

On Corridian Wings 3: Havensafe

Steve Boisman

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Chapter 1

Astrid

The Rigellian slavers came at dawn. Astrid was waiting.

She'd been on this snow encrusted mountainside for three weeks, holed up in two sparsely furnished cabins of a meditation retreat. Playing the role of a troubled young woman didn't come naturally and she was heartily sick of it. Endless days of boring inaction and dwelling on the past had left her miserable and feisty. A fatal combination.

But now, it looked as though her play acting had paid off.

The slavers' ships were unmarked. Light fighters with a crew consisting of a pilot, a gunner and two soldiers, they were designed for fast raids into enemy territory. They also had cramped room for four prisoners which made it ideal for this type of operation -- a snatch and grab of highly prized slaves.

Three fighters pierced the blanket of high level clouds. Two continued on toward the snow dusted ground and one, providing air cover, hovered at two hundred meters. It was a professional, military operation. They'd done this before.

As the fighters made their descent through a band of icy mist, Astrid's dreamy thoughts were with Vidar and the wedding night they'd never had. It had been eighteen months now. Well over the normally accepted mourning period. Yet, her heart would not let go. It was moments like this, in the warmth of a single bed, that she could imagine his touch on her trembling flesh.

Her mind's eye traced the fine detail of his face, his high cheekbones and firm, square jaw. His full lips were made to be kissed. His smile was devastating. It creased his cheeks and brightened his dark eyes. That smile could soften her anger and dissolve

her fears, making life worth living again. His dark eyes shone whenever he looked at her. It was as if he could look into her soul and understand why she hated the world.

Vidar was blessed with the biggest cock she'd ever experienced. No matter what he did with his clothes, he couldn't disguise its considerable length or satisfying girth. What he could do with it turned her belly to mush. That cock would stretch her and fill her like no other. Not even Lars, her first love. When Vidar was inside her, she was transported into another plane, another reality.

Making love on the wing was glorious and her cunt moistened each time she thought of it. The day he'd proposed, she'd been riding his cock in the warm, sultry skies above a languid ocean lagoon. She'd almost lost consciousness in mid flight and he'd carried her limp body down to the warm sand.

He'd come with her first orgasm. His juices slipped down her thighs as he whispered in her ear the words she'd longed to hear. Oh, how she missed him.

Her pussy moistened and Astrid cupped her sex through her fatigues and pressed hard. A slow wave of pleasure radiated from her clit and filled her belly.

Her body's remembered lust took her thoughts back to those all night orgies of sexual abandon and the long hours of languid snuggling and silent caresses. Vidar could stay erect for hours, his rock hard cock pleasuring her in every way. He seemed to know, as if by instinct, how to take her to the brink of orgasm with just a touch of her wings. With a gentle caress of her scapular feathers, his fingers sliding along their frictionless length, she'd swoon like a naïve teenager. As she beat her alabaster wings, he'd stroke the silky frond-like alula, sending her over the abyss of multiple orgasms.

But it was the after play that had shown her the real meaning of love. As their bodies recovered from their energetic coupling, it was Vidar's soft touch and whispered words that took her to a safe place where she could relax and feel at peace.

Astrid groaned as she repressed the desire to bring herself to climax. This was not the time. Not now that her trap was set and she was about to snap it shut.

There was a muffled thud as the first fighter touched down in the open field beside her hut. Snow crunched beneath its landing skids. It was immediately followed

by the second fighter which, she guessed, had landed close by the other hut. She hoped that Linnea and Bjorg were alert.

Astrid tensed when the hatches swished open. Heavy boots crunched through the snow and then, a pause, a profound silence punctuated by her door bursting open. Her night vision glasses guided her aim and she fired her laser pistol through the bed clothes. The helmeted Rigellian didn't see it coming and fell silently into the hut. His partner blundered in after him, firing high. Astrid meant to only wound him in the legs, but as he fell over his compatriot, her beam caught him in the head.

The firefight at the second hut wasn't going so well. She heard Linnea scream, a shouted oath from Bjorg and then, the crump of laser cannon.

She tumbled out of her bunk and, folding her wings behind her, slid through the hole in the wall she'd previously prepared. Behind her, the hut erupted in a ball of flame with a direct hit from the fighter's laser cannon. She scampered down the drainage ditch that ran beside the hut and reached her Second Phase firing point.

From the hillside to her left, a laser cannon fired and the fighter hovering in the sky blossomed into incandescence. "Nils, you beautiful bastard!"

All the action was at the second hut. Astrid circled around to get closer to catch the Rigellians as they left. The hut was burning and two Rigellian soldiers were in full flight back to their fighter. That they were empty handed meant that Linnea and Bjorg were dead. Astrid fired, bringing one of the reptilians down in a steaming, blood-splattered heap.

Behind her, the hillside cannon were taking direct fire from the fighter's gunner. The two-pricked bastard was a good shot. Nils and his gun crew were blasted into infinity. Astrid closed her eyes in a silent blessing of the dead.

With a single sweep of her wings, she launched herself in pursuit of the remaining soldier. The other fighter had lifted off and hovered a meter off the ground, waiting for him. It targeted her with small laser fire as she zigzagged her way toward her prey.

A shoulder-launched rocket fired from behind the burning hut, sizzling past her and striking the hovering fighter, shearing off one of its engine nacelles. The craft lurched over on one side and plummeted to the ground, blossoming on impact into a giant fireball. Astrid's heart leapt in relief -- at least one of her friends was still alive.

The remaining fighter lifted a meter or two, its hatch still open. The fleeing soldier desperately feigned to his right. His kilt flapped, giving her an eyeful of his bare, olive skinned buttocks. Astrid's jaw set in grim determination. She had to capture him or all this would be for naught. With a great sweep of her wings, she accelerated and crashed powerfully into the Rigellian's backside. Wrapping her arms around his thick legs, she used their combined momentum to bring them both tumbling into the snow.

Seeing that the soldier was lost and the fire from Astrid's compatriots was getting closer, the pilot of the remaining fighter veered away. With a petulant surge of its lifters, the ship headed into the darkened west and then upward to its waiting mother ship.

Astrid pushed the barrel of her pistol into the struggling Rigellian's scaly face. "Surrender or die!"

The slaver growled at her through a clenched mouth. "Die!"

She reversed the aim of her weapon and blew off one of his dual cocks. The twin phallus was surprisingly fully erect and poking through his battle kilt. The slaver screamed in pain. "Surrender or lose the other one!"

The Rigellian ceased struggling and emitted only whimpers.

"That's better. Now. Who told you I was here?"

* * *

"Master Surgeon. How is he?"

"Astrid!" Her father flew to her across the hospital room and wrapped his arms about her wings, crushing her feathers. "Odin be praised. You're safe!"

She buried her face into his shoulder feathers as she had when she was a fledgling. It felt good. Then, after another breath-stealing squeeze, she disengaged herself from his protective arms. "Not a scratch."

"When I heard there'd been casualties..."

"Nils and his crew. Bjorg is dead, Linnea was wounded."

Her father bowed his head in prayer. He looked up, his eyes glistening. "And is it true that you captured a slaver?"

She nodded. "He told us all he knew, Father, and we know who has betrayed us."

"Who is this bastard?"

She shrugged. The information was classified. Even to her father. "Just a traitor. He's in hiding."

"You'll find him?"

She nodded. "How is Lars?"

"Hovering. On the brink." Her father's tone was not optimistic.

"Have you found a host yet?"

"I believe so and just in time."

The bed, surrounded by banks of equipment and intravenous feeds, sat in the center of a white tiled room. Beneath light blankets, Lars slept in a deep coma. The specially constructed bed was designed to take the pressure off his injuries and seemed to be having the desired effect. The lines of pain that had been etched on Lars' face when she'd seen him before setting off to the mountains had lessened considerably. She scanned his body, catching only a glimpse of the bandages wrapped around his chest and shoulders. She shuddered and quickly returned her eyes to his face. Her heart fluttered in remembrance of kissing those firm and determined lips.

"These things are never certain," her father said at her shoulder. "The host is barely a match. That's as much as we can say. It's a pity we have no close relatives left."

"When will you tell him?"

"He'll sense it immediately. Then we'll need to nurture him. That will be your task. Only you have any influence over him."

"I doubt that."

"You were close."

"Years ago."

"And your mourning year is well over."

"Father!"

"Astrid. It's not sensible to waste your life. Vidar is gone. He'd not want you to..."

"We've had this discussion, Father. I don't want it again."

But he persisted as fathers are wont to do. "And you went off to join the Marines..." He smiled. "I'll not make that mistake again, but Lars does need you."

"I doubt it. Besides, he's not the type to take his own life. That's what you're worried about, isn't it?"

He nodded. "There's no way of knowing how he'll react. This awful procedure has a drastic impact on a person's self-image and without his crew and ship, he'll feel deserted. He will be angry. That's why you'll be so important to him, to help him grieve."

"Father, we were only... friends a short while before I went away." She didn't elaborate on their torrid love affair. She reached out and stroked Lars' cheek, remembering the warmth of his body next to hers. His red hair had fallen over his brow and she pushed it back into place.

"You are all he has of his old life. That's what's important."

"I'm not good at relationships. You know that. I'll likely cause him more damage."

"Give yourself more credit, daughter. Besides, you and he are all that's left of our bloodline. We must stay together, now of all times."

She frowned. "What is it about *us* that makes us so special to the Rigellians?"

"They *think* we are special. Why they've developed this delusion, I have no idea. How their twisted minds work is anyone's guess."

Astrid stared into Lars' face and took a long, deep breath. He'd been through so much to save his sister Elenii. "Do you really think I can help?"

"He's suffered much trauma. Worse than anything I've seen. The injuries caused by exposure to null space are beyond anyone's experience. The cellular damage he's sustained..." He shook his head. "I'm surprised he survived at all. His ship's doctor did all she could, given her ignorance of our physiology. She staved off death. For that, I am thankful."

"Will the host succeed?"

"You asked me that before. I can only hope. But if the procedure doesn't work, then he'll need you more than anything."

"But he may still hate me."

"I doubt that, daughter."

Astrid wasn't so sure. She'd been his first love and she'd dashed his ardent, young hopes most cruelly. She'd been the cause of his enlisting in the Solaran Navy, the root cause of him not being here to protect Elenii. He would, she knew, blame her for everything.

* * *

"How's Lars?"

The nurse's face was flushed and Astrid could guess why. She'd just finished bathing him. Lars was well-endowed and from the tented sheet, she guessed the nurse's ministrations had aroused a nocturnal erection. Astrid admired the straining organ with fond and erotic memories.

The nurse cleared her throat and replied in a husky voice, "He's restless. We expect him to regain consciousness any time now. It's better if there is someone he knows waiting for him. I'll be outside at my station if you need me."

Astrid nodded. Only after the nurse's footsteps had receded down the corridor did Astrid sit down, pulling the chair close by the bed. Lars' face was passive, his breathing regular. His muscular chest rose and fell with a slow, shallow rhythm. Beneath his eyelids, his eyes moved rapidly from side to side. A smile creased his lips and she was glad that at least he was dreaming about something pleasant.

Seeing him asleep reminded her of the times they'd snuck out of college and made love in the hills. Afterwards, they'd lie languidly on the hillside and she'd watch him sleep. He really was a most beautiful creature.

Whatever happened to those times? It seemed nothing had gone right in her life after she'd left him. Just one disaster followed by another. There'd been Vidar, of course, and the lure of the unconventional, the dangerous, the forbidden.

She studied Lars' lean muscular body beneath the bedclothes, recalling the silky feel of his inner thighs. His cock was still standing proud, tenting the sheet with its masculine power.

Astrid's mouth became dry. She licked her bottom lip. She remembered how that massive organ had filled her willing pussy. It certainly stretched her to the limit and, when she'd come, the contractions of her pussy would squeeze hungrily around his shaft. She missed that.

Her pussy turned to liquid and she squeezed her thighs together in a failed attempt to suppress her arousal. "Oh, Lars," she whispered. This was so wrong, to feel so aroused just by being near his sleeping body. Her hands went to her lap and pressed against her sex.

She'd been celibate for the full period of the mourning year and beyond. She'd had no thoughts, until now, of breaking that celibacy. She'd thought her days of lusting after men had died with Vidar. Her pussy pulsed. Apparently not.

Lars stirred and with a sweep of his arm, he pushed away the bed sheet, exposing his tanned body. Her eyes centered on his cock. It stood proud and firm, throbbing gently with the slow beat of his heart.

Astrid loved the heavy feel of it on her tongue and the insistent way it filled her mouth. She smiled, remembering how she'd taught herself to accept all of him, even as he probed the back of her throat. It was a skill Vidar appreciated, though she'd never told him where she'd learned the art.

She *should* cover him. Reaching out for the blanket, she was tempted to take her hand from her crotch and caress his cock. Her pussy tingled at the thought. Guilt

crossed her mind, but she did it anyway. The velvety smooth skin of his shaft reacted as she gently caressed it with her tapering fingers. The helmeted head pulsed and she grasped him more firmly, moving her closed fingers down until she met the wrinkled ball sac. She smiled as his balls moved inside their protective bag. She remembered how he groaned when she'd suck each ball into her mouth while she caressed the smooth skin around his anus.

Her pussy now was radiating pulses of uncontrollable lust. She pushed her hand harder into her groin and squirmed around it. Her other hand grasped his cock more firmly and she moved it up and down with increasing speed. Lars murmured and to her horror opened his eyes.

She gasped and released her grip. He smiled, those dark eyes staring into her lust-filled soul. Smiling, he found her hand and replaced it on his shaft.

"You're better I see," she whispered huskily.

"Come," he said dreamily and pulled her to him. His hungry mouth found hers and worked her lips open, his tongue snaking its way inside.

His lips and tongue were so insistent, demanding she surrender herself to him. She moved her hand over his cock and he moaned deeply. His hands clumsily found her breasts, massaging them roughly.

It was as if he wanted to devour her. His hand moved to her waist and then, to the juncture of her thighs. She moaned when his hand worked its way inside her leggings and then into her damp panties. His fingers found her pussy lips and slipped inside their wetness.

She groaned into his mouth and pressed herself to him as the repressed lust of twelve months rushed to the surface. Without breaking the contact of their lips, she somehow shucked off her leggings and freed her thighs to his fingers.

When he pulled her onto the bed, it felt so right to straddle his thighs, to lower herself onto the massive cock and sink into oblivion.

As the head of his cock separated her lips and slipped inside, she felt as if her pussy was drawing him in. He stretched her wide and she had to adjust her thighs to accommodate him. She saw that his dark eyes were glazed, a slight smile on his lips.

His hips bucked frantically beneath her and she bounced on his cock. Her pussy lips, wet with lust, slapped against his hard groin. She looked to the door. Surely the nurse could hear them, but there was yet no sign of her coming down the hall to check. This spurred Astrid to ride his cock even more vigorously to ensure she beat the nurse's professional curiosity.

The relentless pressure of his shaft and the upward tilt of his cock massaged that special spot, sending electric shivers through her tense body. She rested her hands on his broad chest and leaning forward, grinding her pussy against his pelvic bone to accentuate the delicious sensation.

The dam holding back her year of celibacy finally broke, unleashing a torrent of sensual energy. She fell forward in sudden and complete orgasm. The muscles of her cunt clenched powerfully around his shaft and she groaned in a second orgasm as his cock erupted inside her. She felt herself filling with his hot come and as his cock deflated, his seed oozed onto her thighs.

Exhausted she fell onto his chest. Eventually her heart returned to its normal rhythm. She sucked in his heady scent and sighed. His breathing was slow and deep. He was once again asleep. She forgave him. He was ill, after all. She gently climbed off his wonderful body.

Reluctantly, she wiped his seed from her thighs. As she rearranged her panties and pulled on her uniform's leggings, she considered what she'd just done. She'd opened the door to feelings she'd thought dead. For long minutes she sat watching Lars, thinking.

I shouldn't have, she chided herself. But the warm feeling in her heart told her she was wrong. She still loved him. She sighed contentedly, feeling at peace with the universe for the first time in a year. "Oh, Lars."

His eyes flicked open and, though glazed, looked straight at her. "Mira..."

* * *

"So, you're awake at last."

His eyes focused on her. No recognition at all. Though she expected it, Astrid was surprised at how much that hurt. For a fortnight he'd hovered between coma and consciousness, his peace wracked by incessant dreams. She thought hearing his delirious calls for the Mira woman would have killed any residual feelings she may have harbored. Obviously, Lars was embedded deeper in her soul than she thought.

"Every time I visit you're asleep."

No response.

"Nurse says you haven't eaten today," she chided. "Or yesterday... or the day before."

His eyes, though fixed on her, remained vacant.

"I know you're in there somewhere. That machine tells me that you're in there." She took a deep breath. "It's Astrid."

She studied his face. His skin was gray, his cheeks hollow. He'd been a fortnight without eating. At every opportunity, Lars would rip the intravenous feeding tube from his arm. The talk around the hospital was that he was committing suicide.

She looked into his vacant eyes. He was succeeding.

It was not surprising. When he'd finally become aware enough to realize what had happened to his wings, he'd fallen into deep depression as so many did. The loss of something as fundamental to a Corridian's existence as his wings was a trauma to the mind that few survived.

