

# THE QUEEN OF TIME

2570 A.D.!

## A TALE OF ADVENTURE IN THE SECOND DARK AGE

By Jerome B. Bigge

### Author's Note

I enjoy a good sword swinging novel in the old tradition of "derring do". I once had the entire Edgar Rice Burroughs "Mars" series, and I do have the complete "GOR" series by John Norman, whose writings I do admire, as perhaps you've noticed in my past works. I do not pretend to be in the same "class" as these two famous authors, but I do think you'll enjoy this eighth book of the "Warlady" series just as much as you did the other seven now. Lorraine's epic "battle" crossing the ruins of Los Angeles being the sort of an "adventure" you'd love to see a movie made of now!

There is a mistaken belief that women could never match men in sword duels, but a check with instructors in fencing indicates that a woman can be a "match" of a man in fencing, and certainly a woman like Lorraine Richards, my now famous "Warlady", could be a woman who might very well be "the greatest swordswoman of all time". And at her side now is Hope Lynn Simmons, the daughter of Bob and Carol Simmons, brought back from the 21st Century to be the companion of the famous Imperial Warlady in her latest story! Joining her later back in her own time the most famous of Trelandar's long line of rulers, Queen Amethysta of the 24th Century! And joining them both once again here are Bob and Carol Simmons along with Janet Rogers herself, who we finally get to meet here!

Naturally I include here more of my now famous "politics", comments about matters that make you set the book down for a moment and ponder a bit about just what the "truth" is here now...Lorraineperhaps at times too really not thinking things through! At the end of this story I also tell you the reader just what the "TRUTH" was about Janet Rogers, that so famous Leaderess of mine!

### Chapter One

It was a pleasant cool early summer evening here in Trella, a quarter moon now shining brightly down upon us as the last glow of the setting sun disappeared there in the west. A few clouds from time to time drifting across the star sprinkled vault as two planets, Jupiter and Saturn, shown down as they have perhaps when the dinosaurs yet roamed this world of ours so many eons ago now. The lovely city of Trella, much like what Rome must have been in its glory, settling down for the night as people shuttered their homes against the footpads and such that yet roamed its streets despite the best efforts of our guardsmen to prevent such crimes. The "thought" now going through my mind as I write this that despite the claims of Sarah Brady and such sorts back there in the 20th Century, "outlawing guns" did not make things any "safer"... Something any "student" of the Roman Empire could have told her! Trella having a "history" that goes back centuries of such crime! Queen Amethysta of the 24th Century having had the same problems here that I have dealing with the footpads and other "low lifes" that make Trella a dangerous place to walk during the night time.

The Queen of Trelandar, Warlady of the Empire of California, your truly here, Lorraine Richards herself, was enjoying a quiet evening with those most "close" to her, while holding to herself the shocking news she'd learned just that day! I, Queen Lorraine of Trelandar, surrounded here now by every "luxury" that the hands of Man could build, was yet well aware of my own mortality! Of the "FACT" that I had now but thirty to thirty five years left to live when before I'd looked forward to at least "TWICE" that number here now in the 26th Century! And worse yet, I would soon begin to visibly "AGE" while those around me stayed YOUNG!!! I would eventually become an "OLD WOMAN", something to "PITY" in a society where such things were almost "unknown" to most people!! Was "THAT" how I wanted my people to remember me now? I recalled how people had spoken of Queen Tulis of Dularn, who had suffered from a brain tumor that was slowly driving her insane. She had killed herself rather than to face the insane madness at the END! It was with such "thoughts" going through my mind that I listened to my companions speak, while sipping quietly at my own brandy...

"The 'world' is finally at 'peace'," my husband Jon Richards spoke, thoughtfully regarding the "level" of the brandy in his cut glass goblet, "And a man can enjoy a little quiet conversation without worrying as to what 'next' is going to happen now." My own dark mood fortunately having gone unnoticed as yet so far. Our slave girl, Yvette, now swiftly refilling Jon's goblet then, her dark eyes glowing into his as he nodded back at the "delight" in her clinging red silken shift that concealed "little" of her. The golden ring of her slave collar snug about her lovely throat. Jon having for several years found himself often "separated" from me as we each carried out our duties towards Imperial California, Yvette having often been his "companion" during those times. "No longer do our 'lords and ladies' need to fear a 'Dulie'," he added, Maris Marn and her lithe "North Star" having taught us all a good lesson in the past about the capabilities of such vessels. The Mexicans were still capable of making "trouble", but as Tarahad apparently "retired", I doubted that they would any more now. The Princess having apparently now learned the error of her ways. The Nevadashad gotten into a "clash" with the Wyomings, but the likelihoods of this escalating into anything serious were remote. Neither the Dularnian Federation or the Empire of California now wishing to allow such a conflict to escalate into anything major. And piracy was now under control with Queen Freydis' people being a part of the Dularnian Federation, enjoying the economic advantages of free trade both now with Dularn and Imperial California.

"And our Queen can now relax with her own family," my Royal Scribe, Keri Grayson added, the tall beautiful slender brunette's dark eyes meeting mine as I "nodded" back. Little Eric, eleven months old, now pulling at his nanny's rich brown hair as she quietly cradled him to herself there to one side of the tastefully decorated suite and gave him the bottle. Sue Cross being an attractive and rather full busted wide hippered wench of the Peasants whom I'd purchased eight months before as being of the right "sort" to make a good "nanny" for a Prince of Trelandar. A free woman once again, Sue carried in her womb the developing fetus of the baby girl that would "complete" this Queen's family. My previous pregnancy

having taught me that I wasn't the sort of a woman to bear children, while a good healthy young woman like Sue here could have given birth to half a dozen and never noticed it!

I am tall, five foot nine, and rather "mannish" in my build, with coal black hair and deep dark brown eyes set in a rather "plain" face. Not the sort of a woman you'd ever look at twice here. I mention this so you will understand better why I sometimes act the way that I do. That I sometimes doubt any man can love me for myself, not for what I am as the Queen of Trelandar. Why I am so "distrustful" of any woman more attractive than I am.

"And pass one's genes down to future generations," I spoke, well AWARE of WHAT the Royal Physician had TOLD me just today! I had been puzzled by the first signs of menopause, which shouldn't have been occurring, not with the anti-aging serums we used now! The blood tests however had confirmed my worst fears, it appearing here now that I'd neglected to receive the "secondary" serum when I arrived in this era five years ago, and due to my age, the "primary" serum had never taken "effect" upon me as I'd thought! Now it was too late, my age such that the serums no longer would be of any value, which meant that I would live out a normal life span for a woman of the 20th Century, somewhere between seventy five and eighty years most likely, and then die of old age here!\* \* The reader may question here the truth of this considering that in Queen Maris' book it appears as if the serums were "effective" in such a case as this. However, it is likely that Queen Maris, not being a Physician, would not have known that the serums were of no value in extending the life of the old slave girl. (J.B.B.)

"When are you going to get married, Keri?" my husband asked. Keri had a number of handsome young suitors, but none of them had seemed to be the sort of a "man" that she'd been looking for now. With her long black raven wing hair, her well molded face, Keri was a woman that could have won any man's heart here in any era. She was a competent swordswoman, a capable and competent woman, a woman who in her own way muchly reminded me of Lady Sanda Talen, who has been my own Prime Minister now for the past five years. Keri's lovely silken blouse and matching brown leather skirt, the sword at her hip much like the attire that Sanda usually wore...

"When I find a `man'," Keri smiled, meeting my own smile. She was young, still in her twenties, and would live for another century at least, changing only a little there at the end of it. I wondered if Keri was still in "love" with Bob Simmons, who had with his wife returned back to the 20th Century, Maris having informed me that First Priestess Tais had later returned their own daughter to them instead of leaving her with Maris as they had. I knew that their last remains now laid safely hidden in a cave a few miles from the city of Arsana, Janet Rogers having faithfully carried out their last wishes despite their own puzzling content. Their bodies having been irradiated against decay and then sealed in heavy stainless steel coffins after they'd committed suicide together in the year 2033, Carol dying of Alzheimer's disease while her husband in turn was soon to die of major heart failure. Bob's last writings here directed to "A LOVELY QUEEN", saying in a few dozen sentences that they were finally "returning home"... "Words" I had no doubt must have greatly "puzzled" Janet Rogers!

"I can name a dozen Warriors who would be delighted to have you as their wife," Jon smiled back, Keri being a beautiful woman of high caste parentage, which is often thought "important" here. Keri being the granddaughter of Lady Tirana Grayson, who is the Warlady of Trelandar, and perhaps one of my best friends here in the 26th Century. An old Warriress who in her day had once been the Warlady of Sarn before Darlanis used her as a "scapegoat" to conceal her own lack of understanding of military "tactics" here. Darlanis being our awesomely beautiful Empress who while I admire her greatly, still has a rather "checkered" past to live down...

"You'd think I was your `daughter' the way you're trying to marry me off!" Keri laughed, her dark eyes twinkling into mine as I nodded back. I do often get somewhat "emotionally involved" in matters I

suppose a wiser Queen than I would not, but on the other hand I think that is probably "why" I am the Queen that I am!

"Shall we change the `subject'?" I suggested with a smile. Keri having just received some fragments of books written back in the 21st Century, her group of young Scribes having done their best to piece them back together into something we could read... I'd considered commanding an expedition into the ruins of Los Angeles, now inhabited only by mutants and the worst of outlaws. I knew of wild rumors that there was supposed to be some sort of an underground "civilization" beneath the ruins, but that I felt was nothing more than the sort of things I used to read about back in the 20th Century! Tales of "space aliens", of strange giant bugs and such nonsense that no intelligent person would ever believe! The sort of "tabloids" that they used to sell in supermarkets...

"I'd like to be on that expedition you're planning into the ruins," Keri ventured, the topic being on everyone's mind lately. I'd perfected flamethrowers, and in the past couple years I'd now raised several hundred Bull Terriers, the finest fighting dog any could wish for, such being in my opinion just the sort of "help" we might well need for an expedition into the "ruins" of LA here! I'd also take a dozen or so Boston Terriers, the "royal dog" of Trelandar dating back a couple centuries. Our first "expedition" into the ruins last year having taught us that perhaps there was "more" to these "legends" than even I'd imagined here, assuming that what my own Warriresses had told me about things was TRUE!

"I do need a Scribe," I smiled back, knowing she would be my choice, Keri Grayson being to me almost like another daughter... "There are a lot of `mysteries' about the past that we can't yet explain," I added, recalling what Keri had told me earlier here. The old "rumors" that there had been about Janet Rogers' parents, Janet having been a "foundling" from what was known of her then. The tale a wino had told about seeing the baby girl delivered to the orphanage by an "angel" no doubt just an drunk's "illusion"! Janet and I having had a good "laugh" about "that" back in 1988.

"Like the `disappearance' of Hope Simmons in 2018," Keri answered. "There is also a `rumor' that a `UFO' was sighted then," she added, the Lorr having from time to time kidnaped women from the Earth and taken them to Mars to serve them as their Servitors there in the great underground caverns of the Lorr civilization.

"Ended up on Mars serving the `ants'," my husband "smiled". Most people still viewed the Lorr as a species of hostile aliens.

"And there's enough `mystery' about events just before it happened to make one wonder," Keri mused, looking over at me now. "There was supposed to be some sort of a strange woman with her. Some sort of an incredibly awesome swordswoman like none before."

"Another `tale' of the past we'll never know the truth of," Jon "grinned", taking a sip of his brandy, Sue looking up at me. She was a rather attractive wench in a way, quite ripely figured. Much like Kathi had been, Lady Tirana's own personal slave girl. Sue was now well along in her pregnancy, nearly six months here.

"Unless I can convince Tais to allow me to travel back," I mused thoughtfully, having for the moment at least found "something" to take my mind off my own troubles here. The Priestesses of Lys had the ability to travel through time to a range of about two thousand years in either direction, I'd once heard from Bob. There was also a story a couple of centuries old of two mysterious "swordswomen" from some strange unknown land who had been so "invincible" that none could stand against them! One of them had later on even become a Queen of Trelandar, Queen Hope, although I didn't consider it likely there was any "relation" here! "Hope" is a common enough woman's name here in Trelandar that it was extremely

unlikely that the mysterious Trelandarian Queen had actually been our Hope Lynn Simmons. In any case she hadn't left any writings behind to "verify" such an idea one way or another here. The great fire that had nearly destroyed the royal palace back a century ago had destroyed any painting that might have existed... Queen Hope having ascended the throne after the disappearance in 318 A.W. of Queen Amethysta, that famous Trelandarian Queen who it is said rose from being a fighting slut to Queen of Trelandar.

"I hope you have more 'sense' than that," Jon grinned at me. "I'd hate to 'lose' the best wife I ever had somewhere in time." I nodded, looking down into my cut glass goblet, wondering if he would still love me "so" when I was wrinkled and gray with age...

"You seemed to be in a dark mood earlier this evening," Jon said to me as we prepared for bed, Yvette there waiting to be of assistance. It is not that unusual for married couples of this era to allow a personal slave girl to enjoy a degree of "intimacy" with them that might have shocked many of my own time, but I was not one who ever allowed "such", being a "prude" about this! The bedroom of the Queen of Trelandar being much as you'd expect, although I am not the "luxury lover" that Darlanis is, I'll note. My "tastes" in such things being less "feminine" than hers are.

"You may leave, Yvette," I spoke, the girl quickly doing so, closing the door behind herself as I went to it and slipped the bar home so I was sure that we wouldn't be "disturbed" by anyone! The only light now in the room the lamp there on my bed table. I am not a beautiful woman, and I like it dark when I make love. I could feel the "chill" of the night air against my skin as I stood there, the sounds of the night wafting through the windows.

"You are 'serious'," Jon breathed, regarding me as I stood there, wearing only a teddy of silk and lace that covered little. The rich furnishings of our bedroom leaving no doubt as to my own status as Queen of Trelandar. A woman so wealthy that she wanted for nothing that money could buy. A woman who could give orders, command ships at sea, who possessed the only airplane left now! A woman who through her own efforts, through her own example, had brought together warring societies, much like "another" once had! Many people now viewing me as being the "second Janet Rogers"...

"You know about these 'strange feelings' I've had lately, these 'sweats'," I added, the "last" having been something there had been no way to "conceal", given the attire that I often wore. "The irregular ovulation that made so much trouble for us here?" That was another reason why Sue Cross was carrying our daughter!

"The 'doc' probably told you to 'take it easy' for a while," Jon smiled back. "After all, you've been through a lot lately." Giving me a smile as he sat there on the edge of our bed naked but for the "strap" that people of this era wear as "underwear". He was handsome, manly, the sort of a husband any wife would be delighted to be married to. Far superior to what Jack had been! With Jack Duval I'd been just something to "use", to "exploit"! He'd needed a "wife" to keep Sharon, and I'd been "available". Our marriage had been loveless, just a "marriage" in name only... I'd been to Jack just a "business wife", something to be "used".

"Do you love me, Jon?" I asked, standing there, my eyes now starting to fill with tears. "Do you truly love me?" I now wept! Standing there before him, the tears now rolling down my cheeks!!

"Lorraine!" Jon cried, taking me in his arms, lifting me up. Cradling me to himself as I might a baby, carrying me then to the bed, setting me down, letting me sob out the fears I carried! Stroking me, holding me, letting me know that he still loved me!!

"You're a strange woman in some ways," Jon said to me as he held me close, my "having" something I'd badly "needed" just now! "But on the other hand with you life is never 'boring' either..."

"I only wish we could have more 'time' together," I spoke.

"Let us then value the time that we have," he said to me.

"Sanda would make you a good wife," I said to him then.

"I don't love Sanda," Jon answered, holding me close.

"She once 'offered' herself to you," I pointed out.

"She is not the 'woman' that you are," Jon said then.

"I'm a homely old bitch, good for little," I said to him.

"And a 'comfort' to have around at times," he grinned back.

"I had hoped we might faceLystogether," I answered then.

"Like the Simmons did?" he asked, knowing of their suicide.

"They loved each other so much," I spoke, weeping a bit.

"Bob did think highly of her," Jon smiled, kissing me.

"She was a woman like few others," I said, remembering.

"Like the one I now hold," he answered, holding me close.

"She was beautiful in her way," I said, remembering Carol.

"And as 'vicious' as one of your dogs," Jon smiled back.

"The Bull Terriers aren't 'vicious'!" I answered him then.

"Whatever you say, my Queen," he grinned, kissing me again.

"A Queen should be treated with 'dignity'," I teased, his hand down there between my thighs doing what I liked done to me. I wondered if the people of Trella ever thought of "what" their own Queen "did" when she was in bed with her husband? I supposed most people thought of me as being something utterly "different" from themselves. Something more "sexless", like a Priestess was.

"In her own bedroom?" Jon teased, well aware of my own need.

"I suppose in her bedroom she can be a 'woman'," I agreed.

## Chapter Two

"I'm afraid your Physician was correct," Tais said to me, her azure eyes glowing into mine as I quietly nodded back, well aware here that the First Priestess had been my last "hope" of ever extending my life on past its normal span. "There are certain theories that we might pursue, but it is unlikely that there is much hope of success knowing what we do of such things now..." The anti-aging serums working by modifying the output of certain glands, these glands themselves also changing with age. I could hear birds chirping away merrily just outside the open windows, a sweet aroma of flowers wafting to my nostrils with the soft airs. The sun shining brightly down from a lovely clean blue azure sky.

"At least you're 'honest'," I grinned back at her then. I knew she would have helped me had it been within her power here. I had flown here in Black Lady, hoping against hope that perhaps the Priestesses here at Shalimar could still do something for me! Here in this lovely white marble city hidden between great mountains, a city so far "different" from any I'd ever known before! Inhabited by a race of lovely and totally "sexless" beings, even more ALIEN in their own way perhaps than were the Women of Mars. The true "rulers" of the Solar System in "fact", if not in name.

"Remember that you have lived before and that you will live again until the day comes that you are united with Lys," she said to me, taking my hands in her own. Once there on Mars five years ago I had spoken to SHE, who the Men of this time now called LYS. The "thought" of HER for the moment driving away my fears here as the memories came flooding back of my experiences there on Mars. Feeling once again that terrible "yearning" to merge myself with HER, to give up my "self", to become only a part of her GOODNESS!

"I 'wonder' if you could do me a 'favor'," wondering as I spoke if Tais was reading my thoughts as I knew too she could do. "I'd like to be sent back in time so that I can save a young woman from becoming a slave," I continued, Tais' eyes now burning into mine like a pair of sky blue lasers as she listened to me...

"What you 'ask' is not something I can decide for you," Tais spoke, walking to the window, and looking out into the distance. "And you should know that it is impossible to 'alter' what is..."

"Hope is going to kidnaped and enslaved by the Lorr," I answered. "I'm only asking you to help me now prevent it here..." I had no doubt from what I knew that the Priestesses could do it! That they could send me back in time to just "before" that time, let me bring Hope back to this era, where she'd be safe with me!

"I will ask the Council of Priestesses," she said, leaving.

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"Nice way to 'travel'," I grinned to myself, shaking off the momentary "disorientation" that Tais had warned me would be a "side effect" of being teleported through time and space. The trees that towered up around me comfortingly "familiar" just then as I soon located the half hidden "earth home" just ahead of me. The Simmons' home being located deep within a thick forest where few ever came. A location that in its way I'd often envied them. I had twelve hours to find Hope, bring her back to this place...

"Locked!" I grinned to myself, too well aware of what anyone might think should they find me lurking around the house! In the attire of a high born Lady of Trelandar I might not "arouse" that much suspicion

as such, such clothing styles not all that "unusual" here. But on the other hand I didn't need anyone calling the police on me. Especially considering "who" I was and "where" I'd come from, this era being one where I could easily end up changing everything if they ever learned my true identity here now! I looked at the chaise lounges set out there on the redwood patio behind the half hidden "earth home", the "temptation" just too great to resist as I pulled off my boots and stretched out on one of them. Smoothing my soft black leather skirt under myself, the matching black silk v-necked blouse that I wore the latest fashion, I made myself "comfortable" there on the Simmons' patio. Pulling my veiled hat down over my face against the glare of the sun as it now peeked through the leafy boughs from above, I decided to wait and see if anyone showed up as I hoped they would! The sighing of the gentle breeze in the leaves, the sweet chirp of the birds, the warmth of the sun now soon putting me to sleep!

I awoke to find the point of a sword at my throat, the young woman holding it a lovely hazel eyed brownette clad in the sort of attire that to my eyes was more "fitting" for some prostitute! Her leather skirt was almost "crotch high", and her legs were encased in crisscrossing leather straps that well accentuated them. She wore a stylish green silken leather trimmed halter that well showed the taut young firmness of her breasts. The young woman I knew without doubt being SHE who I had come here to "rescue" now! I having worried that it was possible that I was "too late" here. That this trip I'd made back in time might have all been in vain!

"Who are you?" she snapped, holding a growling Boston Terrier on a short leash in her left hand, while her point now pressed against the softness of my throat in a way that left no "doubts"! I recalled too that Keri had told me that Hope Simmons had been a "Queen of Swords" here in the United States, and that it was believed that she might have become "that" of the entire world had she not "disappeared" when she did right here! It also "being" rather obvious to me now too that Miss Hope Simmons was one very "competent" young Warriress, especially considering the position I now found myself in! "And 'what' are you doing here?" she added. The "thought" going through my mind that it was going to be pretty hard to make her believe that I was "who" I said I was...

"I am a 'friend' of your parents," I answered her, wondering if I could strike the sword away from my throat before she drove it home, then decided that she was too "competent" for that here! Her very actions indicating that she was very well trained in the uses of the weapon, not too surprising considering "who" her own mother was, Carol being quite an excellent swordswoman herself... Janet Rogers having introduced the wearing of swords as a "badge" of citizenship with her election as President back in 2008 A.D., perhaps I think as a "tribute" to one who she greatly "admired"!! Yours truly favoring a social order where weapons required skill instead of just the ability to point a gun and pull its trigger! A "philosophy" too which both I and Carol Simmons equally shared. Carol having a considerably larger "role" in things than what is commonly known in our history books, I should mention right here! Leaving me to believe that Tais found it "necessary" to return them both back to their own time in order not to foul things up!! Later on returning Hope to them in 1999 so they could raise their daughter to become the fine young woman that now stood before me.

"Show me your 'ID'," she hissed, the dog growling some more. A Boston Terrier is "fast", and I had no doubt that it was capable of keeping me "distracted" long enough for its mistress to kill me if it came to that. This era being one where one had the right to kill intruding criminals, I recalled with a grim smile! Janet having followed my "advice" on that point, I recalled here, a grim smile curving my lips as I considered my "situation" now.

"I'm afraid I can't 'do' that," I said, slipping a golden crown from my wallet affixed to my weapons harness, the coin like all Imperial coins having a "likeness" of Empress Darlanis on it. "And do the words 'Dularn', 'Arsana', 'Maris Marn' now mean anything to you?" I ventured, feeling that sharp point pressing down against my throat in warning as she regarded the coin there in my hand now. This young woman



was at least as "competent" as any of my own Warrioreses, I "mused" laughingly to myself, thinking of the fact that Lorraine Richards, Queen of Trelandar, the Warlady of the Empire of California had been "taken" by a teen age girl! No doubt the captain of my Warrioreses, June Colt, would have a good laugh over that at my expense if I ever told her of it now! June being one of the finest swordswomen I'd ever met, one of the few who was able to give me a good match when I sparred with her. A tall slim "black" woman, we had become good friends over the years since she'd first become my captain back there in 2567 A.D.

"I have heard the word 'Dularn'," she answered, regarding me now with a bit less hostility than she had at first, although the dog was still growling in the back of its throat as a "warning". "Although I don't know just exactly what it means," she added... It being obvious that she knew next to nothing of "things" here.

"It is the name of a country in the 26th Century," I said, a squirrel "chattering" away in a tree nearby, there being an "unreal" feeling about all of this, especially here in this setting!

"My father has a coin like this one," she ventured then.

"The likeness is that of the Empress I serve," I said.

"What is your name?" she asked, "threatening" me a bit.

"I'm Doctor Lorraine Marie Duval," I answered her then.

"Undo that weapons belt," she ordered, the dog growling.

"You are a competent Warriores," I smiled, doing so now.

"Now take off your clothes, all of them," she then ordered.

"Don't move!" she hissed, doing an "inspection" of me that I found rather embarrassing for its total thoroughness, this young woman obviously trained to perfection in the skills of a Warrior! She had me propping myself against the patio door, my legs well spread, while she "inspected" my body in a way that I'd only once seen done before, and that was of Lady Lana by Princess Janis... The young brunette having swapped her sword for my own dagger, a more fitting weapon for close quarters work, I mused thoughtfully to myself then, awed despite myself at this girl's "competence"!!

"Your mother trained you well," I said, feeling her fingers going through my heavy black hair, searching for those little secret "pins" and such that some women often carry in such a place. This young woman obviously having been trained from "birth" just to "be" what she was, a true "War Maid" if there ever was one...

"Carol's pretty 'competent'," Hope answered from behind me.

"She was the 'Warlady' of Dularn for a time," I said then.

"She was the 'what' of 'where'?" Hope breathed, pausing in her inspection. Carol being close friend of Janet Rogers here, I recalled, being much the same here to Janet as I was to Darlanis, although Carol was of course not the "Warlady" of the Federation! On the other hand she was a close "confidant" of Janet Rogers. A woman to whom Janet Rogers "listened", and sought her "advice". Her "replacement" by Domino Tremaine after Carol's "retirement" in 2031 marks in my opinion the beginning of the "decline" here. Janet Rogers in her later years not being as highly thought of as she was in her earlier years, which

makes me suspect that Domino was something of a "bad influence" on her, the Vice Leaderess and Warlady being a rather "hard" woman from what I'm told of her...

"The country back in my own time," I explained to her then.

"My mother never told me anything about that," Hope snapped.

"She wasn't allowed to," I answered, turning my head to face her. "The First Priestess saw to that when they returned here." Going on to explain that it was necessary not to alter time here.

"Lorraine Duval died in 1988," Hope Simmons said to me then.

"I traveled with Sharon into another time," I answered her.

"You do look like the pictures I've seen of her," she said.

"I'm five years 'older' now than those," I now pointed out.

"I suppose that the 'GUARD' could find out 'who' you are, but I wouldn't turn a dog over to them," Hope Simmons suddenly grinned! Her words making a sigh of relief go through me then...

"You do 'look' a lot like 'her'," Hope said, standing there, looking at a book she half held in front of her, while she kept her sword at the ready as I sat there naked at the kitchen table! The thought going through my mind that certain of my Warriresses would certainly get a good laugh about how this girl had actually "taken" the Warlady of California prisoner while she laid asleep! For supposedly being the "greatest fighting woman of all time" I wasn't living up to my "reputation" by any means either here now!

"'Time travel' is possible, but it requires the use of great amounts of energy to break through the barrier that separates one span of time from another," I replied, wondering if she believed. "Only the use of anti-matter weapons releases enough energy to produce a 'Gateway' allowing 'passage' from one time to another." Going on to explain as best I could how I'd arrived here in 2018, the Priestesses using the power of advanced technology to produce a "distortion" in space time, thus allowing travel through time. I'd been warned too by Tais to be sure to be in the center of the "distortion", as anyone caught in its edges would quickly killed! For this reason I had been given a "marker", which I had placed as soon as I'd arrived in this time, just to be "sure" of this... Their "older" method of time travel, using the power of their minds to alter the electrical balance of the locality having also produced some awesome electrical effects from what I'd heard too!

"If you're from the 'future' then you must know everything that is going to happen," Hope grinned at me as I sat before her, my hands in my lap, my knees tightly together like a slave girl. I felt considerable "embarrassment", although "why" I don't know. I am told that stripping a woman is one method that slavers use to break her spirit, her "will to resist". I suspect it is true too, judging from my own later "experiences" as a "slave girl"...

"I have a husband, children in the 26th Century, and I don't wish to risk their welfare for your idle curiosity," I answered. "I will say, however, that there will be a great war in the middle of this century that will destroy all civilization on Earth."

"The Federation controls the world," Hope smiled back then.

"There are other worlds than this one," I now smiled back.

"Either you are a raving 'lunatic' or you actually 'are' what you say you are," Hope said to me as she sat across the circular dark oak kitchen table from me. She had allowed me to put my clothing back on, but she'd drawn the line at allowing me to arm myself, once again displaying her awesome "competence" that left no doubts in my mind that Carol had spent years "training" this young woman in all the "arts" and skills of the Warriress! On the other hand as I tend to be a "walking arsenal", perhaps she felt she had good reason for not "trusting" me too much yet! The "collection" of weapons she'd found on me leaving no doubts!!

"What I've told you is the honest 'truth', and your parents did spend almost a year and a half in the Twenty Sixth Century," I answered, "sipping" at the cup of coffee that she'd made for me. The "view" through the patio doors was lovely, I mused then. I also knew enough of Bob and Carol's "lifestyle" to understand "why" they had wanted to return to this peaceful quiet "world" even without any hidden secret "prompting" from Tais here... At midnight I would have to return to mine, or be "trapped" here! The words Keri had said going through my mind as I looked at her. I would see that Hope got to the 26th Century if I had to knock her out and carry her on my back to the spot from which I'd came! "Patty Pugs", Hope's Boston Terrier looking up hopefully at me as I nibbled on some snacks that Hope had set out for the two of us.

"If we could stop this 'WAR' between Earth and Mars...", she breathed, her lovely full lips half opened like I'd seen Carol's. She had a somewhat more "attractive" face than Carol did, but that is only my opinion here as I'm sure another might disagree. I'm not sure if she is a "clone" of Carol or not, as neither Bob or Carol would ever tell me this, perhaps with good reason. In any case it is of no importance, and I did love Hope for herself. I'm sure that she did make Trelandar back there in the 24th Century a good Queen despite our having so little record of her now.

"Can't be done, even if the Priestesses would let us," I answered. "We don't 'KNOW' just 'WHO' was responsible, and there is nothing in Domino Tremaine's diary to tell us 'who' did it... And it wasn't Janet Rogers' 'fault', whatever anyone thinks now," I added, such being a rather "common" belief in the 26th Century.

"Did you 'design' this entire social order like Janet Rogers claims?" Hope then "challenged" me, her eyes glowing into mine. I suspected this was one of those "questions" you can't "win" on.

"Did a lousy 'job' of it too, didn't I?" I now grinned back.

"It's 'better' than anything we had before," she now smiled.

"I didn't believe you thought very much of it," I admitted.

"There's a lot of 'freedom' as long as you stay out of politics and don't try to upset things." Hope answered then in reply. The government playing little "role" here in most people's lives. "Janet's at least pretty 'honest' about it all," she then added, her lovely hazel eyes meeting the darkness of mine as I "nodded". I had always respected Janet Rogers for her personal moral code. She was the sort of a person who didn't believe in "socialism"... Bob and Carol of course also having their own roles to play here.

"You will be kidnaped by the Lorr in perhaps only a few days right here," I spoke, seeing the "shock" there in her eyes at my very words... "And 'that' is a part of things that I hope to 'change'," I said, "unless you want to be a slave girl on Mars."

"There's no 'chance' that you could be 'wrong'?" she asked.

"There is a book my Royal Scribe found....," I "answered".

"There are 'tears' in your eyes," Hope noticed just now.

"I am sometimes just an emotional old woman," I smiled.

"I suppose I'd better get my things together," she said.

"I'm sure Tais won't 'object' to your dog," I smiled back.

"I'm certainly not going to leave her behind," Hope stated.

### Chapter Three

"Guess it really doesn't matter any more how many 'credits' I spend," Hope commented to me with a grin as she drove us into lovely Seaside just around at sunset. I had been curious to see what "life" in the Twenty First Century was like, and this was probably the only chance I'd ever get now! I'd given Janet Rogers the "basic operating system", and I was curious to see just "what" she'd "done" with what I'd given her. What "life" was actually "like" in the NEW ORDER before The War. What I'd "seen" there on the TriVid, what Hope had told me now I didn't very much like! It appeared now to me that Janet had "betrayed" my hopes. That this World Federation of hers was just another THIRD REICH! Oddly enough however Janet herself was quite popular with people! I understand the "same" was true of Hitler, so perhaps I'd better leave well enough alone here before I "irritate" certain people!\* \* Such as Darlanis, who still "worships" Janet Rogers regardless. Janet wasn't an "evil" person, but she was an absolute dictator in her later years despite the "fact" that she started out as a "Libertarian" when she "started" her "political career" in 1996. On the other hand as has been pointed out to me, Janet "did" the best that she could under the circumstances, and I do rather now doubt that I would have done any better ruling in her place here! Sanda too now pointing out to me that I have made much the "same" sort of "decisions" that Janet Rogers would have made in my own place, one of the consequences I suppose of arguing with Scribes! People who can always find a "book" somewhere to prove you wrong!

"I'll leave your parents my money," I smiled back. A couple of dozen gold crowns wouldn't make any difference in things now, and I had no doubt that Bob and Carol would "understand" just why I had done as I had. Hope had been unable to reach them by telephone, the couple having been with Janet Rogers on a "fact finding tour" that the "Leaderess of the World" was making. I'd had a brief nap there at the house, and while my clothing was not in "style", Hope assured me that it wouldn't cause us any problems.

"There's enough 'foreigners' around now that no one can really say for sure just 'where' you come from," she added then. I supposed I qualified for being "foreign" even if the time from which I came I was the absolute ruler of this entire area, Trelandar covering what was southern Californiain earlier times. California here in the 21st Century being divided into southern and northern parts, almost forming the two "nations" of Trelandar and Sarn in the land area that each claimed for themselves now...

"Your parents did a good job of raising you," I said to her. She was a well bred girl, despite to me her "provocative" attire that reminded me a great deal of that of a dockside prostitute in Trella. Such women often wearing outfits that would make a slave girl blush! She had asked me much about the Twenty Sixth Century, about what life was "like" in our more "barbaric" society. She did feel that Janet Rogers was "necessary" for this "world". I suspected that it was true, that only one like Janet could have done it, given the sort of "nationalisms" she had to deal with. The sort of religious fanaticism that existed in the Middle East.

"I only wish they had told me about `everything'," she said, referring to her parents and their adventures in my own time. I having told her the entire story of what Tais had "done" with them, well aware too of "why" the First Priestess had "done" what she had with her parents, using them like "tools" to "serve" her desires. The Priestesses at the time wishing to end a "war" that no one really "wanted" without directly intervening themselves...

"Most likely Tais used hypnosis to see that they didn't," I answered, well aware of the realities of the matter in this case. Hope at the moment now "stopping" for a traffic light, bringing back "memories" of another life I'd once led so long ago now. A "life" of a sort that I at least had no desire to ever return to. I am, I think, not a "civilized" woman, but truly a "barbarian", a woman more "home" on the quarterdeck of a ship of war, a sword there in her hand as she directs her command against an enemy... I am, I suspect now, also truly a "Warlady" in the full sense of the term, being as Hope once said of me, "The Warlady of Earth"! I suspect perhaps she understood me all too well in this matter!!

"They must have `known' about this `WAR' you mentioned," she answered, the light now turning "green" there before us. I supposed it was possible that they did, but were prevented from acting upon what they knew. Tais, I suspected, was no "fool" here!

"A person programed by advanced electronic hypnosis can know things that cannot be told," I told her, seeing her nod back now. Nor was it likely that the electronic hypnosis machines of this era were "powerful" enough to overcome those of the 26th Century. Tais having taken the "precaution" of mind programing me so that should the "worse" happen, those of the 21st Century would learn little of any value despite whatever "means" they might use here! For this reason I'd been unable to answer some of Hope's questions that she had, although Tais had permitted me some "latitude" here, perhaps feeling that no one would believe me anyway!

"They must be like `gods'," she breathed out softly. I nodded, knowing of "what" she spoke of here. The Priestesses of Lys were "all powerful" in a way that no dictatorship has even been! Even the awesome technology of the Lorr and the Women meant nothing to those who served the "Guardians", the all powerful organization that ruled the entire Universe itself in the name of LYS! A "civilization" of billions of worlds covering an area of twelve trillion light years, all now governed by the GUARDIANS OF LIFE!

"They are our `protectors'," I answered, recalling what Darlanis had told me about what had "happened" there in the "north". A "tale" that had seemed almost unbelievable even to me then! The car now passing a smallish "Temple", a Priestess before it. Hope had been "converted" by the Priestesses, I suspected here. Janet Rogers having wasted no time in establishing the religion, the one thing I was at least "thankful" that she'd "done" for me even if she hadn't kept to the ideals that I'd once given her... \* \* Some of Lorraine's "expectations" were perhaps rather unrealistic here. Janet Rogers did attempt to "maximize freedom" as far as she could given the situation she found in 2008. In this regard she did far better than anyone did before her, Janet being "pro free enterprise" (she also supported syndicalism) and generally was "pro freedom" to a degree almost "unknown" even now. It is possible to criticize her for her stand on firearms, although I do believe that we should note here that she was not opposed to "weapons"

as such, only those that made it "too easy" to kill. I would be quite happy to see her as President of the United States in "real life", as she was certainly far better than any... (JBB)

\*\*\*\*\*

"The 'HUTCH'," Hope grinned, turning into a parking lot next to a nightclub of a type that reminded me somewhat of a dockside dive in Trella. Making me glad too that I had a sword at my hip.

"My mother used to 'dance' here at one time," Hope said to me as she sipped at her beer. I nodded, not much liking the sort of a "crowd" that gathered here, although I was well aware that I was doubtlessly far superior in my own fighting abilities to any. The men and women gathered here for the most part being "armed", Hope saying that not one in a hundred could "use" the swords they carried with any degree of skill. I had fenced with her earlier, finding much to my pleasure and delight that she was a true "mistress" of the blade! Even "better" I thought than her mother had been, and Carol Simmons was probably once a "Princess of Swords".

"Only slave girls do these sorts of dances," I smiled back watching the stripper now "flaunting" herself before us. Human slavery existed in this era, but it wasn't commonplace yet. That wouldn't happen yet until after The War ended this civilization. The first slave girls were black women attractive enough to keep. The great "race wars" that followed The War are little known now, there having been a "dark age" shortly after The War of which little is known. A sort of a total "return" then to "barbarism". During this time much of what was left was purposely "destroyed" in a sort of massive general "vandalism" that left little behind. Blacks for the most part being rendered almost extinct here too.

"You're kind'a 'strait-laced'," Hope now smiled back at me, the prostitutes of this era often wearing attire that would have gotten them arrested back home in Trella for "indecent exposure". Like the 26th Century, there was no social welfare system in this society, and one had to support one's self as "best" they could. There were private charities, but no government "welfare" system. No "minimum wage" or "overtime laws", or anything like them now. On the other hand this was a society where almost anyone could be whatever they wished, where the "ambitious" were richly rewarded. There was, I suspected, far less "poverty" than one might expect. Hope having pointed out to me that in this era one could "start" whatever type of a "business" one wished without government getting "involved" in things, so much "different" from my own 1988. Part of the NEW ORDER'S Constitution forbidding any governmental "regulation" of business, one of Janet Rogers' own better ideas!!

"I'm from a different 'era'," I smiled, a bit "drunk" now. I'd been watching their TriVid as I'd mentioned earlier, and I hadn't much liked what I'd seen, there being too many things that reminded me of what my mother had told me of the Nazi occupation of France. Was my beloved Janet Rogers just another HITLER? Was "this" the same "woman" that Empress Darlanis thought so much of? Perhaps it was just as well that we didn't know the "truth" here! It is sometimes best that your dreams never meet up with reality. Janet having done some of the same things that Hitler had "done". Things like "withholding" expensive medical care to the aged, who she considered no longer worthwhile spending the credits on now! She also encouraged a policy of "euthanasia" for those incurable. There was a system of "National Health Insurance" that operated upon a system of "global budgeting" where medical care had to be "rationed" to those most likely to be of benefit in receiving it. Policies that Hope "defended", saying that all societies have "limited resources", and a wise leader uses those "resources" to the best advantage, instead of "wasting them" on those who are no longer of any "value" to society. My own reactions here perhaps "colored" by the news I'd received from my own Royal Physician.\* \* It should be POINTED OUT here that there was PRIVATE MEDICAL INSURANCE for those who wished for more "coverage" than what the "government" provided. Janet Rogers was very much aware of what had "happened" in the past when the U.S. government had attempted to provide more "services" than what could be "paid for". (JBB)

"Maybe we'd better get going," Hope suggested, there being less than an hour before midnight when Tais would open the "Gateway" that would allow us to pass from this era back to my own...

"I'm glad you're driving," I grinned, having drunk too much! I was in a vile mood, having "brooded" over the things I'd seen.

I suspect now that I tended here to take what I saw at "face value" without ever considering what the "truth" might be. As I am in some ways rather "politically naive" as Sanda admits, I now suspect that I wasn't as "understanding" of what I was told here as I should have been, with the result that I believed the "worst" of Janet Rogers's society without ever thinking just "why" these sort of things were done!! Objectively Janet Rogers "did" what "had to be done", even if she had to tell people that there were no more "entitlements", that the "pension" they'd been planning on no longer would be "there"! The United States of America at the time of its national bankruptcy in 2007 was so far "in debt" that there was just no way that Janet Rogers could do anything but merely try to keep people from total destitution as best she could. It was the Democratic Party who with their insane policies of voting more and more "entitlements" that could not be "funded" that eventually drove the United States of America into bankruptcy in 2007. Who forced Janet Rogers to institute a system of "means tests" for all government financed "pension programs". It was Democrats who sat back and criticized, who denounced her every chance that they got. The same group of people who only a decade before had voted for all these "entitlements", knowing fully well when they did so that it would be impossible to ever meet the "obligations" that they themselves had created!!

"Hey honky `cunt"! Watch where you're going!" the black man snapped at me, giving me a hard shove that made me stumble back! A hot blaze of fury flooding my body, "coloring" my vision as if with a mind of its own my sword leaped from my sheath to my hand! How dare he "lay hands" on the person of the Queen of Trelandar! I saw a sea of faces both white and black looking up at us now! I could hear them yelling, although everything was just "noise"!

"Draw, you nigger bastard!" I snarled, thrusting Hope aside as she tried to prevent this, the "blood lust" now on me like it had never been in all the years I'd spent in the 26th Century...! The combination of alcohol, nervous strain, having took its toll! I was no longer a Queen, a Warlady, but just a vicious predator!! The "fact" that I might "alter" my own future meant nothing now!!

I am not a "beautiful" woman, nor do I have a "good" figure. I'm probably not really all that "good" a wife either to Jon if you consider the "sort" of a wife that he could have had. On the other hand I can still yet do one thing "better" than anyone else can! It is a "skill", I think, that has made me what I am today! One the result of years of constant practice combined with a reaction time far faster than that of most people that I know here.

It wasn't "much" of a fight, I'm ashamed to say, the man being like most all of this time totally incompetent with a sword. I don't believe it took me but a second to "kill", to drive my point past a hopelessly incompetent defense to pierce his throat! The black man staggering back, dropping his sword, clutching at his throat as he collapsed to the floor there among the tables...

"Get that `honky bitch'!" someone yelled, a group of three "black" men now charging me, a grim smile of delight curving my thin lips as I met their totally "incompetent" attack! There was a brief clash of steel, then one by one I killed the trio with an ease that perhaps awed everyone while Hope watched it in horror!! The others shrinking back, like the cowardly animals they were...

"We got to get `out' of `here'!" she yelled at me, grabbing my left arm, my sword yet in my right,

gleaming there in the dim lighting of this "strip joint" as people now held back in terror. The "terror" showing in Hope's voice, now high pitched with fear!

"'They' don't `matter'," I snapped back, keeping my eye upon any who might wish to "challenge" me now, well aware that most of the black race had been exterminated like vermin after 2047 A.D.! The only thing that "mattered" to me now was getting Hope and myself back to the 26th Century, out of this crazy society of hers! That we might have to "concern" ourselves about the "police" was almost "alien" to my thinking, as none would have "dared" to ever "confront" the Queen of Trelandar in such a "matter" as this now! It had been a fair "duel", sword to sword, and "legal" in every "civilized" society that I knew of past the Twentieth Century... Only in that one century has "dueling" not been a part of "life". Perhaps that is why too that they behaved the way that they did!!

"You're NOT of this `time'!" she screamed at me, dragging me towards the exit, people shrinking back, my sword bloody there in my hand, the thought suddenly coming to me that I was truly ALIEN here in the sense that I had no means of "identification" either! That there was a good chance that I could end up in the "hands" of the "GUARD", that organization of Janet's everyone now feared!

"It's `close' to the `time'," I answered, "calming" myself, sheathing my blood stained sword, the tip now "red" with gore... Soon we'd be "safe" in the 26th Century, free of this screwy era! The TriVid I'd seen there at the house leaving no "doubts" in my mind now that Janet was starting to even copy Nazi Germany here!! Her "GUARD", recruited from the same types of people that Hitler had used with his "BROWNSHIRTS" now leaving no "doubts" any more! I recalled the "discussions" I'd had with Sanda Talen and others over the "use" of such a force to keep "order" in Trella. Everyone had "thought" so much of this society, but it was little different than Nazi Germany except Janet didn't exterminate Jews. Not that I've understood "why" anyone would want to "exterminate" Jews, who are a "useful", hard working people valuable to any society lucky enough to have them, but Nazism never did make sense!

## Chapter Four

It was once said back in the Twentieth Century that "THERE ARE NO `DANGEROUS WEAPONS', ONLY `DANGEROUS PEOPLE'." It is that sort of a "saying" that I suppose you could apply to a Warriress too like me. I am "dangerous" with any sort of a "weapon" you can name. While my skill at archery is surpassed by some, Darlanis and the late Carol Simmons coming to mind here, I am quite proficient at the "use" of any weapon that comes to hand. Where others will see only a "tool", I will see a "weapon" to be used. Too, I have "none" of the commonly inhibiting "conditioning" that most people have against the taking of human life. Which in turn makes me almost "alien" in my outlook towards mortal combat here. In some ways I am not "human", not in the ways that others are... That is perhaps "why" I am the sort of a "fighter" that I am now. The sort of a Warriress who is now a "legend" among her caste...

Even among Warriresses, women trained almost from birth to "be" what they are, I am extremely "unusual" in my outlooks here. While Hope had the "skills" to somewhat match me with a sword, she didn't have my "killer instincts", which is I suppose just as well as "one of me" is perhaps enough for any society to "have"! I think that is why Jack drew that revolver on me when he did, as he knew better than any just what sort of a "woman" that I was... And why Darlanis knew right away that I should be her



"Warlady"!

The only woman I've ever met (Princess Tara doesn't "count") who even came close to "matching" me was Carol Simmons, who was mind programed by Tais herself to become another "Warlady". Tais having felt that this was the best way of establishing a "balance of power" between Imperial California and the Dularian Republic. While Carol was certainly "vicious" enough (some of her behavior reminds me more of a "rabid" dog), she lacked the intelligence to fully exploit all the changes that were made in her personality. However, her husband Bob made up for her failures, and the two of them together certainly did manage to give even me a "hard time"!

And with this "off my chest", let us now return to my story.

"The police!" Hope gasped as we stood by her car, the girl now frantically fumbling for her keys. The black and white Seaside police car now pulling into the brightly lit parking lot, someone having no doubt now called the "law" on me. An action that I knew could lead to serious "trouble" if I couldn't "handle" it. On the other hand I was also aware that the police of this era were not the trained Warriors and Warriresses of my own time, and although I lacked a firearm, I did not consider it as meaning that I had no "options" left now. They were but two low paid "flunkies", facing someone who from her early childhood has trained herself in close order combat to the point that I am no doubt the "best" now that has ever walked the face of the Earth! A couple of "napo's" as was the current slang here in this era.\* \* Janet Rogers had a "National Police Force" as a part of her NEW ORDER much as we now have a "National Guard" and military forces. This "force" in turn was divided into the "Civil Police" and the "Criminal Police", the latter dealing with dangerous criminals. It is quite likely that these two women were "Civil Police", and had been sent out just to deal what what was a "civil violation". On the other hand there was also the "Special Services Force", (SSF) which was trained under hypnosis and had fighting capabilities even our famous "Warlady" might have envied! This last was Janet Rogers' "answer" to various sorts of "terrorism". On the other hand her organization of the GUARD appears to have been an attempt to "do" something "effective" about "street crime"! This last having been considerably worsened by her attempts to "outlaw guns" which wasn't anywhere as "sucessful" as she hoped. (J.B.B.)

"Stand `clear' of me," I hissed, Hope moving back, her hazel eyes filled with fear as I stood there facing the two police officers, both of them women, both dark skinned as was common now. Janet Rogers having filled her police forces with "minority women" as a means of "accomplishing" something I'm not sure of here!

#### Author's Note

I feel this was a wise move on Janet's part, as she was well aware that minority women might make "better" police officers in a multiracial society. Certain recent events in our own time indicate now that she probably knew very well what she was "doing" here. As the reader has perhaps noted by now, Lorraine was a "racist" by our own standards, looking down upon those not of the "white race" as being somewhat "inferior". Her later "comments" here about her foster daughter, Ta-she-ra are only a further "proof" of the way that she felt about such things. While she did view Ta-she-ra with considerable affection, she did not seem to view the teenage Navaho as being "equal" to say her own Gayle. In her defense we may note however that many Blacks are no doubt their own worst enemies, and Lorraine appears to have judged any who she met pretty much upon how they behaved toward her in turn. The two careless as they walked up to me, no doubt feeling "safe" in a social order where personal firearms were "outlawed" now... Not knowing that "what" they "faced" was almost beyond their own comprehension. A woman who in only her physical form was HUMAN! A woman whose "reaction times" are almost half that of "normal"! \* \* My "reaction times" are .27 of a second. This I think accounts for the "abilities" that I have as I am simply "faster" than anyone else. Of course, I do have a lot of "skill" to back me up, but I can

deal a deadly blow before the average person can react. I often amuse people by catching flies in mid air here in Trella.

I think it "happened" so fast they had no understanding of what I had "done" so quickly when the first came within my reach. The tiny blade that I'd cupped in the palm of my right hand now pressed tightly up against the soft brown of her throat in warning as I held her head forced back, my hip against her buttocks, keeping her a bit "off balance", a low hissed warning enough to keep her from trying to draw the 9mm pistol she wore there at her right hip! The other police officer just standing there, her hand on the butt of her pistol, her dark eyes wide with "awe" in her chocolate colored face, the whites showing around the irises.

"You are neck chained," I said to the one I held. "I do not wish to make your husband a widower, or deprive your children of their mother," I spoke softly, feeling her shudder against me. Hope now "disarming" her, taking both her sword and her pistol. Flinging the sword away, as we had no "need" of such a weapon. The sword of the 21st Century usually a short, handy weapon with a blade about two feet long, or "sixty centimeters" in "metric". I usually carry a longer and slimmer weapon, although I do admit at times the shorter weapon is the more "handy" to carry about...

"'Who' are 'you'?" my captive "breathed" out, the other just standing there, aware Hope had her companion's gun, and no doubt could use it too from the way that I saw Hope holding it. A number of people standing there staring in awe at the scene! I had no doubt either that someone was already dialing "911" right now!

"I was once 'Lorraine Duval'," I said, smelling the odors of her perfume mixed with her sweat, her heavy black hair against my cheek. "A woman of 'whom' perhaps you have heard," I added then. My name one well known in this era, I knew from my readings here.

"You said you are from the 'future'," the policewoman said, sweating a bit as she drove despite the police car's air conditioning. I doubt that she believed that I was "Lorraine Duval", but it really didn't matter that much as I was sure that no one but only the Simmons would ever believe the "truth" of all this!!

"The year 2570 A.D. to be exact," I smiled back at her, the pistol in my hand rock steady. Back in the 20th Century my skill with firearms put me in the NRA "master" class, I might mention. Hope in the back seat holding the other officer's pistol on her. We had used the police car's radio to warn others to "stay back".

"Did Mankind ever reach the stars?" she asked, perhaps more to make "conversation" here than anything else, I supposed here. The trees like dark shadows in the headlights as we raced down a two lane black topped road back to where Hope and I would find a "Gateway" to another time, another "world", one better than this! The Moon rising there in the east, almost down to a "half" now. I wondered about the supposed "involvement" of the Lorr, why they had desired to take Hope from her world to their own red planet? What was so "unusual" about her that the Lorr had wanted her now?

"Interstellar space travel is against the 'wishes' of those who 'rule' the Universe," I answered, her mouth dropping in awe. "Man did make it to Mars, but that was the 'end' of things..." I added, not wishing to "continue" further on with this right now.

"There was a great 'WAR' in the middle of this century that put an end to civilization," Hope "volunteered" just then to her. The thought going through my mind that while it was extremely unlikely that anyone would ever believe these two women, there was no good "reason" here either to tell them things

that might just arouse the suspicions of someone "intelligent" like Janet Rogers! What wouldn't mean a thing to these two might mean a whole lot to Janet Rogers, who possessed as I knew well an I.Q. of a full 190.

"You will sit here," I said to the two police officers who quickly obeyed, standing there before them, their own pistols in my hands, their safeties' off, the hammers thumbing back. I had also taken the "precaution" here of handcuffing them both. I had no doubt that we'd been followed, tracked to this place. I would have done so had I been the one in "charge" of things here. A car driven by a "tactical" unit using night vision equipment. On the other hand I did not think that the police forces of this era were any more competent than those of the Twentieth Century. It is a mistake no longer made to divide the military and the police into two separate forces. We have "learned" a few things here...

"I've got everything I want," Hope said, holding Patty Pugs. She'd left a letter for her parents, along with one I'd written earlier in the evening before we left for Seaside and everything. I had "edited" both so that none but the Simmons would understand the true "meaning" of all this now. I hoped they'd understand. The Moon was higher, its glow shining down upon us through the trees. I could hear the night sounds, much like my own time now. A low growl from Patty Pugs making the hackles rise on my neck!!! There was something moving in the forest a few hundred feet away!

"Down!" I cried, shoving Hope down, the "crack" of a rifle shot breaking the silence of the forest! I fired at the muzzle flash, more to keep his head down and spoil his aim than with any hope of hitting anything in the darkness even with my own skills! Something "zinging" right by my head leaving no doubt that they were using some sort of night vision equipment here now. These men being no doubt some elite anti-terrorist force of Janet's...! Some military force with M-99's, caliber 5.85mm military rifles, or .234 for those who prefer not to use the metric system here. I was maintaining what fire I could with my two pistols, although I knew that such weapons were almost useless against this force!

Then suddenly there was a "tingling" sensation, and I knew that the energy field was building up, the "Gateway" was opening! I fired again at the muzzle flashes, at dark shadowy figures in among the trees, as a great glowing object suddenly appeared low over the forest, a Lorr battle disc, some hundred meters across!! Just the sort of a COMPLICATION that we didn't "need" right now! The Lorr having perfected a "cloaking field" that they often used in this era to observe Man's activities without being "observed"! This "field", however, could not be used very close to the Earth.

"The Lorr have 'come' for you!" I breathed in a shocked surprise, the shooting stopping as those shooting at us saw the alien space ship now floating there in the sky overhead! A sudden searing agonizing FIRE burning my right shoulder as someone took a shot at me, the 5 gram (77 grain) hollow point ripping my flesh as it just missed by an inch or so from smashing into my prone body as I laid there. The muzzle velocity being over 880 meters per second (2900 f.p.s.) for those interested in such statistics! Patty Pugs suddenly now breaking free of her grip as her mistress reached out to me, then a painful powerful SHOCK! A "sense" of "movement"! A feeling of "disorientation" much "stronger" from what I'd experienced before, and we were then teleported in TIME!

