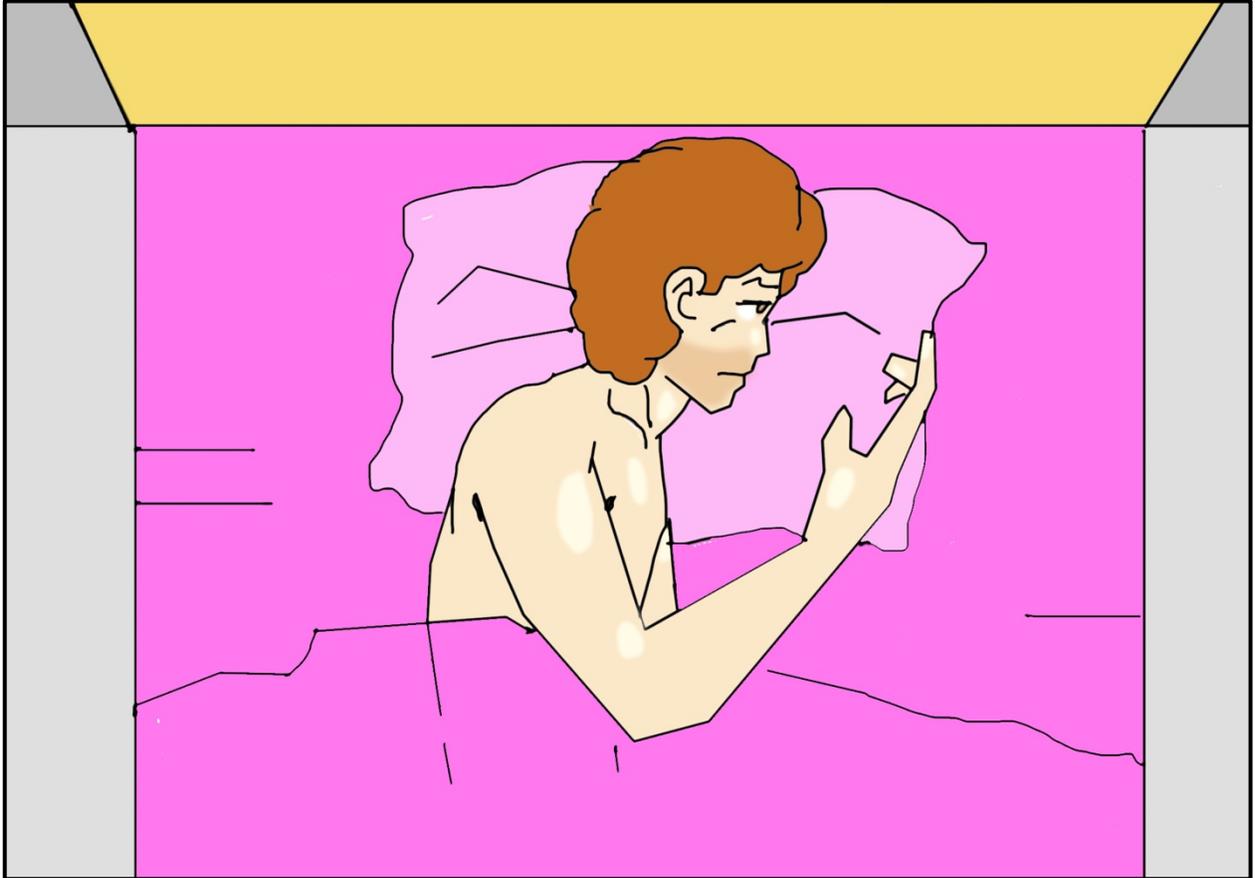


Chapter 1

“Happy New Year”



Sarantos felt ashamed and utterly humiliated. The last two weeks were horrendous. He'd spent most of it twisted in a knotted nightmare that travelled along with him straight into his awakened state. He couldn't shake the crushing sense of gloom that wrapped around his heart like a vice pressing down into his chest trying to crush the spirit out of him. And it was working! He seemed dead inside - the Captain of The Chicago was dead. These were the scars he dared not hide.