Her eyes flooded. "Once, I loved you," she cried. "I loved a man who loved life, loved himself and loved me. He respected his parents and doted on his sister. The man I knew would not desert Elenii no matter what the condition of his wings. Even with no wings at all, he'd go after her. Save her. He'd be the man I loved."

Tears ran hot down her cheeks. She took a deep breath. "I can't possibly know what it's like to lose your wings. I can't even imagine what's going through your mind. But this is not the way, Lars. *This is not the way.*"

She wasn't strong enough to hold back the sobs. She'd tried not to let his decline affect her so, but her failure to bring him out of his self-destruction haunted her every waking moment. She squared her shoulders, drawing up as much anger as she could.

"I've stayed because I want to help you. But you lie there, pretending to be asleep, ignoring me, you self-centered bastard! I could be out there hunting slavers. Killing them. Finding our kin. But I'm not. I'm here. For what? That's what I want to know!"

His eyes were fixed on her, but there was nothing behind them. This was no good. She had to get away from here. She couldn't watch him do this to himself.

"If you want to die, that's fine by me. What do I care? But you should make it count for something. Die fighting, for Odin's sake! Kill some of those slaver bastards! Just pining away is a waste. Elenii would be disgusted in you. Lars! It's been a fortnight, for fuck's sake!"

His cadaverous face remained expressionless, his eyes dry and lusterless.

"I'm prepared to die fighting for our kin," she continued. "I'm not going to give up!"

His lips quivered. His voice, when it came, was so weak she had to bend her ear to his mouth to catch his raspy words. "Do you trust your father?"

* * *

The funeral pyre was now nothing more than a heap of glowing embers. The mournful death song of the choir that had sent Lars' spirit to Valhalla subsided with the sparks.

As Astrid and her father were Lars' only remaining blood kin, they stood at the front of the crowd of onlookers. His death had been announced only yesterday and Astrid, angry beyond containment, had ordered his funeral pyre as soon as possible.

His death had not been a surprise. The cause of his decline and ultimate demise was well-known, his condition the talking point of the village for weeks.

She felt her father's shoulders sag. "You did everything you could, Father." She hugged him. "He'd simply lost the will to live."

The glow of the embers cast dark red shadows across the mourners. There were tears aplenty and murmurs of despair. All his life Lars had been well-respected and loved. His death had sent a cold spear through the hearts of the villagers. He was their greatest warrior and he was gone. If this could happen to their best, what would become of their breed?

"I should've been able to save him." Her father bowed his head. "There must've been more I could've done."

"He was a coward," she said bitterly. She turned toward the other mourners. "He deserves no tears," she shouted. "He should've fought the slavers like I've done. Like Nils and the others who've died. He should not have given up so easily. Don't weep for him. He doesn't deserve it."

Grasping her around the shoulders, her father tried unsuccessfully to lead her away from the fire. "Hush, Astrid. Have some respect."

"Respect? For Lars? He lost that right. He's left his sister to the mercy of the slavers. He deserves nothing from us."

She shrugged him off and turned away from him, staring down the startled expressions of the others who were astonished at her breach of etiquette. "Don't waste your time on Lars," she spat. "Shed your tears for those who deserve it."

"Why so bitter, daughter?"

"He could've done so much. But he wasted it."

He put his arm around her and this time, she did not resist. "What will you do now?"

She shrugged her shoulders. "Set another ambush," she said a little too loudly. "We need more prisoners. The other one died before he could give us any decent information."

"So, we're no closer to knowing where they're taking our kin?"

"No. And to think, Lars could've helped so much. But instead, he's dead and we're no closer to finding out why."

She shrugged off his arm and shouldered her way through the mourners who parted before her and mumbled their anger at the coward's pyre.

Chapter 2

Mira

Please, Lars. You must live.

Mira's silent prayer evoked a deep, wracking sob. In her mind, the dominant image of Lars was of his unconscious body, crashing to the deck of *Mjolnir*, his wings bloody and torn from his journey through the null space tunnel.

The very thought of it turned her stomach even now. She was not unaccustomed to the sight of blood; she'd shed enough of it in the line of duty. But this was different. This was Lars.

Mira forced her mind beyond his injuries to more happy thoughts. Like the taste of his lips upon hers and the heady scent of his pheromones that had the power to overwhelm her. She couldn't forget the heaviness of his cock in her hand, the way it stretched her mouth when she sucked the bulbous head and how its massive girth filled her pussy. She smiled, recalling how he'd fuck her twenty meters in the air.

Mira sighed softly and sank deeper into the bath. She was up to her chin in bubbles, luxuriating in what was a rare privilege for her, washing in actual water.

She was also relieved to be left by herself for ten minutes. Jack Light had been extravagant in his attentions, and his lust for her manifest. So far, she'd resisted, but for how long could she hold out, she didn't know. She needed to get close to him if she was ever to see Lars again and help find his sister Elenii.

She lay still, her fingers tracing the swell of her full breasts. Her pussy was warm, warmer than the water and she ran one hand down her stomach toward her hairless lips. The first touch of her silky slit sent a spark of electricity to her clit. She recalled the first time Lars had touched her there.

Mira wished she knew how he was. She wished he could know how she missed him. How she longed for him. She wished...

The bathroom door slid open with a soft swish and Jack Light, or as she'd nicknamed him all those years ago, Jack Darkness, grinned at her mischievously. Her kidnapper and past lover stood leaning against the door in his characteristic cavalier fashion. He held two long-stemmed wine glasses. She didn't try to hide her nakedness. Why bother? He'd seen her body many times before.

He was wearing linden green trousers that seemed to adhere to his muscular thighs as if they had been sprayed on and a white, silk shirt that was open to the navel. His wide chest was exposed and she noted the trail of dark hair that led straight to his groin.

Mira squeezed her thighs together to quell an involuntary pulse of lust. He was a hunk and he knew it. His self-satisfied smirk did nothing for his handsome features and she told him so.

"Come, come. That's no way to speak to your rescuer."

"Kidnapper, you mean."

"Words, words, words. What are they, but things to hide the truth?"

"You said it."

"No, I think I was quoting someone." He sat on the edge of the bath, holding out a glass to her. She ignored it, staring into those dark eyes and seeing nothing but arrogant amusement. "Genuine Solaran Red, I assure you."

She rolled her eyes and accepted the wine, noting his gaze was now fixed on her breasts, the ringed nipples of which, she assumed, were poking provocatively from the suds. "Do you want anything apart from a gratuitous ogle?"

"Appreciating beauty is not ogling, Mira, my love. You are a work of art."

She took a sip. The wine was good.

He gave her another appraising inspection and frowned.

"What?"

"Apart from those bruises, which I'm guessing are from the act, or acts, of lovemaking gained in the line of duty, you're as perfect as I remember you."

She rolled her eyes. "Let's get to the point. Are you going to take me to Havensafe?"

"My dear Mira, direct as always." He shrugged. "I haven't decided."

"Haven't decided? You can't be indecisive!" she chided. "You're a starship captain aren't you? And a pirate to boot!"

"I'm weighing the possibilities."

"Possibilities?"

He reached down and swept away the suds to fully expose her breasts. "First, you ask me to take you to the very edge of the galactic rim. You then ask me not to tell our Masters back on Earth. And all the while, stubbornly refusing to tell me why you must go there. These are all major requests, Mira. I'm evaluating the possible reasons behind them and the consequences of assisting you."

"It's not like you to be scared of the consequences."

"Let's say I've matured from my young and greener days."

"That does sound like a quote."

"Is it? I don't recall."

"So, where have your deliberations led you?"

"As I said, indecision. I'd love to help you, Mira, For obvious reasons. I wish to have you like me as you once did, to earn your trust and respect, as I once had. But for that to happen, I need to trust you. And that is where I stall."

"You don't trust me?"

He threw his head back and laughed. She studied his profile. He was just too handsome. As many a girl had discovered to her cost.

"Have you contacted Bik yet?" she asked pointedly.

He held her eyes steadily. Too steadily. "I promised not to, didn't I?"

"How can I trust you when you lie so obviously?"

He laughed again. "We're going about in circles. So, tell me. Who was that dangerously ill man you had to send back to his home world?"

Mira shook her head. "It doesn't matter now."

"Ooh! Someone special is he?"

She shot him an irritated glance. Over the rim of his glass, his cold eyes gleamed dangerously, catching the burgundy hue of the wine.

She fluffed up her suds. "Don't you have a ship or something to captain?"

"My executive officer is quite capable of running the ship."

Mira had noticed the attractive and very busty officer give her the death stare when Jack had introduced her as an 'old flame.' "Speaking of which, is *she* someone special?"

"Touché." He smiled and his face became that of the teenaged boy she remembered.

"Another conquest?"

"Cassa Noyse can be described as many things, but hardly a conquest."

"Don't tell me you've found someone immune to your charms?"

"I wouldn't say that, my dear Mira. Cass is, how do we say, a free spirit. Like you in many ways. Perhaps that's why she is so... compatible with my needs."

As if on cue the door to Mira's room swished open and the executive officer, Cassa Noyse, resplendent in her tight fitting emerald uniform, entered without a pause.

"Is there anyone else you'd like in here?" Mira asked petulantly and fluffed up her suds once more. "The cook maybe? We could debate what's for dinner."

Jack smiled. "Or a ménage à trois, perhaps. And as I recall, three is the perfect number for that. What do you say, Cass?"

Mira studied the woman as she was studied in turn. Cass Noyse was tall, voluptuous and athletic without being muscular. She had a trim waist, firm thighs and spectacular breasts that pushed her uniform almost to bursting.

The executive officer's bright blue eyes shone and she licked her lips. "We have time."

He wrapped an arm around Cass's waist. She leaned her hip against his shoulder. "You see, Mira? Cass is a woman after your own heart."

"I don't know what you mean."

"Come now. I heard the stories of you and the girls in your class. You fucked as many as I did. We're the same, you and I. Insatiable!"

Cass was stroking the back of Jack's neck. He tilted his head in response and Mira felt a stirring in her pussy. She squeezed her legs together and took a languid sip of wine.

Jack reached up, pulled the zip of Cass's uniform and opened it down to her crotch. Her outstanding breasts poked free and he reached inside with one hand to gently fondle the nearest nipple. He put down his glass and half turned, so that he could bury his face in her cleavage.

Cass fixed Mira with a lusty and challenging look as she ruffled Jack's hair. She gasped as his mouth found a nipple and Mira saw her thighs begin to quiver as he tongued that sensitive nub.

Beneath the suds, Mira reached down to her crotch in response to a ripple of lust that radiated from her pussy. Her lips were puffy and her fingers eagerly sought her clit which was now fully extended from its hood. She moaned softly.

Jack had stripped Cass of her uniform. She admired her glowing bronzed skin. His mouth was still at her breast, but his fingers were busy inside her hairless pussy. Cass's legs had buckled and she supported herself by holding onto his shoulders. Her face was buried in his hair and she groaned deeply as his fingers worked inside her. Finally, she shuddered in orgasm, squeezing her thighs about his hand.

Jack turned and smiled at Mira. He stood up to allow Cass, whose breathing was ragged and choppy, to undo the belt of his uniform so she could pull out his shirt. In seconds, he too was naked and, without warning, pulled his executive officer into the bath.

A great wave of sudsy water sloshed over the walls of the tub. Luckily, the bath was spacious enough for all three. Before Mira could react to their intrusion, Jack was

suckling at her left breast and Cass was nibbling at the right. Mira closed her eyes and absorbed the delightful sensations.

Questing fingers, to whom they belonged she didn't know, joined her own inside her pussy. She leaned back, surrendering herself to the lips at her nipples and urgent fingering of her open slit. She came suddenly, her thighs clenching around the probing fingers which had found that special spot. She guessed they belonged to Jack. He obviously hadn't forgotten how to please her.

She reached for Jack's cock but was not alone in that endeavor. Cass's hands were already there. Mira smiled at her competitor and, getting to her knees, she pushed aside a pile of bubbles exposing his rampant cock which poked, periscope-like, through the suds. She kissed the glistening head.

Jack's cock throbbed against her lips. Timing her movements with Cass's milking action, she quickly got into the rhythm, following Cass's hands down the shaft with her lips. Jack's hands were clenching her hair as she teased his shaft with her tongue.

Cass kissed her around the shaft on the down stroke and Mira kissed her back on the upstroke. Jack moaned at their dual ministrations, lifting his hips so his groin was above the waterline.

Mira traced her fingers around his ball sac, trailing her lips down his shaft and, in turn, sucking both balls into her mouth. She rolled them playfully around, feeling him jump at the pressure of her lips. Against her cheek, his thighs tensed. He was close to coming.

She quickly brought her mouth back to the base of his cock and then up the shaft. Cass groaned as she came again and from the splashing suds, Mira knew Jack was earnestly fingering her cunt with lustful energy.

Briefly their tongues wrestled over his cock head again. Jack suddenly grasped her head and drove it down over his cock. As his prick exploded and his seed gushed down her throat, Mira, utilizing her unique psionic skill, immersed herself in his thoughts.

His mind opened up for her like a door into a vast library. In the few seconds of his orgasm, she was able to read his thoughts and memories. She tiptoed through his mind seeking names. Her own, Lars, Bik Rende, Havensafe, Karacos, Corris.

She found all of them there and more. In the dark recesses of his memory, she found everything she needed...

Jack's cock finally ceased its pumping of hot come down her throat. Slowly, she withdrew her mouth and looked up at him, knowing him for what he was. A liar.

"Whoa!" he said. He kissed both Cass and Mira on the mouth. "Now, for the second course!" A klaxon sounded. "Dammit!"

Cass immediately climbed out of the bath and reached for her uniform. She initiated the communicator in the lapel. "Noyse!" she said tersely.

She must be wearing an ear implant, Mira assumed as she watched the executive officer step away from the bathroom and hold a whispered conversation with the bridge.

"Well?" Jack asked as he climbed out and grabbed a towel.

"We have a visitor," Cass replied. "A Rigellian slaver. Damaged by the sound of it."

"Well, let's go get it."

"Bridge. Battle stations. Intercept course."

"Jack." Mira grasped him by the arm. "You won't destroy it, will you? Not with slaves on board."

Jack shook her off. "What do you take me for?"

Mira had seen such acts of wanton cruelty in his mind. She feared he was capable of anything.

He paused at the door. "Well? Do you want to watch?"

"I'll be right there."

Mira took her time drying herself and putting on her flight suit. She had much to digest. First, Dantilus Muss, the bastard. He was still alive. Who'd have thought he'd survive Geena's knife to the throat? Rigellians were hardy creatures, but she'd seen the

blade buried up to its hilt in his throat. Well, there was nothing she could do about that for now.

The second thing she'd found was that Jack had indeed been in touch with Bik Rende, her controller on Earth, and his instructions were to take her wherever she wanted to go.

What sort of game was Bik playing? As her controller, the taciturn spy master was one of the few who knew that Mira could read minds. He hadn't bothered to warn Jack of her special skill. Bik would've assumed she'd fuck him, if only to read his thoughts. It was, after all, what she did. So, he obviously didn't care that she knew what his instructions to Jack were.

Bik was giving her some rope to see what she'd do. Jack was to be his eyes and ears. But it raised some other questions. What did Bik know about Karacos and the stolen Corridians? Did he know about Lars? She hoped not. Bik Rende was a callous son of a bitch. He'd sacrifice a thousand Corridians if he could inflict an ounce of harm on the Rigellians. That single-minded focus, while it made him the favorite of their Solaran masters, also put him on par with the Rigellians when it came to cruelty.

The bridge of *Teach's Revenge* was a hive of energized activity when Mira entered. Cassa Noyse was at the helm directing the launch of a shuttle. Blast damage was evident on the Rigellian ship's hull and its main weapons battery was a tangle of melted metal.

"They surrendered," Jack explained.

"How disappointing for you," Mira said dryly.

In the far distance was a giant ringed planet. She didn't recognize the blue cloud bands or the pattern of moons surrounding it. "Where are we?"

"In Rigellian space."

"What? Why?"

He just gave her a sly wink.

"Aren't you worried about the Rigellian Navy?"

"We have about fifteen minutes before they can marshal a response," Cass said. "Then, we'll null it out of here."

"So what are you looking for?"

"Where do you think I get Rigellian wine?" Jack said and laughed. "Seriously, we lift their navigation computers. Bik Rende has a team of decoders trying to decode their beacon signals."

"Seriously?"

"Uh-huh. He's been working on it for years. He's hoping to be able to piece together their tactical navigation system."

Mira nodded, but doubted it. If that's what Bik told Jack, then there was something much more devious going on.

The shuttle docked successfully and twelve tense minutes later, undocked. Presumably the boarding party had achieved its objective.

"You'll let them live?" Mira asked.

"Of course," Cass said. "They'll be rescued soon enough."

A warning bell sounded in her head. "You didn't plant mines on board to blow up their rescuers, did you?"

Jack laughed a little too loudly. "Don't worry, Mira, my love. They'll be safe." He spoke to the commander of the boarding party on a closed line. "Very good, bring it to the common room." He flicked on the P.A. "All hands, this is the captain. Sandy and his team have confiscated some Velosian sherry. Drinks will be served at the end of each watch for the next rotation. Well done, everyone."

