with you than with Lorraine once she finds out who stole the keys to Black Lady," the Princess laughed back.

"You do have a point there," Sharon smiled as she and Gayle pushed the airplane around so that it faced the ramp leading down into the harbor. The hangar was guarded, but as both girls were of "royalty", the guards had paid them but little actual notice, especially after the "tale" that Sharon had told them about her step mother needing to use the airplane again early the next day.

"We are both going to be 'pirates'," Gayle pointed out with a laugh. The thought making the two teenage girls giggle a bit to themselves as they climbed into the airplane and shut the doors. Both were



nervous, a bit scared at what they were doing.

"Yo ho ho and bottle of rum!" Sharon laughed, pulling out the choke while the preheater vaporized the alcohol for starting. The guard was now staring at them curiously, puzzled at their actions. Motioning to the other, Gayle noted with terror clutching at her heart as Sharon turned the ignition key to the "start" position. The two men now strolling over towards the airplane as the engine then suddenly caught with a deafening roar of power!

"Sharon! It's Lorraine!" Gayle cried as the plane started to move, the surprised guards shielding their faces against the prop blast as suddenly a tall black clad brunette Warriorress came running painfully towards them, the look on her face boding ill for the two golden haired teenage delights there in the cockpit!

"Then We Go!" Sharon cried, shoving the throttle all the way in, the airplane rumbling across the planking and down into the calm water of the harbor, leaving an infuriated Queen of Trelandar standing there, the prop blast blowing her clothing and ruffling her heavy midnight hair. She was then joined by another, who smiled at the sight and made a low comment that the taller of the two found fitting considering the nature of the situation.

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A glowing silvery disc floated up from the embassy there in Trella, a soft hum of power fading away as it lifted into the sky above, the stars gleaming down upon it as it then swiftly flew to the southeast. Aurora had made a decision. This time she would not "fail" her own daughter as she had before, the woman "vowed"!

## Chapter Twenty Two

"There is no reason for you to be abused like this," Princess Sela Dai of Talon said to me as I squatted there naked before her over a tinned pan and washed myself out as best I could of the semen in my vagina. The slender 5'2" Princess clad in her silken robe, the lovely feminine curves of her figure well displayed there beneath it. The average Californian woman is noticeably taller, going 5'5", although Sela is rather large for a woman of Talon. Many such women being no more than five feet tall and weighing little over a hundred pounds. Lorraine says that the size of the people of Talon is the result of a program of "selective breeding" carried out over a period of centuries. Janet Rogers once attempted something somewhat similar before her death. There was so much popular resistance against it she made no more attempts to "improve" the human race by using such means.

"I wish Tarafelt the same about it," I smiled back at her.

"I am here both because of Jers and because my mother wishes it," Sela said to me, answering a question I had been wondering about ever since I had first met the Princess of Talon here at the castle. "Our alliance with Baja and thus with the Empire of Mexico assures that your Empire will leave us alone," she added. I had suspected such. Talon had "won" the war against the Empire, but at a "cost" that had nearly ruined the little country.

"You managed to defeat my forces in battle," I pointed out.

"At a `cost' that Talon is still paying," Sela Dai answered. My forces had made a lot of widows and widowers. Memories last.

"I have learned much from Lorraine," I said to her. "I am not the same woman that I was twelve years ago. Your country has nothing to fear from me," I pointed out to the Princess of Talon.

"She is a great Warriress. More so than your other Warladies," Sela Dai answered. "And, I fear, an `ambitious' woman."

"She is the Queen of Trelandar," I answered, drying myself.

"Who desires to make herself someday the Leaderess of the Earth," Sela answered back as I stood there. I wondered about that. Lorraine back in the 20th Century had carefully taught Janet Rogers the political concepts of "THE NEW ORDER" as it was called before accidentally traveling through time to this era. Trelandar had many of political concepts of the 21st Century now in operation. Given the technology of the past I had no doubt that Lorraine would become another like Janet Rogers had been. I had no doubt should the Lorr help her that she would succeed too!

"THE NEW ORDER", or "The New Order For Mankind" as it was called was the carefully worked out design of Lorraine Duval back in the 20th Century. As we have Janet Roger's books, there is no doubt that she was merely "following" in Lorraine's footsteps and carrying out the "orders" that she had given. As this is not a part of Lorraine's books, the reader may not have realized that our Lorraine is actually the very same person responsible for the amazing World Federation of the first part of the 21st Century. It was an amazingly "successful" political system, although I now suspect that Lorraine's early work with "electronic hypnosis" had something to do with it, as Janet Rogers was utterly just too "successful" for anyone to believe otherwise, Especially given the "evidence" that I now have in my own possession from the secret city of Leith hidden there underneath the towering Sierras! \* \* Leith has of course very excellent records of the 21st Century. I also now suspect that the Lorr had a "claw" in things too here!

"She would be a `second Janet Rogers'," I told Sela with a smile. I admired Lorraine's awesome intelligence, and the way she could put herself in another's "shoes". I suppose it is true that Janet herself was no "saint", and I suppose the same can be said of the Queen of Trelandar, but the first half of the 21st Century was truly "THE GOLDEN AGE OF MAN" there before The War ended everything. The very success of Trelandar's new Queen is only further proof of her amazing leadership abilities. There is only one "Lorraine Duval". There will never be another. Perhaps Lysha sent Her to us for a reason too. I like to believe that.

"Tara is terrified of her," Sela Dai admitted with a smile.

"I would not care to have Lorraine as an `enemy'," I replied with an answering smile. I knew my famous friend far too well!!!

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"You have a pair of amazing daughters," Queen Dala Dai said to Lorraine as the two Queens watched the airplane lift off there in the darkness and head off to the south towards distant La Paz.

"I pray to She Who Is Mistress Of All that they will be safe," Lorraine answered the Queen of Talon with a grim smile.

"It is said by some that you once spoke with Lys," Dala Dai replied, looking up into the dark eyes of this amazing woman from a past now mostly only fantastic legends. This woman who had at one time been

the friend of Janet Rogers, the world's first World Leaderess back in the 21st Century before The War destroyed all.

"I did, although few believe," Lorrainesmiled back, turning away, the airplane now only a buzzing invisible speck in the sky.

"I thinkLyssent you here for a reason," the Queen of Talon answered. "You were sent here to give Mankind a second chance."

"I no longer believe everything I used to believe," Lorrainesmiled. "I have learned that no one person can be trusted with infinite power regardless of the perfection of their moral code."

"You are referring to Janet Rogers?" Dala Dai asked in reply as they walked back to their unicorns. A number of armed women, women of the caste of Warrioresses, following close behind them. Such were part of the Imperial Warlady's own personal guard now.

"I thought very highly of Janet," Lorrainesmiled. "Much as I now `do' of Darlanis. But now I know that infinite power must never been allowed to fall into the hands of any one individual."

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Upon another world now only a tiny point of light in Earth's nighttime sky a horrid nightmarish creature much like a gigantic carpenter ant ten feet in length idly nibbled on a food-stick and regarded the glowing colorful designs displayed before her as soft music came from a small radio transmitter into her antennae.

At a radio command from her antennae the display before her changed from a series of randomly generated displays to that of a lovely blonde haired girl with rich jade green eyes who stood with an oxygen mask clasped in her hand. The background behind her that of the surface of Mars a mile above the First Princess. Raspa's memories flooding back to seventy years ago. To the time when she had taken the newly orphanedAuroraas her own Servitor. The girl's mother having died on the surface in an accident, her breathing device having been exhausted before she could reach the safety of one of the small domed villages there on Mars' surface.

The death of a Servitor was considered by most Lorr in much the same light as humans would the death of a "domestic animal". Servitors were "useful", but not really "Lorr", and if from time to time some happened to die on the surface of the planet, it was of little concern as more of the creatures could always be bred! One merely removed an ovum from one, treated it, and then replaced it back into the Servitor's uterus where it became a baby. It was also possible to "modify" such, thus changing the species.

Yet Raspa had "felt" the girl's grief at the tragic death of her mother. A death where she had died actually gasping for oxygen in Mars' thin virtually worthless atmosphere! And Raspa felt "responsible" for the woman's death, knowing that it had been her orders that had been indirectly responsible for the woman being there on the deadly surface of Mars in the first place! She had "mind-linked" with the girl, "shared" with her in a way she never before dared to "share" with anyone else, either "human" or Lorr. "Understood" as she never had beforethat Servitors were "more" than just "domestic servants" put on a world for the Lorr's use!

Raspa had watchedAuroragrowup, saw to her training, education as her own mother would have had she lived. The young woman "beautiful" by the standards of her own kind soon taking a "lover" as many of the Servitors did. A young dark haired woman by the name of Katt. Such "activities" puzzling to the

Lorr, who were a "sexless" race where only their own Nest Queens produced the young of the species as necessary to keep the race of Lorr at the level determined "proper" by their TRIAD of which Raspa was the ruler, or First Princess as was her title among her own kind.

The display changed before Raspa as she called up another of the holographic pictures stored in her personal computer system. This one of the adult woman, her belly swollen with child. Raspa recalled vividly Aurora's strange "insistence" that the child be left with its father on the Earth, and not raised as a Servitor! She had "mind linked" with the woman, felt her deepest emotions. "Understood" as she had not before the deep-felt "hostility" many of the Servitors felt towards their alien mistresses. The Lorr did not mistreat their Servitors, such was almost "unthinkable", but the humans were to them much as dogs were to those of Earth. Then the year before she had been "touched" by SHE-IT-ALL, and Raspa had understood then why it was "wrong" to keep humans as slaves! That some of the creatures were actually as intelligent as Lorr! And as "deserving" of "freedom" as any of her own race!

It was then that Raspa hatched a secret "plan" that made her the one Lorr who might be considered by many of her own kind the worst "traitor" to her race that her race had known in its entire sixty thousand years of recorded history! Raspa being well aware that it was possible that the Servitors could even "turn" on her! That they even might, should they decide, even "exterminate" the Lorr who they now outnumbered by a good margin! Their own "First Princess" now being the yet still lovely Aurora, her own former personal Servitor! The actual mother of Darlanis of California!

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"Lorraine ever teach you to fly?" Sharon asked Gayle as the Trelandarian Princess looked out through the windshield at the stars gleaming there in the sky above them. The Dularnian maiden shaking her head in the negative as her eyes met those of Sharon.

"I would never be able to do something like that," Gayle breathed. The idea of actually flying the airplane terrifying!

"It isn't hard," Sharon assured her with a confident smile.

"But you're from the same time as Lorraine," Gayle replied.

"Darlanis flies, and she's from this time," Sharon smiled.

"Darlanis is 'different'," Gayle protested quickly back.

"In what 'way'?" Sharon challenged Gayle in reply.

"Well, she's a grown-up woman," Gayle ventured.

"And 'so'?" Sharon challenged Gayle right back.

"I suppose that I could 'do' it," Gayle admitted.

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Sela Dai, the Crown Princess of Talon extended a strip of bacon to me in her fingers, letting me take it between my teeth as I knelt there before her, my wrists well secured behind myself. My only attire a strip of blue silken material covering my sex that concealed nothing of the "delights" of my enslaved body.

"You would please a man much," she observed with a smile.

"With the `right' man I would be happy to do so," I said.

"You admit to `needs', `drives'," Sela teased me in reply.

"I am woman, a woman who has `such'," I smiled back at her.

"Interesting," Sela Dai smiled back at me as she sat there.

"I rather think it is due time that you `earned your keep' around here," Princess Tara said to me as I knelt while Sela stood there at my side in Tara's throne room. I thought of the relationship between a dog and its master or mistress. There was something of that sort of a relationship now developing between me and the lovely slender little brunette Princess of Talon. My hands were bound behind me. A wise precaution considering my own fighting abilities. I am a match in a hand to hand to most men.

"My Princess! My Princess! The black metal bird has come back again!" a warrioress cried as she dashed into the throne room. The note of terror in her voice making me smile to myself.

"Bring her!" Tara snapped to Sela, striding from the throne room to the courtyard, the sound of the airplane as it "buzzed" the castle "music" to my ears. Obviously I had not been "forgotten". No doubt the same thoughts were going through Tara's own mind too. The earlier bombing with quart bottles of jellied gasoline had not done much damage, but Tara certainly knew that if it was possible for Lorraine to make nitroglycerine, that might be an entirely different matter if used as "aerial bombs"!

"Who is flying that damn thing!" Tara snapped at me as we saw the airplane buzzing like a maddened insect there in the distance. "Sela says that she got her blade into Lorraine and I do believe her, but who else can fly besides Lorraine and yourself?"

"I know Sharon can, and perhaps Lorraine's Gayle can too," I ventured. I wondered if Lady Tirana could. It was possible. It was also possible that Lorraine had recovered enough to fly now.

"You might consider letting me go before you start getting gallon jugs of nitroglycerine being dropped around your ears," I suggested hopefully. I didn't think Tara was "that" scared, but it didn't hurt to make the comment just in case that she was now.

"Never!" Tara snapped back, although I think she didn't feel so "brave" just then as she pretended to be. She was a well educated, highly intelligent woman. She knew what nitroglycerine was, what it would do to her castle if dropped in gallon jugs!

"You are as helpless as an ant beneath a warrior's boot," I smiled back. There was nothing that Tara could do against the airplane. I suspect that she was very much well aware of it too!

"It cannot attack the castle without endangering you," Tara snapped back in reply. Obviously she had figured that much out.

"It can lend support to armed men attacking your castle," I pointed out. Lorraine had discussed such with me the last I had seen her. I had a great deal of "confidence" in Queen Lorraine.

"Dena can destroy it with her blaster," Tara snarled back!

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"See anything?" Sharon asked as Gayle lowered the binoculars she had been using as they over flew the castle there below. They had been stored in the airplane's glove compartment. A good well made pair of 10x60's. The same that I had used earlier to spy out the Swiftstar. The Princess holding them thoughtfully then.

"Not really all that much, but they looked pretty damm `scared' to me," Gayle observed with a charming smile. No doubt Tara and her people had thought that the airplane might be returning to bomb them again with bottles of deadly nitroglycerine this time instead of the much more harmless bottles of NAPALM.

"I wish we had some nitroglycerine," Sharon answered her.

"Could you make it?" Gayle asked. Sharon was after all like Lorraine from that "wonderful era" there before The War when people could do almost anything that they set their minds to doing!

"It's not that hard to make, but it's dangerous to handle," Sharon pointed out. She knew the formula for its manufacture. The necessary materials were perhaps even available here in Baja.

"I also swiped Lorraine's notes," Gayle suggested. "I could help you." Sharon nodded, a grim smile curving her young lips.

"I sent the Sea Star out to find the Squala," handsome boyish Captain Jers Bisan of the Seahawk told the two lovely teenage blondes. His provocative and sensual wife Lara sitting there beside him. It had been his unpleasant duty to inform Sharon that I had not yet returned from the castle and that it was quite possible that I was now dead and she was the Empress of California.

"Until we know otherwise we will assume that Darlanis is `alive' and is being held captive by your mother," she told Jers.

"Couldn't you just walk into the castle and ask her?" Gayle ventured. Jers was after all Tara's only child. He was the only person who could enter the castle and leave without any concern.

"I'm sure my mother wouldn't allow me to see Darlanis," Jers pointed out. "She's not that much of a fool to let everyone know that she's holding the Empress of California captive." Pausing before adding, "Assuming of course, that she took Darlanis alive which is something that we really don't know yet at this point."

"You might also tell Sela Dai that Lorraine, acting in Darlanis' name, has agreed to a treaty of friendship between California and Talon," Sharon suggested in reply. "She might be willing to help us get Darlanis back if Tara has her in her captivity."

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"Ah, the `quality' of slaves around here is improving," the fat kitchen master smiled as I was presented to him as a new work slave. Perhaps it pleased Princess Tara to think of me slaving away in a hot kitchen wet with sweat, nearly naked but for a strip of cloth covering my sex, doing such menial domestic tasks.

"Her `use' is of course yours," the Bajan Princess told him. The man's dark eyes lighting up with "glee" at the very thought!

## Chapter Twenty Three

"Let's try you out," the sweating overweight kitchen master said to me, a slim brunette slave girl watching us as she stirred a large black iron pot of soup simmering over one of the fires. The firelight gleaming off her sweaty skin as she watched us two.

"I think you will be disappointed," I told him, removing my strip of blue cloth from about my hips and lying down there on the sweat stained mattress that had no doubt cushioned the sweaty naked bodies of a large number of slave girls before me. He then joined me. I let him paw me and then ride me. I hope he enjoyed doing it. No doubt I was a considerable disappointment to him.

"You Dularnians aren't any good!" he complained, getting up, pulling his clothing back together. I laid there, smiling up at him. I am "good" if I want to be. I've learned a lot from Lara.

"As 'cold' as our 'frigid wasteland'," I smiled back at him, recalling what Lorraine had once called it there in the winter.

"Get off your damm back and get to work!" he snapped, reaching for a slave whip. The other slave girl smiling to herself. \*\*\*\*\*

Queen Dala Dai of Talon smiled to herself as she watched the Queen of Trelandar restlessly pace the walkway by the edge of the palace's roof top, the tall stern looking brunette in no mood to be "trifled" with by anyone, as Lady Sanda Talen had just found out to her discomfort! Later, she knew, Lorraine would go to the woman and ask her forgiveness, but just now Lorraine was in no mood to be "pestered" by anyone over anything! Dala watching the famous brunette pause to stare out over the city and the harbor.

"Damn it!" Lorraine muttered to herself, not thinking of the little Queen sitting there on the bench next to a large flowering plant. The black silk of her gown well displaying her figure. Dala was small, only 5'1" and a hundred pounds, but with a slim trim build that any woman, regardless of height, might well envy.

"It was said that people of your era had no 'patience'," Dala smiled, remembering what she had read in the history books.

"I'm still used to a social order with telephones, airplanes, automobiles, not one where the fastest means of transportation over any distance is a three masted Squala class ship!" the famous Warlady of the Empire of California then laughed back.

"I've often wondered what it was like to live back then," Dala smiled, wishing to keep Lorraine's mind off her "troubles".

"We considered ourselves 'civilized', but sometimes I wonder if we confused 'technology' with 'civilization'," Lorraine then replied with a smile. "The fact that we could travel out into space did not mean that we were ready to meet with another race."

"Had the Lorr been different than they were, perhaps things would have been different," the little Queen of Talon answered, a warm sun glowing down upon them from a nearly cloudless blue sky. The Lorr were horrifying creatures much resembling gigantic black ants. Their practice of using "human" women as servants had no doubt also been a deciding factor in the decision made by certain military officers after the death of Janet Rogers to destroy the Lorr by diverting a gigantic comet from its orbit so that it would

crash into Mars and hopefully destroy the horrible aliens!

"I doubt it would have mattered considering that we are still willing to fight among ourselves like barbarians even after everything that has happened over the centuries," Lorraine said. "There are unfortunately too many in this world who can think of war as a 'solution' to all their problems for us to hope for anything more." Dala Dai nodded, thinking of twelve years ago. Of a tall golden Empress who had lead her forces in battle. Of the husband who had died fighting against that woman's own invasion. Talon had "won" that war, but at a "cost" that had almost ruined the little hidden country nestled there between the mountains...

"You are not the 'militarist' I first expected," Dala said in reply. "I suppose one of our troubles is that we live too much in the past and let our own memories control our thoughts."

"And we believe that people never change," Lorraine replied.

"Like the hostile reception we gave Darlanis," the Queen of Talon answered. The memories had been too vivid of another time.

"There is 'good' and 'evil' in all of us," Lorraine smiled.

"With the exception of Princess Tara," Dala Dai teased her.

"Tara is mentally unbalanced due to what happened to her," Lorraine answered. "She was furious with Darlanis for letting her son, her only child, marry a woman like 'Lara of Trelandar'." The Queen feeling that it was best if she kept to herself her own suspicions that the Bajan Princess was now "possessed" by an evil demoness from that "plane of existence" commonly called "Hell"...

"I can understand that as a mother myself," Dala answered. She had a son, and the thought of him marrying a woman with a "reputation" like Lara possessed was enough to any mother sweat!

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"Aurora!" Katt breathed, clasping the still beautiful blonde to herself. The "stress" of overseeing things here at Leith had been "enough" to unnerve the "bravest". Leith being the secret Lorr city beneath the Sierras that had been used for thousands of years as a "base of operations" there on the Earth. \* And there at Katt's side was Aurora's own granddaughter, An'na, whose own beloved Starfire was now being armed with anti-matter missiles! \* There have of course been "tales" of such a "place" told by various "secret societies". One wonders if there might be "something" to such "stories". There are numerous reports of "UFO's" in this same area. (Perhaps the Lorr do "exist" after all!) It may be noted here that Leith was also "THE CITY OF GOLD" once sought by the Spanish. The Lorr using gold for its electrical properties in their equipment. Also the area in which Leith lies was once also quite famous for its rich gold deposits. (JBB)

"I'm 'scared', Aurora," Katt breathed, looking up into her eyes. Thinking of "what" they were about to "do" perhaps in only a week or so now when the "orders" came from Mars. Aurora nodding, well aware of "what" could happen should things "go wrong"! An'na on the other hand could only think of the excitement of REVOLUTION! Of a "new" social order where Woman and Lorr were "equals", and one no longer served the other upon a "slave to master" relationship! And Aurora would be truly their Leaderess!

"My daughter is once again the captive of Princess Tara," Aurora spoke in reply, a side glance at An'na as she nodded back. It was well known in Leith that Darlanis was Princess Tara's new captive. The



"activities" of the woman Dena had been noted too! Aurora had few "doubts" that Dena was now one of Tara's "agents"!

"The Starfire is still having its engines rebuilt!" Katt protested back. "And Princess Tara could kill you!" The traditional "protection" afforded Lorr Servitors would not apply here! Not once Aurora stepped outside the bounds of her own "duties"!!!

"Refuel my saucer and I'll go in that!" Aurora snapped, drawing her pistol, checking it, and putting it back into the holster. "My daughter needs me, and I won't fail her this time!"

"If something happens to you...!" Katt breathed softly, a lovely pair of dark eyes glowing into the jade green of Aurora's. Once, long ago, they had been more than close, their love strong.

"You will `do' as best you can," Aurora smiled back then, turning to An'na, taking her beloved granddaughter in her arms, briefly brushing her hair as she once used to do years before...

"I'll go in your place!" Katt protested. "My life is worth far less than `yours'!" Aurora nodded, knowing the truth spoken.

"Darlanis is my daughter," Aurora answered in level tones. "If Tara kills me, An'na should be our Leaderess in my place." \* \* Lorraine notes in her book that Aurora seemed to be a person of "importance" on Mars. This is just about like saying that I am a person of "importance" here in California! Aurora is a very "popular" Leaderess among the Women of Mars, very well respected. She is also, as Lorraine has noted, a very wonderful singer too!

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Prince Jers Bisan of Baja regarded the two golden haired delights standing there before him, his provocative and sensual wife Lara sitting there on the sofa beneath the stern windows beside him. The cool breeze off the water pleasant given the heat of the sun as the Seahawk rode quietly at anchor there in a little cove some distance from La Paz. The Sea Star gone at his order to seek the Squala, it being obvious now that his mother, the Princess of Baja, had me now in her possession if I still lived.

"Sela Dai is our only hope now of learning anything," Sharon pointed out to the young handsome boyish Prince, the angry flash of Lara's eyes at her words unnoticed by the Imperial Princess.

"Why don't I just go `ask' my mother if she has Darlanis?" Jers smiled back. He knew better than to expect the truth. His mother, who he still loved despite her evil deeds, was not one he could trust to tell the truth. He had meant his words in a different way than what they had implied upon first hearing them. He had over the years learned to disregard much he heard about Tara. Many of the things spoken of her were but mere "legends"!

"Perhaps you might tell Sela that there is now friendship between Talon and the Empire," Gayle of Trelandar pointed out.

"So Lorraine did get a treaty signed," Jers smiled back.

"I did most of the `work'," Gayle smiled in reply, remembering. She was young enough to arouse the Queen of Talon's own "mothering" instincts, and the rest had been rather easy for her. Especially after the young Prince of Talon had taken a "shine" to her, girls of her height and hair color being very rare in Talon.

"We need alcohol for the airplane," Sharon pointed out then.

"I had the rest of it unloaded off Sea Star before sending her out to seek the Squala," Jers smiled back, glad of doing so.

"At least that gives us an 'advantage' over Tara," Sharon smiled, wondering how long it would be before Lorraine arrived!

"Perhaps we could 'negotiate' Darlanis' release," Gayle suggested, thinking of what she had done in Talon with Queen Dala.

"Not likely," Lara spoke up from beside her husband.

"I could 'ask', however," her husband smiled back.

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"No doubt Emperor Manuel will be delighted with you," Princess Tara said to me as I served there at dinner along with Lynn, a nearly naked slave girl both chained and gagged at Tara's request. At the table with her was Sela Dai. I wondered about her a bit. What thoughts went through her mind at the sight of me now there. And the Lorr Servitor "Dena", a "traitor" now even to the Lorr! Tara having just informed me to my horror that Dena would shoot down Black Lady the next time the airplane flew over!

"My Princess, the Seahawk has just entered the harbor!" a warriorress burst in, Sela Dai smiling to herself as I felt a tingle of pleasure go over me at hearing her words. It was obvious that Lorraine or someone had decided to bring Jers into the act!

"Chain Darlanis in our deepest and darkest and most secret cell and warn everyone that none is to speak to my son of her!" Tara snapped back, her rapidity of thought reminding me of another. She had been a capable and competent Warlady over the years. Only her sadism caused her to be less "effective" than otherwise. Otherwise I have no doubt history would have been very different.

"And Sela," Tara added, "I'm sure he's come for Darlanis, not for you," warning Sela not to get up her "hopes" for her son.

"If he comes here, I will 'talk' to him," the Princess answered, her eyes meeting those of Tara across the table from her. Dena glancing at Princess Tara, who "nodded" back in return then.

"Mind your tongue!" Tara snapped back at her, "Or I'll chain you right next to Darlanis." Sela's chin lifted, her dark eyes hot as they glowed into the darkness of Tara's in reply. She was of the Warriorresses. As good with a sword as Tara herself, I suspected, considering the Bajan Princess' injured right wrist.

"Lay a hand on me, and my mother will sign a treaty with the Empire," Sela snapped back, her hand on the hilt of her sword. We did not of course know at this time that such had already been done. No doubt it would have altered things considerably had we known. While the Tarls of Talon cannot fly far enough to reach La Paz, they could be transported by ship to an area close enough where they might make their strikes from the air. Also, of course, Tara was well aware of Black Lady and its own abilities! And I did not not think Dena would be allowed to use her blaster for long without drawing "attention" that she "working" for Tara!

"Bitch!" Tara snarled. "Seize her! Disarm her!" Sela's sword now in her hand. She was "quick". She must have been to get "beneath" Lorraine's guard. Probably another like Sa-she- ra. Dena standing up, her

hand on the grip of her blaster. At a word from Tarashe would doubtlessly kill the Princess right there!!!

"And WHO in the name of HELL are YOU!" Taras snapped, wheeling about, a warrioress of her guards dashing ahead of a silvery clad blonde haired woman whom I instantly recognized as Aurora!!!

"I am Aurora, Representative of the First Princess," Aurora snapped in level tones, ignoring the "fuss" about her as everyone looked to Tara for "instructions" as to "what do" about all this!

"She came down on the roof top!" the warrioress gasped to her Princess. I had a hard time keeping a "straight face" then, especially seeing the look of "sheer terror" on Dena's features!

"You will 'turn' this traitor over to me!" Aurora snapped, pointing at Dena, her right hand on the grip of her Lorr blaster. Such weapons fire small highly explosive bullets of .25 caliber .

"DIE!" Dena screamed, whipping out her pistol, Aurora doing the same! THE SHOTS ALMOST AS ONE! Blood spraying from Dena as Aurora's explosive bullet took her in the chest! A crater blasted into the rock of the wall behind Aurora as Dena's bullet just missed my mother! Fortunately no one had been standing there behind her at the time! The look of "terror" on Tara's face delighting me as Aurora then aimed her pistol at Tara! The Bajan Princess having grabbed up Lorraine's caplock pistol there in the confusion. I waited for Aurora to pull the trigger, kill Tara!!!