Sarantos moaned and looked carelessly around his quarters. How would he find the strength to drag his body out of bed again today? Hopelessness hung in the air. In the nightmare's beginning, he tried to pretend it never happened. He told himself it wasn't his fault that Kitara was pregnant. Then, he wanted to hurt something she loved. He constantly told himself he wanted no part of her or her baby. He didn't believe for one minute it could be his. He had to find evidence supporting this.

Slowly though, through the constant barrage of nightmares and isolation, he was succumbing to the misery of defeat. He refused to face the day. He didn't want to face the crew, his lover or anyone else. Cleary stated he was clinically depressed and needed time in the creation room - there he might transport himself into any scenario he wished. This might help soothe his psyche she told him. It's well known on the ship that the simulated massage therapists were amazing. It probably would be nice to put himself in a relaxing setting on a cliff by the ocean side. The sound of the waves usually calmed him reminding him of his mother's stories growing up. He desperately needed a break because according to Admiral Bane they would leave for another rendezvous on a highly classified mission soon.

They would leave January 3rd right after the new year. The ship was being prepared for war. There could be no denying this. He preferred a scientific mission and was thinking about trying to refuse this next mission as Captain. He honestly wasn't sure if he could function to the best of his ability for the sake of his crew and ship. The Chicago wasn't built for war and her heart wasn't truly in it, and neither was her captain's.

With the new year fast approaching and his band singing at a big event on the space station soon, he hoped to solve things with Addie before then. Was it even possible? Recently he had trouble focusing on day-to-day activities. Even his music was suffering. The spark was missing. At the touch of a lover, everyone becomes a poet. Without his muse though, that creative fire that always burned within him, hid in the shadows. It was nowhere to be found. It would be so much easier to recover if he and Addie could move past this horrible fallout. He made her a friendship bracelet but then threw it in the garbage thinking it was too corny. He obsessed thinking about what he should do for her.

Pulling himself up and into the shower was a chore these days. Today however as he stood under the strong water beating against his skin, an idea came into his churning thoughts. He had to find and speak to Cleary ASAP. She might help him. Suddenly, the heavy burden of his mind retreated to the familiar sadness.

The real tragedy of life is when you're afraid to live it. Hope might be fleeting. His heart might ache but he didn't want a child by that wicked woman. Whenever he and Addie were together, which wasn't often anymore, she feigned bravery. She tried pretending like she wasn't bothered by the situation. However, being a father to a child from that retched Kitara must've been unbearable. He sensed that it weighed heavily on her mind. Addie blamed herself for not being able to protect him to a

greater degree than her security team did. After they found out how Kitara manipulated her appearance to get past the guards, all blame should've been resolved but it wasn't. Kitara had created deep grooves in the vinyl record of their lives! They were both miserable.

He missed making guiltless love to Addie. Only occasionally did they share small meals together but never in their private quarters. He missed Friday nights being alone with her smile. The thing he hated the most - how he and Addie seemed to have lost the amazing natural ability they used to have to search for comfort deeply into each other's eyes. The shame on both their parts seemed too powerful. Every time he looked, her eyes were full of pain and fear.

They needed to get over it somehow or he might never survive the coming year. He needed a fresh start and so did she. The new year would deliver the perfect opportunity to get on with their lives.

He grabbed a cup of bold coffee and headed to sickbay.

He stepped into the elevator and before the door shut, Born jumped in with him.

“Ensign,” Sarantos nodded.



“Captain, good to see you. Are you going to make rehearsal tonight?”

“You know, Ensign, I will show up tonight. I’m sorry if I haven’t been myself lately and have shunned away from my social life, but I’m back in the land of the living now, so to speak.”

“Oh, I’m so glad to hear that. I know the band will also be thrilled. It’s not the same without your guitar and vocals. We hired on a new vocal though, female. She might be right up your ally. I hope you’ll be able to handle yourself. She’s uber sexy and a skilled charmer.’

“Well, I’m not interested in that kind of stuff Born, so long as she’s a skilled singer. I don’t care if she can charm the skin off of a snake!” He didn’t mean for his voice to carry such an edge to it, but it did. Getting serious about yourself requires a clear path and the courage to follow it. Enough moping. He might be the biggest control freak with his music but at least he would do it his way.

