

Chapter 9

“Deep Inside”

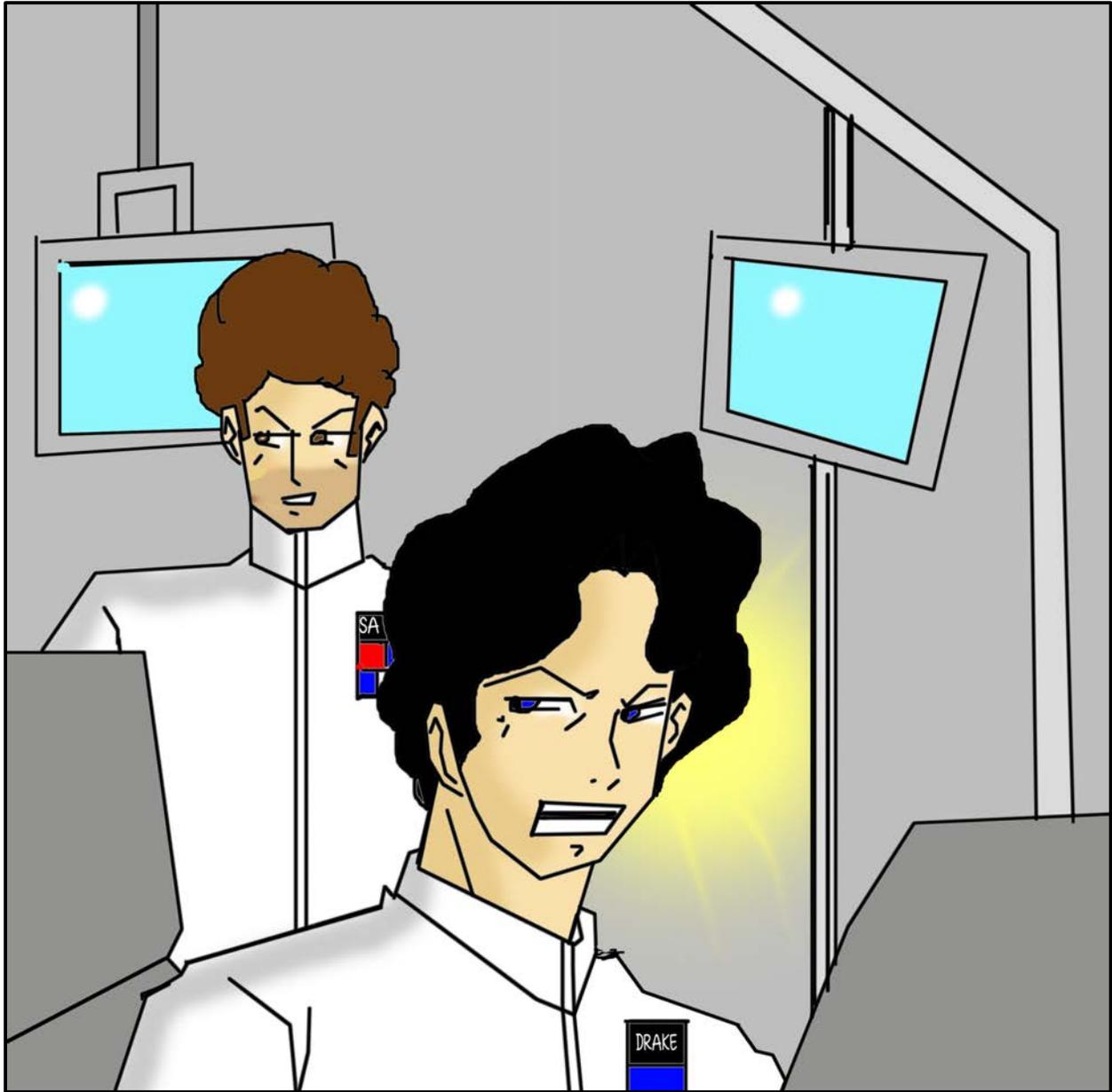
As Captain, this would be the first time Sarantos would go into battle. Everything he'd ever trained for was exactly for this moment - a moment he always hoped would never come to fruition, but it was here and could not be denied. The thought excited him, yet simultaneously terrified him. People might perish under his command, and that was the inevitable reality that war brought. He would do his best and that's all he could do for himself and his country. That's all he could do for the people he loved and for those that fought beside him.