Mira shook her head in disbelief. Jack Light was a paradox, an evil pirate with a heart of gold.

Chapter 3

Geena

"Havensafe is the closest thing to Valhalla we've found so far in the galaxy," Lidj said. She was perched on the edge of a control panel in *Mjolnir's* bridge, her shapely legs naked and propped up on the arm rest of Lars' command chair.

Geena and Talon half listened, each occupied with their own thoughts. Talon was placing *Mjolnir* in a complicated orbit and Geena was musing on the curious turn her life had taken in the last few months. She'd never have predicted the strange events which had brought her to the very margin of the galaxy and the edge of sexual abandon.

This time last year, she'd been a well-respected negotiator and ambassador for the Solaran Confederation. Then she'd been kidnapped by Dantilus Muss, the Rigellian Warlord. In the tyrant's palace, she'd met Mira, a sex slave, and her lover, the magnificent Lars. Wishing her ordeal at the hands of Muss to end, she had attacked the warlord with a dinner knife while he penetrated her with his two cocks. Geena smiled wistfully and her pussy melted at *that* memory.

The sensation of his rigid, twin cocks, one in her pussy and one in her ass, had turned on a switch in her libido that had opened a floodgate of lustful desires. The hard shafts, with their bulbous heads, had slid in and out of her orifices in a strange, feral rhythm which had set her brain alight. It had been an experience she'd never imagined possible and now, she wanted desperately to repeat it.

She licked her lips and her hand fell unconsciously into her lap. Her pussy beneath the thin diaphanous tunic pulsed appreciatively at the pressure. She squirmed in her seat.

And now I'm out here searching for a way to rescue Lars' sister without either Mira or Lars to help. Taking on such a dangerous task was not, in itself, beyond her capabilities. It was just a situation so far beyond her comfort zone.

She was in the company of strange and exotic people. Lars' crew had deep loyalties. They'd do anything for their captain and they certainly had lusty needs. They were the sexiest creatures she'd ever encountered.

She'd once considered herself the epitome of Solaran respectability. An ambassador with impeccable credentials and a personal life free of blemishes or embarrassing entanglements.

She'd been a prude, she realized now, but a prude no longer. She'd never fucked so much in her life. She raised her eyes to consider the three-breasted Lidge and the blue-hued Altairan, Talon, both of whom she'd deliriously fucked only a few hours before. She wondered at the vagaries of fate.

"Listen to this," Lidge said, finding her place in *The Galactic Vagabond*, the unofficial and often irreverent travel guide popular amongst the younger generation. "Orbiting close to a yellow dwarf, it is a world of extremes. As it exposes the same face to its sun all year, half the planet is baked and the other side is perpetually frozen. Volcanoes spew out poisonous sulfur dioxide which, on the boundary with the frozen back side of the planet, mixes with its freezing, carbon dioxide atmosphere and produces yellow snow. Six enormous domes skirt the cold side of the terminator and are forever coated in a dirty, yellow sludge."

"Enchanting," Geena sighed. She was tracing the folds of her quickly liquefying pussy. Her lips were unfolding at her delicate touch and a warm languid wave washed through her body.

Lidge laughed. "And that's not all. The planet is so worthless neither the Solarans nor the Rigellians think it's worthwhile to conquer. Lying on the very outskirts of the galactic rim, Havensafe is home to outlaws, smugglers and slavers. It has become a bolthole for fugitives from all over the galaxy and, on occasion, from without."

"Ooh, aliens. How scary," Talon said, his eyes riveted to the navigational display.

"Havensafe has," Lidj continued, "over the millennia, become an outlaw world, a cesspool of intrigue, of deals and double deals, not to mention bloody murder. As such, it does have value to the warring Rigellians and Solarans. Spies abound in its dark alleys, its smoke-filled bars, its seedy drug dens and pleasure houses. Information has become a currency of exchange and speaking to the wrong person could get you killed."

"So," Geena said, rousing herself from her self-absorption. "We have to be careful."

She considered her companion. The pretty Sirian was a tightly wound sexual package. Her tight fitting, yellow top accentuated her three pert breasts and her short, aqua skirt bunched up around her waist, showing off her athletic thighs to great effect. She was habitually naked under the skirt. Geena had a sudden urge to further lift that thin piece of cloth and suck one of her three clits.

Geena wondered if there was some Gasper floating around in the air conditioning or if her sudden horniness was just the afterglow of their recent orgy.

If she needed an example of her new sexual orientation, she had to look no further than that event. The crew's task had been to arouse Lidj to orgasm by stimulating her three pussies. Their common goal was to fuck Lidj to the edge of reason while the ship's medic, Epirus Neelan, extracted the scent emitted by her underarm glands. From that precious liquid, they could synthesize Gasper, the galaxy's most potent aphrodisiac.

Since Geena's knifing of Muss, *Mjolnir* had been hunted through the cosmos by Muss's navy and they needed a covert way of getting into the Rigellian heartland. It had been Lars' bold plan to charter a private ship to Karacos with the proceeds of the sale of Gasper.

It was a risky operation, but more likely to succeed than a frontal attack on Karacos. They'd decided that only Geena and Lidj, the most expendable crew members,

would go into the domes of Havensafe to negotiate passage. The rest would stay on *Mjolnir* in case of trouble and would follow them to the vicinity of Karacos, coming for them at a prearranged time.

"It has its own government of sorts," Lidj continued. "Formed by the original fugitives from the dying Terran Empire. They have their own thriving bureaucracy with all the trappings of civilization, a health department, customs, police and so on. All are very inefficient and very, very corrupt."

Talon swore and Lidj laughed before continuing. "Havensafe also boasts the biggest controlled parking orbits in the known galaxy, with allotted spaces for over five thousand large cruisers and double that number for smaller craft."

"Tell me about it," he said. "This is a zoo!"

Outside the ship, stretching as far as they could see, were thousands of spacecraft of every conceivable design and vintage. They were three deep in a band and wrapped completely around the yellow planet.

Over the speakers came the garbled instructions from a traffic controller. After an intricate series of maneuvers which taxed even his grasp of orbital mechanics, Talon snuggled *Mjolnir* between a filthy Waspian scrap merchant and a small Jalopee yacht.

"We're in," he announced and locked the ship's autopilot into station-keeping mode.

"What happens next?" Geena asked. Her pussy was aching with lust, but her innate professionalism demanded she delay any further pleasure and stay focused on the present task.

"There's a shuttle to a customs station and after you pass their import controls, it's onto the planet itself."

"What exactly does their customs inspection entail?"

"Bribery and corruption, usually. There shouldn't be any problems. The only prohibited imports are explosives and other weapons of mass destruction."

"What about weapons of mass arousal?" Lidj said, holding one of the vials of Gasper.

Talon laughed grimly. "They'll probably want one vial as tax. If they want an exorbitant amount of cash, I'll make the transfer. Remember we have eighty thousand clits in our account, courtesy of Ghotti when we sold him Mira on Velos."

* * *

Geena stepped haughtily toward the Vampry customs official. The furry little creature was dressed in red, synthetic silk coveralls, his black leathery wings draped at his side. Geena shuddered. She detested the bat-like creatures. They'd migrated to Havensafe when their planet met with an unfortunate *cosmological accident*, following a territorial dispute with a young and petulant Dantilus Muss.

The beady eyes followed her every move with automatic distrust. He spoke with a gravelly voice that grated on her nerves like fingernails on plastiglass. "Your business on Havensafe?"

Honesty was the best policy. The capital penalty for non-declaration of goods was posted on the walls in bloody holo-graphic detail. "We have goods to sell."

"The value of the goods?"

"I don't know yet, I haven't sold them."

Humor was lost on the officious little creature. "Expected value?"

"Ten thousand clits." No harm in undervaluing.

"Import duty is one thousand clits," he announced automatically.

"Ten percent?" Geena said astounded. "That's robbery!"

The Vampry's purple lips curled around sharp canines in an officious grin. "You're welcome to return to your ship if you do not wish to pay the duty. You will incur a five hundred clit administration fee."

Geena shook her head and handed over the ship's credit disk which the Vampry grasped in thin clawed fingers. With remarkable dexterity, he swiped it through a small card reader at his belt. He held it out to Geena, but as she reached for it, he closed his clawed hand. He motioned toward the backpack Lidj wore casually over her shoulders. "Open it," he instructed.

Lidj did so and he peered in. "What is this?"

"Gasper."

He looked up her sharply. Those eyes drilled through them both like diamond-tipped needles. "That means extra duty. Three vials."

"One," Geena countered.

"Two."

"Very well, but I need information as well."

"What information?"

"If I wanted to charter a ship. Who would I speak to?"

"Your final destination?"

"Karacos."

The creature hawked and spat a wad of yellow phlegm onto the deck. Geena frowned at the Vampry's demonstrative dislike of anything Rigellian. "Karacos," the Vampry hissed. "Difficult."

"Why is that?"

The Vampry ignored her, eyeing instead Lidge's backpack. "You will need one of the standard flights. A Silurian pilot, Speke Otes, has a regular run to Karacos."

"Where do I find him?"

The Vampry waited until Lidge extracted two of the vials of precious Gasper and handed them over. "The Angry Pirate. It's in Dome Two."

"How do I get there?"

He motioned to a wide corridor. "A shuttle from the shuttle bay and follow the street signs."

"Thank you," she said stiffly. She led Lidge quickly down the corridor to the shuttle bay. "This is where the fun begins," she commented.

"Great," Lidge said excitedly.

Geena shook her head, wishing she could feel as enthusiastic.

Chapter 4

Teche

Scowling police chief Pos Teche led Jiss and Joss, his Velosian companions, to the Havensafe customs shuttle bay. A short confrontation with the odious little Vampry customs official had soured his already jaundiced mood.

The little bastard's obtuseness over whether or not Jiss and Joss were his slaves had almost ended in gun play. In the end, he was charged double the amount for a tourist visa for the two girls. If it hadn't been for Joss, who'd restrained him, he would've strangled the little prick. "Lord Teche," she'd said softly, "we have the money." The slight flick of her head reminded him of the armed Vamprys standing around the checkpoint. He'd forgotten this was no ordered or civilized world.

He'd stared into her large, oval eyes and his twin cocks filled with blood. She was right. As used to getting his way with bureaucrats as he was, here on Havensafe he had neither power nor jurisdiction. He suddenly felt defenseless. He'd often heard the expression "a stranger in a strange land." Now, he knew what it meant.

The shuttle was a simple affair. A short cylinder with bench seats enough for five passengers on either side. The Vampry pilot sat at the nose, a thick joystick between his legs. Teche hoped the trip down was mostly automated. He didn't trust Vamprys as far as he could kick their furry hides.

There was only one other passenger on this trip. Swaddled in a thick jacket, a blue Altairan with a head cold was spraying medication up his significant nostrils. He was sitting up near the pilot, long, thin legs stretched out before him. Teche noted his shiny, steel capped boots, thinking them incongruous on the skinny legs. The Altairan sneezed loudly, caught Teche's eyes and shrugged an apology. He sniffled through quivering nostrils and coughed again. Teche led the girls to the far end of the craft.

Not for the first time, Teche wondered if he was being overzealous in coming to Havensafe to interrogate the exiled slave trader Ghotti. He already knew the Corridians were being taken to Karacos. Why not go there directly and find out immediately what was going on? His mentor, Caed, had asked him as much before he'd left.

"I want to know as much as I can," he'd explained. "There's something strange in all of this. Why would Lars Dax be searching for his sister on Velos? How did he find out about Karacos? Who is ordering the kidnapping and sale of the Corridians? I suspect there is something deeper going on than just a simple slaving. Though Ghotti is only a middle man in all this, I want to see what he knows before I go blundering around like a Horta in a candy shop."

Caed had reluctantly agreed with him. "His Highness Muss wants results. Don't delay too long on Havensafe."

Now, after the trip in a cramped navy cruiser and his experience in customs, Teche wished he'd gone straight to Karacos itself.

"Two passengers go to each side of the ship for balance," the pilot instructed without even looking over his shoulder.

Teche sat on the same side as the sniffling Altairan and the two girls, after stowing their computer equipment in the overhead compartment, sat opposite him.

With a cheeky grin, Jiss opened her legs and the short tunic rode even higher up her olive thighs. Teche's cocks pulsed at the sight of her glistening slit which opened as he watched.

Jiss dropped her hand to her lap. She hitched up her tunic even further and stroked her dewy pussy. Joss cupped her full breasts and began squeezing them provocatively. Her nipples sprang to attention, poking through the thin material of her blouse.

Teche couldn't help himself and he opened his kilt to expose his twin cocks. Both girls giggled delightfully and Jiss opened her pussy lips wide so he could glimpse the pink flesh within. With long sensuous fingers, she stroked her clit until she closed her eyes and arched her back.

At the same time, the shuttle powered up, emitting a high-pitched whine. The undocking from the customs station was completed with dull clanging noises and then a lurch when the ship separated completely to begin the descent.

Jiss came as the shuttle first struck the atmosphere and her little cry attracted the attention of the Altairan who stared in open-mouthed amazement, his cold forgotten for a moment as he witnessed a ribald scene of sexual abandonment. Teche gave him a snarl and he looked away.

Buffeted by high winds, the tiny cylinder dropped like a stone through the turbulent atmosphere. Teche was glad the girls were calming their flight nerves with carnal activities. His cocks pulsed in appreciation, watching them masturbate in this most outrageous of ways, their fingers buried deep inside their respective pussies.

The varying G-forces told Teche that they were making a series of turns until finally, they ceased turning and approached their destination head on. Then, with a roar of jets and a sudden lurch, the shuttle came to a shuddering halt. They'd arrived. The antigrav thrusters whined down to a desultory silence and the vibration, which had so irritated Teche, shivered to nothingness. A deep silence descended on the interior of the shuttle.

Teche returned his cocks to the shelter of his kilt and watched while the girls readjusted their skirts over their lithe legs. He stared appreciatively when those same skirts rode up over their olive thighs as they stretched to remove their bags from the overheads.

The sniffing Altairan unbuckled himself and was first out the hatch as soon as the ground crew opened it. Teche was glad to give him a wide berth.

"What do you think?" Teche asked as they exited the main airlock into the dome.

Jiss screwed up her nose at the dome's thick atmosphere, a mixture of gasses blended to accommodate the various breeds. "It's smelly."

Joss poked out her tongue. "It's dirty."

Teche couldn't help but agree. He looked around the grimy walls of the receiving area. Apparently, a number of other shuttles had arrived and representatives of over a

dozen races were milling about. Hundreds of travelers, with just as many baggage handlers attending them, began to slowly disperse. He looked up. Buildings, many hundreds of stories tall, stretched up into the air as though they were trying to touch the dirty yellow of the dome's inner surface.

"It can only get better from here," Teche said optimistically. "Now, girls," he chided, "we're to meet a Sodeyn Wele. He is one of Muss's... employees. That means he's as untrustworthy as Muss himself. Don't tell him anything you don't have to."

"Yes, Lord," Jiss responded.

"Jiss, as soon as we get settled in his office, patch into the local bank system and trace that account. See if they have used it again."

Just before they'd arrived at Havensafe, Teche had received a sub space alert from Sodeyn with an important development. The same bank account used by Lars Dax on Velos when they'd sold the hopeful assassin to Ghotti, had been accessed at a Havensafe customs office. "They're here!" he'd exclaimed with glee. But now that they'd arrived in this cesspit, his optimism had faltered. There were over ten million people of every race and breed sheltering beneath the six domes. Finding them in this cramped sewer of a city would be anything but easy.

Sodeyn Wele was a short hybrid Rigellian with a wheeze and dripping nose. Teche took a step back when Muss's spy arrived in a sneezing rush, waving away his spluttered apology.

"Where can I find Ghotti?" Teche asked, getting to the point immediately.

"I've found him," Sodeyn said, his gaze lingering on Joss's prominent breasts. "He's drinking at the Pilot's Lament. I've just come from there."

"Lead on," Teche instructed, relieved that Wele had decided not to send the girls alone with him to this repellent creature's office.

The Pilot's Lament was a crowded sex bar. The thick atmosphere assailed his senses with unidentifiable scents. Teche screwed his nostrils. He noted that Jiss and Joss were holding handkerchiefs to their faces.

Half a dozen races were in the crush. Mostly Altairans, Gaffis, some Nausians, even a pair of Vamprys sucking on each other's necks, mingled in easy bonhomie.

Ghotti sat in a booth watching the floor show, a rather pedestrian demonstration by a bored Flavila performer shooting ping pong balls from her well-trained vagina. The albino gangster laughed outrageously at the finale as she targeted and hit five surprised members of the audience without reloading.

Ghotti was surrounded by three of his thugs who moved protectively around him as Teche approached. Wele waved fearfully at Ghotti, who grunted at Trell, his tall and very beautiful Altairan assistant. She waved her hand slightly and the minimal gesture caused the guards to stand aside.

While he waited for this little ritual to conclude Teche scanned the crowded room. A skinny, bald Altairan wearing a long, black coat was sitting nervously at the bar watching them. He looked away suddenly when Teche caught his eye. Teche recognized him from the shuttle.

