

Rocks and Hard Places
UNEDITED REVIEW GALLEY

ROCKS AND HARD PLACES

By

J.J. Massa



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Rock & Hard Places
ISBN: 1-59836-045-0
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Printed and bound in the United States of America.



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Thank you to my editor, Tracey and my family for their understanding and patience.

Special thanks to: Kate Douglas for her advice and Willa Okati for her inspiration.

Chapter 1

“How’s it going?” Micah Bayonne asked the man with her. *I could ask, “How’s it hanging?” and he wouldn’t flinch. Heck, he’d probably answer.*

She sat across from her brother Granite in the mess hall of the starship *Phoenix* and picked at her food. Sending him a slight smile, she realized that she was a little nervous today. He wouldn’t notice. Lieutenant Commander Granite Bayonne, head of security for this enormous ship now carrying them through deep space, made most people nervous.

“Umgh,” Granite replied, pinning his piercing gray stare on her face. *Wow... maybe he did notice...*

Although this mission had only begun six months ago, to Micah, it felt like an eternity. Shy by nature, she hadn’t made any friends onboard the ship. She glanced at her brother. Granite certainly wasn’t shy—he was as unfriendly as they came but shy? Nope. Somehow, anti-social Granite had managed to strike up a friendly relationship with the second in command onboard, Commander West James.

It shouldn’t be that big a surprise, really, she realized. The two men were of a kind and, as far as she could tell, most of their conversation consisted of grunts and short barks.

She didn’t really stick around long for their conversations, though—it was just too painful for her. Micah had a debilitating crush on Commander James. She doubted if he ever saw her and that was fine. He’d never look at her *that* way.

She and Granite were manufactured people—not even considered real people by some. Most regulars—real people who were born—didn’t think manufactured people could even feel. Those people didn’t think there was anything wrong with hurting or killing them.

“I start my new position right after lunch,” Micah ventured.

“Mhmm,” Granite responded. She saw him look around the room and noticed that most people’s eyes skittered away from his glance.

Nobody really paid attention to Micah after they got past her white hair and metal-gray eyes. Although her looks were beautiful, she made sure she kept a very low profile. Granite didn't care about his profile. It didn't seem to bother him that neither of them could have any real or lasting relationships with the opposite sex. That was partly because Granite liked men instead of women, of course, but not entirely.

Granite had sex with whomever he wanted, when he wanted. She'd been watching him and his partners for years. Since adolescence, she'd spied on him and did her best for the men he'd had sex with and ultimately rejected. Sometimes it seemed he *tried* to believe that he couldn't feel.

"Um, are you going out tonight?" she never gave up. Sometimes her brother said real words to her.

"Hmnnnn," Granite answered taking a bite of his food and looking around the room again.

She'd like to go out and maybe meet someone. Deep inside, Micah wished she could marry and have children. With the genetic tampering, though, that just wasn't going to happen. Still, she dreamed that there was someone out there for her—someone who didn't care how she came to be.

Truthfully, she'd never even dated. Just to stay alive, it was crucial that she be near Granite. Something in her was necessary to his survival and vice versa—in fact she'd been fertilized and developed because of that. This was just one more reason that Granite didn't bother with a serious relationship.

"Did you start that book I gave you yet?" She smiled and tilted her head.

"Mmmmm." He gave her a half nod and an almost smile.

"You like it?" she asked hopefully.

"Mhmm." He closed his eyes and opened them with a hint of a shrug. She knew he was teasing her. She laughed.

He neither liked nor disliked her as far as she could tell, but he had to keep her around. The two siblings were developed in a test tube and additionally some of their genetic make-up had been altered.

Since that genetic meddling by scientists and their own "parents", it was responsible for her interest and expertise in science, Micah tried to count her blessings. She wanted to figure out what they'd done and why. *Besides, I like being super smart.* She knew her high IQ, Granite's exceptional strength and their exotic white hair was largely due to those experiments.

Rocks and Hard Places

“Want to play cards later?” she asked him, looking around. “Hey! Look, there’s Ensign Laylor. He’s actually trying to raise Sea Monkeys!”

Granite’s head turned in the direction she indicated and back to her. He raised a full white brow and frowned at her.

“Oh, Granite, Sea Monkeys aren’t real. You know that. So far all he’s raised is scum.” She saw a hint of a dimple. Was that laughter? She looked at his white curly hair neatly cropped, his hard, angular face, straight nose and full lips. “Granite Bayonne, you are a very handsome man.”

She didn’t know how he could manage to laugh without making a sound but he did. On the positive side, she saw that dimple again and he tapped her nose with one long tapered finger. Micah chose to construe that as a gesture of affection.

The siblings weren’t all that alike since he was nearly seven years older than she was. Both had spent the first decade of their lives in a glass enclosure and had been injected with various genes and compounds.

As a result of their early years, Granite was as mean as hell, monosyllabic at the best of times, and very suspicious. He was attracted to men who were somewhat passive and built small in stature. Add to that, he had the muscular physique of a bodybuilder and was six feet, four inches tall.

Granite nodded at someone across the room and Micah surreptitiously glanced over. *Commander West James, I knew it.* She concentrated on breathing normally and taking a bite of her food. It was never clear what would trigger her brother’s undivided attention but she didn’t want it now.

Not for the first time, Micah realized that in many ways, her brother mirrored the man she was most attracted to. West had slightly wavy dark brown hair and a swarthy golden complexion compared to Granite’s white hair and tanned, but not too tanned, skin tone. Although their looks were not the same, their personalities were very similar.

At six feet, three inches and muscular, Commander West James was reputed to be as hard as a rock, both physically and judgmentally. Considered fair overall, he was said not to suffer fools in any way. Also, it was apparently impossible for him to make any decision based on emotional factors alone. No wonder he and Granite had hit it off so well.

Looking up, Micah saw the head science officer, who was the reason for her current nervous condition, gazing, and not for the first time, in her general direction. After a few minutes of covertly watching him, she began to relax.

She'd been nervous because she was about to begin working full time with him. For days, she'd been certain that their duty hours together would be silent and tense. Wilhelm Schmidt wasn't physically imposing but he intimidated Micah. She respected his work and his rank but it was more than that.

Usually, he seemed so rigid, so unreachable. It was as if he never got nervous or felt emotional like she did. Watching him now, it was as if a massive weight had been removed from her shoulders. She could easily see that one thing—one *person* did affect him.

Following his darting furtive glances to the object of his perusal, she realized that not only did she have something he wanted, but they also had much in common. It appeared that Lieutenant Wilhelm Schmidt, head of tactical science for *Phoenix*, was extremely interested in Granite Bayonne. Logic dictated that Wilhelm was therefore attracted to big mean men, as she was, her brother specifically.

Micah could work with that. "Granite?" she said hesitantly, interrupting their meal once again. He grunted. "Would you excuse me? I need to go talk to my new supervisor before shift."

"Who is it?" he growled. *Wow! Whole words, just when I'm leaving. Ahhh c'est la vie.*

"He's over there," she said, rising and walking away before he could stop her or ask her to be more precise.

Her goal was to talk to the Lieutenant and still keep him slightly hidden from Granite. She gambled on the idea that Lieutenant Schmidt was as shy as she was and as hesitant to open himself up to rejection from Granite, as she was nervous about West James rejecting her.

Micah dumped her tray and followed a group of people out the doors, saying hello. She waited in the hall for the Lieutenant to come out.

"Lieutenant Schmidt, I'm Lieutenant Junior Grade Micah Bayonne. I'll be working with you from now on," she introduced herself when he emerged.

"*Ja?*" he barked. She could hear that his accent was clearly German, as was his demeanor.

"I wanted to speak to you before we began working because I think we have things in common and I hope for a positive experience. You can call me Micah and I'll call you Willy," she offered.

"You will do your job, I will do mine!" the newly christened Willy said coldly and walked away.

Rocks and Hard Places

Micah was disappointed but she was resolute. She would bide her time.

Chapter 2

With a concentrated effort, Willy had managed to ignore his new work mate and her incessant chirping. He allowed himself a faint smile as he thought about her excitement for their work. She'd been so eager to please and so bubbly.

Had he not been so nervous about his feelings for her brother, he would have warmed up to Micah right away. It didn't take long to learn that they had much in common. In fact, he was pleased with the nickname she'd tagged him with. He'd never had a nickname before.

Somehow he'd gotten through the hours of work and dinner and finally, the hours of evening nothingness. If it weren't for his thoughts of her brother, Willy would have taken Micah up on her invitation to dinner and gotten to know her better. Instead, he watched the clock, fretting and thinking. As the time grew later, Willy became more and more agitated.

He steeled his resolve. Tonight, he was going to do it. This mission was six excruciating months old and he *had* to get closer to Granite Bayonne. He couldn't help it—he *had* to. He knew it was reckless, but he couldn't fight the feelings anymore.

At twenty three hundred and twenty hours, nearly midnight, ship's time, Wilhelm spoke to the computer. "Computer, status of Lieutenant Commander Granite Bayonne."

"Lieutenant Commander Bayonne is alone in his quarters. Heart rate and respiration activity indicate sleep."

"Request site to site transport, dim lights to two percent and return on activation."

Only officers above the rank of Lieutenant had the ability to transport in this automatic fashion to say nothing of altering the other man's quarters' atmosphere. As it happened, Wilhelm Schmidt was a computer geek and could reprogram anything. He'd already given himself the ability to transport. He'd been creative enough to ensure that nobody would find out that he'd done it.

Willy materialized inside Granite Bayonne's bedroom doorway and edged a step closer to the bed. If the room's occupant moved he would leave immediately, no

Rocks and Hard Places

questions asked. The light was almost non-existent, he'd made sure of that, but he could see as well as he needed to.

Listening to the sleeping man's even breathing, Willy relaxed. He was safe. He stood where he was for a few minutes reveling in the fact that he was so close to his heart's desire. The first time he'd laid eyes on him, he'd felt the magnetic pull of attraction. As time passed, it turned into obsession. If pressed, Willy would have had to confess to care and maybe even love Granite Bayonne.

After several minutes, Willy edged closer to the bed. Granite rolled over onto his back, startling him. The younger man stood silent again, listening to the other man's regular breathing and finally relaxed.

Fifteen minutes had passed and eventually, Willy stood at the edge of the bed with his fingertips resting on the mattress. Carefully, he leaned forward, hoping for a better look at the object of his fantasies.

He could almost feel the big man's breath on his face when a shock whipped through his body. A pair of hard steel gray eyes was boring into his hazel ones. Before he could move, a vice-like hand shackled his wrist and he found himself jerked forward and pinned underneath a rock hard bulk.

His mouth was working but nothing would come out. With dread, he stared into the shadowed face of the man he'd dreamed about for months. What would happen to him now?

"What recompense am I due for your life, sweet boy?" purred the Goliath pinning him to the mattress. "I've killed men for less than what you've done tonight."

"I—I—please..." he croaked. He couldn't get more than a word out.

"Please, little man? You wish to please?" his voice sounded like the rumble of a big cat. Willy felt decidedly like the mouse.

"I—Sir—I want to, but I've never..." Willy could hear his whispered voice breaking and despised himself for it.

"Never?" the predator inquired deceptively sweetly.

Barely moving his torso, Granite ripped Willy's pajama shirt in half and tugged it off, tossing it toward the doorway. He raised both Willy's arms above his head, pinning them in one large hand held by the wrists.

Frantically, Willy shook his head from side to side. "No. Nobody else. I've never..." With difficulty, he sucked in a deep breath. "*Nie*. But I will," Willy squeaked.

"Yes, little man, you certainly will," the larger man confirmed.

Willy thought his heart would stop when he felt hot lips suck lightly and trail down from his Adam's apple to his left nipple. Involuntarily, he arched his back against Granite and squirmed in response. It felt so incredible to him. When he thought about *who* was doing this to him, he couldn't breathe.

His erection was so hard that he feared it would break off if he thrust forward. He struggled not to but couldn't stop. He heard Granite chuckle and the muscular officer rose to his knees, still holding his wrists in one hand. Leaning down, the big man used his teeth to jerk on the cord keeping Willy's pants up.

Once loosened, he pulled them down with his free hand. Now Willy was naked and pinned under the ship's security officer.

Head swimming, he was helpless to respond in any way that wasn't automatic. Granite devoured him. Like a starving animal, he moved over the younger man, placing open mouthed and sucking kisses down Willy's hairless chest and abdomen to his steel-hard six-inch erection.

The noise Willy made when Granite took his smaller tool into his hot mouth was somewhere between a moan and a squeal. When he gently sucked his balls into that moist cavern, Willy was certain he'd pass out.

"Please, please," Willy begged.

Granite slid up the smaller man's body and loomed over him. He took one of Willy's hands and placed it upon his much larger and wider cock. The larger, stronger hand wrapped around the smaller, finely boned hand and moved it up to the tip and down to the base.

"Soon, sweet boy, this will be buried deep inside of you," he squeezed the hand he'd placed on his shaft. "Is this what you've come here for?"

"I didn't—I wasn't..." Granite's hand tightened over his. "Yes," he admitted in a raw whisper.

Willy felt himself unceremoniously flipped to his stomach. Immediately, he felt Granite's mouth on his leg as the man licked from the inside of his left knee to his slightly parted cheeks. As he squirmed, the same hot mouth traveled up his other thigh.

Granite moved away for a moment and then he was behind him again. Willy felt himself tugged upward and lifted to his knees. He felt the wide palms rest on his buttocks and pull them apart. His very center was exposed to this large and dangerous man.

First he was aware of the cool gel and then the large finger invading his tight core. He intended to jerk away but instead pushed back against it. He whimpered—in fear, in want—he didn't know.

Rocks and Hard Places

“Shhh little man, you’ll soon have what you want.” The security officer's whisper sent shivers of need along his spine.

How had he gone so many months without learning the man’s voice? Willy was sure that voice could entice the birds from the trees. If he’d never wanted a man, *this* man, to penetrate him, Granite Bayonne’s voice alone would have changed his mind.

“I’m afraid.” His confession was lower than a whisper.

“You have only one thing to fear, my sweet,” Granite's sexy purr faded from Willy's mind as the larger man turned his finger and stimulated the gland that Willy had never given serious thought to.

Moaning and whimpering, Willy could barely breathe but he managed to gasp, “What? Fear what?” Granite’s large finger eased deep into his intimate hole and back out again.

Another slicked finger joined the first as it turned and spread the small opening a little wider. “What should you fear my small man?” Granite inquired stimulating the pleasure spot again.

“Yesss! Willie gasped, “I mean—what?” he forced the words past his foggy brain and out of his dry mouth.

“Never let me find you with another—make sure I don’t learn who you are,” he slid a third finger into him and Willy could only gasp for breath and grip the sheets under his frantic hands.

Before his foggy brain could attempt to formulate a response, he felt the blunt head of Granite’s sizeable cock pressing at his opening. Large hands gripped his hips and pain shot through him as the lubed head breached his tight anus.

Slowly, slowly, he felt the enormous rigid shaft fill him, one millimeter at a time. More and a little more and eventually the pain receded.

“Ohhhh,” he groaned, leaning backward, moving onto the huge member stuffing him, filling him so completely.

An arm looped around his abdomen and he felt hot breath stir his hair. Soft, full lips trailed up his neck.

“Feels good, hmmm, sweet little man?” Granite licked up his spine as he pulled out slowly and pushed in again just as slowly.

“M-m-m-more,” moaned Willy, barely able to speak.

“No more?” inquired Granite politely pulling back until his tip barely rested inside the tight ring of muscle at Willy’s opening. He kept both hands on his hips so that the younger, smaller man was immobilized.

“Don’t! No! Please don’t go!” Willy begged, trying to wiggle backward onto Granite once again.

Willy knew he was being pulled backward and tried to add to the momentum as he felt the huge cock fill him wholly once again. Granite’s larger body lowered and covered his smaller one completely.

In the dead center at the back of his neck, a sucking burning sensation dominated. “You now wear my mark little man. I won’t search for you but if I find you with another, I *will* kill you, do you understand?”

Willy nodded frantically. Granite moved his torso up again and Willy felt the cool air at his back. He missed the security of the bigger man’s warmth and protection.

“Now, tell me my sweet, what is it you want?” Granite demanded silkily.

“Move inside me, please?” Willy begged in a whisper.

Granite pulled back a centimeter. “Like that?” he asked innocently. Willy shook his head and Granite pressed forward a centimeter. “Hmmm?” he questioned seeming concerned.

“More,” groaned Willy.

He was on his hands and knees with his nether regions spread wide. This huge man’s monster cock was buried between his ass cheeks and he was sure he’d be split in two in a matter of seconds. The pain was palpable but he ached for his tormenter to move. His body screamed to him that he *needed* the in and out movement.

“More what, my small darling? More space? More time? More...”

“Fuck me! Please, please fuck me,” Willy begged frantically in an urgent whimper.

“How?” Granite inquired, slowly rocking forward and back. He created friction but not enough.

“Hard,” choked Willy, “Fast, deep. Give me, please, give me...”

Before he could utter another syllable, Granite jerked him backward and Willy felt the other man’s balls slap his thighs. He moaned in pleasure. Granite lowered himself over him and his hips began to pump, piston like stroking Willy’s prostate with every thrust.

All Willy could do was groan, “Thank you, please more,” as the other man pounded into him. Suddenly he stopped and pulled back.

“Come, my little man,” Granite ordered through clenched teeth, “Come for me.”

Willy felt his entire body clench at the words. He felt the tingle sweep upward from his balls and all through him. His body arched and he began to let go, spewing hot

Rocks and Hard Places

ropes of semen over his own chest and the arm of the man holding him. Granite slammed into him, losing control and pumping into him in short, sharp thrusts. The sensation of liquid heat spread through him as he collapsed onto the bed and lost consciousness.

When he opened his eyes seconds later, Willy felt Granite slide off the bed and head for the bathroom. The light was brighter in there and would momentarily blind him. Quickly, he too stumbled from the bed.

Gathering up his torn pajama top and discarded bottoms, Willy squeezed the fabric until he found his communications badge. He heard the bathroom door open just as the wobbly sensation of movement, of tugging took over.

Back in his own quarters, he dropped his bundle and staggered to his shower stall. Even though it was more of a driving mist than a shower, the warm water flowing over his sensitized skin was what he needed. Willy sunk to the smooth shower floor and felt the sting of the spray as he began to sob.

Chapter 3

Micah stood beside Willy during the mission meeting wondering what was bothering him. Three times already, he'd reached up to tug the hair at the back of his neck.

At first, she thought it was their uniforms. They were so snug and form fitting, she knew she didn't have a dimple or a mole to call secret. Standing next to Willy in front of Granite and the Commander, she felt dreadfully exposed and was fighting not to squirm.