Deep inside of him lay emotions for Addie that could end him though. He could not deny them no matter how hard he tried to. They distracted him. They kept him from focusing completely on the task at hand. The depth of her soul grew throughout his essence, slowly wreaking havoc with every part of him she touched. He didn't want anyone to die, but especially not Addie. He just could not allow her to die. That wasn't an option. He loved her.

This wasn't acceptable behavior for a man of his rank and his thoughts were certainly out of line! He was a captain, but he didn't know if he could properly handle a situation that might put Addie at risk more so than all the others. She was a Lieutenant and knew her duty. She would be okay with it. He ached, because in his heart, he knew she'd never waver from her position. She'd risk her life without a second thought. She'd do it for those that trusted her, as would he, but when it came to her - he just didn't know if he had his head on straight enough to be objective. He felt inadequate. He was conflicted.

But, he was out of time.

“How much time do we have Drake?”



“Captain, we have about three hours if they continue to advance at this pace.”

“I suppose we can assume at this point that they know we’re wise to them? No doubt all bases will be under attack at the same time, at least that’s what I would do in their position.”

Oh, Addie. I want to be free. It's crazy, every time I look at you I want to give you a piece of me. I want to feel you, feel your love deep inside of me, but here we are in the middle of chaos instead...

“Captain, did you hear me?”

“Oh, sorry, Drake. What were you saying?”

“I said, maybe we should be ambitious about contacting the other bases. It's possible the only one that knows what's truly going on is our base.”

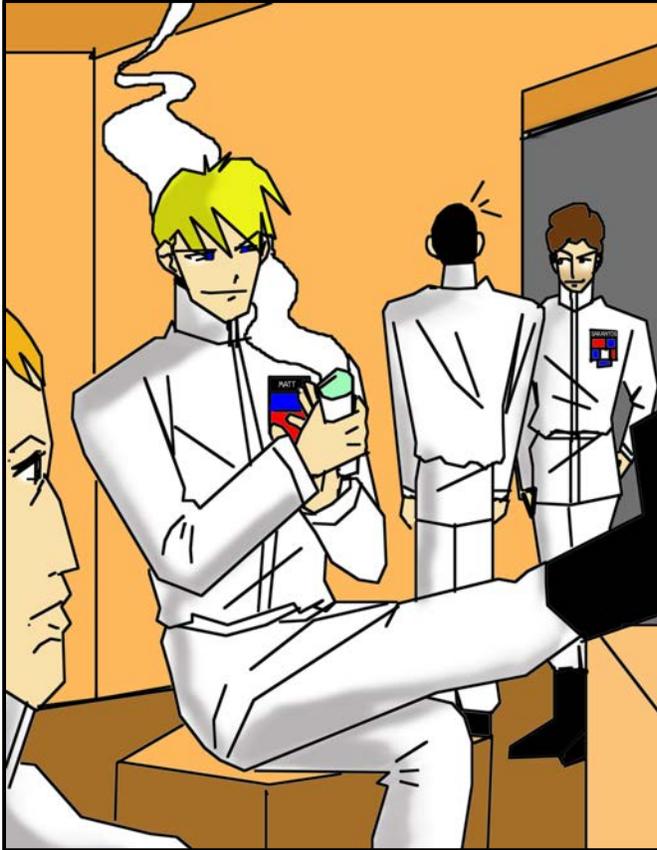
“I agree Captain. I think we're past the point of continued silence and restraint in our communication with each other.”