Born grinned. “Woah, there Captain. I meant nothing by it Sir. Practice is at 7 inside the warehouse. Nothing’s changed. Hope to see you there. I surely hope that nothing comes up to interfere with our plans of a creative evening together. I can’t wait to jam with you.”

The lift stopped and Sarantos stepped off. “Oh, I’ll be there with anti-venom.” The lift closed and Born continued to the deck while Sarantos moved sheepishly into the sickbay.

“Captain what are you doing here this morning? I don’t see an appointment scheduled. Are you okay?” The red-headed Cindy O’Malley escorted him towards a cot.

“Cindy, I’m fine. I came to see the Doc. Is she in?”

“Doc left for a late breakfast. It was a hectic evening here.”

“Okay, I’ll join her there. Thanks.” He hurried out of the room. As he headed back to the lift, the air seemed thinner. “Doc, Sarantos here. On my way to join you for breakfast. We gotta talk.”

The IC broke up. Then the Doc’s voice grew loud and clear. “I’ll be here on the creative deck 5, not in the Diamond Room. I wanted to visit Paris.”

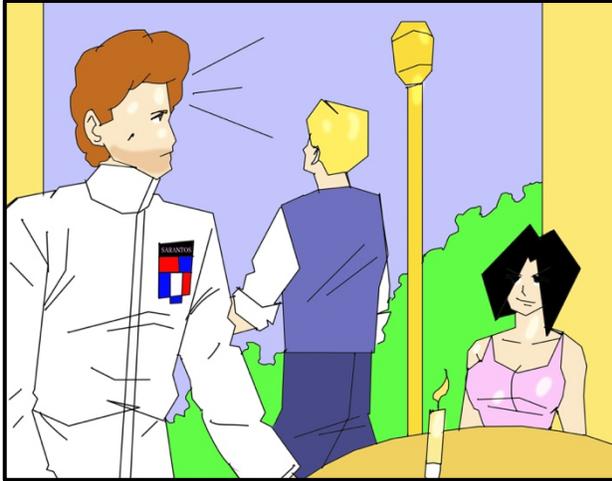
“Okay, sounds good, but I’m not disturbing you?”

“No, Captain it’s fine. I’ll order you an espresso.”

He’d visited the real Paris once and loved walking the streets and interacting with the locals. He never used the creative room enough, but he vowed to use it more often. Maybe Cleary was having issues of her own? Everyone you meet is fighting a harder battle, sometimes you don’t notice because you’re caught up in your own swirl.

Making his way to Deck 5, he thought of their friendship and everything they’ve been through together. Arriving, the door slid open and the soft music of the city streets pacified him at once. He found her at a cute little café sitting outside overlooking the Seine River. A handsome young Frenchman stood next to her in white crisp clothes with a white napkin thrown over his arm. Cleary was flirting shamelessly. He felt like he was intruding.

Sarantos approached her before speaking and overheard part of their conversation. He wished he hadn’t. The skin on his cheeks heated up. They were bright red.



She looked up. “Captain, so nice of you to join me. Captain, this is Pierre. Pierre, you can bring the food and drinks now.”

Pierre bent down and kissed her hand then spoke seductively in French. Sarantos was glad he didn’t understand what he said. She deserved credit for playing the game she wanted to play.

“Captain have a seat and welcome to one of my favorite programs. Sorry, if Pierre was a little naughty with his comments but I wouldn’t adjust him, not one iota.

“That’s okay, Cleary. I couldn’t understand a word he said anyway and before you interpret, I don’t require specifics, but thanks anyway.”

Her slow smile was devilish. “So, what brings you to see me today? How are you, Sarantos? Out of your depression yet?”

“I wondered if you might help me out. Kitara is in prison on the space station, but I want you to run tests on her to verify what she’s saying about that baby being mine. She must have known she was already pregnant and set me up. Can you get authorization to run those tests?”

“I have an old friend who works in surgery at the medical building, but there’s no guarantee they will allow him to run any tests. I’ll check with him and also speak with Lieutenant Monroe who runs the show over there. He wouldn’t like me going over his head. If I can convince him that there might be a mis-justice, he might allow it. If he doesn’t sense that someone has wronged you, he may do it only with the mother’s approval and we know what that means. Kitara would refuse.”

