

Chapter 9

“Hip Hop SociEty”



It'd been over a week since Sarantos had the meeting with Addie and Matt about Kitara and the nasty Garnash. He was so anxious over the whole thing that he hadn't slept well at all while also finding it harder to eat without feeling nauseous. He continued to throw himself increasingly into his music. Music always had a way of making him happy. It did not fail him now. Throughout history, he felt that music always built bridges and brought down walls and borders. Music was

his only salvation as he saw less and less of Addie. He was frustrated by the circumstances, but music always helped him cope. Without music, he felt like he had a layer of skin missing.

The consequences of having an agent on board his starship could prove quite catastrophic. It was his responsibility to deal with all of these situations despite the scars he was hiding. He needed to protect the people on his ship from harm. But, this was an entirely unique situation and the magnitude was enormous. It was unprecedented. It could bring down half of the federation, or certainly at least set in motion a long drawn-out war that might last for many generations! Right now, he honestly wished he'd just stuck to music when he was younger. It was always so much easier for him. Instead, he chose a different path. Kids today wanted to be famous tomorrow but music was never like that for him. It was never about the fame, just about connecting with his soul.

Lieutenant John Baker, Matt Blume and Doc Cleary were three people on this starship that he trusted above all others, except of course for Addie, but she'd been too busy to meet with the team when he set up a private meeting last week to discuss the current matters of importance. Although he had initially felt better after discussing their situation together, it did not last. It didn't matter. He was emotionally drained while simultaneously being filled with a ravenous rage and a constant confusion.

Matt was the perfect choice to be a spy, to listen and watch for any news that might develop when people had their guard down over drinks or dining. Since the ship had docked, occasionally a new face would appear in The Diamond Room. Though they had a rigorous security protocol in place, there was still a general sense of unease in the air. To get on the ship as a visitor would mean at least a week of background checks and filing of proper papers required to prove the visitor's intentions. Who were they meeting? And why? At this point, no one was permitted aboard unless invited by the Captain. Yes, security was that tight. They couldn't have anyone roaming about the ship. People talked to Matt and the Doc on a daily basis but Sarantos wasn't sure if it was enough. They were astute. They were good listeners. They understood body language and could decipher suspicious behavior. Every day though, they both reported nothing out of the ordinary to him and Addie.

After she was seen with Garnash, Sarantos offered Kitara a leave of absence for the next two weeks, hoping they'd find something out about her intentions before then. At first, she was hesitant but he told her she needed a break and they didn't need the extra help because the ship wasn't in hostile territory and they were docked peacefully. He insisted that the whole crew would be doing the same. War could come again at any time and then they wouldn't have any possibility of a break. She looked at him distrustfully but eventually agreed. It wouldn't keep her off the ship, but instead only limit her time on the deck and in rooms she no longer needed to visit. He wanted to arrest her under the suspicion of treason, but they needed more evidence and they did not have it at this time. Besides, she could possibly lead them to others that might be involved. It was a risky move but security had her under tight observation. It was the only plan that made sense to him.

All of this was slow and painful progress. Baker had gone into the system and denied her access to information typically available to high ranking officers. She had been his number one for many years but the lies now made him uncomfortable. Everything is impossible the first time but once the veil is lifted, there is no going back. Baker reassured him that if Kitara asked why she couldn't get into certain sites, he'd tell her the whole system was being flushed because of bugs and it might be quirky for another month.

He was suffocating. He wanted to hurt something that he loved. The truth is he wasn't ready for something like this. He didn't know how to react. On top of that, nothing was happening, and he needed information as soon as possible.

What was Matt doing anyway? He was taking too long getting the much-needed information from his Mangee friend. He looked at the starship time clock in his ready room that sat perched above the replicator. Close enough to dinner. He decided to pay Matt a visit earlier than usual.