He stood up and patted Drake on the back.

“Captain, should I get everyone in the main hall?”

“Yes, Drake. Thank you. I'll meet you there shortly.”

He liked the scanty ships staged around the mini-airlift and looked at them with envy. They were entertaining to test drive and they'd been quite capable at the simulations set up by the instructors but now they were needed as war weapons, not for silly school room games. It felt different, suddenly, extremely different. A sickness crept into his stomach as he arrived at the impromptu conference room meeting.



Matt Blume was sitting in a chair with his legs up on several boxes casually having a coffee. The steam moved around his face masking all details of his pleasant expression to a mini fog screen. He nodded and was about to stand up, but Sarantos waved him back down.

Harry Born came to attention at once, causing him to smile.

“Ease up Born. I’ve called a meeting here; you might as well relax until they all arrive.”

“Yes, Captain.”

The young man sat back down and continued a quiet conversation with Matt.

He watched them for a minute, thinking how decent these men were. His mind wandered to how simple they were in their goals. Would they make it?? He had to stop thinking like that! Of course they’d make it, no one was going to die on his watch. Not one casualty!

“Men, I hate to break up your conversation, but we have two groups coming towards this outpost and they’re only two hours out. They mean business and have strange equipment with them that could possibly be a fighting machine of some sort. I’m sure they will use it against us. When I say groups, I mean armies of an unknown size.”

The coffee steam cleared from Matt's face and the crease that ran between his eyes narrowed like a deep trench. His head propped up to stare directly at his Captain.

Somehow Matt's eyes looked blameful, even before the battle started. After all, he'd brought him on this mission.

“Captain, we need to eliminate this scum. I'm on board with any plan of action you lay out.”

Matt's words stung though as Sarantos sensed sarcasm. It didn't matter. Maybe his team had a right to question his leadership and tactics. How could he have accused any man of anything other than devotion. Maybe it was his own action of bringing Matt into this situation that stirred his guilt. As Captain, he'd better let go of any guilt quickly. These people were here because they wanted to be here. They chose to be here but even as he thought that, he remembered that most of the crew were deceived into thinking it was a peaceful mission and not a war ship going into battle.

He felt sick again.

“Captain, I'm very skilled in military combat and have a unique ability to reflect on campaigns and evaluating any probable paradoxical consequences of enacting several different strategic concepts.”

“Yes, Born, I'm quite aware of your skills and will call upon you to do your duty to the best of your ability when the need arises.”

To say thank you as a Captain might not be appropriate in certain situations. He was their commander and a no 'thank you' was not required to be muttered from his lips. His forces would do what they're told. He was a military leader and they would comply. It was their duty. He was in charge.

At that moment, Major Flint arrived carrying a cup of coffee and a pot filled to the brim with the dark fragrant drink. The Major loved his coffee. He nodded as he positioned himself at the end of the long table.

Drake showed up next with Private Sally Mann and Fred Opal. They positioned themselves next to Flint.

A few minutes passed before the arrival of Chief Gregg Petty, Sargent Toner, Private Bonnie Day and Sargent Cam. Even though it was still dark and morning was several hours away, the group looked well rested and restored to a bright state of vitality.

He needed to be tough and be strong as their leader. He needed to have them trust his leadership. Then in walked Addie and it all went to hell.



Everything stopped. His heart and time itself. Suddenly, no one else was in the room, just her. Damn she was gorgeous. He could taste her as he inhaled deeply. He needed her inside of him so he could digest all of who she was; he needed to breathe her into his body. That might be the only thing that could keep him alive.

Addie didn't seem to notice his anguish. She was a Lieutenant and walked in like one. The power of her movements clung to his chest. She could lead him anywhere anytime. She pulled her hair back in a braid, while tiny strands of violet hair danced down her cheeks and fell

across her breasts. Oh, no, get a grip Sarantos, don't undress her with your thoughts, unless you want all of the soldiers standing at attention as they lead a mutiny of their unfit captain. Now, was not the time.