"Police Chief Teche," Ghotti said cheerfully. "A long way from home."

Teche hated Ghotti for what his men had done to poor Vier, the gangster's Velosian housekeeper. She'd helped Teche locate the data disks that had connected Ghotti to the enormous embezzlement scheme, which had sent General Een to the butcher's bench. Teche would never forgive the white-skinned dwarf for the injuries she'd sustained at the hands of his goons.

Ghotti was reclining casually on a leather couch. The only pleasure Teche got from contemplating the events on Velos was the panic Ghotti must have felt when he learned the slave he'd sold to Muss had participated in an assassination attempt.

Ghotti's alabaster scales were shiny and new. He'd obviously shed his skin recently. Teche's shoulder itched. He was overdue himself and he dreaded the debilitating few days of his next shedding.

"This is hardly a place I'd like to call home," Teche countered.

Ghotti laughed. His karro stick bobbed ridiculously on his fat scaly lip. "I see you've brought your own Velosian trinkets. Take a seat."

Teche nodded to Ghotti's Altairan assistant, Trell. The tall woman bowed. She was a remarkable specimen of her breed. Exquisite breasts poked through a thin blouse and her fantastically opaline skin glowed in every shade of blue. He watched her as she took a seat opposite him. She leaned over and plucked the cigar from her master's lips, flicking the ashes daintily in a tray on the table.

Teche watched her breasts bobble enticingly inside her blouse. His cocks pulsed. Her eyes caught his while she bent over Ghotti and replaced the cigar in her boss's glistening mouth.

"I'm sorry, I'll never return to Velos. It's truly a lovely little planet..." The albino dwarf shrugged wistfully and blew a cloud of acrid smoke into the air. "I do apologize for any inconvenience my men may have caused you back there. They simply wanted what was mine. Nothing personal, you understand."

Teche's eyebrow ridge throbbed in repressed anger. He took a measured breath. "Before I accept your apology, I need information as compensation."

Ghotti laughed explosively. "Calling on an ancient custom is beneath us, don't you think?"

Teche shrugged. "Not all of us neglect our honor."

Ghotti held up his hands in mock surrender. "I believe you have my property in your possession." He eyed the bags Jiss and Joss carried.

"And it made interesting reading."

"General Een has already been served as an entree, I understand."

Teche nodded. "It was not an easy death." He shrugged impatiently. "Enough of this useless banter. I need an explanation of what you know about Corridians."

Ghotti leaned back into the couch, dropping his hand into Trell's inviting lap. She pushed out her hips so that his squat stubby fingers could make contact with her pussy. "Ah, Corridians. I see."

"Lars Dax, in particular."

Ghotti looked reflectively at the ceiling and took a long drag on his karro stick. "He sold me a slave for Muss. A *human* slave."

"I know."

"He acted the naïve trader and I believed him. How was I to know he was an assassin?"

"What about the slave?"

"A Solaran. A beautiful specimen, but ordinary in every other way."

Teche studied the slave trader's expressionless face. "You weren't suspicious?"

"I buy and sell dozens of slaves every day. A human is unusual, but not outrageously so."

"Sold by a Corridian?"

"That did raise my scales, I admit. But they played their parts well. I believed them. I'm no fool, as you know. His story was a lie, I knew that, but I was an ass and assumed he was just an ordinary thief to whom lying is second nature."

Teche believed him. Whatever traitorous activities he was involved in, Ghotti didn't try and kill Muss. "Why did you leave those disks?"

Ghotti shrugged. "Insurance in case I didn't get off world." Yet, there was something in his expression that told the real story.

"Een was going to get rid of you, wasn't he?"

Ghotti smiled, but said nothing.

"You'd become a liability and he was going to take you out of the picture. You left those for me as a sort of payback. So you could have your revenge from the grave."

Ghotti took another drag on his karro stick and blew the smoke arrogantly into the air. "With Muss dead the game was over anyway. Time to move to greener pastures."

"But your goons didn't know that. So they tried to regain the disks for you."

Ghotti shrugged noncommittally.

"Unfortunately, Muss is alive and your crime is now known throughout the galaxy. You can never leave here."

Ghotti took another deep drag on his karro stick, held it in his lungs, then tilted his head back and exhaled the blue smoke into the air. "Havensafe has its pleasures.

Retirement will not be a hardship." He coughed a liquid cough from deep inside his lungs and Teche guessed his retirement would be short. Teche glanced at Trell whose expression was unreadable.

"The records on those disks show you were the broker who sold Corridian females to someone on Karacos."

Ghotti smiled as he nodded. "The Corridian deal puzzled me greatly, I must admit."

"I find it hard to believe you didn't know what was going on."

The albino shrugged. "What you believe is up to you. Trell received the request for Corridians with a substantial advance. We checked, but could not identify the source. We assumed it was our military."

Teche's scales pricked at that. "The military? What do you mean?"

"Karacos is a major R&D center for the Hegemony. Didn't you know?"

Teche nodded. He did know, but hadn't made the connection.

"The weapons division is a good client. I've sold them hardware, firmware, software and wetware. They buy slaves for all sorts of experimentation."

Teche quelled the desire to strike the little bastard. "But the source of the request? Did it go through normal military channels?"

"No. We assumed it was one of their secret departments."

"So you can't tell me anything useful?"

"I'd like to help, believe me. I'm no longer involved and have no reason to hide anything."

From the corner of his eye, Teche noticed the tall Altairan, no longer showing the effects of his cold, climb off his stool and take a determined step toward them.

Teche reacted immediately. As the Altairan casually put his hand inside his coat, Teche stood up and flung his chair in his direction. The Altairan ducked and in the same movement, pulled a short-stocked laser rifle from inside his coat. Stumbling over the chair, he flicked off a series of shots.

Teche pushed the twins to the floor and covered their bodies with his own. The smell of burning flesh mingled with the cloying humidity of the bar. He pulled out his pistol and, risking a glance above an upturned table, took aim. The Altairan was still advancing on him in a single-minded manner, oblivious to the risk.

Teche fired. His laser bolt took the Altairan in the shoulder. The would-be assassin grunted and fell. At once, one of Ghotti's muscle bound goons pounced on him. In a display of raw savagery, the thug twisted the screaming assassin's head and ripped it clean off his shoulders.

Teche scanned the bar again in case there were more assailants but the Altairan had been alone. But who was his target? Ghotti lay on the floor beneath the table, blood streaming from a laser slice through the side of his neck and shoulder. Trell had his head in her lap gently stroking his eyebrow ridge, and in a beautifully melodious voice, cooed softly to him.

Teche climbed to his feet and helped the girls up. One of Ghotti's thugs advanced on him, his face threatening. Teche raised his weapon. "We did not have anything to do with this!" he said menacingly and Trell called the goon back.

"Not that you know of," Ghotti said through clenched teeth. Trell had staunched the bleeding with a table napkin. The albino's white scales had turned a pale shade of gray.

Ghotti's goons searched the bloody body of the assassin. Underneath the coat, he was naked. So much for his cold, but it meant there was no means of identification. It looked like it had been a suicide mission, and on that score, it had been completely successful.

"Our medic will be here soon," Trell said to Ghotti. Teche wondered at the genuine note of concern in Trell's voice. She actually felt something for her vicious employer.

"We were followed to track you down," Teche surmised. "Apart from Muss, who wants Ghotti dead?"

"Maybe to kill you as well," Trell suggested.

That possibility had occurred to him, but if they had been the prime target, the Altairan could have killed them on the shuttle. No, whoever this guy represented, they wanted to find Ghotti. Teche's head may just have been a welcome bonus.

As Teche knelt by Ghotti, his knee brushed Trell's thigh. Her flesh was hot. "Whoever ordered this thinks you'll tell me something. Is there anyone who can help me with the Karacos connection?"

Ghotti grimaced in pain and nodded. He was fading fast. "A... Silurian... Vida Dun."

"Vida Dun. Where can I find him?" Teche pressed.

Ghotti's eyelids fluttered. "... Trell will show you."

"Where?"

"The Hellfire Club," Trell volunteered.

"Which is?"

"You'll find out..." Ghotti said, clicking his fingers. One of his goons approached and held out a bloody hand. Ghotti grasped it weakly and the giant hoisted him up onto his shoulders.

Trell watched him leave and then turned to Teche. She smiled invitingly. Her iridescent eyes drew him in and he was lost for a moment in their translucent depths.

"You're a loyal employee," he observed as they resumed their seats.

Trell demurred, her eyes communicating everything.

"You like us Rigellians?"

Her eyes fell to his crotch. "You have your advantages."

Teche had noted both Jiss and Joss's admiring glances at the blue Altairan. "My assistants find you attractive also."

"They are very beautiful." She looked around the bar. They were in a shadowy corner and, with the removal of the assassin's body, the joint had settled down to its previous buzz of conversation.

"Tell me, Lord Teche. Does violence make you horny?"

Before he could answer, Trell dropped to her knees and reached under his kilt. His cocks were already standing to attention and she stroked the shaft of his fore cock from his balls to its straining head. "You're huge," she whispered huskily.

"Compared to Ghotti, I have no doubt," he responded as she commenced a rhythmic stroking of his shafts.

He reached down and deftly moved his hand along her thigh. Underneath her tunic, she was naked. Her cerulean skin was silky smooth and responsive, changing hue in a kaleidoscope of deep rich colors. His fingertips found her swollen pussy lips. The slit was wet and he slid two digits inside with ease.

"You're very hot," he observed when she adjusted her kneeling position to accommodate his questing fingers.

Trell extended her tongue and licked the head of his fore cock. Her gentle organ probed the slit in the head of the shaft, teasing it open, exploring the wetness within. His balls stirred inside their sac and he groaned involuntarily.

Jiss got onto the floor beside the beautiful Altairan and lifted her tunic. Teche imagined her fondling those thrusting breasts, caressing the budding nipples into stiff erectness.

Trell looked up at him, her large eyes languid with arousal. He bent his head and kissed her wide, sensuous mouth. Joss was kneeling on the couch beside him, her head between his legs. Together, she and the Altairan kissed above the head of his shaft. With their lips softly locked, they slid their kiss down the length of his shaft.

Oblivious to the griminess of the bar, Jiss spread out on the floor and put her head between Trell's kneeling legs. With an agile tongue, she lapped at the wet, open lips of the Altairan's pussy.

The ministrations of both women soon had Teche on the brink of orgasm. Trell herself was quickly taken to the edge by Jiss as she worried at her engorged clit. She pulled her mouth away from Teche's cock and with eyes tightly shut raised her face. Teche kissed her.

Suddenly, a groan was wrenched from her chest. Her body shuddered as if an electric shock had passed through her. She gripped his thighs tightly while her body tensed around the orgasm.

Teche spread his fingers through her hair and fought against his own orgasm. The very thought of this wanton creature climaxing was enough to take him to the brink.

Trell lifted herself off Jiss's mouth. She turned around, presenting her buttocks to Teche, and sank her face into the Velosian's slippery pussy.

Joss reluctantly took her mouth off his fore cock and, grasping both shafts, brought them to Trell's raised buttocks. She carefully threaded the significant girth of the aft organ into Trell's wet cunt. His fore cock was slick with her saliva and she fed it into the Altairan's tight ass. Trell shuddered as the smooth, hard shafts of both cocks slid inside her.

Joss rested her hands on Teche's rump, urging him to pump faster while she kissed him full on the lips. With rising passion Teche pounded into the Altairan's body until he felt that welcome tightening of his ball sac. With a roar, he erupted inside her. The powerful muscles at the base of both his cocks contracted, rhythmically pumping a glut of hot come into her.

As he came, he continued to thrust into her until his bright, white juice was squeezed out and coated the shafts of his cocks with a silky film.

Trell climaxed again and below her, Teche could hear the muffled moans of Jiss, pushed by Trell's penetrating tongue, falling over the orgasmic abyss. Trell slumped forward on top of Jiss's trembling body.

Teche turned his attentions to Joss. She was kissing him hungrily. She crushed her lips onto his, forcing his mouth open, her tongue wrestling its way inside. He was furiously fingering her open cunt. Her heady scent filled his nostrils. She clung to him as she ground her clenching pussy over his fingers.

"Oh, Lord Teche!" she groaned into his mouth.

His fingers found the sensitive spots inside her slippery channel and he was rewarded by deep groans as he took her to orgasm. She collapsed against him, her short, ragged breaths hot on his cheek.

He became aware of a presence hovering beside him.

It was a Vampy waiter. "Drinks, sir?"

Chapter 5

Astrid

Astrid dropped herself into the high backed couch in front of the viewing screen and hoisted her bare legs onto the console. They'd been in null space for two days and Astrid was heartily bored. She looked out into the void and sighed emphatically. "Still alive and well, I see."

Lars didn't even look up from the computer display. "We're three days out from Havensafe."

She huffed and, curling her left leg, grasped her foot to examine the toughened sole. One by one, she extended her claws to inspect them for dirt and scale. She noticed that he wasn't looking at her or the strip of exposed inner thigh her contortion had revealed. She frowned. "Are you always this focused?"

He ignored her and continued examining the data on the screen.

"I mean," she said, filing at a claw with the sonic rasp she'd extracted from the pocket of her bathrobe, "you had us all convinced you were wasting away, pining for your lost wings. Yet, you were planning this expedition all the time."

"I intend to find Elenii," he said bluntly.

She blew some filings away from her claws and uncurled her leg. She drew up the other foot and studied it intently. Her pussy was completely exposed. Yet, he made no sign that he'd noticed. "She's not the only one that has been taken, Lars. The Rigellian bastards have many of our kin."

He motioned toward the screen and the list of the Corridians who'd been kidnapped. She'd seen it before. "So I see. Astrid, I'm sorry that you lost Vidar. He was a good man."

She nodded briskly, unwilling to open that door when she was feeling so horny around Lars. "So, when *did* you start planning this?"

He scrolled down the page too fast for her to follow the names. There were a lot of them. "I overheard you and your father. You said there were traitors who betrayed our people to these bastards. I realized I could trust no one."

"Not even me or my father?"

He shrugged. "I had to be careful."

"But to starve yourself?"

He cleared his throat. "It would be natural to be depressed after losing my wings. I believed the best way to disappear from the notice of any spies was to act naturally."

She nodded and filed another claw. Convincing her father to fake the records of his death had been difficult. He was such an ethical man, but when she'd told him this was positively the only way to save Lars' life, he'd reluctantly agreed to play the part of the unsuccessful physician. "How do you feel now?"

"I'm eating well."

"No. I meant about your wings. I can't imagine..."

He cut her short. "Astrid. I don't have the luxury of fretting after my wings."

"You're in denial."

He stared at her balefully. "After I've recovered Elenii, if I live, then I'm sure my wings will return as good as new."

"That's bargaining."

He stopped his reply before it left his lips. He smiled. "Well, two stages of grief in thirty seconds are quite enough, don't you think? Can we concentrate on the task at hand?"

"Sublimation, I believe it's called." She put down her leg and straightened her bathrobe. "Okay. Fair enough. So, you can trust this Solaran smuggler, Namo Nere, right?"

After Lars' *death*, she'd arranged the covert entry into Corridian air space of the heavily armed ship in which they were presently traveling. She didn't trust the pilot and his taciturn but nonetheless sexy companion.

"I served with him," Lars said. "He's sound."

"He keeps too much to himself." She screwed up her nose. "And he's a smuggler."

"He was in the Solaran Navy."

"He resigned to become a smuggler. That's an interesting career choice, don't you think? But my question remains. Can we trust him?"

"He resigned for a good reason."

"Which was?"

"He fell in love with an admiral's daughter. There was an incident."

"And the admiral's daughter?"

"Is his copilot."

Astrid laughed. She'd suspected the time the young couple spent cooped up in that tiny bridge was not solely devoted to flying the ship. It was because they were fucking each other senseless! She caught her breath. "You have such interesting friends. However, I am interested in knowing why they want to help us."

"I helped them in their moment of need."

She nodded. Typical. Lars seemed to spend all his time helping other people. He was one of a kind. Perhaps that's why she persevered when he obviously loved someone else? Or did she want to be around him in case some of his goodness rubbed off? She could only guess. "So it's payback time."

"Returning a favor is all."

"At the risk of their lives? It's highly possible that none of us will survive this."

"The repayment of the debt should be commensurate with the loan."

There was something in his icy glare that told her not to dig any further. She decided to change tack. "Explain to me again why we're going to Havensafe?"

"My ship and crew were going there."

She rolled her eyes. "The infamous Gasper escapade."

"It will work."

"If umpteen things don't go wrong! Good grief, Lars! Who came up with the harebrained stunt?"

His baleful expression told her all she needed to know. Her failed attempt at holding in her laugh resulted in an explosive, sinus splitting eruption. "Did you hit your head or something?" she gasped. "Were you cinder affected? What possibly possessed you to come up with this... this..."

"Plan," he said simply, obviously not preparing to defend his scheme.

She held up her hands. "Okay, okay. It does have a creative touch, I must admit. The Rigellians won't be expecting it, that's for sure." She suppressed another laugh. "So, once you're reunited with your crew, what then?"