“Kitara wouldn’t consent. That’d be like admitting she lied about the pregnancy.”

“Sure boss, I’ll do it.”

Pierre came back with a light breakfast but then left abruptly.

“Where’d your little friend go in such a hurry, Cleary?”

“We’re meeting later this evening. He’ll be back with an espresso and then wait patiently until I leave. I’m in charge here.”

Sarantos shook his head, “You never stop amazing me, my dear friend. I know you see men outside of the creative room, but you’re obviously insatiable. I guess everyone should trust in something!”

She grinned out from under her posh hat. He remembered how much he’d always enjoyed her company. “Yes, I suppose I am. You remember my motto don’t you - if you’re not busy dating, you’re busy being left behind. Do you like my dress?”

This atmosphere made her frisky. Yes, she looked great in that dress. It was low-cut and allowed ample breathing room for her well-endowed chest.

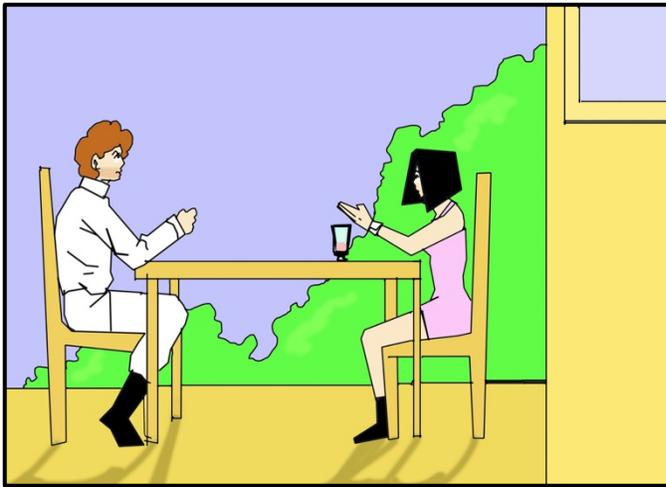
“Yes, it’s stunning on you Cleary.”

“Thanks, Sarantos. Your cheeks are so colorful.” She loved teasing him. “It’s made of organdy and I love the floral print with polka-dots. I found the pink sash and bow sexy.”

Her everything was sexy. “Cleary, stop trying to distract me. I need your help to prove this child isn’t mine. It’s vital to me being able to handle my job as Captain of the ship. This nonsense has affected me deeply, much more than you realize. I need you to be serious.”

“Captain, I am serious. I’m as serious as a heart attack. I can only check into it, but it will be the commissioners who decide, not me. Do you want another espresso to calm you down?”

“No.” Sarcasm with a smile, and sometimes even a sneer. Did he deserve a friend like this? At least she was distracting him from his misery. “I have practice tonight with the band. I have to learn a few new chords at some point later today. Cleary if I can’t resolve this in my heart and head, I’m thinking of staying behind and putting someone else in charge of The Chicago for this next mission. I want to move on this new year and leave this dreaded war and backstabbing friendship behind me. It might be best for me to move on in another direction. I can’t take it anymore.”



“What are you saying Captain?”

“Cleary, I’m declaring officially, it might do me some good to quit being Captain. You should be able to pursue your own goals at your own pace, shouldn’t you? I’m tired of living in fear and there’s no way I’m waiting until next year to get my life right. If Kitara has my child, I can’t handle it. I won’t be able to function.

I want no part of it or her. I also don’t want a bastard child to grow up and later come after me. It would be a vengeful boy’s dream. Having a mother like Kitara would prove disastrous. I have to get as far away from the starship as possible because it would endanger the ship and crew if I had a vindictive individual or group of individuals actively searching for me.”

The Doc slowly set down her glass and looked into his sad brown eyes.

“Sarantos, are you okay? Kitara will be in prison. She’ll most likely not be freed before the child becomes an adult. They definitely won’t let her ever see that baby. I’m not sure what’s happening to you? You’re not thinking things through. You need to stop. Things will get better. You are your own worst enemy. Stop believing you can’t get over this.”