His mind continued to seduce her though, wanting her to do the same. He felt her lips on his and imagined her slowly moving him to the nearest room for a little game time. He was almost drooling. He inspected her until she sat down across from Flint.

I do it for you, Baby. I'd do it all for you, Addie Stuart.

“Captain.” The strong voice of Dr. Major Cherrie Cleary pulled him out of his lustful fog.

“Captain.” Chief Brel Doran entered next to Cleary.

He acknowledged them and decided not to look at Addie unless it was absolutely necessary.

“As you all know by now we are being slowly surrounded by two armies. War is upon us and we have less than three hours to organize ourselves and devise a plan we are all comfortable with. The armies are of massive proportions. Chief Brel?”

“Sir, they appear to be somewhere between 500 to 800 strong, that's each army, Captain.”

He tried desperately not to look shocked. He strained to keep his mouth closed. To help him focus, he looked at Major Flint who sat nodding his head. Sarantos walked calmly to the head of the table and stood with his arms stretched out and the palms of his hands resting on the flat cold table. It offered no comfort. It had no answers for him.

“There is no negotiating with them. We’re greatly outnumbered. I’m open to any military strategic thoughts that might keep us in this campaign until help arrives. I’ve already decided that our previous silenced communication to the base, ship and any military facility does not make sense any longer. These armies could be approaching all outposts so we need to warn them. Communication is live. We need to talk to each other and help each other.”



“Captain?”

He turned and saw the young face of Born looking at him with determination and with fire running through his eyes.

As Captain, he couldn’t let his ground crew down now. Born was young and full of a typical youth’s unexhausted optimism. This astute man had a right to further his career and find a partner in

his life to share his dreams with, not die on a bombed battlefield because some overzealous race couldn’t learn to compromise.

His own youth was sometimes a fleeting memory that only cleared up a bit when he searched beyond the looming fog to glimpse back to yesterday’s lessons. Still, those recollections felt like they belonged to someone else, not a Captain of a Starship, but a young boy that once had the same fire and optimism as Born.

The Captain's job was to feed the optimism of youth while focusing his ground crew to be effective in battle, to fight on even when no hope existed and then wake up again to fight another day.

He looked directly into Born's eyes. Only then did he answer the young Ensign.

"Yes, Ensign Born, what's on your mind?"

"Well, I know we've alerted the main capitol that we've taken the outpost and that the 'Chicago' has also been notified, but I believe if we're breaking silence we should do it now. Our small group will not be able to hold this approaching army, no matter how skilled we are. Just my thoughts, sir."

He tried not to smile, for fear of offending the blossoming Ensign. The young man was of course stating the obvious. He'd already thought of that but to put the youth in an embarrassing situation right now wouldn't benefit either one of them. Commanders were made to be masterminds and implement the best strategy and nourish all egos. It was a constant balancing act. He was glad to see the Ensign willing to put his mind out there for the picking.

"I like your energy Ensign Born. I'll leave it to you to attend to that, at once. There's a communication room downstairs, first door to the left, as soon as you hit the floor. We'll continue to brainstorm here. Thanks, Ensign. That'll be all."

"Captain."

The young man didn't wait for further acknowledgement. Instead, he stood up and theatrically headed toward the exit.

“Okay, what can each of you offer me in this situation? Give me information to work with. No idea is too crazy.

Brel spoke first. “Captain, I saw some equipment for making some small explosives. Give me a couple bodies to assist me and we can rig up the perimeter on the outside, before they break the tree line. I’d like to organize it in several layers. You know, make them slow down and think twice. I want them wondering if there are more distracting them from where they are. We’ll also try to optimize their positioning so that they think there are a lot more of us than there actually are. Hopefully, it’ll fluster them.”