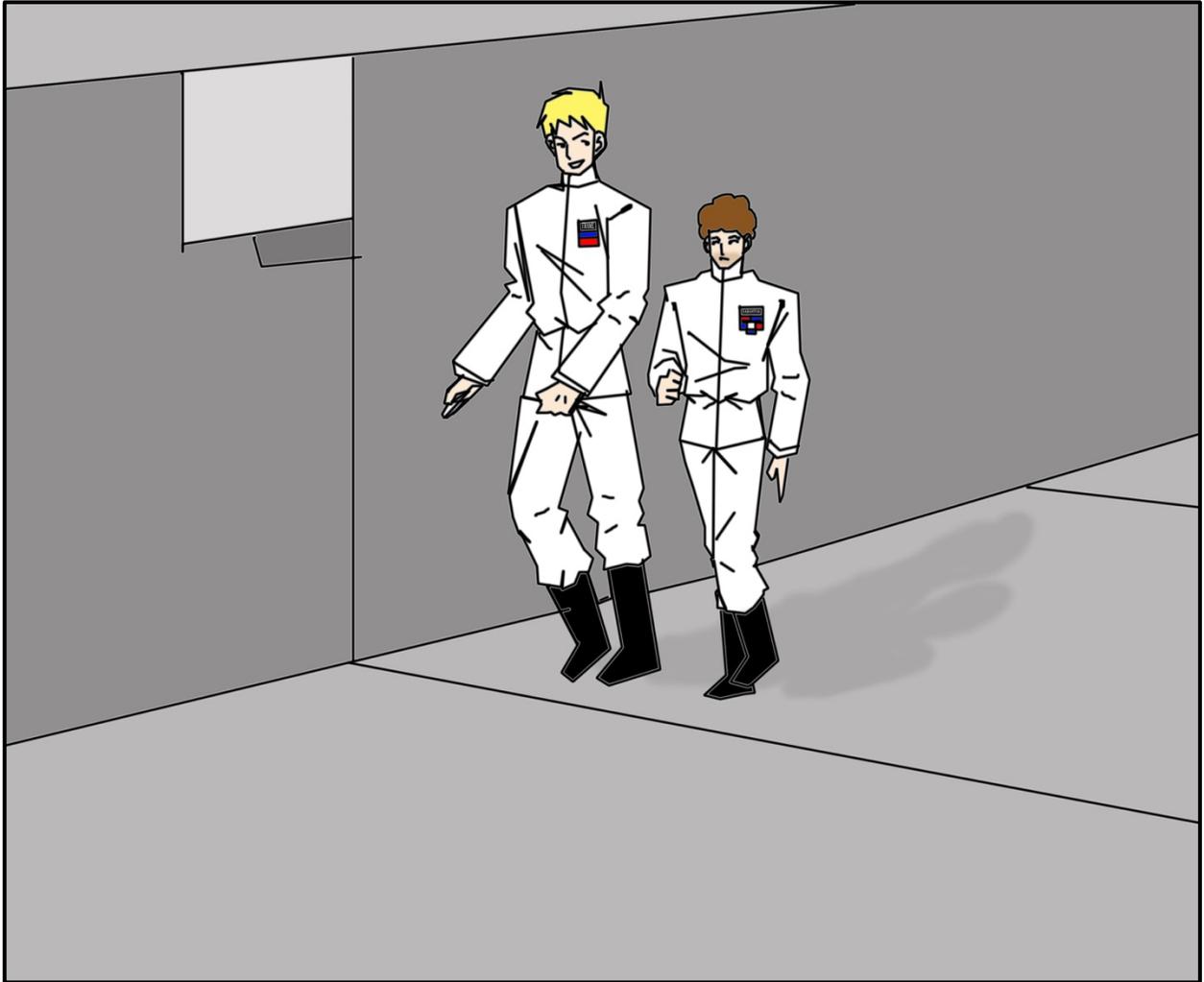
The door slid closed behind him. He still liked that sound. It seemed purposeful and soothing. "Chief Petty, I'm going to dinner, you're in charge of the bridge."

"Yes, Captain."

These days, the walk to The Diamond Room took forever. Time seemed to move as slow as molasses. He didn't like time alone to think, because his tortured mind would always come back to Addie and right now there was nothing he could do about missing the woman he loved. Addie was doing her job and that was her primary focus. That's how it had to be. This Kitara thing was annoying from many angles.

"Captain."

Sarantos turned and said, “Well, Donny, how are you? You headed to the kitchen?”



“Yes, Captain,” he said as he moved next to him.