Glancing left just as the man turned his head a little, Micah realized what was making him so nervous. Granite grunted in response to something the captain said and Willy's right arm twitched as he began to reach for the back of his neck again.

"Don't," she whispered, stepping closer into his side and blocking his arm movement. "He's watching, he'll notice."

"You have something to add, Lieutenant Bayonne?" the captain, an attractive fifty-ish year old woman, asked her mildly.

"No ma'am," Micah improvised quickly, "I was just mentioning some off-site supplies we'd need to Lieutenant Schmidt."

"Very good then, the away team will consist of Commander James, Lieutenant Commander Bayonne, Lieutenant Herrera, Ensign Lewis, Lieutenant Schmidt, Lieutenant J.G. Bayonne, Petty Officer Savage, and Crew members Murphy and Dion. You have one hour to prepare and assemble in the shuttle bay."

"Dismissed!" barked Commander James.

Granite and the Commander followed the captain into her office and Micah grabbed Willy's arm, hurrying to the elevators. "Lab 3!" she called out as the doors closed. The other people who'd been at the meeting were left to find another elevator.

"How did you know?" Willy choked out.

"Shhh, wait," she hushed him.

Rocks and Hard Places

Neither spoke as they entered the lab. She pushed a stool directly beneath a security camera and urged Willy onto it. Striding away, she returned quickly with a plastic jar full of powder.

"Talc," she announced. "Turn around, bend your head." She dampened the area around the large round bite Granite had placed on Willy's neck. Dusting the powder on it she asked, "Did you ... Are you... shoot!" She couldn't find the right words to ask him what had happened and how.

"I jimmied the transport program and did a site to site into his quarters. I lowered the lights at the same time. He caught me, but he doesn't know it was *me*. How'd you know?" Willy spoke without taking a breath and now seemed to be sucking the air into his lungs. His head was still bent.

"Okay, I think that does it, but you'll want to stand sort of in front of me any time he's around. I'll try to block his view of you." She replaced the lid on the talc and put it into a provision bag she was carrying.

"How did you know that I—that he and I—how'd you know?" Willy joined her and began to pack supplies and instruments they'd need for this short mission.

"I've been following him around for my whole life, spying on him, watching him. He's almost the only person I ever talk to." She stopped.

"Does he do this..." Willy indicated the back of his neck. "Does he ... *mark* -- does he mark every man he...sleeps with?" He seemed uncomfortable with the conversation on several levels, but she knew that she was the only person he'd be able to talk about this with.

She was reluctant to say too much but she figured Willy deserved as much information as she could give him. "Once before he marked a man that way. Umm, it ended badly," she sighed.

He froze. "Badly?" he croaked. "How badly?"

Micah released a sigh, hugging the small piece of equipment she'd been about to pack. "About nine years ago, he was in this relationship sort of, he was having sex with this one guy only. He left that same mark on him." She turned and put the little machine she was holding into a carrying case.

"What happened? Tell me!" Willy demanded grabbing at her.

Reluctantly, Micah continued. "I was meeting Granite for lunch near my school. He worked as a guard at the Space Agency. We have to get together every other day at least. Anyway, we walked into the eating-place and there was Rudy. He was actually sitting in some guy's lap."

J.J. Massa

“When he had Granite Bayonne? Why?” Willy shook his head in stunned disbelief.

Micah smiled at him. “I guess Rudy wanted more—Granite’s not very touchy feely. The guy he was with was manufactured, too.”

“So?” Willy pressed. “What happened?”

“To make a long story short, Granite casually strolled up to them and said, ‘Hey Rudy’. Rudy turned and slid off the other guy’s lap and Granite backhanded him. It seemed so nonchalant but Rudy went flying into a table. His jaw was broken and his clavicle, too.”

Willy paled. “Then what happened?” he asked in a raspy whisper.

Taking a deep breath, Micah finished her story. “The other guy jumped up and pushed Granite on the chest. He picked the guy up by the back of his neck and shook him once. Then he dropped him. That was it.”

“Dead?” Willy mumbled. He seemed dazed.

“Um, let’s just hurry. We need personal provisions. I’ll meet you at...”

“Wait!” Willy grabbed her arm. “Mickey, let’s go together, okay?”

“Mickey?” Micah’s mouth curved in a half smile. “As in Mickey Mouse?”

Willy’s pale face now held a hesitant grin. “As in, ‘*Hey Mickey, you’re so fine*’...”

“Tony Basil! You like twentieth century rock and roll?” Willy blushed and nodded, dipping his head.

He laughed and they began to sing, “*North side, east side Little Willy, Willy wears the crown...*”

Micah slipped an arm across his shoulders. “Willy,” she said in her best Humphrey Bogart voice, “I think this is the beginning of a bee-you-tiful friendship.”

Chapter 4

By break time the next morning, Micah and Willy were both nervous wrecks. Micah had noticed Willy heading her way at the end of the evening meal the night before.

Sleeping quarters were all in the same tent since this was the first away mission and the captain wanted them to stay together. Willy had planned to bed down near her. It turned out that the powers in charge had other ideas.

“Lieutenant!” Granite’s voice was heard above the chattering in the large tent. Both Micah and Willy froze as Granite murmured something to the Commander. “Lieutenant Schmidt! Where are you going?”

Willy edged to the side of the tent, turning slightly toward Granite. “Just here, *Obersteutnant*.” Realizing his mistake, he gasped. “*Erbärmlich, Herr*—I mean I’m sorry, Sir...”

Micah could see that he was rapidly losing his composure. She knew that her new friend slash supervisor was cool under most circumstances but Granite seemed to destroy his self-possession completely.

Locking eyes with him, she took a deep, slow breath and sent him what she hoped was a calming smile. She saw Willy breathe deeply.

“The men are sleeping on this side of the tent, Schmidt,” Commander James murmured in a quieter voice. “Would you be good enough to join us?”

Micah saw that the Commander was looking at her and not Willy as he spoke. She didn’t hear Willy’s mumbled reply but the two of them, separately, positioned themselves as far as possible from the command team.

This morning, she’d finished with her shower and was waiting for Willy who’d just gone in. She was picking up her comb when she saw her brother heading for the showers. If she didn’t do something, Granite would walk in on Willy to shower with him and realize who he was.

J.J. Massa

Quickly, she tied a knot in the back of her abundant white hair. It was slightly damp and it would be very difficult to work the snarl out.

“Granite!” she called breathlessly. He stopped and turned his head. “Granite? Could you help me?”

She smothered a smile when Crewmember Maria Dion giggled and sighed. Granite wasn’t wearing a shirt. His muscles clearly rippled under slightly tanned skin and a white furred chest.

Turning her back to her brother, she said, “I have an ugly tangle back there and I can’t reach it.”

Grumbling, Granite took her comb and began tugging at her hair. Something nagged at her and she looked up and into the narrowed blue-green eyes of Commander James. Her breath squeezed in her chest as his sculpted eyebrow arched. Had he seen her tie the knot in her hair?

Micah closed her eyes and bowed her head a little to avoid his gaze. After a minute, she heard him move away. Shortly after that, she heard Willy emerge from the shower and was able to relax.

Now, leaning against a purple rock, she turned to Willy. “You are going to have to calm down Willy. If you don’t, he’s going to really start paying attention to you.”

Her nervous companion released a pent up sigh. “I can’t help it Mickey. *Danken Sie Gott* you were on your toes at the shower. I’ll make sure I go after him in the morning. Then we’ll be going home and I won’t need to worry.”

Making a decision, Micah leaned close to him. “Would it help if I told you something funny about my brother?”

Willy glanced at her and blushed. “I can’t believe there *is* anything funny about him. He doesn’t strike me as having that much of a sense of humor.”

“It’s a good thing I have one then, isn’t it?” she smiled. She could see that he was intrigued. “You got a good idea of his privates the other night, right? You know his --- um—penis and the hair there?”

“Mickey, this is *not* helping!” he rapped in a harsh whisper.

“Wait,” she said in a low voice that only he could hear. “When I was eleven, he forgot to pick me up from school and I had to find my own way home. I was so mad, I stomped straight up to his bedroom.”

Blushing, Willy chuckled. “Okay, *Mein kleiner Freund*, you got me. Tell me all about it,” he urged her, calling her *my little friend*.

Rocks and Hard Places

“Like I said, I was boiling mad,” she whispered. “His door was open and it became apparent that he’d been drinking and possibly having sex. Either way, his, um, his penis was sticking straight up out of those white curls and it just made me madder.”

“You’re killing me, Mickey,” he groaned, his face turning red.

“I had some paints in my bag because I was supposed to make a poster the old fashioned way. You know, with a sponge brush?” Willy nodded. “Well, I loaded up the sponge and proceeded to paint *der Phallus* a nice bright lime green.”

She waited a minute for the image of Granite’s cock painted bright green to form in Willy’s brain. He took a drink water and before he could swallow, the image apparently presented itself. Choking, he spewed the water out of his mouth and began laughing hard.

Before she knew it, they were leaning against each other, tears streaming down their faces and clutching their midsections, laughing helplessly. Even the Commander’s interruption was unable to cause them to contain their mirth.

“Is everything okay over there, Lieutenant Bayonne? Lieutenant Schmidt?” Commander James’ deep voice vibrated across the group.

“Joke,” choked Willy still laughing uncontrollably. “She told me a joke.”

“A joke Micah?” rumbled Granite. She could barely see him through the tears flowing down her face, but she saw one full white brow raised. “None of her jokes are really that funny, West.” He murmured to the Commander. If she weren’t still fighting hysterical laughter, Micah knew the humiliation would have had more of an impact.

“You,” Micah giggled, “you just don’t have a sense of humor, that’s all.”

“No sense of humor!” Willy guffawed.

“Okay, Lieutenant Schmidt, let’s hear it. Let’s hear Lieutenant Bayonne’s very amusing joke, shall we?” the Commander asked smoothly.

“Okay,” coughed Willy. “Okay.” He took a deep breath, dissolved into another fit of laughter and fought to contain himself.

Micah was glad that his laughter had helped him overcome some of his nervousness but she figured that she’d better try to salvage this, too. “Um, it might not be funny to everybody—it’s kind of technical...” Willy began to cough and she lost it.

“I insist, Lieutenant, share with us,” oozed Commander James.

Some of her laughter dissolved as she found herself trapped in that aquamarine gaze. Willy elbowed her lightly.

“Okay, this is it,” he grinned. She grinned back at him, reassured. “If a mole of moles were digging a mole of holes, what would you see?” he asked the group.

J.J. Massa

They mumbled, but nobody answered. Micah saw that Willy avoided more than a quick glance at Granite. Both he and West had matching quizzical expressions on their faces.

“Okay, Lieutenant Bayonne, enlighten us please,” the Commander instructed.

She began to snicker. “A mole of molasses,” she said and dissolved into giggles.

Everyone looked at her blankly for a minute but Granite and West began to chuckle.

“*You know,*” chortled Willy, “moles are used to count atoms and molecules but if they’re mole moles and they’re digging...”

“Yes, Lieutenant Schmidt, if they were digging, all we’d see would be bare little mole asses,” Granite said in a rich chuckle.

Willy turned bright red and Micah wondered if Granite was flirting or if he had some idea about the young scientist’s nocturnal visit. She stifled the urge to shudder. Her brother would be very angry indeed if he found out the young man he’d been flirting with, had already been intimate with him.

~*~

Commander West James moved back through the single file line until he was behind the eight people he was responsible for. As missions went, this one had been smooth sailing. Except for the curious behavior of Lieutenants Schmidt and Bayonne, it had been a completely predictable two days.

He listened as the two bantered, his eyes trained on Lieutenant Bayonne’s flawless hindquarters. The exact curvature as her waist met her hips which then flowed into those perfectly rounded cheeks... *Genetic tampering be damned, what a tush! Perfection achieved!*

He felt himself grow hard and heavy as he watched those lush globes move while she walked, hips swaying in unconscious grace. He groaned mentally—the way these uniforms molded themselves to the wearer, it would not only be obvious that he was aroused, it would be clear to any observer that he’d been circumcised.

In an attempt to control his body’s reaction to the sexy form in front of him, he tried to listen to what she and Lieutenant Schmidt were saying.

“Your column resin is NOT compacting,” she told Schmidt, “it is being spatially frugal.”

West didn’t get it but the other man laughed. “Okay, how about, your PCR products are NOT all mutant, they are just indulging in unscheduled evolution.”

Rocks and Hard Places

The delectable woman in front of West chortled. “Hang on, hang on!” she laughed.

Just then Lieutenant Schmidt, who’d been immediately in front of her, moved up to answer a question from another crewmember. *Probably the question was, “What the hell are you talking about?”*

She slowed and turned to look up at the darkening evening sky when she missed a step and stumbled on a rock. Before she could fall to the ground, West snatched her against him. Her little stumble had caused a chain reaction and rocks began to cascade from the ledge above them. Thankfully, the gap between himself and Micah and the six people in front of her should have prevented other crewmembers being caught when the rocks began to tumble down.

Without thought, he turned her so that she was pressed against the rock face while her shoulders, back, and thighs, and delicious derriere were crushed against him. When the rockslide stopped, he stood, still holding her.

One arm was looped around her waist and the other secured her torso with his open palm flat on her chest. His splayed fingers grazed the peak of her right breast.

“Commander, six accounted for here, you two alright?” he heard the security officer ask.

Sliding his hand two inches to the right, West cupped the full hill of flesh. Slowly, he trailed his fingertips over the nipple and with his thumb he lightly pressed the sensor on her communications device.

He lowered his mouth to her throat and nuzzled her hair out of the way, gently blowing on a stubborn strand. He felt her nipple pucker even more tightly against his fingers. “We’re fine, we’re going to regroup and assess. We’ll be there in a few.”

His lips caressed her soft throat as he directed his comment over her shoulder where her communications badge was pinned. He felt her shiver against him and knew she didn’t realize she had. He swept his left hand down across her abdomen and up between her legs, lightly teasing her feminine mound. She probably didn’t know she’d moaned aloud, too.

“You *are* fine, aren’t you, Lieutenant Bayonne? Hmmm?” he murmured against the hollow spot behind her ear. He touched that soft warm spot with his tongue very lightly. *Tastes like white chocolate. MMMM mmm.*

“I’m—I’m fine, sir, yes,” her voice was a raspy husk.

J.J. Massa

He knew she could feel him smile against her ear. "I agree. You *are* fine." He swept his right hand up and his left hand down and over her once again. "Yes, I believe you are quite fine," West murmured.

"Umm," she whispered, her voice cracking.

"Yes, Lieutenant?" he smiled rolling his hips and his hard erection against her.

"Sir? We should... umm, shouldn't we..." She must have just identified his erection because she gasped.

He gently and slowly turned her and eased her against the wall of rock, smiling when he realized that she was trying valiantly to avoid looking at his pelvis and the long rise of rigid flesh there.

While he was unable to do anything to assuage his aching hard cock, West truly enjoyed teasing the lovely Lieutenant with it.

"We'll just wait a minute and be sure no more rocks come tumbling down, hmm?" Arching a brow, he pressed his body against hers, front to front. He felt her nod as he lowered his face to her hair.

He stood unmoving for a few pleasant moments, inhaling her musky, vanilla scent. Without a word, he reluctantly levered himself off of her and directed her to follow. In no time, they'd rejoined the group and made their way back to camp.

Chapter 5

At two in the morning, Micah couldn't sleep. Commander West's teasing had stirred a need in her that wouldn't let her rest. Never before had she felt so sexually aware of another person.

After they'd returned to the ship that afternoon, she and Willy had prepared their reports and had even been through debriefing with the Captain. The whole time, she'd been on autopilot. All she could think about was that one part of the Commander that had been pressed against her the day before.

She wanted to feel it again. She needed to touch it, to explore it. If nothing else, she should at least be able to see the portion of his anatomy that had kept her up for two nights in a row.

"Computer, complete status of Commander West James, please," she called out, stalking into her small living area.

"Commander James is alone in his quarters. Heart rate and respiration activity indicate sleep," the monotone voice answered impersonally.

Micah moved to her computer and initiated the sequence of codes that would enable her to transport to his quarters and leave again instantly upon command. After learning that Willy had done this, it wasn't that hard for her to copy his actions.

Making sure her communications badge was clipped to her white nightgown—she only wore the issued sleepwear on away missions—she pushed the com interface button. Her nerves were on edge. How had Willy been able to do this? She had no time to ponder the question though. Suddenly, she felt the cold, tingly jerk and there she was.

West's bathroom was on her left and she could see his quarters' entrance doors. Quiet in her bare feet, Micah carefully eased into his bedroom. When she looked at his bed, she had to fight not to make a sound.

Commander West was sprawled gloriously naked across his bed. A sheet covered one knee but the rest of him was bare and exposed. It never occurred to her to lower the lights. She didn't want to miss a single thing.

J.J. Massa

Cautiously, she tiptoed closer to his bed. His light and even snoring told her that he continued to sleep. Looking over him, she first appreciated his broad shoulders and his bulging, well-sculpted muscles. Seeing him in one layer of tight clothing hadn't prepared her for how he would look wearing nothing.

She wondered if his skin would feel as warm as it appeared, if she touched him. What would the tanned skin feel like? Satin? Silk? Cashmere?

Her enraptured gaze traveled over his tightly matted chest and followed the soft wavy hair that tapered down to his navel. She tracked it past the navel and froze on the curly dark tangle below.

There it was. The thing that she'd been fixated on since she'd felt it pressed against her the day before. It jutted tall out of the coarse dark hair and was even larger than she'd thought.

Taking her communications badge in her left hand, Micah rested her right knee on the bed near West's hip. Glancing between his face and his erection, she lifted her shaking right hand.

There was power in knowing that she could be gone in a flash. She moved her fingers and touched his large, hard cock. It moved and he sighed, but didn't awaken. Feeling brave, she traced him from the little scar below the hood, down the length of his hard yet satiny rod, and even through the wiry curls and over his balls.

"Yessss," he hissed, but he didn't appear to awaken.

Lowering herself to sit, Micah wrapped her right hand more firmly around him and squeezed. West moaned and his bent knee straightened slowly, but his eyes didn't open.

Continuing to squeeze, she moved her hand up and down. Her eyes flitted from his face to his cock as she watched fascinated when a drop of clear liquid began to form. Keeping her eyes on his face and her hand wrapped around him, she moved her mouth to the large purple head of his rod.

Her eyes drifted closed as she took it in her mouth, groaning in the back of her throat. He tasted so good.

Suddenly, she froze. Was that a hand on her head? Looking at his face, she saw his beautiful blue green eyes were open but unfocused. She gave him a final sucking lick as she pressed the button on her badge.