“Good. Take Chief Petty. He’s had some experience with explosives and Private Opal too. Opal disarmed bombs faster than any cadet I’ve ever heard of, which tells me he might also be able to rig them just as fast.”



Opal and Petty nodded in unison.

“Sir, your leave?”

“Yes, Brel. Get to it. We don’t have much time. Are you sure you don’t need more bodies?”

“No, Captain.”

The three men stood and then quickly left the room together. As Captain, he felt relieved that he had a proactive crew. He and Addie made great

choices picking this crew. It might in fact save their lives.

“I’m not sure about the machines the enemy is bringing with them, but we can’t worry about something we can’t understand. We have some ships and I suggest we fly them when they get closer hitting their armies right after the bombs go off. It might cause some chaos and additional destruction at the same time. It should also confuse them some more keeping them skeptical about any ground and air defenses.”

“I’d be glad to head the mission, Captain,” said Major Flint.

“Make it so, Major.”

The Major didn’t waste time.

“Chief Drake, Private Mann, Sargent Toner, Private Day, Sargent Cam, please join me in the docking bay. We’ll need to get the ships in order. By that, I mean for each of you to familiarize yourself with their operation, and more specifically, the weapons systems.” Major Flint paused and looked over his choices before he continued to speak. “Private Mann, you’re with me, Sargent Cam you’re with Sargent Toner, Chief Drake, you and Private Day will team up.”

“Yes, sir.” The chorus of their acknowledgement was strong and confident.

“Are there any questions, before we head out,” the Major asked?

“No, sir,” replied Chief Drake.

“No, sir,” said Private Mann and Day at the same time.

“No, sir,” chided in Sargent Toner.

“Yes, sir, I have a question. Do you have any preference for which ship we choose? I felt an attachment to Solar, the pretty one with deep purple pin stripes,” said Cam.

Flint grinned. “Well, done, Sargent. I rather fancied the Monarch, the one with orange stripes. I think a man that feels comfortable with his ship is in better command of that ship. It’s like a woman. The lady you want to love is the one who makes you feel comfortable and because of that you make very few mistakes in that love. You protect her, honor her and ride her off into the clouds. Am I right Cam?”

“Yes, sir.”

Major Flint broke the ice laughing and they all had a good chuckle. He’d handle his crew the best way he could under the suffocating circumstances.

The flyers all nodded towards their Captain and with one salute and hail to Sarantos, they nimbly and efficiently left the room heading to the docking chambers.

He watched them all leave and studied each one of them while pouring out a coffee for himself and those that remained at the table.

Major Flint was tall and well built. He walked with a slight limp that he’d received during a skirmish. Although he never had trouble keeping up with anyone, not even the younger cadets. He was around 50 in age, but was physically fit and looked like he was only 30. He was a proud man and a great flyer with flying skills that could outmaneuver even smaller ships. Flint wasn’t a take the helm kind of guy but when it came to star-flyers, he was absurdly skilled. He’d never married. He was honorable and very dedicated to the federation. Indeed, the federation was his life. He’d hold

his own out there. Flint turned at the door and saluted. His penetrating grey eyes twinkled. Sarantos knew he loved a good battle, even if it was born of hopelessness.

Sargent Todd Cam followed behind him with his large blue ears moving towards any turbulence in the room, no matter how small. Cam, being Olivian could probably hear those working downstairs on the explosives. He was young in Olivian terms, being 68, he was still full of boyish enthusiasm. Sarantos knew he grew up on the planet Tash because Admiral Bane knew his family. As a matter of fact, Bane had grown up with Cam's father. Cam was dedicated and would do a marvelous job. He twisted and saluted as his immense round eyes glowed with pride. The blue tuft on top of his head moved back and forth in anticipation of the coming battle.