## Chapter Five

"Lorraine!" Hope breathed, the blood covering my shoulder leaving no doubt that I'd been "hit", the girl's hazel eyes filling with horror as she suddenly saw the "remains" of Patty Pugs!! The dog having been "caught" in the edge of the "Gateway", where two sorts of "space time" interfaced. The dried mummified body leaving no doubts that the dog had died perhaps centuries ago...!

"'Edge' of the time field...", I "breathed", clutching at my bleeding shoulder, the red blood oozing from between my fingers! The thought going through my mind that Hope should be paying attention to ME, not to the "remains" of a dog dead for centuries! The ruins of the Simmons "earth home" just visible there ahead of us through the trees, the clearing behind the house having grown up to the point that the ruins of the house were hardly visible. A soft gentle breeze sighing through the leaves there overhead, the bright sun peeking down upon us through the moving boughs. A bird chirping away in one of the trees a "comforting" sound then. I heard a squirrel chattering away at us, disturbed by our talk.

"She's 'DEAD'!" Hope sobbed, holding the mummified remains in her hands, Patty Pugs only a skeleton with dried skin and fur. The "look" in those tear filled weeping eyes leaving no doubts in my mind that she considered me RESPONSIBLE for everything here... I was puzzled that we'd ended up HERE instead of in Shalimar, but I guessed perhaps Tais had done her best to at least get us HERE.

"Was caught half way in the 'Gateway'," I answered, sitting there, the blood oozing between my fingers, the pain in my shoulder making my temper short. I carried the means to "seal" such a wound, but I needed to have Hope apply it now to my wound here. "I raise dogs on my estate, and I have a couple 'dozen' of 'those'," I added, the Boston Terrier being a very "useful" dog. They are clean, intelligent, and an easy dog to train, I find... While not a "match" for anything "big", they will "harass" it until you can use your own weapons to deal with whatever you hunt! They are also the "royal dog" of Trelandar, I might mention here, which is why I am so familiar with the breed and its "abilities".

"She was 'mine'!" Hope wept in reply, the tears running down her cheeks as she held the dried mummified Boston in her hands.

"She's dead!" I snapped, the anger making my voice sharp!

"You and your damn 'Gateway' killed Patty!" Hope sobbed!

"She's just a dog, I'll get you another!" I snapped back.

"She'd always be so happy to see me when I came home," Hope sobbed, blubbering now like a baby, completely out of "control"! "She used to 'kiss' me, lick my face when I slept," she "sobbed".

"Here, take my dagger, and bury her!" I snapped back, giving her the weapon, the blood running down my arm, strongly tempted to have Tais send this "crybaby" back to where she came from now! I'd nearly gotten myself KILLED, and for WHAT I "wondered" here?

"I'm sorry, Lorraine," Hope said as I finished bandaging myself as best I could with the tail of my blouse, having stopped the bleeding by a liberal application of the "glue" we now use... That antiseptic, soothing healing "glue" all Warrioreesses carry. My right shoulder, my arm all coated with half dried blood now. I had tied the remains of the tail of my blouse around my waist, making it into the sort of stylish "halter" popular now in Baja.

"I suppose I expected 'too much' of you," I answered back, still yet a bit angry that she'd thought more of her dog than me!

"What's THAT!?" Hope gasped, the tone of her voice making me whirl about, the Garth now standing there watching us doubtlessly drawn by the odor of my own blood, "It's a DINOSAUR!" she gasped in shock, the Garth looking much like a miniature Tyrannosaurus.

"Ten feet of scaly TROUBLE," I breathed, picking up the two 9mm pistols I'd left lying there on the ground among Hope's own things when I'd made the best "repairs" I could to myself here.

"It's awful BIG," Hope breathed, drawing her sword, two feet of gleaming stainless steel. The Garth regarding us with that awesome stillness that is a trait of this big post-War mutation. They are "dangerous", although I feel that a Tigon, the sabertooth tiger of this era is a more "dangerous" predator to face...

"Try climbing one of the trees around here," I answered her, raising one of the pistols. I had my doubts how "effective" they would be, the ammunition being designed to stop human beings, not some big dinosaur like reptile weighing perhaps half a ton! The bullets would probably "expand" too fast to penetrate very deep.

"You are afraid of it?" Hope asked, standing there watching.

"Only an 'idiot' wouldn't be," I snapped back, waiting to see what the Garth would "do". I knew it smelled my blood, which is to one of them an "odor" that causes them to attack, many such predators being instinctively programmed to attack anything that is bleeding or has the odor of fresh blood on it. My own Bull Terriers will do the same, a pack of them being able to even deal with the great bears and such that inhabit these forests here...

"Those hollow points won't be too 'effective'," Hope said, her voice level as she stood there, her drawn sword in her hand. It being obvious to me that the girl had "guts" when it mattered.

"The sides of the skull are thinner," I answered, raising the pistol, the hammer thumbed back so I could shoot it better, the second weapon thrust into my harness ready at hand here now.

"It's facing you," the lovely brownette teenager commented. The squirrel I'd mentioned earlier making a big fuss over this.

"You might consider climbing a tree," I suggested to her.

"I believe you 'suggested' that before," Hope said to me.

"Here, take the other pistol," I said, giving it to her.

"Only five left in the clip," she said, slipping it back. With one in the chamber that gave her a total of six cartridges.

"Four in this one," I replied, checking my own weapon then. The Garth just standing there watching us, its eyes focused on us in a way that left no doubts it would charge us if we moved now. I could see its tail move slowly back and forth, that great tail like that of a crocodile that can easily knock you off your feet.

"It's coming," Hope breathed, the Garth now tired of waiting for us to make the first move. Its movements were slow, seemingly ponderous, although they can actually run a hundred yards in about ten seconds or so. You can "dodge" among trees, but you can't outrun one of the things, at least that's what I've heard.

"Aim for the eyes!" I snapped, dashing to one side, Hope going in the other direction, the Garth charging as I found a tree! Hope's shot loud, the Garth spinning around, giving me a shot at it, the "sting" of the bullet making it roar with terrible fury! The bullets from our Smith & Wessons having little effect on it!!

Hope yet hitting it square, the Garth suddenly decided that I was more of a "threat" to it than she was for some reason! The reptilian horror now chasing me around a tree as I put three more into it, then giving me a chance to put my last round right down its open mouth from about a dozen feet away! The creature then stumbling off, and then finally collapsing to the ground at last!

"These things `numerous'?" Hope asked, now walking up to me. The slide on her pistol like mine retracted, indicating that we had no more ammunition for our weapons, and no way in this era of getting any more, I knew well, the Priestesses of Lys not permitting people firearms any more than did Janet Rogers' government!

"We need to `make' heavy spears," I spoke, tossing the now worthless pistol away. "It's only about ten miles to my estate." The idea of having to "walk" not delighting me that much, as my boots were made more for "style" than for walking any distance... Their three inch spike heels not made for a "walk" in the woods. I'm hadn't planned on having to walk any distance, I'll mention!!

"What we `need' is a `dinosaur gun'," she "grinned" back!

"I'd like to take a look at the house," Hope said to me as I helped her shape a point on the spear she'd made. A sword is an excellent weapon against human beings, but not too much good against the sort of animal life that inhabits the forests of this era. At least with a spear you can "fend off" some predator...

"Wasn't much `left' last time I looked," I smiled back.

"Doesn't `look' that `bad'...", Hope said, standing there.

"I think Tais `goofed'," I spoke, a "sinking feeling" going through me just then as I looked at the ruined house before us. It was just in too "good" a condition for this to be my own era! "I'd say that we're at least a couple centuries from `where' we should be," I mused, regarding the condition of the house here! I recalled the remains of Patty Pugs. They had been not as "bad" as I would have "expected" for an animal dead for five centuries!

"Any idea of `where', or rather `when'?" Hope asked then, a "levelness" to her voice that left no doubts of her feelings now! The "implication" that she'd jumped from the frying pan into the fire by coming along with me making me smile to myself just then.

"Century or two perhaps past The War," I mused thoughtfully, trying to remember what I'd read about the history of events from the time of The War until the time I'd come on the scene in 2565! The city of Trelladated from the 23rd Century, I recalled, although Trelandar itself was not founded until a century later on by the famous Queen Amethysta Broadica about the year 305 A.W. There had been warring city-states, fighting among themselves, a young and vigorous Dularn that had carried out raids along the long coast line of Californiawith lithe schooner rigged raiders!

"What `sort' of people live in this time?" she asked me.

"The `sort' who would enslave us if they can," I said.

"We'd better pray then Tais can find us," she answered.

"I hope so," I answered, wondering if even she could now!

"I'm guessing a couple centuries have passed," I said, looking curiously into the now ruined earth home that Hope had once lived in back in the 21st Century. The thought going through my mind that if Tais didn't find us I was doomed to live out the rest of my life in this era, perhaps again serving the same role I had for Darlanis, assuming that my "luck" held good once again!

"'When' did my parents die?" she asked then, looking at me.

"In 2033," I answered, pushing away some rubble so that I might enter, the thought going through my mind that no doubt Tais would attempt to locate us by making short "jumps" in time using this same location. "Their bodies were discovered last year," I added, Hope giving me an "odd" look, my words no doubt puzzling. The "paradoxes" of time travel often something hard to "explain".

"Looks like animals have been living in here," she commented as our eyes adjusted to the darkness of the interior. While the main structure of the house had survived, the home having been built of reinforced concrete then covered by earth, the interior had been stripped of everything valuable perhaps centuries ago...

"There are animals like those of Ice Ages," I answered her, remembering the first time I'd encountered such an animal here in another age. Just "WHEN" we were now was a question I didn't have any answer for, although I guessed somewhere between her own time and that of Amethysta's, perhaps the Twenty Third or Twenty Fourth Century. The thought going through my mind that we were not likely to receive a friendly reception from anyone we met...

"How 'do' people 'survive' here against such things?" she asked, holding her spear at the ready, her words making me smile!

"The same way Man has always survived," I answered her back.

"A social order with people like you...?" she breathed now.

"There is a 'time' for my 'sort'," I smiled back at her.

## Chapter Six

"We can't stay 'here'," Hope spoke, the flickering light of the small fire I'd made highlighting her attractive young face. I'd built the fire just in front of the long broken out glass patio doors, hoping that we might use the ruined house as a place of refuge until Tais hopefully might locate us. There was no way I could now determine what the actual "year" was here, but I had calculated it to be perhaps three centuries past The War of 2047. The Twenty Fourth Century, although just "when" I couldn't guess. There having been wall scratchings inside the house that hinted I hoped that we were somewhere in the

Twenty Fourth Century here...

"In my time a wench like you would bring perhaps as much as forty gold crowns in Trella on the slave block," I "smiled" back, watching the steaks I'd cut from the body of the Garth we'd shot. I was worried a lot about what of "things" might come with time when the Garth started to rot, the weight of the body being such that we would have needed horses to drag it to anywhere else now.

"How `much' would you `bring'?" Hope "retorted" right back!

"A few crowns as some `kitchen drudge' perhaps," I grinned.

"I hope my mother found my letter," Hope spoke to me then.

"I'm sure that she did," I assured Carol Simmons' daughter.

"I'm `scared'," Hope breathed in a soft voice, looking at me. "I'm afraid of what we'll find here in this strange land..."

"I am too," I smiled, Hope giving me a surprised look then!

"I didn't think you were `afraid' of anything!" she replied.

"Fear can either give you strength or `weaken' you," I said. Such is taught to the cadets at the WarriressAcademyas a part of their training. I have at times been a "guest instructor"... There is much more to being a Warriress than skill with weapons. I believe now that it is more a matter of "attitude", of "understanding" certain "truths" that those of the past tried to deny.

"Is that a `saying' of `Warriresses'?" she smiled back at me as I now put another stick on our little fire. I'd scouted around, found some berries, dug up some roots, wondered if it was possible to make a "bow" of some sort so that I could hunt game. The pond that had once been on the Simmons property had over the centuries filled itself in and had "disappeared", we'd found out. I had however located a source of water, much to our own delight. I had also seen the remains of an old encampment, which I'd kept secret from Hope, not wishing to worry her about such things now.

"A Warriress is merely a woman who `understands' the `realities of life'," I smiled back. "We all die, it is how we `live' that counts," I added, telling her that was one of our "sayings"!

"I think my mother was a Warriress," Hope ventured in turn.

"She `was'," I smiled, being well aware of Carol's "caste".

"She trained me well in the `use' of weapons," Hope spoke.

"You are the daughter of the `Warlady' of Dularn," I said.

"Carol was not a mother like any other I know," Hope said.

"Her name is honored in Arsana," I said, Hope nodding back.

"There have been people living in the house," Hope said now.



"There are doubtlessly outlaws living in this forest," I answered, wondering if Tais could ever locate us here in this time. Even if she tried "jumping" a few years at a time, the odds of our being in the right place at the "right time" were very slim. The howl of a dire wolf making Hope "start", her eyes wild for an instant as she glanced out into the darkness, grabbing for her spear as she no doubt "inhabited" the darkness with more terrors! Fear often doing that to you, as I can speak too from experience. The cowardly can die a thousand deaths in their own imaginations.

"I'm scared, Lorraine," she spoke softly, moving close now.

"An M-99 would be a 'comfort' right now," I smiled, putting my arm around her, the movement reminding me that it had not been that long ago that I'd been shot with just such a weapon here...

"This is my 'home', but everything is different," she said.

"Hard telling who lived in it after your parents," I mused. I supposed it had been "abandoned" after The War, although it may have been lived in from time to time by various wandering people. The structure having shown signs of such previous occupancy, the various faded scratchings on the interior walls leaving little doubt of that when Hope and I had explored it thoroughly earlier. I had also spotted the little china cat that in 2565 I would take with me, although I dared not touch it now for fear of what might happen should I attempt in this era to alter my own future here!! I'd found a "date" scratched into one of the walls with someone's initials, the dating being in "A.W.", not "N.O." or "A.D.", which I had translated to indicate the year 2297, or about two hundred and fifty years after The War of 2047, from which all time is now "dated". Scribes however often using the old "A.D." system yet. That of Janet Rogers being of interest only to a few scholars.

"Where's the nearest town?" she asked, meeting my eyes.

"Thistle's our best bet," I answered, pointing there.

"How far?" Hope asked, making me stop and think a bit.

"Say about twenty miles," I answered, Hope nodding back.

"Do you have any money?" she asked now, a "practical girl".

"I've got three gold crowns left," I said, having left the rest of my money back in the 21st Century for Bob and Carol here. I supposed we might be able to reach Thistle, but I doubted that I could "pass" Hope off as being a girl of this era, while my own clothing, while closer in style to that of this era, would not be the same, the skirts of women in this time being somewhat longer. Not the stylish "above knee" new style that I'd worn to see Tais. Nor would my "accent" be right, even though I'd lived here in a social order pretty much like this one for the past five years.

"What sort of a 'job' could you hold?" she then asked me.

"There is always 'work' for Warriresses," I smiled back.

"Lorraine!" Hope hissed, sitting up, shaking me awake.

"Someone out there," I breathed, reaching now for my sword.

"I think she's a woman," Hope whispered, the figure that of a blonde clad in little more than just a bit of

cloth around her hips, a slave collar of dark iron a darker band about her neck. A low snarl from the darkness making her flee towards our fire! A great shadowy form then moving among the darkness of the trees! The slave girl, nude but for the bit of cloth, shaking with fear.

"Tigon!" I breathed, grabbing for my spear as the great cat came into the light, a horrid snarl now escaping from its throat! The slave girl cowering back, whimpering softly as Hope joined me with her own spear, the great cat now furious at being "deprived" of its prey! Its eyes greenish pools of hellfire as the great striped body left no doubts of what sort of creature that it was! The great fangs, as long as daggers, jutting from its upper jaw as it raised its head and gave vent to forest shaking roars now!!

"Saber Tooth Tiger!" Hope breathed out, holding her six foot long spear before herself. I did not think that the Tigon would attack us. Such creatures seem to have a "sixth sense" about such things, about facing weapons that can do them great harm...

"Steady...", I breathed, following the great cat's movements with my spear point, keeping it pointed right straight at the Tigon, secretly wishing too it was steel shod instead of just wood. Tignons are "larger" creatures than the lions and tigers of the past, and stand about three and a half feet at the shoulder, going I'd say in the neighborhood of perhaps seven hundred pounds. They are capable of killing the great bears of this era, a bear I am told by Scribes is similar to the "cave bear" of the Ice Ages.

"Are you sure we went 'forward' in time?" Hope teased me. I had to smile to myself at that, such a comment being the sort of a thing I might have heard from any of my own Warriress friends! "First a dinosaur, and then this saber tooth tiger," she added... "My dad used to say that there wasn't any decent game left here." Her words making me smile to myself at the thought of her father. Bob liked to go deer hunting, but Carol would have none of it...

"I'm told that there were experiments made with fossil DNA," I answered, recalling what Sanda had told me of such things here. The Women at Leith had also created dinosaurs, as Darlanis found back when she was kidnaped by mutants there in Nevada territory.

"Sounds like the 'stuff' Janet would try," Hope now grinned.

"There are unicorns too," I said, watching the Tigon pace.

"Maybe if we threw firebrands at it?" Hope suggested now.

"Let's just be 'patient'," I answered, watching the cat.

"Wonder where she's 'from'?" Hope now said, nodding back.

"A runaway, and beautiful enough to be 'hunted'," I spoke.

"You mean people will come looking for her?" Hope asked me.

"There are bloodhounds like back in the 'old days'," I said. A woman like she now cowering back behind us would be "valuable". Her master, if possible, would no doubt try to get her back too! On the other hand Hope in her 21st Century attire was the sort of a woman that any red blooded man might pay a high price for too! Of the two I suspected that Hope would bring the higher "price"!!

"I think the saber tooth is going to give up on her," Hope announced, the Tigon standing there, swishing its tail, watching. I suspected that it was trying to determine whether or not attacking us would be worth

the risks it would have to take here... The "intelligence" of many wild animals is quite surprising too.

"It's going away!" Hope breathed, the Tigon suddenly gone.

"Perform the Gesture of Submission!" I snapped, putting my sword to the slave girl's throat as she knelt there before us. I wanted to "pump" this girl of everything she knew, and I wanted her to tell the truth without the least hesitation about it too!! The girl putting her head down, then kissing my dirty bare feet. Hope standing there with a "look" on her face that made me smile!

"You will tell me the year, the month, the day this is," I ordered, still holding the razor sharp point of my sword against the softness of her vulnerable throat. Hope at least having enough sense not to interfere or make any "comments" of her own. It being obvious that Carol had at least taught her a few things.

## Chapter Seven

"It is the year 318 after the Great War, the month is June, and I believe it is the 20th of the month, kind mistress," she spoke in a terrified voice, her eyes as gray as steel looking up into mine as I nodded back, mentally translating that this was the year 2365, or two centuries before I'd come into this time... The last year of the "reign" of Queen Amethysta, I recalled then. The "founder" of Trelandar, the "George Washington" of my nation! She had "disappeared" under mysterious circumstances, and nothing more was known of her, although it was believed that she'd "met with foul play", and had perhaps been murdered by some assassins.

"318?" Hope breathed, unfamiliar with how time was measured here after the great war here between Earth and Mars that had destroyed almost everything that Mankind had ever built, and leaving behind only barbaric savages fighting over the remains of it.

"Time is measured here from The War of 2047," I explained, building up the fire a bit, the flickering flames lighting up the slave girl's face as she knelt there closed legged before me now. Her knees well together, as is fitting when kneeling before free women such as ourselves, the wench obviously fairly well trained, her attire as I have stated only a strip of cloth about her hips. Her nipples were pierced, and fitted with fine tiny golden rings.

"You have a name?" I then addressed the slave girl. "And from who did you escape?" I challenged, well aware that she was a runaway slave girl, and one also quite likely to be sought after. A wench of her coloring and figuring going for somewhere between forty and fifty gold crowns in a good market, I estimated then... Women with blonde hair generally being worth "more" than darker haired women. The reasons for this go far back in time, and are I believe from information I've obtained from Mars, the result of Mankind's near "worship" of the golden haired Lorr Servitors that early Man had seen. This "cultural bias" towards the "blond" goes very far back in Man's own history, and reached its zenith with the Nazis and their own idiotic racial philosophy, who saw the "blond" Aryan "superman" as now being superior to all others.

"I am 'Karen', mistress," the girl said, looking up at me.

"And `who' is your master?" I now challenged her in reply.

"Lord Darius," she then whispered, looking down at my feet.

"Interesting," I spoke, wondering if there was a "relation", the last male heir of the Daris line having died in 2565, it being quite possible that there'd been a change here in both the spelling of the name and its "pronunciation" over the centuries.

"And this is Trelandar?" I asked, wondering if Karen knew anything about Queen Amethysta, who was almost a legend. It being said that Amethysta had risen from being a fighting slut in the arena exhibitions to finally becoming the Queen of Trelandar!

"Most people now do call it `that', `mistress'," Karen said.

"Why did you run away from your master?" Hope now asked her.

"Mistress wished me to lick between her legs," Karen said.

"`Typical' of a society like this!" Hope snapped angrily.

"Such things have existed for thousands of years," I said.

"Doesn't make them `right'," Hope pointed out to me then, getting in the last word here, making me "smile" a bit to myself. I expect too that there was a time that black slave girls in the pre-Civil War South had to do the same thing to their own white skinned mistresses. Such "abuse" of female slaves is common, and no doubt the major reason why most slave girls fear being sold to one of their own sex. Why they always beg to be sold to a man...

I watched Karen now eating the last of the roots and berries we'd collected, the thought going through my mind that the wench was more a "liability" to us here than an "asset" if we were found in possession of the golden haired delight. Karen being a woman that any man might well lust after, a nicely figured woman of average height for this era, perhaps about five foot five, I guessed, judging Karen by Hope's own height of about five seven. I'd "pumped" Karen of all the information she possessed, enough to give me a pretty good idea as to how things stood in this era. Trelandar in this era being divided up into a number of feudal estates, each ruled over by some "Lord", who owed but the scantest of loyalties to the national government there in Trella, the capital. Amethysta having done what she could to draw the nation together, but after her death (so I thought then) Trelandar would be again "divided", with the local "warlords" once again in control of things. The thought going through my mind that what Amethysta really "needed" here now was a good "Warlady" to pull the country back "together", and yours truly was the "best" she knew. Of course that would "change" my own future, so I suspected that Amethysta would die sometime this year, and Trelandar would tear apart after her death, facing threats both from Sarn to the north (sounds like what Darlanis was doing about 2553) and the Dularnians at sea. The swift raiders making everyone's life perilous...

"What can we `do' for her?" Hope whispered as she sat at my side, the flickering firelight making Karen's eyes "glow" as she looked over at us. She was a "liability" to us, harboring an escaped slave girl being a crime in every society that I knew of... On the other hand I didn't want to hand her back to her mistress! I am of the Warriresses, and my honor was at stake here now too. Such things are often hard to understand for those who are not of my caste. Who do not bear the caste mark there on their wrists. A society without "honor" is in my opinion doomed to destruction. There must be "standards", something more than selfish interest. This was, I believe, not clearly understood there in the past...

"No way of getting that collar off her neck without tools," I answered, thinking of how we might manage to conceal Karen's "status" as a slave girl when we entered Thistle, that still being in my opinion our best "move" here. I'd try to get in contact with the Priestesses of Lys, see what they could "do" here.

"I should have brought my bow, arrows," Hope now commented.

"Would have `helped'," I grinned, aware that I'd never had any idea that something like "this" could ever happen to us here! I'd always had the idea that the "technology" of the Priestesses of Lys was about as "infallible" as anything that could be built. The thought going through my mind that perhaps the arrival of the Lorr disc might have had something to do with it here. Another idea I had was that Patty Pugs might have "shorted" something out when she was caught in the edge of the "Gateway", which reduced the amount of energy, causing us to thus end up here in this era!

"We could end up like `her'," Hope breathed, watching Karen. The slave girl now curling up next to the fire, the night being "chill" enough that one might wish for a nice warm blanket here!

"I'm aware of that...", I breathed, wondering what we could do here in a society where sometimes "stranger" and "enemy" were almost the "same" in their meaning. In the 26th Century I'd been considered a "Dularnian" due to my 20th Century accent, and while I probably didn't have as "much" of an "accent" now, I still had the same "accent" as many Dularnians would have. And Hope's own "accent" was that of the 21st Century, even different than mine!

"I just hope that Patty Pugs didn't suffer," Hope said now.

"I'd expect she was instantly electrocuted," I answered.

"`Cold' for June," Hope "commented", shivering a bit now.

"There was a `nuclear winter' after The War," I explained. "You'll find that the climate is colder now than it was before." We'd searched the interior of the house earlier, found nothing of value to us, such things having been taken perhaps centuries ago.

"She's cold," Hope noted, Karen curled up tight against the chill of the night, shivering, her naked body covered with goose pimples. The strip of cloth about her hips covering very little.

"I hope you don't have `hang ups' about letting your body touch that of another woman's," I said, calling Karen over to us.

"Little warmer now?" I asked, Hope's body warm against mine as she laid sandwiched between Karen and me just inside the house where we might at least get out of the night air, the smoke from the fire having leaked into the house, stinking it up a bit here.

"Don't know how much sleep I'm going to get," she answered.

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"Our best `bet' now is to try to reach Trella," I suggested as the birds cheerfully greeted the morning sun, having given it much thought as I'd tried to get some sleep during the night. In a city like Trella I might be able to buy the items I'd need to make Hope into more a woman of this era. And also get the necessary tools to remove Karen's slave collar, which marked her as being the property girl of Lord Darius in no uncertain terms too. The "stiffness" and ache in my bones leaving no doubt that I was getting

a bit "old" for these sorts of "adventures", the thought making me smile to myself as we gathered up our few possessions.

"Won't we have to cross the ruins of Los Angeles?" Hope asked, well aware that no one but a fool would attempt to do so. It being said even in the 26th Century that it'd never been done!

"We'll give them a wide berth," I answered, wondering how I was going to walk such a distance in the boots I was wearing now? The thought going through my mind that like Karen I'd have to go barefoot, as my boots were made for "style", not for walking in!!

"Doesn't 'look' any different than it did back in my time," Hope commented as we walked towards the south, keeping to the forest paths, Karen now naked, her strip of cloth having been left half a mile from the house, hopefully perhaps deceiving any who might be in pursuit of her to believe that she was taken by either animals or perhaps outlaws, who would no doubt keep her as their own slave until they grew tired of her and sold her to some unscrupulous slaver willing to "purchase" a "runaway" slave girl!

"Most mutations tend to be 'self destructive'," I answered. Animals also have an instinctive impulse to destroy that which is "mu" for some reason, as has been noted by Scribes for centuries.

"I hear something," Karen spoke, halting to carefully listen as we both strained our ears to "hear" whatever she was hearing!

"Sounds like the baying of dogs," Hope breathed, her hearing being a bit more "acute" than mine. The thought making a cold chill go down my spine at the thought of what we might face now!!

"It is 'me' they want, mistresses," Karen said to us then.

"There are not likely to be 'that many'," I mused then.

"Lorraine! You can't be thinking...!" Hope protested.

"They will track us once they get Karen," I replied.

"Maybe they don't 'know' about us!" Hope now pleaded.

"We leave 'tracks', don't we?" I "pointed out" to her!

"You just can't 'kill' innocent people!" Hope now cried!

"I'm a 'barbarian' who 'can'," I "smiled", drawing my sword. "You can decide whether you'd rather 'fight' or be a slave girl!" The baying of the dogs leaving no doubts they were on to us now!\* \* My reasoning here goes as this: Karen would be forced to reveal that she was rescued by "strangers", by people who were "not of" Trelandar. Here in this "post-War" era the "stranger" is often considered in the same terms as an "enemy". It is the usual policy to enslave enemy women, especially if they are attractive.

"You could change your entire future!" Hope then protested! "That" was something I hadn't thought of. While it was unlikely here that I could make much of a "difference" in things, it was just possible that one of these people was the ancestor of one of my own friends in the 26th Century, and by killing them I would be changing my own future. On the other hand I didn't think it was possible to actually "change" things, as it seemed to me now that my taking of Hope from her own time had merely "verified" what Sanda had told me about Hope's "mysterious disappearance"...

## Chapter Eight

"You can't be `serious' about this!" Hope protested as Karen knelt there nude in the middle of the game trail awaiting the riders whose hoofbeats I now could hear along with the baying of the dogs. These type of dogs being trained to "track", not fight as my own Bull Terriers were. I doubted that there would be more than half a dozen men, most likely just "men at arms", not true members of the caste of Warriors. Serious "odds", but not beyond my own capability to handle assuming that Hope did her part here! Surprise playing a large element in the "success" of my "plans".

"We have no `friends' in this time," I pointed out to her. I do not take "pleasure" in killing, but on the other hand I do not hesitate to do so once I have determined it is "necessary" to do so. If that makes me a "psychopath" then that's "what" I am!! As I have mentioned earlier I am not like even most of my caste in that I totally lack the normal inhibitions against taking human life. This is why, I think, I am the sort of a person I am. Perhaps a bit too "hard", but on the other hand perhaps I am the sort that when war comes is called upon to fight for "the cause". To keep you safe in your homes, save your daughters from slavery. That tall black clad "Warlady" who stands on the quarterdeck of a ship of war, the same Queen of Trelandar who has faced the enemy. Borne the wounds, faced the death, the dangers of mortal combat!

"You are truly a `Warlady'," Hope said, the tone of her voice leaving no doubts as to her true feelings in this matter. The accent on the title "Warlady" now only further "proof" here.

"You wouldn't look `bad' with a collar about your throat," I "snapped" back, seeing the first of the riders between the trees. It being obvious to me that this daughter of Carol Simmons didn't have her own "killer instincts" that had made her so impressive!

"If Karen warns them....," Hope breathed from beside me.

"She will `do' as I've told her," I told Miss Simmons.

The riders and their unicorns were little different from what I had expected, the men, six of them, being armed with bows and the commonplace short sword much like that of Hope's own era. Karen putting her head down as she knelt there in the middle of the game trail, her knees well spread to display her hairy pubes. The dogs running up to her, standing there and barking loudly. The men dismounting from their unicorns, grinning at each other!

"NOW!" I hissed, leaping from the brush where I'd concealed myself, Hope lagging a bit behind, no doubt still in doubt of the "need" to kill here. I was disappointed in the girl, hoping that she'd be more like Carol, who wouldn't have "hesitated" here now!

"Aii!" a man screamed in terror, my blade driving deep before he could draw the blade he carried. My razor tip now slashing another's throat as he went for his own weapon! Hope engaging a third in a brief clash of swordplay while I went after a fourth among the prancing startled unicorns and the barking dogs! This man now meeting me sword to sword, the steel of our blades "ringing" together for just a brief instant before I found the "opening" I needed and sent his soul too to greet SHE who is all!

"Mistresses!" Karen cried, the last two now vaulting to the saddles of their unicorns, fleeing us, Karen then running up beside one, driving the blade deep into his leg before his unicorn carried him away from us! The two "fleeing" as if the EVIL ONE himself was hot in pursuit! Leaving us three now standing there!

"I feel...", Hope breathed, a bit "breathless" from it all! Her sword still yet in her hand as I cleaned my own blade with a bit of cloth. The sword was stainless steel, centuries old, once a "gift" to me from a woman who wouldn't be born now for a couple centuries yet. A vision of her for a moment filling my thoughts. A woman tall and golden, the Empress of the Empire of California. Darlanis, that beautiful golden ruler of my own beloved "world"!!

"You never get completely 'used' to it," I said, putting my arm around her shoulders. "Even old 'Warladies' like me don't." Her hazel eyes looking up into mine as I added, "You 'do' what you have to 'do', and worry about the 'morality' of it later on." With time I thought she would understand the meaning of my words.

"The 'reality' of it is different from the 'fantasy'," she answered, standing there. I think she had learned much of life. "My mother used to tell me that," Hope added, seeing me nod back. "I think she also knew 'more' of such things than I thought too." Carol having a "killer instinct" that Hope was lacking in here. Hope was a better swordswoman, but Carol was the better fighter! As I've said before, being a Warriress is "more" than just being skilled with weapons. It is more a matter of "attitude", I feel.

"What was your caste before you were enslaved?" I asked Karen as she stood there, her "actions" in picking up a sword and trying to help us indicating that she was more than just a slut. Just some "plaything" for the men of this era to enjoy "abusing". The "feminists" of the past never realizing that the "RIGHTS OF WOMEN" depended upon to a great degree the "agreement" of MEN to honor those "rights" which women of the past so took for granted! Now of course such things are clearly "understood" by both sexes. This is "why" the woman of the 26th Century usually is "armed". Why the mothers of Trelandar train their daughters to "fight"...

"I was the daughter of a Merchant in Sarn," she answered. "A Dularnian raider took the ship I was on, and I was then later sold to a slaver who in turn sold me in Thistle to Lord Darius." Many of these "Dularnian raiders" being more "pirates" than anything else, Dularn having a cultural history of such things despite the attempts here that Queen Maris has now made to deny it. On the other hand there were perhaps just as many if not "more" Californians who have looked upon the women of other nations in the same light, the enslavement of women going back a long ways!

"Won't Lord Darius send more men after us?" Hope "ventured".

"Will those men tell their master they were defeated by two women?" I smiled, knowing what story my own men would have told. There being no doubt in my mind that they would claim that they'd been attacked by a band of outlaws, and they alone had escaped!!

"A definite 'improvement' over walking," I told Hope as she "bounced" in the saddle of the trotting unicorn there beside me. The sunbeams now shining down through the leafy boughs overhead. It was a lovely day, peaceful and quiet, in a "world" far more "cleaner" than that of the 20th or 21st Centuries had been here. There is much to be said for having strict "population control".

"If you say so...", Hope answered, it being "obviously" the very first time she'd ever been on the back of an animal here... Her right hand in a "death grip" holding the front of her saddle. The unicorn fortunately



docile, content to follow behind Karen's.

"If you stand in your stirrups a little it will be a more 'comfortable' ride," I replied, Hope not knowing how to ride the trot, the saddles being much like the military saddle of the 19th Century, no doubt due to the fact that there is one "best" way of "doing" such things, as Mankind has found out over the ages here.

"How far do you think we've come?" Hope asked, rubbing the leaves I'd picked on the interiors of her chafed thighs as Karen tended to the fire, the slave girl like most women of this era being quite at "home" out here in the forests, more so I suspected than Hope might be, who was more a "civilized" type of woman. Hope's own attire so "provocative" by my own standards that I had no doubt she'd be mistaken for a prostitute anywhere in this era! These clothing styles of the 21st Century imply that Janet Rogers wished to keep people's minds (at least men's) off of "politics". On the other hand perhaps I am wrong, as Hope "claims" that I am. Hope saying that such attire served to celebrate a woman's body, which is quite possible as the woman of that era did have a rather "high" opinion of herself, as has been noted here by Scribes.\* \* Whether or not "this" had any bearing upon the enslavement of women after The War is something philosophers have "debated" now for centuries. In my own personal opinion probably very little.

"Perhaps thirty five to forty miles," I smiled, Karen setting out the dried meat and "iron rations" we'd found in the saddlebags. The blonde now clad in the vest and kilt of one of our late pursuers, although her slave collar left no doubt as to what her true status was, as well as betraying her as being an escaped slave, something that I knew might get us into serious trouble... The sun was low in the west, sinking down behind the thick trees. We now had weapons, bows of sinew and horn on a yew base, weapons quite "different" from those of my own era, but yet "effective" in my hands, although the bows were too "hard" for Hope or Karen. Behind us a fallen structure of some sort, trees growing through it, the reinforced concrete walls yet standing despite the three centuries that had passed. I felt it best that we camp here, not out in the open, especially considering the sort of animal life we'd encountered the day before, there being little doubt in my mind here that the "sport hunters" of the 26th Century didn't yet exist in the numbers that they would here two centuries from now.

"Another couple days' ride to Trella," Hope smiled back, the insides of her thighs almost rubbed raw from bouncing in the saddle. We could walk our mounts, but that would greatly slow us.

"What mistress needs is 'chaps'," Karen ventured to her.

"Not a 'dumb blonde'," Hope grinned back at me then...

"I keep 'thinking'...", Hope spoke, the Moon rising in the east. It was growing chill now, the stars bright points of light in the sky overhead as we listened to the sounds of the forest's "nightlife" around us. I nodded in reply, well aware of "what" sort of thoughts that were going through her mind just then. She had come from a much "different" sort of culture than I'd gotten used to here in the last five years. While Carol had doubtlessly trained her well in the use of arms, yet Hope was not a "Warrioress", not truly a fighting woman. In "this" she reminded me of Sharon, who was much like her in this. I was on the other hand a "misfit" in the 20th Century, a "barbarian" who never "belonged". A person who was also quite "politically 'incorrect'" by the overly "liberal" standards of my late Twentieth Century America. I believed in the "old values", in "honor", in "free enterprise".

"Their lives or our 'freedom'," I said, seeing her nodding. It had not been an "easy" decision for even me to "make", but it had to be the way that it was. I have no doubt taken the lives of "innocents" in the battles I've fought, people who meant me no harm, but "that" is one of the "truths" that a Warrioress learns.

"This society reminds me of my mother's books," she spoke. These being a series of three books about a "California" in the Twenty Second Century after a great disaster had taken place. I was a "featured villain" in the stories, Carol's "evil Queen"...

"I'm not your mother's 'QueenLorraine'," I smiled back.

"I guess I've got a lot to learn," she said to me then.

"It's called 'growing up'," I smiled, giving her a hug.

## Chapter Nine

"Lorraine," Hope whispered to me in the darkness, the Moon shining down into my eyes as I huddled beneath my blanket. Its position in the sky leaving no doubt that it was aftermidnight.

"Yes?" I asked, wondering why she'd awakened me now here.

"You were 'right' in doing what you did," she announced.

"Let us 'hope' that I was," I answered, rolling over.

I have over the time since these events happened often wondered myself if I did "right" here or not. I "took" or had taken the lives of four men carrying out their own duties to recover a runaway slave girl. Did my moral justification under the "laws" of my own 26th Century Trelandar "justify" my actions in a "Trelandar" I did not rule, a Trelandar with far different laws than my own? I have reviewed the caste codes of the Warriories, the teachings of the Priestesses of Lys as given in THE BOOK OF LYS, and have not yet found an "answer" here that satisfies me. There is also the "question" whether or not I should have let the men take Karen back upon the grounds that I did not have the "right" to keep her when she was not my "property". Nor did the laws of 24th Century Trelandar recognize the concept of "slave abuse" as we now recognize here in the 26th Century. In the "legal sense" of the question then I did not have the "right" to do what I did, making me a "murderess" on the basis I took life without "cause".

On the other hand it is doubtful that the men would have let Hope and me just walk off and leave Karen kneeling there waiting. They would have wanted to know "who" we were, and as we were not of their era, we would have fallen under the unwritten laws that allowed men to take women of other societies as their own slaves. Hope and I would have then been forced to fight, to kill, to defend our "RIGHT TO SELF-POSSESSION" which is the basis of all political freedom in all the eras in which Mankind has yet existed. Thus, Hope and I would have been forced to kill them to "protect" ourselves, which would have given us same "outcome" here then... When I presented this "question" to First Priestess Tais, she too was unable to give me a satisfactory answer to my moral dilemma.\* \* It is noteworthy here that SHE saw me as a sinner because of my own "arrogance" towards others, not for the actions I have done. Telling me that I have another reincarnation to "go" before I've learned the proper humility to become worthy of "unity" with HER.

This is also a "question" quite different from the issue of the "crossbowman" that I had Lady Tirana

torture back in 2565 AD. In that matter there was first an attempt on my life, and I was then "justified" under the law in taking the actions that I had. However in this case I made an attack upon men who had not as yet shown any hostile intent towards me, although given what Karen had told me about her society, there was no doubt that they would have attempted to take Hope and I as slaves, using the justification here that we were not of their own society, Hope being from 21st Century America and I in turn from 26th Century Trelandar. This in turn would have given us the moral justification of killing them in "self defense" to protect our own "RIGHT OF SELFPOSSESSION", which actually dates back to the 20th Century when I gave Janet Rogers the concept, which she later on expanded on in her book, "MORAL PHILOSOPHY", which is well worth reading here...

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"Let's see if I can't get us some meat," I said, picking up my bow and a quiver of arrows as the birds now greeted the day. Karen building up the fire, the blonde's steel gray eyes looking up into mine as Hope now helped her in the chill of the morning. "And Hope," I added, "Try to teach Karen the basics of swordsmanship while I'm gone," the brownette's hazel eyes then meeting my own as she nodded. I didn't expect too much, but I felt it best that Karen knew at least something about the basics of fighting. It takes months to build real skill with the sword in most cases, although I do know of "exceptions", the late Sa-she-ra being one.

The doe lifted up her head, her ears flicking as I drew back the arrow to my cheek, the bow a bit too "stiff" for my liking... The deer taking the arrow in her side, running off humped up now! Going perhaps a hundred yards or so before then falling to earth.

Dashing up to the still breathing kicking animal, I drove my sword deep into her heart, putting an "end" to her misery. Then with my dagger I quickly partially skinned her. Cutting off then what meat we could eat before it went bad, leaving the rest of the carcass there for the predators. Carrying back the meat in the section of the hide I'd cut previously from the doe's body, my stylish leather skirt now as "blood stained" as any butchers!

"The 'Huntress' returns," I smiled, hoping that Hope and Karen wouldn't expect me to be this "successful" all the time here! The blonde giving me a big grin, no doubt happy to be "free" at least for this short period of time regardless of what the future held for us all. The sword she wore at her hip left no "doubts".

"She catches on quickly," Hope added, Karen taking the meat. Like most women of this era she was capable of doing things that Hope would have been totally helpless at, things that I myself too would have found considerable difficulty in doing here now...

"We'll start 'working' on these bows, get the pulls down," I answered, studying my own weapon. "Shave down the sides of these a bit so that we can use them effectively if we need to here." It had taken "everything" I'd had to "draw" the weapon I'd used.

"Why didn't you bring the rest of the deer?" Hope asked.

"The odor of blood brings predators...", I smiled back.

"Why can't people make guns here?" Hope ventured now.

"The Lorr will not allow it," Karen said to her then.

"We are living under the 'EDICT' now," I pointed out.

"Those 'ants' that you said lived on Mars?" Hope asked.

"For the next two centuries they 'rule' this world," I said, getting out my dagger, and starting on my bow, "lightening" it...

"And there is nothing anyone can 'do'?" Hope ventured, aware from what I'd told her that Priestesses had eventually "defeated" the Lorr, although not by actual military conflict as such here.

"Let's just 'HOPE' they don't learn of us," I warned her.

"Never thought of that!" Hope breathed, looking up now!

"We'll try to keep them from 'finding out'," I smiled.

The Peasant looked up from his hoeing as I rode up to him, giving him "greetings" and a smile. I had a dozen silver eagles. Enough I hoped to buy ourselves some fresh fruit, a bit to eat.

"I have money," I said to him, the man staring up at me.

"That is something I don't have," he grinned back at me.

"But you have food, which I don't," I retorted right back.

"I think we can come to mutual terms, Warriress," he said.

"You did well," Karen said to me, giving me a smile as I showed her what I'd gotten. Hope and the former slave girl having waited here in the woods while I rode across the field to the Peasant's hovel. I had selected his because it had been the closest to the forest. The man and his worn out looking wife had asked few questions despite my to them no doubt "odd" attire now. A boy in his early teens, a girl of perhaps five or six their own children. The wife had been pregnant with a third on the way. Peasant families tend to number a child larger than usual, due to the high rate of infant mortality that is a part of their life. The Priestesses of Lys regulating population growth as they did in my era, as well as seeing to it that "mutations" didn't live.\* \* This last was just changed, as I'm sure my readers all know, by an agreement made between the Priestesses and Queen Joyce of Los Angeles, Queen Joyce being of course the monarch of the mutants, her own underground "country" being a separate part of Trelandar.

"I traded him that extra bow of ours," I smiled, the Peasant no doubt glad to obtain such a fine weapon at such a low "cost". The carrots and potatoes would keep us going for a few days more.

"Like the Middle Ages," Hope observed, giving me a smile.

"Same level of 'technology' anyway," I smiled back at her.

"A stable, stagnant society," Carol Simmons' daughter said.

"Life for them is little 'different' in my time," I replied, well aware of the "truth" of the words that I spoke just then... It was only in last part of the Nineteenth Century and in the Twentieth and the first half of the Twenty First that those who farmed the land made anything "more" than a "subsistence" level of living off of it. Otherwise the life of Peasants here in 26th Century Trelandar is probably really little different in most ways from that of Peasants in say 12th Century Europe. Those who have lived "off the land" have

always been "poor". This was no doubt true in the time of the Pharaohs of Egypt, just as it is "true" today now here in 26th Century Trelandar under me. I fear there are some things that never "change", despite everything...

"There are 'things' you could 'do'," Hope pointed out to me.

"Such decisions are not mine to make," I pointed out to her. Nor did I wish to repeat the "mistakes" of the past here either. The idea of "price supports", while "workable" in the past, wouldn't ever "work" here in a society where over eighty percent of the population "lived on the land", or the next step removed. There is not enough "economic surplus" in my own society to allow such "luxuries" as those of the past could "afford" to have then. Or so they believed then until the United States of America went "bankrupt" in 2007 A.D. as a "proof" of their economic "folies"! The "national debt" at that time having reached such levels (over ten trillion dollars!) that it would have taken a century or more to have paid it off! The "losers" of course being those who had "believed" the politicians who had made promises that could never be paid for. Government employees who found that their pensions, never "funded", were now going to be far less than they'd planned on. People on Social Security who found that the "Trust Fund" had been "drained", that there was no more money to "back" their monthly checks. They were the true "losers" in the "bankruptcy"! Thanks to Janet Rogers no one "starved", but millions of people found it necessary to re-enter the labor force once again here! Taking whatever part time jobs were available to make ends meet!!

## Chapter Ten

"How are you doing?" I asked, bringing my unicorn up alongside Hope's. She'd gotten a bit more used to riding now, and no longer had to hold on to the front of the saddle as she had before to keep her seat on her animal's back. Karen there in the lead, the blonde being a bit more "familiar" with this area of Trelandar that I would be due to the changes in things over the centuries. Trelandar of the 26th Century having "roads" that 24th Century Trelandar didn't have. The Trelandar of this era in some ways not even yet being a "country" as I'd think of it here!

"The 'chaps' Karen made for me do 'help'," she smiled back.

"Riders' up ahead," Karen spoke, raising her hand and dropping back. Under such circumstances I took the lead, my attire being such that I did "appear" somewhat like a Warriress of this era, although close inspection would have of course proved otherwise. The riders being in a column, with several women riding in an open carriage drawn by a pair of horses flanked by men at arms from the looks of them. A wise precaution in an era where outlaws abounded, where such women might later be sold to slavers. The women being of high caste, I noted, wearing the veil of the high caste woman, much like the one I swiftly slipped back on... A pair of slave girls riding double on a horse rode at the rear.

"Oh, Warriress!" one of the women called to me as we rode by, her attire that of the Physicians, while her companions were of the Builders, which includes all the highly educated castes, those who build things, know the strengths, weaknesses of things. What back in the 20th Century would have been engineers, "scientists" of various sorts, like chemists, biologists, physicists. People who "build" things, design ships, perhaps design cities. Who have knowledge of the science of the past, its "technology".

There being too a certain "overlap" between Scribes and Builders although only a Builder may legally "design" and "build" things. It being widely held perhaps with good reason that any building not designed and built by members of the caste would be unsafe.\* \* Much like our "licensing laws" and "union work rules"! (JBB)

"Yes?" I answered, turning my mount, my every sense alert! There were half a dozen men with them, "more" than I would have cared to face in any sort of a fight, Hope being completely unskilled in battle off of a mount. My own skills in this field not being "anything" that I'd care to brag too much about either! Hope and Karen having ridden on a few yards and then halted here. The thick forest on either side of the "road" such that I had no doubts however that archery might be decisive in a conflict here, Hope being an extremely skillful archer much like Carol had been.

"How far is it to the next village?" the woman then asked, her features veiled, although I could see that she was "blonde". Her skirt considerably longer than mine, going down to mid calf. She was wearing like the others a broad brimmed hat, it being thought "proper" that a high caste woman be "pale" in complexion. My own hat at the moment hanging on its chin string at my back, as if I had to fight, I had no wish to be handicapped by it here. It was also somewhat the "worst" for wear, as was my clothing, a fact that I suspected all three of the women had noticed by now.

"About ten kilometers," I answered, using the common metric system that replaced the older system back in the 21st Century. The fact that they were three women together without husbands only indicating that they were perhaps going to join their husbands in some sort of "enterprise" being established somewhere. It being "commonplace" even in my own era for high caste women to travel in groups with armed men for protection against "outlaws". All three had golden neck chains visible under their veils, which left little doubt of this, such marking them too as long married.

"Your companions are `unusual'," one of the others "noted".

"Yes, your slave girl carries a sword," another pointed out!

"I have purchased her, freed her, given her arms, but I do not have the tools until we reach Trella to remove her collar," I quickly replied, well aware that my tale wasn't too "believable!" Hope having dismounted, disappearing around behind a tree, her bow there in her hands, Hope having the much the same awesome archery skills that her famous mother had showed me back in 2567! Hopefully she might be able to empty a saddle or two if it came to a fight here. The women themselves were no threat, as they had only the long slim daggers that most women of this era carry.

"You are a good swordswoman?" the third woman then asked me.

"I am a `Queen of Swords'," I smiled, lifting back my veil. A woman who holds such a "title" is one the wise do not "cross"!

"Thank you for your information," the Physician then said.

"My name is Lorraine Richards," I smiled, giving her a nod.

"You have been wounded recently," another then said to me.

"My blade took three lives," I smiled, telling the "truth".

"What did you tell them?" Hope asked, well aware of what had "transpired" here. The women and their

escort traveling on now.

"In poker I think it is called a 'bluff'," I smiled back.

"They will speak what they have 'seen' to others," Karen warned, the same thought having crossed my own mind earlier now. Someone might just be "believing enough" to send back a dozen Warriresses to check, assuming they had a dozen to send here... Warriresses usually being the "cavalry" of this and my own era, of the era when I, Lorraine Richards, was the Queen of Trelandar.

"We will ride to the west," I said, well aware of "where" that might take us. In my own time even my own Warriresses, the finest fighting women in all Trelandar, were "terrified" of the ruins of Los Angeles. I suspected that the "same" held true now.

"That will take us to the 'ruins', mistress," Karen breathed in fear, her steel gray eyes showing the "terrors" that she felt! These ruins the source of legends that chill the heart of anyone!

"We are well mounted, armed, and I think as long as we make the 'crossing' in daylight we will be 'safe'," I answered back, not really believing myself that there was "danger" in the ruins. I tend to view the people of this "post-War world" as being mostly superstitious ignorant uneducated folk of a sort far below me! It is a "mistake" that I've paid for before, and will again too!!

"I prefer slavery to the death we will find in the ruins!" Karen cried, suddenly kicking her unicorn into a gallop back the way we'd come! Hope giving me a look of "awe" as she rode away!

"We're better off without her," I said, seeing Hope nod.

"She was willing to return to slavery than go with us," Hope said to me as I washed myself in a small stream we'd found, glad to get the dried sweat, the filth off of myself, my shoulder now almost healed, although I would bear the scar the rest of my life from the bullet. I am "scarred", both from battles here on Earth and the time I fought for my life against the insane Lorr, Sisa, there a mile behind the arid cold nearly airless surface of Mars. There is also the laser burn I took in the "revolution" of 2566.

"The people of this era are 'much' like those of the Middle Ages," I pointed out. "They have their own irrational terrors." While I was well aware that the ruins were "inhabited", having seen creatures moving among them when I'd flown over them in Black Lady, I didn't think it was impossible to get through them. I am, I suppose, one who takes risks another would not, it being said sometimes of me that I "tread" where few Warriresses would!

"Whatever...," Hope answered, stripping off her 21st Century attire, her golden clips and provocative leather strap leaving no doubts that she was truly the daughter of Carol Simmons herself! What would be considered a "fifty gold piece girl" in my own era! Over what Karen would have gone for, I mused to myself then as I watched Hope bathe, wondering what the slave girl had done, suspecting too that she'd sought asylum with those we'd met earlier.

"We will stay here for the night," I spoke, the ruins now spreading out there before us. A structure, the roof long gone, suitable I thought for our needs. A place where keen steel might be "effective" against whatever roamed out here at night. I recalled the "creature" I'd seen there in 2565, the scaly humanoid. From time to time such creatures are "glimpsed" by hunters, although they seldom approach human habitation, being well aware of the arrows, crossbow bolts that will be swiftly sent their way. Oddly enough, there has never been an attempt so far as I know to capture these creatures and put them upon exhibition, perhaps due to the reason that they were considered until just recently to be something

"cursed by Lys" and thus to be quite strictly avoided!! My experiences here with Queen Joyce and her daughter, Princess Lily, are proof of this, as my attempt to establish "relations" with those who live beneath the ruins almost caused a revolution! One would have thought that I'd attempted to establish diplomatic relations with the EVIL ONE Himself from the reaction that I got! Even the High Priestess of the city voicing her opinion that Lyshad "cursed" these creatures, and that it was going against "Her Teachings" to establish diplomatic relations with such "things"!

## Chapter Eleven

"I'll take the first watch," I said, seeing that our unicorns were safely secured here inside the structure we were using as both a hiding place and if so necessary, a fortress. The sun now gone, only a beautiful sunset remaining, the Pacific visible there between the trees to the west, among the scattered ruins...

"I don't think I'll get much sleep," Hope "grinned" back.

"We have a hard ride ahead of us tomorrow," I replied.

"It's not that 'far' across the ruins," Hope retorted.

"Perhaps not in 'distance'," I answered, seeing her nod.

"I think Karen 'knew' something you're not telling me," she replied, the scattered rubble of the ruins of Los Angeles now stretched there out before us almost as far as the eye could see.

"There could be 'enemies' behind us right now," I answered.

"And only Lys knows 'what' ahead of us," she pointed out.

"Tomorrow I 'cross' the ruins to Trella," I said to her.

"I suppose I might as well come along," Hope "grinned".

I watched the stars coming out, Hope only a shadow there in the darkness huddled under her blanket. I had thought it best not to build a fire, fearing that the possible reflection of the light upon the interior of this structure might bring unwelcome "visitors" of the exact sort that I had no wish to now meet here! The thought going through my mind as it had before that no one I knew of had ever crossed these ruins from one side to the other! In my own time Keri and a few others had once ventured to enter a short distance, protected by a good portion of my own Royal Guard under the command of my famous captain June Colt, who was a Queen of Swords, one of the greatest swordswomen of the 26th Century... My women had reported having rocks thrown at them, seeing THINGS! June pulling back her forces, and shooting at the least movement! After that there had been no more "expeditions" into the ruins...

I thought of the "adventures" we'd had ever since Tais' time "Gateway" had failed to transport us to the 26th Century, wondering to myself if maybe this era might be my final resting place. That Tais would never be able to find us, and that I would live out the rest of my life here, "separated" from everyone I



loved!!