He dropped his heavy head into his tired hands. "I'm not sure either, but the closer the clock gets to a new year the closer I feel to doom. This year hasn't gone according to plan. I've tried to restructure my thinking." He lifted his head and threw his hands into the air. "I don't know what's going on in my life anymore. I seem totally out of control. Everybody's safe except me. Will I be the only one stuck without a chair when the music stops?"

Cleary sat back in her chair and calmly took a sip of her espresso. "We're each of us out of control sometimes Sarantos. It doesn't mean we fold up."

Anger rose in his voice and he said, "I'm not folding up, I want a new life. My sin has always been my anger. That's how I react to trouble. You're built a little differently, when bad things happen to you, you get sad but draw strength from somewhere else and get over it. I can't. It's not that simple for me. Nothing is ever simple for me!"

She flinched. Cleary never had that reaction before now. "Sarantos as your medical advisor and superior I want you to report to sick-bay as soon as we finish here. I want to run tests on you. It's possible that whatever Kitara injected into you might still have an effect on you."

"Yeah, okay. You might be right. My head doesn't seem to be able to process things and deal with everything like I used to. Ok Doc."

She smiled and said, "Now, eat those wonderful chocolate crepes, strawberries, grapes and drink your espresso, my friend. They'll take good care of you here. Doctor's orders are to enjoy. Now enjoy."

Cleary was attractive. She was a woman in charge. He had always admired her tenacity. Boys were always in search of girls. Too bad he had already found the love of his life, otherwise they'd make a powerful couple.

"It looks good and smells yummy." He cut the fresh crepe and rich chocolate oozed out of the delicate pastry. He had to laugh and wonder about the simulation. How

can you taste and eat something that technically doesn't exist? It must be why Cleary enjoyed coming here. Here you can enjoy any food you desire without the sinful calories.

Cleary performed many tests on him. The results revealed several unusual bacteria that couldn't be identified. She found them primarily floating around in his blood. Cleary swiftly eradicated the infection with medication. Luckily for the crew, it wasn't contagious. She told Sarantos to take the day off and rest inside his quarters.

He took her up on the idea. He slept for four hours, took a shower and was replicating a nice Dominus Napa Valley Imperial wine with hints of black current and licorice when his door opened. Jumping as he overreacted, he was happy to see the surprise guest.



Her smile breathed radiance and instantly warmed his heart; he hadn't seen her smile like that in a long time. Sarantos smiled back. He loved Addie Stuart. Of that, he was always sure.

Addie's expression changed into a scowl with a narrowed brow as she moved toward him with her arms outstretched. "Darling, are you all right? I heard you had a bacterial infection. That would explain your moody behavior these past weeks."

She held him close against her breasts and lightly kissed the back of his neck. He wanted her lips. That wasn't anything new. Could there ever be a day when he wouldn't desire Addie? When he wouldn't want to hold the woman he loved?

Sarantos pulled her further into him. "Yes, I'm better already. I'm sorry if I've been impossible. It's a constant struggle. You think I'm wrong but rarely I'm right and we'll only know for sure years from now when such a unique occurrence

materializes.” He smirked. Then, his eyes closed obediently. The intoxicating smell of her skin entangled him in her web as he fell into the magic of it allowing himself to indulge his senses. Better than the wine.

“I wasn’t sure how to treat you or react to your behavior. I know what happened with Kitara wasn’t your fault, but your own guilt was too much for me to embrace. Now, the Doc speculates an infection likely caused your actions. I had no idea you were infected.” Addie pulled away from him and with stern determination looked deep into his eyes “Are we good?”

He frowned. “The infection was causing me to behave that way? I thought I was losing my mind. Addie we’ll always be good.”

“Thank Stima.” She kissed his lips long and hard.

Sarantos laughed. He hadn’t heard her use that term in a long time. When they were relieved, the Satorian race routinely called out the name of one of their greatest leaders in thanks and praise. She seldom used it.

“Yes, Addie and I want to thank Stima too for that fabulous kiss.”

She laughed and smacked his arm. “Well, I might give you another one, but first I’d be thankful if you offered me a glass of that alluring wine. It smells wonderful.”