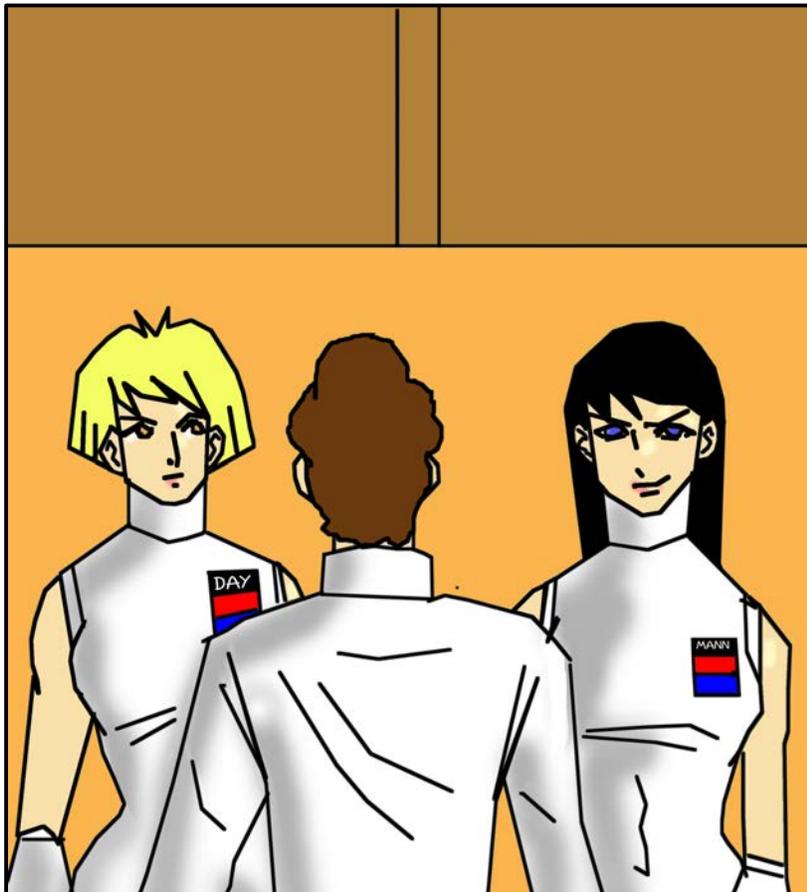


Then Chief Stone Drake turned along with Sargent Cam and saluted. Drake's good looks had gotten him in many struggles as a youth, but that only hardened his resolve to overcome that adversity. At least, that's what Drake had told him once when they were having a drink together at the local brewery on planet Kitra. They'd both been there on a weekend getaway after the academy graduation. He liked Drake but when he first told him that his good looks were a curse, Sarantos laughed uncontrollably until he saw the look on Drake's face. An extremely serious look. He was just a human and grew up on the main planet but used his

looks to get away with murder. Well, not really murder, but everything else was ok. They'd hung out from time to time and he could see what the frustration was for Drake as time passed. Drake had joined Sarantos band for a few years and played a

mean bass guitar, but classes made it harder and harder to get the band together. Plus, they lived in very different worlds. *Good luck, Stone.*

He smiled, as he looked upon the diversity of Private Sally Mann and Private Bonnie Day. Mann was OKurian and Day was human. Both women were part of Addie's security team and their bodies demonstrated how they eagerly they worked out daily to stay at the top of their game. They didn't have to flex to show off their muscle structure. But, their similarities stopped there. Day had blonde hair cut to her ears, mahogany brown eyes, a small mouth and a rather large nose for her face. She was still attractive and her charm, wit and her confidence were part of her beauty. She was dating another person in security and was at her prime at 25 years of age. He wished her well.



Sally Mann on the other hand was incredibly physically attractive, with long black hair and piercing blue eyes, and a cute mouth that curled slightly when she grinned. She had many endearing qualities, some that Sarantos might find more attractive than anyone else because she was OKurian and he grew up with them, learning to love their quiet ways. Mann wasn't going to charm you with her smile and conversation like Day would, but she certainly had a demure-like charm.