~*~

Rocks and Hard Places

West woke slowly to the most wonderful sensation. Maybe he wasn't awake. He *had* to be dreaming. Lieutenant Micah Bayonne was sucking his cock. No, she was licking his cock. *Both. If he was dreaming then she must be doing both.*

Shortly after that she began sucking while she pumped him. He heard her groan and he groaned in return. It was natural to reach out to touch those waves of white hair.

He tried desperately to focus as she gave him a deep sucking lick and then she was gone. How was she gone?

He reached down to grasp his aching tool. It felt damp. Had she really been here? It was impossible, wasn't it?

"Computer, status of Lieutenant Micah Bayonne," he croaked, his voice scratchy. The computer didn't answer. He cleared his throat. "Computer! Status of Lieutenant Micah Bayonne!"

"Lieutenant Micah Bayonne is alone in her quarters. Heart rate and respiration are elevated within normal parameters."

Confused, the Commander struggled to decide what to do next. Mainly, he had to do something about the hard-on that threatened to take over his life. After that, he intended to pay closer attention to one member of the ship's science team. Micah Bayonne was now under surveillance.

~*~

"*ACH, Mein Gott!*" Willy barked out angrily to his breakfast companion.

"Doggone it, Willy! Keep your voice down!" Micah guiltily glanced around the room and saw blue-green eyes rest on her for long seconds and finally move on. Her heart raced.

"How could you do that, Mickey? *How?* You don't know what he would do to you!" Willy admonished her angrily.

"Willy, you went where you did and you're just lucky to be alive. He's killed guys for less!" she whisper-shouted.

"I know, I know, he told me himself," the blonde man moaned. Their heads were together over their food as they lectured each other quietly but intensely. "Yes, of course, dead is definitely bad. But that other man Mickey, you don't know! He might do anything! He could hurt you or lock you up and be justified."

She opened her mouth to speak when a heavy hand landed on her shoulder. "Everything all right?" a purring voice questioned, sounding slightly concerned. Micah wasn't fooled. She took a deep breath and looked up at her brother.

J.J. Massa

“Um, yes, Granite, of course. I’m sorry, was I supposed to meet you this morning?”

“No, tonight,” he clarified. She remembered now, supper, they would have supper together. He turned to look at Willy. “You both look a little pale.” He extended a large hand toward Willy. “Lieutenant Schmidt.”

Willy had no choice—he *had* to shake his hand. She watched nervously as her friend stood and lifted a trembling hand. It was immediately engulfed in her brother’s larger one. She saw Granite slowly sweep his thumb across the back of Willy’s wrist.

“I expect you to tell me if something’s wrong.” His molten gaze bored into Willy’s and then turned on her.

“Um, of course, Granite.” He appeared to accept her promise and then turned back to a shaking Willy’s hand.

“*Ja selbstverständlich*,” he said nervously. At Granite’s arched brow, he amended, “I mean, yes, of course.”

Finally releasing Willy’s hand, Granite nodded. Both exhaled a relieved sigh as the big man finally moved away.

“Willy?” she whispered still staring after Granite. When he didn’t answer, she turned and looked at him. “Willy? Was he flirting with you?”

“*Ja* Mickey, I think he was...” Willy’s voice trailed off. He seemed stunned, frozen in place as he watched the security officer stop and speak to someone before taking his leave through the exit doors.

Chapter 6

Striding toward Science Lab 3, Granite was surprised when Commander James stepped up beside him.

“Help you, Commander?” he grunted.

“Heard the complaint, thought I’d come along,” West shrugged.

“Suit yourself.” Granite rumbled as they strode silently down the corridor.

He knew the other man heard the ear-splitting sounds at the same time he did. They stopped and looked at each other for a moment and then Granite pushed the door open.

“*Walk like an Egyptiannnnn...*” he heard the words echo through the room followed by the heavy beat of some archaic instrument.

Looking on, neither man could make sense of the tableau in front of him. Willy stood at a computer with his knees stiff and then turned one way, bending his elbow and holding his palm out.

He walked in swaying stiff movements. Micah moved in the same odd fashion, with her knees locked and her elbows bent and palms flat.

The two leaned together in passing and sang along with the cacophony, “*Walk like an Egyptiannnnn...*” and then the staccato beat permeated the room.

Granite searched and found the source of the noise and jabbed at the buttons, eventually stopping it. For many seconds absolute silence reigned. Granite and West both glared at the two.

Micah leaned forward and Willy leaned back against each other. The two said at the same time, “*Busted!*”

Granite glowered at them until he felt they’d gotten the message. “I’ve gotten complaints. I expect a report,” he growled.

“I’ll see you separately for counseling after shift,” Commander James barked.

Granite grabbed the music machine that they’d been listening to and exited the room. “Come on!” he murmured to West as he passed him.

J.J. Massa

They returned to Granite's office at the security station. "What's up?" West asked, apparently realizing that the security chief wasn't satisfied.

"Let's watch," Granite growled his response and flipping a switch on a monitor. His fingers flew across the console keyboard and Lab 3 appeared on the screen.

At first glance, Willy and Micah appeared to be talking to each other as they worked. Suddenly, they leaned toward each other and their bodies shimmied, grins on their faces.

"Mmmm, hot," West groaned.

"Yeah," sighed Granite.

West jerked around and looked at him as Granite leaned forward and turned up the volume on the monitor.

"*'Cause he was lean, mean...*," sang Micah.

"*Big and bad...*" sang Willy.

"*And pointing that gun at me!*" they sang together.

Granite saw West glance away from the view screen and over at him. He knew he was erect and it was pointless to try to hide it. He glanced at the other man's lap and his mouth kicked up in a half smile. He wasn't the only one whose uniform didn't hide the reactions to the cute couple on the monitor.

"Your sister?" West asked, raising a brow.

"No," Granite responded, raising a brow in return.

"Oh," said West, looking back at the dancing and working pair on the monitor.

"Yeah," Granite gave his friend a half smile and turned back to the monitor.

~*~

West hadn't been able to counsel either Lieutenant Bayonne or Lieutenant Schmidt after shift. A ship's emergency had forced him to cancel the appointments he'd scheduled with them and allow one of his subordinates to counsel them. He'd be reading those reports in the morning.

He removed his shirt and tossed it into the refresher bin. Sitting down on the end of his bed, he leaned back against the mattress and closed his eyes. He was tired and edgy, his mind on the erotic dream he'd had the night before.

Turning his head slightly to the right, a line of light caught his attention. Eyes narrowed, he reached out for it. Anger slashed through him. He lifted the pearl-like white strand of hair and ran it across the fingers of his other hand.

If Micah Bayonne wanted to go exploring, he'd let her explore. Maybe it was time for him to let her know how it felt from his perspective.

Rocks and Hard Places

“Computer, status of Lieutenant Micah Bayonne,” he demanded.

“Lieutenant Micah Bayonne is alone in her quarters. Currently, she is in the personal cleansing chamber.”

Perfect! Absolutely perfect! “Computer, site to site transport, Lieutenant Micah Bayonne’s quarters.”

~*~

Micah had a towel wrapped around her sarong-style and was drying her hair as she emerged from the bathroom. She was so lost in thought that it didn’t register right away when she felt two strong hands over hers, stopping her.

“Sir!” she gaped at West. “I—I—What?” she stammered.

“Good evening, Lieutenant, you need help with that?” he asked her with a solicitous smirk.

“Sir, why are you here?” she gasped. “I’m not dressed, Commander.”

“No? Don’t worry, I won’t hold that against you. After all, I wasn’t dressed last night when you popped in on me was I?” he responded in a reasonable voice.

Micah felt the blood drain from her face. “Sir... I...”

“Shhh, Lieutenant.” He put both hands on her shoulders and situated her so that she stood with her back against the wall. “I’ll only stay for a minute or two. Last night you came by and touched me. Got me all excited.”

“Commander, I know...” he placed a hand on her lips, halting her broken statements as he shook his head from side to side.

“I just want you to feel what I felt, hmmm?”

All she could do was look at him. Her eyes felt like they would take over her face. He reached up and tucked the towel securely above her breasts. Taking her hands, he placed them on the bottom of the towel, wordlessly instructing her to hold it open, baring her mound to him.

“Now, spread your legs just a little,” he told her.

Silently, she obediently spread her legs just a little, feeling a bit of air between her legs and on her sex. He reached down with one finger and pulled it lightly across her pink labia. She groaned.

“I think you’re aroused Miss Bayonne,” his warm rich voice rumbled.

This time he took two fingers and parted her inner lips. She thought she’d collapse; the sensations were so strong. He stepped a little closer and pinned her to the wall with a hand on her shoulder.

J.J. Massa

He slid one long finger down those moist lips to her center. She felt the hot liquid gush from her and she whimpered. He pressed her hard clit with his thumb and pushed two fingers inside of her.

She felt her juices gush over his hand as his thumb rotated on her clit and his two fingers slowly moved in and out of her. She had never felt anything so exhilarating or so terrifying as the feelings roaring through her body. What she wouldn't give to ...

“Computer, site to site transport, Commander West James' quarters.”

One minute he was there making her feel things she never had before and then—*gone!* Micah slid down the wall to the floor, shaking all over.

Chapter 7

Micah staggered across the lab, holding on to a high table when she heard the high-pitched piercing shriek of another incoming blast. *The Phoenix* was under attack. Willy stumbled past her hitting the table and bouncing off.

“Willy!” she screamed, letting go of the table and dropping to the floor, struggling to get to him.

“The report! They’ll need the report!” he called, groaning and trying to stand.

“Stay down, Willy! Here comes another one! Hold on and stay down!” she shouted to him. The words had barely left her mouth before the next impact stunned the great ship.

This time, the attacking ships had fired a torpedo on *The Phoenix* and some of the equipment bolted to the wall was loosening. Micah knew that if she didn’t send a report of the readings she and Willy had gotten from the enemy ships, they wouldn’t be able to fight back.

Usually, Micah was delighted with the marriage of biology, technology, and engineering that was a hallmark of the twenty second century. Today, she just hoped that her supercharged brain, combined with Willy’s incredible intelligence and unique outlook, would be enough to save *The Phoenix* and her nearly two-hundred crewmembers.

She heard Willy grunt as he narrowly avoided death by a wall-mounted micro-analyzer. The way his arm was hanging, she knew he hadn’t avoided harm altogether. It was obviously broken. She continued to fight her way back to the information workstation.

Hand over hand she clawed her way over to the console, dodging flying detritus as best she could. Finally, she wrapped a leg around one steel support and began typing, sending data, typing some more, calling out to Willy and sending more data.

After what seemed an eternity, but was likely less than twenty minutes, Micah and Willy, supporting each other, staggered to the medical wing. The battle was over and *The Phoenix* had survived. Its science officers were both in need of some minor repairs.

Sickbay was crowded when they arrived but with his usual aplomb, the doctor regenerated their injuries and sent them on their way. Advances in medical technology over the years thankfully included a bone knitter that was capable of manipulating calcium phosphate bone substitutes interspersed with Alpha-Tricalcium Phosphate-based bone filler. This allowed such things as broken arms, legs, and skulls to be fixed in a matter of minutes.

“Willy? Let’s go out tonight, want to?” Micah asked, not looking up.

“Hmmm? Where? What’s on your mind, Mickey?” he looked at her curiously.

“C’mere,” she grinned. By Willy’s answering grin, she knew she must look like she was up to something and he was ready to play.

She tapped a few keys on the information station keyboard and some images appeared.

“There’s this song in my head—this beautiful lady’s voice singing about painted-on jeans. So I did a search for them. Look at those images—don’t they make you want to go dance?”

Willy whistled low. “They look tighter than our uniforms—but—I like it. Look! Those chinos appear to be faded and have holes. I still like it...” Willy turned and gave her a speculative smile. “Let’s reserve a sound proof room at the Rec-Station. People can watch or join us. We’ll have fun.”

“I got our music player back from Granite the other night—complete with lecture.”

Willy’s wide-eyed and nervous expression was not unexpected. “What did he say, Mickey? Tell me!” he sounded a little afraid.

“Don’t worry, Willy,” she gave him a wry smile and rolled her eyes. “He’s worried that *my* reckless behavior will drag you down.” She shot a conspiratorial look at her companion. “*MY* crazy ideas are going to get *you* in trouble, he says.”

“You are definitely a bad seed, Mickey.” As he looked at her steadily, his pious facade never wavered. “I was never so bad before. You corrupt me more with each passing minute.”

“Uh huh. So I’ll see you at nineteen-hundred hours?” She’d mentioned her brother purposely. If he was going to back out, invoking Granite’s name would do it.

“I’ll be there!” Willy agreed with a happy smile.

Rocks and Hard Places

Together they finished cleaning up the mess and hurried to their quarters.

~*~

“So why is it imperative that we go to the Rec-Station right now, West? It’s been a hell of a day.” Granite’s glare could have burned a hole right through him, but West just kept walking.

“As you know, it took most of the evening to re-coup from our little skirmish earlier today,” he began his explanation, ignoring the icy gaze of the man stepping onto the elevator beside him.

“I believe that awareness did enter my consciousness at some point,” Granite growled impatiently.

“Earlier, when things settled down a bit, the captain asked me to locate Lieutenants Schmidt and Bayonne and ensure their well-being. Lab 3 took a pounding,” he explained. “She also wanted to commend them. It was their analysis and recommendation that helped us ward off that attacking Kryklin ship,” he pointed out. “*Bastards*,” he grumbled.

“Okay, so? Does this end up at the Rec-Station somehow?” Granite’s patience wasn’t remarkable at the best of times and West knew he’d had a bad day, too, surviving an alien attack notwithstanding.

“Yes, Lieutenant Commander, it does,” he barked, silencing the other man’s mouth but not affecting his glower at all. “The cute twins had been to Sickbay—they were knocked around pretty good in the attack. Doc set them free though. When I asked for whereabouts twenty minutes ago, one of your people described them as “Looking hot and putting the “Station” on its ear”. Thought you’d like to check it out.”

He felt somewhat satisfied when Granite’s scowl moved away from him and turned toward the doors of the Rec-Station.

His satisfaction skittered away like drops of water on a hot frying pan only seconds later. Moving through the gyrating crowd at the Rec-Station, he ignored the thumping beat of centuries old instruments and just followed the noise. The sound-room’s door was open and the party atmosphere had spilled into the main area.

Finally, at the center of the festivities, he found them. He spied Willy first and then Micah, as she up beside him. They weren’t touching each other but they swayed sensuously together to the throbbing music.

Willy wore a simple white tee-shirt that hugged his slender, wiry frame. The words “Choose Life” were stark against the white, written in bold black letters. His pants were denim, every bit as tight as their uniforms but much more enticing. There were

faded white spots and when the young man turned, he saw that the upper part of the left buttock was missing from his pants.

Seeing Micah in her clinging outfit swept him with heat and then made him burn. He wanted to kill every man—and woman now that he thought about it—who even glanced at her. He wanted her with a hunger that her barely-there outfit only intensified.

West studied the faded denims so tight that he could see where her body divided—he could see the outline of her thong! The right knee was completely absent from her nearly white jeans as was the entire back of her left thigh starting just below the crease of her buttock. She wore a black crocheted sweater and he didn't see any evidence of a brassiere.

Eyes riveted on Willy, Granite leaned close to West and murmured, "I guess that's what they meant by 'fuck-me jeans'."

"Hoh yeah," West breathed. He exhaled an abbreviated sigh. "We can't really do anything, can we?"

"Nope, not really... Except sit here and watch... And kill the first bastard that lays a hand on him." West didn't know if Granite realized he'd uttered that last statement out loud.

"God what I wouldn't give for a real drink," sighed West.

~*~

Granite felt rather than saw the lights in his quarters dim. He quickly rolled from his bed and flattened himself against the wall. When the small man entered his bedroom doorway, he was standing next to the door waiting.

He allowed the slight figure make its way a little further into the room before he stepped behind him. He didn't press the small body against his front. Instead he slid a hand under his pajama top and along that firm bare abdomen and leaned forward until he felt silky straight hair under his lips.

"Hello, my little man. Surprised to find me up and waiting for you?" Granite hummed into Willy's ear.

The rigid tensing of the slender body caused Granite to grin briefly.

"*Bitte!*" he whispered. "Please!" he gasped a little louder, shocked and frightened.

"Yes, my sweet, please," Granite purred.

He rolled his hips against his smaller visitor's rounded cheeks and propelled him forward to the bed.

Rocks and Hard Places

“*Bitte*,” the younger man whispered again and something sparked in Granite’s brain. Something he’d take out and examine at a more opportune time—a time when he wasn’t planning on fucking this tasty little treat into a stupor.

Granite stretched the other man’s arms over his head not bothering to remove the pajama top. Reaching around, he loosened the tie on both his and the diminutive man’s pajama bottoms, letting his drop and tugging the other pair down.

Still holding the other man’s arms over his head, Granite ran his free hand across his back, feeling every rib and vertebrae. Slowly, he ran his hands down over one buttock and thigh and up the other, taking time to caress the soft globes that his engorged cock rested in between.

Finally, the other man’s whimpers and moans pushed him to the edge. He leaned over and snatched a tube of lubricant from his nightstand and released his lover’s hands, moving them to his hips.

“Are you ready my little dove? Hmmm?” he inquired silkily feeling the goose bumps break out on the bare flesh of his lover.

“Yes, yes, please,” the other man panted, “Do it! Please!”

“Shhh, sweet man. *So* polite. Let’s see how ready you really are,” Granite purred rubbing his face in the soft hair.

Pouring the oily smooth gel into his hand, he began to rub his lubed index finger on the tiny rosette between the rounded cheeks. The little man arched into his finger and Granite let it slide into him. Moans coming from the smaller man became louder as that finger moved in and out of him caressing his prostate.

After stretching him wide with two moving fingers and then three, he positioned his slick cock at the opening and thrust. The man under him curved off the bed and Granite slid an arm across his chest, gripping his shoulder.

He held his diminutive lover against his chest and continued to thrust as he lowered his mouth to the base of his lover’s neck and sucked. He made sure this mark was larger than the last one.

He lowered his hand to the smaller man’s erection and ran his fingers over it, feeling it weep. “You like that?” He whispered into the sweet smelling ear under his lips.

He felt his small partner wriggle and tense and try to pump back into him. “Yes, more,” he moaned in need.

Lightly holding the other man’s cock, Granite pulled back and thrust hard then pulled back again, thrusting harder.

J.J. Massa

He moved his mouth to the sweet ear nearby, nuzzling the silky straight hair aside, "Come for me," he murmured, his lips caressing the soft shell-like flesh.