“Sure. I’m supposed to go to practice tonight so we don’t have the whole night together. Honestly, it’s the first time I’ve had the desire to rehearse in a long time.”

He handed her the wine. She smelled it, swirled it and lazily sipped it. “Nice stuff, actually superb. I’d love to come with you tonight, if that’s okay with you. I’ve off tonight for a change.”

Sarantos could barely contain the joy he had upon hearing those words and that made him want to dance. Dancing is exactly what he did after putting his glass on the table

and removed hers from her hand placing it charmingly next to his on the long grey table.



“Computer, play, Make Me Breathe, by Red Dawn and dim the lights.”

As the music started, he held out his hand. Addie took it. He twirled her into his wanting body. Her strong body flexed against his and they literally flew around the room both suddenly floating under a stream of heavenly clouds... something went white. He fell into the zone well past the point of no return. It was the way his core always raced around Addie. Her hair bounced. Her eyes dilated. She belonged to his heart and he to hers.

Sarantos whispered in her delicate ear. “I was the driver and everybody else cared little, they dropped out one by one. All of them except you. You stayed. Join me this New Year’s Eve and help me make a new start, my scrumptious Addie.”

“Oh, I’ll be there, Sarantos, but remember you have to change the inside too for it to show on the outside the entire year.” Her voice befell so sweet and seductive. The heat of her breath tingled inside his ear causing goosebumps to pulse down his side. His ravenous thirst for Addie awakened.

He stopped and took their drinks again handing Addie hers. Another hour before practice. What would they do? She smiled and downed her drink, leading him to his room. Possibility is where you decide it is.

Removing her clothes, he smoothly poured some of his wine on her dark purple skin licking it up, purposely overextending the visit. Then a little more... until only a few drops remained. Teasing and dribbling it over her mouth he kissed and licked it off. She was pleased. She teased that he did not deserve her lips... and that made him aroused.

The two of them could accomplish a lot in an hour. The thought brought a smile to his eyes and a happiness to his loins. They fell into the moment with every ounce of strength they could muster. She was unbelievable. How he held his own against Addie, who did not know the meaning of the word tired, not in war and not in the bedroom, he couldn't fathom.

They both moaned simultaneously.

It never failed with Addie; he travelled to a place filled with an overjoyed light and a Zen zone of utopian bliss. A spot reserved only for them in another dimension of pleasured completeness. He longed to stay there forever.

When he finally came out of his hidden space, Addie's hair was sleek with sweat and lay across his chest. He kissed her forehead as they both lay looking out at the fiery stars. He stared softly into her eyes. They reflected the kind of honesty you hope for but rarely get.

"I guess I should get ready for practice, Addie."

"Yes, I also need a shower my love."

He politely slid her hair to the side and caressed her body for another minute before jumping out of bed and racing her to the shower. The wheel constantly turns.

They were fresh. His step skipped as they rambled towards the warehouse he loved practicing in.

"Sarantos, so glad you made it," said Ensign Born with a smirk.

“Yes, I can’t wait. I miss it.” The spotlight is warm and its light hides the sins buried in the darkness.

“I see you brought the other member of our band with you,” said Born.

“What?” He looked around. His head spun in confusion.



Addie climbed up onto the stage and grabbed a guitar. “No need for introductions, Captain.”

He couldn’t understand what he was seeing and hearing. He didn’t know Addie played, much less sang. He thought Born had told him a new band member would join them.

“No need for formal introductions. I didn’t know you played. Born was right about several things. You’re a charmer and might get my attention backstage...”

Addie was beaming. Never in his life was he this happy! Well, except for when they were alone in his quarters.

“Captain, I’m glad you approve,” said Addie.

“Approve, what’s not to approve.” He couldn’t stop from running up to her and lifting her straight in the air kissing her right there in front of everyone. What a special moment. He promised himself that he would never keep things bottled up inside again. This was but one of his new year’s resolutions. To lose the impact of such a grand emotion by just keeping it bottled up inside was no longer acceptable. He recalled what Addie said, emotion flows from the inside to the outside. So now he wanted to release his emotions outward. No more holding everything in!