"Drop that!" Aurora snapped, her jade eyes now burning hot!

"Not this time, you black hearted bitch!" Lynn suddenly snapped, a knife suddenly at Tara's throat as she stepped behind her, much to everyone's surprise, including Tara's no doubt! "There are worse things than being a slave girl, and serving you is one of them," she added, much to Princess Tara's own discomfort!

"Free Darlanis of her shackles," Aurora snapped to Sela Dai, picking up Dena's own blaster pistol, a smile curving her lips! The look on Tara's face leaving no "doubt" how she felt about it!

"Feels good to be on the side of 'good' this time," Sela said to me as she freed me of my shackles and gag. Lynn careful to keep Tara under control, the Bajan Princess furious at what we had done! "Even if you were responsible for my father's death."

"There is 'something' that needs being done," I told Aurora.

"Open it!" I snapped, pushing Dena's pistol into Tara's back as the Princess pushed the "card" into the lock of the door far below Triskelion. What the Lorr "did" with the things there was of no concern of mine, but I would not leave the last remains of Domino Tremaine for them to gloat over! I would see that her remains received a proper burial somewhere where they would never be "disturbed" by the hand of Man or the claw of the horrid Lorr!

"It is 'wrong' to disturb 'her'," Tara spoke, pushing open the door. Her words coming as a considerable "surprise" to me considering the sort of a person that she was. I wondered if it was possible that Tara had a superstitious dread of the remains??

"What Mars does with this here is of no concern of mine, but I will not have one of those damm 'ants' clawing at 'her'!" I snapped back, shoving the Bajan Princess forward into the room.

"She was a proud and beautiful woman," I said to Tara, looking down at what remained of Domino Tremaine after some five centuries. Most people considered her "responsible" for the attack on Mars that

had been the "cause" of The War of 2047, but I did not think she had ever "given" such orders. Doubtlessly she too had once had her own "Tara", and had been "betrayed" by such just as I had. Such was, I thought, quite likely considering the "horror" that she had viewed the near destruction of Mars by the great comet of 2046! Such was a matter of "public record". Her death here far below the Earth was perhaps only further "proof"! No doubt she had felt "responsible" for what had happened even if there was no way that she could prevent the Lorr's bombing of the Earth! That I thought, was why she had killed herself as she had in this place. In among the bones of the right hand there was a sort of plastic "card", such "cards" being used in the 21st Century as a means of storing data readable only by a computer! And Lorraine possessed such a computer! WE WOULD LEARN THE TRUTH!!!!

## Chapter Twenty Four

"THERE IS SOMETHING HERE IN THIS ROOM WITH US!" Tara suddenly screamed, cowering back. I thought it only a trick of light! Then I wasn't so "sure" anymore. I felt a sense of "peace", of "contentment" go over me as if I "shared" the emotions of one who had over the centuries been tormented by what had been "said" of her! Now safe in the blanket that was rolled about her remains would be the "proof" of the last days of a now long gone "world"! And there was something "else" too, a puzzling feeling of "love"!

"I don't SHE 'likes' you, Tara," I smiled at the Princess!

"You got what you went for?" Aurora said to me as I carried the rolled up blanket with the dried skeletal remains of She who had once been ruler of a world! Tara shivering in terror beside me, more afraid of Domino's "ghost" than anything that Aurora or me might "do"! I found the Bajan's "terrors" quite pleasurable! \* \* I think I know "why" now Tara was so scared of her! If Domino's "last testament" is true, then "Domino Tremaine" was the "clone daughter" I will someday have, and who will travel back in time to the 20th Century by some means yet unknown, perhaps by a flight through a "Gateway", although this is hard to believe. However, her description of her "mother" as a tall "golden" woman in golden mesh wearing a sword is only further proof that she was actually my own daughter that I will someday have! I am well aware of how "fantastic" this all sounds, but I do have the computer card Domino made just before her death, and she does say that she remembers what her own mother did look like, and the description can be of no one else but me as fantastic as it sounds! Especially since she actually REMEMBERED MY NAME, "DARLANIS"!!!

"We still have to get out of here," I pointed out to Sela Dai as she nodded back. Princess Tara fuming helplessly there in Lynn's arms as my former slave girl held her dagger to the black hearted Bajan's throat. A number of Tara's warrioresses now on the scene along with perhaps a dozen of her warriors. Several were armed with crossbows. Aurora standing there before us, a blaster pistol in each hand keeping them "at bay" for the moment. Things were now getting "tense". It would take little to trigger off a sudden bloodbath that none of us would survive. I would see to it personally that Tara didn't survive it. Lorraine could always "clean up" the resulting political mess later on. I had the remains of Earth's last Leaderess safe in the old blanket on which she had died over five centuries before. The body had almost fallen apart when moved, the bones and skin all that was now left of what had once been the tall magnificent golden Leaderess!

"Free all your slaves, both male and female!" Lynn snapped at Tara, poking her with the point of her dagger, making a spot of blood run. "And have your forces disarm themselves or you die right here on the

spot!" I wondered if Lynn could "kill" if it came to that. Perhaps Tara was wondering about the same thing! I now had Tara's pistol. The one that had belonged to Lorraine. I would have preferred a sword, but the pistol would do for now. It was "capped", no doubt loaded. Aurora standing there, smiling to herself, her blasters pointed at Tara's forces. Aurora being a woman who I had obviously "misjudged", it now appeared too! I worried however that one of the crossbowmen, "braver" than the others, might be willing to give his life to take hers with him!

"Do it," Tara spoke to her warriors, the tone of her voice speaking much of how she felt about things just then. There was no trace of fear in it. She is a Warrioress, true to the Codes. I wondered about Aurora, "why" she had come here as she had now. I suspected that I knew "why". That she had needed to "prove" to me that she was truly my "mother" in just more than a legal term.

"I hope you know what this means," Tara snapped at Sela Dai. I sensed the fury of "betrayal" there in those icy cold tones. I thought of Tara's terror there in that hidden bedroom far below. I had seen nothing, but yet I "wondered" if Domino yet "existed"? Had Tara seen her "ghost"? I recalled that sense of "peace" and "contentment" I had felt then as if Domino herself had touched me with a soft gentle caress. She had been much like me in so many ways. We had even looked so much "alike". I suspected that her golden dress would fit me, that her sword would fit my own hand! \* \* As she was of course a perfect "duplicate" of me, both her own clothing and her weapons would "fit" me. Domino is also said to have been the one who introduced the wearing of swords in the 21st Century as a "badge of citizenship". Did she thus honor me? I wish we had better records of her, and knew "more" about her...

"Talon is better off allied with the Empire," Sela smiled.

"Even though Darlanis is responsible for the death of your father?" Princess Tara retorted, her eyes meeting those of Sela.

"And was it Darlanis or you who 'commanded' those forces?" Sela asked in reply. I had once pointed this out to her a couple days ago. That I was not the same person I had been twelve years ago. That people do "change", and that I deserved a chance to prove to the people of Talon that I was not what I once had been!

"Darlanis gave the orders, I carried them out," Tara smiled.

"I never gave orders to have villages burned. Or innocent women and children put to the sword," I retorted. "That was your own idea to 'help break their spirit' like you did in Trelandar."

"It worked in Trelandar, didn't it!" Tara suddenly snapped, speaking before she thought the implications of her words out!!!

"You killed a tenth of our population, you damm bitch!" Sela snapped back, "And then you actually blamed Darlanis for it too!"

"The Nevadas will overrun your country after I 'ally' myself with them," Tara snapped back in fury, not really thinking then!

"We may be able to prevent that," I said to the Princess of Talon. Talon had the ability to make nitroglycerine with Lorraine's help. The Tarls could carry a girl and a dozen pints or so of it. I did not think that the superstitious barbaric Nevadas could withstand an aerial attack carried out by such means! On the other hand I didn't know if such a "violation" of the EDICT would be "tolerated" for long. The Lorr are funny about such things. Often they pay such things little attention, but at other times they react almost

immediately to such "violations"!!!

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"Look at that, cap'tain!" the midshipman cried as he saw the group of figures there in the distance come up over the rise. A tall blonde woman, clad in ill-fitting clothing, leading them. A woman he recognized even at that distance as none other but me! Hovering over them all a small saucer of the sort often used as a "shuttle craft" for short flights over the surface of a world.

"MaybeLorrainedid `underestimate' her," Jers smiled back.

"Let my mother go, Darlanis," Jers said to me, his hand on the hilt of his sword as he sat astride his unicorn. The hot sun of Baja burning down upon us. It was late in the afternoon. The midshipman beside him on a horse looked "uncomfortable". I was after all the Empress of California. One does not give such a person "orders" of any sort. Jers, however, was an "exception". I had the last remains of Domino Tremaine in a blanket slung over my back like some tramp with his "stuff". I had been surprised to find thatTarahad never even ever "touched" the body in the time that it had laid there hundreds of feet below the ground. I suspected now that perhaps the Princess had been terrified of it! She said that she did have "nightmares" about the dead Leaderess!

"You still have your life, Darlanis," he said to me. "Give me hers." I thought of Sandia Allis. The look in her eyes as she died in my arms. The slaves, both male and female, clutchingtheir weapons, their eyes upon me. They too had reason to hate! I had one of the blaster pistols thrust into my harness.Aurorahad shown me how to use it. Her saucer itself was also "armed".

"Don't attempt an `attack' on us," I snapped,Taranodding.Lynnat my order then releasing the Princess, who strolled off, the very "picture" of impotent fury at what had happened to her!

"Darlanis!"Sharoncried, throwing herself into my welcoming arms as I boarded the Seahawk there inLa Paz's harbor. Jers ordering his first officer to raise anchor as soon as everyone was aboard, there being no doubt that his "welcome" here was "over"!Aurorahad left earlier, saying she'd be keeping a "motherly" eye on me for a while just see that I "stayed out of trouble". She had of course done so privately, understanding my own situation! I had taken her in my arms, kissed her. I had a "mother" now! I was very "proud" too of my mother despite what she had once done!

"You couldn't use another `Princess', could you?" Gayle smiled, "Lorraine's apt to be pretty `sore' after we took her airplane and I stole her notes on how to manufacture explosives."

"I will grant you my `royal protection'," I laughed, giving her a hug with my free arm, my beloved Princess there at my side.

"What made you decide for me?" I askedLynnas the Seahawk headed back out to sea,La Pazonly a bad memory now behind us.

"I can read and write, you know," she said to me. I nodded. "I stumbled across some of her writing in her trash while she was still treating me as a `plaything' to be `abused',"Lynnsaid with a smile. "She `owns' every slaver throughout Baja." I supposed that would "effect" a woman who had been a female slave.

"And?" I ventured, suspecting that there was more to this.

"She abuses her slaves,"Lynnanswered. "You never did."

"You have well earned your freedom," I smiled in reply.

"I would prefer to remain your `slave'," Lynn smiled.

"I'm not going to give you that `choice'," I smiled back.

"I'm afraid Tara learned an awful lot from me," Lynn said.

"I'm sure she has `other sources of information'," I smiled.

"What are you going to do with the remains of that woman from the past?" Lynn asked. The remains had aroused considerable comment, especially when I told everyone "who" they had belonged to! Domino had never been as "famous" as Janet Rogers, but she was written up in the history books and with the help of Lorraine's computer, we might finally learn the "TRUTH" of things!

"I will see to that they receive an honorable burial," I smiled, feeling that Domino Tremaine at least "deserved" that!

"There's enough alcohol to make Trella," I told Sharon as she nodded. Gayle looked rather "worried". She had stolen the keys to the airplane and also Lorraine's notes on explosives. I really didn't think she had that much to worry about, however. I knew that Lorraine had Sela's mother with her now in Trelandar.

"You would make my brother a good wife," Sela told Gayle, "Although you are a bit too tall and heavy to ride on our Tarls."

"He is a little bit `young' for me," Gayle smiled back. The young Prince in question being only sixteen to Gayle's seventeen.

"A long engagement would be `proper'," Princess Sela smiled. That would allow a certain degree of "maturity" to develop too.

"I do like your mother," Gayle "admitted" to the Princess.

"It is always wise to be on good terms with your mother-in-law," Sela smiled back. Such a marriage would also be good in a political sense, uniting the two nations of Talon and Trelandar, although I didn't wish to "push" Gayle into anything she didn't want. I did know from Sharon that Gayle had done most of the work in getting a treaty of friendship between the two countries. Obviously Gayle Marn was a very capable young Princess. Much like her older sister Maris, the Queen of Dularn.

"Do you think Lynn will be `safe' on the Seahawk?" Sharon asked from the seat beside me, Sela and Gayle riding behind us in back. The near desert terrain of Baja passing by there thousands of feet beneath us. It is not a rich country. The people are poor. In my own opinion being ruled or rather "exploited" by a woman like Tara doesn't help anything either! I wondered if one certain "revolutionary" I knew would be "interested" in making another "Revolution" once she was delivered of child and free to act. Sanda Talen had been a very effective opponent against me. Her "Free Trelandar" movement had given me considerable trouble!

"About as safe as Lara is," I answered. Like Lara she would now have to live the life of a refugee until I could do something about Tara. Like getting her collared and sold as a slave girl!

"If these bones could `speak', what tales they could tell," Sela mused, regarding the remains of the Leaderess in the blanket. There was "little left" of her but bones, some strands of her once lovely golden hair so much like mine, and paper-like skin that had torn and flaked apart as soon as we moved the body.

"There is a computer card from her time that Lorraine can perhaps `read' with her computer," I answered over the drone of the engine. "Perhaps she left us her `last will and testament'."

## Chapter Twenty Five

"Lorraine," Gayle breathed, shrinking back against me as we climbed up there on the docks of Trella, the sun shining down upon us from a nearly cloudless sky. The awesome Warlady didn't look all that "delighted" to see her. Or even me or Sharon for that matter! The look on her face unreadable as Dala Dai nodded in greeting to us. I recalled the photograph of Lorraine that I had seen there facing that of Janet Rogers. My "Lorraine" was much like "hers". I wondered too what Domino had thought of her?

"You have turned out to be everything I hoped for!" Lorraine suddenly laughed, seizing the girl in her arms, Queen Dala Dai of Talon taking her own daughter in her arms as I hugged Sharon to myself. My experiences with Tara were now only bad memories. We were perhaps lucky to be alive. Few have ever escaped Tara. And now once again I even had a "mother" that I might look up to too!

"Interesting," Lorraine said, looking down at the bones, the few scattered strands of dried hair still yet the color of gold clinging to her now eye-less dried skull. The golden mesh dress, the sword yet as "perfect" as the day that she'd worn them! I had no doubts that in life she had been a truly magnificent woman! The sort of a woman who like me could stand before men tall and proud, the sunlight glinting off her golden attire. She had been truly a "Leaderess". The proper and fit ruler of the world!

"There is `this'," I said, reaching down among the bones, giving Lorraine the computer card. "'She' left this for us." I saw Lorraine nod, smile. Perhaps we might read her last words!!!

"Let's see what `she' left us," Lorraine said, loading the computer card into the 21st Century laptop computer she'd found in Thistle the year before buried safely beneath the earth for some five centuries. I wondered what Domino would have to "say"?

"Wow! She looks just like Darlanis!" Gayle breathed as the computer screen lit up with a picture of the long dead Leaderess. I had noted such years before, and never really thought too much of it. Given enough time, there will naturally be "duplicates"!

"A bit `older', although," Lorraine then noted with a smile.

"THERE IS LITTLE LEFT NOW," the woman on the screen spoke, her voice sounding "tinny" there coming through the laptop's tiny speaker. "AND ALTHOUGH WE HAVE MOUNTED WHAT DEFENSES WE COULD, IT MADE LITTLE DIFFERENCE IN THE END. THOSE WHO `BETRAYED' MANKIND HAVE PAID THE `PRICE' OF THEIR TREASON, BUT THE LORR WOULD NOT `LISTEN', NOR WOULD THEIR SPACECRAFT HALT THEIR BOMBING EVEN WHEN I OFFERED THEM TOTAL SURRENDER IF ONLY THEY WOULD SPARE US!"



"Those damn `ANTS!" Gayle breathed from beside me. Domino going on to explain that she had executed those "responsible" for starting the war with Mars, but that it had made no difference to the Lorr, who obviously wished to destroy everything they could!!

"This was over five hundred years ago," Lorrainespoke, her dark eyes burning into ours. I understood what she referred to! Those who had given such orders had been dead now for centuries!

Domino went on, giving a history of events that was much as I had suspected it would be. There was in her voice a note of "finality". A hint that she had already decided now to take her own life. She felt that she had "failed" Mankind, and that she "deserved" to die. Such was part of a culture that I too shared!

"A beautiful, `noble' woman," Sela Daisaid, her eyes now like mine moist with tears. Lorrainenodding, wisely just then keeping her "opinions" to herself about "blondes". It was almost like seeing myself standing there on that little computer screen.

"NOW THAT YOU HAVE FOUND MY `LAST REMAINS', LET ME TELL YOU THE `TRUTH' ABOUT MYSELF THAT ONLY MY BEST FRIEND JANET EVER KNEW. AND THAT WAS THAT I WAS NOT BORN HERE IN THIS TIME, BUT IN ANOTHER, IN A STRANGE CULTURE FAR DIFFERENT FROM THIS ONE. I AM THE DAUGHTER OF A WOMAN WHO NAME WAS `DARLANIS', A WOMAN WHO WAS A RULER OF A LAND CALLED SURPRISINGLY ENOUGH `CALIFORNIA'. IT IS MY BELIEF, JUDGING FROM WHAT MEMORIES I HAVE, THAT I AM FROM THE FUTURE. PERHAPS HUNDREDS OF YEARS BEYOND THIS TIME, AND THAT I MADE THE ATTEMPT TO `ALTER' THE PAST, TO PREVENT THIS `WAR' THAT HAS NOW NEARLY DESTROYED THE EARTH. `HOW' I CAME HERE I DO NOT KNOW, AND NOT EVEN JANET'S BEST EFFORTS WITH ELECTRONIC HYPNOSIS HAVE BEEN OF HELP. I REMEMBER MY MOTHER TALL AND GOLDEN HAIRED, DRESSED IN A GOLDEN COSTUME OF METALLIC MESH, WITH A SWORD ON HER HIP! FROM WHAT WE KNOW OF MARS I KNOW THAT I COULD NOT HAVE BEEN BORN THERE. YET I HAVE A CLEAR AND VIVID MENTAL PICTURE OF MY MOTHER, TALL AND GOLDEN, AND WITH HER IS ANOTHER WOMAN, ONE TALL, DARK, SLIM, WHO JANET SAYS CAN BE NONE OTHER THAN LORRAINE DUVAL HERSELF, WHOM WE HAVE ALWAYS THOUGHT `DIED' AT SEA IN THE YEAR 1988!" Lorraine's finger stopped the computer at this point as every eye burned into mine as I stood there in awe! Domino Tremaine, a woman of the past, saying that she was my own daughter!

"You will have a daughter, and she will travel back through time to the late 20th Century," Lorrainesaid to me, looking at the remains of one who had once lived some five centuries before! "On a mission to alter all of human history," Lorrainenow added.

"I cannot bear children," I pointed out, seeing Sharon's eyes. She too could hardly "believe" what Domino had just said! \* \* Considering certain recent events, I believe that Lorraine is right in her belief that my daughter will attempt to travel back through time to the 20th Century in an attempt to change history.

"Your ovaries are still functioning," Lorraineanswered. I knew that a woman's ovums could be "fertilized" chemically to produce a perfect "clone daughter". Such had been done since the first years of the 21st Century. The Priestesses of Lys did it all the time. Very little was "thought" of such things now too! The ovum could be implanted in any woman then with a good uterus. "There are ways of verifying such things, but we will need Aurora's help," Lorrainesaid to me. I nodded back at her. "If your genes do actually match hers, then there can be no more doubts." \* \* Such tests were made. And Domino Tremaine was

my own daughter!

"I wish to be alone with 'her' and the computer," I said. I knew how to operate it. I would listen to my daughter's last words "alone" with her as was "proper". Such would be "fitting", I felt then. Lorraine nodded, motioned for the others to leave.

"You have 'questions'," Lorraine said to me as I entered the room, the Queen of Trelandar standing there looking out the window at the city below. The sun now low there in the west over the ocean beyond. Her dark eyes met mine as I nodded back. Her facial features lost in shadow against the glare of the sunlight.

"If only she hadn't been 'hurt'," I said, remember what the last Leaderess of Earth had said about her "memories", about the "theories" she had formed as to the true nature of "time travel". She had suffered considerable "brain damage", resulting in a loss of much of the memories she'd once possessed about our own time. Otherwise I thought she might have been able to "stop" THE WAR!!!

"It wouldn't have made any 'difference'," Lorraine answered. "Mankind would have fought the Lorr regardless of anything Domino would have been able to do," she smiled, standing there, her hair highlighted by the sunlight streaming through the window. "You see, the Lorr aroused in us all the 'old terrors', and especially the fact that they used as 'slaves' the very one 'type' of woman most highly valued here on Earth insured that a war would occur."

"The Servitors are white skinned, 'blonde'," I smiled back. There is throughout history almost a worship of that racial type. Not all Servitors were, but a good percent fitted that standard!

"And held in 'bondage' by 'horrid monsters'," she answered, seeing me nod back thoughtfully. Men of that era would be driven to "rescue" the beautiful golden haired Servitors from the Lorr! Their own instinctive drives to "protect" the "ideal woman" would be enough to insure a deadly war between the Earth and Mars then! I have used some similar "instincts" to my own advantage, I note. Lorraine having pointed out such things there in her own books...

"And most people of that time also felt that the solar system belonged to us," I answered, remembering my own studies here. The "attack" on the Lorr had been "supported" by most of Mankind as being "just and proper". That I knew from what my own Scribes had told me. What had been written on the computer cards my own Warlady could "read" now with her little computer. Lorraine had said that The War had been seen as a JIHAD (holy war) against an alien foe so "EVIL" that anything would be seen as being proper!!

"Man's first and no doubt 'last' interplanetary war," Lorraine smiled, looking out the window, the sun shining into her face. "Against a 'enemy' like something out of a cheap movie..."

"And no one could 'stop' it," I said, thinking of Domino. I suspected that she had taken the "name" after she'd entered the 20th Century, as I was certain I'd never name a daughter "that"!

"Overpopulation would have finished the World Federation in another generation," Lorraine answered, again turning to face me. "According to their own records, the population of the Earth had reached a figure of eight billion, sixteen times what it is now." I nodded thoughtfully, wondering what it would be "like" to live on a world with sixteen times as many people on it as were now... "Civilization would not have survived the consequences of that. In the last years of Janet Rogers' life, she was being forced to use 'military force' to hold her Federation together against the teeming starving hordes of Asia, Africa and South America." The little known "racial wars" just after The War are the "result" of what Janet had attempted to do, and probably account for the fact that Blacks are almost unknown now in North America or

Mexico...

"We were `doomed' in any case then?" I challenged her back.

"We are incapable of `self government'," Lorraine smiled.

"And you `believe' in `democracy'!" I laughed back at her!

"As long as we have the Priestesses of Lys," she answered.

"Who like the Lorr must be obeyed," I noted, seeing her nod.

"And who stand `above' the political system," Lorraine said, her dark eyes burning into mine as she moved away from the window to regard a golden ankh mounted there upon the wall much I knew as people used to have the Christian Cross there centuries ago...

\*\*\*\*\*

I smoothed the dirt over the last remains of a daughter who had not yet even been born, but yet had died over five hundred years ago! I had kept the dress, the sword. Such was a "part" of one who would someday stand at my side, look up at me, and remember over all those years my "looks", and my own lovely name!!!

"This is a part of my estates that few ever visit," Lorraine said to me, the hump of the "earth home" that had once belonged to friends of hers back in the 20th Century yet a reminder of another time, another era. It was fitting that Domino's last remains be buried here. Here too laid the scattered bones of a Garth that Sa-she- rahad killed the year before. Where Sa-she- rahad crossed blades with the infamous Princess Tara, who had later on killed the Nevadawoman with the bullet meant for Lorraine!

"Sword salute !" I snapped, drawing the blade Domino had once carried at her hip. The blade made of a metal unknown to those of my own time. The metal that Lorraine had called "titanium".

"Well, we really don't know any `more' than we did before," Lorraine said to me as we sat around the dinner table that night. Aurora had not returned to Trella as I had hoped that she might. There were "things" I wanted to say to her. Things that only a mother and her daughter share. I remembered the "gunfight" there in Tara's palace. I had no doubts about my mother's "bravery"! \* \* I seem to be of a "line of revolutionaries". Aurora's on Mars, Domino's actions with Janet Rogers in the early 21st Century, and my own activities here with Lorraine in this time. (Darlanis)

"I do think that perhaps you could attempt to extend your `revolution' to Baja once you have your child," I said to Sanda.

"That has been in my thoughts," she smiled back at me then. I had let it be public knowledge that I was Aurora's daughter. I had, however, kept as a secret the fantastic tale of Domino Tremaine and how she had traveled from my own era back to the past! \* \* Aurora has a "theory" (how true it is I don't know) that Domino will use the now experimental starship "Valkyrie" for the trip.

"The Swiftstar is still out there pestering us, but I think once we get one of my schooners in the water we'll see the end of that `annoyance'," Lorraine said to me as we looked out over the city there in the darkness, the stars gleaming down upon us both. There still was a sense of "unreality" about everything after my learning the "true identity" of Earth's last World Leaderess. It gives one a "strange feeling" to know what the future will bring! Especially since there is apparently no way I can alter it now!!!

"Couldn't you find it with Black Lady?" I suggested. It was possible to destroy a ship from the air by means of fire bombs. Sharon had already told her what Aurora had said about the use of "nitro". Apparently there was a "limit" to what could be "overlooked" even by the lovely ambassador to Trelandar. I felt it was just as well. It made me "nervous" seeing Lorraine violate the EDICT as she was and "get away" with it. I knew of her work with other weapons yet, such as cannons. She even had drawn up plans for a "battle-frigate" of 54 guns! Another "Constitution"!

"I'm concerned about how long the engine will last," she answered, "And without An'na there is no source of spare parts." I knew that any repairs of more than a minor nature were well beyond the technology available to us. "The entire resources of the Empire of California couldn't even make one sparkplug!" Lorraine has often teased me. It is true, but there is nothing I can do about it. Then it would take years to "redevelop" the necessary technology even if we could, which I sometimes "doubt".

"Do you think that Tara will carry out her threat against Talon?" I ventured. That had been a topic of discussion earlier.

"The Nevadas right now have 'troubles' of their own," the black clad Queen of Trelandar smiled back. "There was a 'clash' between their forces and those of Mexico, and they lost heavily."

"You have 'sources of information'?" I smiled, suspecting my mother's hand here. No doubt she had "cultivated" Lorraine too! She had tried to "win" my "understanding" through Sharon too, as I have already mentioned. Perhaps Lorraine had made a "deal". I supposed my Warlady had little "objection" to such things either!

"I found it 'useful' to be 'friendly' to Aurora," she then admitted. "She is after all still your mother despite everything." I nodded, smiled, thought of one dead, but not yet born.

"I wish to take Black Lady to Vegas," I said then to her.

"A 'decision' has been 'made', hasn't it?" she smiled.

"I am a woman with 'needs' and 'desires'," I told her.

"He will make you a good husband," Lorraine agreed. I had "responsibilities" now towards my own future, and Earth's "past".

"I will fly Sharon back to Sarn first," I smiled back. I did not wish to spoil Sharon's idealistic "views" of me just yet.

"That probably would be a wise decision," Lorraine smiled.

## Chapter Twenty Six

I watched the mountains moving back there below and on either side as I flew between them, the air thin, cold, making the heavy cloak I wore a comfort even with the plane's heater going. The sky that incredible deep azure blue that only a pilot sees. I saw a Lorr saucer whisk on by me, a gleaming silvery

disc. My mother had told me of Leith, of that hidden Lorr base far below. She had seemed "preoccupied", a woman carrying some great secret.