"We have to assist Mira."

Mira. How she hated that name. "What about Elenii? Surely she takes precedence?"

"Of course!"

"You'll have to make your mind up sometime. You can't have both. Elenii, your sister, or Mira the slut." She regretted it immediately. She hated the very thought of that Solaran bitch. It was too late to take back her words. She noted Lars' clenched fists as he turned away from her. She tried to cover her outburst with a question that sounded logical. "I'm curious about... this human. I am suspicious of her motivations."

"Why?" His voice was sharp, defensive.

"Your crew, when they brought you home all mangled and torn, said that she gave herself quite willingly to a Solaran pirate, Jack Light. Convenient that someone she knows from school apparently waylays your ship in the middle of nowhere."

"She sacrifices herself too easily. She did so at Velos."

"I've been meaning to ask you about that as well. Don't you think it very convenient that she volunteers to go to Muss's palace and then helps a kidnapped ambassador escape?"

"What are you saying?"

She tried to shrug nonchalantly, but failed. "That it stretches credulity too far to think the two are not connected in some way."

"She assured me that was not the case."

That defensive voice again. So he did have doubts about her, did he? "I'm sure she did. And now she volunteers to go off with this pirate."

He avoided her eyes. "She is brave."

"I don't doubt her bravery, but what is her purpose?"

"She is helping me rescue Elenii."

"But why? That's what I don't understand. And another thing I don't follow is your apparent lack of interest in discovering her true motivation. Afraid of what you might find?"

He glared at her. "That's not the issue. The point is, the Rigellians are taking our people to Karacos."

She took a deep breath, preparing another assault, but changed her mind. There was little use in aggravating him. He'd see Mira's true nature soon enough. She changed tack again. "How did you know about Karacos?"

"A rumor from a drunken pilot."

She rolled her eyes. "You're incredible, you know that? Anyway, your drunken pilot knew what he was talking about. He agrees with what my Rigellian prisoner told us. The destination of all one hundred fifty-seven of our close relations is Karacos."

Lars looked at her, a glint in his eye. His eyes roamed over her body, fixing on the juncture of her thighs. "Did you really blow off one of his dicks?"

She cleared her throat. "He wouldn't surrender. He had to be pacified."

He chuckled. "I'd expect that would do it."

Chapter 6

Mira

"Here you are," Mira said. "I've been looking everywhere. Cass said to try here."

The executive officer had been more than a little peeved at Mira's insistence in knowing her captain's whereabouts. She'd finally relented and told her that he often came to the observation blister perched on the spine of the ship.

Mira's impatience was eating at her like a Martian sandworm. She needed to get to Havensafe as quickly as possible. She sensed Geena and the rest of *Mjolnir's* crew were in great danger. They were amateurs in a game where the penalty for mistakes was death.

"I never get tired of this," Jack said, motioning through the synth-glass into the void. He was slumped in a high backed chair, his leather boots propped up on the sill of the view screen.

They'd dropped out of null space an hour before and so far had not moved. No one would tell her what the hell they were doing and her frustration quotient had expanded exponentially.

He slapped his thighs with his hands, drawing her attention to the sensuous curve of his legs. His legs were splayed apart and she couldn't help but notice the bulge of his cock in his skintight pants.

Her pussy warmed at the sight. He was easily one of the sexiest humans she'd ever seen. If only his nature was less savage.

Mira dragged her eyes off his cock and sat in the chair beside him to gaze out at the breathtaking view. Before them was the great cartwheel of the galaxy. A myriad of colored stars -- blues, greens, yellows and reds -- gave form to the great sweeping arms, wrapping themselves tentacle-like around the fiery core.

"To think," he mused. "The Terrans, our ancestors, ruled it all."

"Three quarters of it, at least."

He pointed at the far end of the spiral. "The Others. Ever wondered why they never pressed home their advantage and took over the whole galaxy? They had us at their mercy."

She shrugged. That question had been debated for centuries. The destruction of the Terran Empire by the Others, the unseen, alien civilization of immense power, had resulted in a dreadful dark age. The schism between the various races which resulted had festered and was now manifested in their current state of perpetual war.

The Others' fleets had destroyed mankind's ever expanding empire in a matter of years. That the seemingly invincible foe had not continued and completely destroyed the weakened empire had fueled debate ever since.

Why Jack would be reflecting on that ancient mystery now was mystifying.

"Perhaps they like their privacy?" she offered glibly.

"Ever wondered why we never really fought back? Not even when we reinvented ourselves as the grandiose Solaran Confederation? Why we've stopped at the imaginary border and done... nothing?"

Of course, but none of that was important just now. "Jack, I'm more concerned with what we're doing here in the middle of nowhere."

He laughed and hit a toggle switch. The scene on the view screen veered to the right and a dull yellow star came into view. "You wanted to come to Havensafe. I've brought you here."

Her jaw dropped and her breath left her chest. "Thank you, Jack."

"Call it a gift."

"Which makes me suspicious. Why?"

He smiled, though his eyes never left the tiny star. "I'm bored. I've been blowing up Rigellians for too long. The novelty's worn off."

She knew that wasn't the case, but he opened up a door of opportunity and she took a step inside. "Then you'll help me?"

He swung the chair around so that he faced her with his leg resting against hers. "Of course. You know I'd do anything for you."

Warmth radiated from his leg and led directly to her pussy. "I wish I could believe that."

"What's not to believe?"

He reached out suddenly and grasped her hand. With little effort, he pulled her onto his lap. He stroked her hair, his fingers grazing the sensitive flesh at her temple, sending goose pimples along her arms. Her pussy pulsed with desire. Jack knew exactly how to touch her. His eyes were dark and she felt herself falling into their depths.

His fingers trailed along her jaw line, lightly stroking their way toward her lips, now quivering under the warm caress. Her heart was a thudding drum in the cavity of her chest. A wave of summer heat blossomed in the pit of her stomach and radiated through her insides.

His hands were at the back of her neck again running his fingers through her hair. Slowly, inexorably, she was being drawn closer toward those dark, questioning eyes and inviting lips. Her pussy ached wantonly and she squeezed her thighs together to contain her desire.

She put her hands on the flat of his broad hard chest, thinking to pull away, but his unwavering gaze compelled her to surrender. She opened her mouth in preparation for the kiss.

"Are you sure?" he whispered, his breath burning hot on her face.

Her lust compelled her forward again, but her head told her to stop. This wasn't right.

"I don't expect payment for bringing you here," he said. "Call this a thank you for old time's sake."

"But I dumped you," she said, her voice betraying her bewilderment.

"I benefited from it. I was an arrogant asshole. Still am in many ways, but you made me look at myself and I think I've changed."

Her chest flooded with a new wave of lust. Honest self-revelation in men was so rare that Jack's admission touched something in her heart. Back in school, she'd felt something for him, despite his reputation as a "fuck 'em and leave 'em" jock. She'd always thought there was something redeemable. And now she had it. "Jack..."

His eyes searched her face. "I've never forgotten wanting you till it hurt. Those last months in school were abysmal."

"I'm so sorry. I..."

He silenced her with a fingertip to her lips. "I don't blame you. I realized I'd been a bastard. I didn't deserve to be loved back then... but now, I hope for a second chance."

Her body told her to give him that chance. Earlier, in the bathtub, when she'd been inside his mind, she'd been there searching for information. To determine if he'd lied to her and contacted Bik Rende.

A twinge of distrust tweaked at her because he *had* lied to her. She hadn't expected anything less. He was only doing his job. Hell, in his place, she would've contacted Bik as well.

But that was work and now, with this revelation, she'd seen something new in him. She regretted not looking into his emotional side when she'd had the chance. She wondered what she might see.

"Kiss me," she said suddenly and reached up to drag his face toward her.

His hungry mouth was open and she claimed him with an explosion of carnal energy. He pulled her body into his and wrapped her in those strong arms. Her breasts were flattened against the broad expanse of chest.

His flesh, even through his thin flight suit, was burning hot. She wanted to feel his skin. She slid her hand through the suit's open zipper, found his erect nipple and squeezed it.

He groaned into her mouth as his hand searched and found her breasts. With deft fingers he liberated them from her flimsy suit. In doing so, he grazed her erect and

straining nipples. Jolts of sexual electricity shot through her, adding to the waves of lust radiating from her moistening pussy.

Jack stood and hoisted her onto the view screen's control panel without breaking the electric contact of their lips. His knees forced her willing legs open and he advanced between them until his bulging cock nudged the apex of her thighs.

She'd never felt so loved, so desired. Except for the last few weeks, she'd never felt loved in all her life and now three people actually did love her. Jack, whose nearness swamped her senses, Geena, whose emerging sensuality and openness was a pure joy. But most of all, there was Lars, who'd awakened a raft of emotions that had, for the short time they'd been together, sailed her turbulent soul.

Lars.

Who loved her despite his distrust of her motives. He had so many unanswered questions about her. Yet, he loved her with a passion she'd never experienced before. Her heart lurched as she recalled her last image of him. Lying unconscious, his ruined wings raw and bleeding.

Lars.

Mira reached up and with the flat of her hand pushed Jack away.

He broke the kiss without resistance. She turned away to look out at the cold and loveless stars.

"So, who is he?" Jack's voice was husky and raw.

"Jack, I'm sorry."

"He must be some sort of guy."

"I don't want to talk about him."

"You can tell me. I won't be jealous. I'm much more mature than I used to be."

She brought her eyes around to gaze at him. His downcast expression shot a dart into her heart. "Jack, I'm sorry. I can't."

"Is he one of us? An agent?"

"No. He's not one of us. He's no one."

"I don't believe you," he said. His smile was gentle, even understanding. "He must be someone special to make you compromise your mission. Not contacting Bik Rende is tantamount to treason. Whoever he is, you're setting yourself up for a bad fall."

"And you aren't?" she challenged. He didn't know that she knew he was just following Bik's orders. Her old feelings of distrust rose.

He smiled. "Touché." He reached out and caressed her cheek. "If I'm risking my career... and more, then tell me why you're doing this. You're not on a mission for Bik. So you won't be breaking those rules. What's it all about?"

"I don't want to talk about it."

"It's not traitorous, is it?"

"Of course not! It's... it's personal."

"I thought so. Sweetheart, you have the best reputation in the service for being professional and loyal above all measure. I knew you wouldn't join the bad guys."

She didn't answer.

"So. You've fallen for this guy. What is he? The son of Odin? Nothing else would grab your pussy like he has."

"It's not like that," she lied, keeping her eyes pointed out at the stars.

"That's not true. If he wasn't special to you then you would've told me all about it. I can think of no other reason except love. So, do you love him?"

To admit it gave Jack power over her and could even put Lars at risk. "Not necessarily."

He laughed and shrugged in defeat. "Okay, sweetheart. Know that I love you too. And I'm willing to help you. How selfless is that?"

She couldn't believe she'd almost betrayed Lars and given herself to this man. He was playing her. Bik Rende's orders had been to help her do whatever she wanted. But he had to find out what it was all about. This whole episode had been an informal interrogation. She turned an angry glare onto his smiling face.

"So," he said, ignoring her anger, "what will we do here at Havensafe, now that I've brought you?"

She adjusted her flight suit and covered her breasts. "The crew of *Mjolnir* are here."

"And what are they doing that's so important?"

She considered telling him. He'd help her more easily if he had some form of control over the situation. He would tell Bik Rende, of course, and after he did, she'd have to fuck him to find out what Bik's instructions were. She said a silent apology to Lars, but he'd understand. Any sexual contact with Jack would be in the line of duty. She had to know what Jack and Bik's intentions were. It was the only way to stay one step ahead.

She took a deep breath. "Female Corridians are being kidnapped and taken to Karacos."

His eyes reacted with some surprise. "Why?"

"That's what I need to find out."

"And this special man of yours is a Corridian?"

She nodded.

"They're magnificent lovers I'm told."

She frowned in mock disappointment. "Jack, don't."

"I'm not jealous, Mira. I'm beyond that, really. I'm just fascinated. What is it like to have a big cock inside you while you fly through the sky?"

So he knew a bit about their sexual practices. She wondered idly if he'd ever fucked a Corridian. She dismissed the thought as irrelevant. "I'm more interested in why Rigellians are stealing them. What do they want?"

"Sex?"

"They have their pick of dozens of breeds. Why Corridians all of a sudden? Why make risky raids into Solaran space? There is something about these females, apart from their beauty, that makes them important."

"They want to breed with them and create an army of flying reptiles?"

"Don't be facetious. You don't have the personality for it. It's something deeper, surely."

"Beats me." His expression turned pensive. He switched the view screen back to the swirling mass of the galaxy. "I wonder..."

"What?"

He laughed. "Nothing. A random thought, nothing else. It would be just too crazy, even for our reptilian foes."

"So, you'll drop me off at Havensafe?"

"Of course. And I'll come too!"

Chapter 7

Geena

"I only deal in hard clits," the Silurian pilot hissed, his collar of pink gill fronds quivering around his neck. His tight, black flight suit accentuated his streamlined physique. His strangely bulbous eyes looked her up and down, lingering on Geena's ample cleavage. While he ogled her, his webbed fingers casually stroked the bulge at his crotch.

Geena strained to make out his words. The barroom of the Angry Pirate was a beehive of white noise. A tinny three-piece band comprised of long-snouted Satchmolins tried to inject some rhythm into the aural kaleidoscope. This, combined with the shouted and snarled conversations of fifty-odd drinkers, created a cacophony of discordant sound.

Geena fixed the pilot's scaly face with a long, hard and, she hoped, implacable glare. "I have only items to exchange."

The Silurian shook his head, drops of clear liquid flying out of his globe-like gray eyes. "I have no need of stock. Three hundred thousand clits."

Geena put her hands on her hips, drawing the Silurian's gaze from her cleavage to her crotch. She wore a short, semi-transparent tunic of lavender silk and her pussy lips could, in the right light, be clearly seen.

The pilot licked his lips in appreciation.

Geena had heard that Silurians, the amphibious inhabitants of Karacos, were a no-nonsense people who respected strength in bargaining.

"If *you* do not wish stock worth four hundred and twenty thousand clits, then direct me to a pilot who does."

The gill fronds inflated and glowed bright red. "I do not need stock," he repeated.

"Let's find someone else," Lidj suggested impatiently. "I don't think this idiot could fly a glider let alone a starship."

The Silurian ignored her. "Karacos is a controlled world. You won't find anyone else to fly you there."

"I've heard you are a cunning and brave pilot," Geena said in a soothing voice. "I would prefer to use someone with such a reputation. Can you suggest how we may convert our stock to funds so I can pay you the charter?"

"What is the stock?"

"Gasper," Lidj volunteered. "One thousand units."

"Pure?"

Lidj squared her shoulders. Her exposed breasts, supported underneath by a thin bandeau, bobbed in the smoky light. "I do not sell adulterated stock."

The Silurian, his gaze jumping from one of her three breasts to the others, held out a finned hand. Lidj dropped a small vial into his scaly palm. He raised it to the light, clicking his tongue as he studied the swirling amber liquid. "This is real?"

"You doubt my word?"

The Silurian pursed his wide thick lips. "This is Havensafe. I doubt everyone's word."

Geena persisted. "Where may we exchange this for cash?"

"To enter Karacos, you must have a work permit."

This was new. "What do you mean?"

Lidj held out her hand for the vial but the Silurian closed his fist around the small bottle. "The Rigellian Corporations have need of workers who are registered and have a work visa. That is the only way you can keep your freedom on Karacos."

Geena hadn't considered that angle. "Can you assist us to make our entry safe?"

The pilot bowed his head. "I can."

"Thank you. Where shall we obtain these work visas?"

"I will show you."

"And to gain the clits you desire?"

"Follow these instructions."

The Silurian directed her to the Hellfire Club. There, she was to meet the owner.
A human gangster named Brak Contek.

Chapter 8

Teche

Trell's apartment was lavishly furnished with exquisite works of art, statuettes and objects of cultural significance to at least a dozen races. This was Ghotti's new line of business -- stolen antiquities.

Teche was naked in Trell's gigantic circular bed, glad of the chance to rest and think on what had transpired in the Pilot's Lament. He was relaxed and feeling at peace after another bout of feverish four-way lovemaking.

Trell was sleeping beside him and Jiss lay between her legs, her head resting on the Altairan's thigh. Similarly, Joss was lying completely sated between his legs, the glaze of his last spending glistening on her face. He mildly chastised himself for wasting so much time and feeling so good about it.

The attempt on Ghotti's life was disturbing. He didn't care one way or another on Ghotti's behalf, but using him and the twins as a guide indicated the attempt came from someone in Muss's court who knew why he was here. Could Muss have ordered it?

Teche didn't believe Muss would kill Ghotti before he helped Teche secure the ambassador, her human slave and that Corridian, Lars Dax, for public impalement. Indeed, Muss would want Ghotti impaled and probably do it personally. Ghotti's discs didn't suggest Muss was involved with the Corridian kidnappings at all.

No. It wasn't Muss who'd ordered the attack. But who? General Een reaching from the grave? Teche couldn't credit him with the power or sense of irony to plan it. Governor Bloss? No, he was even dumber than Een.