In the starlight I could see little of the ruins, only the darker and lighter shadows, which I tried to keep my imagination from inhabiting with monsters, well aware of the fact that those of this era, as well as mine, were a "superstitious" people much like those who had lived in the Middle Ages of Europe. The major difference between that time and this one being the Priestesses. The Priestesses at least something I could take pride in as being their "founder" in a way, despite whatever else had been done in my good name by Janet Rogers, whose actions I didn't agree with.\* \* The reader will note here that I have written this book telling about my own feelings and thoughts as they occurred to me then. I'm well aware of the FACT as I go over this work that I'm actually Janet Rogers' "mother". That my child, Princess Ann of Trelandar, was taken by SHE back in time to the year 1965, where she will be raised as a "foundling", where she will grow up to take a "training position" at Duval Computer. Where we will meet, where I will establish almost a "mother daughter" relationship with her that will eventually lead to the historical events of the past... I have of course "mixed emotions" over all this now, but I think it is best that I put down here just what I "thought" of things!! The fact that Janet Rogers was my own Princess Ann, my own baby, does not alter the fact that she did things I didn't approve of! The "thought" occurring to me here that no doubt Janet wouldn't have "approved" of some of the things that I've done in my life.

"Your turn," I said to Hope, shaking her aware, wondering if I would get any sleep now knowing what we could be facing here... I'd flown over these ruins enough times that I pretty much knew the path we'd have to take through them, the thought going now through my mind that it might well be a "ride" like few others! Repeating to myself as I laid down huddled beneath my blanket the saying of Warriresses that fear, like the enemy, must be fought! That the "companion" of the Warriress is "steel", the blade she wears at her hip. The one companion who will never "betray" her! I suspect the last saying was dreamed up by a Warriress who returned home from battle to find her husband in the arms of another woman, something that has often happened to women of my caste!

I am usually thought of as being "fearless", a "Warriress" who sword in hand would take on the EVIL ONE herself much as Darlanis once did against the "consort" of the EVIL ONE, the "being" called in THE BOOK OF LYS by the title "The Queen of Darkness". There even being a saying here in Trelandar that goes that if you must walk the valley of shadows, evil on either side of you, with Queen Lorraine there at your side you need not fear, for the man or woman has yet to be born who can face her with steel and live! The thought going through my mind that if we didn't "make it", it would no doubt be the greatest battle any two women ever fought!! Such a "thought" putting my soul at peace, perhaps because I am a Warriress truly born to the caste, despite my birth in the 20th Century. A woman who sword in hand, has lived the "Caste Codes"!

I thought of Gayle, my oldest Princess, of Ta-she-ra, who I thought highly of despite her racial ancestry that would forever prevent her from ever being considered a candidate for the throne of Trelandar. Of little Mara, whose "interest" was in books, in learning, not in the use of arms. Of Lady Lana, her mother, who had died in battle for a cause that few now remembered. I recalled Sa-she-ra, so brave, so courageous, who had once faced a Garth with only a bow and a sword. Who had died taking the "bullet" that Princess Tara had meant for me. I recalled Darlanis, tall and golden, the Empress whom I served as Warlady. The one woman in this time that was truly my "sword sister". Then there was Jon, in whose arms I'd found love, who had given me Eric, my Prince, who had fertilized my ovum that would be my own Princess. People whose lives I had "touched", changed for better or worse.

Then also Sanda Talen, my Prime Minister, the memory coming to me of the time that Lady Tirana and I had seen Sanda making love to her husband right there on her desk. Sanda who had kept secret the "fact" that she was the sister of the late Queen Paula of Trelandar, the Queen who had died at the point of Darlanis' sword back there in 2553. Who had seen in me a "Queen" who might give back to the

people of Trelandar their country, a Queen who might be able to stand sword to sword against Darlanis herself... So many people who had "believed" in a woman from a time of myth. Who had seen in me "the second Janet Rogers" everyone hoped for! The woman who could lead all of Mankind to a second civilization!

Then Tais had decided to "change things" a little herself. Teleporting Bob and Carol Simmons to this time after first "mind programming" the lovely brownette into a vicious fighting woman! Perhaps even playing her "games" with Queen Maris' own mind here. That climatic battle between the Athena and the North Star having resolved an "issue" that could have been "resolved" no other way. I wondered how harshly SHE someday would judge Tais for that? I recalled too seeing SHE there on Mars, feeling that terrible urge to UNITE with SHE even at the cost of one's own life, own being!! To "drown" one's self in the infinite GOODNESS that is SHE! SHE, the Mistress of the Universe, Mistress of Time and Space, who had once spoken to me there on Mars, giving me a "warning" to carry to Tais of what the future might well now hold for Mankind! The puzzling mysteries of time travel, of "alternative futures", which even the Priestesses of Lys themselves knew very little of!

"SHE," I spoke, looking up at the stars, at the Universe, "I place my soul in Your hands, to `do' with as You see fit here..." It was, I thought to myself, the most "fitting" thing I might do. And with this I found "peace" and fell into a dreamless sleep...

"Lorraine," Hope spoke softly, waking me, the sky now growing light in the east, a few birds, braver than most, chirping. It is an "oddity" that these ruins are not the "abode" of animal life, that what plant life grows here is often "twisted" as if it is true that this part of Trelandar has indeed been "cursed" just as the Priestesses of Lys said that it was. On the other hand it is more likely that such matters are more the result of remaining pockets of radioactivity left over from The War of 2047. That is what I tell myself, taking pride in the fact that I am a woman of "science", not ignorant superstitions like the people I now rule.

"We ride," I said, looking up into her eyes, seeing her nod.

"And may Lys have mercy upon our souls," she answered back.

"Oh Lys, `listen' to two Warriories who are riding into `danger'," I spoke, my sword like Hope's now lifted to the sky as the sun came up over the horizon, lighting the ruins there before us. "We ask not life, but your `mercy' upon our souls should we `fall'." It is an old prayer, perhaps dating back centuries, but yet one I felt "proper" given the situation that we were in now. We were to "do" what no one in the history of Trelandar had ever done, what everyone in the 26th Century said couldn't be "done"!!

"Now I know how the `Light Brigade' felt," Hope smiled...

"I don't think we have to worry about cannons," I said.

"I think Karen made the `right' choice," Hope replied.

"We'll `make it'," I promised, giving her a brave smile.

"Or we'll stand together before Lys," Hope answered back.

"We will not stand alone," I answered, seeing her nodding.

## Chapter Twelve

We rode at "road gait", that fast trot that is the fastest speed that a horse or unicorn can keep up for any period of time. My sword glistening there in the sunlight in my right hand, while Hope held her bow at the ready, an arrow placed on the string. I was well aware of the "legends", that Darlanis had once said that nothing "short" of a Legion could "cross" these ruins in safety. It is also said that anyone who stays long in this place will die of a strange disease that neither Physicians or Priestesses can cure, this perhaps "memories" of a time when radioactivity made the ruins of Los Angeles "unsafe" to enter shortly after The War.

"Sure did 'level' everything," Hope announced as she bounced along there behind me, it being necessary to "stand" a fast trot like this one, balancing yourself on the balls of your feet in your stirrups, going along with the up and down motion of your mount. Our mounts themselves seemed "skittish", their ears often now laying back, their heads going down, presenting their sword long ivory horns against any possible enemy. Normally a unicorn is not "aggressive", but our animals, once we'd been able to get them to enter the ruins, seemed eager enough to get through them!

"The 'bomb' was in the kilomegaton range," I answered back.

"Must have been 'quick'," she now answered, looking about.

"I once saw a movie about Hiroshima," I answered back.

"Don't 'mess' with the Lorr," she now laughed behind me.

"We'll make it 'through'," I said, recognizing that "laugh". I've heard such before, when you watch the enemy warship coming into range, stand there on the quarterdeck knowing that the enemy commander is pointing you out to her crossbowmen, to her ballistae crews, her golden hair gleaming there in the sun, her long slim blade in her hand as she wonders if she will live or die...

"I think there has never been another like you," she said.

"Like Janet Rogers 'one of a kind'," I laughed back then.

"She looked upon you like a mother," Hope said to me now.

"Perhaps I've judged her too harshly," I answered back.

"Something 'moved' ahead of us there," Hope announced.

"We're being 'watched'," I spoke, seeing more movement. The sun was noticeably higher in the sky now, the forest now far behind, several miles at least, I estimated, calculating our speed at about seven to eight miles per hour, the best our mounts could do here for any long period of time. I felt of my animal, felt the wetness of his hair, the heat of his body beneath the saddle.

"We need to take a 'breather'," Hope suggested in reply now.

"There's a large open area ahead," I pointed out to her...

"Wish I had a M-99, a half dozen clips of 35," Hope grinned. The M-99 being an advanced version of M-16 of the 20th Century, a rifle that was eventually replaced by a more advanced type using a rotary tubular magazine that ran the length of the stock. This was the sort of a rifle I'd once seen there at the WarriressAcademy, the sort of a weapon that hinted of things left unsaid! A similar rifle is used on Mars by the Women, this weapon firing explosive small caliber bullets that nothing can resist. There is also a handgun using the same sort of ammunition, this being the weapon I used back in 2568 when I rescued Sharon from the pirates of Alaska. A weapon that Aurora managed to "slip" to me before Tais put a halt to visits by my Martian friends to Earth.

"Can you shoot?" I asked, well aware of what her mother had thought of guns in general, Carol being rather opposed to "guns", although I think more to "hunting" in general, Carol being what a member of the National Rifle Association might call a "Bambist"!

"My dad taught me when I was little," Hope answered back.

"That was before Janet outlawed guns," I grinned at her.

"I think she did what needed to be done," Hope answered.

"I think we'd better get going," I replied, aware that I could see movement now and then among the ruins in the distance.

"What!" Hope gasped from behind me, telling me that a rock had flown on past her face! The young woman turning in her saddle, looking, although the thrower was well hidden by the ruins!

"Afraid of this!!" I snapped, well aware of the ample supply of such "missiles" in a place like this. Another striking my own unicorn just then, making me pay "attention" to keep my saddle!! "RIDE FOR IT!!" I now cried, kicking my mount in his ribs then, another chunk of concrete just missing me as my unicorn bounded ahead! We were in the middle of the ruins, with miles yet to go! A rock striking me in the back, the blow taking my breath as our unicorns galloped across this rock strewn "HELL" as fast as they could flee! The hot sun burning down upon us leaving no doubt it was quite possible that we could leave our bones to bleach here! The creatures that inhabited this places obviously quite hostile!

"Not so 'open' here," Hope commented, our unicorns dripping with sweat as we slowed them from the pounding gallop we'd held them at, using our reins, our heels, even the flats of our swords to urge them on forward, well aware of what sort of THINGS lived here in these rubble strewn ruins left of this once great city...

"Perhaps through 'there'!" I snapped, pointing it out now. Hope following behind as I urged my gasping animal forward again! Into the rubble, into a place where neither of us might escape...

I cut the reins hard across my mount's neck, turning him, a missile that looked like an arrow about a yard long whizzing by! A "thing" like something out of a drug addict's nightmare fitting another arrow on its string, Hope's arrow, shot off the back of a unicorn at full gallop, coming close enough to make it "duck"!!

A clawed, scaly fanged HORROR leaped out of the ruins at me, a thing that Lys never made, never breathed life into before me! My unicorn lowering his head, hitting at full gallop, impaling the HORROR

on its horn, my sword cut almost severing its reptile head from its scaly humanoid body! A howl of pain behind me leaving no doubts that Hope was giving a good account of herself as my unicorn somehow managed to drag his horn free, his head bloody from its claws, one of my mount's ears torn off, the bridle itself half ripped free, leaving me in a scant control of him now! Another HORROR, like some white slimy thing you'd see under a damp rock now dashing towards me with a level spear! The point passing just under my arm as my blade cut down, ripping into it!!

"ANOTHER!" Hope screamed, the hairy HORROR impaling my own unicorn as my animal drove its horn into it, jumping free, giving that HORROR no further note just then as another came out of the ruins with something like a sharpened length of steel, a spear I managed to deflect, to get my sword point into it! This last I noted in passing "female", although such that no man would have wanted to see it! A thing with a face only Stephen King (famous author of horror stories of the 20th Century) could have loved! A companion creature throwing a rock which I fortunately dodged, Hope putting an arrow into it as I dashed now for her, aware that if we didn't get out of here we would die in this horrid place!!!

"Got us this `far'," I said, pulling the arrow out of Hope's unicorn, mine having died fighting as befitting a Warriress' own mount. We'd made perhaps another mile before Hope's unicorn had "given out" on us, the animal now totally exhausted from carrying both of us. Those who had attacked us for the moment at least no longer in evidence, although I did not think we'd seen the "last" of them as yet. Hope standing there with a look in her eyes I've seen before only in battle, when one stands on a deck littered with the dead, "surprised" to still be alive after "everything"!!

"Guess you're as `good' as you said you are," Hope spoke. In the distance beyond her like "heaven" I could now see Trella.

"Not `good' enough for `this'," I breathed, looking at her. I was not a "young" woman anymore, and we couldn't run very far!

"If they come..," she spoke, aware of our last mount's condition. Given time it would recover, but carrying double we had little hope now of ever escaping from these ruins, the thought going through my mind that none would ever know how we died here!

"Go on ahead," I said, sheathing my sword and taking the bow I'd carried on my back in my hands, nocking an arrow on the string. I thought perhaps it was time I lived up to my reputation of being a "Warlady". Carrying WAR back to these HORRORS!!

"No, Lorraine, I won't let you die for me!" she wept back! Hope no doubt well aware of what I planned to do here. Delaying these HORRORS while she made her escape on the unicorn she had...

"I'm just an old Warriress with one last battle in her," I answered, knowing that here in this place Lorraine Richards, the Queen of Trelandar, Warlady of the Empire of California, would do what a Warriress does when she knows there is no "retreat" left! Hope would live, someday become the Queen of this Trelandar, and I supposed perhaps in "legends" I would live on as the Warriress who once stood in these ruins and fought a battle like no other!!

"Then the daughter of Carol Simmons, once Warlady of Dularn, stands at your side!" Hope cried, driving off our last unicorn with the flat of her sword! The tears streaming down her cheeks!

"We shall greet SHE as she's never been greeted before!" I laughed, thinking of the HORRORS we'd take with us to greet Her!

"How many arrows do you have left?" I asked, Hope standing there in the shade of some building wet with sweat in the heat... We'd fought our way across these ruins for perhaps a mile or more, using both our bows and sometimes cold steel when the HORRORS came too close. Twice now my blade had taken "life", life of a sort far different from that it had ever taken before here! She was bleeding from a wound in her leg, my own bloody side only a further proof of the hopelessness of this fight against beings like nothing that had ever existed upon the Earth before. Soon she would shoot her last two arrows, Hope having used all of mine as she was the better archer by far of the two of us here, I note. How many creatures we'd killed or wounded I didn't know, although I suspect from what Queen Joyce has told me that in the history of her entire people there has never been two "fighters" like us!

"It will no doubt be 'quick' when it comes," she said to me. I reached out, took her hand, cut it a bit with the edge of my sword, did the same to mine, and tasted of her blood while she did the same of me. Such is meaningful to "barbarians" like me. I did not need to explain to her the "meaning" of such an act...

"Your mother would be 'proud' of you," I said, remembering.

"The Warriress is selected by her caste," Hope said then, repeating one of the sayings that are a part of our own "Codes". We are not like other women, nor like the crybabies of the past! A Warriress would laugh at the thought of "sexual harassment", at the sort of things the "feminists" of the past so wanted here! We are, I think, the sort of women that once stood beside their men long ago, in an age when cave bears and saber tooth tigers yet roamed the surface of the Earth. When Cro-Magnon man first painted on the walls of his caves, a "warriress" might have been his companion, bearing his children, and standing at his side, a spear or bow in her capable hands when the need arose back then!!

"Another one!" I hissed, stepping around the corner, driving my sword deep into it, and dodging the claws that reached for me! The "twang" of Hope's bow leaving no doubt "another" had bit the dust as I heard its howl of pain, the thought again going through my mind that this young nineteen year old woman had more "guts" than most Warriresses that I had known back in the 26th Century! Hope "joining" me now, picking another off a pile of rubble, the creature dropping its crude bow to stumble down among the rocks!!

"Cold steel now," Hope said to me, drawing her own sword.

"The proper 'companion' for a fighting woman," I smiled.

## Chapter Thirteen

"They must 'know' we don't have any more arrows," Hope said to me as we dashed now from one piece of rubble to another, well aware of what sort of "life" lived in these ruins and its "intentions" towards us! Our swords there in our hands, Hope's blade yet clean and shiny, while mine was covered with a strange gore. The mutants having quickly learned now to avoid meeting my blade. None of them so far any way having anything but the crudest of weapons, primitive bows and spears being their most "advanced" arms we'd encountered so far, although most now just threw rocks. A "coordinated attack" would have been the "end" for us, but the creatures seemed to even lack the ability to work together here! \* \* The question may be raised here whether they wished to kill us or just drive us away. I believe

they sought our lives, although Queen Joyce says that the latter was more likely the case here...

"There's Trella in the distance," I spoke, aware that we'd never reach the city shining there in the afternoon sun now. Not unless the HORRORS that had pursued us this far "gave up" on us. The "edge" of the ruins perhaps yet a good mile or so before us. Lovely forests, green rich fields like a "heaven" we'd never see.

"There they are!" Hope answered, looking behind us now.

"Maybe we've gotten out of their territory," I "ventured".

"Like dogs who have a territory to protect?" she asked as we ran around the edge of some long fallen ruins. Perhaps a big department store back in the 21st Century, I thought to myself now.

"Like...!" I gasped, the HORROR that grabbed for me taking thirty inches of stainless steel right into its armored guts now! Its clawed hand ripping my shoulder, the blood already running as I twisted away, yanking my sword free from its doubled up body!! Hope and I again fleeing, running, the blood red now on my body! The pain of my wounds making everything seem so "unreal" now too! I'd used the last of my own wound compound on Hope, and there was nothing I could do now but just hope the bleeding would stop before I bled too much to continue on here. The lovely brownette just ahead of me, her sword gleaming in the sunlight, her figure, her face so much reminding me of her mother, although Hope did not have quite the "provocativeness" that was a part of Carol...

"You're hurt 'bad'," Hope said, bandaging me as best she could. My shoulder was nothing but "ripped meat" from its claws, my lungs "burning" in my chest from our last quarter mile dash. Fortunately it had struck my left, not my right, and I was still able to use my sword, despite my almost total exhaustion now from running and the loss of blood I had suffered here in this hellish place. In a "place" that perhaps truly SHE had indeed "cursed"!!

"Still could conquer you an empire or two," I "smiled" back. "Just because the anti-aging serums don't work on me doesn't mean I'm 'over the hill' yet," I "laughed", aware I was starting to "lose it" now from exhaustion and the loss of blood I'd suffered!

"There will never be 'another' like you," Hope answered, the tears running down her cheeks as she regarded me propped up there against a half fallen wall. The sun a torment, our tongues dry, water something not to be found in this Lys-forsaken "hell hole"! The only form of life that lived here besides monsters was flies!

"Was the greatest swordswoman of all time," I grinned back. "And I still ought to be able to kill a few more of 'them' yet!" Going on to say, "Now you just run on like a good little girl and let old Lorraine here have her 'last battle'. Tell Tais I died a 'Warrioress' Death', a sword in my hand," I told Carol's daughter then, knowing that now here in this place my bones would remain. That Trelandar's Queen Lorraine back in the year 2365, among the ruins of Los Angeles, showed the SHE-dammed HORRORS of this hell hole just what a WARRIORESS could do when she put her mind to it!

"No!" Hope cried, grabbing my hand, almost dragging me with her. A rock flung from somewhere behind us suddenly striking her down! The blood red haze of anger enough to let me drag her with me as I dragged her unconscious or perhaps dead body along now!! The blood running down my arm, down my side, down my leg, so much blood, spots of it on the rubble as I now dragged Hope like some Neanderthal dragging a woman by the hair! My sword, my long slim lovely stainless steel sword now covered by a strange "blood"...

I saw the "creatures" approaching, like dogs closing in for the kill, hideous things, like something out of a Grade B horror movie. Things "cursed" by Lysas the Priestesses often say here. I knew this time there would be too many, Hope yet unconscious or dead at my feet as I hunted for something to put my back against! A place where the Warlady of California might make a last stand!! Take as many of them with me as I could to greet SHE herself now!

Suddenly I saw one of the creatures clutch at itself, the others hesitating as several young Peasants ran up, shooting half a dozen arrows at the HORRORS! Their longbows driving them off!! WE HAD CROSSED THE RUINS OF LOS ANGELES! AND MADE IT TO TRELLA!!

"You need the services of a Physician," the woman said, Hope holding her head in a way that left no doubts as to her headache! One of the children had seen us, had come running back to their village that bordered on the ruins. The young men had entered the ruins, their bows finally enough to drive back the mutants...

"I will seek one in Trella," I answered, totally exhausted. The thought going through my mind that no one would ever believe. That even in the 26th Century they would never know that Lorraine Richards, Queen of Trelandar, Warlady of the Empire of California, and Hope Lynn Simmons, daughter of the late Carol Simmons, once a Warlady of Dulam, had indeed "crossed" these very ruins!!

"None will ever believe what you did," she said to me then. I suspected that it was true. None would ever believe we did so!

"Two centuries from now there will be a 'Queen Lorraine' of Trelandar," I said to her, the look in her eyes leaving no doubt that she felt that I was in serious need now of a Priestess too!! The Priestesses of Lys often "treating" those who "hold" such insane delusions as mine. It being well known that no one has ever crossed the ruins of Los Angeles. That is those of Trelandar BELIEVE this, although Queen Joyce showed me the records her own people kept, now over two centuries old, of two Warriresses who fought their way across these very ruins, killing over thirty of her own race of people in their epic battle still yet remembered!

"You have suffered serious injuries," the woman said to me. The interior of her hovel leaving no doubts as to her poverty...

"Take this," I said, handing her a golden crown then.

"This is not our Queen," she pointed it out to me.

"It is gold, good gold," I pointed out to her.

"You did not cross the ruins," she said to me.

"Perhaps it is best you believe so," I answered.

"What sort of 'thing' did this to you?" the Physician asked, his eyes looking straight into mine as I sat there stripped to the waist before him. "Did you dare enter the ruins?" he asked, the tone of his voice indicating what he felt of such! Hope and I having spent the night in the village, and then had walked to Trella this morning where we'd found ourselves lodging. The landlord having looked at us with suspicion, due perhaps to Hope's own provocative attire and my own almost as brief "top", this being all that had been left now of my fine silken blouse. My feet were badly blistered from those "stylish" boots I'd worn.



I'd gotten a pair of open sandals, padding my feet in wool socks.

"Found out that is not a good place for even an old 'Warrioress' like me to enter," I smiled back, aware that there was no other form of life that would make such "marks" save for say a Tigon or a great bear. I knew the ruins were entered for short distances, more as a "dare" than as anything else, such having been a popular stunt among young Warriresses here for centuries. A way, I suspect, of "proving" your courage like nothing else...

"A woman who has lived at least a century like you should be a bit more 'careful'," the Physician said, checking my wounds for infection, his very "touch" at times enough to make me gasp with the pain of it. I was one very "battered" Warrioress, I thought! "And taking your grand daughter into 'this' with you..." he then added, Hope sitting there quietly taking this all in as she waited her turn, her own injuries having been less serious than mine. "As a matter of fact, I think you should seriously consider retiring and taking your last couple decades a bit more easy," he now commented, apparently believing me to be well over a hundred!

"Grandma is a bit 'reckless' at times," Hope volunteered... The Physician nodding, his assistant, perhaps his wife, now coming into the room with the medicines that he'd ordered for me. I supposed everyone would have believed Hope to be my granddaughter as we did look about that far apart if not even "more" here now. "But when it comes to 'kicking ass', she's still the 'best'," Hope continued, the doctor giving her an odd look, as the idiom "kicking ass" was virtually unknown here in this time, although it is "known" to a certain degree in mine due to my being there.

## Chapter Fourteen

"How much do you 'know' of this time?" Hope asked me as we left the doctor's, my supply of money even more depleted here. On the other hand once I made contact with the Priestesses of Lys I hoped that Tais would be able to trace us down, and teleport us back to the proper era, once she learned where we'd gone here...

"This is the last year of the 'reign' of Queen Amethysta, who is seen by those of my time as being the 'George Washington' of Trelandar," I answered, looking at the passing carriages and wagons, Trella reminding me in a way of some long ago society...

"What happened to her?" Hope asked, looking about like some tourist from my own time. The new attire I'd gotten her at least making her "decent" instead of looking like some dockside whore! I'd once without thinking too much tried wearing "outfits" like that myself, quickly finding that I got the sort of "attention" I didn't "want" to have, the blacksmith's son there on the estate having fallen in "love" with me, or rather with his "idea" of me!

"No one really knows..." I answered, recalling what I knew of Queen Amethysta Broadica, a woman who like Queen Denise of Dularn was revered in the 26th Century as being the "founder" of her country. Denise, however, having lived a bit earlier here...

"What did she look like?" Hope asked, standing there, squinting against the glare of the sun in the now

cloudless sky. The "morning" having been quite a bit cloudy, but the afternoon promised to be a real "scorcher", like what we'd found yesterday when we'd crossed the ruins, something I knew none would believe!

"Big blonde 'Viking' of a woman, about six feet tall," I said. What Bob Simmons would have called a "Lana Clarkson" type!

"What happened after her death?" Hope asked as we now walked along, looking at the sights, sights sometimes as "new" to me as they were to her, this Trella being a different city than "mine".

"Country 'fell apart', the various 'warlords' of this time then carving out their own little 'states'," I answered her back. "It's likely that both Sarn and Dularn had a 'hand' in things..." Trelandar had never really "recovered" completely, the country having remained muchly "divided" until Darlanis in 2553 added it to her Empire of California, I explained to my lovely companion. The "nobility" of Trelandar having seen to it that the central government had lacked the power to ever be a "threat" to their own "interests", which had made a "power vacuum" that in 2553 the Queen of Sarn, Darlanis Marden, had decided to "exploit" here...

"Didn't ever expect to 'end up' here, did you?" Hope teased.

"Haven't led the sort of life I'd expected," I smiled back.

"I can't think of anyone 'else' who could have gotten us across those ruins," she answered, the ruins being of course quite visible from Trella if you can see over the buildings here.

"Ranks with my trying to fly through a thunderstorm," I said, recalling how I'd almost gotten Sharon and myself killed... I tend at times to be somewhat of a "know it all", especially in matters where my superior knowledge of the technology of the 20th Century allows me to awe those who know less of such matters than I do. I had always discounted the "tales" told about the ruins as being just "myths" held by a superstitious uneducated people! As being in the same category as the belief once commonly held that the Earth was "flat" like a pancake and that if you sailed too far out to sea, you'd sail right off the "edge" of the world!

"I never realized it before now, but these sort of places do stink," Hope announced, the heat of the sun and the flies leaving no doubt that public sanitation left much to be desired here too! People often adding their own "wastes" to the organic stink here.

"One 'problem' I was never able to solve," I grinned back. No doubt they had the same "problem" back in the Middle Ages too. A horse or unicorn makes twenty pounds of droppings a day, and someone has to clean up after them at "taxpayer expense". Even if you have companies that will collect these droppings using slave labor, as has been done for centuries here, you still have a problem in that many "organic wastes" are not of the sort that Peasants can use on their fields, nor do they have the necessary income to pay to have such "wastes" hauled out of a city to their fields. The result is that a city here in this "post-War" society is no "cleaner" than what the "taxpayers" are willing to pay! And in this era, given the low incomes that most people have, my own calculations giving a "standard of living" like that of late Eighteen Century America, not many "taxpayers" are willing to PAY to "fix" a problem that to them is just something "natural" and "normal", "something" that you just "learn to live with" here. I do note that Arsana in Dularn has a "sewer system", but the city was designed later than Trella and Sarn, and Queen Denise was one woman who at least understood the need for public sanitation too! On the other hand Arsana still has a "stink", an odor to it that leaves no doubt that "animal power" is still the "prime mover"...

"What sort of 'crime rate' does a place like this have?" she asked, just full of questions as she looked about at the sights. Looking at the "wares" that a earring maker had set out here now. The woman giving Hope a grin, several of her front teeth missing.

"In my Trella we have 'Huntresses' and 'Hunters' who prowl the streets at night seeking footpads and such to kill," I said. Hope giving me the sort of a "look" that she might have given me had I stated that I made it a regular policy to have public hangings for minor criminals, as they once used to do in Old England. "The 'criminal element' in these societies is little different from that of your own era or the era from which I first came," I explained. Hope still giving me a "look" that left no doubts as to her thoughts here. Something that surprised me a bit knowing that neither Bob or Carol would have seen anything wrong in this!

"Is it 'effective'?" she asked, standing there watching the people walk by. I'd purchased us different attire, attire more "fitting" this era, Hope now being dressed as a young Warriress.

"It tends to 'deter' many from a life of crime," I smiled.

"In my time they castrated criminals," she pointed out.

"We do that too, as well as enslaving them," I said.

"But yet there is still crime," she observed in reply.

"There are always those who prefer it to honest work," I said. This has been a problem probably ever since the Stone Age. It is always "easier" to be a criminal than be an honest person. Man over the ages has attempted "religious education", various sorts of "punishments", but still yet there are still criminals. I suppose that the Priestesses could "mind program" the entire human race to "solve" the problem, but Tais says that it wouldn't work, that it would cause more problems than it would solve here. Saying that it would take the "vitality" out of Mankind, and make us into a social order perhaps more something like the Lorr here! It is also worth noting that "weapons laws" tend to make a "crime problem" even worse than it was before by "disarming" the victim. Trelandar's "weapons laws" under Darlanis prohibited the "people" of Trelandar from having bows or crossbows, with the major result that outlaws became a major problem when they started preying on the Peasants, who had been rendered defenseless by her own laws!! While these laws were not really all that "effective" (enforcement was a "local matter"), they did make things easier for the criminal element of the country, which certainly was NOT what the Empress had intended, although with Darlanis it is sometimes hard to know just what she is really up to in some of these matters...

"At least there are no 'guns' in this society," she noted.

"They have been 'made' from time to time," I answered back. The formula for gunpowder is known to many of the Scribes, and it is possible to make muzzleloading firearms with just a "blacksmith" sort of technology if you aren't too fussy about it here. Most of these sort of "guns" tend to have an accurate range measured in feet, but I do know of two shootings in Trella during the time I've been Queen of the country. Princess Tara's old "gang" still being in operation even if the Princess herself isn't now. There are also "spring guns", which work by compressing a stiff spring, which in turn shoots a short sharpened steel missile like a crossbow bolt. The "range" is of course "short", but within a short distance they can be lethal if the missile hits you right!!

"Like back in my time, the 'crooks' had all the guns," Hope grinned as we strolled down the street,

discussing a "topic" that would have no doubt amazed the good citizens of the capital here! Janet Rogers own "gun laws" having been quite ineffective against criminals despite the draconian penalties she eventually used... \* \* This would doubtlessly be "true" today should we try it! (JBB)

"Which is 'what' you'd have now if the technology permitted it," I pointed out. It was lack of the "technology", not lack of knowledge that prevented firearms from being manufactured here in the 24th Century. On the other hand I suspected that with a good deal of effort and experimentation, one might build some sort of a "hand gun" in even this society, although it would be of little effectiveness as compared to a bow or more likely a crossbow now. The fact that such a weapon would violate the Lorr's EDICT would be of little deterrence to the sort who would make such weapons.

"How does this city compare to yours?" she asked, changing the subject as we paused by an open air fruit stand, such things being a part of the life I'd grown accustomed to here, although I was usually careful about what I ate and drank due to the lack of effective public sanitation, having suffered more than once from the "malady" referred to as the "Trelandarian Trots". For this reason I drink a great deal of beer and wine, the alcohol being a good "sterilizer", drinking water in Trella not always being safe I've found, although this is more a "problem" I suffer from than do those who have lived all their lives here in this society. It being my belief that those who live here have developed over the generations a certain "immunity" to such things that I lack here.

"Smaller," I answered, selecting an apple, paying for it. The woman making change, counting it out into my open palm then.

"Oh, Oh!" Hope breathed, standing there beside me, her words making me turn, look, the woman Physician we'd met there on the road with Karen on a slave leash, talking to three guardsmen now! There being no doubt either we were the topic of their interest! Karen obviously having not hesitated in spilling the beans here!!

## Chapter Fifteen

"What do we 'do' now?" Hope breathed, her left hand on the hilt of her sword. We could easily "best" three guardsmen, our own skills with a sword such that I had no "doubts" of that here, but that wouldn't "solve" anything for long, as I knew well. On the other hand we were "strangers" in a social order where any woman not of their own "society" was a slave girl to be captured! We could both end up slave girls here for the rest of our lives!

"It's pretty 'obvious' that Karen's a 'snitch'," I "noted". The slave girl having obviously told "everything" that she knew. I was rather "disappointed" in Karen, having thought "more" of her than this, but I supposed she'd done as she'd thought best...

"Some sort of a 'procession' or something," Hope noted, people gathering along the street, others opening up their shutters. People moving to the sides of the street with their wagons, carriages and such, a Warriress on a big unicorn clearing the path, a drawn sword in her hand gleaming there in the bright sunlight. She wore chain mail and a crested helmet, the mark of an officer. More guardsmen gathering, keeping a close eye here on the crowd.

"Big blonde on a white unicorn," I commented, seeing her now over the heads of those gathering. Someone yelling "Amethysta!"

"Got a bunch of Warriresses riding with her," Hope added.

"Probably our Queen Amethysta herself," I ventured then, the Queen of Trelandar being attractively dressed in such a "clothing style" that left no doubts either to me now that she'd been born somewhere to the "north" of Dularn. Like Queen Freydis Amethysta was a big leather clad blonde "Amazon"! Her golden crown glistening in the sunlight, a long gray furred cape now spreading out over the back of her unicorn, the Queen being a woman who obviously the people of this era did much "admire" too. Sanda having told me something of her, that she was quite famous even if she apparently had "died" at quite an early age from what was written of her in the history books. She'd been said to be a swordswoman like no other, some even claiming she could have been my "equal"!

"Draws a big crowd too," Hope pointed out, people coming to cheer the Queen as she rode towards us, Amethysta flanked on both sides by Warriresses in lightweight gleaming chain mail, their helmets little different from those that my own guardswomen wore. They had also had shields with the "tree" of Trelandar on them, leaving no doubt that they were Amethysta's own guardswomen here.

"Amethysta is supposed to be a popular Queen," I noted then.

"Like something out of a Nordic legend," Hope now observed. The Queen, I estimated, being an actual six feet in height! With broad shoulders and a figure that left no doubts to her strength! Not a "beautiful" woman as such, but rather "attractive" by the standards of societies where muscles on a woman are considered to be desirable. Karen had said that Queen Amethysta was the finest swordswoman in Trelandar, which I considered "possible" given the sort of a "figure" that she had, Amethysta being the "type" of a woman that could have matched most any man in physical strength!!

"As a Queen I think it best if I extend her my 'greetings'," I said then, strolling forward, pushing my way through the crowd, the guardsmen I noticed quickly following, perhaps fearing that I might escape here, or perhaps even harm their beloved Amethysta!

"Assassin!" someone cried from behind me as I dodged between two mounted Warriresses, the women wheeling their mounts about, while the three guardsmen dashed between them with drawn swords! "Seize her!" I heard someone cry out! Amethysta there before me drawing her own sword, a long heavy blade "suitable" for one like her. Then I was seized, thrown to the filth of the cobblestoned street before I could speak, the guardsmen holding me down as the Queen dismounted, her eyes like azure lasers burning into mine...

"We have the 'other'!" someone cried, Hope struggling among several guardsmen as Amethysta stood there looking down at me. I had no doubt then that things were not likely to be as I'd hoped!

"Have them taken to my palace for questioning," she snapped!

\*\*\*\*\*

"Well, at least they didn't kill us," Hope "grinned" with "graveyard humor" as she shifted her position there on the straw. Like me just as naked as the day she was born, heavy black iron collars locked securely about our necks chaining us to the wall of the dungeon. Some seven feet from the cold hard stone of the floor beneath us a small heavily barred window pierced the thick wall, letting in a hint of air and light. That Amethysta had believed us to be "criminals" was I supposed understandable given the

circumstances here, especially after the "story" that Karen had told. We'd been "lucky" that the Queen hadn't simply ordered us both beheaded! Instead we'd been "condemned to the arena" where we were to fight for our lives against other "criminals"...

"We're just lucky that Karen told her about our skills with a sword," I smiled, making "light" of a very serious matter here! We'd tried to tell Amethysta the "truth", but I fear it was so "unbelievable" that we might just as well told her that we were two "aliens" from another world for all the "good" it did us now. I'd been struck several times by one of Amethysta's women, more I suppose just to impress upon me that I was just a lying "bitch"! Hope too having been "slapped", such being a rather commonplace way to punish a lying slave girl as she kneels there before you.

"Her son must raise Boston Terriers," Hope replied, changing the subject a bit. I'd seen several of the dogs, Amethysta's son being much different from his famous mother, more of a type that loves books and learning rather than war and weapons like his mother. No doubt Amethysta herself saw such things as being a "weakness". She was uneducated, illiterate, a true "barbarian"! On the other hand I am of the opinion that perhaps there is often times when Scribes are better "suited" to rule nations than those of my caste. Mankind does need to learn how to live in "peace"! To resolve conflicts between nations without resort to violence.

"It was in Amethysta's time that the Boston Terrier became the Royal Dog of Trelandar," I smiled back, wondering if Hope was to be someday the Queen of Trelandar after Amethysta? Naked, on her knees, shackled, her head held submissively down, Hope had been the sort of a wench that any man might have paid dearly for. Was it possible that Amethysta's son, Prince Albert, might someday buy Hope, free her later, and eventually make her his Queen? Such had been the case with Amethysta herself, who had been a "fighting slut" in the arena before King John had purchased her.

"I wonder if Tais will ever find us..." Hope breathed then.

"Let's just hope that the Lorr don't..." I answered back.

"Prince Albert was quite handsome..." Hope smiled back.

"Yes, he was," I smiled back, aware of Hope's beauty.

"Likes Boston Terriers too," Hope observed in turn.

"They fight well," Amethysta spoke as she watched us fence. Hope and I both naked but for bits of leather over our sex, the common attire of "fighting sluts". Her son standing there watching us, a Boston Terrier there at his side. The dogs are perhaps the ideal "size" for such "pets", being about sixteen pounds in weight for the females, and a couple pounds more for the males.

"The old woman is the finest swordswoman I've ever seen," the trainer answered her, now motioning for Hope and I to cease. The sweat glistening on our naked bodies as we both then knelt. She was an old Warriress, tall, dark haired, and olive skinned.

"You once `trained' me," Amethysta then smiled back at her.

"I think Lorraine would be your `match'," the trainer said.

"That `good'?" the Queen of Trelandar smiled, walking over.

"She is `old', but yet so `awesome'," the trainer admitted.

"Are you `winded'?" Amethysta now asked me as I looked up.

"No, your majesty," I answered, holding her eyes with mine.

"I do not think you would make a good slave girl," Amethysta said, regarding me. I supposed that was a reasonable assessment. "On the other hand there is intelligence in your eyes, and I do `suspect' that you were `more' than just an assassin sent to kill me by some unknown noble," the Queen continued on here. Fortunately Amethysta had not really believed I wished to kill her, as I have no doubts she would have tried torture to drag from me the identity of whoever had paid me to attempt to kill her. In this light no doubt Karen saved our lives, as she'd maintained despite the most strict of questioning that we were from somewhere else!! The wounds I bore, those that marked Hope's body left no doubts either that we had encountered strange vicious forms of life too! The idea, however, that we'd crossed the ruins being something we found no one had "believed", it being commonly held that nothing short of a Legion could ever cross these ruins now and survive...

"I do think your majesty is perhaps `right'," I smiled back.

"I do not believe in `time travel'," she smiled back at me.

"There was a time when I wouldn't have either," I admitted.

"You are a woman of `breeding'," Amethysta said to me then.

"Sometimes too much is made of such things," I said to her.

"Your body is muchly scarred," Amethysta observed in reply.

"I have fought for my life on two worlds, in two different times," I answered. "Once I fought a Lorr hand to hand," I said. The scars from Sisa's claws will mark me for the rest of my life.

"If you survive the `games' we will talk more," she smiled, taking a fencing foil from the rack, handing her furred cloak to the trainer. I suspected that she would be a worthy opponent...

## Chapter Sixteen

"Where did they get `her' from?" someone yelled there in the stands as I stood there in the hot sun, naked but for a bit of leather covering my sex, a sword gleaming there in my right hand. The "thought" going through my mind that again two centuries from now a couple would stand in this same arena, face a "crowd" much like this one, and put on a display of swordsmanship that would awe those watching. I hoped I'd do as "good" here in this time!

"Bet she's well over a `hundred'!" someone else joined in.

Amethysta had secretly wagered heavily on me, well aware of the "level" of my skills with a sword after the "match" I'd had with her. I'd been "warned" too by the Queen here "to put on a good show if I knew what was good for me"... Otherwise after my first match it would be "obvious" to everyone but the blind that they were seeing the greatest swordswoman of all time in action!

I suppose I take too much "pride" in my skills, although I do have to work hard to keep myself in the peak of fighting trim. It is, I suppose, much like being an Olympic "champion". I never ever got to fence in the Olympics, but I've got no doubts that I would have won the "gold" back then, Lorraine Duclare having been felt by everyone in the world of fencing to truly be the "best"! My incredibly swift reaction times and footwork leaving no doubt!

I looked up at the Queen of Trelandar sitting there in her ornately decorated section of the stands, a great striped awning protecting her fair skin from the rays of the hot sun overhead, a slave girl there at her side waiting to be of service to her now. Amethysta nodding, giving me a wave of her hand as I raised the sword in my hand, the blade not the usual "arena sword", but my own long slim rapier like blade that Darlanis had once given me. That same blade I'd worn at my hip, later held in my hand when I took the Huntress up against the North Star. That legendary battle that men still yet spoke of even yet some four years later.\* \* See "2566", part two for further details of this battle. (JBB)

"The old woman is Lorraine Richards, an outlaw Warriress," the announcer spoke through his speaking trumpet as I bowed to the crowd, a grim smile curving my thin lips as I thought of the sort of "exhibition" they'd get to see this very afternoon here! "While it is unlikely that she will live much longer, we are told by her majesty Queen Amethysta that she is skilled with a blade."

"Send her back to the kitchens where she belongs!" someone in the crowd jeered, a series of answering comments leaving no doubts that most people thought I wouldn't last the first "bout"! It was a pleasant day, a bit "hot", the sky clear blue overhead. I pushed back my coal black hair, shook my head to settle it now. Almost naked as I was, I supposed those with better eye sight had noted by now that I was hard muscled, and in excellent condition. My scarred body a proof too that I was no "stranger" to battle...

"Lorraine's `opponent' is Jarl Dan, a well known `outlaw'," the announcer continued on her, a heavy set nearly naked man now stumbling out on to the hot sands of the arena to face me. The sword he now held in his fist the usual arena sword, a blade much like the common short sword often carried by those of my caste.

Aware of Amethysta's "instructions" and their "implications" here, I allowed the man to approach me, his skill little better with a sword than the Blacks I'd faced back in the 21st Century. My blade meeting, parrying his thrust, pushing it aside. At such a point I normally would have brought up my blade in a swift slash across his throat, putting an "end" to this silly "match". On the other hand had I done so it would have been quite obvious that I was not what I appeared to be here, and that wouldn't do!

I scampered back, letting the man chase me around the arena to the loud jeers and hisses from the crowd, once again meeting his incompetent attack, parrying it, and then half stumbling as I made a quick thrust upwards, piercing his throat, my keen point driving right up into the man's brain stem! The "stumble" was of course deliberate, making it seem that I was merely very "lucky"!

"Look at that! That old woman did kill him!" the announcer told the crowd, who could of course see for themselves here too! Said "old woman" standing there smiling to herself, wondering how much longer this "farce" was to go on here as she stood there barefooted in the hot tan sand, much disgusted by all of this here!



The next man they sent out against me was a Dularnian, and more skilled with the sword than his processor. Once again I put on a "show" for the people there in the stands and their Queen, letting the Warrior chase me around for a while before we crossed swords in serious "play", the man suddenly staggering back, clutching at his chest, my blade having slipped between his ribs!

"What do you know, that old woman knows 'how' to fight!" the announcer carried on, the crowd now becoming aware that the "old woman" they saw there before them was actually a skilled fighter!

"She's a Dularnian Warriress!" someone ventured then. The words making me smile as I stood there now baking in the hot sun. The thought going through my mind that many people in my own era would have paid a good price to see me fight in the arena here...

It should be noted here that in 26th Century I do not as a rule "allow" fights to the death in the arena, whereas in earlier times these sorts of "fights" were extremely popular with the people, much like the Roman "Games" of the Classical Era were. I am of the opinion here that our "blood sports" are only a further proof that we are truly a "race of barbarians" as both the Lorr and the Women consider us. Neither allowing such things on Mars. On the other hand Mankind is more "adventuresome", more willing to take risks, explore the unknown than the Lorr or the Women. I feel that sometimes perhaps it is best not to be too "civilized". On the other hand I am perhaps not too "civilized" myself either.

They next sent out a woman against me, a blonde haired woman who was no doubt from some northern clime due to her "coloring". She gave me a good fight, although I never had any doubts about what the "outcome" of the "fight" would be. I tried to make her death as swift and painless as I could, becoming sickened by this senseless killing to "amuse" the "rabble" of 24th Century Trella. The yells of the crowd like the baying of dogs in my ears now as my last opponent fell, her sword dropping from her hand to the sand as I stood there, sickened by what I'd been forced to "do"!! As a Warriress I am no "stranger" to death, but to KILL just to amuse a crowd who had nothing better to do than to watch me kill was something "else" entirely. The thought going through my mind of when they'd had "public hangings", and everyone had turned out to see some poor soul choking out his last at the end of a rope!

I think Amethysta was a bit "annoyed" at me here, since then I was pitted against two men at the same time, forcing me to display a good part of my own awesome abilities as I now killed them in a few seconds, sick and disgusted at what she was doing here! The crowd too I think now "aware" of just "what" I actually was. That they were seeing swordsmanship practiced at a "level" they'd never seen it practiced before, by a mysterious woman none knew!!

I wondered what Amethysta would "do" now, the crowd no doubt well aware that I was a "ringer", and not just an "old woman" as they'd first thought. True, my appearance, especially without any makeup did give that "impression", but as I'm actually only forty five, I wouldn't consider myself to be an "old woman" yet!!

Then to my horror I saw them shove Hope out into the arena! The young brownette, nude but for of bit a leather, a sword there in her hand standing blinking in the bright sunlight as she heard the yells of the crowd. Hope, so much like Carol Simmons herself long ago, her young slim body an "erotic promise" few men would have been able to resist, standing there terrified before me now!

"Let's give them a good 'show'," I spoke softly to Hope, my friend nodding, taking a better grip of the sword she held ready. I then made an easy thrust towards Hope, letting her parry it as I suddenly came in a swift slash that just "missed", Hope jumping back, a look of "awe" in her eyes as she realized how superior my own skills were to hers. She was "good", but I don't think she would have won the "gold" at the Olympics. Better than her own mother had been, but not yet quite the same class as I am now...

"This has to look `real'," I warned, Hope nodding back, aware that while I might not kill her, I would inflict on her minor flesh wounds just to keep the crowd aware of what I could do!

"You're really `good'," Hope breathed, giving me a good fight as we put on a quick display of swordsmanship that left no doubts of the sort of skills that we both possessed. While Hope was not a "match" for me, she was doing a creditable job of it!

"`Better' than your mother was," I said, parrying a swift thrust that Hope had made. Unlike me she didn't have the control I had, and some of her thrusts could have very well been "lethal" had I not parried them properly. On the other hand I had enough "control" over my own that there was no danger of this for Hope!

"Ow!" Hope yipped, jumping back, a red stain of blood just over her left breast from my last swift slash she hadn't parried!

"Don't get `careless'!" I warned, well aware of things here.

"Wonder how `good' Amethysta is?" Hope ventured then as she tried one of those fancy "tricks" in fencing against me just now. Finding that it didn't "work" against me, as I've seen in my life just about every sort of "trick" that anyone can dream up here. The crowd almost totally silent now as they watched us fighting.

"A bit `better' than you are," I answered, chasing Hope back across the hot sands, my mouth dry, my body coated now with sweat as the sun burned down upon us from a nearly cloudless blue sky. Bloodstains here and there on the sands where people had died...

"What...?" Hope gasped, a silvery triangle now above us! I felt a sudden "disorientation", AND THEN I STOOD UPON A METAL DECK, WITH QUEEN AMETHYSTA PICKING HERSELF UP OFF THAT SAME DECK! FIRST PRIESTESS TAIS STANDING THERE WATCHING GRINNING TO HERSELF!

## Chapter Seventeen

"The `cavalry' always arrives in `the nick of time'," Tais grinned, looking me over with a "look" that left no doubts as to her own thoughts here. Priestesses are "sexless", being "neutered" before puberty, but some like Tais still do have rather "interesting" senses of humor. Amethysta pushing her sword back down into its sheath, the Queen of Trelandar staring about herself at the interior of Tais' spaceship, her eyes wide with awe! Tais having "beamed us up" just like "Scotty" used to do there on "STAR TREK" back in the 20th Century although I suspect that the process was a bit "different" from that used on the TV show here! The name of the ship is the "GAIA", in case you're curious here.

"We have a `problem'," the First Priestess spoke, striding off, I following, with Amethysta bringing up the rear, muttering to herself in tones that made me grin a bit to myself just then!

"You were `telling' the `truth'!" Amethysta muttered to me.

"Tais will probably `erase' your memories of this," I said, not having "too high" an "opinion" of the Queen of Trelandar then after what she'd now put me through there in the arena below us. Sanda had thought "highly" of Amethysta, but I supposed it is always best not to know "too much" about those you think are great. I'd certainly gotten "my eyes opened" about Janet Rogers in the 21st Century, and I suppose Amethysta really wasn't any "worse"! An illiterate, uneducated "barbarian" like her wouldn't think anything wrong in having people fight to the death for entertainment! Even Darlanis used to allow that sort of stuff until Sharon talked her out of it, I mused, and I considered Darlanis a "civilized" woman, at least by the standards of her own era here.

"I was afraid of `this'," Tais spoke, a Lorr battle disc now approaching at a high rate of speed as we floated "cloaked" like an unseen "ghost" over the city of Trellas spread out there below.

"Make the `time jump' now?" one of the Priestesses at the controls asked her then, their attire quite "different" from that normally worn by Priestesses. The different colored jumpsuits that they wore reminding me of those worn by the Women of Mars.

"No," Tais spoke, regarding the viewscreen before her. "Take us straight up, full power on the gravitic drive," she said in level tones, the view suddenly "shifting" as the Gaia spun up to a vertical position and went "racing" straight out into space!

"Lorr disc is attempting to follow," another spoke up then. The view ahead now that of space, while a smaller screen showed the view behind us of the Earth like a globe growing smaller now!

"They have great magic," Amethysta said to me softly then.

"An `advanced technology'," I smiled back at the Queen.

"Lorr disc is discontinuing pursuit," one now announced.

"We're out of their sensor range," Tais mused thoughtfully.

"No doubt you will get a few gold crowns for me," Amethysta said softly, standing there, well aware of her own status here...

"Come about, stabilize us with the Earth," Tais now ordered.

"I don't hate you for what you did," I smiled to Amethysta.

"I don't think `they' will allow me to return," she smiled.

"Prepare for `time jump'," Tais snapped, now looking down at a panel, the displays upon it something I understood "little" of. The Earth now only a glowing great globe against the blackness of space there ahead, the sudden "disorientation" leaving no doubt we had traveled in time, although there was little to "see" of it except that the Earth had now "disappeared" and we had nothing but stars shining there in the blackness of space before us now!

"In the name of...!" Tais gasped out, standing there in awe! It being suddenly "obvious" to me that we hadn't "arrived" where we should have arrived! That this latest `jump' in time hadn't taken us back to our own time, but somewhere entirely elsewhere!!

"My `fault'," the Priestess there at the controls said, looking at her indicators. "We're about a century `beyond' where we should be," she explained, looking over then at Tais, who didn't seem to understand this from the look there on her own face!

"We have navigational computer failure," Tais answered then. The "look" on her face making me smile despite the situation! I felt like making a "comment", but thought it "best" not to do so. It being quite obvious here that Tais' "advanced technology" had once again failed and we'd ended up somewhere we shouldn't have!!

"Magic doesn't always `work'," Amethysta smiled as I washed myself and put on one of the jumpsuits the Priestess had found for me to wear until I could obtain some proper clothing here... The Priestess herself "tense", it being "obvious" that this was a bit "more" here than just the "failure" of the Gaia's computer, which didn't help to settle my own nerves here either, I'd state!

"I've got a `hunch' that they haven't perfected things yet," I "smiled" back, climbing into the jumpsuit, glad to be decently "covered" once again instead of running around like a slave girl! "That's `why' Hope and I ended up in your time instead of mine."

"That's what I `said'," Amethysta smiled, seeing me nod.

"I do lead an `adventuresome life'," I "grinned" back.

"You know `when' you are, but not `where'," I said to Tais, the crew of the Gaia all gathered now around the ship's computer.

"We're in the solar system, at least I `think' we are," Tais snapped, the very tone of her voice leaving no doubts of things!! "But nothing is `where' it `should be', even the sun's out of place!" she breathed, her "composure" for once having departed...

"How long can your life support systems operate?" I asked, a bit nervous having heard the tone of Tais' voice. I'd always saw Tais as being "infallible", and suddenly she'd proved not to be!

"It doesn't make any `sense'!" Tais spoke, ignoring me now!

"Her `magic' has failed her," Amethysta whispered, drawing me aside. Tais was as close to being terrified as she could be!

"I am of the Warrioreesses," Amethysta said to me as we watched Tais direct her Priestesses in various "tests" that meant little. I guessed from what I could see that the Gaia was somewhere outside the orbit of Saturn judging from one of the comments I'd overheard, which didn't make any sense at all from what I wondered what had gone wrong unless the ship had moved in space at the same time, which I knew it could, the craft having "interstellar capabilities" as a part of its design. On the other hand it wouldn't have traveled in space unless "instructed" to do so. It being obvious too that the Gaia's computer was not DEFECTIVE!!

"I'm glad I had the privilege of meeting you," I said then, Amethysta's eyes glowing into mine as she nodded in reply. She'd done things that I certainly hadn't approved of, but on the other hand I had to admit that her behavior befitted her own era here. I wondered too if say Darlanis might have treated me any "better" if she hadn't "believed" that I was Janet Rogers' Lorraine Duval! Especially if there had been someone like Karen to deny it all...

"That will take `too long!'" I heard Tais "snap", her temper short. I suspected that she was almost at the "breaking point".

"May I be of help?" I asked softly, stepping up to her then.

"We are in the year 2670, and far from where we should be," Tais spoke, making a visible effort then to "calm" herself here.

"Can you still travel in time?" I asked, holding in reserve here the thought that we might be able to ask the Lorr for help!

"Yes...", Tais answered, her eyes glowing hotly into mine!

"2660," Tais spoke, having taken over the controls herself. There was a noticeable "shift" in the position of the sun, although I didn't know if it really meant anything or not here now.

"Large gravitational `point' ten light days out," one of the crew now spoke, looking at some sort of a viewscreen before her.

"Back ten more years," Tais answered back, sitting there.

"Different again," Amethysta commented as I nodded back.

"Gravitational `point' one light day distant," I heard.

"If `that' is what I think it is...!" Tais breathed!

"Don't `jump' in time again," I suggested to Tais!