Far ahead beyond the mountains towering up around me the dry dusty plains, the territory claimed by the Nevadas. People much like the Indians of the Eighteenth Century in many ways, I felt. Barbarians by the cultural standards of my own society, but yet a people proud of their land, of what they had done with it. I yet remembered their oldest Prince, Serak of the Nevadas, who had by some "magic" I didn't understand "touched" me in a way no other man had ever done. With him I could be "nothing" but a "woman". I recalled him there at the truce grounds, tall, strong, ever so "masculine". His black hair blowing in the wind, his eyes like a pair of dark coals burning into mine. He was not a "white man", but such mattered little to me as it might have to say Lorraine. He had worn the buckskin of his people, and feathers in his hair. A "proud" man, with "traditions" that went back before the "white man" ever "discovered" America. Proud of his "heritage", his own "People". A true "barbarian", quite unable to either read or write! I had then at that time heeded Tara's advice that he was "nothing" but a "barbarian" and quite "unfit" to be my "Prince Consort"! Now I "wondered" if she had spoken "truly" to me then? Had she feared what such an "alliance" between the Empire and the Nevadas might "become"? Perhaps a danger to her own ambitions??? And such a man, I felt, would be a proper father to my daughter!! To the daughter not yet born, but yet the same I had buried only a couple days ago there in an unmarked grave on Lorraine's lands!

I was clear of the mountains now, the sun well above me. I had at Lorraine's suggestion, allowed plenty of time for flying. For finding a place to land there in Vegas without wrecking the plane. Beneath me now the wastelands where few lived but nomadic Nevadas very much like the plains Indians of eight centuries ago. Warmer now, I stripped down to the beautiful golden dress that my own daughter had once worn over five centuries ago. I had her sword there in its sheath at my hip. I wore her ornaments. I had "felt" that she would have wished it. She had loved me much. That had been in her words she had left perhaps for me to "read". I think that in a way she "understood" that she came from another time, from another era. From some "future Earth" then unknown.

There is of course still considerable "pain" knowing what I do. I can't alter "what is to be". I am glad that she had good memories of me. Perhaps she did because I loved her so "knowing" what I did. No doubt she took the name "Domino Tremaine" as a name more fitting the era in which she lived, if she did "remember" the name that I will give her. She did remember that I had a husband, although her memories of him were not "clear" enough to allow her to do more than just state that she had a "father".

While flying along, minding my own business, I noticed ahead of me movement there below, moving dots like a herd of animals, but not moving in any pattern that you'd expect animals to do!!!

Dropping down, I saw that there was a group of riders circling an apparently "pinned down" smaller force of men in a group of trees, the scene much reminding me of descriptions Lorraine has given me of Indians circling a defensive circle of wagons back some seven centuries ago. Feeling that sense of "invulnerability" that had once brought near disaster to Lorraine and would soon to me, I circled lower, seeing that the circling force was composed of Montanas far from their northern homelands and that the defenders were Nevadas. Both sides staring up at me in awe as I flew over them, the airplane no doubt striking terror into their barbarian hearts! The thought going through my mind just then that with Lorraine's airplane I could do more than just terrify them! A whole lot more! Perhaps even now drive them off!!!

Pushing the throttle all the way in, the roar of the engine ringing in my ears, I came down in a screaming dive, the airspeed well over two hundred knots, nearly two fifty as I leveled out no more than twenty to thirty feet above the ground just above them!

Pulling the wheel well back, I banked the plane almost straight up, doing what Lorraine would have called a "barnstormer", although I doubt that she would have "approved" of my flying tactics very much, having said that the plane wasn't built to stand such "tricks"! Letting the plane fall off on a wing, I came screaming back down at them, my fingers tight on the wheel! The Montanas scattering in terror, unable to control their own horned mounts. Such "tactics" had been used against my own forces by the bird-women of Talon a dozen years ago, and I had no doubt that the airplane was even more "terrifying" than a Tarl!!! A spent arrow slapping up against the windshield proof that those below, at least some of them, had the courage to "fight back" against this new and them doubtlessly utterly terrifying "foe"! As the bows used by the peoples of the plains are not very powerful, I really wasn't that "worried" as I didn't really think they could penetrate the skin of the airplane even if one did hit it! I could see swords being waved in salute by the Nevadas, who may have had some idea of who the airplane actually belonged to, the famous silver double barred Cross of Lorraine my Warlady uses being rather well known now over most of western North America by now. The Montanas having all they could do to control their own mounts now, which allowed the besieged Nevadas the chance to "do" something on their own, their own arrows finding several targets!

Although Lorraine had "mentioned" it to me, I didn't stop to think just then about trade between Dularn and the Montanas, and that some of them just might happen to have Dularnian crossbows!! Nor did I notice the vulture there circling in the sky waiting to feast on the dead below, the fight having gone on for some time.

On my next pass over the Montana commander must have gotten control of his men well enough to direct crossbow fire at me. My first "inkling" of such being when I saw a crossbow bolt half sticking out a wing, a mist of alcohol behind the wing now leaving no doubt that the fuel tank had been punctured by the missile from the men below! I was losing fuel! The thought driving me to seek altitude, where I might consider what my "options" now were! The vulture that circled over the scene of battle now completely forgotten about! I WASN'T WATCHING WHERE I WAS GOING!!!

It was "sudden" when it happened. One second I was flying peacefully along, the next the bird was right there in front of me, the impact plastering my windshield with blood and feathers, the terrible shuddering of the engine leaving no doubt as to the damage that had been done! The propeller ruined! And here where I had no hope of repair! And with hostile Montanas below me too!

I brought the plane around in a long shallow turn, cursing the loss of altitude as it settled down towards the ground below. My only hope was with the Nevadas, but could I reach them now??? My thoughts being that Lorraine was going to be really "pissed" this time at the "loss" of her beloved airplane! The only one in the entire world so far as I knew. Black Lady was doomed now!!!

I held the plane in as flat a glide as I dared, aware that my rate of descent was faster than I would have liked. The Montanas of course being well aware by now that something was wrong. Their forces scattering as Black Lady settled in among them, the plane bouncing roughly over the bumpy ground as I fought to keep it from crashing. Men scattering on both sides of me as I rolled along between them, the Montana unicorns no doubt uncontrollable!

"Hey!" I cried, leaping from the airplane, my powerful compound bow in my hand, one of my arrows passing completely through a Montana to drive deep into the side of another! My bow being quite capable of punching through any armor known in my own era! The weapon being one of the new "Lorraine" type, using a twenty four inch arrow drawn back on a "shelf" and drawing seventy five pounds! The maximum range being well over three hundred yards! I got off several more arrows into the milling mass before they could finally turn their attention to me and make me look to my laurels as a "Queen of Swords"! My blade the same one Domino Tremaine had once held! Thirty three inches of keen titanium!

Then the attack came, the Montanas swarming over me, my swift blade fending away their sabers, the airplane at my back as I dealt death with my keen point. With the long slim blade that had once been carried by the last Leaderess of Earth! A blood red haze of battle-lust now before my eyes as I knew the sort of a fate that awaited a woman like myself in their hands. My blade meeting theirs, and dealing out death with nearly every thrust I made. I was determined that they would win for themselves only a bloody corpse for their pains. I had "tasted" slavery with Tara. In my left hand the long keen fighting dagger of the Warriress!

Suddenly the Montanas facing me found themselves facing other foes, the Nevadas having come to my rescue just in time! Now the fighting was general, and I had a hard time telling friend from foe, although the Montanas had no doubts about whose "side" I was on and made me look to my laurels as a swordswoman several times before they finally got tired of the fighting and took to their mounts, yelling threats of what they would do "next time"!

"Ah, as I yet live and breathe, its 'Azure Eyes' herself!" I suddenly heard a remembered voice exclaim as a tall and bloody Nevada warrior pushed his way through the men surrounding now me!

"Darlanis Marden, Empress of California, at your service," I smiled back, greeting the very Prince I had flown so far to see!

"You're wounded," Serak observed. I had not parried one thrust in time. The blood was staining my lovely golden attire.

## Chapter Twenty Seven

"You don't look too good yourself," I retorted with a smile. It was plain that he had been in a fight from his bleeding cuts.

"You are still as beautiful as ever," he said, gazing at me. I was rather "disheveled" just then and not really at my best. Bloody, sweaty, my tiara somewhere there in the sand around me. A sword in one hand, a dagger in the other. Dead men about me.

"I do have other desirable 'qualities' besides my beauty," I smiled back at him. I was the Empress of California. I was also "good" in a fight, although he had probably already noticed that!

"You were planning to visit us?" he asked, his men smiling among themselves as they "admired" me standing there before them. My dress concealing little of my excellent 5'10" 38-27-39 figure. I might also note here that the dress is "worth" about a hundred crowns! It is somewhat similar in design to a chain link armor, and "clings" well, the hem falling to about the middle of my thighs. It was originally "lined", but I was wearing it "bare" with only my nipple clips and a brief strap on now underneath it. Such allowed one to see just a "hint" of "skin" there underneath!

"I was planning to do more than that," I smiled back at him.

"We could use the 'friendship' of the Empire," he commented. I recalled what Lorraine had told about their "losses" against the Empire of Mexico, and it was also obvious too that they were now in the midst

of a war with the Montanasthere to the north!

"I'm offering you more than just `friendship'," I laughed, leaning back against the plane. The odor of alcohol was strong. My eyes burning into his as he nodded. He knew what I had meant!

"I even learned to read and write," Prince Serak laughed. I recalled the "comment" I had once made about his lacking of such. I had made a number of other "cracks" back then, none flattering. He had "retorted" that I needed a man to put me over his knee and give me the good spanking I "deserved" for being such so bitchy!

"Those are desirable `qualities' in a Prince-Consort," I said, "taking the bull by the horns" so to say. I wasn't in the mood to "play games". I wanted to know how he felt about me now!

"I would have preferred a more `feminine' wife, but I guess you'll have to do," Prince Serak answered, stepping up to me now. Taking me in his strong arms, kissing me there before everyone!!!

"I've never had a woman `propose' to me before," he said to me, running his hand over the interiors of my thighs as I checked the damage the airplane had suffered. The propeller was beyond hope, but the punctured wing tank was repairable perhaps in Vegas given the proper materials. However, without a propeller, the airplane was useless, although Serak thought that his people might be able to carve one out of wood, of which I had my doubts!

"And if you keep touching me like that I'm going to do more than just `propose' to you," I warned him, feeling the sexual excitement growing there up between my thighs, the hot oils wetting my silken strap where it pressed against my freshly shaved sex. Lys! I was as "juicy" as any slave girl waiting for her master!

"That might be `interesting'," he teased me, reaching higher up to caress me there beneath my provocatively short golden mesh dress. His men watching us, poking each other, laughing softly. Nevadas often have rather "risque" senses of humor about such. I have watched them "tease" slave girls, "flirt" with free women.

"I'm not an easy woman to `satisfy'," I warned him back. I am quite capable of matching almost any woman but Jers' own Lara!

"We'll tow this to Vegas and repair it there," he answered, changing the subject, although not his own intimate "attentions" to me which I found to be quite "distracting" to say the least. I was so sexually aroused now that I was practically "dripping".

"Like to take a `walk' with me," I suggested, eying a grove of trees where we might just find a little "privacy" for a while.

"I once heard that Dularnian women are `frigid'," Serak said to me, picking bits of grass from my now sweaty bare naked form. Our "union" had swift, hungry, our "lusts" strong, "impatient". His lip was still yet bleeding from where I had bitten him then! He had also "warmed" my "behind" just a bit to teach me a lesson! I found it extremely erotic to be so "spanked" out in the "open"!

"Then you are lucky that I'm `Californian'," I smiled back. Reaching up to him, my body his to use, to enjoy as he wished it. Women such as myself are extremely rare in Nevadaterritories. I hoped this time we might be a bit "easier" on each other as I wrapped my legs around his naked body, holding him to me so that I might be more deeply penetrated. More completely "filled" now. It was just as well that I had left



Sharonin Sam. This was a "part" of my life that it was best that she didn't see me doing!!

"I see I am going to have sell Pussycat," Serak said to me. Pussycat being his lovely provocative slave girl of many years. A delight that I once considered more some "female animal" than a woman. Small, dark haired, dark eyed, with a reddish-copper skin. A woman who had come from a land far to the east of here.

"I suppose I could always `play with myself'," I smiled. I had no objections to "Pussycat", nor did I wish to see her sold.

"I think I can find time to `sport' with you," he laughed.

"This fuel is drinkable, isn't it?" Serak asked me. Some of his men had been catching the last of the alcohol in the wing tank and drinking it. As it was 200 proof grain alcohol, one could of course drink it, although it didn't take much to get you "drunk" either. There was still about ninety gallons of it left in the other tanks. Enough make hundreds of men "roaring drunk".

"If you want to, I suppose," I answered. I prefer wine myself, although there are certain liquors that I like quite well.

"You are truly a `gift from the sky god'," he laughed back, grabbing a canteen and holding it underneath the dripping wing! \* \* I suppose that I "was". A beautiful blonde wearing a dress of pure gold links, and providing everyone with all the "drink" they could "handle". I certainly made Serak "happy" enough anyway!!!

"I've never known that Montanas came this far south," I told my Prince as we sat there around the fire that evening. After the sun goes down, it gets a bit "chilly" in the late winter months here in Nevada territory. I was glad for my warm cloak. I had also changed my attire for something a bit more practical.

"Nor for them to have Dularnian weapons either," he added. They had possessed several heavy crossbows or light ballistae. One of which had put a bolt through the left wing of Black Lady.

"Princess Tara wanted to make a treaty with you and have you attack Talon," I said to him, stirring the fire with a stick. The sparks flying up into the sky like shooting stars. The stars themselves glowing brightly down upon us, the airplane a dark bulk there in the shadows. The men gathered around the fires, muttering in low tones to themselves. Perhaps talking about us. The wounded moaning softly to themselves there about their fire.

"I'm not that stupid," he smiled back. "My father tried that once. Those big birds of theirs are nothing to fool with."

"I was Tara's slave girl for a short while," I said to him.

"You're lucky to be alive from what I know of her," he said.

"She wanted to give me to the Emperor of Mexico," I smiled.

"A fat `pig' of a man from what I hear," Serak smiled back. "One with a hundred slave girls." I had heard the same story. I was lucky that I hadn't ended up in his "harem" as just another!!

"I wouldn't mind being your `slave girl'," I now teased him!

"I have a slave girl," Serak smiled, "Although my wife to be seems to be almost as 'good in bed' as she is." That pleased me.

"I cannot bear you children, although I am told that there are ways that one can be produced from our genes," I told him.

"My father has another son," Prince Serak smiled back.

"There's something out there in the darkness, something big, awful big," the man on guard spoke, shaking my Prince awake as he slept there beside me. I crawled out from beneath the blanket, naked but for my clips and strap. Grabbing for something warm to cover myself with before then looking for my weapons, for my compound bow, my sword. I thought of the legends I had heard from Serak and others. Of creatures never before seen by the eyes of Men. Lorraine had laughed at my stories, telling me no such creatures had lived for millions of years. Yet, I did not think that such tales were without foundation. The Garth of California stands ten feet tall. Could there not be one even much larger???

"Watch the unicorns," my Prince ordered, the animals now showing considerable terror at what lurked out there close by in the star-lit darkness. "Have the men string their bows, and cock the crossbows that we captured from the Montanas this afternoon."

"There are 'legends'," Serak said to me, stringing his bow.

"The crossbows will be more 'effective'," I said, picking up my own bow, my quiver of arrows. Arrows "made" to pierce armor.

"Hold those unicorns, watch those horns!" Serak snapped. I could see something moving out there in the darkness a couple of hundred yards off. SOMETHING BIG! SOMETHING THAT STOOD UPRIGHT!

"Hold your fire until you can see a target!" Serak snapped. We could see the bulk of the monster out there, but little more!

"If it is what I think, we don't stand a chance against it," Serak said to me. I knew of his people's "superstitions". Had dismissed them as the mere tales of uneducated "barbarians". Now I wasn't so sure anymore. I knew the scientists of the past before The War had recreated many of the strange beasts of the past. Perhaps they had even created dinosaurs! A TYRANNOSAURUS!

One man, braver than the others, advanced with a blazing brand from a fire, and then flung it out into the darkness, for a brief fraction of a second illuminating what stood out there now!

"LYS!" I gasped, seeing its size, the great jaws, the eyes. The top of the head twenty feet above the ground. The diminutive forelimbs, almost useless. That great multi-ton scaly form now standing there. The terrible roar that escaped from its throat enough to terrify even the bravest! I had seen pictures. I knew the nature of the beast. They were supposed to have been extinct for sixty million years. Apparently this one didn't know that!!!

"Your bows will do nothing more than to irritate it," I said to Serak. "Only crossbow bolts shot into its neck can kill it." I tried to make my voice sound more "confident" than I felt just then. I didn't think really anything short of a heavy ballistae would be effective against something like "that" there before us.

"There are wounded," he answered me, his dark eyes gleaming into mine there reflecting the light of the fires. I wished Lorrain was here. She might have had some suggestion of what to do. I was at a loss for one. Even Aurora's blaster pistol would have little "effect" on this! I fitted an arrow to my bowstring.

"Your lances might be more effective," I ventured in return.

"We are Nevadas. We will die like Nevadas," he answered me.

"I need someone to carry a firebrand for me," I said to him. The tyrannosaurus was less than a hundred yards away now. The great bulk easily visible now in the light from the fires. I could see the glow of its eyes. Its advance was slow, but steady. Serak says that such a creature can run faster than a man, but not as fast as a unicorn can. So go the legends anyway.

"I am glad the god of the skies brought you to me," Serak said to me as we halted there just beyond the fires. The great reptile, if one can consider such creatures such, was now about fifty yards off. I could see it quite clearly. The actual creature is not exactly as pictured in the books I have seen. There are slight differences. They are, however, of little importance.

"With a Garth the throat is the most vulnerable place," I smiled back, the "unreality" so great that I felt no fear at all! Behind us were three men with crossbows, two of the Dularnian type, the other of the old Californian type you wind up with a windlass. This last had been the weapon that had pierced Black Lady's wing early that afternoon. It was our only "effective" weapon against the great dinosaur. I had told the Nevada now holding it that I would shoot it. My skill with such weapons being superior to that of any of the Nevadas. "On the other hand the heart might be a better 'target'," I said, taking the heavy crossbow from the now rather obviously terrified Nevada warrior.

Raising the crossbow, I fired, a bellow of pain from the monster there before us leaving no doubt that I had struck it!!! "SCATTER! USE YOUR SPEARS, THROW FIREBRANDS AT IT!" I cried, my bow now once again in my hands as I raced to position myself for a better shot! The great dinosaur wheeling about, my arrows now driving deep, burying themselves in its great body. My bow, of horn and sinew on a backing of yew and osage orange, its pulley system giving it even greater power, will hurl an arrow a full three hundred and thirty yards on a good day. The shaft at close range will pass completely through a deer sized animal lengthwise! I pumped shafts into that great bulk as fast as I could nock the arrows and draw them back, putting half a dozen into the dinosaur before the creature even discovered the source of those doubtlessly painfully stinging missiles! Then with a terrible snarl it charged me, each of its strides a dozen feet in length! The Nevadas following as best they could, peppering it with their own arrows, which seemed to have no more effect upon it than bee-stings! The terrible reptile now pounding along just behind me as I quickly found out that there was no way I could outrun it either! They don't look "fast", but you can't ever "outrun" one!

Dodging among the trees, I loosed several shafts into it! The arrows only serving to infuriate it even more! Then it charged me, smashing through the trees, breaking them off in its fury! I stumbled, fell, saw that awful head come down! My sword now in my hand, Domino's 21st Century sword, some thirty three inches of that strange metal from "her" time, and thrust up into that horrid maw that seemed to be closing off the world above!!!

With a bellow of pain the Tyrannosaurus reared back, pawing at its mouth, the blade torn from my grasp! Then it seemed to for a second "hesitate" as it stood there just before me, and then suddenly it then fell over sideways! The great scaly body now smashing down only a dozen feet from me! We had killed it!!!

## Chapter Twenty Eight

"Get axes," Serak ordered. "I want the head," giving the still form a kick with his foot. The teeth in the jaws like ivory daggers. I wondered what was the usual prey of this monster? I pulled my sword from its mouth, the blade fortunately unharmed.

"There are legends, those who have claimed to have seen," he said to me. "But only one was ever brave enough to stand her ground and kill one." I didn't tell him it was all a matter of luck and that I had been so scared of it I had nearly wet myself!

"Hold me," I breathed, moving into his arms, letting the "shakes" go over me as the delayed nervous reaction took place. We had been very "lucky". Far more than he knew, I thought then.

"Your bow is 'magic'," Serak observed as his men chopped at the neck, only my arrows having penetrated far enough to be in any way "effective". "We need weapons like yours," he said to me then, holding me, stroking me. The "cause" of its death had been my sword piercing its brain when I had thrust up into its mouth! I have no doubt that my arrows would have been eventually "fatal" to it, but such creatures, like the Garth of California, are hard to kill. I was, I suppose, extremely "lucky" in my use of the sword. Perhaps, I think too, I was "aided" by one now long dead. My hand "guided" to drive that keen point to the "kill" spot!!!

"Does it bother you," I asked, "That I am the fighting woman I am?" Serak riding beside me as we led the column of no more than a dozen fit men, the head of the dinosaur sharing the rear of the column with the airplane. Both being drawn by spare mounts. We had left the rest of the great body for the animals. One of the Nevadas had been trampled by the creature. Crushing him to death like an insect beneath its great multi-ton weight!

"Does it 'bother me' that my unicorn is swifter than any other's?" he smiled back. Obviously he took pride in my skills. In the fact that I was "good in a fight". That I was beautiful.

"There are men who it would 'bother'," I smiled back at him.

"Such men are not 'real men'," Serak smiled back in reply. "No Nevada warrior feels any shame because his woman can cook or sew well, anymore than he feels shame because his unicorn can run faster than he can." I found it an interesting theory to say the least. One that would have resolved a number of problems back in Lorraine's time. Of course Serak felt considerable love for me, as I did for him, which no doubt had something to do with it all. It may be noted however that all young Nevada girls are trained in the use of the bow, and are expected to help defend their own village or encampment against any attackers. It not being unknown for one group of Nevada to attack another group of Nevada if conflict develops between them, although a more usual response seems to be the declaration of a "feud" between the two tribes. These people are extremely "war-like", and often fight duels to the death among themselves over things no Californian would ever fight over. The women themselves can also be quite war-like too and are often quite skilled with the long daggers they carry. To speak of a "central government" under such conditions is misleading as the Nevada political organization is more like that of a number of rather hostile tribes who owe "allegiance" to a King of the Nevadas living in the ruins of what was once Los Vegas. For this reason Serak had been visiting various villages and encampments to reaffirm their allegiance with the central "government" if that is the proper term to use in this situation. They unite together only when

facing an external enemy such as the Empires of California or that of Mexico, both of which has fought more than one war with them. It was after our last war with them that I first met Prince Serak some three years ago there on the "truce" grounds that border the lands claimed by both parties. The Nevadashaving for years sought territory in the fertile lands between the coastal mountains and the Sierras to the east.

"Is there anything in the legends to tell of where such beasts as the one we killed last night come from?" I asked later, my cape now drawn about myself to keep me protected from the sun. I wore buckskin chaps to protect my legs and high rawhide gloves. I am a natural blonde, and I do sunburn rather easily of course.

We were riding towards the southeast, back to Vegas, where he would warn his father the King that the Montanashad come in numbers from the north into Nevadaterritory. I had naturally pointed out to him the advantages of joint military operations between his people and my own forces. His people are natural "cavalrymen" and would be a welcome addition to the forces of the Empire. Supplied with our latest design crossbows and compound bows, they would be even more "effective" than before, I thought.

"There is a legend of a 'ForbiddenValley' from which none have ever returned," the Crown Prince of the Nevadassmiled back. "It is said to be somewhere in the mountains over there." I wondered if the dinosaur had come from there. Was there a valley with more of the great beasts? If I could get Black Lady properly repaired I thought I might just investigate such for myself.\* \* I did not of course know at this time that this was the actual location of Leith which lies buried hidden beneath the mountains.Aurora "mentioned" the city to me, but did not give its location.

"If your people can make a propeller I think it might be worth investigating," I smiled back at him there beside me. I am, I suppose, not as concerned about my "safety" as I should be.

"There are said to be flying reptiles as large as a Tarl," Serak warned me. His dark eyes looking into mine as I nodded. I am a good pilot. As "good" as Lorraineif not as "mechanically knowledgeable" as she is. We were now allied with Talon. Perhaps a joint expedition would be best. One armed with light ballistae and heavy crossbows. Talon's Tarls for "air cover" if such was possible. And heavy spears for the dinosaurs we'd meet.

"If your people had bows like mine," I smiled back. Serak had attempted to draw it. Had been amazed that he could not do so! The "pinch" draw used by Nevadasand Montanasdoes not permit the use of a heavy bow. On the other hand I have seen them shoot birds out of the air. Hit running jackrabbits with ease.

"You are not the archer I am," he pointed out to me. That was a fact. I could shoot an arrow further than any warrior of his people, but my "marksmanship" by his standards left something to be desired. Nevadasare extremely "good" with their bows. That has been taught Californian monarchs for several centuries!

"But I can shoot an arrow further than your strongest warrior," I pointed out with a smile. That was true, and he knew it!

"But I can shoot a bolt from a crossbow further than you can shoot an arrow," Serak pointed out, now getting the last word in.

"Ever think of what all this was once like?" I asked Serak. We were at the moment passing some ruins dating back to before The War. Such are much more common on this side of the mountains than on the Californian side. I often enjoy exploring such ruins, seeing how the people of that time lived. They had

"more" than we do now, but on the other hand they were not as "free" as we are. Such is perhaps a major "consequence" of overpopulation. Of the policies of "irresponsible reproduction" of the past eras.

"Men were not 'men' then, or were women 'women' back then," he answered with a smile. "There is more to life than just the simple 'accumulation' of things. They did not understand that. They were a 'sex-crazed' people without anything 'else' to do," he added. "Such" from a man who had enjoyed me only an hour ago! The World Federation under Janet Rogers may have been "sexcrazed" by our standards, although how much is "myth" instead of "reality" is a question for which I don't have any answers. It may have been a "reaction" to the "sexual oppression" of the previous century, or just a "policy" to insure social stability.\* \*The last is probably "closer" to the "truth" than anything else here. Janet Rogers was well aware of the "fact" that people who are thinking about sex aren't likely to be thinking about "politics". She was a more "intelligent" dictator than any of today.

"But they had things we can only dream about," I pointed out. "Things that now are only just legends and myths," I added.

"There is the land, and the sky," Serak noted. "We Nevadas see little need for more than those." I supposed he was right.

"They had airplanes, holovision, things now only stories in the history books," I went on. Serak smiled to himself, nodding.

"Were they any happier than we are?" he challenged me back. "Did they have our clear air, fresh water, the plains, the mountains? Did they love the land as we do?" I knew the answer to that. Those of the past had not loved such things, or cared about them. They came, raped the land, and destroyed its beauty. They cared only for the accumulation of material goods, little else. Perhaps it is just as well that they are gone, dust now.

"He is getting worse," Serak said to me, examining the man. He had been struck by a Montana arrow. The head had come off the shaft and was still deep inside his body. Serak's party had no member of the Physicians with them. No one to operate, to save life. "Dragging your airplane slows us down," he added, his eyes meeting mine. The decision would be mine to make. I understood.

"Do you have a map?" I asked. One was produced for me to look at. With Serak's help I located the nearest Nevada village.

"We will go there, get help for the wounded," I suggested.

"My father should know of the Montanas," he pointed out.

"We will leave the airplane and the dinosaur head at the village," I suggested. Both would be safe there until we could come back for them. "Go on to Vegas with the rest of your men."

"Golden Woman! Golden Woman!" the children called out as we rode into the village. I don't think they had ever seen a woman like me before. The only "white" women they had seen had been those captured, stripped, and led in on the end of a saddle rope.