Donny Frame was human but almost seven feet tall. His lanky frame and big flashy smile was quite comical. With an enthusiastic sense of humor, he fit well into the atmosphere of the kitchen and bar & lounge. Being well-travelled and well read, he could talk about any subject. He was in his element there.

“I haven’t seen you in a while,” said Sarantos.

“Oh, I fill in for Matt from time to time. Tonight, he has a big date. Imagine that, Captain? Matt on a date. I don’t mean my words in a disrespectful way, but you know what he’s like, sir. He always keeps to himself. A loner if I had to guess, friendly though. Thinking about it now, I guess I don’t really know very much about him.”

He couldn’t help but smile at Donny’s interpretation of Matt.

“I know what you mean, Donny. I don’t know much about Matt either but he has the eyes and heart of good man. Interesting observation though,” Sarantos said as he patted Donny on the back. They entered The Diamond Room together.

The crowd was loud, and the place packed. Matt saw Donny and waved him over to the bar.

“See you later, Captain.” Donny moved towards the bar.

“Donny, tell Matt to see me before he leaves.”

“Will do, Captain.”

Sarantos looked silently around the room. In a dark corner of the room, he spotted Addie having dinner with Brel. He headed towards them, as many of the crew nodded in acknowledgement of their captain. Addie was the sole focus of his attention and he was fixated on her when a young woman accidentally plowed into him.

“Oh, no, I’m so sorry, Captain. So very sorry.” The girl was a young ensign and blushed slightly across her cheeks. Sarantos didn’t recognize her, but that wasn’t unusual. There were a lot of people on the ship!

“That’s fine ensign. Just be more careful next time please.”

“Thank you, sir, I will.” Her face was still red as she turned immediately and went sheepishly to the table she was sharing with several other young people.



Another young ensign suddenly appeared in front of him. “Captain Sarantos, excuse me for disturbing you sir, but I was at one of your concerts the other night. Dynamite, sir, if I may say. But several of my friends were wondering if your band does hip hop? I know it’s antiquated music, but we still like it. There’re

about twenty of us in a group that we like to call the Hip Hop Society. Not a real secret society or anything, but part of our message is Hip Hop’s still the ultimate truth. Excuse the expression, but can you dig it?”

Sarantos enjoyed this young man’s direct and forthright manner along with his reckless enthusiasm for music. “We have nothing currently, but I could dig it and write a song that would work for your society if you’d like. I love experimenting with all sorts of music.”

“That would be fantastic, sir. Thanks, Captain!” He smiled and as an afterthought said, “We’re not musicians or anything cool like that, we just like the sound. We love the vibe.” The young ensign moved into the crowd and disappeared from Sarantos view.

It's such a world of extremes. He felt like he more often than not had groupies checking him out and looking for an opportunity. All of these girls were looking for what he already had. He was trying to wipe the silly grin from his face when he approached the table and sat down across from Addie and Brel. "Mind if I join you?"

"Of course not, Captain," said Brel.

"Good to see you Brel."

"You too, Captain. I saw you making your way over here. It must be tough."

"Yes, it would appear I've encountered the youthful dinner hour."

Brel smiled. "It would appear so, sir. You are a brave man."

"Captain, can we talk to you in private, after dinner?" Addie asked.

"Yes, Addie. It seems serious. Maybe we should go to my private quarters to help make it appear more casual than professional."

"That would be wise, Captain."

Now his curiosity was working overtime. It's amazing how people you're closest to can quickly become a vital lifeline.

A young red-headed woman approached and took his order.

“I think I might need a drink from that bottle of wine you have there. Red?”

“Yes, although it looks more pink. It comes from the Aisle of Lindon on the planet Toop. The grapes are a romantic looking pink color and the wine is mellow. Quite nice,” said Brel.

“Never been to Toop, but I heard the place is a slice of heaven. You two ever visit there?”

“No,” said Addie.

“I visit often, Captain. I love the joy of the people there. The land is plush and juvenile with very few of the nasty insects and the weather is impeccable. My favorite beach is the one with purple sand and fresh faces. It was created over centuries by the waves beating against huge cliffs of magnificent purple rock. The sunrises and sunsets are sensational.”