On command, his little lover tensed and climaxed with a strangled scream, spewing hot semen and contracting on his own erection. He felt the tightening in his balls. One more hard thrust and Granite's orgasm swept over him.

He knew the small man had passed out again and he didn't move for a minute, enjoying the smell of his hair and the feel of his smooth, sparsely haired thighs pressed against his own large ones. As he levered himself off of the slight frame, the other man's arms stirred. His form shimmered with the familiar blue light and he was gone.

Granite stumbled with the removal of that smaller body and looked down. What was he stepping on? His lips curved. He leaned down and lifted the small pair of pajama bottoms and shook them. He folded them and placed them on the dresser.

Chapter 8

The end of another exhausting away mission was a day away. This one had been only one day and night, but still seemed excruciatingly long. This time, since it was just short mission and since analysis both on the ship and from planet-side was needed, Willy hadn't come along.

Commander West James had come, though. Every time Micah looked up, there he was. Granite wasn't there, only herself, the Commander and two strangers who lived on the ship that she'd never worked with before.

This planet wasn't dusty and barren like the last one. It was dark, cold, and barren. They'd only been here for a few hours when she'd had to find a way to warm her hands. It was just too cold to work, even with the lightweight, thermal gloves that she wore.

It was so cold that she couldn't even make her body heat activated communications badge work. She stood over the hole she was working on, unable to operate her equipment and extract even a single tiny sample of mineral for the others to pack up for transport.

Micah fought the urge to sit down and curl up into a fetal ball. She didn't want to move at all really. At first, hopping around had sounded like a good idea but now, the idea of making the cold air move or make contact with her body in any way was unbearable.

Just when she thought she would turn into an icicle herself and blend into the artic environment, a pair of strong arms came around her.

"Lieutenant," a rich seductive voice purred into her ear. She could feel the warmth of his breath through her hood. "As your commanding officer, it is up to me to see to your needs—just like I did the other night."

She clutched at his arms like a warm blanket. "I don't like what you did the other night." She shivered. "My needs weren't met at all." She squeezed her eyes closed.

J.J. Massa

“You didn’t like my fingers on you? Touching you? Caressing you between your legs?” he murmured seductively. He gathered her closer.

She shook her head from side to side but realized that she *was* feeling excited. She realized too that she felt warmer. Leaning back, she rested against him for a minute.

“What you said made me feel warmer, sir. Thank you.” She started to pull away.

“No, I want you to stay here and warm up a little more.” He turned her to face him. “Tell me what you didn’t like about when I touched you, hmmm?” His sea green eyes captured her gaze.

She tried to look away but there really weren’t many places to look that didn’t include West James. Finally, she let her eyes drift back to his face.

“After, when you left, it didn’t feel good. I didn’t like it.” She dropped her eyes.

“Micah, that’s because I stopped. If I had kept touching you, it would feel *very* good. Something good would happen.” He sounded so sure about that. She looked up at him again. “Tonight, we have to share a sleeping bag. Ensign Briggs and Lieutenant Briggs are married. They, of course, will share a sleeping bag. Would you like me to touch you again? See if you like it better?”

She searched his face. She *would* like to touch him again. Besides, it had felt so good when he touched her but not so good when he’d stopped. He made her stomach clench and caused her heart to beat faster. Micah couldn’t deny that she craved his touch, his attention.

“Um, okay, Commander. I’d like to see.” She felt the blush stain her cheeks and placed both hands on him, pushing against his chest.

“Micah? When we talk about touching each other or private things, you can call me “West”, okay?” She nodded and he let her break away.

~*~

West didn’t feel bad or unethical about initiating Micah Bayonne into the ways of sex. Why should he? She wasn’t a real person. She would never marry nor have children. She couldn’t be hurt. Manufactured people didn’t feel pain at all, mentally or physically. There would be none of this messy “falling in love” stuff. It was perfect. If he met someone he liked better, he’d just move on. No harm, no foul.

As it happened, they were in for a little more intimacy than either expected. West took all the samples Micah had prepared and returned to the camp so that the Briggs’ could prepare them for transport. When he reached the Lieutenant and his wife he realized that the weather was deteriorating rapidly.

Rocks and Hard Places

An ice storm was approaching, growing more ferocious the closer it came. He ordered the other two onto the small shuttle to wait it out. Grabbing his pack, he fought his way back to Micah. The winds had picked up and ice was blowing everywhere.

It was too far in this weather for them to return once again to the shuttle. He could see that she had packed up her instruments when he finally reached her. They'd have to find some kind of shelter, though.

Through hand signals, they agreed to make their way up the side of the rocky hill they been digging on to a cave nearby. When the ice and winds died down somewhat, they ventured away from the side of the hill and up the trail. No sooner had they cleared the shelter of the steep hill that the storm increased in intensity.

The gale seemed worse after the brief respite. Breathing was difficult, if not impossible, as the relentless wind snatched the air from their lungs. They climbed by touch, stumbling and sliding on the icy rocks. Slowly, step by grueling step, they groped their way upward.

They had ascended perhaps fifteen feet, although it felt like miles, when Micah lost her footing entirely as the shelf of ice and rock crumbled beneath her. Her feet skidded out from under her and she threw her hands up to halt her skid down the steep uneven cliff trail.

As she slid to the edge of the trail and over the side of the cliff, West clamped a strong hand around her flailing wrist. She slammed full-length into the rock face below, driving all the breath from her lungs. For a second, she seemed too dazed to move and hung limply from his rescuing hand.

West hauled her up, grateful that she was so small and light. When he set her on her feet, he could have sworn she winced. He knew that was wrong since manufactured people couldn't feel pain.

The fissure in the side of the rocky expanse was only a few yards further on. It proved to be a narrow vertical slit in the jagged cliff. Getting into it would mean stepping off the ledge they were on. They would have to hang in midair and find their way around a projecting spur of rock with a sheer twenty-foot drop. It would be tricky at the best of times and damned near impossible under these windy and dangerous conditions.

Knowing that they had no choice, West tied a rope to his belt and wound the end several times around a narrow tooth of rock. He wrapped it around Micah's waist. Gingerly inching forward while she played out the rope, he reached around the spur and slid his body over it, following with his foot until he was hugging the rock.

He fumbled around for footing and finally found a toehold. Secure for that moment, he groped for and pulled out his personal lamp and aimed the light into the entrance. It was indeed a cave—dry and narrow, with a slick lip of ice at the entrance. Peering into the dark recesses West couldn't see any signs of animal habitation. With difficulty, he turned his head against the battering wind.

"Looks good," He called, his voice was snatched away by the clamor of the storm but he knew she could see his mouth move. "Loosen the rope and I'll go on in, then give you a hand."

Micah unwound the rope from the rock and tied the end to her own belt. He watched as she inched her way around the sharp ridge. The worst part came when she was forced to take her foot off of the ledge behind her before she had any firm support in the cave ahead.

She let go and scrambled to find another foothold. He saw her slide her foot up and onto a tiny gouge and use it to propel herself forward, into the relative shelter of the cave. For a second she just lay there sprawled in the entrance, eyes closed, out of the deafening wind.

He pulled her more deeply into the cave, settling her against a boulder. "Hang on one minute more, I'll turn the heat up," he promised, grinning at her surprised and hopeful expression. He saw her pop something into her mouth as he turned away from her.

He set his laser-powered weapon on low and aimed it at a medium sized boulder. When he was satisfied, the large rock was aglow with an all-over dull orange, and the air around it shimmered with the radiant heat. West turned the weapon off and the two huddled closer, soaking up the blessed warmth until feeling began to return to their limbs.

"See? Just like home," he smiled. "We'll bed down early and sleep through this storm. As soon as we can, we'll make our way to the shuttle and head back to *The Phoenix*, okay?"

She looked at him, giving him a sweet smile. He tugged his gloves off and warmed his hands, looking away. He was damned impressed with her stamina. She hadn't complained at all.

He knew that she wouldn't feel any pain from her abrupt introduction to the wall of rock earlier—manufactured people didn't feel pain, he reminded himself. Still, he knew she felt cold, experienced fear and knew that she could die. She hadn't turned a hair and just met every challenge head on.

Rocks and Hard Places

“Commander?” she intruded hesitantly on his reverie. He looked a question at her. “What if we moved some of those rocks in front of the entrance?” She waved her arm to indicate a few larger rocks and some medium sized ones. “It’ll be a little warmer then.”

“Very good, Lieutenant, let’s get busy,” he praised her with a warm smile.

He was impressed that she’d thought of that. Most of her history had her working in labs under controlled conditions. She had no experience for the complications of planet side missions. In short order, she’d managed to adapt to difficult situations and pitch in. He knew that, if she were “real”, he’d already be half in love with her.

~*~

After blocking the entryway as best they could, West decided that there was nothing else to do but go to bed. Micah seemed a little nervous about that prospect which surprised him. They both removed their boots and climbed into their joined sleeping bags. He held her for a while just to let them both warm up.

She squirmed and wriggled until finally she told him, “I’ve never actually been intimate with anyone... well you know that, right?”

“Do I know that you’ve never had intercourse?” He grinned at her, though she probably couldn’t see it in the dim confines of the sleeping bag. “I figured that out.”

He rubbed her slim shoulders through her top and slowly let his hands run down her back. He cupped her rear end and pulled her against him rolling her to her back.

“Can I touch you, too?” she whispered in a soft, hesitant voice. He smiled again.

“I’d like it a lot if you touched me, too,” he murmured low.

Micah lifted her hands and rested her palms against his cheek slowly dragging them down. Carefully, her fingertips caressed his shoulders through the thin fabric of his top, over his heavy chest muscles, and down his ribcage, stopping finally at his abdomen.

Quickly he pulled the top over his head and then reached over and lifted hers off too, taking her bra with it. Without another word, he tugged the zipper on her pants and pushed them off, doing the same with his own.

West bent his head to explore her beautiful bare breasts with his lips. He wished he could see her. He wanted to take it slow, his tongue tracing a lazy path over the slope of one rounded globe to take a pebbled nipple into his mouth. Sucking and biting gently on one nipple, he lightly pinched the other one. Micah’s head went back as she moaned, writhing with startled pleasure.

“Does that feel good?” he whispered, raising his head to lick her ear.

“Yes,” she gasped, “I like that.”

J.J. Massa

She reached up to touch his face again and he moved against her. She couldn't miss his rapidly increasing erection. With one palm still on his face, she trailed her fingertips through the curly hair on his chest with the other, running her hand down his body until she found his silky steel rod.

He gasped at her touch. Hearing the sound, she pulled her hand away, causing him to moan in protest. He was too far-gone now to last more than a few seconds he was sure. Micah was hesitant yet curious, moving her hand back to touch him again. As she looked up into West's eyes, her finger circled the head of his cock, smearing the bead of moisture all around.

"That feels good to me," he groaned hoarsely.

"Good," she whispered. "We should both feel good, right?"

"*Mmm* hmmm," he murmured with emphasis.

He trailed one hand down her ribcage, hearing her breathe in sharply. If he didn't know she was manufactured, he'd think she'd felt pain for a second. She moaned when he cupped her mound, his fingers stroking through the soft tangle with easy pressure, urging her legs apart. Gently he stroked along the satiny skin of her inner thigh. He couldn't see it but he remembered those white curls and that pink flesh.

"Please," she gasped, "Ahhhh," she sighed when he moved his fingers back to her moist heat.

She whimpered when he finally gave her the touch she craved, his firm fingers dipping into her wetness, sliding over her slick ridge, fondling her with knowing proficiency. Then he pushed two fingers inside, penetrating deeply.

At the same time, she continued to explore his erection, delighting in the feel and his reactions to it.

"I love how soft and hard it is, it feels like velvet," she told him in a gasp as he pinched her engorged nub between his thumb and forefinger.

"That feels too good, Micah," he groaned as she stroked his hard shaft and ran her thumb over the sensitive tip, spreading the bead of moisture she found.

He nudged her legs apart and took his aching cock in his hand. "Are you ready?" She nodded, her glazed eyes wide. *Good thing she won't feel pain when I take her virginity. At least I don't have that to worry about.*

~*~

Rising above her, he pressed his erection against her slick entrance. Slowly he slid the tip of his erection through her wet, swollen folds, teasing her before he immersed himself within her, gasping her name.

Rocks and Hard Places

It hurt, causing her to whimper from the pain. She was grateful she'd taken those pain pills earlier or the pain would have been worse. In seconds, she'd caught her breath and allowed herself to revel in both the physical sensation of penetration and the long awaited joy of being as one with the man she craved—maybe even loved.

Every detail was burned into her mind by the heightened awareness of her arousal. The slight rasp of his sparse leg hair against the smooth skin of her thighs, the heat of his breath against her neck, the satisfying pressure of his length sliding smoothly into and out of her—all of it affected her. He was inside of her, finally.

Lost in the sensation of him throbbing deep within her body, she caressed his face, his ears, his neck, resting her hands his shoulders. Letting one hand wandered down his back, she enjoyed the play of flexing muscles beneath her fingers and marveling at his taught buttocks.

He began to move faster and the physical need once again building within her overpowered everything else. She wrapped her legs around his waist and thrust against him, matching his rhythm. She couldn't stop a moan from deep inside.

With some effort she opened her eyes, trying to see his face, witnessing his struggle for control as rivulets of sweat trickled down his chest, the frigid storm forgotten. Feeling her excitement and answering his own urgency, he increased the pace even more, thrusting harder. His hand moved between them, pressing on her clitoris, increasing her pleasure and drawing a moan from her throat.

Then she was beyond thought as an overwhelming wave rocked her body. She was thrashing against him calling his name and he was shouting too, the tremors of her release served as the catalyst for his own. He thrust hard hearing his name on her lips and shuddered violently as he emptied himself within her.

They were both panting, covered in perspiration, struggling for breath as they clung to one another, spent. She felt him softening inside her, and he shifted to lift his weight off of her body. He pulled her back against him, nuzzling her hair.

"I, I," she sighed and mumbled, "I liked that West."

"Mmmm, me too," he murmured. "I'd like to do that again pretty soon. What about you?"

She yawned hugely. "Can we do it later, though? I think it wore me out."

His warm chuckle sent shivers up her spine. "We can do it just about any time you want to, as long as we aren't working. I look forward to wearing you out until you get tired of it."

J.J. Massa

Snuggling into him, she felt exhaustion begin to steal over her, glad that the pain capsules she'd taken were working. She was vaguely aware of his aiming his weapon at the boulder again and firing before she succumbed to the warmth and the euphoria of sleep.

Chapter 9

Granite sat alone in the Rec-station bar overlooking the sports deck. Immediately below him was a basketball court. As he watched, four men walked into the room bouncing a medium-sized round sphere.

Taking a closer look, he thought he recognized some of the men. All four were slender and not that tall. They all looked like they couldn't be a day over twenty-one years old although he knew that the youngest person on board was twenty-two.

He waved for another drink and hit the sound button. He liked to know who was who. This was all in the interests of ship's security, of course.

Suddenly, his eyes were riveted to the figure of a pale man with dark blonde hair, a welcoming, innocent smile, and wide hazel eyes. *Ah, Lieutenant Wilhelm Schmidt, it is very good to see you.*

"I call Will!" shouted a young man with wiry hair and café au lait colored skin.

"If you get Will, we're shirts!" this was a young man with black hair joined by another man with no hair and no ears.

"Damn straight you can be shirts! Lardi is plain ugly without his shirt!" shouted the dark young man who'd claimed Will.

Good, yes, Will should play without his shirt.

Granite definitely felt something stir to life below his waist as he watched the lithe young man with the golden blonde hair whip his tee shirt over his head. The compact body in front of him was thin, bare and muscular. There wasn't much left to the imagination since the young man's snug gray gym shorts stopped short no more than four inches below that perfectly round ass.

He watched every move the young Lieutenant made, chuckling when he stole the ball from his foreign friend and dribbled it in circles around him. He enjoyed watching Willy tease the other man and perform in a more superior manner.

He turned the volume up so that he could hear more of the banter as the man he was watching became a little cockier.

J.J. Massa

"Come on, Lardi, try a little harder, you can get it!" he dribbled the ball in circles switching hands.

"You can be such an arrogant ass sometimes, Will!" Lardi growled.

"A little begging, if you please," he chuckled, "*Bitte Wilhelm? Hübsch bitte?*" he chortled.

Granite sat up straighter and leaned forward. Something tugged at his memory. He'd wait. If he forced it, he'd lose it. Whatever those words had triggered would become clear if he just let it happen.

"I will *not* say 'Pretty please' to you!" Lardi snarled.

"Oh well, then," Willy tossed the ball to his friend, Jeremy.

Jeremy scored with it, the other team took the ball out again and in seconds, Willy was dribbling circles around Lardi again. Granite sipped his imitation beer and watched until the game ended.

He leaned forward and stared intently as Jeremy trotted up to his friend before they left the court. He moved as if to swat Willy on the rear end, and Granite felt his blood boil.

He calmed as Willy danced out of the way, faking left and shooting a basket. When Willy moved alongside his darker-skinned friend again, Jeremy reached over and mussed his hair.

Ducking away, Wilhelm Schmidt reached up to swipe the hand at the back of his head and left behind a parted gap. Granite's look turned feral. He could clearly see the mark he'd left on his lover's neck only two days prior.

Dribbling the ball in circles around Lardi again, Willy continued to taunt his friend. "*Hübsch, hübsch bitte?* Pretty, pretty please?" he teased the other young man, completely unaware that he was being stalked.

That's okay, Lardi, he'll be saying, 'Pretty, pretty please?' by tomorrow.

Willy fainted away and shot a last basket. Putting it through the net, he laughed gleefully at Lardi and retrieved the ball. He'd been stalked, hunted, and defeated and remained in blissful ignorance.

~*~

Willy was just emerging from the shower when he heard the chime. He had a message? A message from whom? He knew Mickey was still on that planet they were orbiting. He'd worked back and forth with her right up until the captain had ordered him to leave for the day.

Pushing the button on his information center, his blood ran cold as he listened.

Rocks and Hard Places

“You are required to proceed immediately to Lieutenant Commander Bayonne’s personal quarters. You are required to proceed immediately to Lieutenant Commander Bayonne’s personal quarters. You are required to proceed immediately to Lieutenant Commander Bayonne’s personal quarters.” The message continued to repeat until he found the presence of mind to stop it.

Knowing that the Lieutenant Commander had been notified the second he’d listened to the message, he had no choice but to go. Quickly he donned a clean uniform and headed out the door. His head was spinning scenarios of what Granite would say or do to him, each one more excruciating than the last.

When finally he arrived at Granite’s quarters, the doors swished open and he nervously stepped inside.