"Your culture is much like that of the American Indians of the Nineteenth Century," I observed to Prince Serak of the Nevadas. That was not completely true, but this village was much like those that had existed at that time. Life was maintained by a combination of simple farming and hunting, by the herding of the wild cattle that now roam the plains of western North America. There has been considerable

intermarriage between the white race and thenative Americans who had also originally lived here.

"It is a good way for men to live," Serak smiled back at me. "Better than the way you ofCalifornialive in your big cities." I smiled to myself and wisely kept my mouth shut instead of commenting. I wondered if he was right. These people were "poor" byCaliforniastandards, but on the other hand they seemed much happier than those who lived in Sarn or Trella. One wonders....!

"An `interesting' culture," I observed as Serak and I walked together through the village. The half-naked children running about making us the center of attention. He was their Crown Prince. I was the Empress of California. The only thing that drew more attention than us was Black Lady and the head of the tyrannosaurus. I understood that such creatures were known here. That they had been seen by others. That they came from somewhere in the mountains almost directly to the west of us. I had many questions for those who had "seen". Gotten too few answers back!

"We like it," he smiled back at me. A passing woman in beads and buckskin giving me "the once over" from deep dark eyes. She was bare breasted, a maiden, not yet married, her buckskin skirt high on her thighs. The skin teepees much like those once used by Indians long ago. I saw a child practicing with a bow. Her marksmanship left little to be desired. Such skills are deemed "important" by both men and women. TheNevadawoman is able to stand alongside her man, help defend her own encampment.

"You do not have `warrioresses' as we do," I pointed out.

"I have made the suggestion to my father," Serak answered.

"And what was his answer?" I asked, rather curious to know.

"Men fight, women raise the children," Serak answered back. "My father says that one warrior can father many children, but only a woman can `have' children." The philosophy sounded rather familiar. There were people inCaliforniawho felt the same way.

"Women are `good for more' than just having children," I pointed out, so much aware that I could never have any of my own.

"If my father had a `Darlanis', perhaps he would think differently," Serak smiled, putting his arm around my waist beneath my cape. The cape was necessary to protect my skin from the sun.

"There was a woman with theMontanas," I pointed out to him.

"Their Physicians are mostly women," Serak explained to me.

"Why didn't you have a physician with you?" I asked him.

"We were not expecting trouble," he smiled back at me.

"I will miss my land," Serak said to me as we sat and looked out into the darkness, the stars gleaming bright there above us. A whiff of wood smoke wafted into my nostrils as I nodded in reply. The mountains behind us a bit "scary" as I thought of what they contained. Were there dinosaurs living in some hidden valley? More like the monster we had been so lucky to have killed?

"You will like Sarn," I smiled back. I wondered how he and Sharon would get along. He was a "barbarian", she was a product of the 20th Century. Culturally they were a thousand years or more apart.

Sharon, like Lorraine, is well aware of her superior scientific knowledge as compared to the people of my own culture.

"I would like to meet this 'Lorraine Richards' of yours," he said to me as we sat together. "I have heard many tales about her." I had told him something about her, about Sa-she- ra, who had saved Lorraine's life at the price of her own. Of the fact that Lorraine was now raising Ta-she- ra as her own foster child.

"You'll get the chance," I assured him, wondering how they would get along. Lorraine can be "abrasive" at times without meaning to be. She is not a person who gets along with everyone.

"I'll be back," I assured Serak, creeping from the teepee to seek the privacy of the nearby woods. The insects chirping away as I crept into their depths to find relief with my back against a tree as I squatted. I should have boiled my drinking water, I suspected now. What the Nevadas could "tolerate", I could not!!!

There was a sharp crack of a branch beneath a foot beside me, the sound making me start as I wiped myself with leaves. Then suddenly something was beside me! Something big! I felt hands, warm scaly hands, seize me! My naked body pressed up against a warm scaly body! My scream muffled by a horny hard scaly hand over my face as the horrid creature dragged me off into the darkness, naked and helpless, its squirming captive!!!

## Chapter Twenty Nine

Prince Serak of the Nevadas rolled over, felt with his hand for the warm feminine body he expected to find there beside him. Found nothing. The blankets we had shared together now cold.

"Darlanis!" he called out softly, praying that I was near, concerned that I had not returned from relieving myself in the woods. Remembering the legends he had heard from the villagers. Tales of "things" that lived somewhere up there in the mountains.

"There was an outcry in the woods!" a tribesman cried. Men, women, getting out of their teepees, many naked, some with weapons. Mothers clutching their children to themselves, looking out into the darkness. Serak crawled out of the teepee I had shared with him, glancing about, his naked sword gleaming in his hand.

"Darlanis is gone!" he announced in a loud voice. "Has anyone seen her?" Puzzled men looked at women, their women glancing back. Some looked nervously at the mountains, recalling legends. Of monsters like nothing nature had ever known. Other "things".

"Get torches!" the chief ordered, a blanket drawn about himself. His woman at his side, carrying his weapons. The terror clutching at their hearts. The legends of fearsome reptiles now coming back to haunt them. Was there not the head of such a thing right there beneath the rawhide on the travois next to the black metal bird? Had another such come, and taken the Golden Woman in revenge? The one who their Prince called "Azure Eyes"?

"The droppings are fresh," the Prince of the Nevadas said, "But the tracks are not those of any human being I know of." The tracks there in the soft soil more like those of some reptile!



"She was taken by those who live up there!" a woman cried, pointing with her hand towards the mountains that towered up into the star sprinkled night sky. "Those who are not 'hu', but are 'mu'! They have come to avenge her killing the great reptile!"

"Horseshit!" Serak snapped back, straightening up. "They came prowling around the encampment, and took her because she was careless and didn't know about such things," the Prince answered.

"She will never return, Never !" the woman now retorted back. "It is the vengeance of them for your killing the great reptile!"

"I will go into the mountains and get her!" Serak snapped in reply. Before his eyes swam an incredibly beautiful face framed by hair like gleaming gold. Only hours before those red lips had been pressed against his. She was his Princess!!! His!!! Serak screamed the challenge of the Nevada warrior to the silent mountains there in the distance. He would seek out his love or die in the attempt! Track her kidnapers right up into those dark forbidding mountains. To the "Hidden Valley" itself if need be! That legendary place from which it was said no man had returned!!

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"This one different from the others," the scaly monster said to his companion as they urged their reptilian mounts towards the mountains. The creatures themselves like some nightmare I prayed to awaken from. They had bound, gagged me with a rough and ready skill that had left only one brief moment for a warning scream! Now I was sitting on the withers of the pacing reptile on which my captor rode, the creature like a snake crossed with a human! My head throbbing from the blow one had given me for crying out!

"Hair like gold," the other agreeing, "And skin white like lizard belly," the second added. I didn't really care too much for the comparison, but there wasn't anything I could do about it just then either. "Strong too, work hard for us as slave human." That didn't delight me too much either, let me add right here! I had no wish to spend the rest of my life as slave to such things! Beaten and struck as they felt like, and raped beside the fire!

"If 'silvery ones' allow us to keep her," the first replied. Their words at the moment meaningless to me. Little did I know then THE SECRET that laid hidden beneath those great mountains!!!

Neither of the reptile men wore anything much in the line of clothing except for a sort of leather apron around their hips. I did note, however, that they possessed swords and daggers, the weapons being of Californian manufacture from what I could see of them. That did not surprise me too much, as such weapons are often used as "trade goods" in bargaining with the nomadic barbarians of the plains there beyond the mountains that separate California from the lands to the east. They also had longbows. Not the common type seen in California, but smaller, lighter, ones more suitable for use off the back of such beasts as they rode!

Their mounts were lizards about five feet at the shoulder. The animals moving along at a "pace" that covered considerable ground in a hurry. Not as fast as a unicorn, but more tireless.

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"No horse or unicorn ever made tracks like that," a man said, examining the tracks there in the sand with a torch as Serak nodded. He had no idea as to just "what" had kidnaped me, but he was determined to rescue me from whoever or whatever had done the deed if it was the last one thing he ever did in this life! The Moon now rising there in the east, gleaming down upon them, it being sometime after midnight, the Moon in its last quarter.

"Whatever made those tracks was ridden, and 'whatever' rode those beasts can be killed," Serak answered, the look in his eyes leaving no doubt that he fully intended to do some "killing" too!

"The tracks go towards the mountains," the chief commented. There were many legends in the encampment of strange beasts and even stranger "men" living up there. That which was "mu", not "hu". Unnatural "things" that now lived because of the radiation from anti-matter explosions centuries ago. Life never "created" by Lysor the God of the Sky that many Nevadas still believed in.

"Then I go up into the mountains," the Prince smiled grimly.

"None who have ever gone there have ever 'returned'," the chief spoke. Aware that his Prince would not be turned from his intentions to throw his life away in a futile pursuit after the kidnapers of his Golden Woman. The one he called "Azure Eyes".

"I am a Man. A Nevada. The woman is mine," Serak answered. "I am a Warrior. A Prince of the Peoples." All there knew that he went to his death. That he would never return from the great mountains that towered up into the star-sprinkled sky to the west. That his bones would end up scattered among the rocks to lie bleached in the sun as a warning to others not to trespass.

"You will take this letter to she who is called 'Lorraine'," Serak said to the man. "Tell her what happened to her Empress."

"That will bring the Californians here," the chief warned.

"Tell them where to go if I do not return," Serak answered. Perhaps what he could not do an Imperial Legion could by sheer force of numbers. He had mentioned the dinosaurs, and warned the Warlady of the need for ballistae to deal with such "mu-things". Another would ride to Vegas, to tell his father what had happened. To warn of the aggressive acts of the Montanas. Perhaps the Californians would be "helpful", although one could never say about such people. It being commonly held among his people that no "White-Eyes" could ever be "trusted". That such people often spoke with "forked tongues" like the poisonous "buzz-tail" snake. Perhaps this "Lorraine" was different. She had been a friend of Sa-she- ra, a woman of the People. Was raising as her own daughter Ta-she- ra, a child of the People. One could hope for the best, no more. He had "tasted" of me. Life would no longer be worth living without me at his side. I was his woman. No man of the People ever lets another take his woman without a good fight.

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"I keep thinking of Darlanis," Sela Dai said to Lorraine as the Warlady paced the deck of the Janis, the big trireme moving slowly over a barely moving ocean. The sails hardly filling as it sailed south, south to a point where they would travel overland to Talon, a trip of perhaps a week on the backs of unicorns.

"No doubt well 'used' by now if she found her Prince," the Queen of Trelandar smiled back, thinking of her own husband. It had been long since she had seen him. Too long in her opinion!

"I hope he was willing to accept her as his wife even if she can't ever have any more children," Sela mused in reply, staring out into the glare as the setting sun glistened off the calm sea.

"If he loves her it will make no difference," Lorraine said. Watching the Queen of Talon and her own Gayle there walking the deck by the starboard railing. To Lorraine not having her beloved airplane made travel by any other means seem terribly slow .

"She is a woman like `no other'," the Princess smiled back.

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Through the night the tireless giant lizards carried their burdens, their pace swifter than that of the trot of a unicorn. There far behind them, unnoticed, a solitary Nevadawarrior carefully followed on foot, a heavy crossbow slung over his shoulders. His ivory horned mount following close behind on its lead, snorting from time to time at the various scents that wafted into its sensitive nostrils. It took all of his tracking skills to seek the trail there in the moonlight. His thoughts from time to time recalling the features of one tall and golden, so beautiful it took one's breath away to look upon her. "Darlanis, I am coming to save you regardless of how long it takes," Serak muttered to himself, carefully following the trail left by the lizards. The mountains towering up there before him an awesome barrier that now rose up into the black star speckled vault of the sky...

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"One of the dinosaurs is missing, a tyrannosaurus." a woman told Katt as Aurora, their Leaderess busied herself "sorting out" all the last minute details in preparation for their REVOLUTION.\* \* I suppose that is as good a term for it as any I can think of.

"A `WHAT' is `missing'?" Aurora asked, looking up at her. The fact that there was a couple miles of rock overhead bothered her not at all, Aurora being quite used to living underground as were nearly all Lorr Servitors. Many as a matter of fact muchly preferred such a life to one there under the sky quite like Lorr!

"One of the `recreations' cloned from fossil DNA," Katt answered. Such had been done centuries ago as an "experiment". It had proved to be of no "practical" value although the dinosaurs had been interesting creatures to observe, if dangerous at times.

"Is it dangerous?" Aurora asked, while trying to recall what she knew about prehistoric life on the Earth that long ago. She was a true "Mars" woman, and knew very little about the Earth's own past history except what had been taught to Lorr Servitors. Katt had just become Leaderess of Leith a few weeks before. She was still yet learning about Leith and some of the amazing things that had been "done" there in the past centuries since The War. A slim, dark haired woman, Katt and Aurora had long been lovers.

"It is a carnivore standing about twenty feet tall," Katt replied. "No doubt the barbarians below the mountains are in for a `hard time' if the thing manages to get down on to the plains."

"And `WHAT' is being done to stop it before it kills someone?" Aurora snapped back, much to the surprise of the two women. The Earth barbarians who lived on the plains below being considered by most Lorr Servitors as white southerners once considered those of African descent. To such women the Nevadas were just a group of "savages" that one could hardly consider as being human! Aurora as she spoke tapping into Leith's computer banks, bringing up data on just "what" a tyrannosaurus was! The picture of the creature itself enough to horrify her at the thought of what such a horrid monster might do if it came across a Nevada encampment!

"The Nevadas eventually do kill such creatures," the woman answered, Katt nodding, puzzled that Aurora took such "concerns"! Especially now with their REVOLUTION only twenty four hours away!

"I want that `thing' found and killed! Put `everything' in the air that can `fly', including all our saucers, and find that damm prehistoric monster of yours before it kills someone!" Aurora snapped back, her jade green eyes "burning" up into theirs!

"It's only a little over a day now before.....," the other woman protested. "Better uses could be found.....," Aurora's eyes blazed like hellish green fire into the luckless Servitor's!

"Find that damm dinosaur and KILL IT!" Aurorasnapped, "And thenmake sure that no more escape here from the valley!" Katt nodding, well aware ofAurora's feelings on such "issues". Their Leaderess did not look upon the "barbarians" below as they did!!!

"Do as she says," Katt breathed, the woman nodded, leaving,no doubt glad to take her leave of such a "fire-eater" asAurora!

"Nerves',"Aurorabreathed, pacing the room before Katt. A smile curved Katt's lips. They had been "Companions" for over sixty years. Separated much of the time by their various duties. Such made their times "together" even more precious to both now.

"We `outnumber' the Lorr, and they `suspect' nothing," Katt answered back. She was a very "attractive" woman, dark haired, dressed in a clinging red jumpsuit that left no "doubts" either. The anti-aging serums had worked well on her, concealing her age.

"So did Mankind back in 2047,"Auroraanswered in low tones.

"We have centuries of knowledge, while they knew of nearly nothing," the brunette answered, sitting on the edge ofAurora's desk. The room furnished in the luxury one might expect given the true nature of those who inhabited the hidden city ofLeith.

"I'm going to Farside, check on things,"Auroraanswered. The ability to travel a quarter of a million miles instantly was something no one had really gotten "used to" yet,Aurorathought. There was in theory "no limit" to the distance one might travel by such means by means of the space-time warps that made it quite possible in theory to actually step through a "Portal" on to the surface of another world perhaps dozens of light years away now!\* \* This technology, Aurora informs me, was "stolen" from mysterious "aliens" in the 20th Century, albeit the records she showed me at Leith indicates that these "aliens" were "human" at least in form and shape, although "where" they came from is completely unknown. Lorraine notes in her book (the first) that the Starfire was extremely heavily "armed" considering the "fact" that Mankind in the 26th Century now had no way of fighting back! It is interesting here too that it took the Women almost six hundred years (1991-2566) to actually figure out how to use this device! Aurora also notes that the various fittings and parts used in the original device indicate an "Earth origin", adding even "more" to the mystery as does the "fact" that the device was "used" in the actual home of Bob and Carol Simmons, who Lorraine knew somewhat! A later "investigation" by women fromLeithindicates that neither of the couple actually knew anything about the matter! One possibility here being that my daughter, Domino Tremaine, may be "responsible" for this device, as it would have been possible to use the existing remains of the "earth home" as a fixed base of reference, such being "necessary" for travel through time itself! On the other hand how did she get the device to the 20th Century?

"Ohh!" the woman breathed,Aurorastepping into the room through the shimmering field of strange energies that made up the modified "Gateway" used to operate the "Portals". The Leaderess herself smiling, recovering from the "disorientation" that was a part of such means of traveling across space from world to world! Only the change in gravity betraying the fact that she no longer stood upon the Earth, but upon its satellite, a quarter of a million miles away from hiddenLeith!Aurora's splitting headache from her earlier decompression inLeithsomething that she knew there was no "cure" for. The atmospheric pressure there in the lunar cavern being the same as "Mars normal", or approximately a tenth of Earth's! Such was "necessary" to avoid serious injury or even death from what Earth divers had once called the "bends"!

## Chapter Thirty

"Well, Arlena, how are things going here?" Aurora asked, wondering if there would ever be a "cure" for the headache that one suffered going from a higher atmospheric pressure to a lower one such as Luna and Mars had. The blonde smiling back in reply, well aware that Aurora was trying to make "small talk" just to keep their minds off what was "due" to happen in only a day now! Farside being the former Earth scientific base taken over by the Lorr after The War of 2047 had put an "end" to all such things. Out there on the airless surface of the Moon still stood the awesome monuments to Man's best scientific endeavors centuries ago.

"I'm as 'nervous' as an 'Earthwoman'," the Leaderess of Farside answered, "Especially with that battle-disc here and those damm Lorr 'poking' into everything," the woman answered in reply. The Valkyrie and its anti-matter power core were another cause of concern, especially considering the amount of anti-matter stored aboard the vessel. The ship being a new design, and in theory being capable of generating its own space-time warp and thus being able to travel between the star systems at speeds far in excess of that of light itself! That was assuming that the ship didn't just blow itself apart the first time such was attempted!

"Just remember that whatever happens they are not to be allowed to communicate with Mars or Deimos," Aurora smiled in turn, seeing the look in the blonde's gray eyes. Many of the women of Mars were blondes, the Lorr preferring such for reasons that had perhaps little to do with anything really rational! In any case the "visual sense" of the Lorr was quite different than that of humans, the Lorr seeing things in quite another visual spectrum.

"I could just have them killed," Arlena smiled back at Aurora. Such would make "sure" that the Lorr didn't give any warning when their "REVOLUTION" started as it was due to in another day.

"I hope you didn't 'mean' that," Aurora answered, a note of "warning" in her voice that such would not be "tolerated" by her!

"They wouldn't be so 'concerned' with our welfare if they were in our position," Arlena replied, meeting Aurora's hot gaze! It was well known among the Women that Lorr placed little value on human life. That to the Lorr they were just "useful animals".

"After the 'REVOLUTION' the Women can elect a new Leaderess if they want to, but until then my orders will be obeyed," Aurora answered in level tones. "And there will be no killing of Lorr."

"I suppose you're right," Arlena admitted with a smile for Aurora, who she had to admire even if she didn't agree with her!

"We are going to have share the same world with the Lorr," Aurora replied, "And I don't want to start out with their plotting revenge against us for murdering members of their own kind."

"I'm glad that 'you're' our Leaderess," Arlena smiled back.

"The thousand meter telescope?" Aurora asked, changing the subject. That too being a new development. It was a type of telescope that used not "glass", but controlled curved force fields as a

mirror! With such an awesome instrument it was possible to photograph the nearer stars, and determine if they actually possessed planets that might worth sending the Valkyrie to!

"We are now getting `answers' to questions no one has yet thought to ask," Arlena smiled back. It was known that the nearest star did possess planets, although little was known about them either except that at least one of them might be inhabitable! The "size" of the Universe having been finally "found" by the scientists there at Farside. The "size" being much what had been expected, the age and the rate of expansion having been known even back in the 21st Century soon after Farside had been established during the time of Janet Rogers' World Federation!

"We `need' a new world,"Aurora replied. "For both us and the Lorr. One with a breathable atmosphere, tolerable climate." Mars was a hostile, dangerous world, and the Moon was worthless. Mars was still "short" of water, and the Moon had none at all!

"We could `recolonize' the Earth," Arlena smiled back, a view of the planet suddenly appearing there between them by means of holographic projection as she touched a button on her desk. "Most of it is inhabited by savages and barbarians that we could easily `deal with' if `necessary'." Her words leaving no doubts.

"And `repeat' all the `old mistakes'?"Aurora"challenged".

"They are but a race of `barbarians'," Arlena then smiled. To her the inhabitants of the Earth were nothing but just that!

"And are we `Women' any `better'?"Aurora then purred back.

"Even they once believed we were `better'," the other woman smiled back. She was highly intelligent, the Leaderess of Luna. The Women being organized into their own political system ruled in turn by the Lorr. Such had been used on Earth in the past....

"The Lorr look upon us as we look upon them,"Aurora said. She had "mind-linked" with Raspa enough times to know the "TRUTH" of what she spoke. Even Raspa, the finest of the Lorr, did not consider Women, any humans to be the true equals of her own race.

\*\*\*\*\*

I gasped in terror as the lizard I was riding slipped on the loose rock, slithering back a couple feet before it regained its footing and continued the climb. A climb, I mused to myself, any rational person would have assayed only with good climbing gear! Especially in the poor light of the moon there gleaming overhead!

Above us the darker shadow of a cave into which our lizards slithered, the horror holding me thrusting down my head as we crouched beneath a low rough rocky ceiling. Then after several hundred yards we emerged out just above a forested valley there between the towering peaks. The sounds from the forest leaving no doubts in my mind as to the sort of "life" that it now held!!!

\*\*\*\*\*

"Greetings,Aurora!" the woman smiled, a Lorr standing on its six legs there beside her. Its great compound eyes glowing in the reddish light of the cavern a mile beneath the surface of Mars. The gravity, the air, all speaking of "home" toAurora. She was a Martian, not a "woman of Earth" like her own Darlanis.

"Hard to `believe', isn't it?" Auroras smiled, having been there on the Moon only a second before! Now she was a good hundred million miles from the Earth-Moon system, on Mars itself!

"And perhaps someday we'll be able to go to even other worlds by this same way," the other woman smiled back at Aurora. Such was now quite "possible" with the completion of the starship Valkyrie, which was "capable" in theory of reaching anywhere in the Universe, the ship being capable in theory of "transmitting" itself by means of space-time warps anywhere into time or space!

"And meet with other forms of life beside our own," the Lorr spoke, Auroralike all Servitors wearing one of the little radio receivers in her ear that converted their radio speech to sound.

"Let us hope we have learned from our own history," Aurorareplied, now thinking of what Arlena had said there on the Moon. Wondering if either Woman or Lorr really "understood" the issue!

"When I am with you I have no `doubts', but yet I fear what could happen if your people refuse to `listen' to what you say," Auroraspoke, settling herself on a low cushion before the First Princess. A vivid vision going through her mind of what a bloody battle would be "like" between Women and the Lorr. Most Lorr were not "fighters" of course, only the Princesses and the Warriress caste being usually considered capable of combat, although even a Worker could defend herself if attacked, Auroraknew too.

"My people, unlike yours, are not used to `disobeying' their government," Raspa replied in her toneless radio voice. "We are not a `violent' race like yours," the gigantic "ant" then added. A small glass globe now floating there in the air before Aurora. The Leaderess of the Women concentrating her gaze upon it as she held it in mid-air with only the strange powers of her own mind! Such was a power commonly believed to be possessed only by the Priestesses of Lys, whose own source of such power appeared to be related to technology once developed by the amazing Janet Rogers.

"It was Dena's life or mine," Aurorasaid, thinking that Raspa was thinking of that. She had been badly "shaken" afterwards at the fact that she had "killed". No one knew of course save for Raspa of her own telekinetic powers. She had deflected the bullet meant for her to one side without even thinking. It was a "power" she possessed like Raspa's own strange ESP that even the First Princess of the Lorr didn't really "understand". A "power" developed by experiments with the electronic hypnosis devices of Janet Rogers left behind after The War of 2047. Samples of such devices having been transported to Mars centuries ago by Servitors, several of which having made up Janet Rogers' own close circle of "advisors"! Janet Rogers having been herself a futile "last hope" of the Lorr that Man and the Lorr might be able to "co-exist" in the same solar system peacefully together!

"This Princess Tara will bear close watching," Raspa spoke.

"I think my daughter andLorrainecan `deal' with her," Auroraanswered in reply, catching the glass sphere in her hand. She had been tempted to shootTara, but something had "held" her back. She wondered if there was "anything" to whatLorrainehad written about the matter. It was "possible". That SHE-IT-ALL had saved Raspa's life there on the surface was something that she accepted as the "truth", as unbelievable as it might seem to others. It had been after that event that Raspa had suggested to her that perhaps a major "change" in the "relationship" between the Lorr and the Women who "served" them might be now in order!

\*\*\*\*\*

"This is golden woman we found nearNevadacamp," my captor told others of his kind, holding me by the arm. "She nowslave ." The other mutants huddled around a fire there in the mouth of a cave, the

sounds coming out of the darkness around us enough to terrify anyone. The thick forest in the valley below like a jungle echoing with the sounds of horrible roars and cries. Dinosaurs are noisy things! ("Din-o- saurs!") Especially at night!!!

"If she doesn't work hard enough we can eat her," another of the mutants suggested. They were all different in appearance. None would have been considered attractive by any human standard. Most were more of the "scaly" type like my original captors were . More terrifying in their way than the great reptiles below us!!!

"Or feed her to one of the monsters," another now suggested.

"We could use her as `bait', trap one," a female suggested. "Get much meat that way. And more than what meat is on her too."

"Maybe the `silvery ones' would buy her from us," one spoke. As I was gagged, I didn't have any comments to make about this.

"`Silvery ones' have weapons even monsters fear," one said. These references to "silvery ones" totally puzzling me. Even the Nevada legends hadn't mentioned anything about a race of "silvery people" living up here in the mountains. I wondered what sort of people they might be. Anything would be better than this was!!!

"She tender, tasty," one, a female, observed, pinching me. Her words making me shudder with horror at the thought of such!!! Her eyes as they looked into mine were devoid of any human quality. She was like a snake that had been "crossed" with a human!!!

"Yes! Let's cook her! Eat her!" another echoed the first!

"Food! Good Food!" another cried, drawing a gleaming knife!

"Gut her! Cook her over fire!" another then cried, the group swarming forward, and roughly throwing me to the ground, a horrible monster bending down with the knife to slash my throat!! To "bleed" me out like one would a deer before then gutting me!!!

\*\*\*\*\*

Katt let the little flyer float up into the star sprinkled sky, Mars now no more than another star there in the sky above. The gleaming device on which she rode much like a flying "wetbike" in a way. Around the woman towered the moonlit peaks of the mountains beneath which Leith hid from the outside world. A "city" now tens of thousands years old, built before "Man" even discovered the "New World", Leith having been "old" when the first Indians had crossed the Bering Strait into North America.

Below her now Katt could see the fires of the mutants, those horrors that Aurora had refused to allow her to kill, saying that they too "deserved" to live. Creatures that descended down to the plains below to prey upon the Nevada sin their encampments.

"Wonder `what' they got?" Katt mused, fearing that the creatures might have stolen a woman of the Nevada. They ate human flesh when they could get it, another "thing" about them that she detested, the creatures in her opinion as richly deserving of total "extermination" as any form of life that had ever existed!

Katt could see the creatures gathered in a group, their attention on whatever laid there on the ground



among them, none having yet spotted her or her flyer as she eased her craft down lower so that she might "see". Her hand going to the blaster pistol at her hip as she thought fondly of killing the "things"! Then suddenly she SAW what the creatures had! A BLONDE WOMAN!!!