“Sounds incredible. I think the next leave I get I’m heading to Toop,” said Sarantos playfully.

“You should, and don’t forget to take Addie with you!”

“Addie would enjoy that,” said Addie smiling mischievously at Sarantos.

It would be a perfect honeymoon spot, if they ever got married, he thought.

“Yes, so would I,” said Sarantos being careful not to mention the word marriage.



The candid conversations over dinner were something he'd missed out on for a while. They continued talking about Brel's homeland, but nothing ever personal about the man himself. No mention of family or what he did in his spare time, although Sarantos believed Brel never allowed himself that luxury but instead worked incessantly on improving his fighting skills. Vacation to him was probably about perfecting his skills for service in the federation. Brel did however give away a little about himself when his eyes twinkled as he reminisced about the shores of a coastline where he grew up. The pleasure was obviously reflected by the warmth and enthusiasm in his voice as well as the words he chose ever so carefully to describe it's typical geography.

“Well, Brel you certainly make me want to go to the Shores of Starling. I've never heard of such a majestic place. In fact, I've never heard of it at all,” said Sarantos.

“And you wouldn’t have, Captain, because we keep it hidden, even on Federation maps. To ruin its beauty with too much of a good thing is not a good thing. It’s shared by some of us with only the best of friends, ones we would trust with our very lives. The Shores of Starling are sacred, and its beauty a revered privilege.”

“Everybody came from somewhere. I’m honored that you’ve shared that part of your homeland with me, Brel. Your description made me feel like I’ve seen it before in a dream I can’t quite find,” said Sarantos.

Addie laughed. “Well, Captain I see your dreamy eyes are searching for it even as you speak about it.”

“Yes, it’s one of these nagging things I can’t seem to get close to.” He looked at Brel. “You know, now I must see this place for myself Brel and of course, when I go for the first time I’d be honored to join you. I wouldn’t want to infringe on such a natural beauty without someone who knows the proper way to honor it.”

Brel said, “Captain, the honor would be mine. I’d be thrilled to accompany you but we must take Addie as well. She’s never been there either. I think the two of you would enjoy it together very much.”

“I’m there too. After all of this is over, I’ll need to feast my eyes on something that relaxing and drink it in,” she said.

“Well now that that’s settled, Captain what were the youth of tomorrows talking to you about if you don’t mind me asking. Your face took on a nostalgic look but you listened quite intently.”

Sarantos laughed. “Oh, that. It would appear that I have some fans that attend my concerts and they belong to a group of Hip Hop Society maniacs. They were wondering if I could conjure up some hip-hop magic at my next concert.”

Addie said, “Well, you wouldn’t want to disappoint your adoring public Sarantos now would you? Do you have a song in mind?”

“No, but the young ensign said something that sparked me. He said, their motto is hip hop with a purpose and the beat drives the message and that message sets the heart on fire, that hip-hop’s all about truth. I got the ideas and the blueprint buzzing in my mind.”

Addie laughed. “Well, that’s some truth. You must meet the challenge Captain. Go along for the ride and feel the vibe?”

“Are you teasing me, Addie?”

“Nope. If I close my eyes I can see you up on the stage with the rage around you rapping away like a madman.”

That was enough to cause Brel to chuckle. He didn’t do that often.

Brel said, “I’ve never heard of this hip hop you talk of. What is it?”