Her laugh was infectious. When she laughed, he laughed. All the other members were already there waiting to jam and eager to join in.

There are three things he loved most in the world. Today, they were all here - Addie, his music and being a Captain. After that thought ran across his mind, he realized he’d never again think about giving up being Captain of The Chicago. It’d been his dream since childhood.

Sarantos mind ran wild. His body ached to live dangerously. His soul yearned to dream. It would be his new year stepping out into the unknown.

“Sarantos quit daydreaming and let’s go.” He’s vowed to die with memories not dreams.

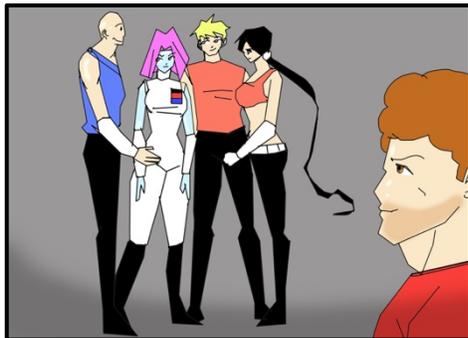
“Ok, Born.”

Too much or too little energy is a disease. He grabbed his guitar and jumped on the stage and belted out some old-time favorite holiday party songs. The band was on and when Addie sang next to him; it worked. Music as always easy for him as easy as ABC.

“Magic,” yelled Born over the loud music.

In two days, New Year’s Eve was here. Mentally he’d just made several key decisions and realized it would be the best year of his life. No matter how small it started, he determined to start something that mattered every day. It no longer mattered to him where they sent The Chicago. He knew he could handle it. He was alive and free. The music filled the room with joy and strength. Kitara couldn’t hurt him anymore. No one could. Music poured thru every cell in his body curing all his ills.

Addie sang with him. The lights revealed a familiar spark in her eyes. They moved as one often but this was the first time musically. So perfect for each other! He was staring at her when she pointed to the entrance. It was Matt Blume.



Matt waved at them smiling proudly which showed every tooth in his mouth. Sarantos nodded. Addie lifted her guitar and tilted in his direction. She was something else.

The band never sounded so on as it did with Addie Stuart in it. After rehearsal, every member congratulated her for making such an impressive addition to the band. Their vibe had caught fire.

Matt joined them. “Sarantos and Addie, that was incredible. Can’t wait for New Year’s Eve. What a party that will be. I haven’t enjoyed many new year’s celebrations. I was always working or stuck out on some mission in a remote part of the universe but now I’m so excited because Donny will work for me. I have set up quite a large staff because it’ll be busy. He can handle them though. Donny did well in my absence, so one night should be easy for him.”

“Matt, we’re going to the Platypus to get dinner. Care to join us?”

“Yes, Sarantos I’d enjoy that.”

The Platypus was about a twenty-minute walk from their current location and the food was divine. Sarantos had dined there on at least ten occasions.

“Matt, have you ever been to the Platypus,” asked Sarantos?

“Have I ever been there? Is that a serious question? I’ve not only been there but the chef and I are excellent friends. Jon Dequesis one of the most amazing guys to talk to; he’s been everywhere. Maybe he’ll join us if it’s not too busy tonight.”

Addie said, “Matt, that’d be great. I love hearing about adventuresome travels and other race’s stories. It keeps me alert to behavior patterns, which is important in my line of work as a security officer.”

“Oh, I’m sure he’ll enlighten you.”

It was relatively quiet. It was almost 10. The building was an original take on a French classic. Outside and inside the red and black chairs offered a sleek and unique appearance. The white crisp tablecloths added class.

Sarantos immediately thought of Cleary. She got this French craving into him with the cuisine this morning; this time the calories were real.

The maître d’ of the hotel directed them to a windowed front table. A nicely groomed tree growing elegantly out of the ground surrounded by alternate layers of brick and tile made the ambience special. A large picturesque window overlooked a small pond and flower garden.

“Thank you, Kaarle. Is Jon in this evening?”

“No, Sir Matt. He’s left for the evening. Shall I bring your usual?”

“That’d be nice and if these two stragglers don’t mind, please bring them the same.”