"What is `it'?" Amethysta asked, looking at the viewscreen, which didn't really "show" all that much yet as the Gaia approached it. The stars pretty much the "same" as they'd been after this short "jump" we'd made using the Gaia's "warp drive".

"Neutron star," Tais answered, the ship's drive humming.

"There's a planet circling it," a crew woman added now.

"I want the `AG' on," Tais spoke, looking at the screen.

"`Dangerous' getting this close?" I asked, Tais nodding.

"We're `shielding' ourselves from its gravity," she said.

"Like out of the `myths and legends' of the past," Amethysta spoke softly from beside me, so "out of place" aboard this craft! A woman from a Tenth Century civilization, now aboard a starship!

"I've got a `question' for you," I said to Tais, the neutron star only visible as a sort of "radar blip" there on the screen. Tais having said that the thing itself was perhaps only a hundred miles or so in diameter, but weighed almost as much as the sun...

"You're wondering why I didn't know about this?" she smiled, using her telepathic powers to read my thoughts. If the Priestesses of Lyshad the ability to travel through time, why hadn't they known about all this? That was something that puzzled me...

"Unless you never went up into the future before," I said.

"Never `more' than a few years," Tais answered me softly.

"You did well, `considering' everything," I said to her.

"Never was this `scared' before," Tais admitted softly.

## Chapter Eighteen

"Planet's `warmer' than it should be," Tais spoke, the various "colors" displayed on the screen meaning next to nothing. Amethysta at my side watching, keeping her thoughts to herself. It was nothing more than a little "blob" up there on the screen. The neutron star itself being so small that it was "invisible" although the effects of its terrible gravity could be "detected".

"Perhaps it was captured when the neutron star went through the solar system," one of the Priestesses "ventured", it having been determined from its course that this was what had happened! The star having ripped through the solar system back in 2648 A.D.

"Just outside `Roche's Limit'," Tais now mused thoughtfully.

"`Breakup point' due to gravitational stress," I explained to Amethysta, who didn't understand me either from the look she had!

"Earth size planet," Tais breathed, studying the indicators. "Surface temperature of course far below that of freezing," she added, the planet from what I could see of it just a frozen rock. "But there is `warmth' where there shouldn't be any," Tais added.

"Are you going to `investigate'?" I asked, "wondering now"!

"We'll go into low orbit, take a closer look," she replied.

"Map coming up," Tais breathed, the Gaia circling this rock from a height of perhaps a hundred miles. There had been "something" odd about the planet. None of us voicing the thoughts we all shared that THIS was the EARTH! A dead frozen lifeless EARTH now circling a neutron star over sixteen billion miles from Sol!!

"It's the `Earth'!" I heard one of the Priestesses now gasp! The thought going through my mind as it did no doubt through the minds of all of us that we were now looking at a dead world here!

"No evidence of `human activity'," Tais mused thoughtfully, watching a series of "indicators" there before

her on the panel. "Only atmospheric gases those that freeze out at extremely low temperatures," she noted as we circled this terrifying "iceball"!

"Mankind is `gone'?" Amethysta breathed, looking at Tais.

"There would have been `warning'," Tais now smiled back.

"There are other `worlds'," I said then to Amethysta.

"And we do have ample `time' to prepare..." Tais said.

"Back home in our own time," Tais smiled, the "jump" having been apparently successful, the Earth floating there before us. I felt as if I'd just been shown my own death, the "knowledge" of the world's end something "sobering" to everyone aboard the Gaia. Even Amethysta, who had understood "little" of the Priestess' own awesome technology, had understood that we'd witnessed DOOMSDAY!!

"What is the population of the Earth," Amethysta asked then.

"About half a billion," Tais answered, watching the screen.

"Can you transport that many people somewhere?" she asked.

"If `we' wished to do so," Tais replied, the implications of her words leaving no doubts as to what she felt about Mankind... Tais having once voiced the thought that much of Mankind had now reverted too far back into barbarianism to be worth "salvaging". A viewpoint that left no doubts in my mind that Tais did share to a considerable degree the same opinions of Mankind as did Aurora.

"A bit different from the Gaia," I smiled at Amethysta, who viewed Black Lady with a bit of understandable "distrust" here...

"I know `what' an airplane `is'," she smiled back at me. We'd spent the night at Shalimar, resting up from everything we'd seen, experienced. I was starting to "like" Amethysta, although she was certainly a "barbarian" by my own 20th Century standards! "And I have `confidence' in you," she added, making me "smile"...

"I think I `prefer' the Gaia," Amethysta said, looking down.

"Their `magic' to `mine'?" I teased this blonde "barbarian" from a time now only pages in some musty history book. She was in her way "as out of place" here as I'd been five years before!!

"I am glad you `survived' the arena," Amethysta said to me, a low hanging cloud like a fluffy mist floating back over us now. The mountains on both sides rising up even "higher" than we were. The thought that the Earth would be destroyed in another eighty years something sobering, although I knew I would not live to see it "happen", nor I suspected, would Amethysta be here beside me now. Neither Amethysta or I had spoken much of it, knowing that Mankind's own fate was now in the hands of the Priestesses of Lys.

"Back in the 20th Century I used to be like a `Priestess'," I smiled to Amethysta. "I listened to people spill their souls..." Amethysta's azure blue eyes holding the darkness of mine as she nodded back, as aware as I was that we'd have to eventually face up to what we'd seen there aboard the Gaia sixteen billion miles from the sun. That frozen "iceball" of a planet that had once been our own Earth. The very world we were now flying over here!

"Last night, after you fell asleep, I went and looked out the window at the stars and for the first time in my life, 'felt' afraid to look up into the darkness, knowing what was 'coming'," she spoke, looking at the airplane's instruments in front of her.

"I suppose the Priestesses could send everyone 'back' in time," I mused thoughtfully. Half a billion people scattered over centuries of time wouldn't have too much of an effect upon things, especially if they were sent into eras with about the same level of technology that we had now. Mars might be able to "absorb" a few million, although neither the Lorr or the Women would welcome such "colonists" to their world, I suspected here! It was also doubtful however from what Tais had said there on the Gaia that the Priestesses had any intentions now of saving everyone. They would no doubt be "selective" in their "choices" here. The thought going through my mind as it has before that for some reason "civilization" had been rebuilt only in certain places...

"That's Trelandar down there," I smiled, looking down now.

"Yours, not mine," Amethysta answered, looking away then.

"My daughter Gayle will be its last Queen," I answered.

"We must trust in Lysand her Priestesses," she spoke then.

"Who will be the ones to decide who is to live and who is to die," I answered, looking out through the windshield ahead of us.

"Trella," I said, the sun now in my eyes as we came flying over the fields and forests towards the city, the ocean there beyond gleaming in the sunlight. Amethysta quiet there beside me.

"Must feel good to be 'home' again," she said to me then.

"Tais sometimes forgets how people 'feel'," I said to her.

"No doubt she had reasons for doing what she did," Amethysta answered, looking down at the city as I came banking around now.

"Looks like we have a 'visitor'," I smiled to Amethysta as I saw the Astarte, Sharon's own flagship, there at anchor as I now brought Black Lady down for a landing. The rake of the three masts and the slimness of the hull leaving no doubts that it was a vessel of Dularnian design, one designed by Maris herself here!

"I wish I'd treated you 'better'," Amethysta "grinned" back.

"Good to see you again, your majesty," June Colt said to me, her dark face glowing with a warm smile of delight as I took her hands in mine, thinking of how much "different" she was from the "blacks" of the past. Proof, I supposed, that it was a matter of "culture", not "race" here as such. Maybe we'll do "better" next time, although Mankind has always needed a "nigger" to do his "dirty work" that no one else wanted to do. The enslavement of native Africans having begun back in the time of the Pharaohs...

"Good to be 'home'," I smiled, wishing I could give her a hug, but that would doubtlessly cause "rumors" here I had no wish to start, there being enough such about my own "appearance" here. The fact that I am rather "mannish" in my looks does not mean I'm a lesbian despite whatever anyone may happen to think of me here.



"That 'black' woman is 'more' to you than just the 'captain' of your guards," Amethysta noted with a smile as we climbed into the carriage that would take us to the palace, the location being of course the same here as it had been back in Amethysta's time.

"An excellent swordswoman too," I smiled back at her then.

"I think you are thought a 'good' Queen," Amethysta smiled.

"There are certain political radicals who don't think so," I grinned back, thinking of "one" who was a real "pain in the rear" to me. The sort of a politician who did nothing but "criticize" everything I did, constantly complaining that I was but another "Darlanis"! Claiming that the "working" people of Trelandar were really not all that much "better off" with me than they'd been when Darlanis had ruled Trelandar with her own Lords and Ladies.

"Sometimes such 'matters' are best resolved with 'steel'," she smiled back, her eyes glowing into mine as I nodded, well aware of the sort of stuff that had been done by previous rulers. By Darlanis herself against Sanda's "Free Trelandar Movement"... The "executions" without any "trial", all the rest of the stuff.

"At least you serve something 'stronger' than fruit juice," Amethysta "grinned", swirling the brandy there in her cut glass goblet, the Priestesses of Lys being "opposed" to "strong drink".

"Looks like Princess Tara is up to her 'old tricks' again," Sharon said, getting down to the "reason" she'd come to see me. Telling me of the political radicals in her own country who were now trying to stir up trouble between the Empire and the Dularnian Federation over the political status of Orgon, which was still yet a "part" of the Empire, not a semi-independent nation like my own Trelandar was. Neither Amethysta or me having mentioned anything about what we'd "seen" aboard the Gaia, well aware that it would do little good to needlessly concern my friends here of it!

"Or Maris Marn," Sanda grinned, her opinion of the "Queen of Dularn" something that hasn't ever changed over the past years! Maris having at one time been a slave girl on my estate who had seduced Sanda's own husband, although I don't think he'd loved the golden haired slave girl except maybe just as a "plaything".

"Maris is well aware of the 'consequences' of such actions," I pointed out. I was aware of the "friendship" between Darlanis and Maris, but even so Darlanis would not tolerate "losing" Orgon to Dularn, regardless of who was "responsible" for the loss here! And to her any "vote" to do so too would be "rigged" in her eyes!

"There are a lot of people in the northern half of Orgon who feel more 'Dularnian' than 'Californian'," Sharon commented then. I suspected too now that they preferred Dularn's lower tax rates. Dularn being more "libertarian" a society too than is the Empire. The "role" of government in people's lives being much less too.

"Maybe I'd better have a talk with Darlanis," I smiled back. Fly up with Sharon to Sarn, and see what Darlanis thought here...

"You should start letting 'others' take these 'risks' for you," Jon said to me as he saw my latest collection of "scars" as we got undressed for bed. In this time I'd been gone for three days, not the couple weeks I'd spent there in the 24th Century.

"I'll still be around to bounce my grandchildren on my knee," I smiled back, slipping down my strap so that I was naked. I do have a fairly good figure, rather slim and muscular, but I'm rather badly scarred due to the "adventures" I've had here in the past five years, scars that bring back memories of so many adventures I've had both here on Earth and there too on the planet Mars. The marks of Sisa's claws, the scar from the laser burn I took when Auroramade her "revolution", those from various sword blades that I didn't quite parry in time, all mark me as "what" I am. A woman who has become a "living legend" in her own time...

"I'll never have another wife like you," Jon smiled back.

"I should hope not," I laughed back, kissing him then.

## Chapter Nineteen

"Telegraph isn't `working' again," the operator said to me. Nineteenth Century "technology" was just a bit too "advanced" for my people, I mused to myself, well "aware" that there could be a break anywhere in the line between Trella and Sarn. This was a much more "modern" design than the system of "stations" I'd set up some years before, but it was vulnerable to broken wires too. No doubt a thunderstorm had caused a branch to fall over a wire! My only other means of "communications" was express riders, which traveled only about a hundred miles a day over the forest paths.

"Contact the most distant station you can reach, have them send out a repair party," I answered, holding my voice level. It being obvious to me that even these people, sons and daughters of the caste of Builders, had little comprehension of what I needed! "And in the future there will be hourly checks on this line from one end to the other so repairs can be made more soon," I spoke.

"The fastest, most reliable communications is still a good ship," my husband smiled as he stood there watching all this now! "On a good day you can put two hundred miles or better under your keel," my handsome dark haired husband pointed out as I nodded...

"Find Sharon, tell her to prepare for a flight to Dularn," I smiled back, seeing him nod. I'd have a talk with Maris herself!

"Keep an `eye' on things while I'm gone," I said, taking Amethysta's hands in mine, the thought going through my mind that Sanda would have her hands full trying to do some of the "political tricks" with Amethysta as Queen that she did with me. Sanda at times almost behaving as if she wore the crown of Trelandar instead of me. That "deal" she'd made with Maris Marn there in 2567 having been just an example of what I'm referring to here... Sanda also tended to be a bit too "democratic" for my liking at times, almost as if she was a good ward heeling Democrat from the 20th Century! A very intelligent, competent, capable woman, Sanda was also the sort of a Prime Minister any Queen had to watch! Her political party, the Trelandarian Revolutionary Party, having controlled the Assembly ever since we'd kicked the Empire out... An even more "radical" group, the Democratic Party of Trelandar having now held "minority status" since the last election. This last group, controlled by a rabble rouser by the name of Les Hawkins, wanted to actually make Trelandar into a "socialist state"! There were of course "conservatives", who yet "favored" Darlanis.

"I'll see that Lady Sanda `stays out of trouble'," she promised, her eyes, a vivid blue, glowing into mine as I nodded back. I wasn't too "worried" about Les Hawkins, who I planned to publicly debate sometime when I got around to it, the "concept" of "socialism" being "refuted" by the "history" of the 20th Century. By the "writings" of Janet Rogers herself, who most people still yet honored even if she had not "been" what most believed of her.

"You are afraid of what the future may hold?" Sharon said to me as I flew north, the steady drone of the engine a comfort now. The clouds just above us drifting by as we now flew towards Sarn. The Pacific a mile below gleaming like rippled glass in the sun. Sharon's golden hair, her facial molding reminded me of Darlanis.

"Darlanis `lost' a lot when she gave up Trelandar to me," I answered. There had been those who had questioned her "motives". Who had said that she was no longer the "leader" she had been... It had been Sharonas Imperial Princess who had "turned things around" for Darlanis, Sharonas the Queen of Orgon who had saved the Empire from breaking up. And now Maris was up to her old tricks again, stirring up trouble like Les Hawkins back in Trella was doing to me. The thought now going through my mind then was it "possible" that Les Hawkins was really an "agent" of Dularn?

"And Darlanis can't `afford' to give up Orgon to Dularn...," the young Queen of that politically torn country added as I "nodded". Already the Dularnian Federation controlled the "territories" to the north of Orgon, what had been Washington back in my own time. And Maris' alliance with Queen Freydis now gave her access to the resources and lands stretching north all the way to the arctic even if some of it was now only uninhabitable wasteland due to the six anti-matter missiles the Priestesses had used last year to prevent the EVIL ONE from entering our own "plane of existence". With Queen Valeris and her Free Women now only a "memory", Dularn had become a "match" for the Empire, something everyone knew too! Was Maris "planning" another war against us?

"Like Vietnam," I breathed, and just as "winless" for us!

"They didn't have `you'," Sharon spoke, looking at me.

"I'm just a woman `good with a sword'," I grinned back.

"I sure wish I'd known..." Darlanis smiled in a warm greeting, taking my hands in hers as Sharon stood watching, the waves there in the bay of Sarn rocking Black Lady a bit there at the dock behind us. The gold of her attire seemingly "fitting" here. She is, I sometimes believe, a woman who believes in things that a person more grounded in "reality" wouldn't bother believing... A woman who even her worst enemies have to say is like no other.

"Telegraph's `out' again," I said, Darlanis smiling back.

"Probably one of Maris' `agents'," the Empress grinned.

"I hope you don't `believe' that," Sharon interrupted now.

"Maris is a Queen who can't control her own people," the Empress replied in level tones, her azure eyes now meeting my own. "A Queen who allows her own Senate to make decisions for her..." Last year she'd come close to be overthrown by Tara's own agents.

"That `radical wing' that's been making so much `noise'," I mused thoughtfully, recalling what I'd heard

of it. People much like my own Les Hawkins, stirring up "trouble" for all of us now! Even Darlanis had a bunch of "radicals" to deal with, although her own political system is much more "conservative" than mine...

"Tarahad some `able lieutenants'," I pointed out to her as we walked toward the magnificent palace that is her "residence".

"AndMexicowould `benefit' from a war of this sort,"Sharonadded, giving me a smile as I nodded in agreement. We'd beaten the Mexicans with "Dularnian" assistance, something I was sure the Emperor of Mexico was well aware of too! Princess Tara having been his "Warlady" before her "encounter" with the Priestesses for violating their EDICT against "advanced weapons". Her own features now so "scarred" from burns she was said to be a "thing" from which people turned away in horror. On the other hand she had warned us of the plans of The Queen Of Darkness, who had inhabited first her soul and later that of Queen Valeris. Giving us the chance to slow the entry of the EVIL ONE into our "universe" from His own, commonly known to Men as "HELL". Thus giving the Priestesses of Lys time to react, to take the "measures" they did, even at the cost of a hundred thousand innocent lives!

"Sounds' like Les Hawkins in Trelandar," I said, looking up at Darlanis as she now stood looking out the window. Reading the newspaper that Darlanis had given me to read,Sharonlooking over my shoulder as she used to do back in the 20th Century. I was growing aware that there seemed to be a "connection" between all of this, as if someone was "masterminding" the entire issue here!

"Political radicals in Trelandar, Sarn, Orgon, and Dularn," the tall golden haired Empress replied, turning to face me then. "All with the same `ideology' drawn from the era you came from."

"You believe Princess Tara has decided to return to her `old tricks'?" I ventured, wondering who else had the "brains"?Tarahad an excellent mind, one as good as mine at least, and she was well aware of the history of the past, including that of the 20th Century. The philosophy of socialism is "attractive", especially to people who don't have the intelligence or the education to see the "flaws" in such reasoning. When one recalls here that during theClintonadministration (1992-1996) the large numbers who yet advocated such "ideals" even when faced with the visual proof of their failure in practice is only further "proof" of such things!

"The `ideas' he advocated are from your own `era'," Darlanis said to me, her azure eyes burning straight right into mine now. "And until now I believed such things were only of `interest' to Scribes." The Scribes being a "bookish lot", often arguing issues that have little if any bearing now upon our own society. On the other hand there are always those who see "economic injustice" in society, and believe that the "role" of government should be to "correct" such things, much as theClintonadministration of the last decade of the 20th Century also advocated...

"I am a `libertarian'," I smiled, "Not a `socialist'." I tend not to "trust" governments, even one that I myself now rule. It is "too easy" to slip into believing that you can "correct" the "flaws" of your society by passing laws against them much as those of the American Democratic Party of the last decade of the 20th Century believed, such "activities" in my opinion having paved the way to the economic bankruptcy of the United States of America in the year 2007, which Janet Rogers then exploited as a means to convince the American people of the need for her NEW ORDER. A political system based upon "cost-benefit" analysis, a system where those badly handicapped were denied educations upon the basis that they would never be able to "use" their knowledge.

Author's Note

If you've borne with me so far, you may have noticed that Lorraine does not approve too much of some of the things that Janet Rogers did first as President of the United States and later on as Leaderess of the World Federation. On the other hand we may note too that unlike our present day politicians, Janet dared not run a "deficit"; she had to "see" that there was the "money" available to "pay" for whatever social policy she wished to have. In such a social order you have to make "hard decisions", decide whether or not spending the taxpayer's hard earned money on some certain social program makes "sense" or not. Her income tax system also allowed the people to "divert" as much of their actual income tax bill as they wished to whatever "good cause" they saw fit. A policy that makes a lot of sense right here in 1993! Janet herself was not a "believer" in "big government", and it is likely that she only "did" what she did to keep things "going". Her policies on "population control" were unpopular (I expect those of the Priestesses of Lys of the post-War era would be even more so!), but they were based upon reasonable, sensible ideas of requiring those who had children to bear the full costs of having them. And not passing these "costs" on to society as we now "allow" due to some misguided "delusions" we have now on this issue.

Lorraine's "prejudices" against Janet Rogers (these were "what" they were) perhaps were due to the fact that the Leaderess did not see any advantage to society in extending tax payer supported medical care past the "bare minimum" to those who would no longer be "productive" citizens of her society. Her attitude towards those who were severely disabled was the same here. Janet was a very "rational" person, one who was very much aware of the economic costs of various social policies, of the fact that encouraging reproduction among the least "fit" was utter stupidity! Those who persisted in reproducing even if they did not have the "means" to support the children they produced were sterilized after being convicted of the crime of "irresponsible reproduction".

And here are the "policies" that Lorraine objected to here: Janet's limitations upon taxpayer supported life-extending medical care for the aged if not paid for by a private insurance. It is likely that we may have to do the "same" if the costs of Medicare continue to RISE as they have despite what the AARP says...

The cutting off of "welfare benefits" to those able to work. In the 21st Century there were no "restrictions" upon economic activities as there are now, which meant that any ambitious person was able to find some sort of "work" to support themselves.

The "parenthood tax" that was imposed upon all who had children. There was also a "deduction" for those who had themselves sterilized before ever producing any children. Also, Janet had the "millage" laws changed so only "parents" paid for education!

Severely handicapped people who would never be able to hold any "productive" position in society AT ALL were not given the "special treatments" educationally that they are now upon the basis that it was only a "waste" of the taxpayer's money to do so.

The "means testing" and "flat rating" of Social Security.

The replacement of the "public school system" with vouchers that allowed parents to send their children to any "qualified" school for an education regardless of if it was sectarian or not. At the present time it costs the public school system TWO AND A HALF TIMES as much money to educate a child as it does in the private school system. This means that Janet Rogers was able to now SAVE the taxpayers 60% of their "school taxes" by doing this!

Only "taxpayers" were allowed to vote... Those who "founded" this country wrote that any other "policy" would be "disaster"...

## Chapter Twenty

"A lovely girl," I said, Darlanis cradling three year old Artemis to herself, the child a perfect "duplicate" of her mother. The Empress "different" as she held the little blonde, whose blue eyes were so much like those of Darlanis. Cloning is nothing new in this era, being commonly performed by the Priestesses. At first Darlanis had been a bit "distant" towards the child, but now she seemed to value so much every very moment to be with her.

"I 'love' her so much...", Darlanis breathed, looking up at me. "Especially knowing what I do..." Artemis being of course Domino Tremaine, who was Leaderess after Janet's death in 2045... Her last remains having been discovered there below Triskelion. The most "puzzling" thing about this all is the fact that Bob and Carol Simmons claimed that they met Domino Tremaine as an adult woman in 1990, whereas the Leaderess was still fairly "young" when she committed suicide in 2047 over her remorse for failing to stop The War between Earth and Mars. As this is a span of fifty seven years, I've always thought that Bob and Carol Simmons made a "mistake" here, but on the other hand it is possible that sometime in the fairly near future a means will be discovered to extend the span of life considerably beyond what we can do today. Perhaps due to the "challenge" that I gave to Tais here earlier.

"Mummy very beautiful," the girl spoke, looking at me. Her nanny standing near by, ready to take the girl from the Empress. The child's room much as one might expect, lavishly furnished with everything anyone could think of for a child's own pleasure! That Darlanis "doted" on the girl was without any doubt, I noted.

"And daddy will be 'back' in a few more weeks I 'hope'," Darlanis now spoke, stroking the girl's long blonde silky hair. Prince Serak at the moment leading his people against the Wyomings in one of their senseless conflicts the two "nations" had. On the other hand I'm sure Serak didn't look at it that way now! Nor did Prince Paul Blue Sky of the Wyomings, Maris' husband...

"Something puzzling me...", I said as we joined Sharon for a late night discussion of what we might "do" here about this issue that threatened to tear the Empire itself apart and doubtlessly would lead to another winless war between California and Dularn.

"What's that?" the Empress asked, settling herself beside Sharon, one of the Empress' slave girls quick to be of service to her regal mistress. Darlanis is said to be an "easy" mistress, but yet one who "tolerates" little in the way of "foolishness"...

"You and Maris encountered the EVIL ONE there in the north last year," I mused, "But yet Bob Simmons also claimed that Tais took him into the future, and he dealt with the same 'being' nine years from now." Bob's description of the EVIL ONE much the same as what Darlanis had seen, although far different here in "size". "And while the Priestesses were able to 'deal' with the EVIL ONE here last year quite 'effectively', ten years from now they were apparently quite helpless against Him for some 'unknown' reason."

"No doubt one of those 'mysteries' you'll have to ask Tais about," Darlanis smiled back, sipping at her brandy while her slave girl's dark eyes looked down into mine as I "nodded" back. The wench now filling

my goblet, her body heavily perfumed. She was dark haired, pretty but not beautiful, a common sort of girl.

"Wasn't there something in the 21st Century called 'virtual reality'?" Sharon ventured thoughtfully, regarding Darlanis' slim slave girl as the wench knelt there to one side waiting to be of further service to us. "And how much do we 'know' of what the Priestesses of Lys can 'do' in such fields?" she "challenged" me.

"Yes...", I breathed, recalling the "advertisement" I'd seen there in 2018 for just such a "thing" as this. There had also been work going on with "holovision", which was supposed to be far superior to the TriVid that I'd been watching at the Simmons. The Priestesses of Lys had the power to "program" human minds, as I'd seen here for myself. Could it be possible that they could have done something like that to Bob Simmons. Giving him some sort of a "fantasy adventure" that would seem to be so REAL that for the rest of his life he would actually "believe" he lived it! The thought briefly going through my mind that the same thing could have been done to me when I'd seen the "end" of the Earth!

"The only question here is 'why'," Darlanis grinned at me.

"They were having a lot of 'trouble' getting the Diana to work," I mused now, regarding the Empress sitting across from me. "And it is just possible that Tais wanted Bob to 'see' himself in a different 'light', as a man who had 'saved' the world," I breathed, sharing my perhaps "fantastic" thoughts with them both.

"He later used the Diana to put an end to Imperial involvement with Queen Valeris, which was perhaps 'fortunate'," Darlanis "smiled" back, having once been the "victim" of the Diana's ram.

"And later the Diana was used against Mexico, putting an end to a war that we couldn't win," Sharon ventured thoughtfully too.

"Which means that Tais definitely had a 'finger' in things," I mused. The thought occurring to me that I'd flown into that thunderstorm like I'd been "instructed" to do so. Had I been "mind programed" so that I'd fly through the "Gateway" into this time? Brought here so that I might "alter" the course of events?

"Could she have a 'hand' in things here?" Darlanis asked then, her eyes like two azure lasers burning into mine as I nodded thoughtfully in reply! Could Tais be the cause of all this? She had even more knowledge of the past than Taradid, the First Priestess being able to travel back almost to the time of the Roman Empire from what I understood, and certainly she would be familiar with the political philosophies of the Twentieth Century!

"Why would she want to break the Empire up, start a war?" Sharon asked. "The Priestesses aren't interested in 'politics'."

"Perhaps a 'challenge' for us to deal with," I mused back.

"Maris and I shared blood," Darlanis spoke, her eyes holding mine. Such is "meaningful" among those of my caste, although it is hard to "explain" to those who are not "barbarians" like us.

"Perhaps we are being 'tested'," Sharon now ventured here.

"Tomorrow we shall fly to Dularn and see Maris," I smiled.

"Arsana," I spoke, looking far ahead as Dularn became visible beneath the low hanging clouds between

which we were flying, the thought going through my mind again of what Tais had said to me. Words to the effect that Amethysta was "needed" in this era!

"I fear 'this' is not the 'best of times'," Maris smiled as Darlanis took her hands in hers. The Queen of Dularn having had her own "problems" with the "radicals" there in her own Senate... And no doubt a "visit" from us right now might have political repercussions upon Maris' "relationship" with her own people here! There having been those who maintained that Dularn was far too "friendly" with the Empire of California, that the Queen of Dularn was herself now far too "friendly" with the Empress herself!

"We do share a 'mutual problem'," Darlanis smiled in reply.

"There is 'little' I can 'do' about events in Orgon," Maris answered in level tones, no doubt thinking this was the reason why we three came here to Dularn at this time to talk to her now.

"Things are not 'always what they seem'," I said to Maris.

"It does seem a little 'far fetched'," Maris smiled at me. A cool breeze off the strait moving the lace curtains as the call of sea gulls flying over the palace now came through the windows.

"I feel it is in the nature of a 'test'," I answered Maris, suspecting Tais was doing it for some arcane purpose of her own.

"To see whether we will work together or fight," Sharon now spoke. "Whether we are willing to see beyond our own short term gains in 'exploiting' the 'situation' that exists now in Orgon." It would be Sharon's country that we'd be all fighting over here. Dularnian against Imperial once again like it had been before I'd managed to stop the fighting there in 2565. Now five years later it seemed as if we'd all be at one another's throat once again...

"Your people are fortunate to have a Queen like you," Maris smiled. I think Darlanis and I also felt that way about Sharon. She was a young Queen, sometimes "inexperienced", but one that I knew her own people thought highly of despite the fact that she was also the Imperial Princess of California, Darlanis' own legal successor to the throne. A beautiful Queen, blonde, blue eyed, a Queen who dressed stylishly, if a bit provocatively at times now. Her attire of silken blouse and hose leaving little doubts as to the sort of a delightful feminine figure that she also possessed! There have been perhaps a hundred men who have already sought her hand in wedlock, but so far Sharon has not felt the same of them!

"I have strong emotional attachments to all of you," Sharon said, "And it pains me to think of what another war could bring." Maris no doubt well aware that once again she'd have to "face" me at sea, that once again she would have to face an enemy's fire. And without Carol as her Warlady she would not have it so "easy"!

"And a war this time would cost far more lives," I added.

"Your 'weapons of the past' and those 'dogs' of yours," the Queen of Dularn smiled back. Mine was the largest establishment of kennels in Trelandar, but there were others. We were also now breeding the domesticated dire wolf, and even the larger animals that Queen Valeris' women had used. And there was also TALON with its great birds against which there was yet no "defense" known! A war this time between our countries would be far more terrible than before, a fact that I was well aware of as were all of us...



## Chapter Twenty One

The cool night breezes coming through the window, the odors of the sea not all that far distant wafting in, I unpacked the few things I'd brought with me, among them the diary I've kept ever since I entered this barbaric era over five years ago now.

Turning up the oil lamp, I seated myself at the bedroom's desk and began to write up my thoughts for the day, writing in French so that none in this time but I could read what I wrote...

"If we can convince Maris...." I wrote when a faint sound caused me to turn, First Priestess Tais standing there smiling!

"You might 'knock'," I smiled, the white gowned Priestess nodding back at me, her attire, golden hair and blue eyes making me recall now the drawings I'd seen as a child of "angels". Tais in some "respects" being almost as "supernatural" as one of them!

"I'll remember 'that' next time," the First Priestess said, walking over to where I sat, looking down at what I'd written.

"French," Tais smiled, her eyes glowing down into mine.

"The language of my childhood," I pointed out to her.

"Your 'theory' about Bob Simmons is correct," she said.

"Building up his 'ego' a bit?" I then smiled back at Tais.

"I felt it 'wise' to 'help' out a bit here," Tais admitted.

"Why don't you just give 'orders'?" I asked her, knowing the sort of "power" that the Priestesses possessed. Even the military power of the Lorr and the Women had been "nothing" to them!

"In raising your 'children', I'm sure there have been times when you could have done 'something' better than they could, but as a wise mother you knew that they had to learn for themselves," the First Priestess answered. "And if Mankind is to ever 'learn' how to behave in a 'civilized' manner, then you must learn for yourselves how to resolve your conflicts without resort to force. Or without running to us to solve every little problem you have."

"Like 'now'?" I challenged, aware that I'd done just that!

"I do think you have 'learned' a few things," she smiled.

"And are 'you' at the 'bottom' of all this?" I challenged.

"Tarahad some able 'lieutenants'," the Priestess smiled.

"You wouldn't be nice enough to tell me `who'?" I grinned.

"`That' would be `cheating'," Tais laughed softly in reply.

"I'm sure I'll catch up with him or her eventually," I said.

"And then `justice will be served'," Tais smiled back at me.

"I have my `suspicions' as to `who' it is," I answered her.

"Let's change the `subject'," Tais suggested, pouring some wine into a goblet and handing it to me, strolling to the window and looking out into the darkness of the night for a few seconds. "I am a bit concerned about your feelings towards Janet Rogers."

"Why?" I asked. "She's been `dead' for five centuries..."

"It is `important' that you understand `why' she did what she `did'," Tais answered, turning to face me, her distance from the lamp making her look almost like a ghost standing there now. I suspected she didn't want to talk about what we'd seen there on the Gaia any more than I did. Knowing that this lovely green world of ours was to be dragged to an icy death in only 78 years!

"Maybe we just don't `believe' in the same things," I said.

"With the exception of her `policies' regarding firearms, which I can `understand' here," Tais spoke, "I find little wrong in what she did. What she was forced to do as world Leaderess."

"There is no `justification' for her `policies' regarding those over the age of seventy two," I pointed out, well aware of what I'd learned here both from the TriVid I'd watched back there in 2018 and from what Hope Lynn Simmons had told me about it too! "You don't `deny' people medical care just because they are no longer `productive members of your society'," I now snapped back.

"Does a poor person in our society receive the same quality of medical care that say someone in your `position' would?" Tais challenged me back, propping herself there on the window sill. I thought of the "drop", and hoped she wouldn't be "careless" here!

"This isn't the 21st Century," I pointed out, Tais getting up and strolling about the room, looking at the various objects.

"All societies have `limited resources'," Tais pointed out. "And those in the 21st Century were free to purchase medical insurance to protect themselves against any future illnesses," she now added. Pointing out something that Hope had also done here.

"Not everyone could `afford' to buy such insurance," I said. I'd always been one of the few doctors who supported a system of "National Health Care" much like Canada and most of Europe had... While I often "waived" my usual fees for those unable to pay, it was my own belief that medical care, like police and fire protection, should be made "available" to all without consideration of their ability to "pay" for such care. I'd also shared these beliefs with Janet Rogers, who I'd thought had understood them too!

"For a `libertarian' you hold rather `socialistic' ideas," Tais answered, that awesome mind of hers no doubt hard at work!

"I've `learned a few things' since becoming Queen," I said.

"We provide our `services' based upon ability to pay," Tais replied. "And many doctors in your time also did the same too." The First Priestess making an "end run" around the point I'd made. Arguing with Tais being much like arguing with a computer!

"Your `point' is that Janet Rogers `did' what was right?" I said, wishing to "pin" Tais down here without any more of this going "around and around" the topic like children playing a game!

"A society should only provide those services to its members that are of benefit to that society," Tais answered me back then. "And attempting to extend the lives of those past the age of productivity is not of `benefit' to a society," she now answered me.

"Social Darwinism?" I smiled back, drawing upon all my own knowledge of the past. Of everything that I've ever read here. "Social Darwinism", for those of you who are not Scribes is a social philosophy of the 19th Century that teaches that the "value" of people can be determined by their "economic success" in life.

"All societies must place a higher value upon their more `fit' members and a lesser value upon their less `fit' members," Tais spoke, standing there, the light from the lamp there on my desk making her look like some "ghost" from the distant past now! "To believe that all human beings are of the same `value' is to fly in the face of reality," Tais added, going now to the window. Looking out into the darkness, perhaps seeing what I did not now.

"I believe the founders of the United States of America back in 1776 would have given you an `argument' over that," I retorted with a smile for the beautiful tall blonde. Enjoying this contest of "wits" here against the First Priestess even if I knew we'd never agree on whether or not Janet Rogers had been "right"!

"There was a `delusion' then about the `nature of man'," she answered, turning back to look at me. "One that `persisted' in the French Revolution, and `ended' in the Russian Revolution of 1917 with the Communists. Man is man, and his `nature' is determined by biological forces, not by his `environment'." The tone of her voice then leaving no doubts too that she believed this!! "Only by altering the very biological nature of Man, such as the Lorr did with the Neanderthal women they took to Mars with them to be their servants thirty five thousand years ago, can the basic biological nature of Man be altered into something different."

"This has little to `do' with Janet Rogers," I said to her.

"I fear you `have' me there," Tais laughed, standing there.

"You feel what Janet did was `right'?" I "challenged" her.

"I would have made the same `choice'," she now answered me.

"You're putting yourself `out on a limb' here," I said then.

"The `policies' of the Priestesses of Lys, and `those' over us are based upon these same `truths'," the First Priestess said. There was now in her voice a "note" of distant thunder! "The `philosophy of socialism', which you unknowingly advocate," has been an utter `failure' on over a million worlds," she spoke! "No society that penalizes its more `fit' to `support' its less `fit' has ever for long survived," the First Priestess said then. "And," she added, "There was a woman who lived in your century by the name

of Ayn Rand, who understood these 'truths' as few have."

"According to you then, it is 'wrong' to help the less fortunate?" I challenged, wondering what she'd have to say to that! Enjoying this "duel of wits" as much as any I've ever had here...

"No, but it is 'wrong' for the 'state', using its 'legal monopoly of armed force', to take money from its hard working citizens to support those who have decided to live at the 'expense' of the taxpayers," Tais answered, "shifting" the subject a bit!

"Those 'senior citizens' paid taxes," I "pointed out" then.

"Janet Rogers only prohibited the use of using medical care whose 'cost' could not be 'justified' as to its 'return' here," I listened to her say, wondering if I could ever "win" against her! "You should be aware that we do the 'same' here in this era now."

"What do you 'mean' by that?" I immediately challenged her.

"Could you rebuild Trella into a 'modern' city?" she asked.

"The 'cost' would bankrupt the people of Trelandar," I said.

"The 'same problem' occurred in the 21st Century when the 'cost' of medical care due to advances in technology reached the point that Janet Rogers had no 'choice' but to 'ration' that care to those most likely to be of benefit from it," Tais answered me. "No society in the entire history of the Universe itself has ever been able to provide to its entire population the sort of 'unlimited economic resources' needed to provide such 'services' here." I knew that she spoke the TRUTH even if I didn't like hearing it.

"I suppose you are 'right'," I smiled, admitting my defeat.

"Can it ever be 'justified' taking the lives of innocents in order to serve a greater good?" the First Priestess asked me now. "When I ordered the EVIL ONE forced back out of our plane of existence, it 'cost' the lives of over a hundred thousand people." The six antimatter missiles used had killed everything within a radius of thousands of square miles of north western Canadathen. The Free Women had not been that "many", but sixty gigatons of such force had left little but molten lava and volcanoes behind!

"The 'greater good' outweighs the 'evil' that you did," I smiled. As a Warriress I was well familiar with such ideas too! During the Second World War the French Resistance had attempted to deal with the concept that many of the German soldiers that they killed were merely conscripts who had no "choice" in the matter either. Men who had no wish to harm any Frenchmen either! Yet it had been necessary to kill these Germans despite all this!

"I find your thought processes 'interesting'," Tais smiled.

"The 'war' must be 'morally just'," I said, seeing her nod.

"A 'matter of viewpoint'," Tais "grinned", standing there.

"The Germans were the 'aggressors'," I pointed out to her.

"No doubt they did not see it 'that way'," Tais answered.

"I think you are `enjoying this'," I said, yawning a bit.

"Do you wish another glass of wine?" the Priestess asked.

"I haven't been `intellectually stimulated' like this for years," I smiled. Only Janet Rogers had possessed a mind powerful enough to really give me a good first class "match" here too! And Tais generated enough "mental horsepower" to satisfy anyone!!

"As I recall there was a certain `problem' in Trella last winter that gave you considerable concern," Tais smiled back now. "A certain Scribe who was a master of the crossbow, who decided to `declare war' upon the `establishment', and who for a period of two weeks, `succeeded' in a way that seemed `unbelievable'." It having reached the point that I had a full Legion in the city itself trying to hunt down this strange terrifying "terrorist"...

"The `Batman'," I answered, recalling the "incident". It had been an "embarrassment" for the entire government, and for me too. Not even my overflights low over the city at night had been effective against this "terrorist" who "hunted" the Warriors and Warrioreesses who maintained "law and order" in my capital city! The man had finally been killed by a prostitute who with a "client" spotted him on a roof top, and naked but for the sword in her hand, killed the black cloaked "Batman" before he could kill again! I'd given her three hundred gold crowns, issued her the Royal Medal of Trelandar, our highest award, for her heroism too!

"I found the `incident' of `interest'," Tais smiled in turn.

"I was just about to appeal to you, to Mars for help!" I exclaimed. The man had come and gone without any ever seeing him!

"The `example', perhaps `refined' a bit, might be `useful'," Tais mused thoughtfully, once again there by the window looking out into the darkness. "An entire city, a nation itself, opposed by one man who came close to making fools of you all," she added. "One sniper, in `the right time and place', with a good rifle and the ability to use it, can `alter' the entire course of history." And with this "comment" she suddenly disappeared, leaving me sitting there with my thoughts, wondering "what" she'd meant here...

## Chapter Twenty Two

"You look `tired' this morning," Queen Maris said to me as I joined her and the others for breakfast, the Queen of Dularn having laid a table that twice our number couldn't have done justice to. I'd spent a long time lying awake, thinking of what Tais had said to me. Questioning my own beliefs. Wondering too about that last "comment" she'd made. I am a master shot with a rifle. Did she wish me to travel back in time with her to assassinate someone? I did not think so, recalling what she'd said about the insane Scribe who had so "terrorized" Trella there last winter... Could such "methods" be used against a more "developed" society?\* \* This is incidentally the very concept of "NEO-TERRORISM", which is to "terrorism" what nuclear weapons are to warfare. (J.B.B.)

"Had a `visit' from Tais," I smiled back, enjoying the looks on their faces. "Seems we're being `tested'

here," I then added. This producing the "effect" that I'd expected that it would here! That "look" of surprise on their faces that I'd expected to see!!

"I suspect if it wasn't for Lorraine here," Maris breathed, her eyes meeting mine, "History would have 'duplicated' itself". We're not really "friends", but I do "respect" Maris Marn a lot! She has a first rate mind, and the ability to use it effectively!

"My thoughts exactly," Darlanis smiled, grinning at Sharon.

"One of Tara's 'lieutenants' is 'involved' in this," I said.

"Knew we hadn't 'heard' the 'last' of that 'bitch'!" Darlanis growled, the Empress having good cause to hate the Princess after the evil Princess had once almost killed her back in 2565!!

"What!" Maris gasped, the four of us "staring" in awe. The woman standing there an attractive brunette, slim, dark eyed, a woman that everyone here in the room instantly recognized! JANET ROGERS! The ruler of the World Federation of the 21st Century... The clothing, the sword at her hip leaving no doubts of this too! The mid thigh height soft black leather skirt, the provocatively styled halter top of black silk trimmed with a leather accenting. The thigh top high stylish "strap boots" beautifully accenting her legs were a "trademark" of the 21st Century like none other!

"I was sent here to help you," Janet Rogers smiled, her eyes meeting mine as I nodded in awe, knowing that this was indeed no other than JANET ROGERS!! "Even if I will not be allowed to ever retain the 'memories' of what I learn here in the 26th Century."

"Tais!" I breathed, Janet Rogers giving me a big smile!

"I was told we'd meet again," Janet Rogers said to me.

"I think we can 'entertain' ourselves," Maris spoke.

"Lorraine," Janet breathed, now reaching out to me.

"I'll see that you are not disturbed," Maris said.

"You have my 'thanks'," I said, now going to Janet.

"I have missed you," Janet smiled, holding my hands.

"Let me take you somewhere more 'private'," I breathed.

"It's been such a long time!" I said, taking her in my arms as soon as I could shut the door behind us, hugging her to me, so glad to see her once again even if only perhaps for a few days. Even if Tais would strip from her the memories of our once again being together! My doubts, my unhappiness with her gone now for the moment!! I'd been "rude" perhaps to the others, "hustling" Janet off the way that I did, but she was the closest thing I've had to really having a "daughter", a woman who shared the same "viewpoints" that I had! Janet's NEW ORDER being based upon the teachings and philosophy in part of Ayn Rand, upon my own personal philosophy here. Upon the "realities" of the 21st Century...

"I'm afraid there's a lot you wouldn't 'like' if you knew," Janet Rogers said, her dark eyes so much like my own glowing into mine. "Things that I had to 'do' that I didn't like so 'doing'." Reaching up, and

wiping the tear from my cheek with a fingertip. A seagull flying by the bedroom window calling out to another... The chirps of nesting birds there beneath the eaves there above. What I'd seen there aboard the Gaia for the time being forgotten.

"You were more the 'realist' than me," I smiled, hugging her to me again, holding her, my face in her coal black hair so much like my own. Recalling that people used to think that we were mother and daughter, so great was the physical resemblance here! \* \* We were, of course, as you know if you looked at the last chapter of my book here. Learned the "truth" about Janet Rogers... That she was really my own daughter, my very own Princess Ann! I was also shown that the Earth was not as "lifeless" as Tais had thought it was when we'd orbited it there in the Gaia in 2650 AD.

"All societies have 'limitations'," Janet smiled back at me. That was one of her most "famous" quotations, one that every school child in this era learns. Along with Robert A. Heinlein's own "There is no such thing as free lunch!", which combined with Janet's own philosophy, leaves no doubts as to "things" here now. Everything you "do" has a "cost" of one sort or another, either in "money" or in the lost "opportunity" to "do" something else... This is not easy to understand, but it is a "truth" known everywhere in the Universe, I'm told by Tais here who should know so.

"Your policies towards medical care for those over seventy two..," I breathed, hating myself for getting into this with her! Holding her close, the tears yet coming, knowing the PAIN that she would cause me, knowing yet that WHAT she had done had been done out of necessity, that there had been no other choice here!

"You are 'familiar' as a doctor with the 'philosophy' of 'triage'?" Janet asked, that awesome 190 I.Q. at work here now! Triage being the concept of allocating limited medical resources to where they will be the most "effective" in saving human life. Allocating any sort of resources to deal with a problem, I knew. It is a military term, and is usually found in military medicine where the number of "casualties" may far exceed your ability to treat. In such a case you treat only those who will not survive without immediate medical care, not treating those who will survive one way or another, and ignoring those who are beyond help.

"Yes," I answered, being well aware here too of such things as a Warrioreess who had seen combat, who had seen "such" herself.

"Given a limited amount of money, and the desire to save as many human lives as possible, what 'do' you 'do'?" Janet asked...

"You save those most 'valuable' to your society," I said.

"Which is 'what' I did," Janet Rogers smiled back at me.

"Your 'logic' is unassailable," I said, knowing it was.

"I often take 'comfort' in that fact," she "answered".

"I suspect you feel otherwise," I said to Janet then.

"I have been called a 'Hitler' by many," she answered.

"I have found it hard to be a 'Queen'," I told her now.

"I trust history did not judge me too harshly," she smiled.

"You are the most famous woman in the history of Mankind," I told her, speaking the "truth" that I was sure she'd soon learn. There has been a "movement" among the Scribes to change our dating system from the date of The War to the birth of Janet Rogers.

"Hillary Clinton said I'd be 'infamous'," she grinned back.

"Hillary 'who'?" I asked, trying to remember "who" she was.

"The 'Queen of the Left'," Janet Rogers smiled, the memories now coming back, conversations I'd had with Sanda years ago now. The former First Lady having made it almost a personal crusade to oppose Janet Rogers almost from the beginning, especially on such matters where Hillary could get considerable "support" from those who lived at the expense of the taxpayers. People on "welfare", on Social Security, those who believed that they were "entitled" to things. The "bankruptcy" of the United States of America in 2007 having made it impossible to continue on as before here now!

"Hillary Rodham Clinton," I breathed, the name having quite a "ring" to it, which is why she always insisted on using it too! She was best known for her advocacy of a system of "national medical care" that would have bankrupted any country that tried it, although there were few radical ideas that she hadn't supported!

"If I'd been the 'Hitler' she said I was, I'd hauled her off to a concentration camp somewhere in Alaska and seen the 'end' of her," Janet Rogers smiled back, her dark eyes glowing into mine.

"What year is it in your time?" I asked her now, having neglected so far to ask this rather important question here of her!

"2023," Janet smiled, walking to the window, looking out. I had no doubts she'd learn eventually of "how" she had died, and when, but that would be a problem for Tais to deal with, I mused! Physically she wasn't a "young" woman, having been born in 1965, but she still looked pretty good, no doubt thanks to exercise and taking pains with her appearance, her hair at this time "dyed" to hide the "gray" that was now starting to "streak" it here at 58.

"Your civilization will 'survive' twenty four more years," I said, wishing her to hear it from my lips rather than another's.

"Tais gave me a 'thumbnail' sketch of things," she replied.

"If you hadn't died..." I wept, the tears really running! "You gave Mankind so much...", I sobbed, my voice breaking here!

"I was an old woman," Janet answered, wiping away my tears. "And Domino Tremaine wasn't 'competent' to run things without my help," she said, answering a "question" I've always wondered about. "She tried, but she didn't 'have it' like I did," Janet added, trying to "cap the well" as I stood there weeping like a baby, knowing that this woman had once given Mankind a chance at the stars! That Man himself had "blown" that chance at GLORY...\* \* I suppose it wouldn't have made any difference in the long run as the "Guardians" would have put a "halt" to such things eventually when Mankind encountered other races of intelligent beings.

"We found Domino's 'last remains' a few years ago," I said.



"Tais told me she lives here in this time with her mother," Janet answered, having apparently been told a good deal by Tais. I supposed such a precaution was wise, since otherwise "feelings" could be hurt, although I'm sure that Darlanis knows that Domino wasn't anywhere near the "Leaderess" that Janet Rogers had been!!

"I've been `forward' in time to `the end of the world'," I said to Janet then, curious to see what her "reaction" would be. Telling her of what I'd seen there on the Gaia, what Tais had told me. Of the "plans" the Priestesses of Lys had to try to transport at least a portion of the human race to somewhere else.

"There could have been `survivors' given a high enough technology," Janet mused thoughtfully, that awesome mind hard at work here! "If you could tunnel beneath the surface of the Earth, the internal heat would be enough to keep you warm for millions of years. On the other hand the great earthquakes and such would be something that would make such preparations perhaps futile here."

### Chapter Twenty Three

"Just `how' did you manage to get `elected'?" I asked, wishing to change the subject to anything else than DOOMSDAY in 2648.

"I'm `responsible'..." Janet suddenly spoke, standing there, starting to weep! "I, I caused.... the bankruptcy!" she sobbed!!

"It was `people' like Hillary Clinton!" I protested, taking her into my arms, holding her, stroking her thick coal black hair as she sobbed softly, weeping out the horrid secret she had held!

Janet Rogers first held elective public office as a state representative in the year 2000, rose to being a "representative" of the State of California in 2004, and was elected President of the United States in 2008 as is taught in all the history books. It appears that in 2006 she authorized a "study" made of the "national debt", which at that time was somewhere over ten trillion dollars, or a debt of just about say ninety thousand dollars for every person working at that time. Such a "debt" of course cannot ever be "paid off", the very "interest" on the debt itself then taking up the major part of the federal tax revenues. Under such conditions a country is left with two choices: The first is to declare "bankruptcy", and the second is to inflate the currency to such a point that the same condition as the first occurs... Both are of course a terrible economic disaster for the country! \* \* The present "national debt" is 4.4 trillion dollars, with an additional 1.6 trillion dollars in "unfunded obligations", making the total "debt" now SIX trillion dollars. Current "interest" on the national debt is perhaps about thirty percent of federal revenues or a bit less. There are also "unfunded" state "obligations" which may increase the seriousness of this problem. At a "budget surplus" of ONE HUNDRED BILLION dollars a year it would take us forty four years to pay off the "principle", while the "interest" on the debt itself greatly burdens our ability to deal with any of the problems now facing this country. Recent events lead me to believe that no President or Congress will ever SOLVE this problem, which means that NATIONAL BANKRUPTCY will occur at some time in the future, probably resulting in a political revolution of some sort (We'd be LUCKY to get "Janet Rogers"! ), and the likely END of all "entitlements" as we now know them here...

While a good portion of the "national debt" of that time was owed to "foreigners" of one sort or another,

the major portion of the "debt" was actually money "owed" to American citizens, most of whom had over past years invested in government "bonds" and so forth, along with corporations who had put their pension funds in similar "securities". The federal government having also "borrowed" from the Social Security Trust Fund, issuing "I.O.U's" in return, which meant that the Social Security System was now actually itself depending upon taking in enough money from payroll taxes to "back" the checks that it issued to the senior citizens. The entire banking system was involved, along with a good part of the national economy, which meant that the system was much like a HOUSE OF CARDS made by children! Waiting to "fall" at any moment should there be the least "hint" that perhaps the United States government might not be able to continue to meet its obligations!

It was early in 2007 that Janet Rogers' "study" was "leaked" to the "media". The conclusions Janet having made being that in a few years the United States would no longer be "able" to meet its interest payments on the national debt, now near seventy percent of all federal revenues in a steadily "declining" economy. This "decline" itself having been caused both by the increasing "overhead costs" of government itself and by attempts to "control" the increasing levels of environmental pollution by passing new laws. More and more "civil rights laws" that increased the "overhead costs" of society while doing little to ease the racial tensions. Laws that in turn increased the "cost of production" to the point that American made good were no longer "competitive" on the world market, causing in turn increasing trade deficits and more and more unemployment. Causing increasing "demand" for more and more "welfare", for taking more and more money from the "taxpayers", who were in turn now growing fewer and fewer here as more and more people found that "welfare" actually "paid" better than "working". The rate of "illegitimate births" now reaching a figure of over fifty percent of all births in the United States!!

At first nothing much happened but "talk" when the "media" released the report to the world, although it gave Janet herself the chance to explain her own ideas of "neo-libertarianism". Janet Rogers maintaining here that the policies of "social welfare" as advocated by the now quite famous Hillary Rodham Clinton had "led" to this state of affairs, and that the only thing that could be done now would be for the United States of America to do as any private business might do, and that was to declare itself in a "state of bankruptcy"! Janet pointed out that the country still had considerable "assets" that could be used to "ease" the blow that would be struck, especially against the elderly who had much of the governments bonds and such that would become next to "worthless" under such circumstances. Naturally Janet was denounced for this in no uncertain terms by Hillary Rodham Clinton! Hillary saying that Janet sought to ruin the entire country here! That she wished to wipe out all welfare, social security, and all "entitlements", put "millions of beggars" on the streets, cause a world wide depression "greater" than that of the 1930's. Hillary then announcing that she herself would run for President in 2008! "See that justice was provided to all Americans!" she proclaimed!

"Must have been quite a 'campaign'," I said to Janet, my arm around her as we sat together. Hillary Clinton was the "head" of the Democratic Party, the famous advocate of "liberalism", of "social welfare", of the "Left" in all its glory! Janet Rogers on the other hand then was someone entirely "new" on the political scene. A woman who spoke for the "taxpayers", not for those who lived off the taxpayers, who believed that the "country" owed them a living. That the government existed for their "benefit"!!

"It just got 'going' when the Europeans got 'scared'," Janet said, her dark eyes meeting mine as I nodded. It had been the European investors who had attempted to get their "money" out of the United States. Who had decided it was time to "get out" now!

"What was it like?" I asked her, knowing only what I'd read.

"A 'panic' like none you've ever seen before," Janet spoke. "Then banks started closing, businesses laying people off by the millions, the 'lines' at the unemployment offices blocks long..."

"Could it have been 'stopped'?" I asked, seeing her eyes met mine as she nodded in the negative. Janet then explaining to me that while the "blow" could have been "eased" by selling off all the "assets" owned by the federal government, Hillary's own political party had prevented that from being done. Hillary Rodham Clinton having been perhaps the "Princess Tara" of her own era...