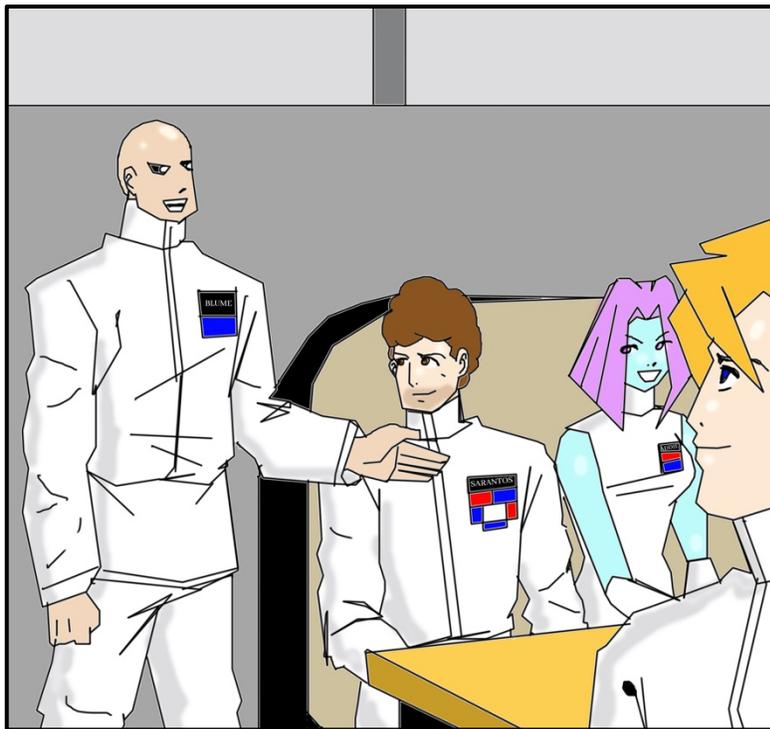
“It’s a part of human’s music history. All types of music that have taken a back seat to the mixture of what you hear today.”

“I think when you have this concert, I’ll also attend with Addie and share in this old music culture of your people.”

Addie laughed. “I wonder what you’d make of it Brel? Your expressions might prove better than the concert.”

“Thanks for that image, Addie,” said Sarantos.

The three of them laughed and it felt good. It felt incredibly good, but then Sarantos creative non-stop mind thought about what Addie said and decided to use her words in the song lyrics. Go along for the ride and feel the vibe. She is quite brilliant without even knowing it. Yet another reason why he loved her.



Matt joined them.

“What’s so funny over here?”

“Hip-hop talk,” said Addie with a watermelon grin.

“Oh, yes. I’ve heard of that archaic style of music. What about it?”

“Oh, some young ensigns want me to play it at our next

concert. I think I’m going to. I can’t let down my groupies or my fans.”

“Mind if I come? I’ve never heard the style before. I prefer Mozart. Is it like that?”

Sarantos and Addie laughed so hard tears came down their cheeks like a waterfall with an attitude.

Trying to speak through the chuckling, Sarantos said, “Well then, my friend your expression may prove more entertaining than Brel or I at the concert.”

Puzzled, Matt and Brel looked to each other for an answer to the madness.

“We should sell tickets to that show,” said Addie still laughing.

This was a priceless moment with his friends. Sarantos didn’t want it to ever end. It relieved the tremendous amount of pressure and burden he felt every day and made him want to engage with all of them more often. He must demand it as their Captain. It would benefit them all. This was better than therapy.

Matt was the first to ruin the joy. “Captain, I have an important date tonight and will come to your room early in the morning to give you an update, without anyone knowing we met.”

“Sure, that sounds good, Matt. IC me to let me know when you’re coming.”

“Okay, but right now a beautiful lady awaits me. Good night all.”

They all said goodnight to Matt and then the tone of the dinner changed back to business.

He was sitting in his room staring out at the closed door of the nebula and working on his new song. He seemed afraid of little things but not afraid of big things at the moment. Brel and Addie had decided they had more work to do and would wait until later in the evening before entering his quarters. It made sense. So for now he could

enjoy a few of the things he loved doing most - writing lyrics, singing and playing his trusty guitar.

Maybe if he did an excellent job with this song, he might bring Hip-Hop back into existence. There were still fans for it, obviously, but it's fire burned out like disco and the many other crazes throughout the years. One style he enjoyed was bilore, a very exotic and intoxicating sound fusing Native American and deep blue harmonies that the group Tangle introduced in 2055. They were from the planet Plankton. He still listened to their records from time to time making him a groupie for bilore style. Next month he'd concoct a song in honor of that period. Maybe he should speak to the band about making this a recurrent theme. Maybe this could be a new thing they could do regularly, bringing back the dead eras and their distinctive styles of music during their performances. No one else was doing it and they would definitely stand out.

He'd use Hip Hop Society as the title to honor these fans. Those young people would love it and hopefully let others know. Maybe it would spread like wildfire. Though their band was doing quite well, this might push them over the edge and into cult-like status. Fame would surely follow. He paused to think about how fame never mattered to him. He was at peace with whatever others thought of his music. He was never motivated to try to prove anyone wrong or try to impress anyone with his music. It was just something he had to do, just like breathing. Sometimes the things you love doing just have a way of finding you.