Teche decided he'd contact his old mentor, Caed, and ask him to investigate the attack back on Velos. It would be a question of who else knew of his mission to

Havensafe. He suspected a high-placed traitor, perhaps even a relation of General Een, if indeed any had survived the purge Muss had initiated.

"Joss," he said softly and she stirred drowsily. "Go through Ghotti's records again. See if any of his contacts were in the military. We hadn't investigated that angle."

"Yes, Lord."

Joss slid out of bed and padded to their bags and retrieved her computer. Teche watched her lithe body and not for the first time wondered at how he'd been lucky enough to end up with the twins. Fate is a strange thing, he mused.

He kissed the sleeping Trell on the brow. He caressed her blue-hued skin and breathed in her musky scent. How indeed had he ended up with Ghotti's most trusted servant? She'd been kept informed of her boss's medical condition but had been ordered to keep Teche entertained. She'd thrown herself into that duty with gusto.

Teche climbed out of bed and joined Joss at an ornate *Chripelate* desk. He settled down to study the Velos security reports on Dax, the slave Natu Gelasia and the Solaran Ambassador. He activated his palm-com's holo projector and three-dimensional images of the suspects appeared on the antique coffee table in front of him.

While both women were exceptionally beautiful there was something about the Solaran Ambassador that was particularly striking. Her alabaster skin seemed to shine of its own light. Her radiance lit up every room she entered.

Teche recalled the report of Muss's attempted assassination and reading between the lines, he realized that the warlord had been besotted with the woman. He could understand why. She was an extraordinary beauty. His twin cocks swelled as he studied her figure, her full breasts, trim waist and long legs.

Beside him Joss had stopped her perusal of Ghotti's discs, having noticed Teche's rapt attention and obvious arousal. "She is beautiful, Lord."

"Yes. Yes she is."

She slid her hand along his thigh and grasped his fore cock. He closed his eyes at her silken caress. He leaned back and surrendered himself to her touch.

* * *

Trell treated them to a meal of delicacies Ghotti had imported from Rigel itself; crunchy Psyllid biscuits with Hasiti cream, sweet Chalcids on bread crust, yellow Tachinid topped with salad and live spicy Vastators on a stick. The girls baulked at the latter, which were intact, their long crunchy pincers threatening to nip them on the lips. With a broad smile Teche showed them how to distract the aggressive arthropods with movements of their fingers while they approached with their mouths on the other side. They had rare fun attacking the creatures and reveling in their salty flesh.

Teche could not imagine the prodigious cost of the meal but reasoned the antique business must be lucrative indeed. He was eager to continue his investigation and convinced Trell to take them to the Hellfire Club as soon as they'd finished eating.

Trell led them to the guarded doors of a grandiose sandstone building. "The Hellfire Club," she announced. "It's very select, admittance by invitation only."

Teche nodded. He didn't like dragging the girls through the rough streets populated by pickpockets, drunks and murderers, but they'd assured him they could protect themselves. They carried side arms and he knew they could use them with deadly effect as they'd shown on Velos.

Trell spoke to the doorman, an unusually tall Vampry with rust-colored fur, and slipped a few clits into his palm. The beady eyes gave them the once over before he spoke into a microphone implanted in his wrist and the door swung open. He gave the three females an admiring glance and Teche a scowl as they passed.

An elevator with a Vampry operator stood at the end of a short, dimly lit corridor. Teche dropped his hand to his laser pistol hanging at his belt. Trell said simply "Room 101." The Vampry manually closed the elevator door and punched in the numbers.

After a rapid descent, the elevator lurched to a halt and the attendant opened the doors onto a red velvet room. With easy familiarity, Trell led them to a set of impressively large wooden doors which a young Vampry pushed open with a toothy-grinned flourish.

The auditorium was huge. A semi-circle of tables surrounded a performance floor that was empty at the moment. Teche scanned the softly lit room but saw only fifty or sixty people drinking and talking. No one paid their entrance any attention.

"The Silurian you wish to see," Trell said, "is called Vida Dun."

"And he is your only contact?"

Trell nodded. "He will know the Karacos connection." She pointed to a tall Silurian dressed in a crimson body stocking, sitting on a stool at a pedestal table. The startling outfit accentuated the ichthyosaur's sinuous form. He was sipping from a tumbler of steaming cinder.

"I must leave you now," Trell said suddenly. "My employer has summoned me." She quickly kissed Teche on the lips. "We'll not meet again."

"I'm sorry to say goodbye," he said.

"As I am," she replied and hurriedly kissed the girls on the lips. With a last glance and a wistful smile, she left them.

Teche watched her quick exit. Trell had given him an insight into the crooked world of Ghotti, but that criminal had no further part to play in this investigation. Teche was sure the answers lay by the languid waters of Karacos and this tall Silurian was the key.

Flanked by the girls, Teche strode up to the table. "Vida Dun?"

The Silurian's bulbous eyes ignored Teche, centering instead on Jiss and Joss. "I am he."

"I wish to talk to you of Corridians."

"Buy or sell?"

"Neither."

Dun took a long sip of his cinder. It had stopped steaming and he grimaced. With an arrogant flick of his finned hand, he ordered another from a naked Vampyry waitress. He stared blatantly at the passing female's nipples, which poked provocatively from her furry hide.

His eyes swung back to consider Teche. "Then we have nothing to talk about."

Without invitation, Teche pulled a chair away from the table and with a sweep of his tail, sat down. Jiss and Joss took up positions on either side of his chair, their hands on their pistols. "You sell Corridians to Karacos," he said. "I need to know your customer's name." Teche met his steady gaze.

The Silurian was one ugly bastard. He took a sip of his cold cinder. "That, I cannot do."

"How much?"

"My Seth friend. It is not a question of clits. The information is not for sale. Besides, you reek of Muss. He has no sway here. Before you throw your weight around, remember you have no power here either."

The Silurian's self-assurance was admirable. "I'm not without influence."

"Less than you think."

"Your ships are not, I believe, registered as unlawful. *Yet.*"

"That is so."

"I can change that."

The Silurian hissed in laughter. "An empty threat. I have protection, my Seth friend. Nothing you can do can hurt me."

Teche didn't doubt it and regretted his heavy handed approach. "Information is all I seek. That cannot be worth the inconvenience I will cause you. I represent Dantilus Muss himself."

The Silurian laughed again but said nothing. Accepting a drink from the waitress, he threw her a handful of coins and turned back to give Teche the blankest of stares.

"You have nothing to protect," Teche continued. "Your trade in Corridians is at an end. Ghotti is no longer of any value to you. Muss will have his head on a pike and his liver on a biscuit if he ever leaves here. The Corridian trade is mixed up with *his* crime. Don't make yourself part of it. Muss *will* put a stop to you if you do not help me."

The Silurian's face didn't flicker, but after a second he held up his webbed hands in surrender. "I cannot give you a name because I simply do not know it. Orders are placed anonymously and the payments are untraceable. That is all I can tell you." He leaned forward so that his scaly face was only centimeters away. As he stared into the dead gray eyes, Teche could smell the stink of his breath. "Seth friend. You meddle in things that you do not understand. There are people behind the Corridian trade who have more power than you can possibly imagine."

"Why do you say that? What do you know?"

"The Corridians, Seth friend. They are delivered to me by *Marines*."

"Marines?"

"They disguise themselves. Pretend to be slavers. But I can smell the stink of military discipline from a hundred paces. And the sonic manacles they use are standard Rigellian Navy issue. I should know, I've been in enough of them."

The lights dimmed even further and a spotlight centered on the crimson curtains. "Ah. The show is about to start. Join me."

Teche settled back in his chair. He needed some time to think and this was as good a time as any. He looked to Jiss and nodded. She and her sister sat down on the spare chairs on either side of him. He motioned to a waitress and ordered three cinders.

The curtains rose, revealing a transparent platform hovering a meter above the floor. Reclining provocatively at its center was a most stunning female creature. It was a Rodite. Teche had never seen one in the flesh before and was immediately captivated by its surreal beauty.

Teche watched in fascination as the Rodite's fingers massaged the inner lining of her pussy. By massaging the upper interior she allowed the clit to escape its hiding place. As it extended its two arms, the crura which usually lay beneath the labia majora formed the shape of a wishbone, fully twenty centimeters long. To the thunderous applause of the crowd, the Rodite applied the head of the wishbone to her open vagina. Then, to the collective gasp of the audience, it proceeded to fuck itself with its own clitoris.

The show was mesmerizing. Teche couldn't help but be aroused. The Rodite moaned as she thrust her clitoris into her glistening pussy. Joss slid her hand beneath his kilt to grasp his fore cock. He glanced at her and smiled, but the smile froze on his lips.

At the far side of the room a familiar figure had entered the auditorium. She was disguised, her hair shaved short and her skimpy clothes made her resemble a slut from one of those annoying Solaran holo-vids. Teche recognized her regardless of the disguise, noting the imperious stride and the glowing skin.

He watched as the beautiful Solaran and her pretty Sirian companion paused to watch the show. However, at the beckoning of a Vampy, they reluctantly resumed their approach to a staircase that led up to the glass office perched high above the auditorium.

Excitement flooded Teche's system. What was *she* up to?

Chapter 9

Geena

With their new Karacos Sex Worker's Union membership cards safely in their purses, the tall lustrous-skinned Solaran and the coquettish three-breasted Sirian reached the main entrance of the Hellfire Club. The doorman waved them through and they found their way to one of the many bars.

"We're looking for Brak Contek," Geena said to the Vampry barman. He looked them over, his dead eyes taking in their revealing attire. The name the Silurian pilot had given them was recognized and the barman tilted his head to the elevator. "Room 101."

The huge wooden double doors opened into an auditorium filled with over two hundred tables and a dozen bars set in a semi-circle about a large performance area. A tall, blue-faced Altairan dressed in burgundy livery asked their business. Geena leaned over close to his face to shout Brak Contek's name. He directed them toward a flight of ornate stairs that led to a glass office suspended in midair at the back of the auditorium.

As they walked toward the stairs, Geena surveyed the amazing scene. The crowd consisted of dozens of species and resembled a galactic trade conference. Among the ubiquitous Vamprys, there were Solarans, Altairans, Cetians, Capellans, Sagitarians, Pleideans, Rigellians and even a couple of Velosians.

Then, there was the floor show itself. A naked Rodite was reclining on a transparent platform, hovering in the middle of the dance floor. The performer was the most beautiful specimen of womanhood Geena had ever seen. The body was in perfect proportion, the face symmetrical, her curvaceous legs long and tapering. The twin globes of her breasts sat high on her chest, the wasp waist flaring out to wide hips. The Rodite's skin was a golden honey and the long hair was the color of space.

Almond eyes flirted with the audience and the full, red lips pouted provocatively, but Geena perceived a hint of loneliness, a certain sadness. What was such a gorgeous creature doing here in this cesspit?

Geena knew the Rodites were a solitary breed of hermaphrodites from a singularly inhospitable world. Fiercely territorial, they killed each other with greater ferocity than even humans. They'd been bred as self-fertilizing and the performer was now demonstrating that remarkable talent for the hushed crowd.

The scene was being filmed and projected onto the wall behind it, so the crowd could see every gynecological detail. The Rodite's pussy was glistening wet and the clit, when it emerged from its cunt, was coated in its own juices.

Both Geena and Lidi had stopped short at the sheer novelty of the display. Lidi had gasped aloud. "Ricia," she said.

"Who?"

"Just someone I know, I think."

"You're kidding. You know a Rodite?"

"When I was younger."

Geena laughed. "When was that? Yesterday?"

Lidi smiled. "It's a long story."

Their Vampy guide urged them onward and reluctantly they resumed their way up the flight of stairs to the office.

A dark-haired Solaran was seated behind a desk equipped with dozens of holographic monitors. His sharp, plebian nose and pointy chin indicated he was from old Terran stock. His bright green eyes suggested a Solaran influence as well, probably from one of the founding families. Contek was obviously the black sheep of the family.

"Brak Contek, I presume," Geena said.

The green eyes studied her. Without comment, he motioned toward two chairs. "And you're trying to sell Gasper," he said once they settled.

"News travels fast."

"Gasper is a rare commodity."

"It has remarkable powers," Lidj volunteered enthusiastically. "It can reduce any sentient being to a sex machine with no inhibitions who will fuck anything that moves."

"I am aware of its reputation," he responded coolly. "It is the stuff of legends. I believe you have a significant supply."

"We do," Geena said. "At the right price."

"I don't believe in buying something without seeing it function."

Lidj held out a vial. "You'd like a try?"

He smiled. "My body is my temple. I do not ingest substances when I have no idea of their quality or safety."

"It is of the highest quality," Geena assured him.

"I'm sure. But can you offer a guarantee?" He laughed, a brittle, humorless sound, and his eyes traveled out the window of his office, settling on the crowd below. "But I will accept a demonstration."

Geena looked down at the multi-species audience. The Rodite was nearing the climax of its act.

"A demonstration?"

"The show is nearing its end. In an hour there will be a new crowd. I will cancel the Rodite's next performance. There will be over a hundred people to whom you will administer a dose of Gasper. I will gauge the results and decide the price I am willing to pay."

"You want us to try it on unsuspecting patrons?"

"They're here for a sex show. They'll get a little extra for their money."

Geena looked to Lidj who nodded enthusiastically. "It's been proven safe on all species," she said huskily.

"I expect you to administer it to yourselves, of course."

Geena's pussy throbbed. She'd already experienced the heady effect of Lidj's pheromones. She wondered at the effect the synthesized aphrodisiac would have on her. She didn't like the idea of subjecting unwitting patrons to Gasper's powerful effects. "We don't intend to waste our product in so profligate a manner," she said.

"You *are* confident of your product, aren't you?" he asked. "Surely, there is no problem?" He made a show of pressing a stud on the table. The office door opened and an Altairan goon armed with a pulse rifle stepped in. He took up a sentry position by the door.

"None at all," Lidj said, not needing the explicit threat of violence. Her face was already flushed with unmitigated lust.

Contek's lips curled into a knowing smile. "So, how do you administer it?"

Lidj extracted an atomizer spray from her backpack and attached it to a vial. "Gasper acts on the membranes associated with smell. Regardless of the mechanism, if the individual can smell, even taste the air with its tongue, the Gasper will have an effect. Thus, it is delivered as an inhalant." She snapped the atomizer shut. "This vial has over two thousand doses. The atomizer delivers the smallest standard dose that has been found to cause an effect on all species."

"Some species have different requirements?"

"Dependent on body weight..."

"Do people develop an addiction?"

"Only to sex," Lidj said with a smile. "No studies have indicated that it is addictive. It doesn't build tolerances and metabolizes within two hours and has no side effects."

Contek rubbed his chin speculatively. "The perfect stimulant?"

Geena saw where he was heading. "Its difficulty in manufacture ensures that it will remain a boutique item."

"Yet you have so much."

"It has taken us a long time to accumulate."

"Yet, you want to fund a trip to Karacos with the proceeds. That appears to be a waste. I'm intrigued."

"That is our business."

He smiled. "Of course. Forgive me. I shouldn't pry. It was rude of me. Now, let me get you a drink while we wait for your demonstration."

Geena didn't like the look in his eye. How much he knew about the synthesis of Gasper, she'd no way of knowing. But if he found out how easily it was manufactured, a secret the Sirians had kept for centuries, then Lidj, or her kind, wouldn't be safe anywhere in the galaxy.

A semi-naked Altairan female brought steaming glasses of cinder and put them on Contek's desk. She handed out the drinks, her pneumatic breasts bobbling for Contek's pleasure. "To a successful demonstration," he toasted.

Geena met his eyes over the rim of her glass. His expression sent a shudder down her spine.

* * *

The cancellation of the Rodite's next performance was met with a disappointed roar from the crowd. The promise of even better entertainment, once they settled back and had a free drink, brought a subdued but acquiescent cheer.

Each armed with a vial of Gasper, Geena and Lidj made their way between the tables, surreptitiously spraying as they went.

As she approached the table occupied by a Silurian, two Velosians and a muscular Rigellian, Geena felt a familiar pulse of lust in her groin. Ever since her encounter with Dantilus Muss where he'd so brutally taken her in both her holes, she'd fantasized of repeating the encounter. Even her desire to fuck Lars hadn't replaced her lust for another taste of the Rigellian organs which had filled her so completely.

She noticed that he'd noticed her. He held her gaze for a moment with his intense reptilian eyes before she looked away. She felt his eyes following her as she went around the room.

Lidj had said Gasper took only a few seconds to take effect. She'd noticed that the tables that had received the first doses had quieted, their conversations adopting a more intimate tone.

When they completed their circuit of the auditorium, Geena looked up to Contek's office. He stood at the window watching. He motioned to his nose, reminding them that they must also apply the aphrodisiac to themselves.

Lidj did so without demur. Geena hesitated. She was already feeling its effects. Her mouth became very dry. If she tried to speak, Geena was sure her voice would be husky. Her nipples were hard and poking through her thin blouse. Her pussy was pulsing rhythmically, her inner lips engorging with blood. She was already very, very wet.