Anger radiated from Granite as he silently ushered Willy through the main room and into the bedroom. Granite sat down on the end of the bed and positioned Willy next to his leg but looking across him. A chill shot through the younger man.

Without warning, he found himself facedown across Granite’s lap with his pants around his knees. His snug, regulation-issue cotton-knit boxers remained in place. This wasn’t sex—what was it? Seconds later he found out exactly what it was when he felt a large, wide palm connect forcefully with his tender butt-cheeks.

“You invaded my privacy!” Crack! “You tampered with the ship’s computer!” Crack! “I could have *killed* you!” Crack! Crack! “I don’t know why I *didn’t* kill you!” Crack! Crack! “Anything could have happened to you!” Crack! Crack! Crack!

Suddenly, Granite stood and Willy found himself in a heap on the floor. The large man stepped over him and angrily left the room.

For long minutes, Willy remained an unmoving sobbing, humiliated mess. After a time, he forced himself to his knees and then to his feet. He hurt so bad that he didn’t know how he could stand.

He clung to Granite’s dresser trying to stay upright. He wanted to be angry but he couldn’t. Granite was right in what he’d said. Willy hadn’t heard everything Granite had said since his main focus had been centered on his tender behind and the other man’s punishing hand.

Thinking about it now, though, he realized that the worst of his punishment had been following expostulations of how he could have been killed or injured. He leaned heavily on the dresser. As he pulled himself upright, he realized that the pajama bottoms he’d left behind the previous night were folded in front of him.

J.J. Massa

With more than a little difficulty, he removed his boots, peeling his uniform pants the rest of the way off, and finally tugging off the knit boxers. He pulled the loose cotton pants up over his flaming derriere. Turning, he faced the door. He was still hiccupping like a child who'd been spanked but, in reality, it seemed an apt description.

He found Granite reclining in a large chair in the main living area, head back, feet up, and his eyes closed. Even seeing him through blurred vision Willy thought the big man looked tired. Stopping at the end of the couch ten feet from him, Willy tried to speak.

The tears were bad enough but he wished he could get his gasping and hiccupping under control. He wasn't worried about his pride—it was long gone anyway. He just wanted to speak clearly and convince Granite not to make him leave or worse, not to hate him.

"I'm s-s-sorry for ... I'm s-sorry." He took a deep breath and tried to remain standing. Granite had opened his eyes. "I h-h-had to get close to you—just had to."

Willy took a step closer. "There's a big difference between getting close to someone and breaking into their quarters and having sex," Granite growled, his mercury colored eyes fixed on him.

"I-I never meant to have sex with you. I m-mean I just wanted to get near you. I didn't think about sex." He dropped his eyes. In a low voice he admitted, "I wanted to t-touch you. I w-wanted you to ... but I've never even held anyone's hand before you."

He knew his face had to be as red as his behind right about now. "Come here," Granite rumbled surprising him.

With difficulty, Willy made his way to Granite's chair and stopped within arm's length, amazed that his trembling legs would hold him. "Why me, Willy? Why me?" Granite demanded harshly sliding an arm behind him and pulling him closer.

"*Ich liebe Sie,*" Willy mumbled around a fresh wave of tears.

"English!" Granite gritted in a hard voice.

"I l-love you." Willy's legs gave out and he sunk to the floor sobbing.

Leaning forward, Granite lifted him and stretched him along his body letting his face settle between his neck and shoulder. "Shhh, don't cry anymore. Shhh," he soothed rubbing the younger man's back. When Willy had calmed down again, he told him, "You can't love me, Willy, I'm manufactured."

Sniffing, Willy choked, "The air in here is manufactured, but without it I would die."

~*~

Rocks and Hard Places

Granite held Willy against him, still rubbing his back as the younger man's sniffling subsided. He thought about all that had brought the two of them to this point. The sweet little man was a genius and, like his sister Micah, had more intelligence than good sense.

So sweet and loving, he really deserved to find someone capable of loving him back. If he were real, Granite knew, he'd be in love with little Wilhelm Schmidt. The right thing to do would be to make him leave.

Willy needed a lover with feelings and who had the ability to care for him. Now, though, wouldn't be the right time to force him into finding someone else. *I should let him down easy. It's probably going to take time. Lots of time. I can't push him away tonight, now can I? It would be just as cruel to do that tomorrow. Yep, it's going to take time.*

When he was sure Willy was sleeping, Granite lifted him and carried him to the bed, placing him face down on the mattress. He rifled through the drawers of his dresser until he found his personal medical kit and returned, setting it beside him.

Gently, he eased the pajama bottoms down, shaking his head at the purple, red and blue welts he'd left on Willy's buttocks. *Poor little guy... I just don't know my own strength.*

Tenderly, he applied the deep-muscle healing ointment, rubbing some on first one rounded cheek and then its twin. When a pink blush was the only color left, Granite put the ointment away. He wanted just enough stinging to remain so that Willy would be reminded of his transgressions for a day or so more. He intended to catch his eye across the mess hall and see how red the man's face became.

Sighing, Granite moved back to the bed and looked down at Willy. His rounded little ass was bubble-gum pink and still looked perfect to him. Before he could help himself, Granite leaned down and placed a kiss on each cheek. Straightening, he laughed at himself and shook his head, pulling the sleep pants up over Willy's hips. If he didn't know it was impossible, he'd think he was developing feelings for his young lover.

Climbing into bed, he pulled Willy into his arms and buried his face in his hair. After a few minutes, he instructed the computer to raise the light level to twenty-five percent.

For a long time, Granite watched the young man sleep until he too dozed off.

Chapter 10

Willy was a happy man. Although he'd awakened alone this morning, Granite had left a note on top of his folded uniform. The sexy security officer wanted Willy to be there in his quarters when he got off shift.

Now, he couldn't wait to see Micah climb off the shuttle. He'd missed her and he really needed to talk to her. Not only did he have a lot to tell her, he had some very important questions to ask her.

He was surprised when he walked up to the shuttle and heard the Commander telling her that she could go by sickbay *after* she'd unloaded the samples and put them in the lab. The man actually told her that she probably only had a few broken ribs anyway.

Willy couldn't believe it. He was raging mad but Micah gave him an abbreviated shake of the head. He quietly gathered up most of the equipment and let her grab her pack and some of the smaller samples. As soon as they reached the hall, away from the Commander, he caught two ensigns and ordered them to cart her pack, the equipment, and the samples into Lab 3.

Sitting beside her, Willy held her hand in sickbay. The ship's doctor helped her off with her uniform top as she explained to him, "I slipped from an icy, rocky cliff path and the Commander caught me. I swung forward and hit the rock wall."

"Miss Bayonne, I'm sure Mr. Schmidt will wait in the visitor area if you're self-conscious," Dr. Bergan said kindly. "You'll need to remove your uniform top."

The doctor would not allow rank to be used in his offices. Everyone could expect the same treatment for their ills and injuries from him no matter their rank, status, species or nationality.

"No, sir. Willy's my friend. It's okay," she whispered, her voice rough.

Tears were streaming down her face now and Willy knew she was in a great deal of pain. When finally, her shirt had come off, Willy gasped and the doctor's face tightened.

"*ACH, Mein Gott, Mein Gott!*" Willy moaned, dragging her palm to his cheek.

Rocks and Hard Places

Her chest was a nightmarish array of blue and purple, slashed with red where the skin had been scraped away through her clothing. She must have hit the rock face with a great deal of force, he thought.

"I fell and then skidded sideways before coming to a stop," she explained breathlessly.

"If you *haven't* broken a few ribs, it will be a miracle!" the doctor growled. "Did your back get slammed against the rocks, too, Miss Bayonne?"

Willy watched suspiciously as Micah shifted uncomfortably, her face turning a dark pink. "Um, I slept in a cave last night, sir, and I couldn't get comfortable."

The doctor gave her a considering look and didn't say anything for a minute.

Finally, he told her sternly, "These injuries will have to go into your file, complete with images, you understand?" She nodded. "I'll be looking over the incident reports from the mission as well."

"Yes, sir," was all she said.

Hurriedly, the doctor took the images for the report and then began the healing process. It took an hour because she'd aggravated her injuries a great deal by lifting things. Willy suspected that the Commander had something to do with aggravating her injuries, too.

After he'd escorted Micah back to Lab 3, he tried to decide how best to approach what was on his mind. He decided to start with what had just happened and try to tie it together with his questions about Granite.

"Mickey? Why wouldn't the commander let you go see the doctor? I heard him say that you probably only had a few broken ribs," he had to bite the inside of his cheek when he thought about that. "He has to know how painful a broken rib is."

"Willy, you know I'm manufactured," she said as if that explained everything.

"So?" he needed a LOT more explanation than that, he thought.

"Some people think that manufactured people can't feel pain," she looked at him and waited, making sure he understood.

"Why would they think that?" he gasped in disbelief. He understood what she was saying but he was still confused.

"We're pretty stoic, overall. You know, we don't say much when we're hurt," she tried to put it in plain words.

"But you were trying to tell him..." he exhaled loudly in exasperation.

J.J. Massa

“He probably has all these beliefs based on what he’s heard all his life. You know, “manufactured people don’t feel pain”, “manufactured people don’t have feelings—can’t feel love”. Thinks like that.”

“But you do, don’t you? You feel love as much as you feel pain, right?” He knew it was true but he needed to hear her say it.

“Yes, Willy, we do. I do. I guess we express it just about as well as we express pain though,” she gave Willy a long look. He wondered what she was thinking.

“Willy,” she said finally, “Some of us—Granite—well, he doesn’t think he can really feel love. He doesn’t think he’s capable of it.”

Willy was at first stunned. That lasted a very short time. He walked over to the information station.

“Computer, view Lieutenant Commander Granite Bayonne,” he ordered.

Granite’s image materialized on the screen. Willy stared at it for several long seconds. His eyes narrowed as he considered what Micah had just told him.

Although he didn’t know it, the feral look on his face was not that different from the look his lover had worn the night before. Unbeknownst to Granite Bayonne he was being stalked, hunted, and defeated, and he remained in blissful ignorance.

~*~

At the normal hour for the end of shift, Granite had paged Willy on his communication badge. He was stuck sorting out a crew altercation and the subsequent paperwork that went with that.

Willy had seemed quite accepting. Granite didn’t really know what to expect from the young science officer. It was past twenty-one hundred hours and shift had ended at seventeen hundred.

His quarters were very quiet when he walked in and his first thought was that Willy had gone home to his own quarters. As he looked around, though, he found him stretched out on the couch sleeping, a portable reading device hanging from his dangling hand.

Instead of walking to the couch and touching the younger man, which is what he really wanted to do, Granite went to the dining table and sat down. Propping his elbows on the table, he tiredly lowered his face into his open palms.

Seconds later, he felt a pair of arms slide around him from behind. He reveled in the feel of soft lips on his neck. He groaned, hugging the arms to him with one of his own.

“I missed you,” he heard Willy murmur. “You must be so tired. You hungry?”

Rocks and Hard Places

Granite smiled to himself. This felt good. Willy's arms around him felt good. He couldn't become used to it though. He was only trying to let Willy down easy after all.

"MMnnn," he grunted.

"You mind if I have a little snack?" Willy's accent was almost non-existent when he was calm.

"No, g'head," he murmured, leaning back and turning when Willy moved away.

Before he realized what was happening, Willy was kneeling on the floor in front of him and was tugging at the zipper on his pants. Bemused, Granite shifted in his chair and suddenly Willy had his cock in his hand, smiling up at him.

He couldn't help but groan when a warm, wet mouth fastened itself onto his now rock-hard shaft and immediately sucked it deep into his throat. With one fine-boned hand wrapped around the base, Willy licked and sucked on the massive organ, exploring and memorizing.

At last he pulled back with a last kiss on the tip and came up for air.

"I've never done this before," he said a little shyly. "Tell me what I should do."

Granite bent down and ran his fingers through the soft hair. "I can't believe what you're already doing. You're incredible," he groaned in disbelief.

Willy leaned down and took a little more into his mouth and began to bob his head. Granite groaned reveling in the feel of this man sucking him slowly and thoroughly, his tongue alternately working the glans and tonguing the slit.

His teeth were nibbling gently at the shaft, his right hand lowering to Granite's balls and squeezing them in a tantalizing way. Granite groaned, reaching out to pull Willy's head closer, stroking the soft blond hair with his thumbs. He began to thrust, and Willy moved his head smoothly with every motion.

It felt so amazing—he'd never felt anything so wonderful. He couldn't believe that little Wilhelm Schmidt was sucking his dick and doing such a damned good job of it. That thought alone was enough to push him over the edge.

His load hit the back of Willy's throat and he half roared, half groaned. The dark stain spreading across the front of the younger man's uniform excited him. Willy had come in response to sucking Granite off. Bringing him to climax had caused the young blond to come in his pants. This thought alone almost caused his erection to replenish itself.

The big man relaxed, and Willy licked his cock clean and released it, wiping his mouth and looking up expectantly. Granite's eyes were closed with a slight smile creasing his lips. He continued to hold Willy's head loosely in both his hands. Willy

reached up and took those hands in his own. Granite pulled him to his feet and onto his lap.

“Now, my little Willy, Willy,” Granite looked at him with a raised brow. “How did someone who has never even held anyone’s hand before know how to do what you just did?” his voice was mild but there was no mistaking his stern look.

“Mickey and I practiced,” came his tentative confession. He ducked his head.

“You practiced giving blowjobs with my little sister? Please explain.” He fought to keep his face straight. In truth, he was stunned.

“We looked up “deep-throating” in the database and then followed the directions using a tuber.” Willy gave in to his embarrassment and hid his flaming face in Granite’s neck.

Shaking with suppressed laughter, Granite shook his head. “You two are dangerous together. I can’t wait to see *those* security tapes.”

Chapter 11

West fought his way up *The Phoenix's* long corridor toward the security station. He'd been heading toward Lab 3, hoping to pigeonhole Micah into a face-to-face conversation. She'd managed to avoid him completely since their return from that last mission.

Briefly, he found himself in combat with one of the Esxkat intruders who'd boarded the ship. *Damn things are just like roaches. They keep multiplying and they're hard as hell to kill. They look kind of like roaches, too.*

He made his way into the security station to find Granite ordering Willy out of the fray.

"You need to go home, Willy!" he barked.

"*Nein!*" Willy barked back at him. "I can't go. What happens if you're shot? Who's going to look after you?"

Granite put a finger on the smaller man's mouth. "*Little Willy, Willy won't,*" he paused, removing his finger and lowering his mouth to the other man's, "*go home,*" he reached to the communications badge on Willy's shirt. "Site to site transport to Lieutenant Commander Bayonne's personal quarters," he ordered, speaking into the young man's mouth.

"Granite!" Willy wailed as his form wobbled and disappeared.

West shook his head, unsure what to think. "The bridge!" he snapped out of the temporary stupor. "They're all over up there!"

The bridge was in chaos. The helmsman was battling an Esxkat and still trying to fly the ship. Even Captain Meredith was involved in the combat. Vaguely, he noticed that Micah was at the science console on the bridge working frantically at the keyboard.

Just when he thought they had the enemy contained, one of the giant roach-like creatures materialized on the bridge three feet from the science information station. Waving a bobbing tentacle, a ribbon of green fire streaked across Micah leaving a smoking, bleeding wound from her shoulder to her abdomen.

J.J. Massa

West shot the foul bug-like creature as Captain Meredith sprang forward, catching Micah before she could crumple to the floor.

"Hang on, Lieutenant," she murmured, "Something for pain over here!" she shouted.

"Ma'am, she's manufactured, she doesn't..." West began gently.

"Silence! Use your eyes, Commander before the rest of you lose some rank!" she barked. The look she aimed at him should have turned him to stone he was positive. "Commander Bayonne!"

West looked at Micah. Her face was gray and her lips were as white as her hair. She shook all over. Transfixed, he watched the security officer gently lift his sister and turn.

"Breathe through it, Mic. Don't let 'em see you hurting. It'll destroy their cherished illusions," he smiled at the captain and began to sing to his sister in a low voice. "*Green grass and high tides forever...*" He heard her weak voice whispering along as Granite carried her away.

~*~

Micah awoke fully alert, though neither her heart rate nor respiration changed in any way. Granite had taught her not to act or react unless her body insisted on it. She'd learned to trust her instincts.

The first thing she knew was that she was she wasn't in her own quarters or the sickbay. She was wearing a Space Agency issue pajama top that would have fit her brother. Her only other garment was her usual thong underwear.

Carefully, she tried to straighten from the fetal position she was in to a flat, stretched out position. Her legs were cooperating but a bolt of pain shot through her as she tried to move her upper body.

Before she could catch her breath and open her eyes again, a familiar pair of strong arms slid around her. "The doc says you need to move slowly for a while. When that giant bug shot you it left poison in your system. It's going to take a day or so for it to filter out."

"Okay," she choked out, trying to hide the pain. *Oh why won't he leave me alone?* "Why am I here, Commander?"

"You couldn't be alone and I didn't think you'd like hanging out in sickbay," he offered, still holding her against him and brushing her wavy white hair from her face.

"My brother or Willy," she countered gasping, still gritting her teeth against the excruciating burning in her chest and abdomen.

Rocks and Hard Places

“Exactly,” he said smugly. She didn’t have the strength to struggle or to argue and collapsed against him. “Micah, I owe you a bunch of apologies.”

“No, I’m fine,” she didn’t want an apology from him. She just wanted him to leave her alone now.

“I was wrong to think you couldn’t feel pain. Won’t you let me make it up to you?” Gingerly, he fit her under his arm and leaned back against the head of the bed.

“I don’t want you to make anything up to me. I-I just want you to leave me alone,” she gasped trying to talk around the pain.

“Maybe when you feel better, you’ll like being around me more?”

“No, every time I’m around you, I get hurt!” She felt her body begin to shake and couldn’t seem to control her mouth. “Intercourse with you is too painful. I wish I never...”

“Shhhh,” he soothed. “I have a *lot* of making up to do, don’t I?”

He reached across her and pulled a pressurized needle from somewhere. Before she could protest, he put it to her arm and pulled the trigger.

When she awakened again hours later, she felt much better. She still felt as if someone had taken a wooden mallet to her but at least she could move. She eased off the bed, made use of the bathroom facilities and peeked into the main living space.

West was stretched out on the couch wearing a pair of reading glasses to look over something he held in his hand. *If we were married or lived together I’d see him like that all the time. OH NO! Stop that!*

~*~

West looked up from the report he was reading and saw Micah hovering in the doorway. *God she’s cute. I’m just going to pretend she’s real. Maybe she’ll change her mind about me.*

Tossing his glasses on a little table, West sat up. “Hi, you! Feeling any better?”