The notes gently played themselves under his fingers, and he sang, "Hate to tell you but it already happened, remember when there was only hate, haters didn't hesitate..." He picked up his pad and wrote it down. That melody was wicked. The song was coming along nicely.

The door slid open and Addie came in, alone.

"Where's Brel," he asked?

“He had a few things to finish up and will be along in about an hour.”



She was dressed in a loosely fitted top that was lightly colored with soft greens and lavender with an open tie at the neckline. She hadn't bothered to tie it and the slit went to the bottom of her breasts not leaving a thing open to interpretation. The colors worked well with her glowing

purple skin and her luscious hair hung loosely around her shoulders and back. She drove him wild when she wore tight jeans that hugged her body closer than he could ever get. He wanted to be those jeans right about now.

“Okay no problem. Would you like a drink, Addie?”

She moved further into the room. He was an animal that had suddenly awakened from a deep hibernation and was feeling rather ravenous. Her smell, the way she moved made him want to pounce. He couldn't wait anymore. He needed her close to him.

“Yes, I could use a red wine, any kind will do. Is that your new song you're working on?”

Not fair, distracting him with music as a conversation piece.

“Yes,” he said, and with a sinful ulterior motive, poured her a glass of wine.

She grabbed it before he could hand it to her. “Thanks, Sarantos. I really need it.”

Did she choose those words on purpose? Addie sipped it so seductively that he knocked it out of her hands without regret and pulled her forcefully into him, kissing her wildly, vigorously nibbling on her neck and breasts. She didn’t stop him. He tore off his clothes and almost ripped her shirt off from her perfect body. He felt like a rabid animal.

The beat of their loins drove the message, their heat ignited the fire. Love and rage to play the game. Love for each other and rage for the length of time they were separated. They were both neglected animals caught up in wild and imaginative love making that he wished would never end. Moving around his quarters every few minutes, finding new locations and selflessly trying numerous unusual positions, they somehow ended up in the shower for their last explosion of fireworks before the sound of Brel’s voice brought them back to reality. Reality sucked.

He kissed her on the mouth and sucked it in ever so tenderly. “We’ll be out in a minute Brel,” he yelled.

“No worries, Captain. You and Addie take your time. I’ll pour a glass of this nice red wine while I wait.”

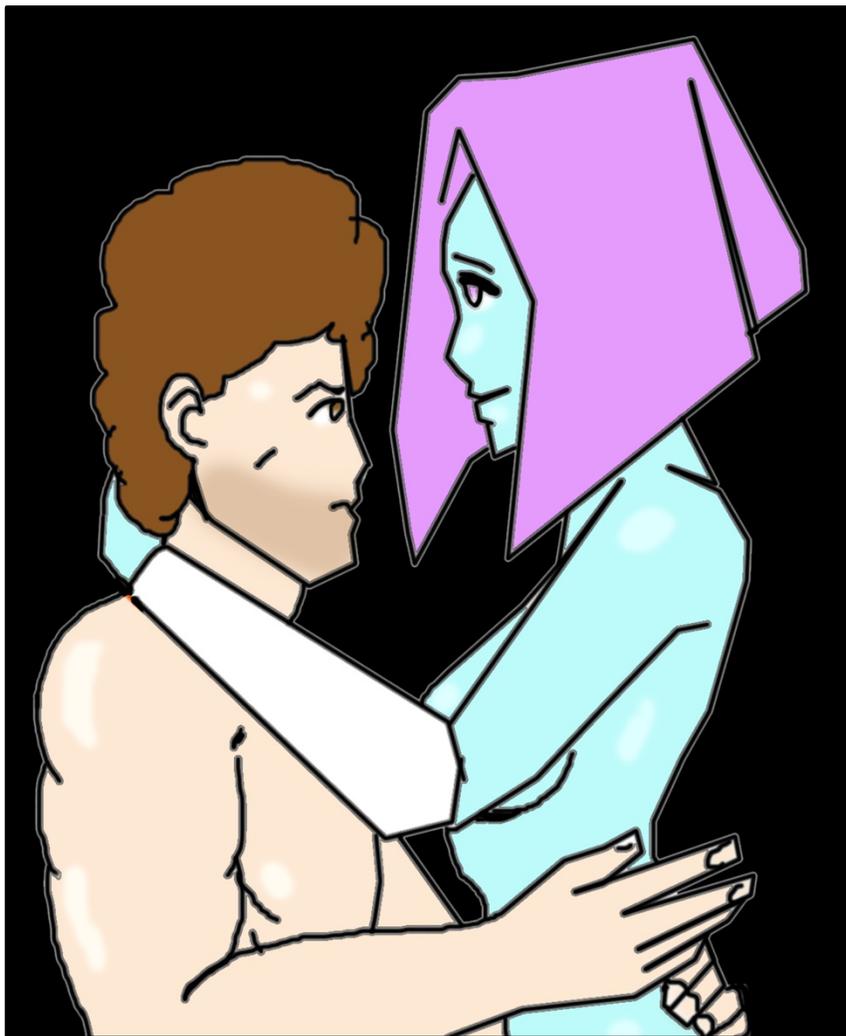
Sarantos dropped his head into Addie’s neck and sighed quietly.