"They held the 'elections' early, didn't they?" I said then.

"I beat both Hillary and that 'Limbaugh' fella," Janet said. "Hillary actually got the 'least' votes of the three of us," she smiled, the American people having finally had enough of Hillary! Not that Mrs. Clinton had thought so, but she'd had little political effect upon matters after Janet had been elected President.

"When you did 'perfect' electronic hypnosis?" I asked Janet. It had been the "use" of this that had allowed Janet to take over the world in such a "brief" period of time that no one has ever been able to determine just "how" Janet Rogers actually did it...

"Had the first 'operational' machine in 2009, started using them in 2010, had 'control' of things by 2011," she smiled back. Janet going on to explain that the "technology" had been far more "difficult" than what I'd believed it would be back in 1988, that it had actually taken the resources of "Uncle Sam" to build them! "Founded the Priestesses of Lys at the same time once I realized just 'what' I had," Janet added, giving me a big smile just then! Janet being wise enough here to that infinite power is dangerous! "Was something 'odd' about the entire affair though," she mused!!

"What was 'that'?" I asked, thinking just then of Tais! Was it possible that she'd gone back in time, back to 2009, and used her knowledge of electronic hypnosis to help design the first of these amazing devices. I knew of how the Women had gotten their first "Gateway" machine, a device actually found in my own time!! Could the same thing be possible here? Was Tais responsible too!

"We found electronic drawings left out on a table in a room locked and guarded by armed men," Janet spoke. "And no one could have gotten into that room," she breathed, looking up at me then.

"But for First Priestess Tais herself," I smiled back here.

"We followed the drawings, and the thing worked," she said.

"Naturally Tais had to 'see' that history was as it was," I smiled, Janet Rogers nodding, her dark eyes glowing up into mine. No doubt Tais felt a degree of "responsibility" about such stuff.

"Someone claimed to have 'seen' an 'angel', but we'd always figured they were drunk or on drugs," Janet grinned, aware now I think of just "who" that "angel" might have been here... Tais!!

"Beautiful blonde in a long white gown...", I smiled back.

"That can 'disappear' right in front of you," Janet smiled.

"Or 'reappear'!" Janet "breathed", Tais suddenly now here!

"I believe you were talking about me," the Priestess said.

"Must be a hard job, keeping history going 'right'," I said.

"These `eyes' of mine have seen `much'," Tais laughed softly in reply, standing there, reminding me muchly of SHE Herself too! "Perhaps in some respects `too much'," she added, the tone of her voice suddenly changing. "The knowledge of what is to be is not always the `blessing' that you may believe it to be," she added. And with THIS Tais suddenly shimmered out of existence as swiftly as she'd appeared, leaving Janet Rogers and I both sitting there.

"That neutron star..." Janet breathed, seeing me nod back.

"Tais probably had to go `see' for herself," I answered.

"The greatest `disaster' there could be," Janet mused.

## Chapter Twenty Four

"I think she is a person who has been forced to `see' things she would much rather have never seen," Janet Rogers smiled at me as I nodded back. If Tais had indeed traveled through time to the end of the world, I suppose such "sights" might "bother" one! A soft knocking at the door then breaking into our conversation.

"Maris sent me," the slave girl said, kneeling there, her eyes glowing softly up into mine. There beside her a cart now loaded down with everything anyone might so wish for here in the line of refreshments and snacks... The collar snug around her throat of almost pure gold, marking her well here as being the "preferred" slave girl of the Queen of Dularn herself. Maris' husband, Prince Paul of theWyomings, having taken Kathi, who had once been Lady Tirana's slave girl before the Simmons stole her. Prince Paul now leading his people in battle against theNevadas, who in turn were lead by Darlanis' husband Serak. Both Maris and Darlanis well aware now of the fact they might well both end up widows, something I suspect also drew them "closer" in a way too!

"Is she `Janet'?" the girl asked softly in awe, staring past me at Janet as she stood and took a hold of the cart's handles.

"She is THE Janet Rogers," I smiled back at the slave girl.

"Mistress asked me to bring you this," she said, pushing the cart into the room as I closed the door behind her, a couple of Maris' warrior women on now guard outside the room obviously having been posted to see that we were not bothered by the curious.

"And what `crime' did you commit to end up like this?" Janet Rogers asked, standing up, the slave girl now quickly going to her knees here before us, and keeping them well pressed together as was fitting in this situation given our own rank and titles!

"I was a minor thief," she quickly answered the Leaderess.

"And how `long' have you been a slave?" Janet asked her.

"For thirteen years, mistress," she answered in turn.

"I `see'," Janet Rogers spoke, her eyes meeting mine.

"This is a `different' culture than yours," I spoke.

"I am well `aware' of that `fact'," Janet answered.

"You recall John Norman's `GOR'," I asked Janet.

"Like `that' society?" the Leaderess said to me.

"I am content to `be' what I am," the girl spoke.

"Perhaps that is just as well," Janet Rogers said.

"We are all `victims' of our own `cultures'," Janet Rogers said to me after the girl had left the room, the Leaderess looking over the various snacks and candies that Maris had provided us. "We all have our own `standards', our own `prejudices' to contend with," she added, looking up at me as I nodded thoughtfully back. Well "aware" of my own "racism", of the fact that I saw those of other "races" as being "inferior" in some respect to my own race even if one of my best friends had been an American Indian. Like before when I'd known her Janet had the ability to "see" through things, and find the "TRUTH" there behind every situation. Such had served her well in the famous "Great Debates" between her and Hillary Clinton when both ran for President there in 2008. I am glad Tais allowed us to "meet" again...

"I am in some respects still a woman of the 20th Century," I said to her. That was "why", I supposed, that I often "reacted" the way that I did to things. In the 20th Century it was the policy to "educate" everyone, even those who would never be able to "hold" any "productive" position later on in society. In the NEW ORDER this "policy" had come quickly to an end, Janet having pointed out that there was no "value" in doing so here in a social order where only those who were "taxpayers" could ever vote! That spending thousands of credits attempting to educate someone with the "mental age" of a three year old was a simple "waste" of money that could be put to "better" uses somewhere else here now! On the other hand the NEW ORDER did use its "computer technology" to help educate and employ those who were physically handicapped, whose minds of course were just as "good" as anyone else's here.

"I am `aware' of that `fact'," Janet Rogers laughed back.

"But I have learned a few things," I pointed out to her.

"I would like to talk to your `friends'," Janet smiled.

"Socialism has always been `attractive' to those `unable' to `succeed' in a truly `free' economic system," the Leaderess of the World Federation of the 21st Century said as Maris now nodded thoughtfully in reply. "While the `bankruptcy' of socialism itself was proven back even in the last decade of the Twentieth Century, still yet among the `intellectual elite' the basic concept refused to die its proper death. Even after having been disproven by the complete `failure' of any nation who used it to improve the living standards of its people by any great amount."\* \* On the other hand Syndicalism was quite successful in the 21st Century. Syndicalism being what we now call "employee ownership" here in the 20th Century where a group of workers owned their own enterprise. This is, however, still "free enterprise". (JBB)

"You can still find Scribes today who `subscribe' to such ideas," I added, being well aware of Sanda's

own "inclinations" that way at times. Lady Talen being a woman who sometimes failed to realize that history had already disproven many such "ideas"! The memories flooding back of our delightful debates there on my estate that long hot summer back in 2565 when life had been easy. When I'd had few worries but to concern myself with keeping fit.

"Your Prime Minister for `one'," Darlanis "smiled" at me. I had quickly refuted most of Sanda's more "radical" ideas, but she was a smart woman, if one who didn't think quite as deeply as I'd wished she would at times. While as Queen I could easily "deal" with such matters, yet I worried what would happen after my death and Sanda then "served" a Queen less "competent" than I was here! Her own political party was likely to stay in power for decades yet to come, especially as long as Sanda herself still ran it... And Gayle was not Sanda's "match" when it came to "intelligence". The thought occurring to me then that in the long run it didn't matter as "Doomsday" was now only seventy eight years away now! This in turn making me realize that my own children might see it!

"There are always those who look towards `government' to redress their own `grievances'. Who fail to `see' that it is their own failure, not that of society that is the problem here." Sharon ventured, wise beyond her years from being a Queen. From actually having to "deal" with such people upon a regular basis! I supposed such things are as "old" as "government" itself is here.

"No government ever made people `better off' than they would have been without it," Janet Rogers smiled, this being another of her famous "quotations" that have survived the centuries past her death. "Just as no country ever taxed itself into prosperity." \* \* This "quote" is actually from Rush Limbaugh, and was asked of President Bill Clinton in the form of a "question" of whether or not he knew of any country that had ever done so. Naturally Bill Clinton had no "answer" for it, as there is no "answer"... (JBB)

"Didn't the `civil rights laws' of the 20th Century `help' at least `some' people?" Sharon asked, the idea of "civil rights" as such being almost as "alien" here in this era as would be the idea of "welfare as a `right'" as was known back in the Twentieth Century. There are "Blacks", but they are no longer commonplace. In any case the "concept" of "government" interfering in "private relationships" between people is totally "alien" to our cultures just as it would have been back in "Nineteenth Century" America. I once discussed this with June Colt, who couldn't understand why the governments of the past had ever "done" such "things" here... On the other hand I suppose I should "note" here that June is a woman of the 26th Century who just "happens" to have a dark skin. She is no more "aware" of being "black" than I am of being white. There are "racial" prejudices, but they are directed at American Indians for the most part, mostly due to their own warlike ways.

"To give some person a `right', I must then take a `freedom' away from `you'," Janet Rogers smiled back. "And in doing so I must make my government much more `oppressive' than it would otherwise be." Janet going on to explain that these "civil rights laws" were a basic "mistake" in the first place, as they "encouraged" Blacks not to correct their own "behavior" that caused the "discrimination" in the first place. Racial discrimination, like all other forms of "discrimination" being caused in part by the "actions" of the group being discriminated against and simple unthinking prejudice. Blacks being discriminated against in the past for the most part because of their higher crime rates, poor "work habits", all the very same things that other groups managed to eventually "overcome" here by imposing strict "SELF DISCIPLINE" upon themselves. By taking "responsibility" for the actions of others of their own cultural or racial group, thus solving the problem without the "interference" of government. This "last" having been done by everyone else but for the black race. \* \* It is likely here that the black race, used as a "control" by the Lorr in their genetic experiments upon the human race, may be exactly what all of Humanity would have been without the Lorr... The "difference" of ten I.Q. points in average intelligence between Blacks and those of other races is apparently only a further "proof" of what the Lorr "did" for us by genetic alteration. The "work" done by Janet Rogers' scientists in the 21st Century "determined" at the time that it was most likely that

Blacks, unlike the other races, were never exposed to the "intelligence enhancing" effects of evolution caused by the Ice Ages due to the location of Africa and its climate in the four known Ice Ages. Current day Blacks in "civilized" North America "appear" to have the same intelligence levels as whites as a rule from what I've been able to observe of such things. They are, however, usually not "pure blooded Blacks", such being extremely rare in our own social order due to effects of female enslavement after The War. I am told by Tais that those in Africa have degenerated back into savagery, with the "civilization" of the past now recalled only as "myth and legends" to be spoken of around campfires at night. Hatred of Jews on the other hand was due to religious reasons and in Nazi Germany apparently was envy of their own economic success. It should be "noted" here that Trelandar's Constitution prohibits any sort of "discrimination" by the GOVERNMENT against anyone... The GOVERNMENT is also "prohibited" from interfering in "private relationships" between people, something "allowed" in the Empire, which actually does have a "law" much like the "Americans with Disabilities Act" which existed in the last decade of the 20th Century. (Repealed by Janet Rogers in 2010) In this matter Trelandar is much more "libertarian" than Sarn or Orgon, while Dularn is even a bit "more so" yet than is Trelandar. Dularnian "culture" and its achievements are also the "envy" of many. Some of this should be "credited" however to Queen Maris, who is very strongly "libertarian" in her thinking, I should note here too.

"There is a 'difference' between 'equality of opportunity' and 'equality of outcome'," I explained, Janet now smiling back. "A society can give you by its laws the first, but not the second without eventually becoming a 'tyranny' of 'special interests'." This last having been a "hallmark" of the Clinton administration. Of the sort of "ideology" that lingered on afterwards to 'oppose' Janet Rogers there in her early years as America's new Leaderess in the "person" of Hillary Rodham Clinton, the former First Lady.

"What did 'happen' when you told the Blacks that they were no longer going to get 'favors' from the government?" Darlanis asked, the Empress having once met the "worst" of the black race. These being the mutated cannibals infected with a sort of AIDS... A "pestilence" that the Priestesses of Lys eventually wiped out there among the "ruins" of Muskegon, Michigan back there in 2566.

"There were the 'Riots of 2010'," Janet Rogers smiled back. These were the last time anyone tried to "oppose" Janet Rogers by such means. "They 'learned' better than to ever 'riot' again..." The "tone" of her voice leaving no doubts that there was "STEEL" in this woman, that she was truly of the caste of Warriories!! "There were a number of people who 'opposed' me, who sought their own private 'gain' over the 'welfare' of the country," she added. "Organized Labor" had been one such group, eventually "crushed" by the brutal force of the GUARD, much like the "Brown Shirts" of Nazi Germany. The "historical parallels" here leaving no doubts. On the other hand I doubt that Janet really had a "choice" here. America was being torn apart, the world was in the depths of a "depression" not seen for eighty years, and Janet did what she had to do to put things back "together" once again for Mankind... "It is not a 'part' of my life that I take 'pride' in, but on the other hand had I not 'done' what I had, I'm sure history would be far different than it has been," Janet then smiled to all of us!!

## Chapter Twenty Five

"Hillary was 'right' about me," Janet spoke, standing there at the window after the others had left. "There are a number of 'parallels' between my 'NEW ORDER' and the 'Third Reich'," she smiled, turning to face me. I knew Hitler had called his own "society" by the same term, as Hillary Clinton had

often pointed out in her own speeches against Janet Rogers. "And I told her so some years later after there was no `doubt' about things then..."

"You `did' what had to be done," I said, putting my hand on her shoulder as those of my caste do. The sword at Janet's hip leaving no doubts that she truly was of the same caste as I am... Only someone like Janet Rogers could have "reversed" things then. Gave Mankind the few glorious decades that are still remembered.

"I'm glad history didn't judge me too harshly," she smiled.

"Just `what' did she `attack' you on?" I asked, "curious".

"Almost `everything' you could think of," Janet smiled back. "My Medicare `cut backs', `flat rating' of Social Security. my use of `means tests'. The EPA, the FDA, a couple of government agencies that had exceeded their own `missions'. Withdrawal of support for `organized labor', civil rights laws, and so forth. Repeal of the `Americans with Disabilities Act', she added then."

"Everything that should have been `done' decades before," I smiled. As a doctor I was well aware of the need for "cost controls" when you have any system of "government health care". My own profession being masters at extracting the maximum amount of money from "Uncle Sam", who was seen as being a "sucker" anyway!! "Padding" the bill, ordering extra and unnecessary "testing"... Her other actions had been to reduce the "cost" of government, to now bring the country's expenditures in line with its own income! Crushing the "power" of organized labor had been necessary to make the USA "competitive" again with the rest of the world here. As for "civil rights", this was a "mistake" that should have been "corrected" decades before, had the leadership not been "soft headed" about such matters as they'd been back then. Under the political systems of the 26th Century, of course, such "concepts" can never get anywhere due to the "veto powers" of the national monarchs. In any case Blacks are no longer "numerous" enough to represent any sort of a political force here in the 26th Century. And those Blacks I've known here in the 26th Century have held to the same "culture" as the rest of us, their own behavior being no "different" than anyone else. Proving I feel that it is really a matter of "culture", not "race" as such that counts in this case! Several of the Warriresses in my personal guard being "Black"... My own "black" Captain of Warriresses, June Colt, tall and slim, being perhaps the best "example" of what I'm talking about here.

"You think highly of me, don't you?" Janet said to me then.

"You're probably `just what the doctor ordered'," I smiled.

"I sent people by the thousands to `Corrective Labor Camps', the Guard spread a `reign of terror' among those who opposed me," Janet Rogers breathed slowly then, turning her face away from me. "I never executed anyone, but with electronic hypnosis there was no `need'," she added, looking out at a scene far "different" I knew than the peaceful harbor that I saw there beyond the quay...

"You did what needed to be done," I said, giving her a hug.

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"If we could get Janet Rogers to speak before the Senate..." Maris "breathed" as the four of us stood there on the rooftop of her palace looking out over the harbor just after sunset. Maris' own Royal Scribe now there below no doubt feeling she was "gathered in the arms of Lys" in getting this chance to "ask" Janet Rogers herself the sorts of "questions" that have had always puzzled those of that "learned" caste. Maris' words bringing back "memories" of what Darlanis had once hoped to "do" with me five years ago.



"Using" me much as we now hoped to use Janet Rogers!!

"What can she SAY that we don't already know?" I asked them. Except for certain technical details, Janet Rogers certainly was of no actual "benefit" to us except just to "awe" the Senators... It had been a once in a lifetime pleasure to meet Janet, but I'd gotten the impression that Janet herself wasn't all that "proud" now of a lot of the things she'd done, and while she was no doubt "justified" in everything that she'd done, that still didn't mean here that Princess Tara's "troublemakers" might not be able to counter even this "legend" from the past that Tais had given us!\* \* There is a regrettable tendency to "believe" that Janet Rogers "solved" every "problem" that Mankind ever faced, and that all we have to do now is to find out what she did during her life here! This is commonly felt to be more a "Californian" trait than one a Dularnian would follow, although Maris apparently felt otherwise. The same "problem" was known in my time in reference to the writings of the founders of the United States, who while highly "intelligent" men, were still yet "limited" by their own technology.

"She's `JANET ROGERS'!" Darlanis breathed, looking at me as if I'd taken leave of my senses for even suggesting such a thing!

"And if Tais teleports us George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Winston Churchill, and say Ayn Rand, would it do us any more `good'?" I challenged them back as we stood there on the rooftop. "This is a `problem' we have to solve ourselves, not by sitting back and `hoping' that someone from the past will do it for us!"\* \* It was the writings of the 20th philosopher Ayn Rand who first gave me the ideas that I in turn then gave to Janet Rogers here. It was Ayn Rand's writings that formed the basis of the NEW ORDER in the philosophical sense, although I'm doubtful that Ayn Rand would have approved of some of the things Janet Rogers did here. On the other hand Janet did remove the "government" from people's lives to a great degree, repealing most of the "mistakes" that had been made ever since FDR's "New Deal" ushered in "liberalism" as the American version of Europe's own "democratic socialism"...

"I think she is `right'," Maris then breathed, regarding me. "We have to learn to rely upon ourselves, not upon a `messiah'." I suspected that Tais had wished to show us that by giving us the opportunity to meet with Janet Rogers. To talk to this "legend"! I wondered if our approaching "doomsday" had any effect on Tais? Was she trying to "teach" us how to live together in peace here?

"Perhaps Janet can `advise' us," Darlanis offered hopefully, apparently not yet "convinced" of the wisdom of Maris' comment... "Tell us what we should `do', what we should `say' in this case."

"She is completely `unfamiliar' with our societies, and her own was so utterly different from ours that I doubt she could be of much help here," I pointed out, a bit "annoyed" at Darlanis for not understanding the "lesson" that Tais was trying to teach!

"Then `what' do you `suggest' we do?" Darlanis now snapped!

"I am, I suspect, the most `qualified'," I answered back.

"I think you are the `best qualified' for this," Janet said to me as I told her what the decision had been. I was fairly familiar with the past, as much as any Scribe might be, and as the Queen of Trelandar, I was also familiar with the social problems of societies like mine operating at a low level of technology... "What we `seem' to have here now is `something' more like Hillary Clinton's `idea' of a `proper society'," Janet smiled then at me. The concepts of a system of basic health care available to "all" paid for through increases in taxes, along with a system of "poor relief" of the sort any of the 20th Century would have recognized for what it was left few doubts of Princess Tara's "involvement"! While she herself was apparently not "involved" here personally, she still did have her famous "organization" capable of "making

trouble" anywhere in North America. While the first proposal did make "sense", the idea being one I'd been considering myself, the second was just another "welfare scheme", with all the "flaws" that any "government operated system" of "welfare" naturally has!

"Hillary did have a 'book' of her own," Janet pointed out.

"And if Taragot her hands on it..." I mused thoughtfully.

"Hillary had a 'mind' as good as mine," Janet added then.

"Wish I could have seen those 'debates'," I smiled back.

"We have a 'visitor'," Janet spoke, looking past me.

"Like to take another 'trip in time'?" Tais smiled.

"Lorraine!" Hope Simmons breathed, looking up at me as she held a little knickknack there in her hand, the gray silken gown and the silver chain about her throat leaving no doubts now that she was the Queen of 24th Century Trelandar! Hope looking little "different" from when I'd last seen her there in the arena. "I'm sure glad you're back," she added then with a warm smile for me, leaving no doubts in my mind that things were not going well!

"Trouble?" I asked, now taking her hands in mine, suspecting that this was "why" I was here. Amethysta had ruled with an iron hand, and I supposed that neither Hope or Amethysta's son, Prince Albert were up to doing so. Trelandar was no doubt starting to fall apart into feudal fiefdoms, not to be "reunited" until 2565.

"There is a local 'warlord' who has been giving problems," Hope answered, a bird chirping out the window, a view of blue sky leaving little doubts that it was "summertime" here in this era.

"And you have need of the 'services' of a 'Warlady'," I now smiled back, well aware that "professional help" was needed here! The thought also occurring to me that I dared not alter history!!

## Chapter Twenty Six

"Back when my mother 'ran things' these 'lords' of ours knew their 'place'," King Albert spoke, cradling a Boston Terrier in his arms, another in his wife's arms, while a third of the dogs now looked hopefully up at me as I sat there now listening to them tell me of their problems. It being obvious to me that some of the lords had decided that without Amethysta on the throne of Trelandar, they could do pretty much as they wished as once they had before Amethysta had forced them to give her their "fealty".

"Your mother was 'successful' because she understood the need to 'concentrate' her forces," I pointed out. This was in my eyes only "basic tactics", although I supposed it wasn't that easy for two "non-military types" like those I faced to "understand" here. These rebellious nobles would have to be dealt with one at a time, and "dealt with" in such a way that they would be "useful" afterwards in dealing with others of their

own sort. It would also be necessary to see to it here that they didn't combine against us, as their total military strength now considerably exceeded our own from what Amethysta's son had told me! What they "expected" me to "do" here about it was yet another matter!

"You are a 'professional fighting woman'," Hope said to me. She was an excellent swordswoman, but not really a "Warrioress", lacking the "killer instinct" that is the mark of the true "professional" like myself. Her husband nodding hopefully in turn.

"I am only a 'visitor' in this time," I pointed out then.

"You can't help us?" King Albert then asked me directly.

"I will teach you what I know," I spoke, yawning a bit.

"And then it will be up to us," Hope concluded for me.

"'Leadership' is more important than arms," I smiled.

"Perhaps tomorrow then," he smiled, nodding at Hope.

\*\*\*\*\*

"My husband is not really a 'Warrior'," Hope said to me as we walked the streets of 24th Century Trella, both of us to all appearances just a pair of Warrioreesses out seeing the "sights". "His 'interests' are in his dogs and his books," she explained, such "information" no doubt known to the "troublemakers" of 2366.

"The history of Trelandar does not hold much hope," I said. It was, I suspected, impossible to actually "change" history as such. Hope having told me that no one believed here in this time that we'd actually "crossed" the ruins of Los Angeles there to the north of Trella. Even those people who had seen us no longer believed that we'd actually done anything more than just venture a distance into them, as others had here before us upon a "dare".

"And Tais would 'stop' you if you 'did' anything," she said.

"Or 'arm' one of these 'warlords' against us," I "grinned", well aware that she'd done something like "that" with Bob and Carol, giving the Dularnians a bit of extra "help" against me...

"We're like 'puppets' controlled by that woman!" she spoke.

"She's not a 'woman' in the sense we think of one," I said.

"More a 'Goddess' out of mythology," Hope mused, regarding a fruit sellers' stand as the sun now set there over the harbor. I supposed it was "true" in a way, although I did like Tais a lot. She was, I knew, far more "human" than most First Priestesses had been from what Keri had told me of them. Like Janet Rogers Tais was a person who had a "mission" to carry out for all of Mankind.

"I'm wondering if she isn't planning to 'transport' people from the Twenty Seventh Century back to eras like this one," I mused thoughtfully, Hope buying an apple and biting into it now. Fruits such as apples were generally safe to eat without washing. I'd told Hope about what I'd seen there aboard the Gaia when we'd accidentally gone further forward in time than we'd "planned" to.

"Ever consider that the American Indians took to the horse far swifter than you'd expect?" Hope smiled back, seeing me nod.

"Maybe a few Nevadas and Wyomings got sent back," I said.

"There are also certain 'inventions' way back in history," Hope mused, regarding a prostitute strolling by in her "costume". The attire no more "daring" than what Hope herself had once worn.

"How much did your husband 'pay' for you?" I grinned back.

"I never was a slave girl in the legal sense," she replied.

"You were Carol Simmons' daughter," I smiled, recalling a comment Bob had once made about his wife, that she was to "sex" what I was to swordsmanship. No doubt Carol had trained her well in such arts, Hope having the sort of a figure any man might well lust after, especially when clad in just a bit of leather here...

"And we both love Boston Terriers," Hope pointed out to me.

"He is a handsome man," I replied, "And a gentleman too."

"I fear, however, not a true 'warrior'," she answered me.

"No more than you are a 'warrioress'," I pointed out then.

"I wish my mom and dad were here," Hope breathed out softly.

"When I get a chance to 'see' Tais, I'll ask her," I smiled, although I didn't see what Bob and Carol could "do" here either. And any "attempt" on my part to introduce the "weaponry" of the 26th Century would doubtlessly be quickly stopped here by Tais...

"You saw the 'end of the world', didn't you?" Hope said to me as we stopped and watched the sunset down there by the docks. A few couples strolling hand in hand making me think of Jon then. His chain was locked about my throat, a "replacement" as the one he'd put there originally in 2565 had been removed by Amethysta's people when they'd captured us. The gold links marking me as a wife of more than three years, a woman who could become a mother under the laws laid down for us centuries ago by the Priestesses.

"I saw the Earth cold and frozen, circling a neutron star," I answered. Whether or not Tais had taken the Gaia back into the future to see just how and what had happened I didn't know here.

"Did I have children?" Hope now asked, standing beside me.

"Yes," I answered, having checked on that. Sanda had tried to give me what help she could, as had Keri, but the records were rather "spotty", and we didn't really know that much about Hope except that she had been the Queen of Trelandar for at least the rest of this century, apparently dying early in the 25th Century. The "cause of death" was unknown, and this was something I had no intention of telling her, being well aware that such would only worry her needlessly, there being nothing she could do about it!

"It will be your children who will see the end of the world," Hope said to me, voicing thoughts I'd

already considered. All three of my adopted daughters would live that long, as would my son and my daughter to be. Whether Jon would was another "issue" as he would be very close to the end of his span of life. I would not of course, since given a "normal" life span I would die just around the year 2600, forty eight years before "DOOMSDAY"...

"I have `trust' in Tais," I answered, giving her a smile.

"If she herself `lives' that long," Hope pointed out to me.

"Priestesses seem to have unusually long life spans," I replied, recalling the rumors I'd heard from time to time spoken. Those of Mars also had longer life spans than those of Earth, but this was probably due to the effects of lesser gravity upon them.

"The `streets' are `unsafe' after dark," Hope smiled at me.

"I am of the Warrioreses," I smiled, seeing her "nod" back.

"And your trust is in `steel'," Hope added, quoting one of our famous "sayings". I am a swordswoman beyond compare, perhaps the greatest that has ever lived in the history of Mankind here.

"And in `keeping our eyes open'," I grinned in addition.

"That probably would be `wise'," Hope "agreed" with me.

"We do have our `civic duties'," I smiled then in reply.

"This is the `worst dive' in Trella!" Hope gasped in horror!

"Just the sort of a place to buy a drink," I grinned back, pushing the swinging half doors open and then stepping inside. The odor of strong drink, unwashed men, and marijuana assailing my nostrils as a group of burly longshoremen looked up at the sound of the doors swinging back and forth behind the two of us.

"`We' don't `like' your kind around here!" one now snapped.

"Perhaps you have `reasons'?" I smiled, my hand on the hilt of my long slim rapier like sword that has taken so many lives...

"Lorraine...!" Hope softly pleaded, looking at them there. More men getting up from scattered tables, all of them armed. A "situation" now developing that I hadn't exactly planned on here!

"I trust you have not forgot what I taught you," I answered, my blade clearing its sheath with a soft rustle of steel. Hope doing the same, placing her back against mine as we stood there! A SUDDEN "DISORIENTATION" AND THEN WE WERE STANDING ON A MARBLE DAIS, FIRST PRIESTESS TAIS NOW GIVING ME A BIG SMILE OF GREETING! A couple more Priestesses in white gowns quietly watching us all!

"MayLys`bless' my soul, you sure are a `determined' one!" Tais exclaimed, regarding me with her hands there on her hips...

"It would have been a great fight," I smiled back at her.

"I have `need' of you in the `future'," Tais answered me.

"The Gaia has re-entered our time period," another spoke.

"Mother!" Hope gasped, "Dad!" The two standing there.

"Up to your `old tricks again', Tais?" Carol smiled.

"And my second most favorite Warlady..." Bob grinned.

"I'd `better' be `first'," Carol laughed, same as ever!

"If you two would step up there," Tais said to Hope and me.

"Another `trip in time'?" I asked, Tais grinning up at me.

"Just a short trip from `here' to `there'," she smiled...

## Chapter Twenty Seven

"Where?" Hope breathed, Carol's arm around her shoulders. The short skirted brownette now "older" than when I'd seen her before, but still capable I suspected of giving me a "hard time"! Carol having even taught me a few things about irregular warfare! She is the sort of a woman who has no "doubts" about herself too.

"Arsana," the Priestess spoke, blonde like Tais, a gold ankh on its chain hanging between her breasts. I recalled then that I had promised to debate the political radicals in the Senate here. Bob looking around, giving the High Priestess a smile in return. Like most Priestesses I've seen, she was a bit "flat chested" due to having been "desexed" before puberty as is generally done. This is not something commonly known, perhaps because the Priestesses themselves do not wish it to be known to those they "rule". On the other hand such a policy is perhaps "wiser" than you know, doubtlessly saving them from certain "embarrassing incidents"...

"Night again," I said, wondering if it was still the same night that I'd been teleported back to the 24th Century where I'd spent the night and most of the next day before being teleported back to this time. Fortunately Tais hadn't told Bob and Carol of how I'd gotten Hope and myself into a "situation" that could have senselessly resulted too in both our deaths in some tavern brawl! Just because I was too "confident" in my own fighting abilities!!

"Dularn," Carol breathed, her eyes "glistening" a bit here. Here she'd once been a "Warlady", not just a "housewife" like she was back in the 21st Century or earlier in the 20th Century. Bob and Carol were good friends of Janet Rogers, I knew, although I'd understood from Hope that they didn't have any actual "role" in the administration as such except perhaps as "advisors" to Janet.

"What year was it in your time?" I asked, curious to know.

"2019," Bob smiled, giving his now royal daughter a hug.

"I'll see if I can find us a taxi carriage," I smiled.

"Doesn't 'look' any 'different'," Bob said to me as I nodded back, his wife sitting there quietly at his side, perhaps well aware that this would only be a brief "visit" to a land they had learned to love. Recalling too what Maris had told me of finding their last remains the year before, proof that they had finally "come home" back to the land they'd both so loved despite it all!

"And my daughter is now a 'Queen' in her own country," Carol said, her eyes wet with tears as she now regarded Hope beside me. The still famous brownette no longer quite as "provocative" as she'd once been when I remembered her, but still a woman even at her age that might yet turn a male head from time to time here... The provocative "shortness" of her leather skirt having drawn the attention of the carriage's driver, who had perhaps believed that she was a prostitute, only such here wearing a skirt that short!!

"Just 'where' are you people from?" the driver interjected!

"They are 'friends' of the Queen of Trelandar," I retorted! The driver making no further "comment" here as we rattled along, the cobblestoned streets of Arsana little different than those of Trella in this regard, both "my" Trella and "Hope's" own Trella. The Moon shining down upon us as the cool breezes of evening drove away the heat of the day, it having been a warm late June.

"How!?" captain Tori Wells gasped as Bob helped Carol down from the carriage, the officer now "recognizing" her old Warlady! The brownette's attire, her strap boots the mark in this era of a woman who "sold" herself, although in the 21st Century such "attire" did not imply anything of the sort. The prostitute of the 21st Century often then wearing attire more suited for the beach!

"Still keeping a good watch?" Carol teased Tori in reply.

"ByLysits good to see you again!" Tori breathed back.

"I'm just a 'visitor' this time," Carol informed Tori.

"It's a 'different' world now," Maris' officer smiled.

"With 'age' comes 'wisdom'," I smiled, Bob nodding back.

"Seems almost if Tais is now building up an 'expeditionary force'," Darlanis mused, the Empress swirling the brandy there in her goblet. The hour late, nearmidnight, the Moon shining down upon the now sleeping city of Arsana. The thought going through my mind that seventy eight years from now great tidal waves would wash over Dularn. Mile high waves as the neutron star yanked the Earth out of its orbit around the sun and dragged it off into the cold icy depths of interstellar space. Only in the center of the land masses, using the technology of the Priestesses and that of the Women and the Lorr could any survive by tunneling beneath the surface down to the internal heat yet stored under the surface...

"To where?" Janet Rogers asked, the same "thought" going through my mind. I rather doubted it, as it seemed more "likely" here that Tais just wanted to make sure that we'd stop Princess Tara's latest attempt to overthrow our societies in favor of the sort of "disorder" that would allow her to gain "dominion" of at least one of our countries, perhaps Orgon, now torn politically.

"More likely Tais is trying to teach us to work together," I ventured, glancing at Bob and Carol sitting there with Hope. I'd once crossed blades with Carol, held her life in the palm of my hand. Marked her face with my point in a way that would leave no doubts that she'd been "bested". That had been my revenge on her for what she'd done to my ships, to my own "reputation" there... Now all that "hatred" was gone, and I could see Carol as just a woman who had been "used" by Tais for her own political purposes. "She's only got seventy eight years to 'civilize' us here," I now added, not really thinking of what I was saying to them all here!

"And 'WHAT' happens 'seventy eight' years from now!?" Maris "asked", her eyes, as green as emeralds, glowing hotly into mine. The others save now but Janet Rogers, all "staring" right at me! "Is the EVIL ONE returning to Earth?" she ventured, such being a "prediction" there in the BOOK OF LYS that'd come true last year!

"A neutron star passes through the solar system in 2648 and drags the Earth out of its orbit," I replied, Janet nodding back. Telling them what I'd seen for myself aboard the Gaia when the ship had accidentally traveled too far "forward" into the future.

"The destruction caused by the Earth being dragged out of its orbit around the sun would in many ways 'exceed' that of The War," Bob spoke up, glancing at Janet Rogers, who nodded in turn. "There would be great tidal waves miles high that would sweep for perhaps hundreds of miles inland, terrible earthquakes like nothing Mankind has ever experienced before, perhaps the rise of new mountain ranges, thousands of volcanoes pouring out molten lava."

"I think I'd better not 'plan' on having children," Maris said, the look on her face leaving no doubts as to her feelings.

"I believe that Tais plans to transport a portion of Mankind back in time, send other portions to other worlds," I ventured... "There is some 'evidence' from history that this did 'happen'," I added now, recalling the conversations I'd had earlier with Hope. "We know for example that the American Indians seemed to adapt to the horse far faster than what one normally would have expected," I explained, such indicating to me at least that perhaps some of the Nevadas and Wyomings were sent back to the Sixteenth Century.

"The question has never been 'answered' either why we of the western coast of North America managed to rebuild some sort of a civilization when those elsewhere failed to do so," Darlanis ventured, raising a "point" that had puzzled me off and on now too! There was an "Empire" in Europe, but I knew little about it except for what Yvette had been able to tell me about it years ago. Mexico and parts of South America had managed to build some sort of a "civilization", but most of these were little "higher" than those once "raised" by the American Indians there centuries ago. There was some sort of "civilization" in China and Japan, but in this case too they had not reached the "levels" that we had here, perhaps because they had not had the "advantage" of having "me"! \* \* I am of course "responsible" for all the "advanced" technology, although Dularnian Builders did manage to reproduce the various crossbows and compound longbows used back in the 21st Century...

"The Lorr 'knew' of the 'Gaia' for centuries, but never were able to determine 'where' it came from," I said, recalling what Aurora had once told me. The Priestesses of Lys of this time being of course "The Others" that the Lorr had always so "feared"!

"There is a 'problem' in that those of our future would have knowledge not a part of the time to which they were sent," Sharon mused thoughtfully, looking now at me and then over at Darlanis.



"The Priestesses can `take care' of `that'," Carol smiled.

"I hated you for what you `did' with Hope until Tais told me `why'," Carol said to me after the others had retired for the night, Bob standing there patiently waiting for his wife to come.

"You did an excellent job of raising her," I smiled back, remembering her courage and bravery when we "crossed" the ruins.

"At least she escaped The War," Carol mused thoughtfully.

"I'm glad we had this chance to see each other," I said.

"I am too," the former Warlady of Dularn replied back.

## Chapter Twenty Eight

"You can wait for me," Carol said, Bob nodding, leaving us, closing the door behind himself. Carol standing there before me. She wore a sword at her hip, which I knew that she could use too.

"I'm `scared'," Carol said softly, looking up into my eyes. She was no longer "young", no longer that provocative delight who Bob had once called a "Queen of Sex and Sensuality" with reason. She still had a pretty good figure, but her face was starting to reveal her age now, Carol having been born back in the year 1953. Even so, she didn't look as "old" here as most women her age did. Physically Carol looked about the same "age" as Janet Rogers did, such being "due" to the anti-aging serums she'd received in 2567. By present standards here she looked about a hundred and twenty.

"The `end of the world' is nothing for you to worry about," I answered. Carol would die in the year 2033 in joint "suicide" with her husband. Maris had found their bodies only last year... "And we do know that there is `life after death'," I assured her.

"I look at myself in the mirror, see the `gray' in my hair," she spoke, going to the window, looking out at the moonlit view. "An `old woman' reliving now the `glories' of her `lost youth'." I knew she now dyed her hair, exercised daily to keep her figure. Bob was getting noticeably gray now around the temples, I'd seen, a bit "thick" in the waist as time took its "toll" of him too....

"The anti-aging serums never did `work' on me," I told her.

"What?" Carol breathed, turning about, facing me now there.

"I've got perhaps thirty, thirty five years left," I said.

"Does your husband `know'?" Carol asked, standing there.

"There is nothing even Tais can `do'," I said to her now.

"You will `age', he will not," Carol spoke, seeing me nod.

"I think I have a `death wish'," I said, telling her of what I'd done there in 24th Century Trella with Hope at my side then. Going into a bar, looking for someone to cross swords with there!

"Maybe we both ought to go out and get `drunk'," she smiled.

"People are going to `wonder' about us," I said as Carol pushed open the swinging doors and stepped inside a dockside bar. A number of burly seamen and longshoremen looking up, giving the sexy brownette the "once over", Carol still at her age being able to turn heads, although I think it was more the shortness of her skirt and the 21st Century strap boots that she wore that did it!

"Let them," Carol grinned, striding into the room as if she "owned" the place. There was no doubt that she was truly of the Warriresses, a fact I'm sure everyone there quickly noticed too! The sword at her hip seemingly "fitting", Carol being a woman who in some ways perhaps reminds me now too of Princess Lara of Baja.

"Over here," I replied, spying a table against a corner wall where we might be less visible to those who inhabited this dive. Such would of course also insure that no one got behind us here. I tend to be a woman who mistrusts nearly everyone that she sees. It is, I am told, a good "trait" for any Warriress to have too.

"I think you were `born to the caste'," Carol smiled back, pulling back a chair, standing there now looking over the place.

"I `am', I fear, not a very `trusting' person," I answered.

"I wouldn't have had the marriage I had without you," she "grinned", plopping down in one of the wooden chairs next to me. "Found that there was `more' to life than being `good in bed'."

"What'll you have?" a bar wench asked, strolling over.

"Skirt on her as `short' as any I've seen in Seaside," Carol grinned as the wench strolled off, the velvet band about her neck leaving no "doubts" either that she was a member of the "Guild". Many such women "moonlight" in places like this, serving drinks when they aren't "working" in the rooms upstairs. The "look" she'd given Carol had left no doubts as to what she thought too!

"Wears strap boots like you do too," I grinned in reply.

"I'm responsible for the `style'," Carol smiled back.

"Figured someone `was'," I smiled, knowing Janet Rogers.

"`Make love, not war'," my sexy companion smiled in reply.

"I don't believe history would have been the `same' without you," I grinned, watching the bar wench returning with our order. The thought going through my mind that Tais doubtlessly had made "sure" that Bob and Carol would return back to their own era too!

"I'm not as `stupid' as some people have thought," she said. "Men who are sexually frustrated are more likely to be violent." Carol going to say that she'd instructed Janet Rogers to do every thing that she could

to make sex just as "available" as possible. The "concept" was probably not "original" with Carol, but she did put it to good use, as I'm sure most of my readers now are aware.

"You'd better not stay," the bar wench spoke in a soft voice as she set the drinks down on the table. "Our guild leader is here, and she doesn't tolerate `scabs'," the wench said to Carol.

"I'm a married woman, not a prostitute," Carol grinned back.

"No `decent' woman would wear clothing like yours," the bar wench retorted, not believing. A tall brunette descending the stairs that led to the second floor, the woman having the sort of a figure that left no doubts that she was a professional fighter! And the velvet band about her throat and her attire left no doubt either that she was no doubt the local Prostitute Guild leader...

"Looks like `trouble' coming this way," Carol noted now.

"I'll take `care of it'," I answered, getting up then.

The woman stopped, her left hand on the hilt of her sword, the bar room suddenly "quiet" as those there saw me approaching, most Dularnians of course knowing the attire of the Imperial Warriress, the black silk and leather that is almost our trademark.

"I see the `Organization' hired a `sword'," she said to me, the term referring to the criminal organization of Princess Tara's which is well known all over North America, much like the Mafia was back in 20th Century America. There are, I might note here, those who make their living hiring out their "skills" to the highest bidder, professional "swordfighters" who live and die by the skills they possess, such often being used by criminal organizations like Tara's to terrify honest people into submission.

"You are having `problems' with the `Organization'?" I asked, wondering if Tarahad decided to come out of "retirement"! Tarahad once tried to "control" the entire "underworld", along with everything else that she could manage to seize control of... This was one of the "reasons" why Taraso hated Lara Warsan, as Lara had organized the Prostitute Guild, freeing the women of first Sarn and later on other nations from the Princess' control!

"You're not one of `them'?" she breathed thankfully in turn.

"I am Lorraine Richards, of `whom' you may have heard," I said, her eyes suddenly getting "big" as she realized just "who" she could have been facing! While I am probably not as "good" as some of the stories that are told about me claim, I am no doubt a swordswoman that no one would ever want to face either here now!

"Was kind'a hoping to see you in `action'," Carol grinned up at me as I brought the Guild leader to the table. I'm sure she didn't really mean it, as I'd had "enough" of killing people for "entertainment" there back in 2365 when Queen Amethysta put me in the arena there in Trella and made me kill people to entertain the rabble of her city. Granted, Amethysta was and is a "barbarian", but even so it isn't anything I look back on with pleasure.

"People `die' when I draw my blade," I pointed out to her.

"I'm just `not' myself here," Carol quickly apologized then.

"There is something `familiar' about you," the woman said, regarding Carol with puzzlement. I supposed

it was possible that she'd seen Carol back a couple years ago, when the brownette had been the Warlady of Dularn. Or perhaps even served on the North Star back there in 2567 when Imperial California painfully found that Maris Marn had found herself a true Warlady there in Carol!!

"I'm Carol Simmons," Carol smiled, now introducing herself, briefly trying to explain some of the "paradoxes" of time travel. It being known by some at least that the Priestesses of Lys had the amazing ability to transport people from one era to another. Such is generally considered by most people to be "magic" anyway.

"I served on the North Wind when we `took' the Athena," the Guild leader smiled back, telling us her name was Landis Dan, and that she'd been a petty officer on the ship under captain Miles.

"Not a part of my life that I take pride in now," I said.

"Perhaps you could speak to Queen Maris..." Landis said.

"I think perhaps a few `volunteers'..." I mused back.

"I want `in' on `this!'" Carol quickly interjected.

"I doubt that Tais would `approve'," I pointed out.

"Hell, I'm still pretty damn `good!'" Carol snapped!

"We have Hope and Darlanis," I mused thoughtfully then.

"Better leave Maris and Sharon out of it," Carol suggested, neither one of them being very much of a "swordswoman" actually.

"Janet Rogers probably wouldn't be any `good'," I now added. The "look" on Landis Dan's face as she heard making me wish for a good camera, not the big bulky things they have now, but one of those neat little cameras like Hope had back in the 21st Century. Ones using those little "disks" you put in a viewer to look at...

"I'll round up all the `girls' who can use a sword," she spoke, chugging down a beer like some 20th Century truck driver!

## Chapter Twenty Nine

"I was about ready to have my guard `comb' the city for you two!" Maris Marn exclaimed as Carol and I staggered back in, both of us several sheets to the wind at least, the brownette having a "hollow leg" that I'd had a hard time matching drink for drink... With the Queen of Dularn was everyone else, including Janet too! A couple of the Royal Guard with us, seeing we got this far now. Both of them having wooden faces trying to conceal their grins...

"Been planning ourselves a `WAR'!" Carol grinned drunkenly back at the Queen, who didn't seem to think too much of either of us right now as she stood there with a robe pulled around herself against the chill of the night. Darlanis grinning to herself, while Bob looked concerned and Hope somewhat "ashamed" of Carol!

"Tara's been making `trouble' again," I informed the Queen.

"I'll take over from here," Bob smiled, going to his wife.

"Here, Lorraine, lean on me," Janet Rogers smiled to me.

"You know, you do look a little like me," I said to her.

"I'll come along and `help'," Sharon now volunteered.

"Put your drunken old stepmother to bed?" I grinned.

"You took care of me lots of times," she reminded me.

"You were one of the `good' parts of my life," I smiled.

"The `morning after'," Maris grinned, looking at me as I joined them for breakfast, Carol giving me a smile and a nod too, the dark circles under her eyes leaving no doubt of our drinking. I could have slept another couple hours, but we had much to "do", or so at least Maris had so told me here when her slave awoke me. Maris tends to be a little "plump", not objectionably so, but I'd sweat ten pounds off her if I still owned her, I'll mention here. Janet Rogers smiling, in "appearance" almost as "old" as Carol... I wondered if I'd look like that in another fifteen years or so.

"Probably still a battle or two left in her," Bob grinned.

"There is a rather amazing resemblance between you and her," Maris commented as we ate, looking at me and then at Janet there.

"People used to think we were `mother and daughter' back in the 20th Century," I smiled back, recalling the glances we'd get. Both Janet and I were brunette, dark eyed, tall and rather slim. I'm the taller of the two, but we did look a lot alike now too...

"We share the same blood types, the same fast reaction times, and we are both `skilled' with the sword," Janet answered. "I `doubt' that I could `match' Lorraine, but I've `bested' Carol quite a few times, as I'm sure she'd admit if you ask her here."

"She fences like you," Carol grinned, nodding over at Janet. "And she's also `bested' Hope a number of times," Carol "added".

"There's nothing in the history books of it," Maris spoke.

"I never wished to fence in competition," Janet replied.

"How `good' are you?" I asked Janet as we squared off in Maris' exercise room, everyone including Tori Wells watching us... If Janet could "best" Hope she could well be a "Queen of Swords".

"Don't know, never got `beat' after the first year or so," Janet laughed back. "Hope gave me the best `fights' of any," she grinned, taking a secure grip of her foil as we faced each other. It being obvious here that I might have to "exert" myself a bit!

I reached out, tapped Janet's foil with mine. Her sudden attack so swift that I could only partly parry it, having to even dodge down and to one side! And not even Darlanis could DO THAT! Janet coming in at me like none ever has, her attack so much like the "sort" I use that it was almost as if I was fighting myself!!

"I'd do `better' if I was ten years younger," Janet smiled as we drew apart, the Leaderess' swordsmanship truly awesome yet!

"I'm glad we're `friends'," I grinned, returning her attack. Putting all my awesome skills learned over a lifetime into play! Not even Darlanis herself could stand against such an attack, but Janet Rogers DID! The thought going through my mind that perhaps I'd finally met a woman who was actually my own EQUAL here! And that woman had been Janet Rogers, THE JANET ROGERS of legend, who had died in the year 2045. The woman who had once "ruled" Earth!

I was aware of only Janet's foil, of countering her attacks. She was an aggressive swordswoman, like none I've ever faced before. Her fighting style so very much like my own has become... She was so "good" that I was being forced to use all of the old "tricks" that I've learned in a lifetime of fencing and actual combat, tricks for which she had an "answer" for every one too!!!

"Always wondered how `good' I was," Janet breathed, stepping back, both of us breathing hard from this swift interplay that I had no doubt had amazed everyone there who had seen it. A match that in its way perhaps I think represented the absolute "limits" of what can be achieved with the foil. "Taught Hope a lot too."

"You're obviously the 21st Century's greatest swordswoman," I admitted, suspecting that in all the history of swordsmanship she probably ranked only second to me. And unlike Hope, Janet had a "killer instinct" that I knew would really tell in combat!!

"I am `of the Warriories'," the old Leaderess smiled back. I recalled too that she'd often spoken of such things, such being written up in the history books. She was probably the "first"...

"I'm glad we're `friends'," I smiled, putting away my foil.

"If anything happens..." Maris breathed, looking out the window as it grew dark, a fine mist of rain now falling as the sun set unseen there in the west. The "thought" going through my mind that like Carol, she was probably "good in bed", especially if you liked them a bit on the "plump" side as many men did here.

"It won't," Carol snapped, the tone of her voice betraying.

"I'd feel better if neither of you were going," Maris said. I had no doubts what she was "implying" here, nor did Carol too!

"I'm not `over the hill' quite yet, Maris!" Carol snapped.

"Easy," Bob smiled, now hugging the brownette to himself.

"Be `careful', Lorraine," Sharon spoke, touching my arm.

"The 'Organization' has been 'roughing up' our 'sisters'," Landis Dan said, Darlanis beside me hooded to conceal her features, that beautiful blonde hair that makes her so stand out. "Trying to make us 'knuckle under' and pay them 'protection'..." Tori nodding, glancing at her three "volunteers" from her force. "They are also running their own 'girls' against us here too..."

"And you need some 'champions'?" Bob now "grinned" in reply. Landis Dan was good looking, and her skirt was even shorter than Carol's, I'd noticed, Bob still yet being a man who noticed such!

"You could 'say so'," Landis Dan smiled right back at him.

"About like what I did for Lara when she started," Darlanis mused, her eyes gleaming like two sapphires meeting mine in turn. The Empress' skill with a blade only surpassed by Janet and me.

"We can't afford to hire the swords we need," Landis said, explaining that the criminal organization sent out its "goons" in groups of up to half a dozen "toughs" to "shake down" the girls! The fact that all the women carried swords, and that many of them were quite competent swordswomen didn't deter the "goons" either! There being very few swordswomen who can stand against such odds.

"You have a Queen, it should be her duty to offer 'protection'," Darlanis spoke in level tones, the "implications" plain! "In the Empire your Guild enjoys the 'protection' of the Crown," she added, making a "point" that I was glad Maris wasn't hearing!

"Such 'protection' has its 'price'," Carol pointed out then, Darlanis' 'price' having been the Guild's own "independence" too.

"Our 'problem' is fighting criminals, not 'politics'," Janet spoke up then, a "note" to her voice that left no doubts of "who" she was. A woman who had one time had ruled the entire Earth... "And there should be no 'partnership' between government and 'organized labor'," she pointed out, Darlanis nodding back in reply.

"She's still the 'same' as ever," Carol grinned as the others left to go to their own "positions". Darlanis, Janet, and Hope in one group, Tori and her own Warrioreses in the other. I wasn't too "sure" about Tori and her women being able to handle a force of say half a dozen men at a time, but Tori said that she was a capable swordswoman, and that those with her were the best.

"Different political philosophy," I smiled, well aware that Darlanis was somewhat "liberal" in her own political beliefs too!

"I 'respect' our Queen, but I don't want to 'serve' her like those in the Empire have to serve Darlanis," Landis Dan added... I'd put an "end" to such things in Trelandar, although I too did "use" the Guild from time for my own political purposes here too! On the other hand I was more "honest" with the women, and tried to see to it that they understood just "why" I was doing so here.

"I don't think Lara ever had a 'choice'," Bob mused in turn. A bar wench bringing the drinks we'd ordered, the four of us for all practical purposes posing here as just being common patrons.

"She's basically a very 'good' person," I spoke, rising to Darlanis' "defense". "A sort of 'She-Ra' in some ways," I added.

"Hillary Clinton wasn't an 'evil' person either," Carol then said, sipping now at her drink. "At least she

didn't think so."

"The 'Queen of America'," Bob grinned, "That was Hillary."

## Chapter Thirty

"Don't look like anything's going to 'happen'," I said, sipping at my beer, the "taste" not all that enjoyable any more now. We'd spent most of the evening discussing 21st Century politics, comparing them to those of the 20th Century and the 26th here... Bob saying that had not Janet been as "competent" as she was, it was possible that Hillary Clinton would have been President. On the other hand the American "taxpayers" were well "educated" that Mrs. Clinton was no "friend" of theirs, and they decided in the secrecy of the voting booth to put their "trust" in Janet Rogers rather than in Mr. Limbaugh, who was the head of the "conservative movement" calling for policies much like what Janet offered. Janet's main "advantage" here being that she was "Libertarian", whereas Rush Limbaugh really didn't believe that much in freedom. Not in the same way in any case as did Janet Rogers at the time.\* \* Janet tended to become more "authoritarian" in her later years, but she did remain "true" to the idea of "keeping the government off people's backs" that she campaigned on back there in 2008... These conversations of course utterly "fascinating" Landis Dan, who like most people of this era knew very little of our history. I've also read novels supposedly set in the 20th Century that are so historically "inaccurate" that they made me laugh in reading them. Stories that hopelessly "confused" the technologies of the 20th Century with that of the 21st Century into a real mix mash!!

"Maybe the 'others' had more 'luck'," Bob grinned in reply.

"Trouble!" Landis breathed softly a few minutes later, the group of "men" who now entered the establishment obviously not the usual sorts who came here. Being more the types who "prowl" the streets late at night and waylay honest citizens seeking to return to their homes. The same types that I'd been trying to "deal with" in Trella, while being at the same time denounced by Les Hawkins and his gang for my "reign of terror" that my Warriresses were now "inflicting" upon the so called "honest" citizens of Trella. Said "honest citizens" being the same sort of "low lifes" that used to prowl the streets of American cities back in both the 20th and the 21st Centuries. Although I do believe that in the 21st Century they at least "did" something more effective about it by castrating any violent criminal. In the 20th Century they just let them back out on the streets again after serving usually quite short jail sentences, teaching them little but that "crime did pay" in a society no longer willing to "punish" them.