“I’m fine,” she responded from the doorway. “I want to go back to my quarters now.”

“Oooo, sorry, that’s not going to work for me.” He shook his head with a regretful frown on his face.

“I’m—I- I don’t want to have intercourse with you again,” she stated firmly. It was all he could do to keep from chuckling at the determined look she wore.

“Well, if you’re sure?” She nodded her head firmly. “Then I guess we’d better find something else to do. How about some food?”

J.J. Massa

By the time she opened her mouth to speak, West had lifted her in his arms and was heading for the couch.

As he keyed the food request of creamy tomato soup and melted cheese sandwiches into the edible rations unit, he considered his beautiful guest. She was as skittish as the feral cats that used to hang around his father's barns at home. He couldn't really blame her for feeling that way but now he needed to fix it. The question was, how?

When she finished eating, West removed the dishes and pulled her onto his lap. "Now, my little chickadee," he wiggled his eyebrows at her. "Whatever shall we do to entertain ourselves?"

Giggling, she asked him, "Are you familiar with the man who made that phrase famous?"

Fascinated, he grinned at her. "As a matter of fact..." he bent down and kissed her nose. "I'm not! So tell me all about it."

"His name was W.C. Fields and he starred in a movie called *My Little Chickadee* with a lady named Mae West. I wish I was just like her," she glanced at him shyly. She cocked her head and altered her voice to mimic the actress, "*Any time you got nothin' to do and lots of time to do it, come on up.*"

West laughed until tears ran down his face. "You are too cute!" he said when he'd regained control. "What do you say we watch that movie? I'm sure the computer can find it."

Her happy smile was all the reward he needed, he decided. There'd be other rewards later, he knew. He couldn't believe that he'd somehow missed this side of Micah Bayonne. What an adorable creature.

They watched one movie after another until he carried her, fast asleep, to his bed. It never even occurred to him not to join her there.

~*~

Micah woke early the next morning to incredible heat—all of it pooled in the bottom of her stomach and between her legs. When West nipped the inside of her thigh, she moaned, her back arching automatically.

"Commander! I mean, West!" she squeaked. "What—what—ahhhh..."

His wicked mouth found her pink inner lips and traced them with his tongue. She squirmed and he nipped at her little nub, taking her hips in the palms of his hands. When she yelped, he took her clit into his mouth and began to suck, inserting a finger into her dripping slit.

Rocks and Hard Places

All she could do was whimper when his mouth replaced his finger and his tongue delved deep inside her. He lifted his head, opened his mouth wide and covered her lower lips and her feminine opening.

“Mmm,” he hummed. “Mmm, mmm,” he groaned into her causing a vibration to shoot through her.

Her hips shot off of the bed and she screamed as hot fluid gushed into his mouth and her orgasm swept her like a tidal wave. Slowly, aftershocks still rippling through her, he kissed his way up her body, lifting his overlarge pajama shirt off of her.

Before she could take another deep breath, he was buried inside of her to the hilt, his face nuzzling her neck.

“Feel like having intercourse now?” he murmured wickedly, mimicking her.

“West,” she whimpered again.

He apparently took that as consent and his hips began to move. Slowly at first, he pulled out and then eased back into her. When her hips rose to meet him, he began to thrust a little harder.

She wrapped both legs around his waist and clutched at his shoulders as he continued to pump steadily into her. “You like this, honey?” he murmured. All she could manage was a frantic nod. “Want me to go faster?” She nodded again.

At her second nod, West wrapped his arms around her, his hips moving piston-like in and out of her until her nails sank into the flesh on his back. Her vaginal muscles began to tighten around him and he threw back his head, groaning through his clenched teeth, the muscles on his neck cording and veins throbbing.

Spent, he collapsed on top of her. After a minute, he raised his upper body and looked down at her. She was flattened against the mattress with her arms spread wide. He arched a brow at her. She smiled vaguely.

“That was *much* better,” she sighed. Flopping beside her, West began to laugh.

~*~

West refused to let her out of bed for more than a cursory cleaning that morning. She was in and out of the shower in less than five minutes and eating toast with coffee in six. He turned on the view screen and keyed in twentieth century entertainment. He listened to her giggling at the cartoons while he took his own super-fast shower.

They sat up against the headboard together sipping coffee and nibbling on toast laughing at the cartoons. At his insistence, neither wore more than a towel although he was sure she’d forgotten that halfway through the third cartoon.

J.J. Massa

Looking over at her, he felt himself getting hard again as her towel drooped lower on her breast and slipped further off of her parted thighs. Finally, he pushed his towel away and lifted her, still sitting cross-legged and placed her onto his naked lap.

With a little shifting and squirming, he had her right where he wanted her—impaled on his throbbing cock. He placed two fingers on top of her clit and began to rock, letting gravity take care of the rest.

He felt her juices flow over him as he continued to rock forward and back steadily deep inside of her. Her head went back against his shoulder and he pressed his lips into her hair, still rocking steadily. He felt the tingling begin low in his balls as she began to mewl, tightening around him.

He grabbed her hips, holding her still as he thrust upward, once, twice, three times and he exploded. He wrapped his arms around her and held her as they rested. Inhaling her white chocolate and vanilla fragrance, he nuzzled her ear and rubbed his cheek against the softness of her silky white hair.

After a long silence, she said, “I liked doing that with you. Do you... do you do that with many people?”

He smiled and kissed her temple. “No, Micah, I’ve only ever done that in just that way with you. You’re special. You’re very special to me.”

“Me?” she pulled back and looked at him critically.

“Yes, you!” he kissed her nose. “In fact, I’d like to do lots of things like that with you for a while, okay?”

She considered him for long minutes. “Okay,” she smiled. He wished he knew what was going on in her mind right then.

“Now, let’s watch some more cartoons. I like these a lot. Who’d you say that one is? Big Bunny?”

She nudged him playfully with her shoulder. “No, silly. *Bugs* Bunny!”

“Bugs? Like mosquitoes, ants, and...” he shuddered, “roaches?”

Chapter 12

Granite and Micah walked down the long corridor together, talking about how the last alien attack had depleted the ship's energy stores. Ever since Willy had come into his life, Granite was much more open and talkative.

"Hey, look Granite, its West. Do you know that woman he's talking to?" Micah pointed to the observation room further down the hall.

Observation rooms typically opened off the big hall with couches and chairs scattered about. From the outside of the ship, they looked like oblong glass bumps. Given the way West and his companion were standing, Micah knew they might notice Granite, but not her.

She grabbed her brother's arm as the air left her lungs. West was kissing the other woman. He'd told her that she was special to him. What did that mean?

Granite slid an arm around her and walked past the opening and stopped. They could hear the couple talking from the room behind them.

"Hey Commander, isn't that your girlfriend's brother? Won't she be mad that I kissed you?" The nervous voice of the woman could be heard in the hallway.

"Yeah, that was her brother but she won't be mad. She's manufactured. They don't have the same kind of emotions we do," he answered with a sigh in his voice.

"Are you sure about that? Commander Bayonne and Lieutenant Schmidt *both* seem to love each other."

"Commander Bayonne's just acting. Sooner or later Lieutenant Schmidt will realize that he needs *real* love in his life. Look, Petty Officer Dryson, I really respect how hard it was to make your feelings known but ..."

Micah didn't stick around for more. She put her arm around Granite's waist and did her best to propel him forward. Woodenly, he let her steer him to his own office. She was pretty upset for herself but she had a very good idea why her brother seemed so devastated.

J.J. Massa

“Granite, Willy loves you and you love him. Don’t believe what West said. *Don’t!*” she knew her brother very well after all of this time.

Granite sank down into his large chair and draped his torso across the desk burying his face in his crossed arms. “He’ll change, Mic, you heard West. Willy will need more,” the muffled voice of her rock hard, bad-to-the-bone, can’t-love-or-be-loved brother moaned. “It doesn’t matter how I feel, he needs more.”

Micah sat on the desktop and draped herself across her brother’s back, trying to soothe him. It wasn’t long before they were both shaking with helpless sobs.

~*~

Granite called the Lieutenant, who was his second in command and notified him that he’d be leaving early. He headed to his quarters to prepare Willy a wonderful meal.

When Willy arrived, Granite moved to greet him.

“Hi, Willy,” he slid his arms around his five feet, seven inch tall lover, giving him a warm hug. “I missed you today.”

“Um, missed you, too,” Willy mumbled, bemused.

Granite cupped the younger man’s face with both hands and lowered his mouth to his forehead. Lightly he skimmed Willy’s forehead, eyes, and cheeks with his lips before covering his mouth with his own.

His hands never left Willy’s face as his lips moved over the other man’s outlining them with just the tip of his tongue. He groaned softly when Willy opened his mouth, his tongue tentatively touching Granite’s. His tongue followed Willy’s back into his mouth, deepening the kiss. Willy clutched at his shirt, gripping it for support.

He tasted that incredible mouth, never before knowing, or even imagining, that such delight existed there. Felt the soft warmth of it, tasting Willy’s special flavor and reveling in it. He’d never kissed before—it was too intimate a gesture. Tonight, he would kiss this special man over and over, memorizing the feel and flavor of him.

He felt himself shaking, felt the man in front of him tremble as they parted slowly, stealing quick, light kisses as their arms slid around each other. They held on tight, hands caressing shoulders and backs, as their heart rates slowed.

“I made supper for you, Willy. Would you like some?” He smiled to himself, thinking that he *shouldn’t* ask the other man if he was hungry.

Shyly, Willy smiled and nodded, sliding into a seat at the table. He gasped, incredulous as Granite began serving his food.

“*Tafelspitz! Rosti! Riesling Wein! Dies überrascht!* This is amazing!” Willy seemed bowled over in disbelief.

Rocks and Hard Places

“I thought you might like it. I like the *Tafelspitz*, the braised beef with horseradish. I don’t know if I’ll like the *Rosti*, the potato pancakes fried with onion and butter. That sounds iffy to me,” Granite laughed, wrinkling his nose. “I like the wine though. Germany produces some very good wines.” Granite realized he was prattling so he closed his mouth.

How he got through supper, he just wasn’t sure. Somehow, he found himself eating with Willy, talking and listening. Mostly though, he listened, *really* listened, and memorized the sound of the younger man’s voice.

When supper was over and conversation dwindled away, Granite stood and held his hand out to Willy. “I’d like to make love with you tonight, Willy. Would that be okay with you?” he murmured, knowing that it would be.

“*Ja, bitte*,” Willy squeaked, taking the proffered hand. “I mean...”

Granite stopped his words with a quick kiss to that soft mouth. “*Ja, bitte*, is just fine, Willy.”

Once they reached the bedroom, Granite moved into Willy’s space, lifting his uniform shirt and bending to kiss the uncovered skin of his abdomen. When he tossed the shirt aside, he began exploring the exposed torso. He swirled his tongue on Willy’s flat male nipple, nipping and sucking lightly. Willy moaned deeply and Granite filed that sound away to remember and cherish.

Continuing his oral exploration, he licked his way across shoulders, clavicle and sternum, working his way down the younger man’s ribs and up the other side. By the time he got to the waistband of Willy’s pants, the blond was a quivering mass of need. Granite pressed Willy back on the bed and tugged off his shoes and pulled his pants down, over his hips, taking the snug boxers with them.

~*~

Willy watched in awe as Granite removed his uniform. Although the big man was simply stripping off his clothes, he was bowled over once again by his fluid grace. When he dropped down on the bed next to Willy, Granite covered his mouth in a hungry kiss. Just a touch of the lips and he was drowning again, falling into the kiss, losing himself in this man.

For all that the kiss was so urgent, the mesh of bodies was slow. Granite stroked loving fingers down Willy’s chest, down to his waist. A gentle drift of touch over his throbbing sex, and then he was sliding around, cupping Willy’s ass and pulling him toward him. Now they were pressed furred muscular chest to bare, lean chest, hard flat belly to soft, smooth belly, large thick cock to smaller, hard cock.

Soon, their bodies were pressing together, so that their cocks were sandwiched between their bellies, rubbing together in a glorious friction. Lost in sensation, it took a second or two for Willy to realize that Granite had withdrawn and was no longer pressed against him.

“I want to come inside you while I watch you come, hmmm?” Granite’s sexy voice tickled his senses and Willy was sure he’d suck on a razorblade if this man asked him in that tone of voice.

Unable to speak, Willy nodded, watching Granite’s face. His fingers tickled him, pushing insistently between his rounded nether cheeks, one questing, exploring, prodding. His breathing was starting to get shallow and his eyes were slitting even further in anticipation.

Willy closed his eyes and sucked in a breath, willing his heart rate to calm. *God, he wanted this so much.* Granite had never used the phrase, “make love”, he’d never kissed him and never looked at his face when they were intimate. There was the finger again, this time cold, lube covered, pushing, entering, curling around inside him. Another joined the first, tickling, stretching, and aahhhh, there it was, that ripple of pleasure, unexpected and intense as thick fingers scraped his prostate.

Then, in a flurry of movement, the questing fingers were gone, and Granite was moving forward, his bulbous head resting at Willy’s most private entrance. His knees were folded between his and Granite’s chest, they kissed, a meshing of mouths to prelude the most intimate kind of loving.

That little nudge between his cheeks, his lover’s shaft parting him and his belly turned over, he felt liquid heat pooling deep in his groin. His cock was so stiff that he thought if Granite so much as brushed it, he would come hard and hot all over his lover’s hands.

Granite locked eyes with his and began to push himself in. Willy felt his own eyes close and his head fall back. When he felt the other man slide all the way to the hilt, he dug his heels into the mattress and pushed against him, squirming a little.

His eyes snapped open again and he watched his lover’s face, aware that Granite stared intently at him, as if cataloging each feature and expression. They were both moving, connected, fused together, nearing a climax together, lost in time together. What was left of his mind was focused on the man with him. He was with him. They were and would be together.

Granite leaned forward and twined his fingers into Willy’s. Slowly, steadily, he pulled out and glided back in making him feel full and complete. Willy felt the tingle, the

Rocks and Hard Places

ache, he needed to come and he wasn't sure why he couldn't. And then Granite leaned down and whispered the words he needed to hear.

"Come for me, little Willy. Come," rumbled Granite's sexy purr.

The voice, the words... Willy's orgasm was fierce, bursting out of him in a guttural shout, shooting over Granite's stomach. The haze in his head cleared, and he felt Granite's careful thrusts disintegrate into jagged movements. Once, twice, and then he was coming too, a heated gush of seed, planted deep inside him.

When he opened his eyes minutes later, Granite was laying beside him, stroking his hair back from his face, his eyes brimming with emotion. Without a word, the big man got up and returned with a warm washcloth.

Willy awoke hours later and found himself draped across his sleeping lover's broad chest. He rubbed his cheek in the soft white hair there and scooted up to bury his face in the other man's neck. Inhaling the musky scent of the man he loved, Willy was overcome by the perfection of the moment.

"*Ich liebe Sie,*" he mumbled, kissing Granite's neck on the verge of dozing.

"*Ich liebe Sie, auch,*" he heard vaguely as if from far away.

He struggled to wake up but he couldn't. He felt the soft brush of lips on his forehead and the feel of a tender hand rhythmically stroking his back.

~*~

It was late the following afternoon when Granite had his second in command, Miguel Alverado, deliver a note to his young lover. He'd written to Willy telling him that things weren't working out between them. He made it clear that he didn't want to see him any more.

Granite scrubbed the heels of his hands up and down his cheeks. He was sure he was doing the right thing. Of that he had no doubt. Willy deserved the best and nothing less. If he believed manufactured people had hearts, Granite knew his would be breaking at that moment.

"Boss, you don't look very good," Miguel said to him when he returned.

"Can the sympathy, Lieutenant, what took you so long to get back here?" Granite barked. "All you had to do was deliver a little note, not take half the afternoon off!" he moved across the office, pretending to organize supplies at a station on the other side of the room.

"I'm sorry, L.C.," Miguel offered sincerely, using the initials of Granite's rank to address him as he usually did. He sounded a little confused. "I stopped to talk to Micah and was out in the hall when Willy collapsed and had to be transported to sickbay."

Granite went rigid, forcing himself not to turn or look at his subordinate. “What’s his status now, Lieutenant? Do you know?” He made himself breathe evenly, regularly. “You *did* stay to find out?”

He could feel the junior officer’s eyes on his back but he waited, not turning. “Of course I did, sir. I woulda anyway, but we’re talking Willito here. He’s not just anybody, ya know?” his voice vibrated with anger. When Granite didn’t respond, Miguel continued, “Even if you two weren’t together, I’d make sure he was okay.”

“I’m glad to hear it, Lieutenant,” Granite replied in a low voice. “Did the doc say what was wrong with him?”

He knew Miguel was still watching him like a hawk. The young security officer was holding himself in check but with obvious difficulty. After a prolonged silence, he finally replied.

“He was in shock, Commander,” his voice resonated disgust now. “Something happened to him between the time I gave him your note and left the room. The doc said he was devastated by—something.” Granite glanced up at Miguel and back down quickly. “People *die* from that ya know,” he growled, seething.

“And?” Granite rumbled back, refusing to react.

“He was sedated and Lieutenant Bayonne stayed with him.” The young man said nothing for long seconds. “Permission to leave for the day, sir,” he said finally, obviously bewildered and still angry with his superior.

“Granted,” Granite said calmly.

He waited until Miguel had been gone a full minute before he gave in to his anguish, collapsing into his desk chair and dropping his face into his hands.

Chapter 13

“Lieutenant J. G. Micah Bayonne reporting, Captain,” Micah addressed Captain Meredith upon entering her office.

She’d transported from Lab 3 straight here so that nobody would see her come or go. The captain would be the only person aboard this ship besides Micah to hear what she had to say. If the captain didn’t seem to understand early on and agree, Micah had decided that she would alter her story and withhold facts.

“Lieutenant, thank you for being so prompt. I got your report and I am most reassured that you believe the combination of chemicals and substances found on the planet we are orbiting will combine to create an alternate energy source for the ship’s systems.” She gave Micah a congratulatory smile.

“That pleases me, too, Captain,” Micah stated frankly. She took a deep breath, plunging ahead. “Ma’am, there are one or two, ahhh ... complications,” she hedged.

“I suspected as much, Lieutenant. Care to enlighten me?” Her well-modulated voice was steady and calm but her piercing gaze drilled right through Micah.

“Captain, the air on that planet is not fit for human...” she took a deep breath and looked directly into the captain’s eyes. “The air is not fit for *real* human consumption.”

“Lieutenant, I object to that classification,” Captain Meredith growled. “There is no human being serving on this ship that is not *real*. Kindly never use that description again.”