\*\*\*\*\*

I kicked out, fighting for my life, the terror clutching like a icy hand at my heart, when suddenly there was a sharp report, one of the "horrors" falling bloody, blasted to the ground! More shots coming, the mutants fleeing in terror, falling, a small silvery craft descending from the star sprinkled sky above! The craft a Lorr "flyer", flown by a dark haired woman who was pumping explosive bullets into the creatures as fast as she could aim her weapon! The woman clad in red no doubt a Lorr Servitor!\* \* Many women of the Lorr wear silvery jumpsuits (my mother does), which is probably why the mutants referred to them as "silvery ones". That the creatures "knew" of Leith makes me "wonder" too!

"Thank SHE-IT-ALL I was in 'time'!" the woman cried, leaping from her craft, the few surviving mutants having sought the safety of their cave, a dozen of the creatures now lying about dead! "SHE-IT-ALL" being the name they use for Lys, Lorraine's "SHE". I found myself quite in "agreement" with her just then too!!! I noted that the slide was locked back on her pistol, although just then it didn't mean anything to me, as such weapons are of course not something that I am "familiar" with. A Lorr blaster pistol holds twenty five rounds, and Katt had fired all twenty five too!

I watched her glance at her pistol, then at the caves where yet more of the creatures lurked. She seemed "scared" of them! I saw one peek out at us as she then quickly freed my ankles, the woman not even taking the time to free my hands as she dragged me over to the flyer and practically flung me into the seat! The craft lifting slowly up into the sky, very obviously overloaded!

\*\*\*\*\*

Serak studied the trail before him, the mountains towering up into the sky, the Moon shining down there from the east behind him. There was no doubt "where" the trail led. He recalled the "tales" told around the campfires at night of "things" that lived up there in those mountains. The great reptile his Azure Eyes had killed with her wonderful marksmanship only further proof!

\*\*\*\*\*

"I didn't know there was a Lorr base around here," I said to the woman as she removed my gag and freed my hands, the flyer obviously overloaded the way that it flew so sluggishly, our combined weights almost being too much for its anti-gravity drive to handle. I had no "doubts" either that she had saved my life, wherever she had come from! A minute later and I'd been dead!!! I tried to avoid looking down, as floating a couple hundred feet above the ground on a device like a Lorr flyer was a bit "scary"!

"This is Leith," she answered, "And I am Katt, its Leaderess." She didn't say "Leaderess", but "Vosadrina", which is the word in their own language that stands for "First Woman". I mention this here as few people know that the "Women" (their name for themselves) do have their own language. A language my mother says is thousands of years old, and dates back even to the caves!

"You are Aurora's 'friend'?" I asked, remembering. I did not know "what" to call her, and felt "friend" was probably best! The idea that my mother "made love" to another woman bothered me!

"She is my 'Companion'," Katt replied, a portion of the side of the mountain before us now opening, revealing a cavern inside.

"You are very 'fortunate'," Katt said to me as I washed myself and did what I could to restore my appearance to "normal". Attire of the sort that Lorr Servitors wore had been "provided". Katt's dark

eyes glowing up into mine as she sat there before me.

"I agree with you that those 'things' should be 'exterminated'," I smiled back, Katt having told me of Aurora's opposition to the killing of the mutants even if they were "dangerous" both to those of Leith and to the Nevadas who lived below the Sierras. Katt was obviously a quite "competent" woman, I noted to myself. There was also a subtle "tension" here in Leith that puzzled me. Those who were Katt's "associates" seeming quite "nervous" about something although I could see no reason for their nervousness. \* \* Those close to Aurora knew of course of what was being planned. None, I think, but Aurora and Raspa herself knew the full details as such. I am also informed by Aurora that there are "ways" that a person can "know" something, but be unable to "tell" what they know, even when the Lorr version of electronic hypnosis is used. Apparently the version of electronic hypnosis as developed by Janet Rogers was far "superior" to the version used by the Lorr! \* \* And that "perfected" by the Priestesses of Lys was better yet!

"Darlanis!" Aurora gasped as she suddenly stepped into the room. Katt looking nervously up at her Companion, no doubt well aware of what Aurora's opinion had been earlier regarding the mutants! My mother flinging her arms around me, hugging me close !

"Those 'horrors' outside nearly killed me," I told her. I told her the "story" of what had happened. Of Katt rescuing me. Aurora agreed that it would be wise if the mutants were killed.

"You must be very tired," Aurora said to me some time later, perhaps about dawn in the outside world. Those of Leith keep different hours than those of the outside world. In Leith there is no "day", no "night". I found myself in agreement with her. I let my mother "tuck me in for the night". We had spoken much.  
\*\*\*\*\*

There below us a small figure toiled up the mountain. The figure of a man. A man of the Nevadas following a trail left by those who had passed this way the night before. "He loves you much," Aurora said to me as we stood there on the side of the mountain, the afternoon sun in our eyes, its warmth now pleasant.

My mother was attired in her usual silver, her eyes shielded by dark glasses against the sun's glare. Her appearance that of an "alien" being not of this Earth. At her hip a blaster pistol.

I called out to him. Called him by name. Only one man would have tried to follow me here into the mountains. A minute later my Prince held me in his arms, my own mouth wet upon his.

"Darlanis!" Serak breathed. "My Darlanis, my 'Azure Eyes'!" Aurora standing there, watching, sheathed in silver. A woman of a "world" not our own. As "alien" in her own way now as a Lorr!

## Chapter Thirty One

"Serak, this is Aurora, my mother, my true mother, the woman who gave birth to me on Mars, not Queen Tulis of Dularn as most think," I said to him, wondering if it would make a "difference". Those of Mars are quite often considered as "alien" as the Lorr!

"You are 'worthy' of my daughter," Aurora spoke, taking Serak's hands in hers, her eyes behind her dark

glasses glowing into his. "She has `chosen' well, Prince of the People," she smiled.

"She is a `woman' beyond compare," Serak laughed in reply, "Regardless of `where' she was born." I suppose I "should" have told him the "truth" before, but I didn't know how he would feel! Knowing that the woman he so loved was actually "half-Martian"! \* \* I realize now how "foolish" I was, but at the time I did "feel" it was best if he didn't "know" the "truth" about my parentage!

"Something wrong?" Aurora asked, Katt suddenly dashing down towards where we stood, squinting against the glare of the sun. Like many Women of Mars, she found the light of the Earth's sun almost "blinding" unless she wore dark glasses against its glare.

"There's an `army' of the Montanas now coming this way!" she yelled, Aurora glancing at Serak, and then at me. I supposed to her such meant "little", considering what "concerns" she now had!

"How `many'?" Serak challenged, yet holding me in his arms.

"Several thousand at least judging from the `report' we received from the saucer on patrol," Katt replied, looking at him.

"I'm sorry, `Azure Eyes', that it has to `end' like this," Serak said to me, taking my hands in his as we stood on the mountainside. "I will fight with my People, die as a Nevada should."

"Then we will fight side by side, and let Lys judge us," I cried, throwing myself into his arms. It would be a fitting end for the Empress of California. Sharon would make a good Queen. I knew that Lorraine would see to that. Nothing else mattered.

"Don't be a `fool'!" Aurora snapped, grabbing my arm then.

"My `place' is at his side!" I answered, holding him to me.

"My people will be `slaughtered' by a force like that," he said to me. "Unless your mother will help us," his eyes meeting hers. I knew that the Lorr and their Servitors did not "interfere" in the affairs of Mankind. My mother might be willing to "risk" her life for me, but she would have little concern for the fate of the Nevadas, whom she considered nothing but barbarians. I thought of the little village I'd been staying in. Of its people. Of the women and children. What their "fate" would be!

"It is not a `decision' that I can make, but `another's'," Aurora replied. "And you will have to `abide' by HER decision."

"Serak, Prince of the People, this is Raspa, First Princess of the Lorr," Aurora spoke with a smile, introducing him to the gigantic black ant there at her side. "It is HER decision if we will be permitted to now use our weapons against the Montanas." Telling him then to kneel before Raspa and allow Raspa to touch him with her antennae. Serak later told me that he'd much rather have faced armed warriors than kneel down before that "horror"!!!

I watched Serak kneel, saw Raspa touch him with her antennae, my beloved Prince then going rigid as the gigantic ant stood there on its six stick-like legs, Aurora telling me that Raspa was "merging" her mind with his. That he now saw as she did, and she saw as he did, and that their thoughts, minds, were now ONE!!

Raspa "held" Serak for perhaps a long minute, then she took a step backwards, my Prince then getting

up to his feet, a "look" on his face like that of someone who had "seen" something no other human had ever seen! He had "seen" as Raspa saw, shared with her his thoughts while she in turn "shared" with him. I wondered what the "decision" was. Would Raspa "act" to save the Nevadas??

"She will 'help', but she will not allow us to 'kill'," he said to me. I knew that the Lorr possessed "non-lethal" weapons.

\*\*\*\*\*

"Look!" someone cried, pointing up into the cloud sprinkled sky. A great metallic cylinder now drifting down towards them!

"Perhaps we can 'hitch' a ride to Talon," Lorraine smiled. "Enjoy the fruits of 'modern technology'," she added to Sela Dai. The Princess of Talon regarding the Starfire with some concern. Mankind had few friends among those who traveled between worlds.

"Raspa has 'asked' for you, Lorraine, to 'stand' at her side in an affair that will effect the destiny of two worlds," An'na said to Lorraine in the Janis' great stern cabin, the Starfire's soft hum of power seeming to almost come from everywhere around!

"I am 'honored'," the awesome Imperial Warlady smiled back!

"Try to stay out of 'trouble'," the Queen of Trelandar spoke softly to Gayle as the young Princess' eyes filled with tears at the thought that she might never again see her beloved Lorraine! The lovely golden haired maiden having little doubt that Lorraine was to be taken again to a world only a dot of light in the sky!

"I'll...I'll make you proud of me...," Gayle sobbed in reply!

"I'm a 'tough old bitch'," Lorraine smiled, "I'll be back."

"There have been 'changes' made since I was last aboard," Lorraine observed with a smile as she glanced about at the interior of the spaceship. Her attire, weapons, seemingly totally "out of place" aboard such a craft as this. The "hum" of the ship's power was "different", she noted with a Warrior's sense.

"I think you will find this of 'interest'," An'na smiled, showing Lorraine the ship's "Portal", the shimmering warp-field leaving no doubt in Lorraine's mind that there had indeed been a major technological "break-through" since only a few months ago!!

\*\*\*\*\*

"Lorraine!" I cried with delight as she stepped through Leith's "Portal", Raspa there at my side with her antennae spread in greeting. I knew that they had once "shared" an "experience" no other living person had experienced for over two thousand years. Both had been "touched" by Lys, or SHE-IT-ALL as the Lorr refer to her. The BEING that Lorraine has called "SHE", or GOD.

"Apparently I am to 'share' an 'adventure'," she smiled, going to her knees before Raspa. Raspa "mind-merging" with her. I saw An'na step into the room behind Lorraine, Aurora welcome her.

"Too bad there isn't a way I can 'do' that with you," my Prince whispered, playfully caressing me as I stood beside him. "I've always wondered what goes through that mind of yours."

"Holographic projection was known even back in the 21st Century," Aurorasaid to Serak with a smile as she showed us what was "planned" for theMontanas. It was, I thought, an excellent example of the sort of "power" thatLeithand the Lorr possessed!

"I'm glad you're on `our side'," Serak said to her smiling.

"I wish I was on Mars with Raspa," An'na now interrupted.

"We may `need' you and your Starfire here," Aurorasaid, taking the young woman in her arms, and hugging her to herself. "If things `go' against us, we have only the Starfire to destroy Deimos and the surviving battle craft Mars will send against us."

"I will not fail you," An'na said, holding her foster mother. An'na had once been "mine". I had given birth to her, nursed her at MY breast, and loved her as only a mother can "love" a child! Serak saw the "expression" on my face, took me in his arms, held me close. I had Sharon. Aurorahad my Anna. I "understood" now as never before what Lorrainehad "felt" seeing Sharonwith me. The "pain" there filling a mother's heart. \*\*\*\*\*

"I think I will keep this," Lorrainesmiled, regarding her sword. On her right hip a Lorr blaster pistol, a couple of spare clips, an additional fifty rounds of the explosive .25 bullets.

"You are a `barbarian'!" Raspa replied, regarding her there.

"I am what I am," Lorrainesmiled, checking out the "assault rifle". The upper barrel firing the explosive bullets, the lower a 20mm missile with an explosive force equal to a full ton of TNT. Over her shoulder a pouch containing another three magazines for the rifle, each magazine holding another hundred rounds for it. Another held more of the small rocket propelled missiles for the weapon. The "look" in Lorraine's eyes leaving no doubt!

"The greatest fighting woman of all time," Raspa replied.

\*\*\*\*\*

"I'm glad I'm not down there," Serak laughed, theMontanasfleeing in terror before the nightmarish monsters. A better educated group would have known that such things could not "exist", but the Montanaswere as much "barbarians" as were theNevadas.

"The power of modern technology," Aurorasmiled in reply.

\*\*\*\*\*

"I'm `scared'," Gayle spoke softly, Queen Dala Dai's arms around her, comforting the teenage Princess. "Lorraine's never `acted' like that even when we fought the pirates." Dala nodded, understanding. There had been "that" in the Warlady's own demeanor that indicated she suspected she was going to her death!

\*\*\*\*\*

"I'm going with you to Deimos," I said to Aurora, Katt there at her side, Katt with an auto-rifle, my mother with a tube-like device that had been brought on the Starfire from the Moon. The Starfire itself now far out in space on "battle-alert", ready to "act". It would if necessary destroy Deimos with a "AM" missile. Aurorahad said that there would be great death and destruction on the Earth itself if it became "necessary" to destroy Deimos! The "timing" such that hopefully Deimos could be destroyed over the Pacificocean, where its destruction would cost fewer lives!!

"And where `Azure Eyes' goes, I `go'," Serak quickly added!

\*\*\*\*\*

"Are the `Portals' `secured'?" Lorraine asked, Raspa nodding in reply. There was a time difference of "nine minutes" between the time things happened on Mars and they could be communicated to the Earth by radio. The "Portals" however were instantaneous.

"I think," Raspa spoke, "That if we are `successful' in this that I will appoint you as `Warlady' of both our worlds." Raspa having no doubt that Lorraine's "grasp" of military affairs exceeded that of any Lorr Princess or even that of her own An'na!

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"Time," Aurora said to me. I kissed Serak and stepped through the "Portal" with her. Katt following close behind with my Prince. I hoped he had remembered to keep the "safety" on!!! Both of us were now armed with blaster rifles much like Katt's.

"Ahh!" I heard him breathe behind me as he stepped through, the difference in air pressure, gravity leaving no doubts that we were now in the hollowed out interior of Deimos. Katt grabbing him before he went sailing up into the air from muscle reaction! The internal gravity of Deimos at this point only a tenth that of the Earth where we had come through! The great Lorr starship spinning on its long axis to maintain a "semblance" of gravity.

"I think everything's.....," Aurora breathed, a number of the lovely Women dashing about, the scene reminding me much of a disturbed ant's nest. A Lorr Warriress suddenly shooting at a woman with a laser projector! Katt's auto-rifle blasting the gigantic ant into bloody fragments! It was "obvious" that things were not "going" as we had all "hoped"! I saw a Lorr battle-disc lifting off, its terrible beam of energy searing, burning. Katt leaping up, firing futilely at the disc! Its beam swinging, the woman seared to a charred husk instantly by that horrible beam!!!

"DOWN!" my mother screamed, "DON'T LOOK!", she warned, shoving us down, swinging up her own weapon, firing, some sort of a missile roaring out. Then came THE LIGHT as the anti-matter warhead exploded. Aurora says it was about a "kiloton". A fragment of the battle-disc smashing down among the rocks nearby, Serak covering me with his own body to "protect" me as best he could!

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"NO! TRAITOR!" the Third Princess cried in fury, Lorraine's slim stainless steel sword driving deep into her brain through a compound eye as the Warlady killed without the least hesitation!! The Warlady moving quickly, dodging a laser beam, firing the 20mm missile from the lower barrel of her assault rifle, the blast deafening there in the cavern as the Lorr scrambled in terror for any place of safety! Lorraine then pouring a stream of bullets into the gathered Lorr Warriresses there at the entrance to the cavern as she leaped behind cover! Raspa scrambling to safety, sensing the "hatred" directed against her! The Warlady firing another missile, the blast in the cavern deafening, the laser beams of the Warriresses brilliant in the smoke as Lorr fought Lorr in their bloody civil war, the Women themselves with their swords fighting both the gigantic ants and sometimes each other!

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"It's coming about to attack!" the woman beside her cried, An'na nodding, her deft fingers on the Starfire's controls. It being "obvious" now that some of the Lorr had decided to "fight"!

"Shields up, lock on lasers!" An'na snapped, programming an anti-matter missile. The battle-disc firing, the Starfire's own shields taking the bolt of pure energy, and safely absorbing it! The Starfire's own

weapons firing, destroying the other's missile in reply! An'na's finger punching down on the firing button, firing back! The battle-disc disappearing in a burst of LIGHT!!!

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Lorraine stood there in the smoke filled cavern a mile beneath the deadly hostile surface of Mars. She had been burned by one of the laser beams on the thigh, her clothing seared against her flesh. She would forever bear the scar of this "battle". At her side a gigantic black ant, its antennae gently waving. "It is a victory for both our races," Raspa said to her tall friend.

"A 'New Order' for both," Lorraine answered. Perhaps after all she was the "second Janet Rogers" Man had always dreamed of.

"They have 'won' on Earth too," Raspa answered, listening to the "news" on her antennae. A lovely golden haired woman now was truly the Leaderess of her race. Aurorato had lived to see it!

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"It is 'over' now," Lorraine said to me. Aurora was "numb". I understood her "loss". Katt's death had been a painful shock to my mother. She had died fighting against the oppressive rule of the Lorr. I had told Aurora "that". It had cost many lives, both "ours" and those too of the Lorr. It would take "time" for such "wounds" to "heal". For "forgetfulness" to heal our hurts!

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"I'm glad that I found you despite all our 'adventures'," I said to Prince Serak of the Nevadas as we sat around the campfire the next night. "You are the only man that I've ever met that ever caused the fires of desire to burn in my loins like now." (I had to stop and think for a minute before I dreamed that "one" up!) I was glad too that Sharon wasn't around to hear all that!

"If that Lara Warsan of yours is the 'Princess of Sex' as you say, then you are truly indeed 'The Goddess of Love'," Serak smiled back at me there as I sat there beside him. I wore only my golden mesh there beneath my cloak, the hem of my skirt being drawn up to my hips. I had no desire to conceal myself from him. The more frequently he "used" me, the more delighted that I was. I had come far too close to dying too many times to have any desire to control myself or perhaps even behave as a Queen should! As for Aurora, her sort of "life" was not for me. I wanted the fresh air, the sky, the sun, and the love of a strong barbarian! I wanted his hands on my body, his lips on mine. I had too many "memories". I recalled Katt's death, the others that I had seen!

"I am your 'Princess'," I smiled back. "Yours, no other's."

"I would have it no other way," my Prince answered, taking me in his arms, pressing me down on my back and then kissing me. His tongue darting between my open lips to taste of my sweetness. His free hand going between my thighs, which opened in welcome seemingly almost of their own volition. I was as "hot" as any slave slut! My body arched up against his hand as he touched me.

"Please," I begged softly. "There are others watching us."

"That is easily rectified," he laughed, getting to his feet, standing over me as I laid there before him. With an easy motion he bent down, lifted me to my feet, and before I knew what was happening, Serak flung me half over his shoulder and carried me off towards a small clump of trees, my rear end sticking up into the air, while my head hung down over his back, my golden hair before my eyes. And the laughter of his men ringing in my ears!

## Chapter Thirty Two

"You have a lovely city," An'na of Mars commented as she stood there on the rooftop of the royal palace of Talon and looked over the city surrounding it. The lovely small lake there in front of the white marble structure adding its own beauty to the loveliness of the scene. "One equal to any found anywhere."

"You should know," the Queen of Talon smiled back, the sun now setting there in the west over the distant mountains that divided her country from Trelandar to the west. Talon lies in a valley that runs north and south between two mountain ranges. It is well known for its famous wines among other items of repute.

There beside them stood a tall dark haired woman, the "look" in her eyes leaving no doubt that she had "seen" things few ever had. A pair of lovely teenage blonde Princesses on either side. The dark haired woman's arms about them both, holding them close. On the interior of her right wrist the mark of the Warriress. A stylized sword, its point facing "outwards" towards an enemy foe.

"I grow `weary of war'," Lorraine said in level tones. She had come close to dying there on Mars. Her body now even more scarred than before. Lorraine wondered when it would all "end"?

"Without you to stand at Raspa's side we would have `lost' all," An'na said. She knew the "truth" of what had happened on Mars. It had been only the awesome Warlady's own fighting skills that had "turned the tide" against those who had opposed Raspa!

"I'm just `lucky' the Lorr don't `see' as well as we do," Lorraine smiled. It had been "poor marksmanship" that had saved her from the laser beam. Even so her leg was still "painful" and would remain so for some time yet to come despite the drugs she had been given to ease the discomfort of her third degree burns!

"There is `something bothering you'," Lorraine said, putting her hand on the shoulder of the little Queen of Talon later that night after many had sought the comforts of their beds. The Moon rising over the mountains to the east, the Starfire a gleaming cylinder there on the plaza, its hull unmarked from the battles it had been in. An'na herself was "different" than before too, Lorraine had noticed. She was actually only a little older than either Gayle or Sharon, but like the two Princesses, she had seen death and destruction first hand. The destiny of two worlds had been forever changed by the battle the night before up in space!

"We fought a war with Darlanis that cost Talon a high price, and now Darlanis only needs to `ask' her mother and anything she wants will be `hers'!" Dala's dark eyes burning up into hers as the Warlady nodded, understanding much of what Queen Dala felt!!!

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"For an `Empress' you make love like a slave girl," Serak said to me, gently caressing me back "down" after we had just made love there in our own teepee. He had "used" me very well!

"Would you prefer any other kind for your wife?" I teased him back, my body damp with sweat from making love. I "sweat" profusely when I make love. It is due more, I think, to some reaction of my body to the sexual act as such than anything else. On the other hand I am not a woman who just "lies there"



either!

"I see that Pussycat will have to look to her laurels," he laughed, then biting my lower lip to make it swell a bit. Marking me as being "used". My own bite marks along his neck would be quite visible there in the firelight around the campfire. There would be no "doubts". I wanted it exactly that way too. I was very much in love with him. I wanted everybody to know that we made love. That he "had" me on a frequent basis, and that was exactly the way that I wanted it to be. I have strong "drives".

"I also have an 'Empire' to offer," I pointed out to him. As my Prince-Consort he could enjoy the glories of my Imperial realm. It was true that since the Revolution I didn't have quite the power of life and death over people that I had before, but I still was the woman who "made the decisions", the woman whose orders men obeyed. I thought that I had a lot to "offer" any man.

"That is a 'point' in your favor," he laughed, holding me.

"And I am also a beautiful blonde," I added, kissing him.

"Who wears the most delightful of clothing," Serak laughed. My golden mesh attire did well display the perfection of my body.

"I am a very lucky man to have such riches, such beauty," he laughed, caressing me, touching me. I fear that in his hands I am nearly insatiable. I felt a couple of his fingers slip up inside me. Into the hot sticky moistness there between my thighs. The chief had posted guards, although there was but little danger in my eyes. The mutants were all dead now. The hidden city of Leithnow only a memory of things neither of us would ever forget. I recalled the "fighting" there in Deimos. How Serak had crawled around behind that Lorr Warriress, and used Aurora's pistol to kill the horror before it killed anymore! And tomorrow we would fly on to Vegas, Leith having replaced the propeller for us. There was yet adequate alcohol for the trip. I had patched the hole the crossbow bolt had made with materials from Leith. We had returned to the village that morning in one of Leith's saucers. Spent the day together, glad to be alive after everything! Our memories yet vivid of our battle there inside Deimos. A battle that had altered the destinies of two worlds for all time to come. Yet, I wondered how "much" had really "changed"?

"I am a lucky woman to have a MAN like you," I answered, my arms around his neck, my mouth wet, hot, moistly seeking his own. His bravery, courage in following me to Leith ample proof of his manhood. In combat he had been fearless, and a "born leader". I recalled his killing of the Lorr Warriress after the creature had killed several of the Women. It had been "dug in" among the rocks where our bullets were ineffective against it. Aurora's rocket launcher and its anti-matter missiles being far too "destructive" to be used against such a "target" at close range. I had watched Serak, my heart in my mouth in concern for him, work his way around eventually to a point where he might shoot the gigantic ant that had pinned us all down with its own laser fire. Aurora had smilingly made a comment about "Indians" that I had not really "cared for", but felt it best to keep my mouth shut.

"You are the 'woman of my dreams', Azure Eyes," he laughed, rolling me over on top of him, looking up into my shadowed face. "The woman for which any red-blooded man would take on the Lorr themselves for!" I reflected that he done just that on Deimos!!!

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"I wonder what will happen now," Sharon spoke to the shadowed figure of her stepmother as the two stood there on the roof of the royal palace of Talon. Was Man now free of the domination of the Lorr, or had Man merely exchanged "masters" for one perhaps more physically attractive, but just as "alien" as the Lorr?

"We are not yet `masters of our own destiny',"Lorrainespoke. There would be a new Lorr Triad, a new political system for the Women. The Earth would still be considered a "barbarian" world filled with dangerous and savage blood-thirsty warriors!

"At least Darlanis' mother will be the one running things,"Sharonsmiled back, well aware now ofAurora's true "status" as the Leaderess of the Women. A woman who would now with Raspa of the Lorr shape the future destinies of two worlds, and two races.

"There is I now believe a `third force' involved here that no one has yet considered,"Lorrainespoke suddenly there in the darkness. "And the Priestesses of Lys have yet to have their say in matters." The woman from the now mythical past recalling some certain "incidents" she knew of that told much of the Priestesses and their own "powers". And then there were the mysterious "Others" that the Lorr had feared for centuries now. Who were they?

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Aurorawas tired, although "exhausted" might be a better term considering all that she had been through in the past forty eight hours. Even with the stimulants she had taken, she was still feeling the "effects" of going far too long without sleep! Of trying to deal with all the problems caused by their "REVOLUTION". There were a number of high ranking Women who had to have their "hands held" and gently told "what to do" when they should have been taking care of things on their own and not "bothering" her about them! And her several trips through the "Portal" had not helped either, especially not with the necessary changes in atmospheric pressures between Earth, Mars, and the Moon! Thus it may be said that when Arlena came dashing into Aurora's office in Leith that Aurora wasn't all that "delighted" just then to see her, or to even listen to any more "troubles" than she now had!!!

"Aurora!" Arlena gasped, "You won't believe what I saw only a few minutes ago!"Auroragiving her the sort of a "look" that left no doubt that she wasn't really all that "delighted" about such news either! Arlena gasping a bit, perhaps from the sudden change in air pressure in coming from her own Farside toLeith!!!

"We've been `invaded' by aliens from another star system?"Auroraasked sarcastically, rather "annoyed" by the interruption. Arlena was a good friend who she'd known for years, but just thenAurorawas in no mood to be "bothered" by anyone for "anything"!!

"There was a woman walking around outside on the surface looking at the Valkyrie!" Arlena gasped, "And the Lorr commander of the battle-disc saw it too!" the beautiful blonde then added. "And she wasn't wearing any SPACESUIT!" Arlena's lovely gray eyes much like her beloved daughter's now burning intoAurora's!!

"As I recall it is possible to step out on to the surface of the Moon for a few seconds without a space suit,"Aurorareplied. "There have been a few `idiots' who have managed to stay out there on the surface for several minutes without killing themselves." The tone ofAurora's voice leaving no doubt that she considered this entire matter just a matter of someone pulling such a trick on the Leaderess of Farside! "If you build up the oxygen content of your blood first you can do such a thing easily, although it's easy to kill yourself too."Aurorabeing well aware from her own childhood on Mars that such things could be done, children often dashing about on the surface of that world without oxygen supplies much to the horror of their mothers! Such could be done on the Moon too, since once one's body was adjusted to the low pressure pure oxygen atmosphere inFarside, it was quite "safe" if still a bit "fool-hardy" to do such "stunts"!