“That’s good Brel.”

“Captain, would you like me to come back later?”

Brel just upped the anti on how much respect Sarantos had for this man. Personally, Sarantos didn't think he could have more respect and admiration for him than he already did, but now, Brel would have his undying devotion.

“No, that's okay, Brel. We'll be out in a minute.” They still had work to do and as much as he'd like to say, go home and don't come back until tomorrow - he couldn't. Besides, it had been an eventful hour though it seemed like a few seconds!



Addie licked his mouth and moved her tongue down his body before getting out of the shower.

Moaning softly, he joined her. She was like a classic painting, like a walking goddess who fell down from the heavens and onto his lap. Such a classic beauty an one he felt he in no way could ever deserve.

“Thanks, Sarantos. That was incredible.” Her voice was sultry, but then she put the icing on the cake. “I've missed

you, my love. Let's talk later.”

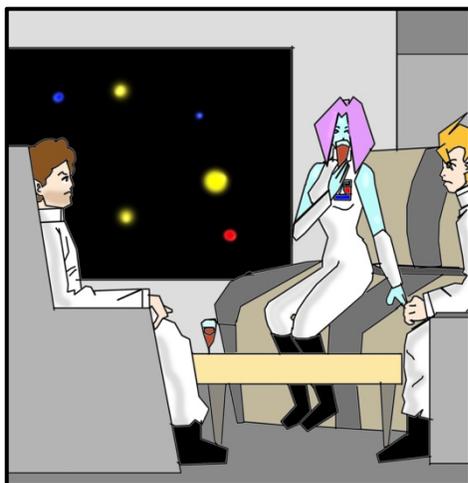
He somehow controlled the urge to grab her again and pull her back into the shower. Control yourself, Sarantos. This woman was impossible for him to be around. With her, he could feel the vibe. Together they just fit. It would be great to forget everyone and everything else and run away with her, with no rules to follow, no Federation to serve...but that was impossible. She must have sensed his thoughts somehow, because she glanced at him with an understanding look and held his eyes momentarily with a cozy warmth.

Whenever she wasn't close to him, it felt like the world was about to end. He tried to be patient and let time do its thing but this woman was his entire existence, his everything. There would never be another for him.

After several minutes, they both joined Brel in the main area of his quarters.

Addie poured them both a glass of wine and sat down on the couch that faced the open star system, pulling her legs under her.

He sat down facing her in a comfortable chair. Brel did the same.



He might as well get this started. “Okay, you two what's so important that we needed to meet alone and in my quarters?”

Addie spoke first. “Captain, it's not as though it's that important but this whole business should be kept secret for now.” She was back to calling him Captain. He sighed. She continued, “Brel, why

don't you inform the Captain of what you found out." She took another sip of wine.

He wanted her to spend the night.