Sargent Sam Toner was the last one to leave the room of those that would lead the overhead mission to attack the approaching army from the air. It was hard to tell what the OKurian were thinking but he knew that Toner was thinking about. He surely worried about his wife, daughter and two sons that lived on a farm in Pendash like his parents and grandparents had. Toner and his wife, Judith had just had a little baby girl who was still only five months old. Yet now here he was in a crazy war for a wacky reason trying to defend his family and not get himself killed in the process. He was a handsome man of the highest honor, with a sincere dedication to the Federation, Most of all, though, he was basically a devoted family man.

He took a moment to reflect on the people he'd known over the years and the ones he didn't know as well. He hoped their lives wouldn't be snuffed out, because a couple of races wanted more attention. What's wrong with this universe where communication doesn't work? Why does the ego of a silly child grow up inside of some individuals as they never outgrow delusions of grandeur? Why do they think they're so important and to prove their worth, throw temper tantrums and threaten others with death. Is that the super power they've always wanted? Really? Sometimes the thought process of these weird lawless childish individuals gave Sarantos a splitting headache, like right now.



“Sarantos?”

“Yes, Doc?”

“You’re rubbing your head. I’m wondering if you’re well. Maybe, I should check you out?”

“No, Cleary, I’m fine. Just a headache that feels like the soldiers are using my skull as their marching grounds instead of the forest.”

“Oh, I understand, Captain.”

He sipped on a coffee and offered more to everyone else. Matt was the only one that accepted.

“Well, crew. We’re running out of time, it would seem.”

A low-key Ensign Harry Born strolled into the room and sat down.

“Ensign, we’ve put groups on explosives around the perimeter and sky fighters ready for action. After you inform me about what you carried out, I’d love for you to join Chief Brel Doran downstairs. I imagine you saw them when you came up?”

“Yes, I did, Captain. I’ll be glad to join them, sir. I contacted our ship and spoke directly to the acting Captain. He contacted Admiral Bane to inform him of our current situation and is now on standby. The Admiral is sending additional ships here to help us that were battle ready and happened to be stationed at nearby outposts. They should be here within the hour, sir. I then contacted the capitols of Okura and they’ve already sent out troops to reinforce each outpost to aid in holding it until the federation can reach us. Okura has an underlying extended military organization ready for such attacks. That’s why the bases were here.”

“Yes, that’s excellent, Ensign. Did they say when we could expect help from Okura?”

“Sir, I was informed that each outpost should receive overhead assistance within the hour and an army of underground troops will enter through the tunnels and find each commander in charge, such as yourself, sir, who can then direct them as needed.”

“Great. That certainly makes me feel better, Ensign. Great job.”

“Also, Captain, there are more lasers that can be found next to the room Brel is working in. I noticed the number on the door on my way back. Apparently, some of those guns can be used to take out at least 5 enemies at a time, sir.”

He looked at Addie. She nodded her head in approval. Dr. Cleary shook her head negatively, while Matt nodded yes.

“You can’t be serious, Captain? Using a weapon that has that kind of lethal ability is barbaric and inhuman,” said Major Cleary.

“At any other time, I’d completely agree with you Cleary, but not today. Today, I have a very small group of men and women who didn’t know they were going to be in a combat situation like this. Instead the peaceful mission they thought they were on was derailed. They were deceived. I’m not happy about that to begin with, but I understand that’s what war is all about and there’s a strategy to everything the Federation does. Furthermore Cleary, we didn’t start this war either. I’ll remind you of that. This army that’s coming to kill us, is immature and willing to sacrifice all of our lives so they can take these toys here. I’m sorry but I have no choice and will use all weaponry, ammunition and tactics available to us so that I can to keep my crew alive.”

Her face grew red. “Captain, I know you want to keep our crew members alive, and so do I, but it’s uncivilized!”