"The woman wasn't one of `us'," Arlena protested in reply. "She appeared to be one of Earth's

Priestesses of Lys!"Aurora giving her the sort of a "look" she reserved for those who had obviously taken leave of their senses to even say such a thing!!!

"And just what `did' this woman `DO'?"Aurora challenged her in reply, suspecting some sort of a "prank" being pulled on her! There were always those who delighted in such sorts of "jokes"!!!

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"Once my people were free to roam this great land wherever they wished, but then the white men came and put us on their `reservations' and treated us worse than the cattle they raised," my Prince said to me as we sat about the campfire later that night. He was, I knew, "Navaho", although we of Californiacalled them "Nevadas" after the territory that they controlled. To Serak he was of the "People", and "Nevada" was just a "white man's" term.

"Now your People are `free' again," I said to him, resting my head on his shoulder, his arm about my cloaked body. He was by the standards of the Empire, a "barbarian", but I loved him and I knew that he loved me, and little else "mattered" just now.

"That will never be," he answered, staring into the fire.

"The Lorr will no longer be ruling us now," I pointed out.

"We have but exchanged one `master' for another," Serak said, stirring the fire with a stick. "My people will never be `free' regardless of what happens up there in the sky above us."

"Aurora is certainly `better' than the Lorr," I told him.

"In your mother's eyes I am not `worthy' of you," he said.

"She's never said anything like that!" I quickly protested!

"Eyes often speak the `truth' when lips lie," Serak replied. "To her I am but an `uncultured barbarian' unfit to mate with you," he said. "And sometimes I wonder if someday you too will think the same of me and resent the gold locked about your neck."

### Chapter Thirty Three

Aurora bent down, carefully examined the footprints there in the lunar dust in the beam of the flashlight. The Leaderess of the Women ignoring that "bloated" swollen feeling that one experienced exposing oneself to the vacuum of Luna's surface without the protection of a space suit! There was little sensation of "chill" despite the fact that she was exposed to a temperature of perhaps several hundred degrees "minus", the lack of atmosphere making the loss of body heat far slower than it would otherwise. She had breathed deeply of oxygen before venturing forth, her red blood cells, more able to carry oxygen than one of Earth, allowing her to function now without breathing for up to five minutes.

Springing up, she dashed back to the airlock that lead to the interior of Farside, the hidden subsurface Lorr base on the opposite side of the Moon from Earth, the great silvery bulk of the Valkyrie gleaming there beneath the pin-point brilliance of the unwinking stars in the utter blackness of space overhead! A

quick slamming of the airlock behind her, a sudden gush of "air", and once again she could breathe normally, her lungs being adapted to an atmosphere far thinner and weaker than that of Earth's!

"You all right?" Arlena asked as Aurora stepped through the inner door of the airlock, the blonde nodding, her body now readjusting to the differences in pressure. There being no doubt in Aurora's mind that there actually had been a woman, a human woman from all appearances, actually walking about outside without any spacesuit! And "staying out" far longer than anyone could have!

"There are footprints of a woman wearing sandals," Aurora spoke, the "disbelief" showing in her voice. She knew that she was nearly "exhausted" from everything she'd been through, but this certainly wasn't just some "trick" of a now tired out brain!

"Then it wasn't a holographic projection?" Arlena answered.

"Someone was 'out there'," Aurora answered in level tones. "And I think 'she' was just exactly what she appeared to be too."

"Let one end of this sheet of paper represent the Earth, and the other end represent the Moon," Aurora said, standing there before the assembled Leaderesses of the various groups of Women. "Now up to only a few months ago we could only travel as everyone knows from one point to another by moving ourselves over the entire distance from point to point." A number of nodding heads now assuring Aurora that she had everyone's complete "attention". "But now that we have the 'Portals' we can 'bend' space together like this (bending the sheet of paper together), and thus travel from 'here' to 'here' as if there was no 'distance' at all for us to cover." Further noddings indicating that everyone understood. "And in theory there is now no limit to the distance we might be able to travel without now actually being forced to cross space. Making it possible that someday we may be able to step from here on the Moon to say a world circling a star hundreds of light years away as easily as any of us might step across this room."

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"If 'that' is the way that you actually feel about me, perhaps we shouldn't get married," I snapped to Serak, standing up, drawing my cloak about myself. "Hurt" that he would even think that I might someday "wish" that I was no longer married to him! That I might "detest" the neck-chain he had locked about my neck!

"You do have a 'temper'," Serak laughed, getting up, some of the others gathered around the fire watching everything going on. His eyes holding mine as we stood there. "Among us marriage is a 'joining' of two as one," he said, putting his hands on me then. "I would 'fight' my way across the whole world to win your love."

"My mother has never 'understood' me," I smiled back at him.

"She perhaps 'means well', but 'knows little'," he smiled. I suspected that it was true. Aurora knew very little of "love".

"I do not 'envy' the Women," I said to him, now drawing him away from the fire to where we might now enjoy a bit of privacy.

"We could teach them much of what it means to be a woman," he laughed, taking me in his strong arms, pushing back my cloak.

"They would never be the 'same' again," I answered in turn.

"Perhaps it is 'best' then that they never learn," he said.

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"The 'Portals' require the generation of enormous amounts of power, so much 'power' as a matter of fact that there is no way that the 'Priestesses' could ever produce such 'power' without us knowing about it," Arlena pointed out with a "knowing" smile, it being obvious to those there in the room that she didn't believe.

"Would you toss me that ring you wear," Auroras smiled back. The woman doing so, the ring suddenly halting there in mid-air before them all! Floating in air without anything holding it up!

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"You are a woman like no other," Serak said to me. I had to smile to myself. It was just as well that there was no one about to overhear. Conversations between "lovers" are often "silly".

"I suppose it would be difficult to find one like me," I smiled back, stepping in front of him, "rubbing" myself against him. Letting him feel the curves of my body, the delights I had to offer a man. I wanted his hands on my body, his tongue in my mouth, his fingers in my vagina. I wanted him to make me arch and squirm, to make me "hot" and sweaty. I "needed" him like a drunk "needs" a bottle. A woman in love can often be "needful".

"Perhaps it would be better to collar you and keep you as a slave," Serak suggested there behind the teepees in the darkness. "Some beads and a bit of buckskin would be 'becoming' on you."

"A spanking from time to time might not be amiss," I purred.

"Your loincloth would be cut short," he ventured in reply.

"I would of course be 'bare' beneath it," I teased him.

"Such is usually done to slave girls," he informed me.

"And my breasts would be 'bare'?" I ventured in return.

"Your nipples would be 'painted'," Serak smiled down at me.

"And I would be 'used' often?" I ventured, touching him. I noticed that he was "ready" for me. I wanted him "inside me". I wanted to be "had" there behind the teepees like some slave girl!

"As 'often' as I 'wished it'," he said to me, undoing me beneath my skirt, exposing me so that I might be thus penetrated. He pushed me up against a tree, reached down, lifted me up a bit. The bark was rough against my back through my cloak as he took me as a man "takes" a woman. My legs drawn up, wrapped around him. We were conscious of "little" but each other as he then "had" me!

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"How did you 'DO' that?" one of the Women gasped, the ring dropping into Aurora's hand as she stood there before them. A few hundred feet overhead the airless dark cold surface of Luna.

"By the 'power' of my mind," Auroras smiled back at her. The look of "disbelief" in all their eyes making the Leaderess smile.

"I've heard that those Earth Priestesses can do that," one of the Women spoke, her voice soft, but yet audible to all there.

"They may `tap' energy sources we know nothing about," Auroraspoke. "And one of them was here tonight on the Moon, a quarter of a million miles from Earth, without any spacesuit or any means of transportation, looking at the Valkyrie, and leaving her own footprints in the dust as proof that she was actually here!"

"That means.....?" another spoke, "disbelief" in her voice.

"A `technology of the mind' as far superior to our physical technologies as ours is over that of the barbarians that still roam most of the Earth!" the tall golden haired Martian snapped back, it being obvious to her that should the Priestesses of Lys decide to "act" against them, there would be absolutely nothing either the Women or the Lorr would now be able to "do" about it!

"Aiiii!" a Woman gasped in shocked surprise, there being an "instant" of "shimmering" beside Aurora and then suddenly there stood a blond haired woman in a long white gown there before them, a golden ankh over her bosom! The woman Aurora instantly recognizing as Tais, First Priestess of the Priestesses of Lys!!!

"I thought it might be `due time' I put in an `appearance'" Tais laughed to the shocked and surprised group of Women there on the Moon! "Especially since such a `fuss' has been made over my taking a walk around your new spaceship," she then added to them!

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"The `way' of a man with a maid never changes," a voice spoke from behind us. The voice of an old woman, a tribeswoman! A hint" of laughter in the voice as we both "froze" with shock!

"When I was a young maid I too was put up against a tree and pleasure taken of me," she laughed there in the darkness, a dark blanket pulled about herself against the chill of the nighttime. "Although I did not cover my breasts as this one of yours does."

"In her land, honored mother, women do not expose their breasts to lovers except in private," Serak explained as I stood there blushing hotly to myself, well aware of "what" she'd seen!!

"Are you ashamed to show your bosom?" she then asked me. I smiled and undid my halter, letting my breasts hang free, with my nipples of course still yet covered by my clips. While the women of the Nevada peoples do not cover their nipples, this is not a practice that I wish to follow, as I find it quite embarrassing. \* \* It was a cultural practice of the 26th Century to cover the nipple if the breast was exposed with a golden disk much like the "pasties" worn by a "strip-tease" dancer of our own time. (JBB)

"That is an `improvement'," Serak observed with a leer. I supposed that it "was". The women of the Nevadas do not wear straps either, but I wasn't quite willing yet to go "that far"!!!

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"You were the one walking out there around the Valkyrie?" Aurorabreathed, regarding Tais with a look of utter "disbelief"!

"You will not be permitted to use it to travel to other worlds outside of this solar system," Tais answered

her in reply. "If you attempt to do so, action will be taken to see that you do not `do so' again." There was in her words a "hint of thunder"!

"And `that' is a `decision' `you' have made for us?" Aurorahissed back in icy tones, well aware that Tais obviously possessed "powers" that even Aurora herself could hardly comprehend!

"What the Lorr did fifty thousand years ago will not be allowed to be `repeated'," Tais answered with a hint of "infinite power" in her voice. "Those greater than me have decided this."

"And just `who' are they?" Aurorachallenged,her eyes hot!

"They are the `Guardians of Life'," Tais answered in reply.

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Lorraine Richards, Queen of Trelandar, Warlady of the Empire of California, stood at the window and looked out at the moonlit scene below, her dark eyes missing little of the beauty of the night-time scene. Mingled with such came a vision of what she'd seen there on Mars. The death, the "destruction" of revolution. "Where does it all `end'?" Lorrainenow quietly mused to herself.

## Chapter Thirty Four

(Commentary byLorraineRichards)

Once, what now seems a long ago I had discussed with Janet Rogers a "theory" of mine as to why the Earth was not being visited by space travelers from other star systems. (The evidence for "flying saucers" being a bit "shaky".) It was my belief that there was a sort of interstellar "police" that kept more advanced worlds from using their technological capabilities to conquer less advanced worlds. Janet had considered my ideas "nonsense".

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"What gives you the `right' to pass `judgment' on us?" Arlena challenged Tais as the First Priestess stood there before the assembled Leaderesses of the Women. The airless, lifeless surface of the Moon only a few hundred feet over their heads. A world that had never known life, as "dead" as any world could be!

"It was decided tens of thousands of years ago that such was necessary for the protection of intelligent life from `exploitation' by those more 'advanced'," Tais answered as if she was speaking to a group of small children. Their open "hostility" to her had been expected. "You forget that there are out there in the Universe forms of `life' that could conquer and enslave you right now almost just as easily as the Lorr conquered and enslaved those of Earth fifty thousand years ago. Beings far superior to you in intelligence and in technology." Auroranodding,forced to "agree" even if she wished it otherwise. The Universe could be a "dangerous" place! Such had been taught by the Lorr.

"And the Valkyrie?" another of the Women then asked Tais.

"You may use it out to two light years from the Sun," Tais answered. "That has been determined as the `limit' for its use."

"And have the Lorr been `told' of this?" one now challenged.

"Another has informed Raspa of these matters," Tais smiled back. Adding then with a smile, "I am sure that you have much to discuss now." With this she "shimmered" for an instant before disappearing as suddenly as she had appeared there before them!\* \* I always have had my "suspicions" about the Priestesses of Lys, but even so I never realized just how "advanced" they actually were! Of course not all Priestesses have such "powers", and it does take the "combined efforts" of many to "do" such things, but still I should have suspected "such" when Tais showed that she possessed mental powers of reading a message "implanted" in my mind without my even thinking about it just then! (Lorraine)

\*\*\*\*\*

"I have been `expecting' you," Raspa said as Aurora and Arlena stepped out of the "Portal" there on Mars, the Leaderess of the Lorr smiling inwardly to herself at their obvious discomfort! It had been only a few minutes earlier when the Priestess left.

"Is there nothing we can `do'," Arlena asked, regarding the gigantic black "ant" standing there before her on its six legs.

"Perhaps there is a friend of mine to whom we might address just that question," Raspa replied, informing the Woman on duty at the Portal to switch its frequency to that of the Starfire's !

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Lorraine arose from kneeling before the horrid looking alien from Mars, a grim smile curving her thin lips. Her slender muscular body concealed now beneath a heavy robe against the chill of the night. It was hard not to laugh at the looks on the faces of the two women with her, but she doubted that either would like such! The "news" she had drawn from Raspa's mind had told all!!!

"`Mummy' has just told her `children' that they can't cross the street," Lorraine laughed softly, regarding the three there. "Perhaps it's just as well, considering what we could have `met' out there had the Valkyrie been successful," Lorraine then spoke.

"We're being treated like naughty children!" Arlena protested, not all that "delighted" either now at Lorraine's comment!!!

"Considering the past history of all three of our races, I also consider it as being proper," Lorraine smiled back at her. The Women too themselves had viewed Mankind as mere "barbarians".

"You're responsible for all this!" Arlena then snapped back, it being common knowledge that the Priestesses were "Lorraine's".

"I do manage at times to `do the right thing'," Lorraine smiled in reply, standing there, her dark eyes burning hot into the gray of Arlena's. "And I think it is a lesson well taught!" The vice-Leaderess of the Women scowling as she regarded her!!!

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"It is `good' having a woman like you sleeping at a man's side," Serak said to me as I rejoined him there beneath the blankets after squatting behind a tree to relieve myself. I had just as a "precaution" taken my sword with me. I had also done as did the women of the village and stayed in sight of the encampment although there was now little to worry about any more with the mutants all dead! Aurora's orders having been quickly followed.



"Because I am `beautiful' or because I am `good in bed'?" I teased him, biting his lip just a bit when we kissed so that it would be swollen in the morning. Such would of course leave no doubts as to the sort of a woman who now "shared" his blankets!

"Both," Serak laughed, reaching down, and "touching" me.

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"Since we're `stuck' with our own `neighborhood', then it makes sense to consider what we can do to `fix it up'," Lorraine said as Aurora and Raspa each nodded in agreement, Arlena pouting to herself in disappointment at having been told that her own race was "unfit" to mingle with others out there among the stars!

"The `terra-forming' of Mars is difficult," Raspa admitted.

"Not if you use your `Portals' to transport water from the Earth to Mars," Lorraine replied. "And the same could be done with the Moon too," she added, with a smile for still pouting Arlena! "There is plenty of fresh water on the Earth, and I'm sure that a few trillion gallons of it won't be missed," the Warlady smiled.

"And we could do it too!" Arlena spoke, her eyes glowing! Water would not remain on the surface of the Moon due to its lack of atmosphere and gravity, but there were caverns beneath its surface that could be developed into new "homes" for many people.

"Venus may be `terra-formable' if we can get rid of most of its poisonous atmosphere," the Queen of Trelandar then suggested.

"We could transmit its atmosphere out into space," Auroramused, considering the "possibilities" now being "offered" here!

"Or perhaps transmit some of it to Mars," Raspa ventured. "Some `filtering' would be necessary, but the carbon dioxide is badly needed on Mars to help thicken the atmosphere," she added. The "life-plants" of Mars converting carbon dioxide into oxygen.

"The Jovian satellites might be "usable" to a subterranean race," Lorraine then ventured, "Given fresh water from Earth."

"I fear Mercury is `too hot'," Auroramused in thought.

"We should have `enough room'" Lorraine smiled back.

"I `suppose so'," Arlena then answered doubtfully.

"There is plenty of `raw material'" Lorraine smiled.

"The asteroid belt?" Aurora ventured now with a smile.

"We may someday be deemed `worthy'," Lorraine ventured.

"And `children' do `grow up'," Aurora then smiled in turn.

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"You will be the first Nevada to 'fly'," I said to Serak.

"I have faced many 'perils' in my lifetime," he smiled back.

"I am a 'good pilot'," I assured him with a smile. He tapped doubtfully on Black Lady's wing, stood back, regarded the airplane. Shrugged his shoulders in a way that left no "doubts"!

"I think I will be the first 'Nevada' to fly," he announced to his watching men, who considered me as some sort of a "witch"!

"The 'only' way to travel," I smiled, standing there, the sun glinting off my golden attire. I wondered what Aurora was doing just then. No doubt enjoying the "fruits" of her revolution against the Lorr. I wondered if it would really make any "difference" to us of Earth. I rather "doubted" it from what my mother had said in passing. She was "Martian", not an Earthling.

"It is a beautiful land," Serak said to me as we flew over it. I didn't share his "opinion" of it, but wisely kept my own opinions to myself, knowing that they would not be appreciated!

"Many have thought so," I ventured non-committedly in turn.

"It is 'our' land," Serak said to me. I nodded, understood.

"Perhaps it is 'our world' again too," I then said to him.

"At least the 'Women' are more attractive than the Lorr," he smiled back, reaching over, caressing the interior of my thigh.

"I wonder if it will really make that much of a 'difference' to most people," I mused. The Peasants would till their fields as they had for hundreds of years. There would still be a "need" for Warriors and Warriresses. I would still have Lorraine. A daughter who might someday roam the vastness between the stars.

"It is 'good' that you will be my Princess," he said to me.

"If you keep reaching up under my skirt like that I'm going to have 'trouble' flying this plane," I teased him back in reply.

"Your 'Empire' now has the 'means' to conquer my people," he said, looking into my eyes, her words coming as a shock to me!!!

"You mean because of Aurora?" I quickly smiled back at him.

"A dozen warriors, armed with the 'thundersticks' of the 'Women', could rout an army," he replied, his fingertip now slipping in beneath my strap. I could feel myself growing "wet" too! Feel the "swell" of my nipples beneath my clips, my breasts bared to his touch, his eyes. I felt incredibly "female", totally so!!

"Once all men lived under the rule of one woman," I replied.

"It is said that she 'understood' as few others did," Serak said to me. I was surprised that such "records" had been "kept"!

"I suspect that Lorraine is 'another'," I said to him then.

"But it is your neck that I am going to 'chain'," he said.

## Chapter Thirty Five

"Vegas," Serak smiled, pointing. The ruins of the great city of the past spreading out there before us. I thought of what had once existed. What the Lorr had done to us in The War. Lorraine had spoken to me of what she had seen on Mars. Neither Man or the Lorr would go out to other worlds with "clean hands". \* \* I suspect this is more the reason why "The Guardians of Life" did not wish the Valkyrie to be used to explore other worlds. I am of the opinion too that the Women are not "guiltless" either. I have in my life dealt with too many of the Women to feel otherwise. Their "attitudes" towards us of Earth leaves little doubt.

"Something out of history," I smiled back at him, touching him with my hand. He enjoyed such physical contacts with me too. I like to "tease" him a little when we're together, just to let him know I am a sexy, "desirable" woman who is in love with him.

"Better 'go easy' on this business with Leith," he warned me as I circled the ruins looking for a safe spot to land the plane. "My father worries enough about you Imperials without having a bunch of queer women from Mars to worry his head about." I nodded, smiled to myself. The women of Mars were "queer" in the full meaning of the word. I had met my mother's "lover" there in Leith. I remembered her death in battle, my mother's reaction!

"That looks long enough, and there doesn't seem to be any rubble to worry about," I answered, looking down as we circled over what was once perhaps long ago a great roadway dividing the city. My imagination busy at work recalling what had once been. The streets teeming with traffic, the throngs of people. All now only a few lines in a moldy musty history book in some library back in California! And how much did we really know anymore about things? About the "realities" of life? That I wondered...

"I hope they believe in finding out who we are before they shoot," I said to my Prince as we stepped down from the airplane. The gathered Nevada archers standing there regarding us leaving no doubt in my mind of what their intentions might very well be! It had been less than four years ago that my Legions had fought a great battle a few hundred miles from here. A historic battle that had decided the eastern limits of my Californian Empire in a way that nothing else could have so well done. It had been at the "peace" table that I had first met Serak. Allowed him later to "touch" me. Allowed myself to "respond" to him as I had then. Then "terrified" by my own "feelings", I had listened to Tara when she had told me that he was totally "unfit" for a husband!

"I am Serak, Crown Prince of the People, and this is my woman, the Empress Darlanis of California!" Serak cried to the men. The way he emphasized "my woman" leaving no doubt how he now felt about me. I was "his property" as much as his unicorn or his sword. It gave me a bit of a feminine "thrill" to be so classed! "She has agreed to become my wife under the customs of our people." I briefly wondered what their marriage ceremony was like? What sort of a costume I would be wearing? I have my "vanities".

"I see that my son has taken a wife," the King of the Nevada spoke from his throne as Serak stood

beside me. "One tall and golden," he smiled, regarding me. My attire concealed little of my figure. I was bare breasted, my nipples concealed by golden clips. The setting was both barbaric and majestic at the same time, I thought to myself. The Nevadas had taken over what I suspected had once been a great edifice of some sort, and made it into what they considered a palace. Their "tastes" were a bit "barbaric". On the other hand there was no doubt as to things. Their cultural patterns are a mixture of the two races from which they have sprung. Their history is now rich in legends, myths.

"You have raised a fine son, your majesty," I smiled back. He was an older man, but one still in his prime of life. Able to ride with any of his warriors. Draw a bow, fight with a blade. A half naked woman, dark of complexion, now crouched by his side. She was collared. A slave girl. Perhaps from an enemy nation.

"And I think he has chosen well," Terak smiled back at me. "Union between the People and the Empire will be of benefit to all." I hadn't really thought of it that way, but he was right!

"I have chosen her because I love her," Serak said to him.

"That is always wise, my son," his father then smiled back.

"I feel," Serak said, regarding me, "That this white doeskin skirt would be proper." My attire would be brief. I would be bare breasted, my nipples daringly exposed and painted. I would be loaded down with precious jewels, ornaments of various sorts. I would soon also be wearing silver about my neck as his wife.

"My slave girls wear more than that!" I pointed out to him.

"You are a beautiful woman. Men should 'see' you," he said. In a corner, pouting to herself was a lovely Indian girl. Serak's Pussycat. Her coal black hair a lovely mane falling to the small of her back. She wore beads, a brief buckskin skirt. Her breasts were bared and painted, her nipples gilded as mine would be. Around her throat a gleaming band of steel. A slave collar. She displayed her femaleness like another woman might a fur coat.

"As long as don't you ask me to do it back in California," I smiled back. Exposing your nipples is considered quite "erotic".

"Only when we are 'alone' together," he smiled, kissing me, undoing my clothing. Pussycat getting to her feet, coming near.

"You fear me, don't you?" I said to Pussycat as she prepared me. Often slave girls fear free women. And with good cause too.

"You tall, golden, not short, dark like me," she said in broken English. Many Nevadas do not speak good English. Lorraine would of course say that only Dularnians speak good English. That the rest of us speak a bastard tongue that is partly Spanish with a touch here and there of American Indian tongues. I might note here however that those of Leith speak perfect English, which is to be expected considering their own form of life.

"Treat me with the respect due me, and you will have nothing to fear from me," I said to her as she perfumed me, wishing to establish a proper relationship with her right off. I had shaved myself earlier, such not being a common practice among Nevadas.

"He loves you now, not me," she answered, her eyes wet with tears. "I cannot match one tall, golden like you in his eyes."

"Once the `thrill' wears off, I'm sure he will look upon you with more favor once again," I told her, kissing her forehead. I was well aware of her femaleness, the total womanhood of her. I had no doubt that a girl like Pussycat would bring a high price.

"You not like what I was expecting you to be," she answered. I supposed she had expected an "imperious mistress" ready to whip her should she commit the slightest error in her relation to me.

"I have learned much in my life in the past few years," I said to her. "Much of what `loyalty' means, and `justice' too."

"Tell Serak not to `forget' his Pussycat," she purred back.

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"You could have gotten yourself killed there on Mars!" Jon Richards protested as he saw the half-healed burn there on his wife's leg. Lorraine still yet limping a bit from being shot by a Lorr's laser. Her dark eyes smiling into his she nodded back.

"I `stand by' my friends," the Imperial Warlady smiled.

"I fear `losing' you," Jon "admitted", holding her close.

"I expect to `be around' for a few years yet," she smiled.

"I want `you' to be my son's mother," he then said to her.

"I have every intention of being so," she smiled back then.

"You are a woman like no other," he said, pressing her down on the bed, her mouth like a leech now clinging to his as he let his hands stroke her beloved body, that hard muscular unfeminine body that he had learned to love so well there on the Janis after the tragic death of his Princess. Lorraine being like no other. The sort of a woman that a man might "value" as a wife forever!

"They told me there on the Starfire what `happened'," Jon said as he held the now sweaty damp body of his beloved Queen to himself. Their "union" had been swift, "hungry", driven by their "need" for each other. Later they would make love again, a kinder and "gentler" love, one not "driven" by the "hunger" of their bodies. He could feel the scratches of her nails from where she had clawed at him in the throes of orgasm. He had bitten her mouth, her lip now swollen a bit from the bite. The silver of her neck chain glistened against the tanned softness of her neck.

"The `plans of mice and men' oft go a'gay ," she smiled back.

"Perhaps it is for the `best'," Jon agreed with his Queen.

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Serak and I knelt as his father gave us his blessing. I was barbaric and provocative in my attire, the briefness of which left no doubts that I was a woman about to become the wife of a Nevada warrior Prince. My height, my blonde hair making me an exotic delight to their eyes. I doubt if many of them had ever seen a woman like me before. A woman who was quite "different" from their own women. I had

worn my weapons. I wished to make a certain "statement" here for everyone to see. Serak accepted me as what I was. That I was both wife and Warriress. The Empress of California. A woman who sat upon a golden throne, and ruled a million people. A woman who could give orders to another Queen. A woman whose "domain" in a way extended from just below Puget Sound to the northern borders of Baja. A woman who in her own way had made "history" in her own lifetime. I thought of my mother. Of Anna. Of Lorraine, who had done so much for menow.

The Priestess who was to marry us was no different in her appearance from those in California. I had to smile to myself as I saw her. Her white gown, the ankh no difference from those I'd seen the Priestesses there in California wearing. Lorraine had once told me that the Priestesses operated in every "civilized" part of the world. And perhaps some not so "civilized" too, I mused with a smile to myself, noting however that she was not a "white woman", but of much the same "racial type" as the Nevadas!

I noted a bit of disturbance to one side as a man rushed to the King, whispered something in his ear. Another yelling something about a "flying saucer"! Smiled to myself as Serak looked at me. It was obvious that we were about to have "guests" at our wedding! And I had little doubt just "who" that they might be!!!

"I suppose 'such' attire is 'fitting'," Aurora said to me. My wedding "dress" leaving few if any doubts as to my own "feminine charms". The Warlady of California in her black silk and leather was the "same" as always. Jon Richards there at her side, his arm around her slender muscular waist, and rather nervously "eying" the Nevadas now gathered around us. Like many men of the "civilized countries", he viewed such men as being "uncivilized" barbarians whose only desire in life seemed to be to steal women and gold! "You are a daughter any mother could be proud to call 'hers'," Aurora smiled at me, her jade eyes glowing into mine. Lorraine giving me a smile, nudging Jon at her side.