She held the vial to her face and pretended to pump the nozzle. She was sure she'd inhaled some of Lidj's. Her face flushed and the pulsing in her groin quickened. The very air took on a sparkling aspect and around her, the faces of the various men softened. Where there'd once been rough-hewn countenances, there was now a plethora of desirable and sensual faces.

"Get ready," Lidj said. "Your lust will know no bounds. You'll want to fuck anything with a penis, and if there were no men in the room no table leg would be safe."

Geena laughed, her throat thick. Her nipples were burning, crying out for a touch. Her hand was at her crotch. Abruptly, she reached out and grabbed Lidj by the shoulder, spinning her around so she could kiss her full on the mouth.

Lidj responded immediately. Geena pushed her tongue into the unresisting mouth as she groped clumsily at her three breasts. Lidj was doing the same, one hand clutching at her breast and the other finding Geena's pussy.

Around them, other bodies joined in various configurations. The air was thick with the arousal of a dozen species, all bent on fucking whoever was closest. Geena experienced a moment of panic, afraid she'd be swept away in all this sex and never find her way back.

And then, suddenly, beside her was the hulking Rigellian. Geena almost swooned as his strong hands separated her from Lidj. In a single graceful motion, he'd given the Sirian to his sexy Velosian companions who immediately began kissing her neck and removing her blouse, so they could have full access to her three breasts.

Geena was overwhelmed by the Rigellian's piercing gaze. His lusty eyes captured her, holding her in thrall so that she stood waiting for his next move. His twin

cocks pushed his kilt aside and their steel-like shafts prodded her thigh. She opened her legs to him, surrendering herself, willing him to fuck her with those glorious twin organs.

She lifted her head to be kissed. The Rigellian, for a moment, seemed to resist. He seemed to pull back his head and clamp his mouth shut. A thought that he didn't like humans flashed through her mind. Or perhaps he was rebelling against his reason being usurped by this strange compunction to fuck everything alive in the room.

Geena's need became undeniably urgent. She grasped his smooth, scaly head and pulled him down to her. Cupping her hands around his ear holes, she pulled his lips to hers. She opened her mouth wantonly and licked his thick lips. Then she pushed against them with the tip of her tongue, trying to part them and enter his mouth.

Still, he resisted as if he was fighting the conflict in his mind. Then, to her joy, his mouth opened and her tongue sank into the warm cavern of his mouth.

His tongue seemed to grasp and wrap itself around her searching organ. His sweet mouth reminded her of honey and then she was lost in an ocean of sensation. He slipped his hands inside her blouse and massaged her breasts. Her body dissolved at his touch, her pussy aflame.

Her body wanted to fuck this strong, overpowering creature but her conscious mind wanted to make love. To take it slow... to...

His hands ripped away her blouse and shredded her tunic. Without undergarments, her pussy was naked and open. Hands, unseen hands, groped her thigh. Her Rigellian lover hissed and the hands retreated.

His hungry mouth claimed hers again and he lowered her to the floor. She stopped him with a hand against his broad, hard chest. She wanted those glorious cocks in her mouth first. She dragged her lips from his and slid them down his neck, to his smooth chest, his hard abdomen. When she got to his kilt, he released its ornate buckle and it fell to the floor.

She noticed the belt that remained firmly around his tight waist and the holstered pistol that hung from it, but she ignored them. She continued her journey

straight to his groin. She'd dreamed of sucking these amazing organs and now, she had them within reach. She gripped his thighs for balance as her knees settled on the floor.

His twin cocks were throbbing and she took a moment to study them. They were thick and engorged with blood, throbbing with his heartbeat. Apart from the duplication, they resembled oversized human cocks consisting of a shaft topped by a bulbous arrowhead. The differences lay in the detail. The mottled olive color she found attractive, and the ridge around the head was, on close inspection, not smooth as in human cocks but knobby. The knobs were iridescent shades of emerald and cobalt. She gasped, for as she watched, the knobs changed color, becoming red, orange and deep green. How beautiful. The knobs mirrored the color cells on his eye ridges which changed hue according to his mood.

The scales along the shaft were so tightly locked that beneath her fingers she couldn't feel where one scale ended and another began. His cock was as smooth as silk. Her pussy pulsed, her clit aching as she caressed the slippery shaft.

She stretched out her tongue and licked the swollen head of the fore cock. It pulsed so violently beneath her tongue, she jumped in surprise. She wanted to lick the shaft all the way down to the ball sac and then up the length of the second cock.

But she couldn't restrain herself. She plunged her mouth down over the organ, taking its length inside her mouth and down her throat until its bulbous tip prodded the back of her mouth.

He grasped her by the temples and held her head in place over his groin, not allowing her to retreat. Geena's mind was awash with conflicting impulses. At first, she wanted to pull her mouth away from him to breathe. Yet, she thrilled at being able to accommodate him for so long. Her head swam and she fisted the second cock and stroked it vigorously. She heard him groan and his cock pulsed gratefully inside her throat.

Hot flashes cascaded along Geena's spinal cord. She was so hot! She reached down and rubbed her swollen, throbbing clit. Her pussy was wet and her fingers slipped easily inside to massage her aching cunt.

The Rigellian released her and, gasping for breath, she withdrew her head. She took a deep breath and resumed her assault on his cock. The velvety skin of the shaft surrounding the rock hard length slid silkily along the sensitive lining of her mouth. She stretched wide to accommodate him and the burgeoning head of his phallus once again stroked the back of her throat.

She pushed back against his restraining hands and began a rapid fucking movement with her mouth, simulating what she hoped his cocks would soon do to her nether regions. The thought made her cunt clench around her fingers.

His cocks were rock hard and throbbing. His thighs trembled. With a roar, he pushed her head away and, dropping to the floor, pulled her on top of him.

She was ready. Instinctively, she straddled his thighs, squatting over his straining organs. His strong hands gripped her hips and he pulled her savagely down onto him. Instantly, her cunt and ass were pierced by those glorious twin cocks. She fell on them till her buttocks slapped his smooth scaly groin.

He thrust upward at the same moment, forcing his groin hard into her, his cocks buried to the balls. The fore cock was so deep within her cunt and the back cock filled her asshole. Her body tensed as she approached the first orgasm. Her cunt clenched the shaft of his fore cock and her ass tightened around his second cock. Beneath her he bucked, increasing the vigor of his double-poled thrusting.

Then he kissed her.

She came suddenly. Violently. Her whole body clenched in a gut-wrenching spasm.

Inside her, as if in perfect harmony, his cocks pumped in unison and she felt a glut of warmth in both cunt and ass and she milked his pumping organs until his hot seed leaked out onto her inner thighs.

Finally she collapsed onto his broad chest, their hearts pounding against each other through the walls of their breasts. Gasping for breath, she kissed his smooth neck, running her tongue along the edges of his scales, bathing in the incredible warmth of his skin.

She opened her eyes languidly. Beside them, Lidge was fucking a Silurian, his long wiry cock a blur between her legs. Lidge's face was obscured by one of the Velosians who knelt over her face. The Velosian was in turn being fucked in the ass by some unseen male. It was a tangled confusion of flesh.

Geena's pussy pulsed at the sight and she adjusted her belly around his reawakening cocks. Her motions increased and he hardened even more.

She found a pussy in easy reach of her mouth and she lapped at the warm wetness with abandon. She came a second and third time. Then the Rigellian flooded her body again with his gushing seed.

Her body was alive with sensation. Lips and tongues tugged at her breasts. Cocks thrust mindlessly into her mouth, cunt and ass. It seemed to go on for an eternity.

Chapter 10

Teche

Teche groaned as his cocks erupted again and he sighed when a profound relaxation swept over him. He opened his eyes to see the Solaran lapping enthusiastically at Jiss's pussy. Beside her, Joss was being fucked by the Rodite.

He watched in fascination as the creature's clit expanded and like a writhing snake, extended itself to enter the Velosian's wide, open vagina. Joss arched her back in sheer pleasure as the organ filled and stretched her pussy.

Joss came, her body shuddering violently, and the Rodite emitted a loud groan as it pulled out of her pussy to come. The base of its clit/cock pulsated and Teche groaned in vicarious pleasure as the strange organ spurted a plume of cream over Joss's heaving stomach.

A moment of clarity came to his mind. He disengaged from the Solaran and caught Joss's eye, motioning her closer. She reluctantly pushed the Rodite away and joined him. He glanced at the Sirian. Lidj instantly understood what he intended. Jiss signaled the Solaran woman as soon as she looked up.

Suspicion swept across her face. She stood up so that she was eye to eye with Teche.

Teche smiled. She was the most amazing human he'd ever seen. Her lustrous skin was glorious. He pulled her to him and kissed her full on the lips. She responded hungrily.

"Madam Ambassador," he said when he broke the kiss. "His Highness Dantilus Muss sends his regards."

Her eyes snapped open.

"He still lives. I see the news surprises you."

She squirmed within his arms.

"Such is his respect and admiration that he has sent me across the galaxy to escort you back to Velos. He wishes to... honor... you."

"Impale me, you mean." She struggled but he held her so she couldn't move more than a centimeter.

"Madam, I regret my duty."

Hope flashed across her eyes followed closely by suspicion. "Then release us."

"I am afraid I cannot."

"I thought as much. Compassion is a Rigellian gem difficult to find."

Unaccountably his ego was hurt by the insult. "I am responsible for lives other than my own."

His voice, he knew, betrayed his reluctance. She ceased her struggling and her eyes narrowed as she studied his face. "Who are you?"

He pulled the ambassador in reach of his cocks. She opened her legs and he easily entered both her cunt and ass once more. "Pos Teche," he said as he pushed his cocks deeper inside her.

"Pos Teche," she repeated as if tasting his name. "I have important things to do."

He gripped her tightly by the waist. "On Karacos?" he guessed.

She raised an elegant eyebrow. "What do you know of Corridian slaves?" she asked in turn.

"I know of them."

"Then you know we have to stop it. It's cruel..."

He withdrew his cocks so that the heads were nestled in her pussy lips. Then suddenly, he thrust hard into her again. She grunted and smiled.

"Madam, I am aware of the problem. Unfortunately, I can do nothing but my duty."

She let out a whimper as his fore cock pressed against her G-spot. "What do you intend?"

"Regrettably, I must take you back to Muss."

She rotated her hips to maximize the pressure of his cock inside her pussy. "You don't like your warlord leader."

"He is the most powerful warlord in this sector."

"And you are a Seth. It can't be easy for you."

He smiled in admiration. Despite being captured, she still attempted to reach him as an individual and in that way bend his will into betraying Muss. A born negotiator, she was undoubtedly skillful. No wonder Muss had fallen for her so easily. "My troubles are my own."

His thrusting gained pace. The warm juices of her pussy and the tightness of her ass were bringing him close to the edge of orgasm.

"I would like to share them. To ease your burden," she said.

He believed her because the expression told him that her words surprised her too. "Madam. In another time, another place, perhaps."

Joss nudged his arm. "Lord Teche."

He followed her glance. The ambassador's companion, the young Sirian, had her arm wrapped around Jiss's unsuspecting neck. Behind her, held so Jiss could not see, was a table knife. Teche's stomach fell.

He gritted his teeth in frustration. The ambassador had flirtatiously occupied his attention while gaining an advantage. He'd committed the sin of underestimating her. "Madam. I would like to declare a truce."

The ambassador frowned. "Pos Teche, you are a rarity of your breed. Your brethren would sacrifice a member of an enslaved race without thinking."

He shrugged. "No more unique than you, Madam. Shall we continue?" he said, moving his cocks slightly inside her.

She signaled to Lidj to put the knife down. "Oh, yes. Let's continue for awhile, and then, sadly, we shall leave."

"I regret that, Madam. Truly, I do. But I have a feeling we'll meet again."

Chapter 11

Lars

Lars scowled. A mob of bustling Vamprys, cleaning up after the riotous orgy that had occurred during the previous performance, swept across his line of sight. Lars couldn't take his eyes off the dark-haired beauty sitting in a booth at the opposite side of the auditorium. Despite the dim lighting he was certain the woman was Mira.

There was no mistaking the shape of her face, the high cheekbones, those full lips and glorious hair. She was wearing lurid makeup. She was in disguise, he guessed.

He'd last seen her in that confused and brain numbing eternity of his return through the null space tunnel. She'd been the beacon that had guided him home, the vision of love that had kept his heart beating despite the killing pain. His ruined shoulders throbbed at that memory.

But that was then and this was now. Mira was sitting in deep conversation with a tall dark-haired and manifestly handsome human. Jealousy swept through him like a cold alpine wind.

He motioned toward them. "Who's that?" he asked Namor.

Namor laughed. "That's the famous Jack Light. A Solaran pirate, the scourge of the Rigellian Navy."

Lars nodded. He'd heard of the exploits of the rogue pilot and his bloody reputation. It was said he had no conscience. Yet, he was sitting alone with Mira. Lars quickly scanned the room for bodyguards but could see no one obvious. The pirate was either completely reckless, or he was so feared none dared touch him. "How do you know him?"

"We served together on the *Majestic*. I always suspected he was a spook."

"A spy?"

"Of some sort. Never gave a straight answer to anything. He's a hit with the ladies though. Inside two weeks, he'd fucked every female on board and they all thought they were the only one." He whistled. "He has a beauty with him there. I wonder who she is."

"So, that's her," Astrid said, not bothering to hide her sarcasm. She took a sip of her steaming cinder. Lars picked up his glass without taking his eyes off Mira.

"Who?" Namor asked her.

"I'm guessing it's the famous Mira. Her hair's a little different from the hologram I've seen and she's colored her skin, but from Lars' rapt expression, it has to be her."

Lars ignored her. Mira and the pirate spoke intimately, their eyes locked together. A hot flame of jealousy rushed through him as the pirate bent over her and kissed her full on the mouth. She didn't resist and the kiss lingered.

"It doesn't matter, Lars," Astrid said softly as she pried open his fist and extracted the glass of cinder before it shattered. "Keep focused. We're here for Elenii and the others. Okay? They need us, Lars. Mira's taking care of herself."

He couldn't take his eyes from the kissing couple. Grasping him by the face with both hands, Astrid turned him toward her, fixing him with her eyes. "Get a grip!"

He tried to read her expression to get his mind off Mira. Astrid's anger seemed to dissipate and her expression softened. "Oh, Lars, you idiot."

Suddenly, she kissed him. Her full lips clamped over his mouth, her tongue forcing him to open his own lips. His cock thickened.

Lars needed her to save him from himself. He wrapped his arms about her, drawing her hard into his body. He felt tears unaccountably streaming down his face. To give up Mira, once and for all... It was the hardest thing he'd ever attempted in his life. Yet, he thought it the ultimate betrayal.

He concentrated on Astrid's body, her breasts pressing against his chest, her thighs hard against his own, her tongue writhing sensually inside his mouth.

"Lars," Namor said, interrupting their passion. "Peny tells me she's located *Mjolnir*. It's in an orbital parking lot, going by the name *Thor's Hammer*."

Lars broke the kiss immediately. He stroked the line of her jaw. "We must go."

Astrid licked her lips, her eyes wide open. "I hope your cabin on *Mjolnir* has a double bunk."

"Astrid..."

She nodded grimly. "I know, I know. Stay focused."

He looked to Namor. "Is the ship intact?"

"There were no entries against its name. Normal stores replenishment. Penry tells me they bought a couple of jet pack thrusters."

Lars gave a slight smile. Acron had promised Geena he'd buy one in case a torpedo ever snuck into their null space envelope again and someone without wings had to go out to destroy it.

Excitement at being reunited with his ship and crew displaced some of the hurt caused by Mira's betrayal. He stopped himself. Was it really betrayal? They had expressed love, but no commitment. She was a free agent. Perhaps she was here with the pirate trying to get back to *Mjolnir*.

He stood up suddenly. "We need to know what they're up to."

Astrid glared at him. "Do we really need them at all?"

"Of course. When Namor gets us to Karacos, I'll want them to be ready to come get us once we locate Elenii."

"Are you sure about this plan?"

"It worked before."

"I'm not Mira. I don't play the role of slave convincingly."

"That's the point. Namor here has kidnapped you, hearing that they pay well for Corridians. Just be your normally charming self and they'll buy it."

"And you'll be doing what?"

"I'll be your handler."

"I don't like it. It's too loose. You're not thinking straight! You're too focused on Mira."

She was right, of course. It wasn't much of a plan. It was doomed to failure. When he'd first outlined it to her, he meant it as a starting point, hoping that when he found *Mjolnir* and the others, he'd be able to come up with something better.

"This plan," she continued, "with me acting as a slave is just ludicrous. We'd never pull it off. Even if we got through to anywhere near Karacos and got into trouble, your precious *Mjolnir* wouldn't be able to come get us."

"Do you have a better plan?" he spat.

"I do. We need to find out where the slaves are being taken. Karacos is a water world. There are thousands of islands. Which one is the slave pen is not something we can discover once we're on the ground. We need to get hold of a pilot who flies there and..."

"... and?"

"Beat him around the head until he talks."

"And if that fails?"

"I'll blow his dick off!"

Lars held her eyes for a moment before laughing out loud. "You're serious."

"Never doubt me."

"So how do you plan to get hold of this pilot?"

"I met him at the bar, while you were making goo-goo eyes at Mira."

"He flies to Karacos?"