I saw one of them grab the bar wench and shove her roughly back against the bar, while the others stood there and laughed as another walked around behind the bar to help himself to things. The few other patrons in the place sitting quietly at the tables. The bartender now shrinking back, terrified of these brutal men.

The "caste codes" do not apply when dealing with those who live outside the law, outlaws being "fair game" for anything you wish to do, much different than it was back in the 20th Century when the criminal had more "rights" than did his own victims! They had not considered the possibility of anyone "interfering"! No doubt believing that their numbers would "scare off" anyone!



My attack was "announced" by the blood curdling scream of the attacking Warriress, my sword thrust driving into a man's neck and then tearing free as my razor sharp stainless steel blade then slashed another's throat only half a second later on! My return slash cutting a man's forearm as he raised his arm to defend himself, while Bob and Carol, along with Landis now engaged the other three in a clashing ringing of our steel blades! My man going for his sword, allowing me to drive my blade home! The bartender reaching over the bar with a truncheon and giving one a sharp blow to the head, while Carol and Bob killed theirs just before Landis slipped her blade into the last one's heart!!

"We'll take this one to the palace," I smiled, standing there, the first several inches of my sword wet with human blood. The various patrons sitting there in awe, knowing we were not the sort of people that anyone wanted to get "involved" with here... "Maybe 'learn' something 'useful'," I smiled, Carol nodding back. In this age there are no laws against the use of "torture", which means of course that criminals are well aware of what can happen!

"Quiet night," Darlanis grinned, a bit "drunk", I suspected as we met back at Maris' palace, the Queen having quickly seen to it that our "prisoner" enjoyed the "comforts" of the pits beneath the palace where it was cold and damp the year around, and one soon made the acquaintance of various sorts of "life" there too!

"Maybe it is time I took a 'hand' in things," Maris spoke.

"Better if you let 'us' take care of it," Tori ventured.

"Like Lorraine's in Trella?" the Queen smiled back now.

"My 'GUARD' does the 'same'," Janet Rogers pointed out.

"What you 'do', you 'do' on your own," Maris warned Tori.

"What's a 'matter' with you?" Carol snapped at the Queen!

"I'm sure she has her 'reasons'," Bob spoke, Maris nodding.

"I'm under a lot of 'pressure'," Maris Marn answered back. "Sometimes I wish I was back on the North Star instead of here." Maris having aroused considerable "opposition" in the last couple years by some of the things for which she'd taken a moral stand. Things that even I hadn't ever dared attempt to do in Trelandar! She'd made herself a lot of political enemies, and I suspected it was quite possible here that her "enemies" now had a "majority"!! Not enough to "depose" her, but enough to see to it that no more laws she favored would be passed, and that her "effectiveness" as Queen of Dularn was considerably reduced in many political ways!

"I'll give you the 'military support' of the Empire if it comes to 'that'," Darlanis spoke up then. "I'd rather see you on the throne of Dularn than some 'socialist radical'," she grinned!

"I would have thought you would welcomed seeing Dularn torn apart by political radicalism," Maris replied, looking up at her. The tone of her voice leaving no doubts as to her feelings here.

"We stood together side by side there in the 'north'," the Empress answered. "Faced together that 'she-demon' from Hell..." I supposed sharing such an "experience" might be "something" that would "alter" one's viewpoints towards another. There is a "sisterhood of the sword" that few outside of our caste "understand". "And 'shared blood'," Darlanis added, Maris nodding softly back. It is not a "part" of

our caste codes, but yet perhaps should be.

"We `value' such things as `honor'," I said to Janet then.

"Perhaps one can be `too civilized'," Janet smiled back.

"The `wisdom of the ages'," Carol smiled to Bob then.

"Which we are fortunate to know," Hope then grinned.

"Sang like a `bird'," Tori grinned, Bob giving her a smile. Our captive had wisely decided that telling us what we wanted to "know" was better than being drowned. Carol had dreamed that up. There is a pool beneath the palace that connects to the harbor. The water level in it rises and falls with the tide twice a day. The man had been placed in the pool helplessly bound to a beam at low tide with the water level up to his chin. Carol had told him a very "descriptive" story of just how unpleasant it is to drown!

"Didn't really learn that much that we didn't already know," the brownette added, sitting down there at the table and helping herself to the scrambled eggs and half a dozen small sausages... "But on the other hand I'm sure Tara's `Organization' will be well aware that we aren't all the `pushovers' that they thought."

"Terrorism can be a `two edged' sword," Janet smiled then.

"My thoughts exactly," Carol smiled, glancing over at me.

"We should try to gain a little `information' if we can," I smiled, glancing at Darlanis and Janet Rogers. The Prostitute Guild would provide the "disturbance" we needed with the "Molotov Cocktails" I'd quickly made up for them to use. I had decided to "fight fire with fire", to carry the battle back to the "enemy"!! Carol giving me a big grin as she sat there listening to me talk.

"You do have a competent `Warlady'," Janet said to Darlanis.

"I have always thought so too," the Empress now smiled back.

"`War is the application of violence against a specific objective'," I smiled, now quoting from the "Warrioress' Handbook". "We are waging `war', not terrorism, which is the application of violence against no specific objective," I added, Janet nodding. Such was not as clearly "understood" in the past as it is now... The thought going through my mind just then too that the "Batman" there in Trella had been waging "war", not "terrorism" as such!! This in turn dredging up the "question" that Tais had ventured...

"I'm glad you're a `friend'," Maris smiled, looking at me.

"Sometimes it takes a `few good women'," Hope commented.

"To `do' what needs to be `done'," she smiled in turn.

"I am glad to have lived in this era," Darlanis smiled.

"Sword salute," I said then, drawing mine, touching theirs.

"Sisters of the Sword," the Empress of California said then.

"A time to be remembered," Janet Rogers commented to us all. The tears that glistened in all our eyes spoke much I think then.

## Chapter Thirty One

"Wait for my signal," I said, Tori nodding there in the darkness, the sky cloudy, the stars for the most part now hidden. It was quite late at night, well pastmidnightin any case here. The log they'd use as a battering ram lying there in the shadows.

"Yes, your majesty," the captain of Maris' guards grinned.

"There won't be any doubt we're `responsible'," Hope spoke.

"Knowing and `proving' are two different things," Tori said, taking the words right out of my own mouth before I could speak!!

"Higher than this building," Darlanis spoke, looking up. We had planned to come across the rooftops like burglars often do. The building we needed to gain access to being about ten feet higher than the roof of the building on which we were standing.

"You and I should be able to swing Hope up," I suggested.

"If there's a guard up there..." Janet breathed softly.

"I'm `good' enough with a sword," Hope assured her then.

"O.K., lets `do' it," the Empress snapped back now at me.

"Glad she isn't Maris," Darlanis breathed as we lifted Hope. The Queen of Dularn being rather "overweight", as I've mentioned.

"Up she goes..." I hissed, lifting on Hope's booted foot. Darlanis doing the same, the Empress clad in a black tunic and hose, her golden hair under a stocking cap to conceal its color.

"Be careful!" Janet whispered, there being a gap between the two buildings which Hope could very slip down between to possible death or at least serious injury giving the "drop" right here... Darlanis leaning up, putting a hand under Hope's foot, grunting with the effort as she almost shoved Hope right up over the roof!

"Strong, isn't she," I whispered to Janet, who nodded back. Hope waving down to us, then disappearing over the roof top now.

"Trouble!" Darlanis hissed, some sort of "outcry" above us!

"Sounded like a man, not a woman," Janet offered then as we stood there waiting, wondering just what

had transpired here now!

"Gave us a bad moment there," Darlanis spoke as Hope put her head over the edge and reached down for Janet, who would go next.

"They did have a guard, but he was asleep on the job," Hope answered, her grin there in her tones concealed by the darkness. She was just a bit too "calm", which left no doubts here either!

"What did you `do'?" I asked the Queen. "Run him through?" One does not "silence" a sentry with a sword thrust, I may note. In any case you first must cover their mouths to "silence" them.

"Tried to slash his throat with my sword," she answered as she took hold of Janet's wrists, Darlanis and I now boosting the Leaderess up over the edge of the roof top with Hope's help here.

"We all have to `learn'," Darlanis grinned as I was next to be boosted up over the roof top, Janet and Hope having hold of my wrists while Darlanis there below shoved up against my feet here.

"Should have brought a rope," Janet Rogers said to me as we looked down at Darlanis standing there below us. The thought going through my mind that it would have made more sense to have had me come last, so that I could boost Darlanis up while Janet and Hope helped from their end. Now we would have to horse the Empress up by brute strength, and I wasn't sure we could do that!

"This will work `better'," I said, climbing over the edge, hanging for a brief second by my fingers and then pushing back with my feet so that I landed back on the roof top next to Darlanis. Darlanis giving me a nod as she put her boot in my cupped hands, that big blonde's good hundred and fifty pounds too all I could lift as I hoisted her up far enough for Janet and Hope to grab her hands. Then the rest was easy, with Darlanis' powerful muscles to assist lifting me back up on to the roof beside them.

"I'll try to do `better' next time," Hope whispered to me as I looked at the body of the luckless guard they'd left up here. Darlanis lifting up the trap door, Janet with drawn sword ready to "greet" anyone who might be below. Her face only a pale shadow there in the darkness, the last stars now gone behind clouds. I wondered what thoughts went through the mind of the Leaderess.

"Don't `worry' about it," I smiled, going to the edge of the roof and looking down at the street there some forty feet below. Few structures in this era go much more than five stories due to the lack of structural steel, most buildings being made of brick. I "flicked" my lighter a couple times, seeing an answering "glow" from the street below that left no doubts Tori was "ready" here.

Dashing across the roof top back to the trap door, I then climbed down the stairs there in the darkness behind the others, the attic of the building still quite warm from the heat of the day. A muffled yelling below us leaving no doubts that Tori and her women from the Prostitute Guild were now attacking the place!

With a booted foot Darlanis kicked open a door, the men in their straps, some without even these turning, their swords naked in their hands as several nude women then fled in terror out a doorway! Janet and Darlanis now engaging, Hope to the Empress' right, while I took my position to Janet's left, our long keen blades dealing out death with almost every stroke we made then...

I saw the last man flee in terror, taking Darlanis' flung sword between his shoulder blades, the Empress striding up to the still thrashing body and then yanking it free as we stood there. Janet having told me in private that Domino Tremaine was much of the same sort of a woman as Darlanis, which wasn't too

surprising considering just "who" had provided the ovum to form her from. I understood too that Bob and Carol had met the woman in 1990, which raised all sorts of questions for which I had no "answers"! The noises coming from below indicating that the prostitutes had decided not to use their fire bombs, but their swords instead...

"One `survivor'," Tori grinned, the naked man kneeling there before her. She is a busty woman, and almost another "Carol" in a way, although they don't really look all that much alike here.

"No doubt Carol and you will learn `something'," I smiled.

"`Mean bitch' when you do get down to it too," Tori grinned.

"Take our wounded and dead with us," I answered her back, the prostitutes looking about themselves, others nursing wounds. We'd lost three, the "enemy" perhaps a dozen or so here, I knew.

"Seems the city's guardsmen were otherwise `engaged'," Tori noted. I supposed that Maris was able to arrange that "much"... It being obvious to me that Maris didn't really have what it took to be the Queen of a country, although she was certainly capable enough when it came to fighting a war with someone, we'd learned! Whether the problem was that she was "too nice" in some ways, or just a matter of not understanding the "situation" was something Darlanis and I had discussed earlier without any conclusions now.

"Something `chewing' at you?" I asked Tori, standing there.

"I wish Maris had a little of `you'," she answered me back.

"If things had been different, you could have had Darlanis," I answered, well aware that Darlanis was certainly more capable. I suspected that Maris was "smarter", but Darlanis was the sort who understood the "realities of life", and dealt with them too!!

"I admire Maris, but we need a `stronger' Queen," she said. Telling me a "confidence" that I knew I could never tell Maris...

"When Maris commanded the North Star `us' Imperials had no doubts as to her competency," I said to her, Tori grinning back.

"Perhaps she should be reminded of `that'," Tori replied.

"You aren't going to get `away' with this!" the woman screamed at Maris, shaking her fist at the Queen of Dularn here! It was late at night, when all good people were home in bed now. Perhaps three a.m., although I didn't know the exact time here. It had not taken long for our actions to receive the notice they deserved. This blonde being the first of Tara's spawn we'd seen! Whether or not the Princess was "involved" here I didn't know, but I had no doubts that her "Organization" was behind all of it!

"Figured we'd shake the `rats' out of the `woodwork'," the Empress grinned, spinning the woman around, grabbing a handful of her tunic, the blonde suddenly well aware that yelling at Maris was one thing, but Darlanis was something else entirely here now!

"I'm a member of the Dularian Senate!" the woman protested!

"A faithful servant of Princess Tara, no doubt," the Empress answered, "The same woman who took

from me my own `womanhood'..."

"Maris!" the senator begged, terrified now of Darlanis here!

"She's a `civilized' woman, but I'm just a `barbarian' as you `Dulies' used to say about me," Darlanis grinned back at her. "Just a `half-breed' with her mother living on Mars," she added. "And I settle matters with cold steel, not with talk," she said!

"Might get a few credits for her as a slave girl," Janet added, regarding the woman, who looked upon her with puzzlement... Janet's facial features being fairly well known in this era yet.

"Probably `knows' about all the rest of the `organization' here," I "ventured", giving the now terrified woman a grim smile. "And I'm sure she'll sing sweet as a bird once Carol gets done with her," I added, the old Warlady standing there watching this.

"Might not be `worth much' afterwards," Carol grinned back.

"No, I suppose not," I mused thoughtfully, regarding her.

"Please...!" the terrified woman wept, going to her knees.

"Gesture of Submission!" Darlanis snapped, standing there.

## Chapter Thirty Two

"She `sang sweet as any bird'," Carol grinned, the senator having told us enough to leave no doubts "who" was behind all of this. I'd suspected such for some time, but hadn't been able to "prove" it as such. The Princess herself wasn't "involved", but she'd had some "able" lieutenants, and we'd have to deal with them as best we could. For the time being the woman was held in the pits beneath the palace, where she could remain until we had a ship "available" to transport her safely south to California... Janet had said that Senator Mathis had reminded her a bit of Hillary Clinton, who had also been a rather "mouthy" bitch, I knew.

"I'm scared, and I don't mind telling you so," Maris said.

"Problem with all the `democratic' societies," Janet mused. "Too easy for some radical socialists to get them `stirred up'."

"Sometimes you can be too `democratic'," Darlanis "grinned", the "implications" of that "comment" something none of us missed.

"Not much sense going to bed now," I mused, the sun now up.

"The `Organization' is going to figure out eventually what `happened' to their `tool'," the Queen of Dularn commented then.

"Tulis would have rounded up the lot of them and put them on the next slaver going south," Darlanis grinned, looking at Maris. "She may not have been my mother, but I always did 'admire' her."

"I've tried to establish 'democracy'," Maris spoke softly.

"Was a failure in the past, will be again," Janet smiled.

"Human race isn't capable of self government," Bob added.

"Except upon a very 'limited' basis," Carol pointed out.

"That's why we have to 'have' the Priestesses," I added.

"We are 'concerned' as to the fate of Senator Mathis," the man said, several of his companions nodding as they stood there in Maris' throne room, the Queen in all her finery sitting there. Maris is a beautiful woman, richly figured, if a bit overweight.

"My 'interrogation' of her has left no doubts that she is in the 'service' of Princess Tara, who as you know, was and still is an enemy of the Dularnian Federation," Maris Marn answered back. "I have therefore sold her for the price of one silver eagle to Empress Darlanis of California as a slave girl," Maris continued! The senator having quickly learned the "error of her ways" after feeling the whip laid across her bare back by the Empress here...

"You have no 'authority' to 'do' anything of the sort!" the man protested, standing there, no doubt well aware that Maris was not the "push over" that these men had "thought" of her as being!

"I do have the authority to punish 'traitors' as I see fit," Maris retorted. "And any Dularnian citizen who serves the interests of the 'Princess of Evil' is a traitor to the Federation..."

"We'll 'see' about that!" the man snapped, glancing at his comrades, Tori's guardswomen standing there watching, their round shields marked with the maple leaf symbol that Dularn uses here. Their eyes alert, "watchful" beneath the brims of their helmets. Their chain mail glistening in the light from the open windows...

"I should perhaps warn you that Darlanis and I, 'Sisters of the Sword', have sworn a pact of mutual support," Maris answered in level tones, the blonde having more "guts" than we'd thought!! "And if you force me, I will request 'assistance' from the Empire to deal with any 'rebels' I now find troublesome," she continued!

"The Dularnian people will 'hear' of this!" he snapped back!

"You no longer have the 'advantages' you had before," Maris said in level tones, "Nor do you now have me to 'use' as before." The "implications" of this I think not missed by anyone here too.

"Once they gather their 'wits' we will have 'trouble'," Maris said, sitting there in her regal finery on her throne before us. "And I dread what a 'civil war' could bring to my Dularn..."

"I don't think the people actually understand the issues," Janet Rogers spoke. "Socialism is 'attractive' only to those who don't understand its full implications for everyone's freedoms." The philosophy always having its major appeal to the unthinking. To those who want to take from others what they cannot

"earn"... It is interesting in this context that the early Christians were by any standards "communists" in their own economic philosophy. Whether this had anything to do with the later fall of the Roman Empire is something perhaps Tais can answer for us someday here.

"We need to have you speak before the people," Maris said.

"It would be better yet if you spoke," Janet pointed out.

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"I'm scared," Maris breathed, the sweat now gleaming on her brow. Fortunately her gown was cut rather low, and clung to her in a way that left no doubts at all that she was fully "female"! We'd spent the last couple days working with her, getting Maris ready for this "confrontation" with Tara's "Organization", with the "lies" that had been spread throughout Arsana about us all... We'd learned through a ship sent south that the Japanese had made contact with Queen Freydis' people there to the north of Dularn. This I hoped here might rebound a bit to Queen Maris' favor now.

"If I was a man, I'd be thinking of what it would be like to go to bed with you," Carol smiled, now giving Maris a loving hug. We'd dressed Maris as we had for good reason, hoping that she was attractive enough to keep her male listeners at least interested! The auditorium was the largest in Arsana, and held perhaps three thousand people, all of whom had come to listen to their Queen... We had also "packed" the house with Tori's Warriresses, and all of the "sisters" from the Prostitute Guild we could, such women serving to "reinforce" the guardswomen should trouble break out.

"Talks good," Darlanis smiled as we listened to Maris talk. She had a good voice, one that carried well. I was worried about crossbowmen, but I thought our precautions were adequate here...

"Proves that we can all work together," I smiled in reply.

"Had a lot of 'guts' there in the 'north'," Darlanis said. "Think in some ways she even had 'more' than I did then," the Empress added. Darlanis having admitted that she'd been even more terrified of the EVIL ONE than she'd been of Princess Tara when she'd fallen into the evil Princess' hands back there in 2565 AD. Darlanis of course being well aware that such a "Being" as the EVIL ONE was could also steal your soul and drag it off to HELL! At least this was what the Priestesses taught, although how TRUE it was I didn't know, much of what the Priestesses of Lys "do" being done more to "impress" people than anything else here now.

"She didn't flinch when she faced me either," I pointed out, remembering how Maris had been in battle. She was a brave woman, a woman who I'd learned to greatly respect there in close combat. She didn't have the "killer instinct" like Carol, but on the other hand Carol had been mind programmed by Tais to be "vicious", much like training one of my Bull Terriers there for the "pits"!

"I never saw 'socialism' as being anything but some 'ideology' of the past," Darlanis said, standing there beside me. "Just some idea invented by people who have been dead for centuries..." Marx, Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Castro, Ho Chi Min now only "names"...

"It's basically an 'ideology of envy'," I answered in reply. "Dreamed up by people who were 'inadequate' in some way or another," I added, wondering if my own training here might apply now!

"And 'pandered to' by politicians seeking votes," Janet added as she joined us, having apparently now overheard my comment. "It was the 'method' that Hillary Rodham Clinton hoped to 'use' against me, but that I ended up using in turn against her then."



"Caused by the fact that in the United States of America at that time anyone was allowed to vote, regardless of what their economic or mental qualifications were," I explained to Darlanis. Here in the 26th Century voting is the privilege of "taxpayers" only, it being held that those who cannot generate enough of an income to be required to pay taxes should not vote either! The thought going through my mind just then that former Senator Mathis had "admitted" under Carol's questioning (I would not wish to let that woman ever "interrogate" me!) that Tara's most "able" lieutenant was somewhere in Trelandar, which I suppose made sense in that I was the most "serious" threat the Organization faced...

"We must ask ourselves here at this point what direction do we wish Dularn to go in?" Maris spoke, the Queen "good" once she got going, I noticed, recalling how she'd been in previous years. "Do we wish to turn our lovely country on to a path that has been taken by other nations such as Soviet Russia, the Chinese People's Republic: Where every last portion of human life was controlled by the government? Where 'freedom' was just a 'word' in the dictionary? Or do we want our country to continue to stand as it has now for centuries as a beacon of freedom to everyone?"

"I think we have 'won'," Janet smiled, suddenly then shimmering for an instant before she disappeared! The thought going through my mind that Tais had given her to us for just "this"...

"No doubt she is 'needed' elsewhere," Darlanis said to me.

"Bob and Carol and Hope are gone too," I breathed in reply.

"They have served their 'purposes'," Tais spoke to us then, suddenly standing there before us, her azure eyes holding ours.

"You have taught us something," Darlanis said to Tais now.

"You have learned to stand together," the Priestess agreed.

"Sisters of the Sword," Darlanis said, Tais nodding back.

"There is something to be said for barbarians," she said.

"It's all over now," Maris said, the reaction of the people leaving no doubts that Tara's agents had been "foiled" in their plot against our civilization. I had no doubts too just "who" was responsible for things in Trelandar, and I would "deal" with him when I returned to Trelia. We still had "mopping up" to do, but we felt that the major danger to our societies was now over.

"Be good to get back 'home'," Sharon grinned at Darlanis.

"I'll stay a few weeks with you to clean things up," the Empress said, putting her arm around Sharon like any mother might. "And now that we know what we are dealing with, I don't think we will have any trouble making Orgon once again properly 'yours'."

## Chapter Thirty Three

"How are things in Dularn?" June Colt asked as she greeted me there at the dock, my husband and Sanda there along with her. Sue Cross holding my baby son in her arms like any good nanny as several of my guardswomen secured the airplane after its flight. The ripe bodied brownette's belly swollen with my Princess to be.

"Seems that Princess Tara's old 'Organization' is still in operation even if the Princess herself finally has 'retired'," I answered, well aware that I still had to deal with her lieutenant here in Trelandar. His identity something I had no doubts about!

"That Les Hawkins is making 'trouble' for us," Sanda spoke.

"Amethysta wants to fight a duel with him," Jon grinned.

"Where is she now?" I asked, wondering about her here.

"Out touring the country," Sanda answered quickly.

"You and her have 'words'?" I "challenged" Sanda.

"She's an 'uncivilized barbarian!'" Sanda snapped.

"Kind'a 'fun' to have around the place," Jon grinned!

"You're as 'bad' as she is!" Sanda quickly retorted back!

"She was one of Trelandar's 'better'Queens," Jon smiled.

"Let's take a little 'stroll'," I spoke, taking his hand.

"Amethysta's a lot of 'fun' once you get to know her," Jon said to me as we walked hand in hand. Pausing there by some drawn up boats where he gave me a quick kiss. "But Sanda is the sort of a woman who just can't tolerate taking orders from anyone she considers beneath her in intelligence," my husband explained. I supposed it was true, as Sanda only respected me because my own mental abilities exceeded hers to some extent. She was by the "standards" of this era a very well "educated" woman, a member of the caste of Scribes; the sister of the last Queen of Trelandar, and she did appear to feel at times she "knew it all"!! "I also have a hunch," he continued on here, "That she feels as if life is passing her by," Sanda now being a grandmother, Jon told me... Her daughter in law Phara having recently given birth to a son.

"She's never gotten married," I mused, aware that so far as I knew Sanda had no serious "romantic interests", which was somewhat surprising considering that she was a very attractive widow, a woman of "power and position", and rather "well to do" to boot. She was a good mother to her four year old daughter, but other than that, she seemed to have no "interests" outside of politics. She was a very "capable", "competent" woman, but one very private in her own personal life which seemed to consist of little more than reading books often late into the night before retiring...

"Don't believe she's..." Jon smiled, looking over at Sanda.

"She 'isn't', I can assure you of 'that'," I quickly said.

"Good face, good figure, nice ass," Jon grinned in reply.

"Her `private life' is none of our concern," I answered.

"It might be if she snaps at Amethysta again," he warned.

"Les Hawkins been trying to stir up the people," Sanda said to me as we rode along in the open carriage, one of my guardswomen as driver with June and three of her women as my own "escort". "He's got hold of some 20th Century political philosophy and he's `milking' it for all its worth," she explained, the description leaving no doubt that these were the exact same "tactics" I'd seen there in Dularn. The same "tactics" others had used there in Orgon and Sarn against Queen Sharon and Empress Darlanis here. Even Talon had its share of "radicals", although Dala Dai, the Queen of Talon, was not the sort to long tolerate such things... I'd not "heard" anything about Queen Freydis, but Freydis was not one that even the most rabid socialist would want to "fool" with! Like Amethysta, Freydis was the sort to just lop off a few heads! I had little information about Baja, although I suspected that if it came to it Prince Jers Bisan's wife, Lara would see to things! The Japanese ship had returned to Japan, the last I knew of it... I'd taken Black Lady north, talked to Freydis, who had told me that the Japanese didn't seem all that "impressed" with her here. I was rather surprised they hadn't headed south to Dularn, but I supposed that they had their own reasons for not doing so here.

"Socialism didn't work then, and it won't work now," I said. "What it is `based' upon is nothing more than the `envy' that the lesser qualified feel for the more qualified in our own society." Keeping to myself the thought that Sanda herself with her "Free Trelandar Movement" had once advocated ideas not that different, a fact I was sure Sanda was as much "aware" of as I was here too!

"That is nothing but `human nature'," Sanda pointed out. A prostitute strolled along the street, her attire reminding me of Hope's there in the 21st Century. I am in many ways still yet a woman of the 20th Century in my attitudes towards such things...

"Once you start taking away people's hard earned money, just wait and see how long it is before you get into trouble," Jon now added to this conversation. His words making me smile, as he had gotten the "facts" of the issue here as they actually did exist! It was the small businessmen who were the most "conservative"...

"The `Conservatives' are only a `minority'," Sanda smiled.

"So are Les Hawkins' `Democrats'," I pointed out to her.

"There is so much that could be `done'," Sanda said to me.

"And just `who' is going to `pay' for it?" I challenged her.

"Our taxes are `lower' than they were under Darlanis," she pointed out, the implications being that if the taxpayers of the country could have managed to make "do" then, they could again... The Empress having drained the countries she ruled to maintain her "bloated" military forces both in money and in manpower too. There had also been the "cost" of maintaining the Lords and Ladies that Darlanis had imposed upon the people of my lovely land.

"And the `standard of living' is higher," I now pointed out, recalling what I'd learned there in Dularn that Princess Tara's most "able" lieutenant was right here in Trelandar making trouble for me. And could that

"lieutenant" possibly be Sanda herself? Les Hawkins, while a good public speaker, was not an intelligent man as such, while Sanda herself did possess a quite high "I.Q."! Such an "idea", I mused to myself, was completely "unthinkable"!!

"The 'poor' are just as 'poor' as ever," Sanda pointed out. "Our 'revolution' did them but little good," she added to me now. I'd heard "that" too in different words one time from one of her own Scribes, a Tom Stevens, who was also just as "Black" as June.

"Those who are 'ambitious' have raised themselves," I said. My relaxing of the "laws" that prevented people from seeking out a living had made a considerable "difference" here in Trelandar. There were those who "opposed" such things, "established interests" who didn't like the "competition" from the newcomers, but that had been something I'd also pretty much expected here too. Back in the 20th Century those most in favor of "regulation" had not been the customers of such "services", but the "providers" of such services themselves. Licensing and regulation being one of the "means" that businesses have always used to "protect" themselves from "competition". Often in "partnership" with organized labor, who is also well aware of the implications of competition! The best "proof" of this being the actions of the automobile industry back in my own era attempting to keep out foreign imports.

"There is a growing 'opposition' from the guilds," she said.

"Who are concerned about 'competition'," my husband added.

"'Overpaid unionized workers'," I now smiled back at Sanda.

"That was a term often used by Janet Rogers," Sanda smiled.

"I had a few delightful days to speak with her," I told her. The look of "awe" on her face something to see as she sat facing me in the carriage. "Tais teleported her and the Simmons back to this time for a short while to assist us in dealing with Princess Tara's latest 'plot'," I added, wondering again just "who" Tara's agent was here in Trelandar? Senator Ola Mathis had only been able to tell us that such an "agent" existed, not "who" he or she might be. And how long had such an agent been here in Trelandar? Princess Tara's "Organization" actually dated back to when she was the Queen of Sarn, even before Darlanis replaced her in Thar Marden's affections! And although it yet appeared that Tara had finally "retired" from her career of "evil", still, I wondered at times if she'd been "replaced" by someone else just as "evil" as she had been. "WAS THERE ANOTHER 'PRINCESS TARA' SOMEWHERE NOW?"

"I 'wish' I could have been 'there'," Sanda said to me in tones that left no doubts as to her own feelings about Janet too! Feelings that I myself somewhat shared having now met Janet in person, having had the chance to ask her the questions I'd had...

"Do you believe in socialism?" I suddenly challenged Sanda, aware that in a few more minutes now we'd be at the palace. Was it POSSIBLE that Sanda was Tara's "agent" here in Trelandar. The woman responsible for all the problems we'd been having here now?

"I'm 'aware' of the history of the past," Sanda answered me, the tone of her voice leaving no doubts that she was aware that I was probing at something here, and that she was the object of my suspicions! "But I hardly believe that a socialist state could be established at our level of technology," she pointed out then. Such a belief was of course untrue, as "socialism" can be established at any level of technology, although it probably works most effectively at a "level" where computers are commonplace...

"If one could be established, would you support it?" I asked, driving in at her like I might any opponent

with my sword! Sanda was a well educated woman, highly intelligent, probably equal to Hillary Clinton if not quite "up" to me or Janet Rogers. And much of what Sanda stood for had been the same sort of things that Hillary Clinton had stood for over five centuries ago here! I have an excellent memory, and I could still recall the conversations that Sanda and I'd had back there on the estate in 2565!

"If you could rule it..." Sanda smiled, "I think perhaps we might think 'differently' about such matters," my Prime Minister added, obviously just a little smarter here than I'd planned on! "You are a woman to which I think 'nothing' is really impossible if you put your mind to it," she spoke softly, her dark eyes holding mine as I nodded back, well aware of the high opinion she had of me. "A woman who in her own way has become a 'living legend' in her own time," Sanda Talen spoke as Jon nodded in turn...

## Chapter Thirty Four

"Lorraine!" Mara smiled, looking up at me as I hugged her to me. She was the "youngest" of my three "Princesses", the "daughter" of the late Lady Lana, of whom I'd thought quite highly of. Ta-she-ra, now a lovely girl in her teens standing there smiling. The guardswomen standing there in front of my palace wooden faced as they watched all this, the hot sun no doubt making them sweat a bit, especially as June was going about making inspections too! Seeing that my women met the level of "perfection" she felt those who "served" the Queen of Trelandar must meet to satisfy me here! My own "standards", which June "understood", were more related to "fighting ability" than "spit and polish", I might mention here. I didn't have the best looking, but I did have the best fighters.

"Thought they'd be 'safer' here," Lady Tirana said to me...

"I didn't want to 'upset' you, but there was an 'attempt'," my husband suddenly spoke up, his eyes looking into mine as I nodded back, well aware that such things came with the "throne"! There are always those who attempt assassinations or kidnapping.

"The wolves didn't leave enough to 'question'," Tirana said. My estate was now "patrolled" by such creatures along with armed men and women, now of the Warrior and Warriress castes too here! The wolves, both the giant and the dire, "backed up" by my dogs.

"Princess Tara may be back making 'trouble'," I said then, "And 'information' I obtained in Dularn indicates that her best agent is right here somewhere in Trelandar right now too," I added, Sanda nodding, perhaps now aware of the implications here... As Prime Minister her authority in Trelandar was second to mine. She also was head of the Revolutionary Party, which ruled Trelandar as the "majority" party in the government. I "trusted" her, although we had our philosophical "differences". Sanda as Prime Minister being somewhat to the "left of center", while I as Queen of Trelandar had become noticeably much more "libertarian" here than I'd been back there in 2565 when Sanda and I'd first talked.

"Les Hawkins may be a good 'rabble rouser', but he wouldn't have the brains for something like 'this'," she pointed out then. He was a man of low caste, an "Iron Worker" as I recalled here.

"My 'thoughts' exactly," I smiled back at my Prime Minister, her dark eyes holding mine. Sanda Talen was a capable, competent woman. The sort who would make an extremely "dangerous" enemy...

Fortunately she was also a woman of little actual "ambition" as such, being content to serve me as she had faithfully from the day I'd landed there off the Squala that summer day in 2565 A.D. Except for Lady Tirana she'd been the only well educated woman on the estate I'd "inherited", and we'd rapidly become quite close. Jon and June leading off the others as Sanda and I walked down the lovely great hallway, the tapestries on either side showing "scenes" of past eras of Trelandar, which I have always enjoyed. The thought going through my mind that all of this would be destroyed in only another seventy eight years depressed me now too.

"There were a number of 'radicals' in the 'Free Trelandar Movement'," Sanda mused, stopping there before one of the scenes. "And it is my belief that Princess Tara had a 'hand' in things. There were 'gifts' of money that 'came' from persons 'unknown'."

"Which means that Tara's 'Organization' may have gained a 'foothold' in the Trelandarian Revolutionary Party?" I ventured, well aware of the "implications" of what she was telling me here. Such "traitors" could be extremely dangerous to my own rule too. It is not hard to make a monarch look like a "fool" if you know what you are doing. Taradid so to some extent with Darlanis... Betraying the Empress, discrediting her whenever she could do so.

"Some of those we consider 'friends' may not be," she said. "We need to analyze the votes made in the Assembly by members of the party, and compare them to what would be of benefit to Tara." I nodded, well aware that Sanda was "hitting" at something here.

"A 'traitor' in our own midst?" I asked, Sanda "nodding".

"Tara's 'Organization' can provide 'favors'," she said.

"And people can be 'bought'?" I said, Sanda smiling back.

"The majority of people who enter 'politics' do so for reasons that have little to do with the welfare of the people," she answered, looking up into my eyes as I nodded thoughtfully back. "Honesty" among politicians is like "virtue" among prostitutes... It is as "true" today as I suspect it was back in Caesar's time.

"Back in 'the old days' we'd lop off a few heads and put an 'end' to this sort of 'nonsense'," Lady Tirana exclaimed as Sanda and I told her what our "suspicions" were here. "Mind, I'm not saying that maybe 'democracy' isn't a good idea, but you have to see here that most of these 'voters' of yours are going to 'vote' for whatever they can 'take' from those better off." Echoing the thoughts that I'd been thinking just then as we sat and discussed this over drinks after a meal of the sort a Queen might so enjoy!

"Same basic argument made by Hamilton against Jefferson back in the late Eighteenth Century," Keri grinned at her grandmother.

"I believe Janet Rogers made the same 'observation'," Tirana retorted, obvious better "read" for a Warriress than most were!! In Janet Rogers' "era" only the "taxpayers" were allowed to vote. We did the "same" now, but even so there were "pressures" placed upon our politicians to vote for legislation of the type familiar to anyone from the 20th Century when such ideas were commonplace! There were also the castes and guilds jealous of their own place. In a way my 26th Century Trelandar resembled 12th Century Europe. Mankind has, I fear, learned little from his own history here...

"'Supported' by ample historical evidence from the Roosevelt 'era' of 1932 to the year 2008 when

Janet Rogers was elected," my husband added, obviously having been listening to all this a bit! Jon, like many naval officers, having an excellent education due to the fact that there is often little to "do" aboard a ship but to read books, most captains having rather excellent libraries...

"A 'consequence' of the fact that in order to get 'elected' you must 'pander' to the 'selfishness' in the voters," Sanda now spoke, no doubt well aware of the "political realities" here too. Most people usually voting for whoever will "give" them the most! This is "why" for example that the United States of America back in the last decade before Janet Rogers actually "voted" itself into "bankruptcy" by just such "short sighted" economic policies. Policies of "rights" and "entitlements" that ruined the country! Spending as much as a hundred thousand dollars to "educate" a child who lacked the "mental abilities" to ever be "productive". A "delusion" caused by the concept that everyone had a "right to a good education" regardless of ability, paid for if necessary by the taxpayers. It is surprising in a way that they "lasted" as long as they did before national bankruptcy put an end to it all!

"At least there are no new scars," Jon said, "examining" me. I wore a new silk and lace teddy that didn't conceal very "much".

"Yvette will have to sleep somewhere else tonight," I said.

"She's not as 'good' as you are in bed," Jon smiled back.

"Proves that 'looks' can be 'deceiving'," I noted back.

"Doesn't have your 'brains' either," my husband said.

"A woman of little imagination," I smiled, kissing him.

"Glad I never married Maris Marn," Jon said, holding me.

"Her 'loss', my 'gain'," I smiled, Jon picking me up now. Carrying me to the bed, and letting me drop the last few inches. The thought going through my mind that Maris weighed more too...

"I've been doing some 'thinking'," Sanda said to me the next morning as we ate breakfast. As Prime Minister she had quarters here in the palace, her own suite, and a staff of several people. Ta-she-ra and Mara having eaten earlier and then gone "riding".

"That's 'good'," Jon grinned, sitting next to me eating.

"Go on," I spoke, ignoring my husband's comment here.

"If Les Hawkins is someone's 'tool'..." she mused.

"Yes?" I breathed, thinking of the "implications".

"Our 'traitor' could be almost anyone," Sanda said to me, chewing on a piece of bacon. Yvette waiting to be of "service".

"Say someone 'planted' in your organization years ago," Lady Tirana ventured. "Someone we all 'trust', someone known to us." I recalled what Tais had said to me. I supposed she knew "who".

"Your own personal staff..." I ventured thoughtfully to her.

"Or someone high in the ranks of the `party'," Sanda spoke.

"If our `agent' is `intelligent', he or she will not make themselves `obvious'," Jon pointed out, regarding Sanda sitting there across from him. "They would not `advocate' the sort of `ideas' that Les Hawkins advocates as a part of his politics..."

"A `needle in a haystack'," I breathed out thoughtfully.

"`Hopeless'," Sanda answered, regarding both of us now.

"You might try an `investigation' anyway," I smiled.

"Tara's agent might be `careless'," Jon pointed out.

"Or `nervous'," I now added, Sanda nodding back at me.

"We can always hope he or she will make a `mistake'," Sanda spoke, regarding me. I would deal with such a person harshly... "Fear often causes people to do such," she said, no doubt speaking from experience, having been for a number of years a "wanted outlaw" with a price of a hundred gold crowns on her own head due to her "activities" as the leader of the Free Trelandar Movement.

"I wonder what they hope to `gain' by this?" Jon now mused.

"There may be those who would `profit' from it," Sanda said.

"We might consider such in our investigation," I suggested.

"I am glad I didn't have to fight you instead of Darlanis," Sanda grinned, Darlanis having sought the life of the Lady Sanda Harles for years, even to finally putting a "price" of a hundred gold crowns upon Sanda's head as a wanted "outlaw" and "rebel"...

"Darlanis would have `won' if she'd had Sharon," Jon smiled back. We'd come closer to "losing" Trelandar to Darlanis than most knew here. The election had been in our "favor", but not to the extent I think Sanda would have expected. I suspect that if Darlanis had tried to make a "fight" of it, which she didn't, it is entirely possible that the outcome of things wouldn't have been as they were. Especially if Darlanis had done her "She-Ra" bit, which seemed to impress people more than Sanda or I liked. Darlanis' biggest "liability" had actually been Princess Tara... It had been Princess Tara who had made the Empress so much hated here in Trelandar. Princess Tara who had committed the atrocities against the people of Trelandar that "discredited" Darlanis. Destroyed her hopes of a Californian empire from Baja to Dularn.

"I suppose if she hadn't killed my sister I'd think more highly of her," Sanda admitted, digging into her own breakfast...

## Chapter Thirty Five



I stood at the window and looked out, aware of what the future held for my beloved country. Seventy eight years from now great tidal waves would crash over it, destroying it completely, leaving no trace of the civilizations that had once existed here. The advanced civilization of the past now only ruins in the distance, and the city there below the palace I'd learned to love. It was, I mused to myself, just as well I would not live to see the end of a world that I'd grown to love over the past years... I'd scheduled audiences this morning, but now I no longer cared, as nothing no longer seemed really all that important to me now. Tais would see to the safety of those important to me, and with the Gaia's ability to travel through time I had no doubt that it would possible for them to begin new lives somewhere in the past.

A faint sound behind me caused me to turn, the soft gasp of surprise that escaped from my lips making the trio smile at me!

"A last `visit'," Carol said to me, her eyes moist with tears as she stood beside her husband, both of them showing all the signs now of advanced age! Their attire of the 21st Century, although "different" than before. Tais nodding quietly, tall and golden, her long white gown reminding me of ONE I'd once seen on another world. A world where great ants lived deep underground.

"It is the year 2032 in our time," Bob said to me then. I knew that they had committed suicide together sometime in '33. He had been dying of heart failure, and Carol of Alzheimer's, the disease stealing her memories, "taking" from her that I feel was most dear. Memories of Dularn, of life here in this time... They were both "old", gray, their features wrinkled with age. My "reaction" was I feel now due to the fact that I was not used to seeing such things as people die here before they get so "old"!

"Will you bring Hope here?" I asked the First Priestess.

"I have asked her not to," Carol spoke in level tones.

"We do not wish to let Hope see us now," Bob explained.

"There are times I am not `myself'," Carol added then.

"You will be `safe' here," I said, my own eyes wet now.

"You are not `responsible',Lorraine," Tais spoke to me.

"`All societies have limited resources'," I answered her, the tone of my voice bitter. Janet's own "social darwinism" had its "justifications", I supposed, but it was hard to "accept" it when one saw the actual consequences of such things. I recalled what my mother had said of the Nazis. Were we really any better?

"The disease is `incurable' even by us," Tais spoke to me.

"I'm `responsible' for you too," I snapped, Tais "nodding".

"There is a knock at the door," Bob Simmons interrupted me.

"Your majesty," June spoke, standing there beyond the door as I opened it just a bit, concealing the room there behind me. "You have `audiences' this morning," she pointed out to me then. Jon standing at her side, giving me a smile as I now nodded back.

"You will see that the Simmons have everything they need," I spoke to her in level tones, opening the door wider, "And you will 'inform' your guardswomen that whatever they see, whatever they hear, is not to be 'repeated' or their Queen will be very angry with them," I added, June nodding, her dark eyes wide as she understood. "Mrs. Simmons is suffering from an incurable disease that makes her at times 'confused'," I explained further on here.

"Aye, your majesty," June answered, Tais now "disappearing".

"They are 'friends' from my own era," I told my officer.

"I will see to everything," June Colt assured me then.

"Don't worry about it, my love," Jon then said to me.

I looked at the back of my hand as I sat there on the throne of Trelandar, searching for the first signs of age there upon it. I was clad in silk and leather, the trappings of a Warrior Queen, the lovely golden tiara set with precious gems there on my head. The long slim blade at my hip, a keen dagger in its sheath on the other. I wore leather boots, spike heeled, the latest style now. I was rich, a woman of immense wealth by the standards of this era. I could have "anything" that the hand of Man could build... The thought going through my mind that eventually if I lived long enough I'd look like Carol did, wrinkled, gray, perhaps like her even suffering from a disease that would steal away my memories! And would Jon still love me then like Bob still loved his Carol??

"What do you think, Lorraine?" Sanda said to me, breaking into my train of thought as I wondered how I'd "look" years from now. The people there before us all now waiting for my decision. The argument having been about certain "guild" and "caste" rights which certain people wanted me to enforce against any "newcomer". Much like the "licensing laws" of the 20th Century I knew well... Laws written not to "protect" the "consumer", but to "protect" those who were "established" from the "competition" of newcomers! Such had "doubled" the cost of medical care before Janet Rogers had put a final "end" to such "laws" by Constitutional Amendment. The thought going through my mind that I could do the same here!!

"Historically there have always been 'those' who sought the 'protection' of government against 'competition'," I spoke, Sanda at my side looking on, well aware of how I felt about such stuff. "It was such a political philosophy that led in part to the great 'bankruptcy' of the United States of America in the early Twenty First Century, and as Queen I see no need to repeat history now." I was well aware that my ruling would not be "popular" with many, but I felt it was perhaps time that I took a stand on things now. "We need not repeat the 'mistakes' of Roosevelt's 'NEW DEAL', which did much to set the course towards economic destruction, a fact that I'm sure any Scribe can explain more clearly than I..." Then glancing up at Sanda as she stood there, giving her a smile that I'm sure she didn't "share" just then by any means here. My Prime Minister nodding in agreement, well aware that I'd left her with no other "choice" either despite whatever she might have had wished otherwise. I was tired of this sort of "politics", of being a "patsy" for the competing political interests of Trelandar. The thought then going through my mind that what Trelandar really "needed" now was a Queen like Amethysta, who didn't fool around!

"That last 'decision' of yours could cost us 'politically'," Sanda snapped at me as soon as she could be alone with me, the note of anger there in her voice leaving no doubts either as to her own personal feelings on these issues. Her dark eyes burning into mine as I nodded back... If the people of Trelandar wished to repeat the "mistakes" of the now distant past there was very little that I could do to stop them from it! I wondered if perhaps we'd been just as "well off" after all under Darlanis' rule? The Empress

didn't seem to have the "political problems" I did... The same sort of "problems" that Maris struggled with in Dularn! Could it be that Darlanis' less democratic society was superior?

"In seventy eight years the world comes to an end," I smiled back, explaining that I'd witnessed such an "EVENT" myself here. "I hardly think what we `do' now is really going to matter much."

"I have `children'," Sanda breathed, looking at me in awe.

"The Priestesses will `do' what they can," I assured her, Sanda standing there, the emotions upon her face making me smile.

"You should have `told' me," Sanda "protested" in reply. I think she was hurt that I hadn't "shared" this "secret" with her. We were in a way "more" than a Queen of Trelendar and her Prime Minister. Sanda was a old friend, a woman I felt affection for.

"I believe Tais plans to teleport people back in time," I said, recalling the discussions I'd had there in Dularn about the fact that the American Indians had adapted far swifter to the horse than what one would have expected given the situation here. "Mars can also accept colonists," I added, Sanda nodding in turn.

"The `DOOMSDAY' of legend," Sanda now mused, standing there. A few guardswomen at a distance seeing that we weren't disturbed.

"Tais brought us `visitors'," I added, giving her a smile.

"We met before," Carol said, the disease apparently not having yet destroyed those memories of what she'd experienced here in our time three years ago, in her time forty one years ago now.

"There are still those who speak of you," Sanda smiled back, holding those now withered hands of the old Dularnian Warlady... Carol nodding back, her old eyes "wet" with tears as she smiled.

"I have never forgotten the `arena' here," Carol "grinned". I knew she still possessed good memories of the past, it was what happened here in the present that she couldn't remember any more!

"I learned that day the sort of a `wife' I had," Bob said, his arm going about his wife, Carol's aged eyes looking into his. "And I still `love' her just as much as I did when I married her that June 14th back in 1975," he added, giving her a loving hug. Jon standing there nodding at me, perhaps understanding more now.

"There are certain `things' I haven't forgotten," Carol smiled, the couple perhaps lost just then in "memories" only they shared... Sanda standing there looking at me, her eyes like mine wet with tears. They were by our standards incredibly "old", due to die in another year, but yet I wondered if even my marriage to Jon was as "strong" as the marriage had been between these two??

"You still wear a sword at your hip," I said to Carol then. She was gray haired now, no longer the "brownette" I remembered there in Arsana only a few days before. The psychological "jolt" of that was something I had a hard time "accepting" emotionally.

"I plan to die with it in my hand as a Warriress should," Carol answered, her eyes, still sharp and hazel, meeting my own!

"She is still my `Warlady'," Bob said, seeing me nod back.

"A 'legend' who will not be 'forgotten'," I answered him.

## Chapter Thirty Six

"Sanda," I said, walking to the window, looking out, "Perhaps there is a 'way' around our 'problems'." My Prime Minister standing there looking at Bob and Carol, perhaps aware for the first time too now of the true "power" of the Priestesses of Lys.

"And 'what' would 'that' be?" she then challenged me back. Jon giving me a grin, aware that Sanda was not my "match" here...

"Consider the 'possibilities' of 'Constitutional Amendments' that would prohibit the government of Trelandar from 'involving' itself in any way in the economy, or in 'relationships' between people. We would limit the government to 'national defense' and 'relations' with other nations," I concluded, giving her a smile. "Janet Rogers did the same thing back in her own time," I added. That was not exactly true, but Janet had done something like it.

"You could 'sell' them to the people of Trelandar as means of 'insuring' their 'freedom' from 'government tyranny'," Bob now added, standing there with his arm about his gray haired wife. "Point out what Darlanis 'did' when she was ruler of Trelandar."

"I'll make the same 'suggestion' to Darlanis and the others," I "smiled". That would put a "halt" to this "socialist plot" against us. "Limiting" government to national defense and relations with other nations would force the "pro-socialist" forces and others of the "ilk" I'd met this morning to reveal their true intentions here in a way that would leave no doubts...

"Take some 'doing', but I think it could be 'done'," Sanda mused thoughtfully, "Although you realize that it could boomerang against us in the future," she now pointed out to me as I nodded. Bob grinning at Carol, holding her close, her body against his. Such a "love", I thought to myself, was something rare, something like a lovely beautiful flower one might find in bloom somewhere. They would die together in another year, and Janet Rogers would carry out their last wishes to be irradiated and then placed in stainless steel coffins hidden just outside of what was once Victoria on the island of Vancouver where they would remain forever.

"If such had existed in the past, there never would have a 'national bankruptcy' or any 'need' for Janet Rogers," Bob said. "Nor any civil rights laws, social security, or anything else..." I reflected that if we had a "second chance", this time we'd do it differently, making sure that government was limited in power.

"People would have been forced to resolve their 'differences' without the 'intervention' of government," I pointed out. "See to their own 'welfare' without relying upon 'government'," I added, looking out over the ruins of Los Angeles, remembering how Hope and I had ridden across them, the "horrors" that we'd faced. It had been FDR here in the United States who had introduced the concept of a government that looked out for people's "welfare"... The philosophy of "socialism" had been popular then too, I knew, few understanding that the ultimate consequence of giving a "government" unlimited power was a "social

order" like Soviet Russia.

"We could have a problem of people `taking the law in their own hands'," Sanda pointed out thoughtfully. I suppose it was "possible" here that the castes and the guilds would try to do so to "protect" their own "interests" from possible "competition". On the other hand perhaps "that" was better than the way we were doing it now. Sometimes it is "best" if "issues" are "settled" with cold steel. Then there is no "doubt". The "abortion issue" of the 20th Century wasn't resolved until the time of Janet Rogers, and even then it was more the destruction of Christianity by the Priestesses of Lys that actually "settled" the issue here...

"I am of the Warrioreses," I smiled, Sanda nodding back.

"And `steel' is a Warriress' `companion'," Carol added.

"I don't `understand'," Sanda spoke, standing there.

"Some things cannot be `explained'," Bob smiled then.

"I suppose not," Sanda admitted, giving him a grin back.

"There are `issues' that cannot be decided by vote," I said.

"You are `different' now than you used to be," Sanda spoke.

"I am `older', and hopefully a bit `wiser' too," I smiled.

"If word ever gets out..." Sanda mused, looking down at the wine there in her goblet as we ate lunch, her eyes meeting mine.

"I doubt if anyone would believe us," I smiled back at her.

"The `death' of a world," Bob smiled, picking at his food.

"I `remember' you from `before'," Sanda said to him then.

"You're the `same', the old former Dularnian Sealord said.

"I keep wondering if this is a dream or reality," she said.

"More wine, `mistress'?" Yvette asked, standing at my side. I shook my head in the negative, Jon now motioning the girl over.

"I want you to get your staff working on those Constitutional Amendments just as soon as possible," I then said to Sanda... I wanted to set an "example", to see if what I believed was true. In the past "government" has been more often the "problem" than the "solution" to social problems. I wondered the same was true now in this era. There was a constant "pressure" upon my government to extend "favors" to this group against that group. My own audiences this morning had been ample proof of this here too now! Everyone with their "hand out" to their Queen for some "favor"...

"Queen Amethysta is back," June Colt said to me as I nodded the next afternoon, Bob and Carol off somewhere with Jon. She'd been out "touring" the country, seeing all the "changes" I'd made since her

time. I suppose for many people life was little "different" now than it had been back there in the 24th Century. Sanda was away from the palace, trying to drum up "support" for my proposed Constitutional Amendments there in the Assembly. She had not been too sure if our "trick" wouldn't be seen through, but I thought it well worth the attempt, as if she couldn't do anything with the Assembly, I might be able to take matters to the people of Trelandar, and get what I wanted in that way too...

"I'll meet her at the entrance," I said, standing up, June taking the lead as I followed, leaving the throne room where I'd been having another "audience" with those who were attempting to get me to "support" things that I had little desire to "support"! More and more it seemed that everyone wanted ME to "support" this cause or that cause, spend the taxpayers' hard earned money upon some "pet" project of theirs that I myself saw little value in...

During the first four years of my reign I'd been busy fighting one war or another against first Dularn and then Mexico. I'd let Sanda run things, and she in turn had deferred things upon a basis of while we were at "war", we couldn't "afford" to "do" it. Now that there was no longer a military threat to concern people, everyone had their own pet project or "cause" they wanted me to support, usually against some other group who wanted ME to support them against the first group. As you can see, I was readily starting to see that perhaps the sort of "policies" that Darlanis used to carry out, that Amethysta had a couple of centuries ago were perhaps the best way after all. A sort of "KILL THEM ALL, LET LYS SORT THEM OUT!" I've seen on an Imperial battle flag...

"You are a 'popular Queen'," Amethysta said to me as I took her hands into mine, glad to have her back, even if there wasn't anything she could do either here to help me with this "matter".

"So were you in your time," I smiled back at the blonde.

"I don't see that Mrs. Talen around," Amethysta smiled.

"She's hard at work on a 'project' of mine," I said.

"I think she 'needs' a man," Amethysta grinned back.

"I could use a little 'advice'," I smiled back at her.

"You have to be 'strong'," Amethysta said as we walked along the corridor, a number of my guardswomen at a discreet distance. "Either you are in 'control', or 'they' are," she explained then.

"It is 'said' that you had no 'living' enemies," I smiled.

"Those who 'opposed' me knew the consequences," she nodded.

"I became 'Queen' not because I wished it, but because Sanda and others saw me as a 'means to an end'," I said to Amethysta... Like Maris Marn of Dularn I was not a Queen "born to the throne".

"My late husband saw me in somewhat the same light," she answered, looking up at one of the tapestries that decorated the hallway. "He wanted a woman 'good with a sword'," she grinned.

"Sanda 'wanted' the 'same'," I said, remembering just "how" I'd become Queen. Sanda had been awestruck by my "abilities" with a sword, and she'd no doubt hoped that I might kill Darlanis for her, thus "avenging" her sister's death at Darlanis' hands!