"I am pleased you are here to witness our marriage," Serak said to my Martian mother, who gave him a warm smile in reply. I suspected that she now looked upon him somewhat differently than she had before. I did not of course then know of what had happened there on the Moon, or what the First Priestess had said. I suppose it had also given her considerable "cause" for thought!

"Then under the eyes of Lys I declare you husband and wife," the Priestess said as we stood before her hand in hand. I wondered what Lorraine thought of all this. She tends at times to view such things from the point of a woman of the 20th Century.

"Now there will 'no doubts'," Serak said to me, kissing me there before everyone, and giving me an affectionate slap on the rear end where it jutted out beneath the white doeskin now covering it. I had no doubt that I would be "well kept" as his wife. That I might from time to time be put over his knee and spanked. I was naked beneath the skirt, with nothing covering my crotch. I found it an experience that left me now muchly aware of myself! Aware of the fact that he could reach beneath my skirt at any time and intimately caress me. Touch my own intimacies. I was "his" now in the eyes of his people. Nevadas often look upon their wives as the men of California look upon their slave girls. I found such a relation quite "thrilling" to my own womanhood. I had no doubts that he would find me an "eager and willing" wife! About my throat now the silver chain of the newly married wife!!!

"We have been 'judged' and found 'wanting'," Lorraine said to me as the festivities started after the wedding ceremony. Her words for the moment hardly registering in my consciousness then.

"It seems that Mankind, Womankind, and Lorrkind are all unfit to 'mingle' with the 'superior' beings of the Universe," the Queen of Trelandar smiled, her words still yet meaningless to me.

"What Lorraine means is that we were told that we would not be 'welcome' out past the bounds of our solar system," Aurora now added as she joined us. Telling me the story of what had happened there on the Moon. I found the tale "amusing" even if I knew how "hurt" my mother was over all this. "And the Priestesses of Lys will be the ones to 'decide' when we are 'fit' to join with the other intelligent races of the Universe!" Lorraine giving me a smile as Jon nodded beside his wife. Serak then joining me, dragging me off before I could make any "comment" on things!

## Chapter Thirty Six

"You have that 'look' about you of a 'well used' woman," Lorraine smiled up at me as I greeted her the next morning there at breakfast. I had little doubt of that. I thought Serak had learned a few things too. He had given me a good spanking, then took me while I was well tied! The orgasm that had rippled through my loins had been fantastic! Later on I had showed him how a wench of California could behave towards the man she loved. We had much both enjoyed ourselves. I had however refused to allow him Pussycat in the bed with us!!! That had been too much!!!

"And in another couple years we'll have Gayle married off to that Prince of Talon," Jon smiled, changing the subject a bit. I recalled that the young man in question was quite "smitten" with Gayle, who was blonde and "taller" than he was by an inch or so. Gayle, like many who had once been enslaved, looked upon sex differently than did the young women of his own acquaintance. As the Princess of Trelandar it would be an excellent marriage for all concerned, serving to cement together the political relationships between Trelandar and Talon, and in a way that of California too. Should it be "possible" as I still hoped to restore peaceful relations with Dularn I might yet see a united "Empire" that covered all of the western coast of North America. One that would be held together by the "common interest" of those governed, and not by the blades and spears of my Imperial Legions!!!

"We still have Maris and Tara to deal with," I pointed out, giving Lorraine a smile. Tara I believed I had "neutralized" by my marriage to the Crown Prince of the Nevadas. No doubt Lorraine's three "Squala" class schooners, the first one already in the water, could deal with anything that Queen Maris might produce to trouble us with. I still believed that Maris was being given "bad advice" or something as I did not believe she was foolish enough to "start" a war after my conversations with her. Yet someone had provided the Montanas with a number of crossbows. Those we had captured as proof had been of Dularnian manufacture. Their major assault upon the Nevada had been routed by the Starfire. It had, I thought, been an effective "lesson" to us all.

"Annoyances now, nothing more," Lorraine smiled back at me. I wasn't so sure of that. I suspected that Lorraine had been too overly impressed by the awesome technology of Mars to realize as I had that it really didn't make any difference in our own lives. That we still faced the same problems we had before all of this! That while Raspa and Aurora might jointly "rule", as now seemed to be the case, it really made little difference to us of Earth. I still wasn't too "clear" on the role of the Priestesses of Lys.

"My father is willing to fight your enemies if you will give us the things that we need," Serak suddenly interrupted us both.

"Might give Princess Tara something to worry about," Jon smiled. "We could have a bit of trouble getting the Nevada to Baja, but I suppose we could use our own ships for that purpose."

"I don't know how Dala Dai of Talon would take it, however," Lorraine commented, picking at the remains of her breakfast there before her. "Her people are pretty 'scared' of the Nevadas." I gave Serak a smile as he nodded, his hand caressing my buttocks there beneath my skirt. Serak likes to "pat" me and "tease" me.

"There is also the matter of the Montanas," I pointed out, blushing a bit from his "attentions" in front of the two of them.

"Probably Queen Maris of Dularn behind them," Lorraine said, her dark eyes meeting those of my new husband as he nodded in agreement. The Montanas had possessed a number of Dularnian crossbows. A new and terrifying weapon here on the arid plains. One that I would have to "match" with similar weapons of my own if I could not bring some sort of a "peace" between the two peoples. I knew Lorraine was having a factory manufacture compound bows there in Trelandar. Such a weapon could be "decisive" here in the hands of the Nevadas. The rate of fire far exceeded that of crossbows, and with a range of over three hundred yards they could be as "decisive" a weapon as the "Winchester '73" had been!

"We seem as far from 'peace' as ever," Lorraine smiled back.

"At least I have a good 'Warlady' this time," I answered, thinking of how Princess Tara had betrayed me over the years for her own ends. I wondered how many lives had been lost for her own gains. How many "enemies" I had "made" just because of her?

"My son has spoken of the Montanas and your role in saving his life and that of his men," Terak said to me as we strolled through the ruins of Los Vegas. I now wore the attire I had worn here, the golden mesh that is almost a "trademark". "I am concerned that they are now obviously in possession of Dularnian weapons," he added. I nodded in agreement. I and Lorraine had spoken of such earlier. I wondered about Queen Maris. And about my brother. And too about Princess Tara? Did she have a "hand" in things? It seemed to all "fit" together if you added her and my worthless brother to the puzzle. I spoke of such to the King.

"I have a number of young men who are eager to fight," Terak said to me with a knowing smile. "Give them weapons and transportation and they'll fight whoever you wish." I nodded, smiled, remembering what Jon Richards had said to me this very morning.

"If you could get your hands on Princess Tara....," I spoke. Terak nodded. Such, I thought, might just be possible if she had no knowledge that I was now the Crown Princess of the Nevadas!!!

"I only regret that you cannot give me a grandson," he said, changing the subject. We were now some distance from his palace, deeper into the ruins of Los Vegas. There was little left now after all the years. A half dozen of his men, archers, with us. They were armed with the usual Nevada composite bow. It is short, handy, ideal for fighting off the back of a running mount. The range is short, no more than a hundred and fifty yards if so. My compound would shoot an arrow over twice that distance easy!

"That isn't difficult," I said, "Although another woman would have to provide the uterus for me." My mother could do that for me in Leith. The first experiments in that field had been carried out back in the late 20th Century. It was possible to take one of my ovums, some of Serak's sperm, fertilize the "egg", and implant it into the uterus of another woman. We had spoken of such briefly there at Leith. I did wish to have children. A son to give Serak. One who carried both our own genes. Later a daughter from my own ovums to carry on my own blood line. She would be the one that I buried recently there on Lorraine's estates, the last World Leaderess of the 21st Century, Domino Tremaine. I suspected that she would



grow up, try to use the "Portals" to somehow travel back through time to before the time of the Priestesses of Lys. Perhaps even attempt to prevent Lorraine from suggesting them to Janet Rogers for all I knew here... That was as much "possible" as her attempting to prevent The War.

"I have heard such things can be done by the Priestesses," he said, unaware of my thoughts, leaning back against a ruined building of the 21st Century. I nodded, smiled. It was best he did not know of what laid in the future for the wife of his son.

"Perhaps Serak's slave girl, Pussycat," I mused to myself.

I drew the arrow back until the feathers kissed my cheek before releasing it. The shaft flying off, although not quite to where I had wished. Hitting a foot below the target before me. Terak glanced at Serak, my Prince giving his father a smile. I had of course used the common "three finger draw", not the "pinch" draw commonly used by the Nevadas. The warrior whose bow I had used looked at me in awe. He was a big muscular brute, and had loudly protested earlier that "no woman" could ever draw his bow even half-way back. The fact that I had done so awed everyone except for Lorraine, who of course knew my own capabilities.

We had with us another of Lorraine's new compound bows. These were of a similar design to those manufactured in Dularn, but with a few "improvements" to make them even more effective arms. The arrows were shorter than standard, and were shot off a "shelf" fitted to the bow. The weapon she had brought had been a weapon of some seventy pounds "peak" draw. None of the Nevadas had even come close to being able to drawing it with their pinch draws. I watched her draw it, release the arrow. She is a good archer. Not perhaps quite the master of it I am, but on the other hand she has no equal when it comes to the use of the sword either! There is only the one "Lorraine". There never will be another. I am glad that I have known her. Stood with her in battle. She is the sort of a woman that makes one realize just what a "woman" can do if she really sets her mind to doing "it"!

I smiled as Terak took the bow from her. Attempted to draw it as she had, but using the Nevada pinch draw. It was of course impossible to do so. Lorraine took the bow back from him, showed him how to draw it using three fingers. This time he drew the bow back all the way. The arrow didn't even come close to the target however. He turned, looked at his warriors. Their faces were of "stone". Lorraine nodded, smiled at me. I nodded back.

"We learn how to draw bows 'Californian style'," he cried, lifting the compound over his head. "Then we ride with 'Golden One' to battle!" His last words took me completely by surprise!

"I think that with men like that you could still conquer the world," Lorraine said to me with a smile while the cheering still went on. Serak had his arm around me. I was to him more than a "wife". More than his "Princess". I was Darlanis, his Darlanis! The woman who wore his neck-chain. His woman. The one he had been willing to die for there in the mountains now only a memory!

"And with 'you' to lead us," Serak said to her, glancing at Lorraine. I think he had misunderstood the meaning of her words. At least the meaning that I had taken. Perhaps she had meant as Serak thought she did. Armed with compound bows the Nevadas would be almost invincible in battle. They would not quite equal the "reach" of crossbows, but their rate of fire would be better.

"It is often better to try to make peace than fight wars," I answered. I had no wish to see more war. Know that I had sent brave men and women out to die for a cause few could understand! I was of the Warriresses, but I had little desire to die as one!

"One always prefers `peace', but often your enemy does not give you that choice," Serak smiled back, holding me in his arms.

"Like Queen Maris of Dularn," Lorraine added just then, much to my own irritation. Her activities were like a thorn in my side. Why did she wish to provoke another war with the Empire?

"The source of the crossbows the Montanas now have," Serak added. "A weapon against which my people suffer a disadvantage."

"Not after my factory in Trelandar gets going making those new compound bows," Lorraine smiled, having overheard his words. "Then you will have a weapon the equal of anything before the invention of firearms." I considered the fact that she was indeed truly a "Warlady". That she gloried, delighted in such horrors!!

"Ah, if you were not already married, what a wife you'd make me!" Terak suddenly said to Lorraine, perhaps much to her shock!! I doubted very much if Jon Richards was "delighted" to hear that!

"I am," Lorraine smiled, hesitating for a second, glancing at her husband before adding, "Although I do appreciate that more than you'll ever understand." I had no doubt he found her quite attractive. She is not without certain "charms" all of her own!

"You seem to enjoy the thought of sending these people at the throats of other people!" I hissed to Lorraine as soon as we were alone together. Her dark eyes were like coals burning into my own as she regarded me. Her hand on the hilt of her sword. I sometimes do not think before I speak. She nodded, smiled at me.

"There is a time for `peace', and a time for `war'," she answered in level tones. "Had the democratic nations of the world in the first half of the 20th Century not resisted Hitler and later Stalin, the world you would be living in now would be considerably different than what it is. There are times when it is necessary to fight. I know what you've been through, and I can understand why you only want to live out the rest of your life in peace, but unfortunately, this is just not the era for that yet." The tall brunette now laid her hand on my shoulder in affection.

"I keep thinking of what Aurora could do...," I answered her.

"The `second coming of Janet Rogers'?" Lorraine smiled back.

"She could do so `much' for us!" I spoke, raising my voice.

"Why should she?" Lorraine asked. "We mean little to her."

"But she's my own mother!" I protested, wondering too if the Priestesses of Lys would even "allow" it. They now were the true rulers of the Earth. Perhaps of the solar system itself, I knew. I thought again of the "fact" that Lorraine had "invented" them.

"And just what do you want her to do for you?" Lorraine then challenged me back. "Give Maris Jord a good spanking where she needs it and then exile Princess Tara to the Moon or something?" The idea of Queen Maris bent across Aurora's knee made me smile.

"There has got to be a better way than wars," I protested.

"Man named Gandhi thought so back in the 20th Century," she answered. "Called 'non-violent resistance'. Turned out it only actually worked in democratic countries where the government wouldn't send millions of people to the concentration camps." I thought of Princess Tara. There had been others like her in our history. And others like Queen Maris, I thought to myself, who I had "trusted", and who had betrayed that trust for her own ends.

"You don't offer us too much hope," I said to her. Lorraine smiled and nodded. I knew the history of the human race myself.

"We will someday become like the Women and the Lorr, but they will not have 'lived' as we do," she answered me with a smile. "This is an 'age of adventure' that will never be again."

"I don't like what you are now 'implying'," I said to her, well aware of the meaning there behind her words. I feared that she spoke the truth. The Women and the Lorr were "dead ends" in the biological sense. There can be no "evolution" in such a social order. No "improvement" in the races other in a minor way.

"Some of us are tigers, others are pussycats," she smiled. "Why do you think that Raspa had me with her on Mars?" she said. I suspected that I knew the "answer" to that question already.

"I don't understand the 'implications'," I answered her.

"There are those who build civilizations, and those who later on live in them. Think of the men who originally settled this land seven centuries ago, and compare them to the men of the era where they seriously discussed 'giving it back to the Indians'," she smiled. "Civilization unfortunately does not breed 'men' of the type necessary to rebuild the civilization they now live in."

"The Nevadas are barbaric savages," I pointed out to her.

"You also found one attractive enough to marry," she smiled. "There is in any healthy 'normal' woman a drive to mate with the strongest and most fit warrior that she can, so that her children will have his own abilities to survive in a hostile cold world."

"And where did you ever get that idea?" I challenged her.

"I am a woman. My genes yet speak to me," she answered.

## Chapter Thirty Seven

"A very intelligent woman," Serak said to me as I told him about what Lorraine had said to me about all women having a biological urge to "mate" with extremely "masculine" men. "And one who understands the 'realities' of life far better than most do."

"She is too much in love with violence and bloodshed," I answered, annoyed that he did not "understand" me or what sort of an "answer" that I wanted from him just then! And not an agreement with the philosophy of some man who had died for hundreds of years! I was sick and tired of "being in harm's way", of consoling weeping widows when their husbands never returned from battle. Of telling little

children that their mothers were dead and that I was "responsible" for their deaths! I wondered if it was possible that the Priestesses of Lys might now be able to "impose peace" upon Humanity much like Janet Rogers had done centuries ago? It was obvious that they certainly had the power to do so! \* \* Tais however has refused to do so, saying that we must learn on our own to live in "peace" with each other. She has however said that the Priestesses will "enforce" the Lorr's old EDICT regarding weapons, thus "limiting" us as to the "destructiveness" of the weapons we may build. Doubtlessly just as well as Lorraine was planning a 54 gun heavy frigate of the "Constitution" class!

"She is the sort of a woman any Nevada could be proud of," he smiled back, irritating me even more just then with his words. I recalled his comment he had once made about her being "fascinating" because of her "knowledge", her awesome intelligence! I wondered if he now considered me a "dumb blonde" like she did!!!

"She is a bloodthirsty warrioress from the distant past!" I snapped back. "A woman who once sat and watched another woman torture a man to death!" I knew that was something Lorraine was ashamed of having done. It had bothered her greatly the year before. Colored her every thought afterwards as you will see if you read her book. I was angry. Otherwise I would not have said what I had. Why couldn't he, or anyone for that matter, understand how I now felt about such things? That I wanted to see a world at peace, not a world where the hand of man was raised against his brother human! Would there never be an end to war???

"One should not speak such of one's friends," he said to me. "There is that within you, Azure Eyes, that is not so attractive. Something that makes me believe that you are not at 'peace' with yourself. That there is a hurt deep inside that makes you strike out at others like a buzztail snake without meaning to hurt them. A pain that is like a cancer eating at your heart like the larva of the desert wasplaid within the body of a yet living spider." He sometimes has a very vivid way of expressing himself in words.

"She is my friend," I admitted, ashamed of myself for having spoken such of her. Lorraine was, I thought to myself, the only woman that I had ever been "comfortable" with. That I "trusted". Yet I wondered if she really "understood" matters as I did now.

"Just as you are my woman," he smiled, taking me in his arms, stroking my rich golden hair. Looking into my azure eyes. "Just as I must understand that you are not like our own women."

"There isn't as much 'difference' as you think," I told him, pressing myself up against him. "Lorraine taught a Nevada woman how to use a sword, how to fight in battle." I remembered her telling me about Sa-she- ra. About how she gave her life for her Queen. I knew Lorraine had once thought of training more such.

"Yes, Sa-she- ra," Serak smiled. "She is known to us."

"Lorraine wishes to train 'more' like her," I said.

"She will not have much success," Serak smiled.

"There is not much left," I said to Serak as we rode through the ruined remains of what once had been the city of Los Vegas. A few buildings still somewhat recognizable, but most had fallen into piles of rubble. Rubble the Nevada had for centuries picked over for their own use. Being illiterate for the most part, I wondered how much of the "past" they had destroyed not knowing its value to us of the present. There were, I knew, other ruined cities like this, ruined monuments to Man's stupidity.

"They were not a happy people," Serak observed. "They did not appreciate the sun, the sky, the land like we do." He was, I knew, something of a "savage" even by my own standards. I had no doubt that those of the 21st Century would have considered him in much the same light as they would have the Indians of their own time. "Their men were not 'men', their women were not 'women'." I supposed he was right in a way, if you judged the people of the 21st Century by his own standards. They had suffered badly from a condition that Lorraine once dubbed "overcivilization". I had no doubt that she had been right. I would not have wished to have lived back then. There had been in its way a dying world. Even Janet Rogers had not been able to prevent it from eventually destroying itself. I wondered if this we'd do any "better" now.

"They worshiped 'technology' too much, the 'truth' too little," I replied with a smile. I understood such even if Lorraine did not. We did not need to repeat the mistakes of the past. I knew why the Priestesses told the little children what they did.

"The 'truth' is all around us only waiting to be found," Serak said, halting his unicorn, swinging his arm in a circle. The hot Nevada sun burning down upon us from a cloudless azure sky upon us both. I was glad for my cape, the broad brimmed hat that I now wore. The sun reflecting off the stone dazzling my eyes.

"But there are those who 'worship other gods'," I smiled. Lorraine wanted to reintroduce the technology of the past. I did not. I saw no reason to build better and better weapons. That road had led only to the destruction of a world. To a war with another planet. War with alien beings who had wished us no harm!

"They ignore the 'truth' when it stands there before them," he said. "They have eyes, but yet cannot 'see' because they are blinded by their own greed. They seek war because they do not have peace in their hearts. This city is a monument to them." I did not think he spoke of the ruins, but of what had once been. The civilization of the 21st Century that now lay in ruins here.

"You speak of things that few will understand," I answered.

"But you 'understand', do you not?" he now then asked me.

"I understand 'more' than I would have thought," I smiled.

"One can be both 'rich' and 'poor' at the same time," he said. It is a saying among the Nevadas. It is said of those who are not of "The People". That they may be "rich" in gold and such things, but yet "poor" in their own so meaningless lives. I thought of those of the city when it had still stood. They had been "rich" in a way we can hardly understand, but yet I think they were more "poor" than the lowest Peasant out tilling his fields. Like those of Mars they no longer were truly "human". They had "cut" their biological "ties" with their own "natures". It is unnatural for a woman to seek love in the arms of another. For a man to do the "same", although we still have our "queers". The Priestesses can "cure" such, if they desire to be "cured"...

"You are more than a wife to me, Azure Eyes," he said to me as we sat our unicorns side by side. He did not need to "explain" further. I understood the true meaning of his few words.

"There is within you an 'intelligence' I had not expected," I answered with a smile. "Perhaps we of California are little better than those who live beneath the sands of Mars," I smiled.

"You 'understand' us more than does Lorraine," he answered. "She only wishes to use us for conquest and war against others."

"Princess Tara did once hold me slave," I pointed out in reply, my unicorn shifting restlessly beneath me, his tail swishing back and forth against the biting black horseflies that seemed to come from nowhere to bother both our mounts and ourselves. She had also once attempted to kill me, but that he already knew.

"I have heard much about her, 'nothing good'," he smiled.

"Friendship between 'The People' and Californiawould be very beneficial to both our cultures," I commented, changing the subject just a bit, turning my mount so that the sun was at my back. My thick golden hair protecting the back of my neck from its rays. I am a natural blonde, and I do sunburn rather easily.

"It is something my father has wished for all his life," Serak answered. "Unfortunately until just recently the Empress of California didn't sharehis own 'viewpoint' upon the matter."

"The 'Empress of California' has learned much," I smiled.

"Your legs are becoming sunburned," he observed then.

"This will help," Serak said to me, gently rubbinga cool softening oil into my sunburned skin, Pussycat sitting there, watching, her dark eyes glowing like those of a cat into mine.

"I fear I'll never make aNevada," I smiled back at him.

"There are women among us with hair like yours," he said. "Not many, but some who live in the lands towards where the sun rises in the morning do have light hair much like your own." The thought of someday perhaps exploring such lands with him filling my adventuresome heart with excitement. Such places were now only legend back inCalifornia. I recalled names such as "Chicago", "Detroit", and that great city of "New York" now a legend!!!

"How far east doesNevadaterritory go?" I asked, curious. Pussycat curled up there watching me much like her own namesake. Her dark eyes never leaving me. I sensed her hostility towards me. She had been "Serak's" in a way few slave girls ever are.

"There is a point where our borders are in 'dispute'," he smiled. Such borders tended to move about with the fortunes of war. TheRocky Mountainswere inhabited by various tribes of war-like peoples. Further east there were forests, legends I had heard of peoples living in social levels similar to that of California. There were, however, no eastern "Empires" like my own.

"Like ours with Dularn," I smiled back. The "cease-fire" last year had not really resolved anything. Obviously Maris now felt the same way, although I did not consider it a very "intelligent" move on her part to try to provoke another war with me.Lorraine's new mass produced compound bows might be "decisive".

"And theMontanasto the north, who Dularn is now allied with," Serak answered. Their possession of Dularnian crossbows was proof of such inLorraine's eyes if not completely in mine.

"Men must fight, while women wait," Pussycat suddenly spoke. "Nothing ever changes despite the ages that have passed since the first man picked up a club to slay his brother," she then added.

"Cain and Abel," I smiled, recalling the legends. AsLorrainehas noted elsewhere, the Priestesses of Lys do not tolerate other beliefs when they conflict with that in THE BOOK OF LYS. The Bible is a

"legend", although copies do survive in museums.

"Yet those who do not fight are our `masters'," Serak noted.

"Perhaps there is a lesson to be learned there," Pussycat now ventured, showing a surprising intelligence for one like her.

"Make love, not war," Serak smiled, Pussycat being the sort of a slave girl that one thinks of making love to frequently. I recalled hearing that very same quotation before, but just where? Perhaps Lorraine would know as I thought the saying came from her own era back in the 20th Century. Of course overpopulation also can lead to war, so "love" is not always the "answer" either, although that was not clearly understood back then or even later.

"`Love' always better than `war'," Pussycat smiled at me.

## Chapter Thirty Eight

"You are not `welcome' here," the King of the Montanassaid to me, "Not as long as `he' stands at your side, Imperial." I smiled at his words, well aware of the fact that he was also terrified enough of my Martian mother to "tolerate" me and Serak! A woman with reddish hair sitting there beside him obviously from Dularn. The rich leather of her clothing leaving little "doubt". It being quite obvious now that the King had a "Dularnian" Queen!

"We come in `peace', not `war'," Serak spoke for me. "I am my father's son, and his words speak through me. We do not wish war with our brothers of the plains, but we will not allow anyone to now take from us what has been always been rightfully ours." Aurora stood quietly at me side, her golden hair gleaming in the sun, her dark glasses that concealed her eyes and her silvery attire leaving no doubts in anyone's mind that she was "from" Mars.

"We are not `fools'," the woman spoke, her voice level. She was obviously a high born noblewoman of Dularn. A woman my age. I faintly remembered her as a child so long ago now it seemed.

"But only fools fight for a losing cause," Serak smiled.

"`Yours' is the `losing cause'," she hotly retorted back.

"You lost your husband in battle against the Empire," I spoke, remembering her now. He had been a high ranking officer. Her children had died in a plague that had swept across Dularn. Such things happen from time to time. Aurorasays "mutations".

"We have a `better' Queen this time," she snapped back. "One who will lead the peoples of the north to victory against you of the south. " I didn't much like the "implications" either!

"They are being used as `tools' by that damn Dularnian," Serak muttered as Auroralifted the saucer from their encampment. Obviously Maris or "someone else" had planned things carefully. The "marriage" of the still youthful beautiful childless widow of the Duke of Arsana to the King of the Montanasleft little doubt. I supposed he "contented" himself with his slave girls while she in turn had her own slave girl to take "care"

of her "needs" like Lynn used to do with me. Such is not unknown here in this era.

"Lorraine was 'right' all along about Maris," I answered, sorry in a way to learn the "truth" about a woman I had "liked" so well as I had. Maris having been a person that I had instantly "liked" the very first time that we had met there last year!

"Like to do a little 'exploring'?" Aurora asked, her eyes glowing into mine. This had been the first time she had been "free" since their revolution to spend some time with me. I knew how "important" such was to her. I "understood" much now that I had not before. She had "loved" me so much despite "everything".

"I'm in the 'mood' to do a little 'exploring'," I smiled.

"Have any idea of 'where' we are?" Serak asked, the saucer floating like a silvery cloud over an inland lake that drained out into what the Ancients had called "Lake Michigan" six centuries ago. The ship's computer had called the place "Muskegon", although I wasn't too sure on just how it was pronounced or just how "accurate" the computer itself was on data six centuries old!

"It's called 'Muskegon' according to the ship," Aurora smiled. "That is assuming the data was 'recorded' accurately."

"Muskegon?" Serak now smiled, that being what she had said.

"On the western coast of the 'State of Michigan'," she added, giving him a smile as she sat there at the disc's controls.

"Doesn't look like much," he observed. Chicago had been a disappointment too. The effects of wind and weather, of time had left little but crumbling ruins inhabited by skin-clad savages completely "unaware" of "what" had floated over their heads. "Sun's going down too," he remarked, the sun now orange red there low in the west over low hills. The deep snow drifts there beneath reminding us both of the fact that it was still yet wintertime while the lake itself was covered over with a thick sheet of ice. This part of North America being even "colder" than Dularn!

"Cold too," Aurora observed, the exterior sensors giving her a reading of just under freezing as she brought the saucer down for a landing there in a small clearing next to some ruins, the frozen over lake there a hundred yards away gleaming in the twilight. To the west a line of low hills, if such could be called that, concealed the much larger body of water there to the west. The body of water that Aurora had earlier called "Lake Michigan".

"Those ruins look rather 'interesting'," Aurora said, getting up from in front of the controls, her silvery attire being "designed" I knew to "protect" her from extremes in temperature.

"I'm coming with you," I said, slipping a heavy cloak over myself. I had worn tunic and hose for the "visit" to the Montanas instead of my more "usual" golden attire. Serak in his buckskin looking much like some of the inhabitants of the ruined city of Chicago as he threw a furred cloak over himself then in reply.