"He's a Rigellian navigator. Dissatisfied, overlooked for promotion for the fifth straight year..."

"Not much of a navigator then."

She kissed him. "That's more like it. That's the Lars I remember."

"We'll figure something out..." he began when a laser bolt arced through the room from the main entrance. "Wait!"

She ducked as another energy bolt sliced over their heads. Suddenly, a Rigellian and two incredibly attractive Velosians sprinted into the room. More laser bolts followed them and they returned fire over their shoulders as they ran.

"Get down!" the Rigellian shouted and pushed several patrons, frozen in mid conversation, to the floor.

People began screaming and ducking for cover. Some pulled over tables to make flimsy barricades and drew their weapons in self-defense.

Lars did the same. He pushed their table over in front of them as a shield and pulled Astrid down to the floor.

"What the hell's going on?" she yelled.

"Some local problem," Namor said as he drew his weapon. "We best not get involved."

A ricochet from a great mirror zipped past them and disintegrated a chunk of the wall behind them.

"How can we *not* get involved?" Astrid laughed and drew her pistol.

Lars desperately scanned the unfolding mayhem to locate Mira. The table she and the other Solaran had been sitting at had been turned over. He could no longer see them.

Then, through the main entrance, a group of Vamprys armed with laser rifles pushed through the crowd. They were shooting indiscriminately, not caring who they hit.

Lars saw the Rigellian take aim at the ceiling and a couple well-aimed shots destroyed the lights, plunging the room into semi-darkness.

Astrid pulled on his arm. "Lars! Come on, let's get out of here!"

"Wait," he said, letting his eyes adjust. He started running in a crouch toward where he'd last seen Mira.

"Wait!" It was Astrid clutching his arm. "Lars. We can't afford to get mixed up in whatever Mira is doing. She has her own agenda, and it doesn't include finding Elenii. You have to realize that!"

He shook her off. "She knows Elenii! She was on the same slave ship."

"That was just a story, Lars. Surely you realize that. How can you be so blind?"

"Go back to the ship with Namor. I'll be there directly."

"I'm not leaving you!"

"Go!"

She slapped him hard across the face. "No one orders me to do anything. I am a commander in the Corridian Marines. You're a mere citizen. I outrank you. Now come with me!"

For a moment he forgot their surroundings and saw, for the first time, who she actually was. The consummate professional. She'd tolerated his stupidity out of loyalty. But she was on a sacred mission to rescue or avenge her kind. She was as selfless as she was determined.

He knew she was right. Yet, he couldn't explain why he had to get to Mira despite the danger. "Please, Astrid. Let me do this one thing. You know I won't let Elenii or Vidar down..."

"To hell with Vidar! I'm worried about you, Lars. You've lost your senses over this... this... human. She's a liar and who knows what else. Since you lost your wings, you've been acting delusional. You can't go on like this. Your decision making is impaired. You're moody and secretive."

She was right. Mira was a liar. Right from the start she'd lied to him. It was only that single fact about Elenii, her injured foot, that proved she knew her. If Astrid was correct and Mira had another agenda, what could it be? And who was that pirate really? "I think Jack Light knows something," he shouted over a dull explosion from the entrance door. Someone had released a concussion grenade.

She clutched at his arm. "No. Lars. Don't mess this up."

"Namo said he was a pirate. Pirates are involved in slave running. Besides, if what you say is true, then Mira knows something as well. We have to find out what that is."

Lars looked across the darkened auditorium. People were trying to escape by making a break for the emergency exits and were being caught in the crossfire. A laser bolt shattered the pillar above their heads, showering them with fragments of concrete.

"I have to go!"

“Lars! No!”

He shrugged off her restraining hand and set off to find Mira.

Chapter 12

Geena

Geena's heart was cleaved in two when Pos Teche left.

She followed his progress toward the auditorium door as he led his Velosian companions away. He was being true to his word and didn't attempt to arrest them for Dantilus Muss. He was risking public impalement by doing so. He turned and a smile crossed that handsome face. She slowly raised her hand and waved goodbye.

"I thought you hated Rigellians," Lidj said when Teche had disappeared through the door.

"They're not all the same," she replied. She took a deep breath to clear her head. She glanced up to the glass office. "Contek is waiting."

"I don't trust him."

"Impressive demonstration," he said as they entered his office. His skintight trousers were open and he was languidly stroking his thick flaccid cock. Movement behind her proved to be a pretty and very naked Altairan who was busy wiping her mouth.

"Do we have a deal?" Geena asked.

"Certainly," he said. "Give me your account code and the deal is done." He took his hand off his cock and motioned to a com-unit.

Geena punched in the numbers. "I'll need to verify the money has been paid."

"Certainly."

When Talon confirmed the money had gone into their account she nodded to Lidj. The Sirian dropped the satchel containing the vials of Gasper onto his desk. "The atomizers are there as well."

"Thank you. Do you need an escort?"

Geena eyed him suspiciously. "That won't be necessary."

"Havensafe can be a very dangerous place to the uninitiated."

"We can take care of ourselves."

A sly smile crossed his face and he nodded. The door of his office burst open and three large Vamprys entered, guns drawn. Behind them the naked Altairan poked the barrel of a gun in Geena's back. "Your weapons please," she said in a singsong voice.

"What's this? I thought we were dealing with an honorable thief."

"Gasper is such a wonderful drug that I wish to go into its manufacture."

"I don't know how to make it," Lidj said defiantly.

"Oh, but I think you do."

"You're wasting your time," Geena countered. "We stole the drug from a Sirian cargo ship."

"Perhaps. We'll find out soon enough. I have an employee who is adept at extracting the truth."

"Our friends will come for us."

"Friends do not trouble me."

"They are military trained."

He motioned to the Vamprys. "As are mine." He pointed to them. "You know where to take them."

"You're making a big mistake!"

Contek picked up a vial of Gasper and studied it. "No. It is you who were in error for ever coming to Havensafe."

"What are we going to do?" Lidj whispered as the thugs escorted them from Contek's office.

"Let me think," Geena said. Suddenly, as they paused on the first landing of the staircase, she was blinded by a laser bolt. Down below them Teche and the girls rushed in, guns drawn, laser bolts following them like angry fireflies. Teche pushed patrons aside like they were dolls, creating a path for the girls to follow. Teche yelled something and the trio dived behind an overturned table.

Their guards had crouched low at first sight of the firefight and were no longer watching them. Geena caught Lidi's eye and winked at her. Lidi nodded and as one, they got behind the guards and, planting their feet squarely in the center of their backs, pushed them over the stairs.

The guards grunted and tumbled heavily onto the floor. By the time they'd come to a dazed stop, Geena and Lidi were down the stairs and past them. They crossed the floor quickly before diving behind the table to take cover with Teche.

"Returned so soon?" she said as she landed beside him.

"Madam, I'd travel the length of the galaxy to be with you."

She laughed as a bolt shattered the edge of the stone pillar beside her head, showering her with stony shards. "Friends of yours?"

"So it appears."

"Then they seem intent on ending the friendship."

Teche quickly scanned the room. Tables and chairs were strewn about as people fled in panic. Another bolt zipped close by. Too close. Teche looked to the ceiling and, taking quick aim, shot out the lights.

"So, what's the plan?" Geena asked as Teche gave her his spare pistol.

"I was hoping the assailant of the great Dantilus Muss would have one."

"That was my zenith, I fear," she said as she fired a wild shot at a dark shape gliding toward them. The Vamprys had taken to the air.

Teche fired at the same creature and scored a hit. The dead Vampry tumbled out of the air and fell a few meters away. Jiss scrambled toward it. She pried its pulse rifle from its dead grasp and was turning back when a shape swooped from behind them, gathering her slight body up in its arms.

"Jiss!" Teche cried as he fired. The creature was hit and tumbled out of control, its burden making it impossible to fly. In the dim light, Geena saw the Velosian fall into a pile of tables and chairs.

Teche was up and running toward her immediately.

"Lidi! Stay here!" Geena said as she followed the Rigellian into the darkness.

In the flashes of laser bolts she followed him as he picked his way between debris and bodies that littered the floor. Rigellians must have enhanced eyesight because he didn't misstep once.

He crouched beside the unconscious Velosian and cradled her in his arms. Geena had just reached their side when a pair of Vamprys dropped onto them from the air.

Geena grunted in anger as the armored Vampry careered into her. Her gun was wedged beneath their bodies and all she could do was writhe ineffectually beneath it. Beside her, she could hear Teche fight for his life as two more of the creatures pounced.

And then suddenly, from nowhere, another figure was amongst them. The ferocity with which he fought was terrifying. Geena only saw fragments of the melee, but the body fluids which splattered her face were testimony of the bloody fury of the attack.

The dead Vampry, which a moment ago had been pinning her to the floor, was hurled away and now the figure, human by the look of it, was standing toe to toe with Teche as they beat the remaining three Vamprys to a pulp.

"I thank you, stranger," Teche said as they carried Jiss to the relative security of the redoubt that Lidge and Joss had built. "I am Pos Teche. Who are you?"

The stranger hesitated as he looked to the other side of the auditorium. Geena imagined the thin cadaverous man to be searching for someone. "Call me Thor," he said huskily and then was gone.

"I shall repay this debt!" Teche called behind him.

Geena lay panting beside Jiss who was slowly coming to her senses. She considered the stranger and it was too late when the significance of his name occurred to her. Pos Teche was staring after the stranger as well and she realized he was asking himself the same questions.

"There is an emergency exit to our left," Teche said. "About sixty meters. We must try for it."

Geena looked in that direction but could not penetrate the darkness. Another laser bolt crashed into a wall close by. "If you say so!"

Teche fired into the air and another Vampry crashed into the floor. "We must go now!" Teche called and, picking the semi-conscious Jiss up in one arm, began running into the darkness.

"Come on!" Geena called to the others.

Laser bolts flashed between them as they sprinted toward the wall. Geena ignored the laser blasts and kept her eyes fixed firmly on Teche's broad back. He reached the door. He punched the door controls, but the doors remained stubbornly closed.

Geena crashed into the wall beside him, followed within seconds by Joss and Lidj. A laser bolt bore into the wall at her shoulder and she turned and fired into the swarm of Vamprys that flitted about them. The air was rent with screams of pain.

"What do we do now?"

"Over here."

Lidj shouted in recognition. "Ricia?"

"My friend, follow me."

They scrambled through the overturned tables to a side door. Ricia used a security card to open the lock. "Follow me."

"One day you'll have to explain this to me," Geena said to Lidj.

"It's a long story," Lidj replied.

The Rodite shut the door behind them.

"Thank you," Teche said to her.

Ricia shot Teche a withering look. The Rodite clearly didn't like Rigellians.

"I will lead you to the airlock," Ricia said pointedly to Lidj. "It is the only way out of the dome. The Vampry soldiers have the interior under lockdown."

Geena saw Teche about to ask a question. Geena silenced him with a touch on the shoulder. "Who controls the Vamprys?" she asked as they sprinted down the corridor.

"They are mercenaries. I believe your reptile friend is the target."

"I guessed that," Teche said gruffly.

Geena rolled her eyes at him. "Ricia. Will you come with us? You will be in danger for helping us."

The Rodite didn't answer. They'd come to an exit. She used her card to open a door into a dimly lit service tunnel. A moment later they came to a maintenance airlock.

"Here are environmental suits," Ricia said. "The nearest dome is five kilometers across the wastes. It is night but the dome lights will guide you."

"How do you know?" Teche asked suspiciously.

"The one thing life has taught me is to always have an exit strategy," Ricia said. "Now I must go. Good luck."

"Thank you, Ricia," Lidj said, grasping her hand.

Ricia kissed her. "To future meetings, my friend."

"To future meetings."

They hurriedly put on the figure-hugging garments of ultra tough, but super flexible materials. The suits compensated for the lower atmospheric pressure outside the dome. After donning the lightweight breathing apparatus, they quickly checked the integrity of each other's suits.

Teche opened the inner door and assisted Jiss, who was still groggy, into the cramped airlock. Geena was last in and closed the door behind her.

Teche had his hand on the airlock control panel.

"Wait!" Geena said. "When we open this outer door, I'm sure alarm bells will ring and the Vamprys will know we left. Hopefully, they'll think we are just ordinary people escaping the firefight but we have to expect them to check it out. We'll have to run, no matter what, as fast as we can to the nearest dome and find our Silurian transport. Understood?"

"Understood," Teche assured her and opened the outer door onto a snowstorm. Methane crystals flooded the airlock. Winds from the warm side of Havensafe gusted at two hundred kilometers an hour and rarely rose above a frigid minus sixty degrees. Carbon dioxide, sulfur and other products of its ceaseless volcanic eruptions combined to fall as a dirty, yellow snow. It was a freezing saffron hell.

They stepped out onto slippery snow and ice. The spiked soles of their boots bit into the crusty surface. The howling wind tugged at them like insistent lovers.

"Agh!" Lidj grunted. Geena turned and saw her floundering in a bank of heaped snow. She reached out and pulled Lidj back to her feet.

"I can't see any lights!"

Geena couldn't either. "Let's get around the other side out of the wind and see if it's any clearer."

Skirting the base of the dome they trudged through snow drifts. "Look there. I see a light."

"I see it."

"Hurry! I can feel the cold through my suit."

Though Geena guessed it was her imagination, she felt cold too. The freezing wind plucked at her, threatening to push her over.

Beside her, Teche and Joss, each with an arm around Jiss, dragged their stunned companion through the snow. A minute later she seemed to get her bearings. She shook Teche and Joss off to prove she could make good progress on her own.

"We can make it," Geena told Lidj, though she hardly believed it herself. The snow was shin deep and the ground beneath solid. Geena and the others began to walk with assurance. Now that they had the lights of the other dome to aim for, they leaned against the howling wind with increased confidence.

They'd been struggling against the wind and snow for several hours when Geena took a step into nothingness. Teche reached out quickly and grasped her arm, preventing her from falling into an abyss.

"Thank you, Lord Teche," she gasped.

"My pleasure, Madam."

They skirted the crevasse. Joss, as she was lightest, volunteered to go first and test the ground. Teche hooked his hand into the belt of her environmental suit lest she fall into another hole and the group continued in their wake.

Suddenly, out of the yellow storm loomed the shadowy curve of the dome. Snow swirled about the airlock assembly which, framed by red strip lighting, jutted out from the wall.

Geena reached out and touched the dome. At last! The trek across the dirty snow drifts had been the worst experience in her life. But now they were safe!

She reached out to the airlock door control. From out of nowhere, another hand reached out and grabbed her. A tall figure stepped out from behind the assembly. It was the Silurian pilot. "Don't open this airlock. They'll know you're here."

"What are you doing here?" she asked suspiciously.

"Do you have the money?"

"Yes. But I need communications with my friends to deposit it into your account."

"That will be done. Follow me."

Geena had drawn her pistol. Teche had done the same. "No. Tell me first how you knew we were out here."

"I heard about the Hellfire Club. Once the airlock was used, a general alarm was raised. There are people searching for you from the other dome. When I realized you were not among the dead and injured, I assumed it was you who had triggered the alarm. I knew you would head here, so I waited. You do have the money, don't you?"

The Silurian's story was borderline plausible. What choice did they have but to believe him? "I do," she said.

The pilot led them through the snow to another airlock close to the main hangers. "We have disabled the alarm system," he said as he cycled the airlock through its stages. "We must go quickly to my ship," the pilot said gruffly. "The Vamprys are on the move."

Geena turned to Teche who was gazing at her speculatively. "I must help my friends," she explained.

"I understand," he said simply. He held out his hand. "Till we meet again."

She wanted desperately to kiss him, to hold him and not let him go. "I will dream of that day."

He gripped her hand firmly. "As I." He released her, hoisted a protesting Jiss into his arms and, with Joss shouldering their weapons, made his way to the corridor leading to the shuttle bay.

A tear tumbled down her cheek. "Come," the Silurian pilot urged.

She smiled at Lidj. "Well, let's get on with it. Off to Karacos."

Lidj beamed. "Bring it on."

The Silurian led them to the ship's airlock. Geena took a deep breath. Now the real fun began. What would happen on Karacos she had no idea. But at least she'd be there on the same planet as Lars' sister.

She'd resolved herself to go with whatever happened when the ship's inner door swished open. Her eyes widened at the size of the reception party waiting for them. Lidj groaned.

"Oh," Geena said. "It's you again."

Steve Boiesman

Steve lives in New South Wales, Australia, with his favourite cat Jones (named after the Nostromo's cat in the *Alien* movie series) and at every opportunity scuba dives, walks and swims along the beautiful Australian coastline's many beaches. An amateur underwater photographer, Steve's diving forays have taken him to the U.S., Fiji, the Philippines, Malaysia and Vanuatu. Steve grew up on a healthy diet of Isaac Asimov, Arthur C. Clarke, and Robert Heinlein. Today, Steve is considered a rising star among short story writers. An avid romance reader as well as contributor, Steve is a member of Romance Writers of Australia, and has had his work selected for inclusion in several of the group's short story competition anthologies. Steve is also a Book Reviewer for a major Australian regional newspaper and is a regular contributor of stories for several adult magazines. Visit his website at www.steveboiesman.com.