"She is a woman who 'uses' others," Amethysta said to me. I supposed it was true. Amethysta was a woman who "saw" the truth.

"She could just as well been 'Queen' instead of me," I said.

"But you were the 'swordswoman' that she was 'not'," my companion answered, her eyes like azure gems glowing into mine now. The thought occurring to me that I actually knew little of Sanda. That she was devoted to me was something I had no doubts of here. On the other hand did she see me as a "weapon" to be used against her own political enemies? I had no doubts that she was aware if pushed far enough that I would become a ruler like Darlanis had!! And if I did, would Sanda become my own "Princess Tara" here too? Amethysta giving me a "grin" as I now stood there beside her deep in thought. She at least was a woman that I could relate to... A woman who I could "trust" as much as any that I knew here now.

"Yes," I breathed, recalling the events of five years ago.

## Chapter Thirty Seven

"What did you 'think' of our society?" I asked Amethysta, Yvette then pouring a thick brandy into the other Queen's goblet. Amethysta was a "barbarian" both in her mannerisms and attire. A woman who saw things perhaps more "clearly" than one more civilized might. I'd done some reading about her, knew something of "what" she'd done. Had not Tais taken her from her own time I'd had no doubt that Trelandarian history would have been much different than it had been. And Trelandar would not have been the "easy pickings" that Darlanis found it to be back there in 2553.

"You are a 'better' Queen than I 'was'," she smiled back.

"That seems hard to believe," I said to the big blonde.

"More 'popular' anyway," Amethysta grinned back at me.

"Depends on 'who' you listen to," I smiled back at her.

"You 'listen' too much to that Prime Minister of yours," the former Queen of Trelandar smiled back, swirling the brandy there in her goblet. She was a hard drinking woman, one well "able" I suspected to drink me under the table if it ever came to it here. Not a "young" woman as such, being almost as "old" as Tirana was. My "Warlady" having taken the Huntress yesterday back "home". I thought lovingly of my estate, of enjoying "peace and quiet" for a while. Of letting Sanda "deal" with these damn "politicians"!!

"I've 'relied' upon her for the last five years," I pointed out in reply. I "trusted" Sanda, knew too she was "loyal" to me. She who wears a "crown" often tends to trust very "few" people...

"She now 'runs' this country," Amethysta spoke to me then.

"We're actually a 'Constitutional Monarchy' like Dularn," I said. The "role" of the Queen in such a

society is one more of a "monitor" to keep the elected officials from getting out of hand. I could "veto" any bill or law the Assembly tried to pass, although I could be overruled by a four fifths majority, which was unlikely as even my own worst political enemies had to admit now. On the other hand I couldn't have "legislation" that the Assembly wouldn't "give" me, a fact that I was well aware of here too now. I could "stalemate" the Assembly almost as "long" as I wanted, but on the other hand they could do the "same" to me in return...

"So 'they' claimed," Amethysta said, sipping at her brandy. "That Queen Barbara of theirs wasn't no 'democrat'," she smiled. The Dularnian Queen in question having been a granddaughter of their famous Queen Denise, who had established the social order. "Hard drinking bitch, could cuss better than any man could," the Queen of 24th Century Trelandar smiled back as I nodded in reply. Jon now just then coming into the room with Bob and Carol in tow.

"Where did you get those 'two'?" Amethysta breathed in awe!

"We're 'friends' of Lorraine's from the 21st Century," Bob answered, Carol regarding Amethysta curiously, a "puzzled" look on her face. I knew that last night she'd gotten up, wandered out into the hallway, and asked the guardswoman on duty where she could find a telephone so that she might make a call to "Janet"! Bob had come out just then, and had guided his confused wife back to their room here at the palace, leaving my guardswoman standing there stunned, puzzled no doubt at such a strange request here...

"Not one of my 'better' days," Carol spoke then, "smiling" a bit at Amethysta, who "nodded", looking at the old woman in awe.

"Time travelers," Amethysta breathed, giving Carol a smile.

"We played our 'role' here in this time for Tais," Bob added then, perhaps now even confusing poor Amethysta even more here.

"It's a long story," I said, Amethysta nodding back at me.

"I've often 'wondered' about the Priestesses," she admitted. "There were 'rumors' about them that seemed hard to believe too."

"They are 'mistresses of time and space', allied with alien beings throughout the Universe called the 'Guardians'," I smiled. I recalled some of the comments that Aurora had once made there when I'd first visited Mars. About their "mumbo jumbo" they did. How little she'd known of their true nature! I missed Aurora, a "friend" who I often thought about these days now. The thought going through my mind that by now Tais had no doubt approached both Aurora and Raspa about transporting a portion of the human race to Mars. Something I was sure would delight neither either!

"The Huntress has returned from your estate," Jon said then.

"I am planning an expedition into the 'ruins'," I said, June giving me the sort of a look she might have given me had I said I was planning an expedition to the Moon. Although I'd told her of how Hope and I had crossed the ruins in 2365, I don't think she really believed that I'd ever attempt entering them again here...

"The dogs and wolves that Huntress brought," she breathed.



"I am known as being a 'Warlady'," I pointed out to her.

"Only 'you' would attempt it," she grinned back at me.

"Something to get my mind off 'politics'," I now smiled.

"The 'old couple'?" she asked, referring to Bob and Carol.

"I'm sure they'll be safe with us," I said. Carol was still "lucid" most of the time, her "problems" being mostly at night... Bob was healthy enough, as long as he didn't "stress" himself. I knew they would appreciate sharing this "last adventure" with me. I wondered "why" Tais hadn't taken them to Dularn instead, but I supposed that she had her reasons here. In any case I planned to give them the best "vacation" that I could as Queen of Trelandar!

"Has been getting a bit 'boring' around here," June smiled.

"We will take my flamethrowers too," I smiled back at her.

"I think in the entire history of Humanity there has been but one true 'Warlady', and you are 'her'," Bob said to me then as he looked over the weapons that I planned to take with us into the ruins there in the morning. The guardswomen well aware too of the sort of "dangers" that we might face here in such a place!

"We did 'beat' her once," Carol now pointed out to him then. She tended at times to speak without thinking, and Bob admitted that at times she could get rather "snappy", even with him now...

"That was 'luck'," Bob quickly pointed out to his wife. I felt sorry for them both, especially knowing what laid ahead now. They had enjoyed so many GOOD years together, so many years that it was almost tragic that it had to "end" like this. On the other hand I supposed they each had their memories, Bob having said that Carol still could remember what happened fifty years ago even if she couldn't remember now what she ate for breakfast that morning! The disease she was afflicted with being one that was "unknown" both here on Earth and on Mars, from what Tais told me. There had been some research carried on in the early 21st Century before Janet Rogers put an "end" to such things, but I supposed I was as much to "blame" here as Janet, as I'd maintained back then that attempting to extend the lives of the "non productive" was a waste of money, something for which I had good cause to regret. Especially as it was always possible I could end up like Carol...

"I sometimes speak without thinking," Carol said to me.

"You did 'win' against me," I now smiled, remembering.

"The North Star was a good ship," Bob said to me then.

"And you commanded her well," I said, Carol nodding.

"Dinner time," Jon interrupted, walking over to us.

"I've got just over half the Assembly on our 'side'," Sanda said to me as we ate, Amethysta giving her a smile from across the table, Bob and Carol there beside my lovely Prime Minister. Jon beside me watching Yvette reaching across the table to Sanda. The slave girl's attire such that much could be seen of her bare breasts beneath her clothing when she bent over like she was now.

"Those `Amendments' will have to be voted on by the people," I said. That probably wouldn't be too "difficult", although I was well aware that someone like Les Hawkins could make trouble!

"If we can get them through the Assembly," Sanda explained. She'd been trying to "sell" them on the basis of more "freedom" for everyone once the "government" was prohibited by "law" from "interference" in the economy or in relationships between people.

"Be `better' if they were both in one," Bob said to Sanda.

"You might `have' something there," she admitted in turn.

"We could phone..." Carol breathed, then blushing a bit.

"She doesn't live in this time," Bob said, touching her.

"God Damn This Disease!" Carol wept, tears in her eyes!

"Come with me," I said, getting up from the table then.

"I'm afraid," Carol said, standing there, my hands in hers. The roof top of the palace was "private", the view one that I've always enjoyed, Trella spreading out there below us, the ocean in the distance, the ships there in the harbor bobbing like corks in a swift breeze from the west. A dark row of clouds on the horizon over the ocean leaving no doubts that a storm was coming in.

"It is the `separation' you fear, isn't it?" I said to her.

"The knowledge that our lives are at an `end'," she replied.

"I may some day be `like' you," I said. "And I hope I can face my own death as bravely as you have," I said, Carol nodding. Such things are I think "different" from facing death in battle. I have no "doubts" about the reality of reincarnation, of the "fact" that I've lived before, and that I will live once again... It is, I think, more the thought of "separation" here that hurts.

"I remember Maris telling me about Queen Tulis," Carol said. "At that time I couldn't `understand' why she did it, now I do."

"We all wish to die with a bit of dignity left," I said.

"We still did `beat' you back there once," she smiled.

"Yes, I believe you did," I spoke, the tears now flowing.

"Funny how `unimportant' it all seems now," she said to me.

"You are weeping," I said, seeing the tears running down her cheeks despite the blurring of my own vision from the same cause.

## Chapter Thirty Eight

I settled myself on my wolf's back, the animal moving a bit beneath me. He was the largest of the gigantic wolves I'd had brought back from the territories once "ruled" by Queen Valeris. That "Queen of the North" who had given her own soul to the demoness from HELL called "The Queen of Darkness" in the BOOK OF LYS. The great furry body hot beneath the leather of my riding saddle. My own attire silk and leather, the attire of a Queen of Trelendar, a broad brimmed hat shading my eyes from the sun's glare...

"Going to be like riding into an oven," June said to me, her unicorn's ears laid back as she rode next to my fearsome mount. Her helmet and chain mail glistening there in the hot sunlight. Jon giving me a smile as he sat astride his pure white unicorn.

"There's no 'need' for armor," I said, making a "decision". I supposed I was putting my hundred Warriresses at more "risk", but on the other hand a woman who can think of nothing more than how "hot" she is isn't going to be that alert or ready to fight!!

"Always meant to 'try' this myself," Amethysta mused as we drew up there with the ruins before us, a few Peasants watching from a distance, their hovels like dots there on the landscape... Bob speaking to Carol in low tones behind us, his wife answering. June on the other side of me, her chocolate skin glistening now. Jon keeping his thoughts to himself, no doubt recalling what I'd told him of my adventures in crossing these ruins back in 2365...

"Let the dogs free," I ordered, June nodding in reply to me.

"Those little 'Bostons' aren't going to do much," she said.

"They will bark, draw in the bigger animals," I pointed out.

"'Something' out there, watching us," Ta-she-ra said to me. Like me she was mounted on one of the gigantic wolves I often now used, although I didn't "trust" the animals inside the city yet. The dogs roaming about, although most stayed pretty close to us. The rubble much like I remembered it the time Hope and I had crossed these same ruins over two centuries before. I doubted however that we'd find any remains left over from that time now. The sun like a furnace there in that cobalt blue sky overhead. I'd gotten a bit later a "start" than I'd planned, but I didn't think it really mattered that much. I'd brought wagons, barrels of water, extra supplies, everything that we might "need" here...

"June, I think it would be a good idea to put out scouts," I spoke, turning in the saddle, aware that there were ample places here in these ruins where we might be fired upon from above now. The ruins of buildings perhaps a dozen feet or so in height yet. "Detach your women in groups of three," I added as she "nodded". "And tell them to stay alert and keep their bows ready to use..."

"Looks 'promising'," Keri said, slipping from her unicorn's back. Bob giving her a grin, the story he'd once told me about the slim brunette something I thought it best to keep to myself. The hot sun above striking glints from her thick coal black hair. Her slim, trim figure, her height, Keri being taller than I am, made her the sort of a woman that any red blooded man might want! The two other Scribes dismounting, speaking in low tones to Keri. One the handsome Tom Stevens, his skin as "brown" as June's was.

"Put out guards, establish a 'perimeter', two archers to a crossbowmen," I spoke to June, adding then, "And each group is to have a Bull Terrier with them." June nodding, giving her orders. "The last time I was here the 'reception' wasn't too 'friendly'," I added, giving her a grin as she nodded back, well aware I suppose that even with our weapons we could be in serious trouble...

"I'll let the rest of the dogs roam free," she said to me.

"Hold the dire wolves in reserve," I replied, June nodding.

"You are planning to fight..." Amethysta spoke, watching.

"If 'necessary'," I said, dismounting from my own wolf.

"She is a 'Warlady'," Jon added, dismounting himself.

"We are 'surrounded'," Ta-she-ra said, sitting there on the top of some rubble, stroking the head of Delilah as she laid now panting beside her. My Princess having brought my 10x60's from the airplane, which allowed her an excellent "view" of things... They were a bit "heavy", but the optical quality was better than anything I've ever seen, either now or in the 20th Century here. A sixty degree apparent field of view, razor sharp to the edge. The optics were of "ED" quality, the eyepieces of seven elements. I wished I had a blaster rifle of the sort I'd once used on Mars.

"A force as powerful as mine can fight their way out," I answered. If Hope and I had been able to make it as "far" as we had, I was sure that a hundred Warrioreses, well armed, some ten dire wolves, fifty Bull Terriers, and a half dozen Boston Terriers, could "go" wherever we wished in these ruins. I also had my flamethrowers, against which there was no defense but "distance"!

"'They' will not attack until night," Ta-she-ra said then. "And your dogs are not 'invincible' by any means," she added now. I nodded, well aware of that fact. Against men, they were "effective" fighters, but against the sort of "things" that Hope and I had seen here two centuries ago, not even Bull Terriers would be effective except just to maybe "slow" such creatures somewhat.

"You feel that I am 'overconfident'?" I asked, a bit annoyed here at her, although I suppose I could blame "that" on the sun!

"I think sometimes you 'believe' too much in yourself," she answered. "Remember what Carol 'did' to you three years ago..." I'd been overconfident, and eager to show Darlanis up a bit too! Carol had made even more of a "fool" of me than she had Darlanis! No one had ever said anything of it to me, but I had no doubts my reputation as "Warlady" had suffered a bit from her actions here.

"And the 'terrain' would be in their 'favor'," I answered. Even primitive bows of the crudest sort would be "effective" too, especially at night when we'd be all "targeted" around our fires. Ta-she-ra, being "Nevada", was quite familiar with such tactics.

"The flame throwers have a maximum range of seventy feet," she pointed out, "And it is possible these creatures can see in the dark better than we can," she added, a cold chill going down my back as I wondered just "where" these "horrors" did live now? Even in my flights over the ruins I'd never seen but a few here. Yet, when Hope and I'd rode across these ruins we'd found plenty!

"The dogs can see better in the dark than we can," I said, talking perhaps just to reassure myself that I was in "control".

"They can be killed easily by any pointed weapon," my Nevada Princess answered, playing the "devil's advocate" here to me now.

"You are truly of the Warriresses," I smiled, sitting down, taking the binoculars from her, and searching the nearly rubble.

"I have learned 'much' from you," Ta-she-ra now smiled back.

"I've got a 'hunch' you're more 'capable' than June is," I said, well aware that June, while a capable officer, was not all that "imaginative" when it came to military tactics as such here. She was "brave", an awesome swordswoman, but not a "tactician". War can be and often is a "game of wits", not just a "battle"...

"She is 'brave', but not 'crafty'," Ta-she-ra smiled back.

"I wonder...", I mused to myself, looking then for Carol.

"How do you 'feel' today?" I asked Carol, drawing her aside.

"Hot," the old gray haired Warlady smiled, looking into my eyes. I wondered why I'd brought the pair on this adventure now? Both would have been better off back at the palace, where medical assistance was available should it be needed for Bob's heart now. True, I did have my own doctor with us, but still I didn't know if I'd done the "right" thing here in bringing them both with me.

"I mean..." I spoke, fearing to cause her "pain" here. She was a woman that I respected, one that I'd grown to like, and to make "fun" of her condition was the last thing on my mind now...

"I don't 'remember' what I had for breakfast, but I still can recall the North Star, and what I did to you there on the estate," Carol answered, her hazel eyes, yet undimmed, glowing up into mine. I knew she might still yet retain some of her ability to see what perhaps only Ta-she-ra had seen here, although I was sure that given a force as powerful as mine we had little to fear here in these ruins. At least not in the daylight, I mused here.

"I need your assessment of our military position," I said.

"Sitting ducks," Carol smiled, standing there in the sun.

"Ta-she-ra 'said' the same thing," I said, Carol nodding.

"Your dogs might make a 'difference'," she said to me now.

"We're 'through'," Keri said, a half dozen of my guardswomen, now stripped to the waist, resting there in what shade they could find. Bob sitting on a piece of rubble, grinning at them. I wondered if there could be an "underground world" here like I'd heard. It being known that in the 21st Century deep cellars and such had been built, it being more "energy efficient" to live below the Earth's surface where the costs of "cooling" were less... There had also been a number of underground "warehouses" here too, I understood from Keri. These being the "reason" we'd come. I thought too of what it might be like to have to fight underground, in the darkness by torch light against such "horrors" as Hope and I'd seen back there two centuries ago. Was it worth it? "Risking" the lives of those who I knew just to gain a worthless bit of knowledge about the past when the Priestesses of Lys could teleport you back to any period in

Man's history for the last two thousand years? Perhaps even further here if they used the Gaia.

"Send down some dogs to check things out," I ordered June, my officer nodding, her dark eyes for a moment then holding mine. A Boston Terrier and a couple of my Bull Terriers being lowered on rope down into the darkness of this "opening" they'd made, the rubble having been cleared out from the opening, the doorway now broken open, perhaps for the first time in centuries here now...

## Chapter Thirty Nine

"Dogs seem 'scared' of something," June Colt said to me as I slipped the flame thrower's harness over my shoulders, the weight of the weapon such that I regretted making it so "heavy" here. My husband standing there beside the opening watching me, a crossbow in his hands, with Keri at his side armed with a bow. I had brought with us miner's lamps, working on carbide, which I'd felt would be more suitable for conditions like those we were now likely to find below. The thought going through my mind just then as I stood there now burdened down by the flame thrower as to why I still took such "risks" when I had June and her hundred Warrioreesses, the finest fighting women in Trelandar, to do it? Queen Amethysta there watching me, the sun glinting off her hair.

"Probably too 'dark' even for their eyes," I answered, knowing that it was a lie, that the dogs sensed something below now! "But send down a couple more of each type," I said, June nodding. "And give me a dire wolf along with them," I said, smiling a bit.

"Creepy place," Jon remarked, our head lamps doing little to dispel the darkness. The dogs staying close by, their eyes glowing in the light from our lamps. A doorway beyond leading out into more darkness, into what I sensed was a larger area of some sort. The thought going through my mind that we could be in part of some underground parking garage, such having existed back in the 21st Century when the value of land in Los Angeles had made it worthwhile for people to dig down or build upwards instead of spreading out over a larger area. I lit my flame thrower, making the weapon ready to use. I had "confidence" in it, knowing that nothing living could face such a weapon and survive its flames...

"There's been 'others' down here," Keri said, examining the interior of the room we were in. "Marks on the walls here," she added, the scratchings visible there in the light of her lamp. I nodded, listening to the dogs, a couple now growling a bit here! The dire wolf was standing there, the hair raised up on its back!

"Got the 'scent' of something," Jon said, raising his crossbow. The bolt was of the armor piercing type, which I considered more "effective" given the sort of "creatures" we might find now. The dire wolf "tense", its ears cocked, a low rumbling growl coming from it as it stood looking into the darkness. A noise from the larger open area now causing several of the Bull Terriers to charge into the darkness, followed by the dire wolf, while the Bostons held back from the battle and gave voice to sharp piercing barks that are characteristic of the type of dog they were. Then suddenly I heard the sounds of the Bull Terriers attacking something, something "big", hearing the dogs now cry out in pain!

"Time to remember our caste codes," I now smiled at Jon. It being obvious that whatever it was, our dogs couldn't handle it. I'd feared such, knowing the sort of "creatures" that lived here.

"Lysbe merciful," he grinned, holding his crossbow ready.

"Just don't `miss' it," Keri snapped then, nocking an arrow, the "tension" showing in her voice as well as by what she'd said.

I let loose a brief spurt of fire, enough to light up things a bit, something "shadowy" moving there in the darkness, the sounds of the dogs leaving no doubt that they were attacking it!

"Big thing," Keri spoke, coming back to full draw here now.

"You'll hit a dog," I warned Keri, the light too dim yet.

"Broken free of the dogs," Jon said, aiming, then firing.

"You `hit' it," Keri spoke, the "thing" crying out now. Throwing a dog from it like a garth or something similar might... It was almost as "big", I realized, seeing it more "clearly" now.

"Didn't `stop' it," I said, Keri's arrow no better. I raised the flame thrower, took aim, squeezed the trigger then. A blazing stream of fire shooting forth, coating the "thing" then!! A dog running off, its back aflame, howling horribly in agony... I heard Keri curse as her arrow missed the burning dog, the animal now rolling in some rubble, the horror before us still "up"!! I hit it again, coating it with flame, the dogs fleeing the fire! The thing screaming, the voice like that of some tortured animal! Keri driving arrows into it as swiftly as she could nock them...

"Stinks!" Keri said, suddenly turning away, vomiting. Jon giving me a grim smile, while our surviving dogs gathered around. The sour odor of her vomit mingling with the odor of burned flesh as we stood there watching the carcass of the underground horror burn. The flames dying out as the dogs watched, their eyes glowing as the flames reflected off the half seen, half sensed walls. A few vehicles scattered about, covered with dust, but still in surprisingly good condition considering how long they been here!

"Had a sword," Jon said, the dire wolf it's victim here.

"`Animals' don't carry swords," Keri said to me then.

"Never `said' that they `were'," I answered her back.

"Take a Legion to explore this," Jon then said to me.

"We'll do with what we have," I spoke, my voice short.

"You're our Queen," he said, seeing me nod back in reply.

"Keri, get June, have her send me thirty women," I said. "And a couple more flame thrower kits," I added, seeing her nod.

"This isn't a good place for you or Bob," I said to Carol. In the light of our lamps one could see the dusty cars scattered about, several of the women curious enough to brush off the dust. A human skeleton, dried bones for the most part, drawing notice.

"`Cooler' than it is above," the old Warlady pointed out.

"Just stay `close'," I answered, not all that "happy" now.

"I'm `forgetful', not `stupid'," Carol smiled back at me.

"I hear the `yip' of a Boston," June interrupted us then.

"Let the rest of those dogs go," I ordered, June nodding.

"Found something," Jon spoke, their barking already obvious.

"Through `there'," I said, now leading the way across the underground parking garage, the remains of the cars seeming "odd" to one used to a social order where such things were but legend. Memories flooding back then of movies I'd seen many years ago...

"An easy shot," June spoke, drawing the arrow well back.

"No!" I snapped, looking at the creature crouching there.

"She's just another one of these `mutants'," June protested.

"Perhaps `communication' is possible," I spoke, wondering...

"If `that' gets `hold' of you..." June noted, seeing me nod.

"Then Gayle will be the Queen of Trelandar," I smiled back, slipping the flame thrower down off my shoulders, glad to ease myself of the nearly forty pound burden I'd been lugging around!

"I will not harm you," I spoke, standing before it as it crouched half a dozen feet off the floor, a pit bull jumping up while one of the black and white Bostons stood yipping at it now. A sharp order from me making the dogs move back, although I did not "trust" them completely given the "situation" we found here. June stepping forward, leashing the dogs, dragging them back now.

"Your kind always `kill'," she answered, clawed and scaly. The voice was not like that of a human being, but "different"...

"I am Lorraine Richards, Queen of Trelandar," I said to her.

"I am Lily, Princess of Los Angeles," the horror said to me.

"I give you `greetings'," I said, not knowing what else to say just then. Lily was like a cross between a garth and woman. Scaly, fanged, clawed, with glowing red eyes like some animal...

"I will take you to my mother, the Queen," Lily replied.

"We will come with you," Jon and June both spoke then.

"She will go with me, you will stay here," Lily said.

"I will be safe," I said, blowing him a kiss in turn.

"I don't love Sanda...", Jon spoke, seeing me nod back.



"Impressive," I said, well aware that none had expected this beneath the ruins. The tunnels and caverns reminding me somewhat of the work of the Lorr, but without their own sort of lighting. Except for my head lamp, we walked in darkness, me and this Lily. This "princess" of an "underground world" none had known of here.

"We have attempted to retain a bit of 'civilization'," Lily said, a clawed hand on my right shoulder as the seven foot tall mutant walked beside me. "Despite what your kind has 'done'..." I felt it best just then not to disagreed with her on this now. It was obvious too that Lily and her sort could see in the dark. Like the Lorr they doubtlessly saw well down into the infrared. And like the inhabitants of Mars they would be fearsome fighters. Well able I suspected to "deal" with my own guardswomen here too!

"No doubt it is 'difficult'," I said diplomatically in reply. I was alone here in a world where only they could "see"...

"My mother has done much to 'improve' things," Lily said.

"And your father?" I asked, looking up at this "princess".

"Was killed by one of your 'surface kind'," she answered.

"They are 'taught' by the Priestesses to kill," I said.

"We are 'different', so we must be killed," she spoke.

"Like the Lorr back there in 2047," I said to Lily.

"This is where my mother lives," Lily said to me.

"I fear I do not see as you do," I said to Lily.

"Your kind is blind without the light," she said.

"You can see well here?" I said, seeing movement.

"There is my mother, her advisers," Lily answered.

## Chapter Forty

"I am Queen Joyce," the horror sitting there on the "throne" said to me. At least I think that's what she said to me, but at the time I had a bit of difficulty understanding due to my own "nerves" and the fact that Joyce, like many of her people, does not have the same sort of vocal cords that ordinary humans have. I could see a bit, although there was only my own lamp for light.

"QueenLorraineof Trelandar," I answered, nodding in turn.

"The ruler of the outside world," she spoke, regarding me.

"It is obvious that you are `not' what we thought," I said.

"Your intentions towards us do not seem `peaceful'," she pointed out. No doubt she was well aware of the forces that I'd brought with me, the weapons, the fighting dogs and dire wolves. I suppose that if someone had marched an army up to the gates of Trella I might feel much the same way just now about the "issue".

"A matter of `misunderstandings'," I spoke, sweating a bit! Joyce and her companions, what I could see of them, like something out of a 20th Century horror movie. Scaly, hideous things!

"I am going to look into your mind, see if your lips `lie'," the creature on the throne spoke, two others now dragging me up to her as she squatted there, a scaly horror as big as a Garth!! I felt myself "held", her horrid clawed hands clasping my head, those eyes so much like a reptile's, but "intelligent" now burning into mine. I felt or sensed a "whispering" in my mind, then suddenly my mind was linked with hers! I saw as she saw, felt as she felt, and saw myself as she saw me, sensed her thoughts, felt the "distrust" that she felt towards all of my kind, perhaps with good reason! Her mind, like Raspa's, almost totally "alien" too! Visions swam through my mind, both of my life and of hers, scenes of an underground world like none I'd ever known, the epic battle that Hope and I had waged crossing these same ruins back in 2365!

"You are the fighter of legend," she spoke, releasing me. I suspected that she knew too just "what" I was, that I was not of this time, but of another now only legend and myth in this era...

"I am a woman `good' with a sword," I smiled back at her.

"We have few `friends' above," she spoke, regarding me.

"One may stand before you," I said, looking into her eyes.

"You are not like the `others'," she spoke, regarding me.

"Even the Priestesses are not `infallible'," I answered now.

"I will give orders that your people may `go' where they wish," she answered, squatting there on her throne before me now.

"I didn't think we'd ever see you again," Jon said to me as I emerged into the daylight, the light almost blinding for a moment until my eyes could adjust to the difference in the light.

"I have found a `friend'," I said, beckoning to Joyce.

"I suppose I should have expected it," Jon now observed.

"There is but one like her," Amethysta added with a smile.

"It must be `painful' seeing her like that," I said to Bob as the sun now sank low in the west over the Pacific, Keri and her Scribes having wasted no time in taking up Queen Joyce on her offer to explore the fantastic underground ruins of 21st Century Los Angeles. Carol sitting there watching everyone, with my

own people in turn keeping an eye on her, it being "common knowledge" now despite my best efforts to conceal it that the old Dularnian Warlady was both "forgetful" and sometimes rather "confused" too!

"She may not remember what she had for breakfast this morning, but she still can remember standing with me in the hot sands of your arena and facing the best Darlanis could throw at us," he answered, his eyes glistening as they met mine. "We may be both 'old' and 'ready to greetLys' as you'd say, but I've lived for fifty seven years with her, and Carol's always 'been there' for me every time," he continued on, seeing me nod back in reply now.

"You will 'greetLys' together," I said, recalling what Maris Marn had told me. I suspected too that neither of them would have wished to live without the other. They were, I mused, the most "together" couple I'd ever met, much more so I thought than Jon and I were, despite our best attempts to do otherwise here...

"Maybe we can 'settle down' a bit now and not worry so about what the Dularnians and all the rest are doing now," Jon said to me as we sat around the fire. The flickering light from the flames casting moving shadows here among the ruins. His cloak about my shoulders as we sat together side by side, both of us perhaps well aware too of how the world had changed in the last five years from when we'd first found love in each other's arms.

"'Raise' our children properly," I smiled, well aware that I had "neglected" my duties as a mother somewhat recently here now. Bob and Carol now sitting opposite us, whispering to each other. Queen Joyce like some nightmare brought to life there beside us. Amethysta too like some "Viking" out of the old Norse legends.

"She was a mighty 'attractive' woman once," Jon said to me.

"Who was 'what'..?" I asked, puzzled by his words here now.

"Carol Simmons," Jon answered, regarding the couple there.

"Thirty gold crowns in a fair market," I smiled back at him. Even in the "prime" of her life Carol had never been "beautiful". Attractively "figured", but I wouldn't have called her beautiful. Darlanis had once "appraised" her there in Trella back in 2567. I'd seen her enough times in bikinis back in the 20th Century to have a pretty good idea of what she'd looked like back then too.

"A woman who knew that she was one," Jon said to me then.

"You could buy better slave girls in Trella," I retorted.

"Perhaps we should change the 'subject'," Jon suggested.

"What's the fuss about?" I muttered, Jon shaking me awake!

"The Simmons!" my husband spoke, Carol clutching at Bob!

"Lorraine! You Have To Do Something!" she cried to me!

"Heart..." Bob hissed through gritted teeth at me then.

"I'm here, I'll always be with you," Carol wept softly.

"Here, lay him back," I spoke, his old wife holding him.

"If we were in Trella..." Carol spoke softly to me then.

"June!" I cried, "Get the medical kit!" Looking for her! "Where's my doctor?" I snapped, someone now shaking her awake...

"Perhaps I can `help'," Queen Joyce spoke then to us two.

"She has `powers'," I said to Carol, seeing her nod back. My Physician stumbling over to us, still half asleep as yet now.

"He is very old, near end of his life," Joyce said to us. Amethysta kneeling at my side, her eyes meeting mine as I nodded.

"Do whatever you can," I said, aware that he would live. That Bob and Carol would die together on Catalina Island in 2033. Such was "history", part of what had been. What couldn't be ever "changed" despite the best efforts of anyone of this time. Carol was old, gray, her face wrinkled, but I think Bob did not see her as I might have had. Perhaps to him she was still the provocative sexy delight he had first seen washing herself back in 1975. Still the same woman he'd married, lived with back in the 20th Century before I'd come on the scene. Put a "strain" on their marriage by my merely being about. By my own "need" for someone to understand how I felt. I had been to Bob something "new", a different sort of woman. We had been friends, and I think "more" in a way that Carol sensed even if her husband didn't understand! I saw Queen Joyce laying her clawed hands on him, saw the blaze in her eyes, felt or rather "sensed" the forces at play here now! The stars gleaming down from the sky, Jupiter high in the heavens as the flickering light from the dying fires lit up this "scene". My Physician regarding me, watching Joyce, a puzzled look on her face as she squatted there beside Carol, watching, waiting, now.

"What has been, will be," I said to Carol, wanting to take her into my arms, hold her, but knowing it was impossible now. I had once scarred this woman's face, even sought her life in revenge for what she'd done, not because of the war that had existed then between Trelandar and Dularn, but for "personal reasons"! Carol having embarrassed me by the simple fact of proving to all those around me that I wasn't as "invincible" as I'd thought now! That despite the fact that I was Warlady of the Empire of California, I could be made the "fool" by an exotic dancer from the 20th Century, a provocative sexy brownette skilled with the bow!! By a woman who had been "appraised" by Darlanis herself as worth maybe little more than thirty good gold crowns in a fair market! Now this same woman, old, aged, due to die in only a few months, wept silently at my side, and I could do NOTHING to help her now!

"We will be together forever," Carol spoke softly to me. I think she was aware of the fact that neither of them had more than a few months left to live, that this last visit to the 26th Century was a "gift" First Priestess Tais had given them both...

"I have done what I could," Queen Joyce said, regarding Carol as the now gray haired old Dularnian Warlady nodded in reply.

"You have my thanks," Carol answered, her eyes glistening.

"Let me `touch' you," Joyce said, reaching out to Carol.

"Why not?" Carol smiled, allowing Joyce to do so here.

"Your memories are unlike most," Joyce spoke to her.

"I've lived a rather unusual life," Carol answered.

"She is not like most women," Bob added just then.

"I believe that is 'true'," Queen Joyce admitted.

"Their relationship is like few others," I spoke up.

"It gives me pleasure to share her memories," Joyce said.

"Thank you," Carol breathed softly, weeping a bit more now.

"There is no 'death'," Joyce said, regarding the old woman.

"Such has been known for thousands of years," I ventured.

"She has 'lived' like few others ever have," Joyce said.

"I have lived a life few women have have ," Carol spoke.

"She was a woman like few others have been," I said then.

"We die, but yet we live on in memory," Joyce said to me.

## Chapter Forty One

"Hold me," I said to Jon, slipping back in under the blankets beside him. Aware of my own death to come as never before. In another thirty years I'd look like Carol, just an old woman. Living with her memories of what had once been so long ago now... And would Jon love me then, an old woman, her hair turning gray? He'd still have his "youth", while I grew old, wrinkled, homely!

"Carol seems to have a bad effect on you," Jon observed.

"A vision of what the future holds, perhaps," I answered.

"They loved each other so much," he said, holding me close.

"They have had what few couples have ever had," I smiled. I understood as I had not before "why" their relationship was as it had been. Why even now there was a "bond" between them that I didn't think even death would be able to break. A "strength" to their marriage that I knew that even Jon and I didn't have now... We were husband and wife, but we both could go our separate ways, live out our own lives, and pretty much act as if we weren't even married. That had been something Bob had never done with Carol.

They had been united in a way that so very few couples ever are.

"I do not think he 'sees' her as we would," Jon said to me.

"There was only 'one' Carol Simmons," I replied, watching. Carol was holding Bob to herself, an old woman, her mind failing fast, confused at times as to even where she was, but yet to him I did not think he saw her that way. He did not see the lines of her face, the gray of her hair, the way her body now sagged with age. She was still "Carol", his "Carol", the same woman who had one time stood in the hot sands of the Arena of Trella, naked but for a bit of leather, a sword gleaming in her hand, proud, vital! My Physician sitting back a little, watching the old couple here.

"A woman like few others ever were," Jon smiled, holding me. "I think she was a woman who knew exactly 'what' she was, and was happy being just 'that'," he added, looking over at the couple.

"I'm glad she no longer hates me," I said, watching them.

"Perhaps Tais had her reasons for what she did," Jon said.

"How are 'things' this morning?" I asked, checking on Bob. Carol quietly regarding me as she sat beside him, watching my every move. She had at least not had any attack of confusion here.

"Don't think I'd care to start a war with you," he smiled.

"You did win the last one," I smiled, seeing Carol grin.

"I think we were very 'lucky'," the old Warlady smiled.

"'Luck' is sometimes what you make of it," I answered.

"You were 'overconfident'," Bob pointed out to me.

"Took me a long time to live it down," I agreed.

"You 'belong' here," Carol said, seeing me nod.

"A part of the history of what is," I smiled.

"A 'living legend' of this era," Carol agreed.

"Problems, June?" I asked, my captain getting her people ready for the return to Trella. Keri and her Scribes would stay, complete their labors, which might take weeks, I knew here now. There was much that could be learned of a time now only legend.

"I don't think you should take Joyce to Trella," she said.

"We need to put an 'end' to this 'prejudice'," I replied, my dire wolf moving beneath me as I swung up into the saddle, my sword at my hip, the sun already growing hot as it rose up in the east. I suspected that in a way I wanted to "prove" something... Queen Amethysta was sitting there on her own unicorn watching us. A few of my women watching us, others there busy at their duties.

"You are going against the 'teachings' of the Priestesses," she pointed out, seeing me nod back. I was

the Queen of Trelandar, but the Priestesses of Lys were the actual rulers of Earth. Tais was for all practical extents the Empress of the Solar System in that the Priestesses of Lys claimed dominion over Mars... Tais rarely interfered in affairs beyond the Earth, but she did have the POWER to do so, a fact that Raspa and Aurora were well aware of from what I knew. Aurora especially now resented Tais, the Leaderess of the Women feeling that Tais had no business in telling the Women what they could do and what they could not do.

"They are just women with an impressive technology," I said. I was responsible for much of their "technology", as was Janet Rogers, who had carried on my research into electronic hypnosis. It was true now that they had gone far beyond what I had intended them to be, but I supposed it was just as well considering what had happened here. They were in their way Mankind's "guardians".

"The people of Trelandar consider them 'holy'," she spoke, looking up at me as I sat there astride my dire wolf, the sun warm on one side of my body, the morning still yet a bit chilly here. It would be a lovely day, with only a few clouds here in the sky. "And their power is for all practical purposes 'infinite'," she added, her chocolate colored face filled with concern for me now. No one in the history of the last five centuries had ever gone up against the Priestesses of Lys and survived their anger, I knew. They were for all practical purposes our rulers.

"I am sometimes a Warriress who 'ventures' where she should not," I smiled. By taking Queen Joyce to Trella I would be violating one of the most deeply rooted prejudices Mankind now had!! On the other hand I live by a moral code all of my own, one that has been forged by my life in two utterly different societies. I am a woman of two worlds, of two eras in time, of two cultures...

"The people could turn on you," June warned, standing there.

"If they do, I will die as a Warriress should," I smiled.

"You would not die alone, your majesty," she said to me.

"I'm just a woman 'good with a sword'." I smiled back.

"You are a woman who is 'legend'," she answered me.

"Just an 'old bitch' past her 'prime'," I smiled.

"'Mount up', you bunch of 'daxies'!" I heard June bark, my Warriresses not too delighted by the idea of taking Queen Joyce to Trella, especially as they knew what the consequences could be once the population of the city heard of it. On the other hand I am thought by most people to be rather "alien" myself, so I had a hunch that the reaction might not be quite as everyone expected. On the other hand I had enough political enemies who would be delighted to exploit a situation like this, a fact I knew well too! And even if the Priestesses of Lys didn't react to Joyce, I had no doubts that Les Hawkins would certain drum up his "Democrats" in opposition to me. The rabble of Trella that he called "his"!

"Her language is 'picturesque'," Bob grinned, sitting beside his wife in the wagon I felt it best they ride back to Trella in. Joyce beside them, half shielded now by a canvas over herself. I knew she found the direct light of the sun uncomfortable, a "problem" that the Lorr also "share", I might mention in passing.

"She's a bit 'nervous' this morning," I smiled back at him. Explaining in a few words what reasons June had to feel so now... Why my own Warriresses might feel much the same way here too.

"I don't think anyone but you would try to do something like this," Carol said, regarding me, her arm around her husband here.

"Others have considered me 'fool hardy'," I grinned back, a nod and an answering smile from the old Warlady making me smile. I have garnered such a "reputation" over the years, I fear here.

"One thing I've always admired about you is 'guts'," Carol answered, for a moment almost the same Carol I'd once known here. "The willingness to stand up for what you believed in 'right or wrong'," she added, June now getting my women properly organized. It is important under such circumstances that discipline be maintained. Such is part of the Codes by which any Warriorress lives.

"Sometimes it does help to be a 'living legend'," I smiled.

"Trella," June said to me, perhaps more to make conversation here than anything else. I had "done" what no one else in the history of this era had done, not even the Priestesses of Lys... I wondered if I had this time stepped over the "bounds". If I had gone beyond the "point" that even a Queen of Trelandar might go now. Queen Joyce was "alien" in a way not even the Lorr were. Her sort were seen by Mankind as "monsters" to be destroyed by any means available. Like the vampires and all the rest that had populated Twentieth Century horror movies. Even the Priestesses themselves taught that anything "mu" must be destroyed without any hesitation. They still killed any newborns that were not "hu", and "woe" to be any who opposed them in this, I understood. What the "reaction" would be to my bringing Joyce to Trella was something no one could say for sure, although there was no doubt in my mind that my political enemies would exploit it for all it was worth. Especially "those" like Les Hawkins, who would be doubtlessly delighted to have something like this to "exploit"...

"No doubt you have been reviewing your past life in the last few moments to 'guess' what Lys might make of it?" I smiled back, such being a part of the teachings of the Priestesses of Lys. I had once met Lys Herself on Mars, although I think SHE is a better name for a Being who Mankind knows as Queen of the Universe. June was unmarried, although I knew she did have a "lover" here. I suspected it was Tom Stevens, who was one of Sanda's "people".

"You are perhaps a 'legend' like no other who has ever lived in all of history, your majesty," she said to me, giving me a smile, her teeth white against the darkness of her attractive face. Back in the 20th Century I'd not had too high an opinion of the Black race as such, but here in the 26th Century I've had good reason at times to reconsider my earlier opinions of Blacks.

"I am woman 'good with a sword' and with certain 'ideals'," I smiled back. That is how I see myself, not as others perhaps see me. I am I suppose "awesome" with the blade, although Darlanis is nearly as "good", and far more "attractive" than I am too. On the other hand I am extremely intelligent, and take pride in the fact that I was Janet Rogers' "mentor" during the time I knew her in the Twentieth Century. That I did make a "difference" in history despite the fact that even Janet herself made "mistakes". I do hope that when the time comes that I stand before SHE and am judged for my sins that SHE will take into account that I did try to live a good life, that I did try to do on to others as I would have wished to have been done on to. Perhaps that is ALL anyone can ask. I have tried to be a good Queen, a good wife to Jon...



"Don't keep glancing back," I "warned" June in a low hiss as we rode into Trella proper. I'd had Queen Joyce conceal herself beneath a large canvas so that no one would know "what" she was. While I had no doubt that the people would eventually learn that I'd brought the ruler of the mutants of the ruins of Los Angeles into Trella, I did feel that inside my palace I might be able to "control" things a bit better than I could here in the streets...

"We wouldn't stand much chance against a mob," she replied.

"I do have my flamethrowers," I answered with a grim smile. The look of "horror" there on her face at this making me smile. The weapons had not proved all that effective against armored mutants, but against ordinary humans they would be terribly lethal! I recalled how Bob Simmons had used such a weapon back in 2567...

"Yes, my... Warlady," June Colt answered, her thoughts quite visible there on her face. Like most people, even Warriresses, the idea of "mass destruction", of killing large numbers of "civilians" was something almost "unthinkable". Only Princess Tara had ever done such things, and her name was spoken of by many in much the same light now as one might have spoken of the EVIL ONE.

"I do not take pleasure in killing," I said to her then. I saw her "nod", her dark eyes briefly for a second holding my own. "On the other hand there have been times that I have found such to be 'necessary' and at such times I have taken life," I added.

"The people are quite 'curious'," she spoke, regarding them as they gathered to watch us trotting up the cobblestoned street. I was the Queen of Trelandar, and naturally drew some attention, especially considering the size of the force that I had with me. It being common knowledge, I supposed know, as to the nature of the expedition that I'd taken with me into the ruins of Los Angeles. Into a place that no one had ever dared to enter before.

"We'll be 'all right' as long as Joyce keeps her wits," I smiled back. One glimpse of her and as we used to say back in the Twentieth Century, "the fecal matter would be hitting the rotary air circulation device". And using the flame throwers on a mob, while "effective", would most certainly result in "problems" later on for me. Especially given the sort of "leadership" that my own political enemies might be able to provide here now too...

"They are going to learn eventually," June now reminded me, pulling on the reins of her unicorn as a child dashed across the street just in front of us. Its mother half hesitating to pursue it for a brief second before then dashing across in front of me. My gigantic dire wolf, nearly as large as a unicorn, still easy to control despite the crowds that now lined both sides of the street. The shopkeepers, the passersby, everyone stopping now.

"How did the people behave when Princess Tara was Darlanis' Warlady?" I smiled back. Tara had ruled by terror, by fear. It had been "effective" for much the same reasons that there had not been any "riots" in Nazi Germany or Stalinist Russia. The "same" was true of Janet Rogers' NEW ORDER after the "rioting" of 2010. Janet had ordered machine guns used. It had been an "effective" way of teaching people the "folly" of rioting. There had been no more riots after that. Discipline is sometimes "necessary" both for children and for societies. On the other hand one must know "when" to do such things and when not to do such things too here. This is, I might mention, a point of disagreement between me and my otherwise quite excellent Prime Minister, Mrs. Sanda Talen. I fear she believes too much in the idea of

"democracy", and fails to realize that at times "discipline" is what is really needed...

"You are not Princess Tara," my officer smiled back at me.

"Perhaps she too believed in what she did," I smiled back.

"Did you 'associate' with people of my 'race' in your time?" she suddenly asked me, a question that came as a sudden "jolt"!! "I 'ask' because Keri said something to me that there have been very great changes in things since the time you left your time." I had told Keri a great deal, which she had then put into print.

"The 'Blacks' of my time were not like those of this," I said. "The 'War', for all its destruction, served to give us a form of 'racial equality' that would have been impossible before. It is my theory that a 'genetic cleansing' occurred afterwards." I was also aware that among Blacks the women were more "intelligent" than the men, something that had been known in my own era.

"People still worship that which is 'white', 'blonde'," she pointed out in reply. The Priestesses depicted "Lys" as being a white skinned, blonde haired woman. SHE has of course neither shape or form, and appears to you only as you wish to see Her as.

"The Lorr doubtlessly played their 'role' here," I answered, Amethysta then trotting up beside us putting a halt to all this. The palace just ahead of us, the guardswomen on duty opening the gates as they saw us coming. The sun hot in the sky overhead...

"You are taking a great risk on my behalf," Joyce said to me as I showed her the room where she might stay here at the palace. I had no doubt that word would eventually reach the city that I had a mutant living here in the palace. What the "reaction" of the people would be was something I couldn't accurately predict.

"I am not a woman of this time," I smiled back at her.

"The 'second Janet Rogers'," Joyce grinned in reply.

"The first wasn't too bad either," I smiled in turn.

"When Les Hawkins finds out..." Sanda said to me when I left Joyce's room, the implications of her words no doubt being shared by many here in the royal palace. I had weapons, the Warriresses to defend the palace against a mob, but eventually a siege by the people would be enough to bring defeat even with our flamethrowers and everything else. On the other hand I'd already sent a telegraph to Darlanis, who I trusted to know about such things. I did not think the Priestesses would "interfere", due to Tais. On the other hand I couldn't be too "sure" about that either now!

"He will no doubt 'exploit' the situation," I smiled back.

"Such 'matters' are often best settled with 'steel'," Queen Amethysta smiled, her eyes glowing into mine as I nodded in turn.

"Or by an expert with the crossbow," June Colt added then.

"I don't 'agree' with such 'ideas', but perhaps..." Sanda mused thoughtfully, it being obvious to me that she was under considerable "pressure" from everything here too. She was the effective "ruler" of

Trelandar in that she made most of the day to day decisions, and while I could "overrule" her, I rarely did.

"Maybe there's 'hope' for you yet," Amethysta smiled back.

"I'm no 'stranger' to such things," Sanda smiled in turn.

"I'd like the night 'off'," June said to me as I nodded. I was sitting with Bob and Carol, talking about the "old times"...

"I suppose it won't 'hurt'," I answered, seeing her nod.

"I'm going to ask my 'lover' to marry me," June spoke.

"That's pretty 'sudden', isn't it?" I ventured in reply.

"I've been thinking about it for some time," she replied.

"Is he... like you?" Bob asked, sitting there with Carol.

"We share the same 'ancestry'," June smiled back at him.

"Be sure that you share 'more' than that," Carol ventured.

"I think we do, we can 'talk' together," June Colt answered.

"That is always 'important'," Bob smiled at the Black woman.

"'Different' than a woman from our time," Bob said to me as soon as June had left the room. I supposed June was "different". She was culturally a "white" woman, and not really a "Black" in the sense that one of the 20th or 21st Century would have been.

"She's aware of being a 'non-white'," I smiled back at him. June did look upon such things a bit differently than I did, but on the other hand racial prejudice of the sort known in their era is almost unknown here in the 26th Century. There is a "dislike" of certain peoples, but this is more related to political events, to the sort of "activities" that are commonplace among Nevadas and so forth. In any case the crime rate among the various races is virtually the same from what data I've been to collect here...

"She thinks highly of you," Carol said, regarding me then.

"I'm not the 'easiest' Queen to serve," I smiled in reply.

"I think she admires you for 'what' you are," she said.

"My 'upstanding moral character'?" I laughed softly.

"You are like few others," the old woman answered.

"Are you wondering if I did the 'right thing'?" I asked Jon.

"With another wife, perhaps, but not with you," he smiled.

"I'm not 'infallible'," I smiled, undressing before him.

"You're still 'better' than anyone else I know," he said.

"There are a lot of women better looking than me," I noted.

"What makes a woman 'good' isn't always her looks," Jon explained as I got into the bed beside him. Moving into his arms so he could hold me close. The night sounds coming through the open window, a few stars visible if one looked closely here now.

"I will eventually look like Carol does now," I pointed out.

"I married you for better or for worse," he now smiled back. "And so far its been all 'better'," he said, kissing me then...

### Chapter Forty Three

Queen Joyce of "Los Angeles" quietly regarded Les Hawkins as the man stood there staring at her now sitting there beside me... In her way she was as "ugly" as any Lorr, but also doubtlessly as intelligent as any one of the inhabitants of Mars. The troublemaking "Democrat" just standing there in awe at "that" beside me.

"It is true..." he gasped, looking up at Joyce. I supposed he had an "agent" here in the palace. I employ dozens of people.

"I am Joyce, Queen of Los Angeles," Joyce said to him then.

"Their civilization is underground," I said then to the man. I was attired in all my regal "finery", including my ornate crown I rarely wear except upon state occasions. Despite whatever Les Hawkins might claim for himself, I thought that he was impressed! My Warriresses, drawn up in their numbers, my dogs, wolves, left no doubt that I was fully capable of employing violence here too!

"You act against the 'teachings' of the Priestesses," he answered, regaining his wits. I suspect he'd come to make threats, but I suppose facing me had made him realize how foolish threatening me might be. I do have a "reputation" of being "dangerous to cross", perhaps "deserved" to a certain extent here too now... He was not an attractive man, being rather overweight, with a look about him of too infrequent baths, a typical "low life", I mused to myself. A man who envied everyone more "fortunate". A man who doubtlessly was "ideal" for Princess Tara's own purposes.

"I'm sure they will 'notify' me of that if they wish," I answered now in level tones, sitting there on my throne before him. "They hardly require your assistance in a matter such as this."

"When the people of Trella learn of this they will demand an answer from you," he snapped back at me, standing there before me with one of my guardswomen on either side. "And this time 'woman from the

past'; even you have gone too far," Les Hawkins now added, his dark eyes burning up into mine as I sat upon my throne.

"Senator Ola Mathis of Dularn spoke much of you," I said. I was taking a shot in the dark, but the expression on his face for a brief instant left no doubts in my mind that he was Tara's man! "I fear however that she was of little value afterwards..." The look of fear there in his dark eyes made me smile to myself. "You may leave now if you wish," I smiled, motioning to my women.

"Were you able to sense his thoughts?" I asked Joyce as soon as I had a chance to speak with her in private. The fact that she was a telepath being something I'd kept from the others here.

"He is as you suspected only a 'tool'," she smiled back, the smile showing a set of fangs any Garth would have been proud of.

"Any idea of 'who' his master is?" I ventured, wondering how good her telepathic powers were. From what I knew of such things it was possible that she might have picked up something "useful".

"I will 'share' with you what I received," Joyce answered, placing her clawed hands on my temples, linking her mind with mine. Once again I saw as she saw, her visual sense different as is that of the Lorr, my mind linked with hers, sharing thoughts.

"The woman is not one I recognize," I said, Joyce nodding.

"She is not Princess Tara either," Joyce added for me then.

"At least we know Les Hawkins isn't the one," I smiled back.

"I am sorry I cannot help you more," Queen Joyce said to me.

"You've done all you could," I answered, aware too that her own life was at risk here should Les Hawkins be able to arouse a mob. My flamethrowers and quickfirers would stop such a mob in its tracks, but a siege was something I had no "defense" against. On the other hand it was doubtful that Les Hawkins would be able to convince Warriors and Warrioreses to join him in his attack. A mob armed with the usual "street weapons" wasn't too much of a threat to my fortified palace, not with the weapons I now had...

"This is not a good place for me to stay with you," Joyce said suddenly, standing there, a good two feet taller than I am. She did look a lot like a Garth too in a way, I mused to myself.

"My estate would be a lot safer," I mused, regarding her.

"Commodore Janice Hill, Queen Joyce of Los Angeles," I said. Janice looking at Joyce with much the same expression I suspect that she would have showed had I introduced her to a Garth here. The Huntress resting calmly at anchor, the day utterly windless.

"Pleased, your majesty," Janice answered, regarding Joyce.

"I wish to be taken to my estate," I said to my commodore.

"I can see 'why'," Janice now smiled, giving me a big grin. I'd smuggled Joyce out of the palace while my women created a bit of a "diversion" to fool anyone watching from a distance here. I gave Les

Hawkins credit for enough intelligence to think of that. It would take him time to raise a force of Trella's rabble, time I could use to see that Joyce was safely "transported" beyond his reach. And if Les Hawkins and his rabble attempted to reach my estate, they would have to pass through the forests, where my own forces could wage a running battle with them they couldn't "win"! I'd taken Bob and Carol Simmons with me for company, feeling that they might enjoy a few days on my estate better than at Trella...

"Brings' back memories?" I said to Carol as she stood there at the rail, a thing of curiosity to many aboard the Huntress. I knew she was old, dying, but yet I wanted to make her last days as "pleasant" for her as I could. I felt I "owed" her that much. The black smoke rising up from the funnel, the thud of the engine now familiar sounds, at least to me, if not to her here, I mused. There was not enough wind to make it worth bothering raising sail, but the steam engine, newly reworked, would do the job now.

"Bob enjoyed the North Star," she spoke, looking out to sea. "I think it was on her quarterdeck that he 'found' himself then." The old Dularnian Sealord at the moment talking to Commodore Hill as she stood there beside the actual "captain" of the Huntress, a midshipman, young, pretty, brunette, watching us all with awe. I thought of other such young officers I'd known, seen die in battle. Now the greatest danger one faced was from nature herself. No longer would the "sight" of a Dularnian cause men and women to run to arms, others to scale masts to await their captain's order to set or reduce sail as needed. We were at peace, at least with any nation upon the North American coastline at the present time. I knew that both Carol and I had played our "roles" in that here.

"I think you played your part too," I smiled back at her.

"There is little 'need' for Warladies now," she smiled.