"Don't wander off too far," Aurora warned, the chill in the air bringing back memories of my childhood in Dularn. I wondered what this "Muskegon" had been like back in the time before The War? The ruins we stood by were those of some sort of a large manufacturing facility of some sort, although of what sort I had little idea. (They landed by the S.D. WARREN on Lakeshore Drive)

"Wonder what sort of people live here?" Serak mused as he stared about. I found his masculine



presence "comforting" just then too. There was something "forbidding" about these ruins! I watched my mother disappear around a corner of the ruins. She had a blaster pistol there on her hip. I had no doubts either as to her abilities to use it, having seen her twice now in combat!

"I doubt that they would welcome `strangers'," I smiled back. Most barbarian groups tended to view strangers as enemies. Some even tended to "shoot first, ask questions later", I knew!

"Then it is `good' that I have you at my side," he smiled.

"Because I am a `Queen of Swords'?" I smiled back at him.

"Because you are my `Princess'," he laughed then in turn!

"These bones leave no `doubts'," Serak said to me. I could tell that they were "human", but "more" than that was beyond me. There was a skull, smashed open, and other bones scattered about. The ashes of a fire. Some of the bones had been broken open for the marrow. Broken open by means of "tools" of some sort too!!!

"Those who live here eat human flesh," Serak now said to me, his words now bringing back vividly the horrors of another time.

Then suddenly to our surprise a slim fur covered figure dashed out of the ruins to flee in terror towards us! A drawn dagger in its hand! A half dozen yelling fur clad figures armed with swords and crude spears suddenly dashing out of the ruins behind it! Men with black faces, chasing a white skinned blonde!

"If they use those spears," Serak muttered, drawing his sword, mine already in my hand. That long slim 33" blade that had once belonged to another woman now dead for over five centuries. The blade made of that metal that Lorr often used for their own craft. The metal that is called "titanium". The edge honed to a razor's sharpness. The point as keen as my skill with a sharpening stone could make it. I am of the Warriresses. I know the value of keeping one's weapons in first class condition.

"Behind us!" I snapped to the woman, drawing Serak back with me. The black men leaping to the attack, now voicing yells and curses in some language that was like none I'd ever heard before!

"Careful! Azure Eyes!" Serak cried, his blade biting deep! My keen point taking another in the throat, that "kill spot" that Lorraine had taught me. My enemy's blade harmlessly deflected!!!

I noticed that the men we fought seemed "diseased" in some way, although at the time I had little time to note such things! In any case after we killed the first two, the other four were a bit more "careful" in their attack, not just charging in on us!!!

"Jit'ears!" the one of the four surviving black men said to his companions, his speech almost like that of another language!

"They are going to use their spears!" the woman warned us!

"NO, THEY'RE NOT!" Serak cried, charging them, no doubt "trusting" that I would "be there" at his side as a sword companion! Our blades flashing in the ruddy rays of the setting sun! My foe's defense poor as I drove in to kill! The blonde woman leaped at another as he stepped back, thrusting with her dagger, my blade going deep into his heart! Then only the dead laid before us! Scattered figures, bloody, there now staining the snow!

"Don't touch them!" the blonde warned as Serak bent down to look more closely at one of our late foes. "They have DISEASE!!!" She had not withdrawn her own dagger from the one she'd struck!!!

"What are they?" I asked, it being obvious to me that these men were obviously infected with some sort of a "wasting disease" totally unknown to either me or my Nevada Prince. That they were of the black race was obvious, although they appeared to be of a "lower type" than those I'd seen back home in my own California!

"They `niggers!'" the woman answered back, standing there. She was a beautiful woman, young, blue eyed, one that might make even me feel just a bit "concerned" under other circumstances as Serak does have an "eye" for beautiful women, especially blondes.

"Niggers?" I asked, wondering if that was the name of the "tribe" from which they had come. Her use of the term indicating however that she viewed them as a sub-human form of life like we of California and the western plains viewed that which was "mu"!

"We `whites' kill `niggers' whenever we get the chance," she said to me. Explaining that the "niggers" ate human flesh whenever they could get it. This was anyway what she believed that they did, the "remains" we'd found earlier tending to confirm it.

"Does a beautiful woman like you have a name?" Serak asked.

"I am Serena Novak, Princess of Muskegon," she exclaimed!

"And `what's' going on here?" my mother suddenly challenged, her hand on the grip of her blaster pistol as she stepped forth!

"A Martian!" Serena breathed, standing there, looking! Her words coming as something of a surprise to me just then as I had not considered her to be anything "more" than a simple barbarian!

"I'm Aurora, Leaderess of the Women," my mother smiled back.

"And I'm Prince Serak of the Nevadas, and this is my wife, Darlanis, Empress of California," Serak then introduced us two.

"She is `white' and `blonde', while you are not `white'," she said, looking at him. I didn't much like what she `implied'!

"Does `that' make a `difference'," Serak challenged her! I had no doubt that he had "caught" the implications of her words!

"You are `First American'," she smiled, her eyes glowing into his. "Your kind `friends' of my people," she smiled again.

"Africans," Aurora observed, squatting down by one of the bodies. "The `disease' is unfamiliar to me, however," she added.

"It is called `AIDS' in the old books," Serena said to her. Aurora almost jumping back from the bodies, the look on her face leaving no doubts in my mind that she knew just what "AIDS" was!!

"Hey!" Serak breathed as half a dozen white men, armed with bows, swords at their hips, now suddenly appeared on the scene!!!

"It would be best, Aurora, if you gave me that," Serena said to my mother, having seen my mother's hand suddenly go to the grip of her pistol. There being something in the "tone" of her voice that made me suspect that it would be best now to obey her!

"Better do it, mother," I said, eying the men. Their bows were much like those carried by the Nevadas. There were six of them. The "look" in Serena's eyes puzzled me. She seemed almost "desperate". As if she "needed" Aurora for something, but what?

"I am not without `resources'," Aurora whispered to me as we walked with three of Serena's warriors on either side of us, the men being armed with rather crude swords and bows much like the sort used so effectively by the Nevadas. The thought going then through my mind "HOW DID THEY KNOW THEIR PRINCESS NEEDED THEM"?

"We have our swords and they are only six," Serak noted in low tones. Like me he was of a "fighting caste". On the other hand Serena had Aurora's pistol. She had known what a "pistol" was, which also meant that she might also be able to "use" it!!!

"We will wait and see what they `want'," I spoke softly. I noticed that the sun was now down below the horizon. These people would be "familiar" with the area. We would not be. There was a small sickle of a Moon floating there in the sky to the west. Venus bright above it. Around us the ruins of Muskegon.

"He has a serious infection," Aurora said, squatting down beside the man there in the cavern like place that Serena and her people lived in. I could see that myself even standing there! A nearby fire giving off almost as much smoke as it did heat too!!!

"He is my father," Serena spoke, her eyes burning down into the jade of Aurora. Aurora's pistol held there in Serena's hand. I sensed the note of "desperation" there in Serena's voice. She no doubt believed that Aurora possessed the means of healing him!

"There are medicines aboard my saucer," Aurora said, standing up, facing the Princess. She was young, perhaps only twenty. Dressed in nothing more than a buckskin halter and a brief skirt. Serak was "grinning" to himself despite the "seriousness" of our situation. Serena was blonde, beautiful, blue eyed much like me!

"He will go fetch them," Serena said, pointing at Serak. I wondered how "safe" that would be here in the darkness, especially if there were any more of these "niggers" roaming around now!

"Give him my pistol," Aurora spoke in level tones, no doubt thinking the same "thoughts" that I had been thinking just then!

"Men will go with you, and if you betray us, I will kill your `woman' with this," Serena said to Serak, her eyes icy cold, motioning with Aurora's pistol. Serak nodding, glancing at me.

"Here is the medicine," Serak said, panting a bit, giving my mother a "wink" that I suspected he had used the disc's radio to send out an "S.O.S" or whatever is used by those like my mother!

"This should do the job," Aurora spoke, giving Serena's father an injection. The medicine no doubt a wide-range antibiotic similar to "those" often carried by those of my caste in warfare.

"I am sorry I had to do this," Serena said, suddenly handing the pistol back to my mother, "But I feared that otherwise you'd let my father die." Serena going on to say that those of Mars often viewed those of her people like they did the "niggers" who lived out in the forests like the savages that they'd now become!

## Chapter Thirty Nine

"I would not have killed your woman, but I had to make you believe that I would so that you'd get the medicine to save my father's life," Serena said to Prince Serak as she offered to escort us back to the saucer. An "offer" we were "glad" to take up even with the protection of Aurora's pistol considering the true nature of some of the "life" that now roamed the ruins of Muskegon. I wondered if Serena's people, armed with Lorraine's new compound bows, couldn't drive off or kill the last of the blacks. She appeared to be a surprisingly "competent" woman, I noticed!

"Would you like to come with me to California?" I ventured. I was sure that my mother could see to it that she got back O.K.

"There are 'legends' of a great 'empire' to the west," she smiled, her beautiful eyes glowing into mine. I wondered if I'd made a "smart move" in asking her, considering how Serak seemed to be "enjoying" himself a bit too much for my liking with her! I was in any case "thankful" for her men, as with nothing but the light from the torches to guide us, it was rather "slow going"!

"Princess!" one of the men gasped, a great glowing shape now floating towards us there in the sky. A great silvery cylinder!

"I trust An'na has enough sense not to shoot," Aurora spoke in soft tones, the Starfire's great searchlights now brightly lighting the forest as its sensors then quickly located us below.

"Lower turret, fire!" Anna snapped, the hellish light of the laser beams flashing out, searing everything they touched! I saw the figures dashing about below, the Starfire's infrared sensors being able with Serena's help to locate the camp of the blacks!!!

"We will notify the Priestesses about the disease," Aurora said to me. "Such can cause millions of deaths if not stopped." The Starfire now firing its main armament, bolts of pure energy like horrible bolts of lightning that nothing could withstand!!! This being followed up by an anti-matter missile of ten kilotons that lit up the entire ruins of Muskegon like some awesome "sun"!

"The 'niggers' killed the Priestess here in Muskegon," Serena said. "Some say that they ate her too," she added gruesomely. There would be no "survivors" to pass on their "infection" now.\* \* According to Aurora the black race of Earth was used by the Lorr as a "control group" when they performed their experiments upon the rest of Mankind. Lorraine writes in her own book that it is possible that the blacks represent what Mankind would have been without the intervention of the Lorr. One does wonder here.

"I want to thank you for everything you've done for me," Serena said, the brief soft tanned leather of her attire leaving few doubts that she was an extremely "attractive" woman, especially now that she had been "cleaned up" considerably and shown how to apply a bit of make up to her lovely features! Serak at my

side giving her a look that left no doubts as to his thoughts! Serena having the ability, we'd found, to actually "communicate" with some members of her own people in a sort of "telepathy" that I was sure both Aurora and Lorraine would like to know more of!!!

"I think you have the makings of a Warriress," I smiled. It was my intention to take Serena back to Californiawith me. I certainly wasn't going to leave her around Serak if I had anything to say about it! She was just too beautiful for my liking!

"I owe you my life," she smiled, smiling at Serak then too!

"I suppose I should be getting back to Trella," Lorrainesaid to me there in the darkness as we stood together that night beneath the stars, the coolness of the night a contrast to the heat of the day here in southernNevada. "I trust Sanda Talen, but in a way I still feel 'responsible' for everything that happens while I am away." I nodded, aware of my own 'duties' that I had been now neglecting. There was the danger of war with Dularn growing stronger with every day that passed. Especially withLorrainebelieving that Queen Maris of Dularn was actually "responsible" for everything that had happened, which I still rather tended to doubt knowing what I did about her. I sensed the hand of Princess Tara behind the scenes, with my brother no doubt playing his role in things. With Maris Queen there was little reason not to believe that my brother might not be trying to discredit me in whatever way he could, our enmity going back to the time that he raped me as a teenage girl and stole my virginity.

"There was a saying back in my time 'that the road to hell is paved with good intentions'," Lorraine suddenly said to me as she stood there in the darkness, only a darker shadow against the barely visible shapes of the ruins of Los Vegas there before us.

"You are not responsible for what happened," I said to her. She had spoken to me of these things before. Of the fact that she had been the one to make it possible for Janet Rogers to become the first world dictator there in the 21st Century. That if she had not willed her money to her, given Janet Rogers the "step up" that she needed, that there never would have been a World Federation, or the capability to fight a war with another planet! Or the Priestesses of Lys, who now controlled the solar system...

"I meant well," Lorraineanswered in the darkness. "But I always thought I'd be 'there' to guide her," she added, the "her" of course being Janet Rogers herself. "I never thought I'd end up here withSharonsome five hundred and eighteen years in the future." I suppose it had been quite a shock. Her book tells all. The shock, the disbelief when she and Sharon first learned.

"Yet you did correct a lot of the mistakes made by those of your own era," I pointed out.Lorrainehad first raised the issue of "irresponsible reproduction", the idea that only those who paid income taxes should be allowed to vote, the concept that the best way to rid a society of criminals was to put a "bounty" on them. The "T.I.P" (TURN IN PUSHERS) concept she invented was later used by Janet Rogers to virtually eliminate "drug pushing" in the 21st Century. She believed in strict population control, in the requirement that parenthood should be "licensed", which Janet Rogers did not, unfortunately. She was responsible for the Priestesses of Lys, who eventually replaced all other religions and became the true "rulers" of the Earth as I have related here.

In the field of economicsLorrainehas always stood for a minimum of governmental interference in the economic system, in a system where the workers may organize to purchase the very means of production (Syndicalism, or "economic democracy"). That the "best" government is only that one that "governs" the least! Her policy of "universal education" that she introduced last year in Trelandar has been eventually financed by means of a small and highly progressive tax upon those who do have children, it being Lorraine's policy that they who have children should be required to bear the full "costs" of their actions.

That "reproduction" should never ever be subsidized by society. That, she feels from her own studies of history, was one of the major causes that lead to the near collapse of her own social order at the end of the century. She points out that as soon as a society starts to subsidize "reproduction", then that society is doomed to collapse. And that those who advocate "universal suffrage" are just as dangerous, Lorraine believing that only "taxpayers" should be allowed to vote. This being a point where she differed from Sanda Talen, who once advocated a form of "universal suffrage" that was quite similar to that which had existed back in the 20th Century.

"And yet I've made enough mistakes of my own in return," she smiled back there in the darkness, referring to her earlier comment about Janet Rogers. I could tell by the laughter in her voice now that her rather "dry" sense of humor was now speaking.

"It was Janet Rogers who made the 'mistakes', not you," I answered. Janet had "ignored" problems that Lorraine never would. On the other hand Lorraine can be and is "hard" at times. She tends to be the sort who makes decisions and sticks to them.

"I told Janet what to do," Lorraine replied. "Unfortunately she tended to do exactly that without first questioning whether or not it was the 'right' thing to do given the circumstances."

"You can't consider yourself responsible for that," I said.

"At least I did a good job on the Priestesses of Lys," my Warlady answered, "Although they are sometimes a bit 'dogmatic'." Serena standing a bit away from us, staring out over the ruins. I wondered what thoughts went through her mind. She was illiterate, unable to read or write, like most Nevadas were, I knew. A woman from a culture that in many ways resembled that of the old Stone Age except for the few precious metal tools they had found.

"An 'interesting' woman," Serak said to me the next day as we watched Lorraine's Black Lady fade to a speck there in the distance towards the mountains that separated California from Nevada. Somewhere beneath those peaks was the hidden secret city of Leith. Ruled now by the Leaderess of the Women, my mother.

"She is 'more' than that," I smiled back, kissing him.

"And do you have 'duties' to perform?" he asked me.

"I am the Empress of California," I pointed out.

"But I am sure others can do your duties for a while," Serak pointed out. "My father doesn't have to be here in Vegas all the time." I supposed he had a point there. Sharon could deal with things while I was gone. It would be good practice for her too. There was no "need" to return back to Sarn quite yet, I thought.

"Ah," Serak observed, reclining at his ease beneath the shade of a tree, his back to its trunk, "It is always nice to see women at work." Pussycat and I fixing our picnic lunch at the moment. His half clad provocative slave girl giving me a "sly" smile as I nodded back. We had built a small fire to cook our meat, a task for which Pussycat was far more fitted than me, a "spoiled" aristocrat who could "hardly boil water" successfully. In any case I've never considered "cooking" to be the sort of a menial skill that a woman of my own royal position should know.

"You could 'help'," I suggested, squatting by the fire. I had learned the wisdom of keeping up wind from

it quickly enough. Pussycat nodding, her half clad figure leaving no doubts as to her own sensual desirability. The woman more like a female animal who lived for love making than those slaves that I had known.

"I am a Nevadawarrior, and a Prince," Serak pointed out. "It would hardly be 'becoming' for me to do 'women's work'." It seemed as if I had heard comments like that before somewhere now. Like about five or six centuries uttered by other men back then!

"And I am the Empress of California," I pointed out in turn.

"You will burn the meat if you hold it that close," our curvy little half clad slave delight commented in soft tones as she walked up to me and took the sticks with the meat from me. Squatting there before the fire, much like some Stone Age woman. Serena had stayed "back" in Vegas, at my "wishes", not Serak's.

"There is much I have yet to learn," I said softly to her.

"You are an 'Empress', I am but a 'slave'," she answered.

"You are an excellent cook, Pussycat," I said to her as we ate. Serak feeding her from his hand much like one would a dog.

"Pussycat's good at doing a lot of things," Serak smiled, giving the smoky smelling coppery skinned wench an affectionate hug. Pussycat kissing the side of his neck, her bared breasts welcoming his caress in return. She wore only beads and a brief buckskin skirt highlighted by exotic patterns she'd sewn into it. She was, as I had noted, quite naked there underneath it. Unlike me of course, she was not "shaved" there beneath it, this being a practice known only apparently to women of "civilized" countries such as California and Dularn. (And also Mars) She did "trim" herself down there, but the idea of actually "shaving" was apparently just as quite alien to her as it is to most "barbarians".

"You do 'love' her, don't you?" I said to Serak. He nodded, smiled at me. Kissed the wench, who laid happily in his arms.

"She has been a 'comfort' to me," Serak admitted to me, putting a bit of meat in her mouth, the hem of her buckskin skirt a bit "high" on those provocative tapering coppery thighs of hers.

"Just remember," I said to him, "That I am now your wife."

"I'm sure you'll 'remind' me if I 'forget'," he laughed.

## Chapter Forty

"We have," King Terak then said to me as we ate dinner that night, his son at my side, "Evidence that the Dularnians are now supplying the Montanas with their newest and most modern weapons." That was known to both of us, as I had already seen for myself ample "evidence" of Dularn's "involvement" in all this in the person of the new "Queen" of the Montanas. Such now all indicating that Dularn was attempting to win allies among the savages of the plains by any means, perhaps in the belief that given enough time they might encircle the Empire and destroy it from the east. California's control over the length of land she

controlled being based for the most part upon her naval strength.

"In a month Lorraine's factory will be able to supply you with a thousand such weapons as I have shown you," I replied, referring to the new compound bow that she had so ably demonstrated. I was a bit nervous however whether or not I could "trust" the Nevadas with such armaments, especially given their viewpoint that the women of California were better off in slave collars. I was married to their Prince, but there would be those who would say with considerable justification that I had armed one of the Empire of California's worst and most deadly of savage enemies!

"We need ten thousand such weapons," Terak insisted, a bit of meat speared on the point of his knife as he poked it at me for emphasis. "And we cannot afford to wait a year for them."

"I can give you the 'support' of several Imperial Legions," I pointed out. I had such military forces at my disposal, although with the political situation as it was I really didn't know if I'd be able to retain "control" of things if certain people now in high political office decided to oppose my own wishes.

"Out here in the plains?" Serak laughed, his eyes speaking what his mouth had not. I knew the "history" of such military expeditions in the past. What the Nevadas had done to such units here on the arid western plains where water was often something as "dear" as gold. Infantry was almost "worthless" on the plain!

"My Imperial warrioresses have 'done well' in the past," I pointed out, cutting at my meat there on the plate before me. I could field a good force of such women with the help of the Nevadas. Whether or not such a combination of forces could "work" together was something else, Nevadas having a low opinion of women as a rule. A woman among the Nevadas being a household drudge and little more. They tended to view Californian women in terms of chains and slave collars, although this might change, I hoped.

"They will no doubt look pretty in Montanacollars," Terak laughed. He did not have a high opinion of the female sex when it came to fighting. I hoped that by now he might have changed his opinion of what women could do after meeting Lorraine and me. Seeing that not "all" women were of the sort he kept for slaves.

"I have faced your women in battle, my father has not," Serak said to me that evening later on after his father had left us. We were now once again alone together. I had dismissed Pussycat. "The Imperial Warriress is a worthy foe of any man," he added. I smiled in reply, moving close, letting him take me then in his strong manly arms and hold me close. "And their Empress is the most beautiful woman who ever lived." "Love" is no doubt blind. I still planned, however, to take Serena with me back to Sam. I could rely upon Aurora seeing to it later on that she got home.

"I am not without a 'certain charm'," I smiled back at him.

"You would be 'more charming' without so many clothes," he teased me, reaching down and undoing the buckle to my sword belt. As I was only wearing my golden mesh, I didn't think that I was "overdressed" by any means. Would he rather see me wearing nothing but a bit of perfume? That does have certain "advantages"!!!

"That is a bit better," he said a minute later regarding me. I now wore only my golden clips and a pale blue strap covering my shaved sex. I stand 5'10", and have the figure to match. As others have noted, I am very nicely proportioned for my height.

"I can remove these and this," I smiled, indicating the golden disks that now covered my pierced nipples and the triangle of pale blue silk that now covered my freshly shaved sex beneath. My cultural "mores"



regarding shaving one's body hair no doubt something that he found quite "exotic", although I do think that he now enjoyed being married to a woman who did "do" such things. The fact that I douched every day meant little as even the Nevadawomen did that, the cultural "mores" for that being almost universal with the exception of truly "barbaric" women like Serena. Serena being the sort of a person who "bathed" too infrequently, a "fact" I'd noted the first time I got "down wind" from her...

"I would for the moment prefer to just `admire' you," he smiled, stretching out there on the bed while I stood before him.

"I do have my `good points'," I smiled back, doing a little "posing" for him. Walking about, standing in "certain" ways too.

"You are the woman I've always `wanted'," Serak said to me.

"And now you `have' me," I smiled back in reply, lifting up a leg, placing my foot on a table, and stroking my thigh as I looked into his eyes. I have learned much from the beautiful Lara, who once was the most famous prostitute in all of Californiabefore she married Jers, the son of Princess Tara of Baja.

"The most beautiful woman inCalifornia," Serak smiled back. "With hair like gold and eyes blue like the sky after it rains."

"Flattery will win the `love' of a fair maiden," I teased, going to him, slipping my arms around his neck, pressing my naked body up against him. Using my belly and thighs to "tease" a bit as I laid there beside him. Rubbing myself up against him like some great cat. Playfully nipping a bit at the side of his neck.

"You have `learned' a few things from Pussycat," he laughed.

"You've never had a wife like me before," I teased him back.

"I've never had a wife before either," Serak then laughed.

"You have one now," I said, undoing his clothing, my eyes glowing hot into his. I reached down, undid my silken "strap" to bare my sex. His lips seeking, finding mine as I undid my clips to bare my nipples. And lifting my body, guiding his lips to me.

"I will miss you when you are gone back to California," he said to me, tracing circles with his fingertip around my left nipple as I laid there beside him, "contented", and a bit sleepy.

"You're coming with me!" I laughed, rolling over, kissing him, my mouth wet, eager, loving as he held me close, tight, our mutual nakedness speaking of what we had just done moments ago.

"My father needs me here as long as theMontanasare on the warpath," Serak answered me in level tones, looking into my eyes.

"Your brother...?" I asked, already knowing the answer now.

"A boy, not yet a man," he replied. I nodded back in reply.

"And if I don't return toCalifornia...," I mused, aware that I really had no "choice" given the sort of a woman I was. I was Darlanis, Empress of California. My marriage to Serak didn't alter that. Nor the fact that there would soon be a war between the Empire and Dularn once again. One now no doubt

unstoppable!

"We have our `obligations'," he answered, looking down into my eyes. Stroking my nakedness as it now laid there before him.

"Yours to your father, and mine to my people," I answered.

"The `price' of being what we are," he smiled back at me.

"You will be even more beautiful when this is gold," Serak said to me as he toyed with the silver neck chain there snug around my throat the next morning. The history of "neck chaining" one's wife now being lost somewhere in the centuries that have passed since the custom was first introduced sometime after The War of 2047 A.D. Lorraine believes that it symbolizes the submission of the wife to her husband, but I rather doubt it! To me it symbolizes that I am "his". That I belong to my Nevada Prince. That there is someone to whom I am "important". Someone who thinks of me not as an Empress, but as a woman to be "loved"!

"I am a woman with `needs'," I purred, kissing him then. I let him lift me in his strong arms, and carry me then to the bed!

"Perhaps it is best that you do return to California," my Prince smiled as we got dressed for the day a while later. "I don't know if I could stand the `strain' of having you `around' all the time." I smiled, splashed some perfume into the palm of my hand and splashed it beneath my armpits. Rubbing the rest between my breasts. I would have to teach him the delights of making "love" to me in more "exotic" and "different" ways, I mused!

"You have Pussycat, all I have is my `hand'," I teased him.

"There are advantages to being a man," Serak smiled back.

"We have an `important visitor' who arrived only this morning," King Terak said to us as we entered the throne room, motioning with his hand then for the person to be brought forward.

"Tara!" I hissed, seeing that infamous Bajan Princess. She didn't look too "delighted" over this turn of affairs either. I saw that she had been wisely disarmed, with a Nevada on either side to insure "order" as she was brought up the center of the throne room to where Serak and I now stood quietly waiting. The silver chain that Serak had locked around my throat told its own story in a way that needed no words to "explain itself" to Tara.

"We explained to this Bajan that the relationship between us and the Empire of California has been `altered'," Terak smiled.

"I have been your `friend' long before this `bitch' came here!" Tara snapped back. I assumed that Terak had already spoken to her. That I was now the Crown Princess of the Nevadas. I don't think she was really aware of the situation she was now in.

"Does she have `suitable accommodations'?" I asked Terak, a smile of pleasure now curving my lips as I regarded the Princess. It would not be proper to chain her in a dungeon like some slut!

"Those suitable for a woman of her `position'," he answered.

"See that she lacks for nothing, but under no conditions is she to be allowed to return to her own country," I smiled back.

"You Lys-damned bitch!" Tarascreamed back, furious at me!

"Perhaps you would prefer her `status' and the `pleasing' of warriors?" I asked, indicating Terak's own white skinned, blonde haired female slave who wore only beads and a bit of buckskin. I knew he had only purchased the wench the day before from some Nevadawarrior, but Taradidn't of course know that. She was of Dularnian ancestry, but had lived in California for all her life.

"I am the Princess of Baja!" Tarathen snapped back in fury!

"You are not `unattractive'," King Terak observed with a smile. "Your breasts are still firm and the curves of your body beneath your clothing do indicate that you would be quite becoming kneeling here at my side," the King of the Nevadas added, giving Tara a leering smile back as he tousled the hair of his new slave girl. The wench, well "trained", kissing at his hand.

"You will regret doing this!" Tarasnappped furiously back!

"See that she has every `comfort', but don't let her escape or I can promise you that she will be nothing but `trouble'," I warned Terak, giving Taraa "smile" that made her even more mad!!

"Perhaps she will grow lonely for a man's `touch'," he smiled back. I hoped he would take the precaution of seeing that she didn't have anything around that could be used as a weapon. Tarawas like me of the Warrioreses. And a very dangerous one!

Tara's reply to that wasn't even remotely "printable"!!!

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"I've been wondering," Jon said to Lorraineas they laid together after making love there in her lovely palace in Trella.

"About what?" Lorraineasked, kissing the mark there on his neck where she had just bit him only a few minutes before that.

"If a woman like Darlanis could ever make love like you," he teased the tall brunette from a past era now mostly only legends.

"I don't think it's likely you'll ever know," she laughed.

The End