"Sure Lieutenant," Brel said and then looked directly at him. "Captain, I followed Kitara to her private living quarters on Garnash. I moved in close enough to hear some of their words. Garnash offered her membership into a private club known as the Drifters. A club I would call ruthless usurpers. I've had experience with them before and they stop at nothing to get what they want. Belonging to no country, no family, no rules but their own creates an unbelievably bad day for anyone who interferes with their intentions. Let's just say, they are very bad news."

Sarantos felt the tension seeping into his muscles and quickly increase throughout his body, despite the current release of it. Kitara was still causing him trouble. Why was she doing this? Jealous of his relationship with Addie? No, it couldn't be that simple. It would have to be deeper than that to get her to behave in such an unorthodox way.

"I've heard of the Drifters. What is she thinking? Those are the type of people that killed her parents. I don't understand how I didn't see this coming. I trusted her, and she was my number one."

This was the first time he'd felt ill from what she was doing, the first time it actually hurt. Kitara had gone too far. There was no denying it now. There was nothing else he could rationalize to explain her behavior.

He could feel Addie's eyes on him, studying him like she was getting ready for a school exam. He shivered and looked her way. She sipped her wine.

Brel also took a sip of wine and spoke again. “Captain, there’s something else. Since you set Kitara on her way for a few weeks, she’s out of our loop, so of course Garnash cleverly fashioned an idea that could remedy that.”

Sarantos couldn’t let him finish without some anger seeping into his actions, so he interrupted. “That’s ridiculous. He can’t change that, it was my decision, not his. The arrogance.”

Brel and Addie were patiently waiting for him to finish. He calmed down.

“Captain, Garnash gave her an infectious disease to put most of the ship in a state of quarantine and once it was known what it was, you would need to call in for outside help to man the controls and keep things under control. Of course, all who came in would be wearing protective gear and still be able to function. Who likely would be called on board, but Kitara? A sound and brilliantly evil plan.”



He couldn’t stop his mouth from falling open in surprise. What was that woman thinking? How could she even consider such a despicable action?

“What disease?”

Brel said, “Blurdeosious. I’ve informed Cleary. We still have time. Garnash will be getting it for her this evening. I suggest we put a quarantine on our ship before it happens preventing all from exiting and entering.”

Great, the concert was in four days. “I don’t see how that will stop them. They could just wait until the quarantine is lifted. No, I know that disease and we need to get Cleary and her crew to start giving out inoculations immediately. It might stop it from becoming an epidemic on our ship. The shot protects some, while others might experience lighter symptoms of the disease. It’s our only hope of keeping her from taking charge. Enough! I want her arrested, now.”

Addie calmly looked at him. “Captain, it might not be the best idea. We want the whole group, not just her. She could lead us to the leader of the Drifters, something that the federation has wanted for decades.”

“I understand, but don’t you think that keeping her out there with her freedom is putting the security of our entire ship at risk?”

“Why don’t you let Brel and I sort out the security of the ship, Captain. If you want to consult with Admiral Bane, please do so but I’m sure he’d agree with your security Lieutenant.”

“I will consult him but I’m sure you’re right”, he gasped. “However, I think he’d want a heads up. Brel make sure Cleary gets those shots out to all on the ship immediately and to everyone coming and going from the ship as well. We don’t want it getting out amongst the star base. Tell them it’s for their protection against a local virus we found on our ship. I’m sure when Kitara finds that out though, she’ll know we know. She’s not stupid but we can’t take a chance of it going viral on the entire base.”

Addie said, “The only other way to handle it would be let her get on the ship tomorrow with the virus and then set up the protocol for everyone else leaving and entering. She might get word, but it’s less likely. Captain, when she comes on board, I’ll inform you of her location. You might make it a point of kicking her off the ship with the best of intentions to enjoy her two-week break. Even walk her off if you have to.”

“Okay, and before you say anything. I can keep my cool you know.”

“Good. I strongly suggest you, and your crew go get shots this evening, along with Brel and I,” said Addie.



“Open IC. Cleary, the captain here.”

“I’m ready and way ahead of you. All three of you get to sick bay now and start sending the crew down here after that. I already vaccinated John and the crew he had here this evening. We can’t have the controls down.”

“Smart woman,” Sarantos said.

The crazy Drifters made him think of another line in his new song, utter domination sweeping the whole damn nation. Hip-hop society.