Sarantos nodded.

“I’d love whatever you chose, Matt,” said Addie.

Their dinner was exquisite. The conversation was easy. They didn’t leave until 1 AM and by the time Sarantos and Addie got back to his place it was just past 2.

“What a night, Sarantos. Should I stay?”



He looked at her and shyly pulled her inside his quarters. “Life gives us enough regret, there’s no need to add to it. You should stay babe.”

They escaped into bed and both fell asleep as soon as their heads hit the pillows.

People aren't usually fulfilled staying where they are but Sarantos was at this moment. He needed nothing else out of life. These last few days transpired differently. He strutted hastily on his way to see the Doc. She wanted him to check in with her before the ball dropping tonight. He felt the excitement aboard the ship. The new year was only hours away.

Addie worked harder than usual the past few days. He rarely saw her. When he did though, they had a marvelous time. He couldn't wait to share the stage with her this evening. Ringing in the new year with the woman he loved was perfect. The perfect fairytale.

The door swished open. Cleary waited for him all amused.

“What's with the grin, Cleary? You have the night off?”

“No Sarantos. I gave the night off to my crew. It's just me. Although I'd love a computer-generated doctor hologram to keep me company.”

“I don't know if that'll ever happen on The Chicago, but I'm sure you could use one.”

Cleary said, “My friend, I have good news. The commissioner already approved the doc at the hospital to run tests on Kitara and the results revealed that she's not even pregnant. It looks like she wanted to cause you unnecessary grief and torture both you and the woman you love.”

Sarantos fell downward into the Doctor's chair in complete shock. “Why would she do that? She deliberately lied. Who did she think she was? Wishful thinking? Would Kitara stoop so low and want to hurt him so badly? Was her mind that sick?”

“No, she’s physically fine. That doesn’t mean her mind is and she’ll be undergoing more psychological testing, some of which will be very extensive. You’re free to enjoy the new year, Sarantos. How are you otherwise? I hope things are going well.”

“I’ve never been better, Doc. Thank you for the great news. You made a perfect evening even more perfect!”

“I want to check your blood and do a scan again just to make sure you're still clear of that nasty infection.”

“Okay.” He laid on the table. She scanned and tested him thoroughly until he’d had enough. “Okay, Doc that’s it. Gotta try to get ready for the concert tonight. My goal is to look good and I can’t do that unless I’m well rested.”

“Understood Captain. I’m happy to inform you that the virus has not returned. You’re good to go. Happy New Year Sarantos.” She gave him a long hard kiss.

“You too Doc. Try to enjoy your evening.”

“I will you pervert. I won’t even tell Addie that you kissed me.”

Sarantos chuckled then hurried back to his quarters. He took a two-hour nap, hit the shower and threw on some flashy clothes for the new year party. Then he headed to the gig.

The place was rocking already. All the band members were on stage, including Addie. She looked ridiculous, beyond luscious. A slinky silver gown with hints of lavender confetti along the bottom and a bosom that somehow clung to her incredible body. Her hair set up but some of it slumped disobediently with bold glitter hanging tenaciously onto the strands adding to her already sparkling hair. All the men in black tailcoats and top hats stood out. He had to replicate one to fit into the festivities tonight. He approved of how it looked on him.

The band started as soon as he took the stage. The lights flashed around the room. He was certain he wouldn't make any more mistakes this year as he waited for midnight to fall. He was doing what he loved the most. His mind was at peace. Maybe his brain was the toughest muscle in his body.

He sang and danced towards Addie, timing it exactly before the ball was about to fall. The words he wrote earlier in the week played on a regular loop in his consciousness. Dream dangerously.

He screamed and let it out. "Addie, you can have this heart to break, our love isn't a mistake, don't live in fear, don't wait till next year - the time is now. Marry me! Marry me so every one of us in this room can have a happy New Year!"

She was radiant. "Sarantos, today I'm listening to my heart, so yes. Yes, I'll marry you my love!"



He was suddenly faint. She responded yes? Did he get his way? Today was the best day ever. It was a fresh new start...

“Happy New Year,” Sarantos yelled to the crowd as he drank in the night’s aura. Sometimes the things you do, find you...