He’d never been angry at Cleary before, but there’s always a first time for everything. He felt his cheeks go flush and his stomach churn before the challenge of her words, but he would not be intimidated today. Any weakness wouldn’t prove beneficial in the heat of the moment. He wanted to tell her that she wasn’t making any sense, that she was ignorant in her believe to heal everyone as a doctor, that all life was precious all the time, but he held his tongue. To get into an argument right now would be wasting precious time and they didn’t have that luxury.

“Doctor Cleary, I’ve made my decision and this conversation is over. I have no time to discuss it further. You’ll stay at this base as our physician in case your assistance is needed. I think you’ll need to stay in sick bay so that any wounded incoming troops will know where to find you. It’s next to the cafeteria, which is easy to find. Please make sure when a soldier brings in an injured party that the uninjured soldier is also checked out first and eats something before returning to combat. Am I understood?”

“Yes, Captain.”

“You might as well go get yourself set up down there. When the other army arrives, I can send you someone to assist, unless you want Born to go with you now?”

He could tell she didn’t like being pushed out of the rest of the meeting. She was annoyed but he’d have to deal with her later.

“Born will be fine.”



“Ensign, you’ll assist Dr. Cleary in sick bay. Do you have the stomach for it?”

“Yes, Captain. My mother was a nurse and I learned a lot from her, so I think I can handle it.”

“Good. Was that all the information you had for me Ensign?”

“Yes, Captain. If you check the rooms that are marked with numbers 1-8 you might find other useful tools for the war.”

“Excellent job, Ensign, now please join Dr. Cleary and ready sick bay. Doctor?”

“Yes, Captain.” She stood up with annoyed eyebrows and crunched-in shoulders and headed for the exit with the Ensign following her close behind. She never bothered to look back.

He grinned. Cleary was known to get hot under the collar if you didn't agree with her sometimes, irrational thoughts. She always assumed everything she thought was rational and that was often true but in this case, it was so far from logic that he couldn't even see the need to pretend she had a point.

Time was running out. Suddenly, an urge returned. He wanted Addie.

“Matt, please assist Brel, in setting up and putting out the explosives. Make sure they all have those laser weapons before they go out, just in case they run across a small group of raiders. You, as well. After, they're done, I'll meet you all back here to discuss further action.”

“Yes, Captain. On my way.”

He watched him leave.

“Captain, where do you want me?”

“On the table, naked.”

“Captain, we don’t have time for self-indulgence.”

“Well, lovely lady, if we don’t have time, I might not be able to behave as a proper Captain and function at my highest capacity. As your Captain, you’re also not allowed to decide the best place of action that I see fit for you. Are you?”

She narrowed her inviting eyes at him in a little display of anger. It only made him want her more. He was already there! He never had to touch her because just wanting her made him insanely delirious. He’d become a user and she was the sex machine that enabled him. There would be no cure. He was an addict.



He pulled her onto his lap. She let him. Placing his lips on hers was lighting a raging fire. She responded.

“Deep inside, baby,” he whispered.

Her moans were driving him over the edge as he watched her undress. She played with him. She toyed with him. She flawlessly used her own sensuality, teasing him beyond any fantasy. She didn’t play fair.

“Sarantos, since you were so forceful with me, now I’m begging you. I have a craving. I want you deep inside of me.”

Her voice was like the whisper of a gentle breeze, or a spring that had a small waterfall glistening in the sun...then it all stopped.

She grabbed him and pulled off his clothes as he struggled to inhabit the chair. Then she sat on his lap and his world exploded into fireworks.

Her voice was no longer a whisper, but an urgent command. “Deep inside of me. I’ll give you a piece of me, and there’ll be no going back, because you’re doing the same...deeper Captain!”

When she said Captain, he lost it. She was both provoking him and mocking him. Just when he thought she could go no further, she did.

If either one of them was going to die in battle today, this would be their last memory together and wow, what a memory! A memory of freedom, of love, of...