“Yes ma’am,” Micah dropped her eyes and raised them again with a sigh. “Okay, well, most people on this ship could not survive the chemicals that make up the air down there. Two people can... sort of...”

Micah waited to see if the captain would arrive at the inevitable conclusion.

“Yourself and your brother, no doubt?” At Micah’s nod, she continued. “What’s to prevent crew members from wearing protective gear and using portable oxygen tanks?”

“Any more oxygen than a small augmentation tank would have—any more than that would spark a chain reaction that could destroy the planet,” she made her explanations patiently and calmly, waiting for the next question.

The captain paced in front of her, processing the information. “Okay, Lieutenant Bayonne. I understand that you and your brother are the two obvious choices for this mission. What’s the catch?”

Micah opened her mouth and closed it again. She wished she could just do what needed to be done without all the explanations. That really wasn’t very realistic though, she knew.

“The air down there is a perfect chemical mix for Commander Bayonne. It is chiefly composed of the chemical found when I exhale combined with a hint of oxygen.” Again Micah waited watching the thoughts tumble across the other woman’s normally calm face.

“Let’s see if I understand this, Lieutenant. For your brother, the mix is perfect, sweet mountain air. You, on the other hand will be inhaling almost pure toxins. Is that accurate?” The captain stared hard at her, daring her to deny it.

“Simply put, ma’am, yes, that’s accurate enough. I will be able to function properly and think clearly. However, because the modicum of oxygen in the air coupled with the few ounces of concentrate and Granite’s own breathing exhalations, it will allow me up to two days of full functionality. That will be long enough to locate and procure the proper substances,” she explained as formally as possible, ignoring her shaking legs and dry throat.

The captain didn’t ignore them, however. She waved Micah to a nearby chair and retrieved two cups of coffee from a nearby food preparation unit.

“You do not expect to survive this mission, Lieutenant?” Captain Meredith murmured after a long silence.

“No ma’am,” she answered simply.

“Does Commander Bayonne have any idea about this?” Micah shook her head negatively. “What of his survival after you perish?”

Micah allowed herself a wry smile at the matter of fact statement. “I have given my notes and experiments to Lieutenant Schmidt and will include a fair amount of the compressed air from the planet’s environment in the materials. That will ensure his survival.” She hesitated a minute. “Lieutenant Schmidt is very creative and has a personal investment in Commander Bayonne’s longevity.”

Rocks and Hard Places

The captain nodded sharply. "Does he know of the likely outcome of this mission?"

"No, he is only aware that *The Phoenix* and her crew will perish if we are unable to complete this mission now. You and I are the only people onboard who are completely aware of the ramifications of this mission." Micah gulped down her coffee and gazed sightlessly at a point above the captain's left shoulder.

Nothing was said for long moments as the captain considered all that she'd been told. Micah watched as the other woman had stood and began wandering aimlessly around the room stroking the occasional knickknack. Finally, she returned to stand in front of her desk, looking down at Micah.

Micah shot to her feet. "Very well, Lieutenant Bayonne, you and Lieutenant Commander Bayonne will depart tomorrow at oh six hundred hours," the captain rapped out.

"Yes, ma'am. Will that be all, ma'am?" she assumed a parade rest stance with her elbows out and hands clasped in the small of her back.

The captain reached forward and pulled her into her arms for a tight hug. After a brief hesitation, Micah put her arms around the captain, hugging her back. She felt the tears prickle at her eyes and did nothing to still their flow.

Pulling back just enough to look into her face, Micah could see that the captain had given in to her emotions, too.

"What are your plans this evening, Micah?" she asked after a moment, smiling feebly.

Micah felt her face flame but she gave her captain a devilish smile. "I intend to seduce Commander West, make him beg, and then have my way with him until he's unconscious."

The captain's mouth curved into an answering wicked grin. She gave Micah a last, tight hug and said, "Very good, Lieutenant, proceed."

~*~

West was aware that the captain had emerged from her office. Absently, he moved from the command chair to his own chair slightly in front and to the left of it. He resumed reading the report in his hand until he felt something tickle the back of his neck.

He turned his head slightly and felt a hot tongue trace his ear. "Commander?" purred Micah into his ear. She stroked his neck again with her fingertips letting her nails trail across the heated flesh and he felt hunger and lust slam into him, full force.

J.J. Massa

“Will you come by my quarters after shift, sir? I have been expanding my knowledge and I need you to review my studies.”

West cleared his throat and glanced at her without looking up. “Certainly, Lieutenant, I’ll be glad to help. What is the subject matter?”

The soft lips moved over his ear again, grazing the lobe and back to the center. It seemed like minutes, yet it was only seconds before she answered.

“Deep-throating and the perfect blowjob,” she whispered as the air whooshed from his lungs. She smiled and nodded to the room at large and walked out.

After thirty seconds of dry wheezing, West began to choke and had to leave the bridge for a few minutes. The helmsman asked if he was okay but the captain merely smiled enigmatically.

Chapter 14

Micah wasn't surprised when West came charging into her quarters an hour after she'd left the bridge. She'd spent that hour well, preparing for his arrival having pulled on a corset, high cut silk panties, thigh high stockings with garters and black three-inch stiletto heels. Over this ensemble she wore a floor length satin robe.

She had her back to West when he demanded, "What in the hell were you playing at behaving that way on the bridge?"

She turned to him and smiled, raising a delicate white eyebrow. Micah was going to make a memory with the man she loved and she wasn't going to let him mess it up.

"Answer me, damn it!" he barked.

She tugged the tie at her waist and let the robe fall open. Shrugging her shoulders twice caused the slippery garment to slither to the floor.

The sound West made was somewhere between a cough, a gasp and a wheeze. Micah decided that she liked him insensible and would keep him that way. She strolled slowly up to him and placed the fingers of one hand under his chin, gently pushing his mouth closed.

Still not saying anything, she trailed her hands down to his waist and slid her hands under his shirt. Slowly moving them upward, she gathered material with it and he raised his arms. She pushed it over his head.

She kissed the side of his neck, moving around to his back. Trailing her fingernails over his sensitized skin, she saw West's head drop forward and heard him moan. She saw his color rise and saw that sensual mouth open slightly. His eyes were half closed, as she licked his ear, kissing her way down the strong column of his throat.

She made her way down his chest, licking and nibbling, tonguing his flat male nipples into hard points, dragging her teeth across them until she heard him groan. She traced each rib with her tongue and lips, kissing her way to the soft skin of his tummy and circling until she'd made her way down to his belly button, licking at it and nibbling finally taking the zipper of his pants into her teeth.

Tugging it down, she wrapped her arms around his waist and sunk toward the floor. His pants and shorts gathered around his knees and his engorged erection sprung free.

West responded immediately, his hips bucking forward, his entire body flushed and coated with a light sheen of sweat. He grabbed her shoulder and held on. She buried her face in the crease of his hip, inhaling his heady male scent. Bypassing the hard column of throbbing flesh, she kissed and licked her way down one hip and thigh to the knee. Sucking and nibbling on it for a minute, she transferred her attentions to the other side and made her way back up.

Still kneeling, Micah shifted her head slightly and ran her lips from the bottom of his shaft to the head. West began to tremble and she grabbed one of his hips to hold him steady.

She couldn't see his eyes but knew they were glued to her face. He still didn't say anything at all, she was pretty sure he couldn't. His hand was digging so hard into her shoulder now, she decided she should take pity on him.

With one quick movement, she had his entire cock in her mouth and swallowed it whole. His other hand came down on the top of her head as he moaned and shifted. Following his movements, she explored every inch of his pulsing erection with her lips and tongue.

She sucked his balls, one by one, lovingly caressing the shaft with his tongue, and then swirled her lips around the head, enjoying the salty tang of West's pre-cum. When she knew that he was close, she took him deep into her throat, and sucked him hard. A few moments later, West exploded into her mouth. She rode out the aftershocks, and then took one last loving suck on his spent cock.

Carefully, she eased him down into a chair and removed his boots, socks, and wadded pants and shorts. She went into the kitchen and returned with an imitation alcoholic drink and some fruit. Straddling his lap, she fed them to him one piece at a time and held his drink for him to sip. Every so often, she squirmed a little until his erection began to replenish itself.

Sliding off of his lap she held out her hand and led him into the bedroom. "Lay down on your stomach," she murmured pointing to her bed. He obeyed.

Pouring some warm oil into her hand, she began to work the knots of tension out of his back. She'd taken care of a great deal of tension already when he'd come in her mouth but she wanted him as relaxed as it was possible to be.

Rocks and Hard Places

She smiled to herself as she rubbed in circles, pushing and gathering and working his muscles all the way down his back, over his buttocks and up each leg. His moans and groans of pleasure echoed around the room. By the time she rolled him over, he was as boneless as a water balloon.

She moved down to his feet and began to massage them, working her way up his legs again. When she reached his knees, she caught his attention and wriggled her breasts out of her bustier. His erection sprung to rigid attention once again.

Smiling serenely, Micah took the scented oil and poured it over West's proud erection. She let the oil drip down its length, over his balls and down the crack between his nether cheeks.

With one hand she began massaging his rod and with the other, she cuddled his balls. When he began groaning loudly, Micah crawled up and leaned over West's face presenting him with a soft breast to suck on. He attached himself to it greedily.

Leaning forward again, she pulled the crotch of her panties aside and lowered herself onto his now quivering cock. A guttural groan erupted from him as she sank deeply onto him.

Slowly, she began to move up and down, reaching back to touch his balls and tease the cleft between his cheeks with one finger. As his groans got louder, she slowly turned on him until her back was facing him. He began to thrust hard into her and she reached between his legs. His balls were hard—he was close.

Leaning forward, she let him grab her hips and she inserted one finger into his anus, curving it and finding his prostate right away and stroking it. He came straight up off the bed with a bellow, coming instantly. *Thank God for all those years of biology. Talking to Granite's lovers over the years hadn't hurt either.*

He pumped his seed into her over and over and then collapsed. When she climbed off of him and turned to look at him, she realized that he'd passed out. She lay down beside him and curled into his side. Exhausted, she watched him until she too, fell asleep.

Arising early the next morning, Micah showered and readied herself for her mission. He was still asleep, snoring lightly. Just before she left her quarters, she leaned over him and pressed her lips to his. He opened his eyes and she smiled.

"Go back to sleep," she whispered. "I just wanted to tell you that I love you."

His eyes got wide for a second and then they drifted closed. She kissed him again lightly and left.

When she got to the lab, she sent him a note to his personal console. He would get it after he reported for duty. In it, she told him that she understood that he could only

J.J. Massa

have a committed relationship with a person who had been born and not manufactured. She thanked him for the time that he'd spent with her and she wished him luck.

~*~

The shuttle landed, bounced, landed again, slid down a small slope, and came to a stop with a bone-jarring jolt. On the floor, Micah groaned and sat up. The hard landing had snapped her safety belts. She knew she'd been out for maybe a minute. She looked around and spotted a pair of long legs protruding from under the co-pilot console. She touched one of the legs and it twitched.

"Granite?" The leg twitched again. "Granite, are you ok?"

"Yeah," came his muffled reply "Just give me a hand getting out from here."

Micah grabbed the other leg and hauled. Once his torso cleared the console, Granite rose to his knees and crawled backwards out from under the tangled mess. He emerged, blinking and looking more than a little disheveled. They stood and stared at each other for a minute.

Moving in unison, they popped the rear hatch and exited the shuttle. Micah looked around and groaned. The landscape was completely bleak, no sign of vegetation. *More dirt and rocks, my favorite. Why is it always dirt and rocks in these situations, why not a bucolic paradise just once?*

Granite had opened his bio-reader and was scanning the area. "No life signs. Wonderful," he enthused sarcastically. "We seem to be at the bottom of a crater and there's no sign of water down here either. We're going to have to climb out."

Micah looked up at the towering cliff walls surrounding them. She sighed in resignation.

"Well, let's grab some rations and water, and get moving." Granite snapped the bio-reader shut and moved back into the shuttle. He re-emerged with a water bag slung over his shoulder and gave a handful of ration bars to Micah. "Stick those in your pockets." Then he turned and headed towards the nearest cliff face. "The readings say there's water in this direction."

Micah turned and dejectedly trudged after him, groaning under her breath. After two hours of rock climbing, her knees were shaking and she could feel blisters forming on her fingers. She looked up at Granite still climbing steadily.

Another twenty minutes of climbing, and her mind was in a blank daze. Suddenly she realized that her face was level with her brother's foot. Granite was standing on a small ledge looking down at her.

Rocks and Hard Places

"There's a narrow but fairly deep crevice here that I think we can squeeze into. We'll rest a minute and eat something."

Taking his hand, Micah climbed up beside Granite and peered doubtfully into the crevice. "You really think we'll both fit in there?" she asked.

"Yeah, I'll get in first and then I can prop my legs up on either side. You can sit in front of me, but you'll have to dangle your legs off the edge. You should be able to rest your feet on this little ledge," Granite replied pointing down to a small extension.

Micah was too tired to care anymore. "Okay," she sighed. *My last days and I get to spend a significant portion of 'em climbing a crevice.*

Granite handed her the water bag and climbed into the crevice. She took a drink and handed the bag back to him. She took a couple of ration bars out of her pocket, tossed them over to him then slid into the crevice between his bulky thighs. She leaned back and felt his arm come around her waist, holding her in place.

Granite passed her a ration bar and murmured, "We should only rest for about an hour since we're still only about half way up and I'm not sure how much light we have."

She leaned back against his shoulder and he turned his head so that he was breathing directly into her face. She smiled.

"Were you going to tell me, Mic?" he asked conversationally.

She sighed. "Yeah, later. How'd you know?"

"This is the best my body has felt in a long time. It didn't take long to realize that it was because I could breathe so easily. It must be killing you."

"Well..." she chuckled dryly, "Not yet, anyway. I've got a couple of days."

"You know what, Mic?" he slid his arms more tightly around her.

"What's that, Granite?" She'd closed her eyes now.

"Your jokes are just plain *not* funny," he kissed her temple and leaned his head so that he continued breathing into her face.

Chapter 15

West was in the captain's office discussing the away mission when the acting security chief called. Captain Meredith wasn't telling him much but he hung in there realizing that she'd tell him what he needed to know.

"Can this wait, Lieutenant?" he growled.

Lieutenant Alvarado who was Granite's second in command interrupted again, "Commander, I have something of an emergency, sir. It seems the head of the Science department, Lieutenant Wilhelm Schmidt, has been involved in a brawl. He's beat up pretty badly, Sir."

Captain Meredith was instantly on her feet. "Is he in sickbay, Lieutenant?" she barked.

"Yes ma'am, Doc's working on him now," the Lieutenant answered quickly. "I need to fill you in, Ma'am, Sir."

"We'll meet you in sickbay," West snapped and stood, following the Captain out the door.

As they entered the medical wing, a swarthy young man stopped them, explaining, "Doc's still working on him. They worked him over pretty good. He's the worst off so he'll get the most attention. The good news is he got a few good licks in. Soon as I saw what was happening, I'm afraid I got a little physical myself."

West noticed a slight flush, an embarrassed blush possibly, creeping up the young man's light, golden brown skin.

"Lieutenant Alvarado, I, for one, appreciate your enthusiastic assistance of Lieutenant Schmidt. Having said that, I would like more information please, as to what caused this. I'm afraid I can guess but tell me anyway," the captain sighed sadly.

West looked from her to the other man, seeing him nod affirmatively. "A couple of guys were saying that it didn't matter if the L. C. died down there because he's not real anyway. They said he's not a real man. Willy lost it. I don't know if you know how much he loves Commander Bayonne or how much the L.C. loves him."

Rocks and Hard Places

"I knew they had a relationship," West responded carefully.

"Had... Yeah, had," sighed the Lieutenant. "For two people so in love, damn... Sorry, ma'am." He blushed, shaking his head. "Look, the Doc said that there wasn't enough energy in the ship's stores to heal bumps and bruises. I put the whiners in the brig. I want to go in and check on him. The L.C.'s goanna *kill* me when he gets back and sees Willy's face," he groaned turning and heading into sickbay.

"Dr. Bergan, please update me on the status of Lieu... of Wilhelm Schmidt before we go and speak to him," ordered Captain Meredith, obviously trying to observe the doctor's rigid personal protocols.

"Certainly, Ms. Meredith, certainly," he answered clearing his throat. "Well, Mr. Schmidt arrived with a broken leg and hipbone, a shattered cheek and various lacerations and contusions." He consulted his notes and looked up. "The more serious injuries included a punctured lung. For the most part, his injuries were healed although the various bruises were not. We have enough power to heal injured organs and bones but he will still look pretty beat up until the cuts and bruises fade."

His throat dry, West asked the doctor, "Can we see him please?"

The doctor waved them through the door and West stood in front of Willy. In obvious pain, the young officer lifted his head. The stark contrast of the split lip, black eye and dark bruises against the other man's pale features caused West's stomach to clench and roil.

Taking him completely by surprise, Willy glared at him, loathing in his hazel eyes. "It was you," Willy gritted. His voice changed pitch, "Even the Commander says manufactured's can't love. You'd be better off if he dies down there—get yourself a *real* boyfriend!" He was obviously quoting one of his tormentors.

"Lieutenant," Captain Meredith placed a gentle hand on Willy's shoulder. "Commander Bayonne *will* return."

"Captain, my tests show that one of them will not make it. The mix of air..." Willy began, seeming to struggle to keep his voice under control. The captain raised her other hand, palm out, and cut him off.

"Commander Bayonne will return safely, Lieutenant Schmidt. He will, however, need a great deal of love and support. He'll also need you to complete Lieutenant Bayonne's work on his respiratory intake. The mix on the planet below is perfect for him," she took a deep breath, placing her other hand on his other shoulder.

West looked from one to the other as Willy's features paled even more. The captain's face seemed strained. For the first time since he'd met her, she looked every one of her fifty plus years.

"She knew," choked Willy. "She knew right away and she didn't tell me. Why?"

"What? What did she know?" West hated being left out of the loop. He was sure this had to do with whatever the captain had been keeping from him.

The two seemed to ignore him as Captain Meredith answered the science officer's plea. "Yes, she did know. There was just no other way, Lieutenant."

"What. Did. She. Know?" West rapped out. He'd had more than enough of being on the outside looking in.

The captain dropped her hands from Willy's shoulders and turned toward West. Before she could say anything, Willy, wincing in pain, carefully slid down from the exam table he'd been sitting on.

Moving into West's face he rasped, "Mickey—Micah—Lieutenant Bayonne—will not survive this mission. She knew it going in, it seems. But hey, don't worry," he sneered. "She's not *real*, is she? No great loss." Tears were streaming down his face now. He turned to the security officer who'd been standing in the corner the whole time. "Miguel, can you take me to Granite's quarters? I-I forgot the code."