"But we do have our..." I breathed, forgetting a moment!

"I may not recall where I am at times, but I've never forgotten what it was like back then," Carol answered, touching me. "And please don't 'pity' me, Lorraine," she now spoke to me then.

"I only 'wish' it could have been 'different'," I said, my eyes blurring a bit. I wondered if I had "resented" this woman. That I'd sought to do what I tried to do because she, Carol, just an exotic dancer in some Seasideestablishment, had actually been able to make a "fool" out of me before Darlanis and my husband!!

"I will live on in your memories," Carol said to me then.

"Perhaps I am a better wife to Jon because of you," I said. Jon standing by the bow of the Huntress, talking to the ship's first officer. Perhaps discussing something to do with the rig. I recalled what Jon had once spoke of Carol. Once she had been a very "attractive" woman in her own way. Provocative, sexy, a woman like few have ever been. A legend in her own time, I knew. In a way the "Lara Warsan" of the 20th Century, I mused just now.

"And I to Bob because of his memories of you," she smiled.

"Still no wind," Janice said, almost as if she thought I was blaming her for the lack of it. While the Athena was my actual "flagship" as such, I generally now used the Huntress for most of my sea borne travels, with Janice in command of the vessel here. She was a competent officer, one who knew me well, knew the sort of "discipline" I liked to see aboard a ship. Not a sea officer like Jon or Maris Marn, but competent at her work, I often felt.

"We have coal enough to reach my estate," I smiled back.

"Ship far out, Dulie by her rig," the lookout called down. "Looks like a 'North' from the height and rake of her masts too!"

"Captain North!" Janice snapped, wheeling about the words. The officer in question barking an order to the helmsman, Sandis North being tall and blonde, a Dularnian herself by birth, I recalled as I stood there watching. Her blue eyes meeting mine as I nodded back. It would be wise to "investigate" such a vessel. Even now, with peace between Dularn and the Empire of California, it was the "policy" on both sides to notify the other whenever a warship was sent into the territorial waters of the other here.

"Signal 'what ship' as soon as we are within range," I ordered, standing there at the rail. Much aware too that there had been no notification by Dularn of any of their warships this far south. Queen Maris was "careful" about such things, which meant to me that it was likely this was not a "Dularnian" ship as such! "Also please inform the crew that I would like them at battle stations, just in case this ship is 'what' I think it may be..." The "look" on Janice's face, and upon everyone's making me smile. "We may just be making the acquaintance of Princess Tara again."

## Chapter Forty Four

"They have steam as we do," Janice said, lowering the telescope. Her dark eyes meeting mine as I nodded back at her then. She is an attractive woman, tall, slim, dark haired. Much like a daughter of mine would look like, I suspect. I thought highly of her too. Perhaps due to her looks, to what we'd shared together over the years that we'd known each other, the adventures we'd shared together aboard this very ship. Her uniform in the "new style", the black silken tunic and hose, instead of a loose dress like fighting women used to wear even aboard the warships. My own attire was more "feminine", as I suppose befitting a "Queen".

"Tara's last vessel also mounted cannon," I commented then. Had it not been for the "intervention" of the Priestesses of Lys and the firepower of the Gaia there would have been nothing left of the North Star. Not even Maris Marn's "abilities" at command had made any difference, I recalled, although her own bravery had left no doubt that she was truly of the Caste of Warrioreses... I'd never thought that much of her, but she'd had plenty of guts! Something there'd been no doubt of either there in the "north"... I recalled too what Darlanis had said of Maris, of her courage, of what they'd learned there in the north, of what they'd SEEN!! And when it had come down to it, she'd been brave too this year. Willing to risk her position, her throne, to fight against Tara.

"We would be defenseless against such weapons," Janice said. I suspected that the same thought was shared now by many aboard. The crew of the Huntress were picked men and women, the "best". I could rely upon them to maintain order even under cannon fire.

"We can turn and run for Trella," I now smiled back at her.

"That probably would be the 'wisest' course of action," she answered, knowing that I was often not "wise" at doing such here.

"But then we would learn nothing of things," I pointed out. I also had no desire to return to Trella just now either here... Not with the sort of a "mob" that Les Hawkins might be raising!

"We may have an 'advantage' in speed under steam," she said. The Huntress was newly refitted, and had a powerful engine capable of driving her at six knots under steam power alone. She was not as "fast" under sail perhaps as a Dularnian "North", but on the other hand I did not feel Tara's ship was of the latest type.

"My thought exactly," I said, glancing over at Bob and Carol standing there together at the rail. At Joyce watching us, her eyes shielded by a dark cloth from the glare of the bright sunlight. I wondered if it was wise here to risk their lives here. I saw Bob whisper something to Carol, then walk over to the hatch that led below to the engine room. I suspected that a decision had been made. The old Dularnian Warlady giving me a grim smile!

"Better this way than in bed," Carol said to me, drawing her sword, the blade glittering there in the reflection of the sun. I nodded, well aware that "history" cannot be changed, the smile curving my lips no doubt making others aware that once again the Warlady of the Empire of California strode the deck of a warship! That once again she scented the odor of battle, my blade suddenly in my hand almost as if it had a mind of its own. The crew hurrying to their stations, some glancing up at me standing there...

"I'm glad to be here," Carol said, joining me then, her old eyes meeting mine. "I'm glad this time we're on the 'same side'. That we're together at last," she spoke, cutting the palm of her hand on her blade and offering it to me. I cut my own, tasted of her blood as she did of mine. Such is, I think, meaningful only to those of our caste. I'm glad we shared this "adventure". I still recall her last words when Tais and I helped them pass on. She did "remember" our standing together as she laid beside her husband there in their own beloved home. The poison they took giving them both a peaceful passing into the astral world together just as they wished it to be. I weep as I write these words. She was a woman I will never forget. A woman I much admire too.

"We have 'lived' as few have," I said, Carol smiling back.

"Definitely a 'North'," I said, Janice standing at my side. I nodded to Carol, to this old, gray haired Dularnian Warlady I'd crossed blades with only three years ago. There are many "paradoxes" in time travel. Even though Carol is now "dead", she yet "lives" and it is possible that I will see her again some time... I would also like to meet Janet Rogers again, she who was once my Princess Ann of Trelandar, the child who SHE herself took back in time to the Twentieth Century so that history might be as it was. Bob then rejoining us on deck, an old man, but still in his way a man who had once commanded ships of war, who understood "things". Jon had left the palace the same time I had, with my son and Sue Cross, Yvette, for a place of safety should the worst happen now.

"And if it is Tara's..." Janice said, standing behind me.

"Then we will do as we must," I answered in level tones.

"We wouldn't stand a chance against cannon," she mused.

"A fact I have already 'noted'," I smiled back at her.

"Only one of our battleships could survive it," she spoke.



"Tara used explosive shot before," Sandis North added then.

"No doubt then we can expect she will use it again," I said.

"Cannon will outrange our own weapons," Bob said to me then.

"It is unlikely that her weapons would have a range of more than half a mile," I replied thoughtfully, aware that ours had a far less range, our steam powered weapons being able to fire no more than six hundred yards at the very best. I could "counter" explosive shot with my own fire bombs fired from my catapults. I was not "defenseless" by a long shot, although the longer range of Tara's cannon meant that the Huntress would have to endure being under fire for a period of time before I could return fire... Tara had been able to fire a broadside into the North Star at close range back last year, Maris having had no idea of what she was facing, a situation that would not be repeated in this case!

"Our speed through the water is about two hundred yards a minute," Bob observed, mentally doing the same "math" that I was. We would have to withstand at least one broadside fired at long range from the enemy, perhaps two depending upon its commander. Granted such fire would be from a considerable distance, but I had no doubt that we'd take "hits", although how much "damage" we'd suffer was something unpredictable. Maris had been taken by surprise at close range, and Tara herself had been in command. There was also the question of how "good" Tara's gunnery would be. Such weapons violated the edicts of the Priestesses, and it was unlikely that the evil Princess would have been able to train her crew in gunnery to any extent. Also, it was likely that her own first ship had perhaps been pretty much "one of a kind", and this ship might have only a few cannon and not a full complement.

"Ship is turning towards us," Janice announced just then.

"Signal them again," I ordered, my officer nodding back.

"No response," Sandis North spoke, lowering her telescope.

"I want the deck soaked down," I spoke, Janice nodding back. "Raise battle flags, load fire bombs in all catapults," I added, her dark eyes briefly holding mine. I knew she "understood"... It could be the "last battle" many of us aboard might ever see. I could, I knew, quite likely be sharing their fate. As for Bob and Carol, I supposed there was little danger for them here now. It is unlikely that any force, any agency less POWERFUL than that of SHE herself can alter such things. I saw Joyce watching me, a mutated horror standing there on the deck, the sun shining on it.

"You are she who fought her way across the ruins," she said. No one had ever really believed until Joyce had confirmed it now.

"I never would have made it without Hope," I smiled, putting my arm around Carol as she stood there at my side. This old woman, dying from an incurable disease that stole her very memories.

"I have taken the 'liberty' of hoisting your flag," Janice said to me. That double barred silvery cross on a black field. Tara would have no doubts now as to "who" she faced here. The evil Princess, once the abode of the Queen of Darkness, would be well aware that she faced Lorraine Richards, Queen of Trelandar.

"Pass the word to the crew that at my command they are to fall flat to the deck," I spoke, seeing her nod at my order here. The explosive shot fired from Tara's ship would be less effective then. There would be a "gauntlet" that we would have to run before our weapons would be effective in reply to Tara's cannons.

"I am glad I am here today," Janice Hill said to me then.

"There is the scent of blood in the air," I said to her.

"It is the scent of our foes," she answered with a smile, a grim smile that left no doubts that she knew what we faced here!!

"Such is part of the caste codes of Warriresses," Carol explained to Joyce, the old Warlady's memories apparently yet good. She was old, dying, but I thought still proud of her caste here. We of the Warriresses know that there are no immortals, that it is better to die with a sword in your hand than to live a coward.

"Less than a mile now," Janice said to me, the enemy ship not having yet identified itself. I wondered if it was Tara's? I knew of no other ship like it save for the one Tarahad built. The same vessel that she had used years ago to provoke a war between Dularn and California. A war that had dragged on for years too before a peace treaty had been signed by Maris and Darlanis.

"May Lyshave mercy upon our souls," I spoke then in turn.

"I am proud to stand beside my Queen," my commodore said.

"Better plan to be lying beside her," I grinned back then.

## Chapter Forty Five

"No signals, no `nothing'," Janice breathed, it hardly being necessary to use a telescope. We were doing almost seven knots. Bob had "adjusted" the safety valves for more pressure, saying it was time to "use" the "safety factor" built into the boiler here. I trusted his knowledge of such things, even as "old" as he was.

"A ship of Tara's for sure," I answered, Carol talking to Joyce as the two stood there now watching the approaching enemy. I wondered if Tara herself was in command, or another was here...Tarahad so far as I knew "retired" after getting "burned" last year. I supposed she had decided to "go straight" after all the experiences she'd had, the terrible "scarring" of her face, body. Too, I suspect that she'd learned much of "evil" from the "Queen of Darkness", whose evil spirit had once inhabited her own soul. There was a time when I would have laughed at such ideas, but no more. I recalled what Darlanis had told me of such matters here. I believed now in such things, that "EVIL" did exist as a Being!

"They must know `who' they face," Janice smiled back now.

"Let us hope it causes them `concern'," I smiled in reply. I have a "reputation" for having a "bulldog tenacity" in battle.

"About a thousand yards now," Sandis North broke in here.

"There is a `roll'," I observed, seeing her nod in return.

"Stay alert, you lookouts!" the captain yelled to mastheads.

"My husband has an `eye' for blondes," Janice whispered now.

"She is built pretty good," I observed in the same tones... Not "Darlanis" quality, but Sandis was one very attractive woman.

"There was a time when only slave girls went to sea," Janice said to me, standing there watching the approaching enemy vessel. One does not like to think of what lies ahead. Thus such banalities are commonplace when you are facing battle. There is also I think an attempt to avoid showing the fear, the terrors you feel. I recalled the time we faced Maris Marn, the North Star with this same ship. Janice had been young, inexperienced, in command for the first time. She had done well back then, however, I reflected thoughtfully. I could trust her to carry the attack through if I fell. I glanced at Carol, knew we had a second "Warlady"...

"If I fall, ask Carol for assistance," I said to Janice.

"She's..." Janice breathed, aware of the implications.

"Her fighting instincts are still good," I smiled back.

"Ahh... Down!" Janice yelled, a puff of white smoke from the enemy leaving no doubts either as to the type of weapons carried!

I reflected upon the low muzzle velocity of Tara's cannon as we laid there waiting for the hit of the deadly projectile. Then came a splash to one side of the ship, the cannon obviously not being too accurate, although I think the fact we had "zigged" a bit might have made a difference here along with the heavy roll. While there was no wind at all, there was still a heavy "roll" as I've noted, and I suppose that did have its effects here too now.

"Turning `broadside' to us," Sandis said there on her knees.

"MayLysbe merciful..." I heard Janice breathe just then.

"Range about seven hundred yards," Bob Simmons announced.

"Everyone `DOWN'," I snapped, following my own orders!

"I believe they have `fired'," Carol ventured to us now.

"Muzzle velocity less than six hundred," I said to Janice. A sudden loud explosion to port leaving no doubts we'd been hit! The other four had been all misses, going over us a bit here now!

"On your feet, man your weapons, damage party to port!" I heard my commodore bark as she leaped up to her feet. "Helm to port," she added, the Huntress swinging, bringing her broadside to bear. Range too long for our quickfirers, but we might get a hit with one of our catapults if we were lucky, I thought then...

"'Accident' aboard the enemy, I believe," Sandis said to me. I'd seen the puff of white smoke, the thud of it echoing across the water. The Huntress was almost broadside to them now. I had hopes we might score a hit. The damage fortunately from the shot had been minor, the missile having exploded against the railing with all the rest complete misses. Either Tara's weapons were not very accurate, or her gunners were inexperienced with cannon.

"Must have 'dropped' a shell," I grinned back at her. The crew of the Huntress was now busy loading, the ship coming around to present her own broadside, while the enemy seemed to just sit there broadside to us as if their captain didn't know what to do! The thought going through my mind that Tara most certainly was not aboard, as she would have never tolerated any such nonsense!!

"'Fire' the broadside!" Janice yelled, the Huntress firing!

"May Lysbe merciful," I heard Sandis softly muttering now.

"Hard turn to starboard, man the port broadside," I ordered. I would keep up a steady rain of fire upon the enemy, my own arms being able to fire far faster than could their crude cannons now!

"There is a 'hit'," Janice breathed, the flames now visible!

"Port broadside fire as your weapons bear!" I snapped then!! The men and women of the Huntress scurrying to do my bidding now!

"They are returning fire!" Carol spoke, standing beside me.

"Everyone Down!" I yelled, the crew dropping as one here!

"Let's just hope their 'marksmanship'..." Janice breathed, a sudden terrific explosion overhead causing yells of terror as hot pieces of the deadly metal came shooting down among us! A small piece of something struck me in the back, like some spent arrow, I thought! The mainmast, now cut in half, falling over the side!

"Damage control, get that mast cut free!" Janice cried, on her feet, Carol yanking a bloody splinter from my back, giving me a silly grin. I could feel the blood run, the wound however only minor, nothing to concern myself about for the moment at least...

"Enemy hopelessly on fire," Sandis spoke, the black smoke now rising far up into the hot summer sky. I could see that they were starting to abandon ship, get what boats they could afloat! When the fire reached their powder magazine or the shells that they carried, I suspected that it would blow the ship sky high!!!

"Launch boats, pick up survivors, but stay at least a hundred yards from that ship," I ordered. Sandis now nodding back.

"You are wounded," she observed, giving me a grim smile.

"Another scar to bring back memories," I grinned back.

"That 'woman' is the same one I saw in Les Hawkins' mind," Joyce said to me as we dragged the survivors from Tara's ship up over our side to the deck. The Huntress had taken "losses", our "butcher's bill" having been three dead, two seriously wounded... The broken off stub of the main mast leaving no

doubts either now that the ship had been in a fight. Princess Tara had not been among those we'd rescued before the enemy ship exploded in fire. Janice had cut my dress apart, applied wound compound to me there on deck when I'd refused to go below to see the ship's doctor. I supposed Jon would smile and comment about another "scar" on me.

"I will allow you to `question' her," I smiled back at Joyce. I had no doubts that Joyce would learn much we needed to know. Evidence I'd need to convict Les Hawkins of treason here! The woman shrinking back in obvious terror as Joyce reached out with a clawed hand. The "Queen of Los Angeles" like a nightmare.

"Do we continue on to your estate?" Janice asked me then.

"I think we will return to Trella," I smiled back in reply.

"We have the `proof' we need now of Hawkins' treason," my commodore observed, giving me a smile as Joyce dragged the luckless woman off. I did not think the woman would forget this now! Joyce would merely ask questions, and read her own thoughts back.

"I see Trella is still in one piece," I smiled to Sanda Talen as she came aboard, the Huntress' damage obvious to any who had eyes to see. Joyce had learned much from the woman, enough to convict Les Hawkins of having been an agent of Princess Tara. It was nearly sunset, a row of dark clouds there on the horizon.

"Amethysta `took things in hand', and `dealt' with Hawkins," Sanda spoke, a note of "awe" in her voice as she looked up at me. Going on to say that Amethysta had gathered together the people loyal to me, and in a short hot battle, defeated Hawkins' rabble! She had killed Hawkins herself, putting an end to his evil plot!!

"She doesn't `believe' in `democracy'," I pointed out to my Prime Minister. "Like Darlanis she believes in something else."

"Maybe she is `right'," Lady Sanda Talen admitted softly.

"There is a `time for steel'," I smiled back at Sanda.

"That is why we need a Queen like you," Sanda answered.

"Or like Amethysta," I smiled back, Sanda Talen nodding.

"I don't like her, but she is `effective'," Sanda admitted.

"Perhaps she `reminds' you too much of `others'," I smiled.

"That is `possible'," my Prime Minister admitted to me now.

"One tall and golden, who once ruled this country?" I said.

"I do not see Darlanis as I once did," Sanda admitted to me.

## Chapter Forty Six

"'You' are condemned to slavery," I said to the woman as she knelt before me. She was attractive, with light brown hair. She would be shipped north, far north to Queen Freydis' territories. My forces had rounded up the last of Tara's agents, and I'd sent to Darlanis and Sharon by telegraph the names of those who had in their countries been in the service of Tara. As for Tara herself Joyce had learned little, just "bits and pieces" of information.

"Your majesty is `merciful'," the naked slave girl answered, June Colt's hand in her hand holding her face up towards me now. Most monarchs in this era would have had her head for all this...

"In the arms of a strong master you will forget politics," I smiled back at her. Joyce had said that she believed this woman had been a close lieutenant of Tara's, and had attempted to follow in her footsteps. I supposed that it was possible here too. She had read some of Tara's books, and formed her own ideas here. That she had been as "successful" as she had been was due I felt more to human "selfishness" than anything else she'd done to us. Like Hillary Clinton in the Twentieth Century she had been a woman who had been able to exploit the selfishness of others for her own gain. Telling people exactly "what" they wanted to hear too!

"Yes, mistress," the slave girl answered, bowing her head. I wondered if her master would let her keep the name of Hillary?

"Well, that's the `end' of that," Sanda said to me as we shared dinner. The Huntress was being repaired, the dead buried, the wounded were now recovering in the hospital. Tais had sent Bob and Carol back to their own time for their last few months...

"The `world' is now once again at peace thanks to you," Jon smiled at me. I knew he had a high opinion of me, "too high", I felt. I am not a person to be admired in some respects, I fear. I tend to be a bit too "authoritarian" in some respects, too in awe of my own intelligence. Perhaps too I like warfare too much.

"Tais said we were being `tested'," I smiled back at him.

"I think `you' were the one being tested," Sanda smiled.

"I keep thinking of Carol," I said, looking at no one.

"She lived a good life," Jon said, touching my hand.

"Someday I may be like that," I said, meeting his eyes.

"She said to me before Tais took her back that she was glad to have been on the Huntress, to have been in battle again," our slave girl ventured softly as she knelt there beside Jon and me. Yvette Senchal's dark eyes holding mine as I nodded back in turn. "I think she was truly of the Warrioreesses as few women are," our slave girl smiled, perhaps knowing more of such than I'd known...

"Tais," I smiled, the First Priestess suddenly "there". Sue Cross, swollen with child, there to one side watching as I wrote in my diary. The glittering gems of the Priestess' golden ankh leaving no doubts as to

"who" she was, if any had any doubts now. Jon sitting there staring at her, no doubt suspecting that Tais had plans here to transport me again through time to another era.

"There is a 'duty' for us to 'perform'," Tais said to me as I stood, suspecting that I was about to travel again in time now! A sudden "blurring", a sense of "movement", and then Tais and I stood suddenly in a dimly lit bedroom, the old man and the old woman lying there on the bed quite familiar I think to us both.

"I was 'hoping'," Bob said, looking up at me. Carol's eyes holding mine as I "nodded" to her, her face already starting to blur before me as the tears came to my eyes at the knowledge of what they had done, the tiny bottle there on the bed table leaving no doubts. I knew of such things, of the fact that unlike my own Twentieth Century suicide was an "accepted" means of "ending" one's life both here in the Twenty First Century and my 26th now. The poison they'd used was one that gradually stopped the heart. Both were in uniform, Bob that of a Sealord, Carol of a Warlady.

"There will be less 'discomfort' with my 'help'," Tais said. I am told that at the end that there is a sensation of "choking".

"I remember the Huntress," Carol said to me, her hand gently squeezing mine as I knelt weeping at her side. "And standing on the deck of the North Star in battle," she continued on here now. "The arena in Trella, the sun hot on my body, Bob at my side..." There were tears in those old hazel eyes as she looked up at me.

"You wear the uniform of a Dularnian Warlady," I said, the sword in Carol's right hand laid half across her old aged body. I wondered how much of her memories yet remained in her mind now. At the end Alzheimer's disease can steal every memory you have.

"I was once a Warlady of that far country," Carol smiled after a second's pause for thought. "I served a beautiful Queen." I wondered too how "clear" Carol's memories were of things now? I was tempted to ask her if she knew "who" the Queen was, but not if it would only serve to confuse her in her last minute of life!

"Your bodies will be sent there by Janet," I spoke to her.

"That is good," Carol Simmons smiled back in reply then. I knew, as they apparently did not, that they would not be buried in their uniforms, as Maris had discovered them attired in attire of the 21st Century. I supposed Janet had seen to such here now.

"There is no 'death', only life eternal," I heard Tais say. I knew the "truth" that she spoke, as I think did Bob and Carol. One of the "paradoxes" of time travel is that there is no death.

"We are 'together' at the 'end'," Bob said to his beloved.

"And with 'friends' at our side," his wife answered him.

I watched Tais lean over the bed, her eyes seeming to glow. I knew something of her powers, of what she was capable of doing. The "death" came swiftly then, in only a matter of a minute or so I think. Tais has the power to control the movements of matter, to stop hearts from beating, as well as being able to read minds. At the end I saw Tais clasp their hands together, their bodies "relax" as the "end" came swiftly then as their hearts both beat for the last time and the dissolution of Death came to them both.

"We have a last 'duty' to perform," Tais said to me. "It is one I can 'do' by myself if you do not wish to

assist me here..."

"They weren't buried in those clothes," I pointed out then.

"They left a will specifying just that," Tais said in reply. "However, those uniforms would raise `questions' that even Janet would have a hard time answering," Tais answered me in reply now. "Thus it is necessary that we destroy any references to Dularn."

"That `uniform' meant a lot to her," I said to Tais, my eyes once again filling with tears. To strip the uniform from Carol's body was something I couldn't do, nor did I feel right in allowing Tais to do it despite whatever problems it might cause later!

"I realize that," Tais answered, standing there before me.

"You could send me back to the future," I said to Tais. I did not wish to witness this "desecration" of Carol's dead body.

"Is that what you want me to do?" the Priestess challenged.

"You will `rob' her of what her last `wish' was," I wept, the tears uncontrollable as they streamed down my cheeks. Carol had been a "friend", one who had meant a lot to me emotionally...

"Was it the `uniform' that made Carol what she was?" Tais asked, no doubt well aware of the only possible answer to that... "And for Dularn to `exist' history must not be changed now," Tais continued on. I supposed she knew what she was doing here now.

"I will help," I said, the tears running down my cheeks. I could only pray that Carol would understand why I did what I did!

I picked out a lovely metallic mesh sheath for Carol, the sort of a dress that I knew she would have liked to have worn. I knew enough about Carol, about how she thought, felt, to know at least this much. I let Tais change Bob's clothing, but I took care of Carol myself, stripping her and then dressing her old and limp body in the lovely metallic sheath that she'd be buried in. I also took pains, wiping my eyes as I wept, to make her just as pretty as I could while Tais waited "impatiently" for me to come. Then as I straightened up, there was a sudden "blurring" again, a sensing of "movement", and I was suddenly back in my own palace!

"Lorraine!" Jon spoke, taking me in his arms as I wept, the tears filling my eyes as I told him of what I'd had to do back in the year 2033. What I'd been forced to do by Tais so that history would not be changed or altered. Time travel is not always a "blessing". It can be extremely painful emotionally to a person. I had been forced to violate Carol's last wishes so that history would not be altered, so that there would be a Dularn for her and Bob to live in for just over a year and a half before they returned to their own time. I can only hope that Carol understood. That she understood as she witnessed this why it had to be done!\* \* It is a well documented fact that people, just after their own deaths, are often able to "see" what happens to their bodies. I note too that this knowledge even dates back to the 20th Century.



There in the bedroom of the Simmons home I reached down to undo Carol's uniform as she laid there on the bed. The dead woman's eyes suddenly opening again, and with a look of utter fury on her dead face, her hands suddenly clasped me about the throat! "God Damn You,Lorraine, For The Bitch You Are!" she snarled at me! Her strength horrifying greater than my own as I felt her hands closing tighter about my throat, choking me as I now fought helplessly to free myself from this awful nightmarish horror!

"Lorraine!, Wake Up,Lorraine!" I suddenly heard a voice crying, Carol's fury filled face burning up into mine as I fought against those awful choking hands that now encircled my throat!!! Then suddenly I was aware that it was Jon's face looking at me, not Carol's, and that all of this had been just a nightmare now!

"You were crying out,Lorraine," Jon said to me, holding me, my body wet with sweat, the terror still vivid in my mind here!! I recalled what Maris had said about her nightmares with Darl Jord, and I wondered if Carol's ghost had come to haunt me here!! This was my second nightmare I'd had about Carol, and I feared I might be soon seeking the assistance of the Priestesses should it continue much longer too. While I knew from my Twentieth Century training that there was a good reason for these "nightmares" of mine, it did not do anything to help me get rid of them either...

"I violated Carol's last wishes at Tais' orders," I replied, getting out of bed, my damp body cold, throwing a robe about myself as I stood there, the stars bright outside the bedroom windows, a less than half full old Moon shining down upon the scene. I opened a bottle of wine, and took a long deep drink of it as I stood there with Jon watching. My nerves still shaken from this.

"Perhaps you should see Tais then," Jon suggested to me. I supposed that would be wise, as Tais could certainly use electronic hypnosis on me to rid me of these "guilt feelings" I had.

"Give Amethysta a chance to `run' things for a few days," I smiled back. With Black Lady Shalimar was just a few hours away. I'd had no more "trouble" with Tara's agents, and while Sue Cross was due to have my daughter quite soon now, I'd already made the necessary arrangements for everything here and there was really no more that I could do at this time until she actually did give birth. She was a woman with strong maternal drives, and little Eric did like her a lot, although I was careful to see that Eric did not confuse her with myself. In any case I could safely leave Trella for a few days without having to worry about it now. See to my own needs, talk to Tais, perhaps take a trip to Mars...

"I rather suspected that you might be soon paying us a visit," Tais smiled as she took my hands in her own. I supposed it was possible that she knew what the effect of what I had done to Carol might give me guilt feelings later on about the affair too. Rationally I doubt that Carol would have objected, as she knew as I did how important it was to safeguard the future from any harm.

"No doubt you already know about the `problems' I'm having," I said as Jon stood there at my side. I felt like saying that she was "responsible" for my having the nightmares that I'd had!! A few of the Priestesses staring at us curiously, while others in turn tended to their duties, the sun as usual shining brightly. Shalimar is a beautiful place, like some city in a fairy tale. I might note that the Priestesses themselves are "fairy like" too.

"Perhaps it would have `better' had I sent you back to this era and then did what had to be done without your knowledge," the First Priestess answered. "And I can assure you that your palace isn't `haunted' by the `ghost' of Mrs. Simmons here either..." I had to smile at this, as Tais was obviously reading my thoughts!!

"You could have 'explained' to them earlier that they would not be allowed to be seen in their uniforms," I retorted to Tais. As they had been in our own time only a few months before their deaths in 2033, I saw no reason why Tais couldn't have done so...

"Perhaps it would have saved 'trouble'," Tais admitted then.

"You're not 'infallible' are you?" I smiled back in reply.

"Never claimed that I was," the First Priestess answered.

"I've got Auroraworking on our 'problem'," Tais said as we had dinner with her later on after I'd had my "treatment" by means of electronic hypnosis to remove my "guilt" feelings about Carol Simmons and what I'd been forced to do too at Tais' orders. "There was a lot of 'opposition' to sharing our technology with Mars, but I felt it best considering the situation we now face."

"This 'death star' of yours?" Jon asked, nodding at me.

"Terraforming of Venus would take centuries," she mused.

"There is ample 'room' on Mars," I pointed out, knowing enough of things to know that life was possible upon its surface. Not all of Mankind would be transported there, but some would... By the use of "Gateways" it would be possible to transport both water and air to that world, make it much more "inhabitable" than it was now. I felt that such "cooperation" was our best bet now!

"Aurora demands that the Women be in 'total control'," Tais answered. "And you know what that might mean," she added here. Mars was a society of lesbians, a culture far different than our own. While Aurora herself knew what heterosexual intercourse was like, this was not likely to be something most of the Women would ever want to experience judging from what Aurorahad said of it!! And the Lorr for the most part too had little liking for Mankind even if they had little "use" for the surface of their own world.

"There are no other 'usable' planets?" Jon asked her then.

"Not in this solar system," the First Priestess replied.

"The 'range' of the 'Gateways' is infinite," I smiled.

"The 'Guardians' are then a problem," Tais admitted.

"There must be worlds without intelligent life," I said.

"Millions, but they are also 'protected'," Tais replied.

"You have considered sending people back in time," I said.

"There are a number of 'problems' in doing so," she said.

"There is 'evidence' that you will do so," I said to her.

"The American Indian, the horse, certain 'ruins'," she said.

\*\*\*\*\*

One does not travel between worlds without a certain amount of "adjustment". The atmospheric pressure at the surface of the Earth is about fifteen pounds per square inch. That of the underground caverns of Mars is far much less with an atmosphere of pure oxygen. It is thus necessary to go through "decompression" before you can travel between the worlds without grave danger. I am told that anyone who transported themselves from Earth to Mars without decompression would almost "explode" from their own internal pressure much as a fish dragged up from the depths of the ocean dies from the differences in pressure from hundreds of feet down beneath the surface and that of our own environment. On the other hand once you are used to the pound and a half pressures of Mars, then you can travel to the Moon, and even step outside (not in the sunlight) for very short brief periods as Aurora has done.

"It is obvious where Darlanis got her looks," Jon said as he greeted Aurora, who does look something like her famous daughter. The true first daughter of Darlanis, An'na of Mars, nodding as I took her hands, the two of us having once shared much together. An insectoid horror, ten feet in length, then extending her whip like antennae to me as I once again merged my mind with Raspa's. Once again I saw as she saw, felt as she felt, and "shared" with that alien mind from another world my deepest feelings and emotions. For Raspa and I both have met SHE, the Mistress of All...

"Were I not a happily married man..." Jon grinned as he sat across the table from Aurora and a few of her associates, his own words making me smile as I'm sure Aurora had little "interest" in such things, her one and only experience with a man having been rather painful for her and not anything she now wished to repeat. The food and drink of Mars being somewhat different from Earth's.

"I do not think you would find one of us `willing'," Aurora answered, his words of course being quite misunderstood here now. Jon muttering something under his breath, glancing at me, the grin that curved my lips no doubt leaving no doubts of it either! "On the other hand I cannot speak for all the Women of Mars now."

"This is not a `culture' like our own," I told my husband.

"She is a beautiful woman despite `that'," Jon replied.

"I feel I have little to worry about here," I smiled.

"Guess I should have kept my mouth shut," Jon grinned.

"I appreciate the `comment', Mr. Richards," Aurora said.

"I think I understand what I did not before," Jon smiled.

"An entire `world' of `them'," Jon said as we got undressed.

"Who is to `say' who is `right'," I teased my husband back.

"How far down under the surface are we?" he asked me then.

"A mile or so, I believe," I said, seeing Jon nod back.

"I don't think I'd want to live here," he announced then.

"No, I think you'd find it not to your taste," I smiled.

## Chapter Forty Eight

"I like a world that is 'warm'," Jon said to me as we flew back to Trella. "A world where you don't have to wear an oxygen mask and gasp for breath all the time," he added. The surface pressure of Mars being such that even breathing pure oxygen you still feel out of breath all the time. The Women and the Lorr are of course used to such, but while the Women look "human", it should be noted here that their lungs and blood are "different".

"The Women are 'beautiful'," I teased him as we flew along.

"And as 'strange' as the Lorr in their own way," Jon smiled.

"There were 'feminists' in the Twentieth Century who would have liked such a society," I pointed out, the clouds like drifting puffs of white cotton against the deep azure blue of the sky. We were just past the Sierras, and flying over the lower hills.

"There are always 'queer' women and other 'unnatural' forms of life," Jon smiled back. Like most people of the Twenty Sixth Century he viewed homosexuality as a "mental disease", one to be "cured" by the Priestesses. To Jon and everyone else the idea that someone might enjoy being homosexual made no more sense than the idea that someone might enjoy being "sick" with some disease. While it is true that some free women enjoy being "lapped out" by their slave girls, this is considered much in the same light as if the action was being performed by a dog. Slave girls under the law still being considered "animals" in the legal sense here.

"What about male homosexuals?" I retorted back at him then.

"A man uses his 'hand' if he doesn't have a woman," he said. In a society like ours few men went for long without "having" a woman, prostitution being "legal" and female slavery commonplace. It is known that such things tend to "keep women in their place", which is perhaps one of the "reasons" that they now exist again.

"There were cultures in the past where homosexuality was considered 'normal'," I pointed out. The Greeks of the Classical Era having viewed such matters in a far different light than now.

"And what ever happened to any of them?" Jon retorted back. I rather suspected that he "had me" there. On the other hand I'd guess that homosexuality might have had a weakening effect upon a society in that homosexuals would be less likely to get married. Less "likely" to father children, to pass their genes on to the next generation. This is probably the major reason why most ancient peoples were so strongly opposed to the homosexual as such. In societies with high infant mortality rates, with almost constant warfare, a high birthrate would be a decisive factor there.

"There were people in the Twentieth Century who thought that a woman like me must be 'gay'," I smiled, my own appearance being such that I did look rather "butch" in a way, as well as the fact that I had rather "unfeminine" interests in a number of things...

"No woman as 'good in bed' as you could be," Jon grinned.

"We don't have to get to Trella right away," I smiled back.

"A lovely place," Jon said, looking about as I tied down the plane. The small lake glittering in the sunlight, the clouds now spotting the sky adding their own bit of beauty now to the scene. We didn't have any wine or snacks, but I did have a blanket... A heavy forest on all sides, the breeze rustling the leaves a bit.

"Perhaps now we can start living as marrieds," I smiled.

"I'm a pretty 'lucky' man," Jon said, watching me undress.

"You could have had a wife with a nice smooth skin," I said. I'm all scarred up from battle, from all the fights I've been in. If that splinter had hit me harder and in a different spot I'd be dead now, just another memory like so many others I've now known.

"I think I prefer a woman who can stand by a man," he said, removing his vest and kilt, the common attire of men in this era. "There's more to being a good wife than just being beautiful..."

"You knew 'what' you were getting when you married me," I said, moving into his arms, molding my naked body up against his.

"That's 'why' I wanted you, and no one else," Jon said then.

"We could 'retire', go live on your estate," Jon said to me. Holding me in his arms, cuddling me as I laid fucked beside him. I tend to be a woman who always has "doubts" about herself a bit. I am not a beautiful woman, I don't have a "ripe" figure, or most of the qualities that men usually find "attractive" in a woman. I'm supposedly "easy to get along with" according to Jon, but I'm of the opinion this due more to the fact that unlike most married couples, we don't have the things to fight about that most would. As a Queen I am so wealthy that money means very little to me, a fact that I think makes it possible for us to live as we do here. I do have a lot of jewelry, perfume, "everything else" any woman might desire, slaves to serve me in any way I wish, and "duties" that are "light" enough that I really don't feel tied down here.

"Let Amethysta rule Trelandar?" I smiled, kissing him back.

"She and Sanda could do a good job of it," he pointed out.

"You wouldn't like the way I'd get," I spoke thoughtfully.

"You can't 'let go', can you?" Jon smiled, knowing me well.

"Not for 'long'," I smiled, kissing him, caressing him now. I did not think that another half hour would really matter here. We had have so little "time" together over the years that we both value these moments together when both of us can "forget" it all!

"I'm glad you flew through that "Gateway", Jon said to me as we flew back towards Trella. "This is 'where' you belong now..."

"I was a 'misfit' in my own era," I answered, recalling as if was only yesterday some of the political

ideas I'd seen then. And the real disintegration of American society didn't start until the Clinton era, when homosexuals, feminists, Blacks, and every other "minority" group demanded "their share of the pie" even if they had done nothing in the first place to produce it here!!! That had been perhaps the "beginning of the end", the economic and social "bankruptcy" that had brought Janet Rogers to power in 2008. And it is evident that the Democratic Party was to blame!! That same political party so much based upon human greed and envy, upon very much the same "ideals" that throughout all of human history have been proven to be the "destroyers" of society. That recurring false "belief" that there is a "free lunch", that you can somehow "have" things without ever having to "pay" for them. The lies of those who in their hearts perhaps know better! Politicians who in order to get elected appeal to the greed and envy in people, people like Les Hawkins, like Bill Clinton, like that agent of Princess Tara who sought to become another "princess of evil" like her mistress had once been. That woman whose first name had oddly been "Hillary", who had perhaps too admired the first "Hillary", who had done so much to destroy her own society back in the Twentieth and early Twentieth First Centuries.

"You look 'better'," Sanda said to me as we shared drinks that night. I supposed that was possible, I mused thoughtfully.

"You should find a man, get yourself laid," Jon grinned.

"Jon!" I laughed, Sanda "blushing" a bit as she sat there.

"It's not good for a woman to rely on her 'hand' too long," Jon observed, no doubt delighting in Lady Talen's blushing too!

"What makes you believe that I don't have a 'lover'?" Sanda suddenly challenged him back. "I'm not unattractive," she added! Sanda then explaining that she'd kept it a secret from all of us!

"Why?" I asked, puzzled here that she'd do such a thing!

"When Les Hawkins started to 'make trouble', I planted an 'agent' of mine on his staff so I'd know what he was up to," Sanda explained. "He reported to me on a regular basis on Hawkins' activities when we met in a certain tavern not far from here, and I suppose one thing did lead to another and we became 'lovers'." Sanda going on to say that any public "acknowledgment" would have "blown his cover" and ruined the entire operation she had going!!

"Going to get married?" Jon asked, regarding the brunette.

"We 'are'," Sanda smiled, her dark eyes flashing into his!

"You're not 'neck chained'," I observed, such being the custom in this era although there is no legal sanction for it here.

"There is 'another' like 'Hawkins' in the Assembly," Sanda said. "My husband is now on his staff," she continued on here. I supposed that was good enough reason to keep this all "secret".

"I wonder if we can 'trust' her," Jon laughed to me now.

"She has a history of being 'tricky'," I smiled back.

"I prefer other 'weapons' than the sword," Sanda said.

"Just as long as you aren't another 'Hillary'," I smiled.

"The woman was once a part of my organization," Sanda said.

"Makes sense when you think about it," I mused thoughtfully.

"There was a time when I thought too little of 'honor'," she said. I could understand such things, the desperation back then. The seeking of "allies" wherever they might be found, even if it was likely that they could be a danger to you later on here then! "'Drew the line' at Tarah however, woman just too mean for me..."

"I guess she's worth 'keeping around'," Jon grinned at me.

"Yes, I'd say so," I smiled, regarding my Prime Minister.

"And she is rather nice to look at," Jon grinned back.

"Even if she is 'married'," I smiled, Sanda nodding.

"Probably 'better' that way..." Jon smiled at me.

## Chapter Forty Nine

"Take good care of her," I said to June Colt's husband to be as he now waited for June to put in her appearance as his bride. He was as "dark" as she is, and quite strikingly handsome, I also had noted, June being a woman who had rather good "taste" in men. He was of the Warriors, and also too of the Scribes, I'd heard, such leaving no doubts here either now as to his "intelligence". Sanda thought highly of him, and that too spoke much of him here.

"She's the best," Tom smiled, his teeth white in his face. I reflected upon the fact that her last name would be Stevens, not "Colt" any more. I'd have to get "used" to that, I mused, the thought going through my mind just then as I stood there in all my "finery" as Queen of Trelandar that I seemed to be seeing a lot of weddings, Sanda having finally "officially" gotten married. The passage of our Constitutional Amendments having put an "end" to the hopes of certain "radicals" in the Assembly of ever passing the sort of "legislation" I was too familiar with from the Twentieth Century. Trelandar was now safe from "democrats". \* \* The same sort of laws here would keep us "safe" today from the likes of our own "democrats" like Bill and Hillary... (J.B.B.)

For a brief moment I thought of what laid ahead in the future for all of Mankind, the neutron star that would be Doomsday. I could only hope that the Priestesses of Lys would do what they could to transport at least a part of Humanity back to another era, perhaps some to Mars, to that ruddy world in the night sky.

"I think highly of her," I smiled, seeing him nod. The band now starting up the "Wedding March", June and Sanda approaching. The silver chain about Sanda's throat would soon be "matched" by the one

around June's. They would take a short honeymoon, then June would return to her duties as captain of my personal guard. She had told me that he was working on a "history" of the Black race from its earliest origins to the present time. That perhaps I could resolve for him some of the "puzzles" about such matters. I had warned her that what I might have to say might not be what either of them wanted to hear, my opinion of the Blacks of the Twentieth and Twenty First Centuries not being all that "high"...

"Love her `wedding dress'," he grinned, June having decided upon a wedding outfit based upon Twenty First Century attire. It was I must admit "provocative", if a bit "shocking" for a wedding dress. The short white leather skirt, halter, and "strap boots" bringing back memories of another era, of a time in Dularn when Carol Simmons had worn such attire and thought nothing of it too! That June had decided to wear such attire spoke much of her in a way that I supposed had come as a "surprise" to me. I've always considered her a rather "sober" and sensible woman, not one who might ever wear such provocative clothing as this to her wedding!

"Doesn't leave any doubts about her," I smiled back in turn.

"Never had any about June," Tom smiled, his eyes gleaming!

"Another happy couple," I said to Sanda there at the reception after the wedding, Sanda's handsome young husband grinning back at me. The fact that Sanda had a son almost as "old" hadn't apparently made that much difference to either one of them here! He was dark like her, and very obviously deeply in love with her. Sanda is a very "attractive" woman, and I suspect "good in bed". Due to the anti-aging serums of this era she appears much like a woman in her late twenties would, and not her actual true age...

"With their whole lives before them," her husband smiled.

"Yes..." Sanda breathed, knowing well what "awaited" us.

\*\*\*\*\*

"Be any `day' now," I smiled, patting Sue Cross on her "tummy". She was big, badly swollen up now, ready to deliver at any time. It was now in late September, the nights cooler now. The year 2570 A.D., or 523 A.W. as time is more commonly reckoned...

"Be more `comfortable' having `her' in my arms than in `here'," Sue smiled, her eyes, much like Carol's hazel, meeting my own as I nodded and smiled in reply. I liked this young woman whose uterus I had "borrowed" to carry the last child I'd have. The daughter who would be of my flesh, and not of another's here. I love my three foster daughters, even none of them are "mine".

"I expect it will be," I then smiled back at the brownette.

"You're a good Queen, your majesty," Sue said to me then.

"I try to do my `best'," I smiled, regarding her there.

"It is a great honor to carry your Princess," she smiled.

"When the children are grown a bit I'll give you enough money so that you can have a good marriage, a family of your own," I said to her. I would see to it that she was well taken care of.

"I would like to continue being their `nanny' if possible," Sue said to me. I saw no reason really why she



couldn't be here. I am not a "maternal" woman, I actually lack such "instincts". I did a good job of raising Gayle and Ta-she-ra, and little Mara, but on the other hand I'm not much of a hand at handling babies.

"I think a trio of gold crowns a month would be proper," I said. Such is quite high pay in this era, I might mention here. By Twentieth Century standards it is perhaps \$30,000 a year now. Sue had strong maternal instincts, everything needed for the job. She was "clean", young and healthy, and reasonably intelligent...

"Your majesty!" the guardswoman breathed, shaking me awake.

"What is it?" I growled, only half awake, Jon beside me. I could tell that it was the middle of the night, a cold rain falling, the odor of it now gently wafting in through the curtains covering the bedroom windows. The woman holding a lamp, her helmet and armor gleaming in its light as Jon rolled over to look.

"Miss Cross is having labor pains," the guardswoman said.

"I will come," I said, slipping out the bed into the chill, Jon then following me, the guardswoman now holding up her lamp.

"How is it, Sue?" I asked, the Physician already there.

"Feels like I'm trying to pass a watermelon," she smiled.

"I've given her something for the pain," my Physician said.

"Has the 'Priestess' been called?" I asked the guardswoman. It was "chill" in the palace, my heavy wool robe a comfort here.

"She 'has', your majesty," the guardswoman quickly answered.

"Then we wait for nature to take its course," I smiled back, looking down at Sue Cross, the sweat now glowing on her forehead. There is little that "medicine" or even a Priestess can do here. I recalled with a smile delivering Hope there aboard the Diana. I had found it impossible to hypnotize Carol, perhaps due to the fact that Tais had done so years earlier as has been noted here. I had a good "competent" Physician, the best in Trella at least, a woman who I had a good deal of "confidence" in for such a task.

"I will be the mother of a Princess of Trelandar," Sue said. It wasn't true in a biological sense, as it had been my own ovum and Jon's sperm that had produced the zygote, but I supposed in a way the child would be as much "Sue's" as it was mine here now...

"And I'm sure a good mother too," Jon smiled down at her.

"It is coming," the Physician said, her hands between Sue's open uplifted thighs. The wench was wide hipped, a woman made to bear many children, I mused to myself watching the scene here as the Priestess watched dispassionately, her task being of course to verify that the child was worthy of life and not "defective".

"There's the head," Jon breathed beside me, watching this.

"Our little girl," I said, taking his hand in mine then.

"You have a fine daughter, my Queen," the Priestess smiled.

"My Princess Ann," I nodded, taking the baby from her. I could see Sue's eyes, the look in them. She had carried the baby for nine months in her body, and now the child belonged to another. A Queen of her country, a woman who had once purchased her as a slave girl for twenty five gold crowns off the slave block! Holding the new born baby in my arms, I went and knelt at Sue's side, placing the child in her arms, her eyes glowing into mine. "Thank you, Sue, for doing what I no longer can," I said to her.

"Our family is 'complete' now," Jon said to me as dawn broke over the hills to the east. It was going into fall now, into the cooler times of the year, the warm pleasant summer now most over.

"And the 'world' is at peace," I smiled. I'd dealt with the last bit of "evil" left over from Princess Tara's organization, and had altered forever the relationship between Mankind and that which was not "human". I'd shared a few precious days with a woman I'd once "wronged", and I supposed earned the trust of all. Some five years and a few months ago I'd come into this era with Sharon, crashing into the Pacific some miles outside of Trella. I'd found enemies to fight, friends to stand beside, in this era where perhaps Man had finally learned the lessons of history now. Where "racial prejudice" was almost unknown, where men and women were judged upon what they could do, not upon what they were... From the southern tip of Baja to the cold lands of Queen Freydis I now had "friends", men and women who honored an old "Warlady"!! And like an old "war-unicorn", I supposed it would be the pasture for me eventually, while a younger generation took over my world.

## Chapter Fifty

It was a few days before Christmas, a holiday still yet celebrated by most Trelandarians despite the Priestesses of Lys who tolerate no other religion but their own now many centuries old. I held my beloved little baby Princess in my arms, Sue Cross sitting there watching, her eyes so much like Carol's glowing into mine. I knew how "hard" it was for her, knowing that the child she'd given birth to would be another's. I could understand such "pain", even if there was nothing I could do about it. Yet it was Sue's breasts, not mine, that gave food and drink to my baby girl, and often Sue's loving arms, not mine, that now cuddled her up against the soft feminine warmth of her body. I am too of the opinion too that a baby "knows" its own mother by the odors of her body much like puppies "know" their mother by her scent here. I was also aware that little Eric called Sue "mommy" at times, a fact that left no doubts that he too saw her in such a light now. The thought having gone through my mind of giving up my duties as Queen of Trelandar and retiring to my estate with my children and my husband as Jon had once "ventured" to me a few months ago...

"She is a beautiful little girl," I said to Sue, who nodded. In a way I was starting to "resent" Sue, not because of anything that she'd done, but because my children saw her as their mother! While Eric did see Jon as "daddy", he did not see me as "mommy". I wondered if An'na of Mars, Darlanis' first daughter, had been the same way. Raised by a "nanny" much like Sue while her mother went out as a Queen of Sarn to fight wars with other nations. I knew of how An'na's decision to stay with Aurorahad hurt, but I thought I could understand. Perhaps An'na had never seen Darlanis as being anything but just a "woman" who came to see her from time to time. More of a "foster mother" than anything else here. I did know that Darlanis was spending much more time with her second daughter, Artemis, although here too I

suspected that Darlanis, like most high born women, really didn't play the role of a mother to the point that a woman of lower economic status might here. The Empress of course being well aware of "who" Artemis would "become", the "mystery" of Domino Tremaine yet unsolved...

SUDDENLY THERE WAS AN EERIE SENSATION IN THE ROOM AND I SAW A GLOWING FIGURE STANDING THERE BEFORE ME! THE FORM THAT OF AN INCREDIBLE BEAUTIFUL BLONDE WOMAN DRESSED MUCH LIKE A PRIESTESS!! AND ONCE AGAIN I FELT THAT SENSATION OF "LOVE", OF "GOODNESS" IT IS TOTALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO DESCRIBE TO THE READER, SHOULD HE OR SHE EVEN "BELIEVE" WHAT I HAVE WRITTEN HERE! THAT FEELING THAT I CAN BEST DESCRIBE AS A TERRIBLE "CRAVING", AN URGE TO THROW YOURSELF INTO "HER" ARMS, EVEN AT THE COST OF YOUR OWN PERSONAL EXISTENCE! AND NOW ONCE AGAIN I STOOD BEFORE THE RULER OF ALL, SHE HERSELF!! THE MISTRESS OF THE UNIVERSE, RULER OF ALL THAT HAS EVER BEEN OR WILL BE! THE BEING THAT MAN LONG AGO IN MY TIME CALLED "GOD"...

"The child you now hold in your arms has her own destiny to fulfill ," SHE spoke to me as I now gave HER my baby without hesitation. My own will nothing against HERS as everything seemed to "fade out" around me then in a sort of "blurring". Then I stood in the entrance to a dirty, rubbish filled alley, a wino staring at us in open awe as GOD now cradled my Princess and floated to a nearby brick building that had obviously seen better days here! A feeling of "loss" in my mind despite SHE's own awesome powers!! Despite the fact that I knew now "who" my little girl would become! That SHE held in HER arms Janet Rogers herself, my baby!!!

It was night where I stood, the stars dim in a light polluted sky, a few automobiles parked here and there leaving no doubts that I was back in the Twentieth Century, although just what YEAR I could not determine, the cars themselves mostly dating from say the 1950's. I saw SHE place my daughter on the doorstep of the building, a knocking sound now coming to my ears as I stood there unable to move, my attire no doubt quite out of place here too!!! The attire of a Queen of Trelandar as "outlandish" perhaps as the attire of SHE herself might be in such a godless world as this...

I saw the wino throw the bottle he'd held from himself, go to his knees, stretching out his arms to SHE as for a brief second SHE stood there regarding him like a loving mother might do. I sensed that SHE was speaking to him, but I heard nothing then, as SHE does not communicate with us by sounds, but by thoughts... Then SHE returned to me, and there was a sudden "blurring" as we then stood in a deep dimly lit cavern, men and women moving about along with a scattered number of Lorr! SHE telling me that this was the interior of the Earth itself, that despite the fact that the surface of the Earth was now incapable of supporting life, that deep beneath its surface life might still go on here. That Man yet survived, even in only thousands now, but Man did LIVE still inside his own world, the world that had given him birth.

"You are puzzled that I take such `interest' in things?" SHE spoke to me, her beauty such that it is beyond description. SHE is of course without form or shape, a BEING beyond our own ken.

"The Priestesses say you watch over us," I answered softly, standing there here in the "bowels" of an Earth perhaps a hundred years beyond the time I'd known only a fraction of an hour ago.

"I watch over all living things," SHE spoke, the long forgotten words from the Bible coming to mind that not even a sparrow fell that SHE did not know of. "I am the `MOTHER OF LIFE'," SHE added, "Its `guardian' in all the universes that there are." I saw "visions" then, of worlds almost without number, and I realized then too that WHAT stood there before me was only a tiny fraction of what SHE truly was. That the power of GOD, SHE was truly infinite, that SHE guided the myriad universes, that nothing in those

universes could occur unless SHE permitted to occur.

"You allow `EVIL'!" I sobbed, standing there before "GOD"!

"A wise mother must give her children the chance to `grow'," SHE answered. "They must learn for themselves right from wrong." I knew that SHE spoke the TRUTH, even if I could not understand!

Then there was that sense of "blurring", and once again I stood in the very same room in my palace that I had been in only a few minutes before, with the "knowledge" impressed into my mind of just who my little baby would grow up to be, the tears rolling down my cheeks as I knew now without any doubt "who" my Princess Ann had been now! I was the true mother of Janet Rogers herself!

"THAT was LYS??" Sue breathed out, standing there facing me, the look on her attractive face leaving no doubts she had "seen"!

"Yes," I answered, the tears running down my cheeks. LYS is one of HER names, although I think SHE is perhaps more accurate. "And my Princess Ann will grow up to be `Janet Rogers'," I said. SHE had allowed me that "knowledge", of "who" my Princess would grow up to be. I'm very proud to be Janet's "mother", and as I've written here, Janet did have many of my own "skills" too... And if Tais is willing, I plan to see my daughter again someday!!

And with "this" I come to the end of my story, leaving you with perhaps a story you will find hard to believe, many people still believing that my earlier experiences on Mars were only the result of "lack of oxygen" and the "effects" of Lorr venom. This time I did have an "eye witness" to SHE's appearance, and Sue's own "vision" of SHE matches mine quite closely, I might note now. SHE also gave me a few "suggestions" I'll pass on to Tais here... Maybe I'm not going to "die" quite as soon as I thought here either. SHE having made certain "suggestions" I feel worth trying.

The End

Lorraine Richards, Queen of Trelandar