"Yeah, sure, Willito, I got you, man. Let's go." The security officer looped an arm across Willy's shoulders and the two left the sickbay.

West stood in the middle of sickbay, frozen and completely stunned. Micah had signed her own death warrant in order to ensure the survival of everyone on the ship. She'd come to him the day before and loved him so completely and thoroughly that he'd passed out from sensory overload. He'd never ever been given so much from another person.

He thought about how "attached" he'd felt he was becoming to her. *Attached. To quote one of Micah's twentieth century cartoons, "What a maroon!"*

He loved her, she loved him and he'd let her go. He'd pushed her away. He'd ignored everything his head and heart were telling him and just clung to old-fashioned prejudices.

Staggering to a nearby chair, West lowered himself into it, cupping his face in his hands. He sat like that for a minute while the captain discussed the energy shortage with the doctor.

After a short while, he looked up. "Doc is there any hope at all?" he asked, pleaded. "Is there any possibility that she could live?"

Rocks and Hard Places

"If she's breathing when the shuttle lands here on the ship, Mr. James, there's a slim chance. That's the best I can do," as usual, the doctor ignored rank and addressed him by a civilian title.

Although his words were firm, the doctor's eyes were soft and kind.

West knew that none of them wanted her to die. He sighed.

"Time to get back to the bridge, Commander," Captain Meredith said sympathetically.

Nodding, West stood and followed her.

~*~

Upon reaching the top of the crater, Granite and Micah had been greeted with a scene more in keeping with what his sister had hoped for. They found grass and plants, *blue and red* grass and plants, but still they were part of the abundant resources Micah had been looking for.

Over the next day and a half, they packed many of the plants, complete with root systems, into airtight containers. Under Micah's direction, they found the "water" Granite had mentioned while in the crater. She insisted that he store a great deal of it since it contained not only the chemicals that made up the air but also some of the elements needed to restore the ship's energy.

Late in the evening of the second day, she lay against him, struggling to breathe. "What am I going to do without you, Micah?" he mumbled, fighting the burning tears in his throat. There were times that he wished he could go back to ignoring his emotions.

"You're going to let Willy love you, Granite. And you're going to love him with everything you are." She angled her head so that she could see his face. He leaned down and exhaled again into her nose.

"What if West is right, Mic? I really want the best for Willy, you know that." He sighed, trying to keep control of his wayward feelings.

"That right there proves how much you love him Granite. West is a smart man and he's right about a lot of things. In this case though, he's dead wrong."

Brother and sister sat together quietly for a long time, resting. "Micah," he said after a while.

"Yeah?" she roused herself. They had to get back to work soon.

"I'm glad they made *you* my sister," his throat was working and his eyes were blurry. He felt hot all over.

"I love you, too, Granite," she whispered in a rough voice.

J.J. Massa

He leaned down and kissed each eye, absorbing the tears there. They clung together for long minutes holding each other.

When he felt his voice had regained its steadiness, Granite spoke again. “I know you’re in love with West. Is that why you took this assignment?”

“Yes, I’m in love with West and no, that’s not why I’m here.” She leaned back and gave him a gentle smile. “Besides you, I’m the only person who could live long enough to complete this mission. The fact that he doesn’t think I’m as human as he is—well, that just made it easier to say good-bye.”

She struggled to her feet and reached out a hand to him. He took it but stood without letting her pull. She needed every ounce of energy she had. They got back to work.

Chapter 16

Willy absently called out, “Come!” from his position on the couch when the door chimed.

Glancing at the entryway, he was surprised to see Commander West James standing there. He didn’t move as he watched the ship’s second in command shift nervously from one foot to the other.

The two men stared at each other for long minutes, neither willing to break the silence. Finally, West gave in.

“I don’t really know what to say, Lieutenant Schmidt. I’m not even sure why I’m here. I just felt like I had to come.” The older man looked at Willy and then looked away.

Willy stared at him for a minute longer, his jaw working angrily. “Permission to speak freely, sir?” he said finally, focusing on the wall across from the couch.

“Granted,” West nodded, tensing.

Willy turned his angry eyes on West, but knew the effect was ruined when he felt his chin wobble. He was battered and bruised and here was the man partly responsible. He wished he could despise him but he couldn’t. It wasn’t his way.

“What is *wrong* with you?” he choked. “How is it possible in your mind to believe someone can feel happy and sad, but not love and hate?” Dashing the gathering tears from his eyes, Willy pulled in a deep breath. “You lied to yourself and made as many people as you could believe you. Why? Why did you do that?”

Biting his lip, Willy ignored the pain and stood. He knew that if he stayed in the room with his commander, he’d lose it. He was halfway to the bathroom when West spoke.

“I know I let a lifetime of ignorance blind me to what was right in front of my face,” West gritted. Willy stopped and stood rigid beside the arm of the couch. “I know I wasted the best thing that ever happened in my life... I know I’m a fool.”

Willy heard the other man suck in a deep ragged breath. He turned slowly toward West.

“I love her...” West croaked.

The sight of his superior officer shaking with tears running down his face was too much for the softhearted young man. In four strides, Willy was in front of him. He stood on his tiptoes and wrapped both arms around the older man, soothing and petting him.

“Shhh, s’okay, shhh,” he murmured to the big officer, stroking his short, dark hair. “If there’s anything at all we can do, we’ll do it. If there’s even a miniscule chance...”

Afraid he’d fall over and take the larger man with him, Willy gently tugged him to the couch, continuing to comfort him. Finally, the worst of the storm passed and West moved to the bathroom to wash his face.

~*~

West knew that he’d be deeply embarrassed later on. For the moment, however, he simply felt shattered. He barely recognized the face he saw in the mirror.

Slowly, he made his way back into the main room of Granite Bayonne’s quarters. Seeing Willy sitting on the sofa, he lowered himself beside him. Suddenly, he was totally exhausted. He didn’t even know if he’d be able to drag himself back to his own quarters. Heaven help him if the ship came under attack any time soon.

“Lieutenant—Willy?” Willy nodded at him. “I don’t know... I’m sorry, okay? Is that okay?” West wasn’t sure what he wanted or what he was asking. Somehow, he was sure the other man knew though.

“You know why they call it *“falling in love”*, Sir?” Willy asked him.

He shook his head negatively.

“Because it hurts like hell when you land,” he explained, smiling when West began to chuckle. “How about some wine, hmmm? Granite got it for me recently.”

Both men nursed a glass of wine, talking quietly about ship’s business and gossip. Eventually West finished his wine and placed his glass on the table. Looking at Willy, he realized that he felt slightly better and much more hopeful.

He stood and Willy stood facing him. “I, ummm...” he reached out, resting a palm on the young man’s shoulder. “Thank you, Willy. Just—thank you.”

Willy smiled at him, trying not to open the split in his lip. “*Sie sind willkommen*—you’re welcome.” He stepped forward and gave him a quick hug.

West noticed that his heart held a tiny spark of hope instead of the overwhelming dread it had when he’d arrived.

~*~

Rocks and Hard Places

With the help of their inflatable carts and the rigging of a rope-pulley system, Granite and Micah were able to get all of their supplies back to the crater. Looking at his sister now, though, he knew there was no way she could climb down the dirt and rock face. She wouldn't even be able to rappel alone, he knew.

"Micah, I'm going to lower you down there," he decided finally. "Micah! Can you hear me?"

Her face had a definite blue caste to it, as did her eyes. "Yeah," she nodded, saving her energy and trying not to speak too much.

"Will you be able to unload the rope pallet when I lower it to you?" he asked in concern. She nodded.

Without another word, he tied the rope around her and carefully let her down. He firmly believed that, if she was still breathing when they reached the ship, she could be saved. It was the only chance she had. He needed her for more than whatever chemical she exhaled. He needed his sister—his family.

After all the supplies were unloaded, Granite rigged the rope so that he could make his way down the crater, rappelling quickly. Once there, he found Micah draped over the water containers holding her tiny portable oxygen tank in her hand. Her respirations were slow and shallow and her lips were cyanic, but she *was* breathing.

He lifted his sister and strapped her into a passenger seat on the shuttle. Moving quickly, he loaded the materials they'd collected into the storage area and secured everything in place.

All the busy work completed, he had just one problem—the shuttle wouldn't work. He thought that maybe he'd pulled some wires loose when he'd gone rocketing in under the console upon landing, but he wasn't trained in how to fix that. *Where's an operator's manual when you need one?*

With no other choice, he tapped his communications badge. "Commander Bayonne to Phoenix, come in please."

"Go ahead, Commander Bayonne," West replied evenly.

"Mission accomplished but there's a technical problem. Some wires under the copilot console were dislodged upon landing. The damn thing won't start," Granite growled.

"That should be simple enough to handle Commander," West sounded relieved. "Look under the console and you'll see, way at the back, a lever—more like a switch."

"I see one," Granite returned, having crawled under the console to find it. "It's marked 'PILOT MANUAL ONLY'. Is that right?"

J.J. Massa

"Yep, pull it forward," West instructed.

"Got it! Thanks, we're on our way."

He began pushing buttons and heard the beautiful whirr sound of the shuttle coming to life. He prayed that the air would circulate and even out so that Micah would revive at least a little.

"Commander?" West's tiny voice interrupted him as he guided the shuttle up and out of the deep crater.

"Go ahead, Commander James," Granite replied, concentrating on clearing the dusty rock lip.

West cleared his throat. "Status of..." he cleared his throat again. The shuttle was out of the crater now and heading home. "Status of Lieutenant Bayonne," his voice cracked almost imperceptibly.

Granite glanced at the blue face of his sister, unable to tell if her color was improving. He couldn't even be sure if she was breathing.

"She's present. Her condition is...questionable."

~*~

Met with a flurry of activity, an unconscious Micah was transported instantly to sickbay. Granite had been told in no uncertain terms that his services were not necessary. The captain had ordered him to his quarters. He argued, refused, insisted and was eventually promised that he'd be informed instantly of any changes. With those assurances, he headed to his quarters offering no further resistance.

Now, as he trudged through the door, he was surprised to find Willy sleeping on his couch. For a few minutes, he stood looking down at the young man, so innocent in sleep. *He's innocent wide awake, too. I can't let him stay. He doesn't really love me, and he needs to realize that now while he's still young.*

Willy had a blanket pulled over him and one pajama-clad calf could be seen as well as one bare shoulder. Granite hated to wake him but knew he had to.

"Willy, wake up!" he barked harshly.

The eye that wasn't pressed against the couch snapped open. Willy buried the left side of his face more deeply against the cushion and pulled the blanket closer around him.

"Granite!" his eyes—eye—filled with tears. "*Ich wurde mich so gesorgt.* I mean I was incredibly worried. I'm so glad you're okay."

"Willy," his voice was gruff and he was once again fighting emotions. "You shouldn't be here. You have to go. Now!"

Rocks and Hard Places

Willy squeezed his eye shut. “*Bitte*, please. Just let me stay here on the couch until morning. I’ll be gone when you wake up, I promise.”

Granite knew he wouldn’t be able to sleep with Willy so close. He’d be fighting the urge to go to him, to wrap his arms around him and never let him go.

“It just won’t work, Willy,” he declared, tugging the blanket off of him. “Lights, seventy percent!” he yelled and the room brightened instantly. Turning back to Willy, he began, “It just isn’t going to... Oh my God! Willy?” The blood in his body felt like ice with a frozen ball settling in the pit of his stomach.

Willy’s torso was covered in black, blue, and yellow bruises. Granite sunk to his knees. Willy pressed his face even more deeply into the cushions, tears flowing freely now.

“Look at me, Willy,” he ordered roughly, his voice filled with dread. Willy shook his head “no” as best he could without revealing his face. “Damn you, Wilhelm Schmidt, you sit up and look at me right now!” he roared.

Shaking uncontrollably, Willy pushed himself to a sitting position and turned his face to Granite. His own hand shaking now, Granite gently touched the swollen black and red bruised eye, and the puffy purple cheek. His finger traced the distended lip and stopped to rest on the painful split an inch from the center.

Leaning forward, Granite slid both arms around Willy and pulled him from the couch onto his lap. “My little Willy, Willy,” he crooned, rocking him, tears streaming unchecked down his own face too.

“They s-s-said I didn’t r-really love you,” Willy gulped. “They s-s-said you *couldn’t* really love me. They said you should die down there.”

Granite scooted around so that his back rested against the couch. Willy was still sobbing emotionally, his head resting against the bigger man’s chest.

“Shh,” he told him, his voice choked. “Shhh, my little man. They’re wrong. They’re all wrong.”

When he got his breath back, Willy looked up at Granite. “I got a few good licks in before they ganged up on me. Miguel came along and left them pretty bruised. I’m the only one Doc healed.”

“This is healed?” he grunted, rubbing his cheek back and forth against Willy’s soft hair.

“I had a few broken bones. Doc didn’t have enough reserve energy for healing any superficial injuries. I just have to heal the old fashioned way,” Willy snuggled

J.J. Massa

against Granite's chest. "Please can I stay? I can't lose both you and Mickey at the same time. Please?" His breath hitched but he managed not to cry this time.

"Willy. My little Willy, Willy, you can stay just as long as you want, hmmm," Granite carded his fingers through Willy's soft, molten gold hair. He leaned down and gently touched his lips to Willy's.

"Even if it's forever, Granite?" Willy whispered against his lips.

"Especially if it's forever, Willy," Granite whispered back. "Especially then."

Nothing was said for a long time. Finally, Granite moved to stand, taking Willy with him. Setting the smaller man on his feet, Granite guided Willy into the bedroom. Willy sat down on the bed watching while his lover stripped down to his boxer shorts.

"Granite, what—what about Mickey? I've been afraid... What about Mickey?" his voice trembled as did his chin, but he contained himself.

"She was breathing when we got here. Doc's hopeful... that's all I know. They chased me out of there and said they'd call me when they *do* know something." Granite slid into bed and pulled Willy into his arms.

Willy fell asleep cuddled against him almost immediately. Granite gathered him still closer and thanked whatever gods had prevented him from throwing away the best thing in his life a second time.

~*~

West stood by the window of sickbay looking out. The captain had graciously relieved him of his duties until Micah regained consciousness. She'd informed him that he'd need at least that much time to figure out how to convince the girl that he was no longer *quite* as big an ass as he had been.

He still had no idea at all of what he should say to her. His mind was still stuck on the thrilling news that she would live. Live! That's what had been repeating in his mind since the doctor had finally gone.

Groaning, he sunk down in a chair by the bed and crossed his arms on the blanket and lowered his face into them. "If I were you, I wouldn't believe I love you!" he moaned. "If I were you, I'd tell me what a fool I've been. I'd tell me to fuck off and die, alone and cold."

"It's a good thing you aren't me then, isn't it? Sounds like you'd be sleeping outside with nothing but your potty-mouth to keep you company." Her voice was rusty and her eyes were still closed but... She *had* spoken, hadn't she?

"Micah? Honey? Are you awake? Did you speak?" He was on his feet now, bending over her.

Rocks and Hard Places

He saw one eye open a crack and then the other. After a second, her silver eyes found him.

“I bet my breath is really bad,” she wheezed.

“Let me see,” he said, lowering his mouth to hers.

Gently, he brushed his lips across her, once, twice, and a third time, gingerly seating himself on the bed beside her. He lifted his face and looked at her. He’d never seen anything more beautiful in his life.

He lowered his mouth back to hers and licked her bottom lip. Her lips parted and he covered them, his tongue dipping deeper to taste hers. Groaning, he gathered her into his arms and deepened the kiss, sinking his tongue deeper still, tasting her teeth, the satin lining inside her mouth, her palate, and then he heard it.

“Huh hmmm!” Dr. Bergan interrupted them. “The poor girl nearly died of asphyxiation, Mr. James! Kindly allow her to breathe!”

“Um, I’m sorry sir,” West sounded like a recalcitrant boy. “I was, uh, I was just trying to ask her to marry me.”

“Next time, mister, try using words!” the doctor growled, moving around and checking Micah over.

“Oh, I don’t know, Doc, I think he was doing just fine...” Micah grinned weakly.

“I think I need practice,” West whispered back to her. “A lifetime of practice.”

Epilogue

“Can’t you control her? I would never have let you marry my sister if I’d known you weren’t capable of keeping her at home!” Granite’s temper was barely held in check as he snapped at West.

Neither man so much as slowed down until they entered the elevator at the end of the long hall. “Recreation Station!” West barked to the computer. Turning to Granite, West objected incredulously, “ME? Keep your husband at home. He’s got higher rank, he’s obviously the ring leader here.”

“Micah has always been inquisitive and playful. You’re obviously not keeping her...” Granite’s eyes narrowed and he looked his brother-in-law in the eyes, “*entertained*”. The elevator doors opened and he strode out without a backward glance at West’s livid red face.

“If Willy was all that *entertained*, he wouldn’t be out playing with my wife!” he snarled back at Granite.

“At least I *knew* they were up to something! You’d still be lost in your “Waste Management” reports if I hadn’t called you and let you know something was up. At least *I* pay attention!” Granite spat.

In a rage, West opened his mouth to speak, clapping a heavy hand on Granite’s shoulder. Granite opened the door to the Rec Station and both men stopped short. Instead of the scolding tirade that West no-doubt intended, only one word left his mouth.

“Shit,” he murmured.

“Hell and damnation,” huffed Granite in apparent agreement.

The strains of *Hey Baby* by Bruce Channel filled the air. Willy was dressed all in figure sculpting black while Micah wore a low cut, sleeveless dress. The bodice was tight and revealing while the skirt was wide and full. Willy had an arm around her waist as she flowed backward, undulating in time with him, one of his legs inserted between hers.

“Hmmm...” came a voice from beside them.

The men turned and looked at Captain Meredith, weak smiles on their faces.

Rocks and Hard Places

“They look hot, don’t they?” Lieutenant Miguel Alvarado joined the group and nodded at Willy and Micah.

“They do,” agreed the Captain. “Micah says it’s called “Dirty Dancing”.”

Miguel grinned and grabbed her hand. “Let’s go try it!”

Granite stood next to West for a moment, saying nothing. Finally he said, “I think its time to fall back on a tried and true solution to our problem.”

West arched an inquiring brow at his unwilling companion.

“If you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em,” Granite explained decisively.

“Damned straight!” West grinned.

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Author Bio

J.J. Massa lives on the Jersey Shore with her husband and children and yellow lab. For many years, she taught and wrote for various periodicals but never seriously considered writing books. When she was laid off at her last job she decided to finish writing a story she'd begun for her own entertainment. When it was finished, she took a chance and submitted it to one of her favorite Electronic Book publishers. She hasn't stopped writing since.

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