

## *Chapter 5*

### *“No One’s Perfect Until...”*



Sarantos felt numb as he walked down the stairs and through the long corridor reflecting over the past six months of war in a heartbeat.

So much had happened to his soul, to his body, and to those he loved dearly. He’d learned more about his native homeland than he thought possible. Some of these things made him want to stay here forever, like the secret camps created to protect the OKurian homeland that connected to the cities via complex underground passageways. These tunnels were designed to be self-sustaining cities

among themselves and could supply thousands of citizens with beds, ample food, libraries, lively theatres, along with fully equipped hospitals and the finest schools. The more he investigated the elementary interlocking grid system, the more impressed he became.

Their ships were ultramodern though, faithfully serving the men who flew them. He’d met an incredible team of OKurian soldiers, imposing yet sensitive to nature and their fellow races. They’d even designed a race of computer generated humanoid beings, which were more human than some of the species Sarantos encountered over the years. Plants he never even knew existed on OKura along with their noble

purposes were unmasked on this mission, but the most impressive thing he experienced was the healer - the healer that saved the life of his beloved Addie.

He still had trouble believing it, because he'd still been in combat and unable to see her in months. He felt her in his dreams, though. She was in his heart, and in his soul. Hell, he could even taste her lips and smell her intoxicating essence if he focused just a little. He tried not to do it too often, because it made him wild with fury knowing it wasn't really her in front of him. He hated pretending!

She'd stayed on at the hospital for what seemed like an endless month. Her recovery was long and grueling. Then on his command, she had checked back into The Chicago and worked only from the safety of the ship. She joked he was being over-protective. He denied it but sometimes did actually wonder about his own intentions. She'd spoken to him often about the ship and informed him of the strange behavior of Lieutenant Kitara.

Kitara would randomly disappear for hours at a time. Although he still trusted her, it was slightly suspicious and could not be denied. He couldn't understand why her sister was on the side of the Belocks because according to Kitara, they'd killed her parents when she and her sister were only two. Time heals, as the quote goes, but is that always true? He didn't know if he could ever himself forgive a race for killing his parents. The logic of it was simply irrational. War is war and not all men or beings who fight in it want to annihilate an individual person for war crimes instigated by a particular government. Soldiers usually at the most basic level only kill to protect themselves and their comrades. Self-preservation and anger at those that would go to war over the need for control were typically a strong motive. Freedom would only happen when acceptance for the individual belief systems and traditions were left to those individuals. Harmony? If there wasn't ever any war, more races would surely get along. And if they could forgive each other, there'd absolutely be less war. He shook his head. It'd never happen though.

He had a negative attitude about it because he knew his fellow beings. Although there were many that'd appreciate and thrive by learning from others and living

together peacefully, the majority still favored aggression, control and could not resist their primal need to argue over anything just for the sake of it. The thought disgusted him.

Kitara was now a worry to him. He didn't know what to expect from his long-time ally and friend. She'd been with him on and off for several years but she didn't seem ready to accept the fact she may never have him in quite the same manner she was ordinarily accustomed to. They used to spend nights drinking, dancing, making love and chatting into the wee hours of the next morning. It was harder for her than for him because he had Addie. Kitara currently had no one. Kitara must also see how much he obviously loved Addie, which surely made her furious. He hadn't set out to make her angry. It just happened that way. Love was a strange and beautiful thing. It could not be planned meticulously. Love is love.

He didn't just love Addie because she was drop-dead-gorgeous. She was also brilliant, thoughtful, strategic, interesting, humorous, mysterious, self-sacrificing, and one of the most fascinating, selfless and pleasing lovers he'd ever been involved with. He grinned. That was just naming a few of the reasons off the top of his head.

Now, she was again at the hospital helping with the army that was finally being dispatched back home. Their mission on Okura was finally over. The Okurians said they would clean up any remaining renegades left roaming around the woodlands.

He was finally free to see Addie and was hoping to visit the farm to check on his family one last time. He thought he should bring Addie to their going away celebration. Her race, the Satorian, had many different celebrative parties throughout the year, but going away parties were not typically one of them. This was the first woman he'd ever wanted to bring home. She was the one.

The pounding of his footsteps reminded him of the walk he and Kitara had taken before meeting Admiral Bane when all of this that started last year. A lot had happened since then, including almost losing Addie. The closer he got to her



location, the more he felt her energy. It wasn't something he just felt in his head. He always felt that way about her presence. He could feel her essence in the air.

Two soldiers came out of the critical care unit and he stepped inside.

Addie was helping a soldier to his feet. He inhaled deeply at the sight of her, staring in awe at her perfect muscles while they flexed giving the soldier her full support. She'd lost

some weight but was still strong and muscular. She'd been working hard in the weight room on the ship to regain her strength. Her braided purple hair shimmered in the light and hung down her back gently falling on her slender waist. She looked up at him and her violet eyes moved onto his like a dragon riding the waves of an ocean until it overtook him and submerged him beneath the depths of her soul. He was drowning but didn't want to come up for air. She broke the connection by looking away.

Helping the man to a chair that was placed against a far wall where he could finally sit down in comfort, Addie gently released him into it. She stood up, turned and ran as fast as she could to his arms, almost knocking him over.

That's another thing he loved about her, spontaneous to a fault.

It was kind of awkward. His cheeks heated up and other parts became, well, obviously happy.

He pulled her out into the hallway like a mischievous teenager in love. It felt like they were two kids in love. She jumped onto him and wrapped her legs around his waist. Looking quickly around the corridor, he moved to a door marked arsenal. Thank God it was unlocked. He somehow dragged them both inside the large room filled with guns, ammo, and boxes of various weapons. That excited him more.

He sat her on a table and smelled the joyous life that danced through her intoxicating hair. He swiftly undid her braid and watched her luxurious purple shimmers fall around her shoulders. They'd both died in combat and now he was in heaven, of that he was sure. Her eyes pierced deep into him and drove the arrow into his heart.

“I missed you! I missed you. I love you.” His voice was a whisper.

“I missed you, too. And I love you too, Sarantos. I thought I'd never see you again, my love, but here you are touching me like I have fantasized about repeatedly every day that I've been apart from you.” She pulled him closer, as the sultry sound of her voice and her warm breath fed his fire.

He wasn't sure how long they'd stayed in that room making love, because with Addie time never mattered.

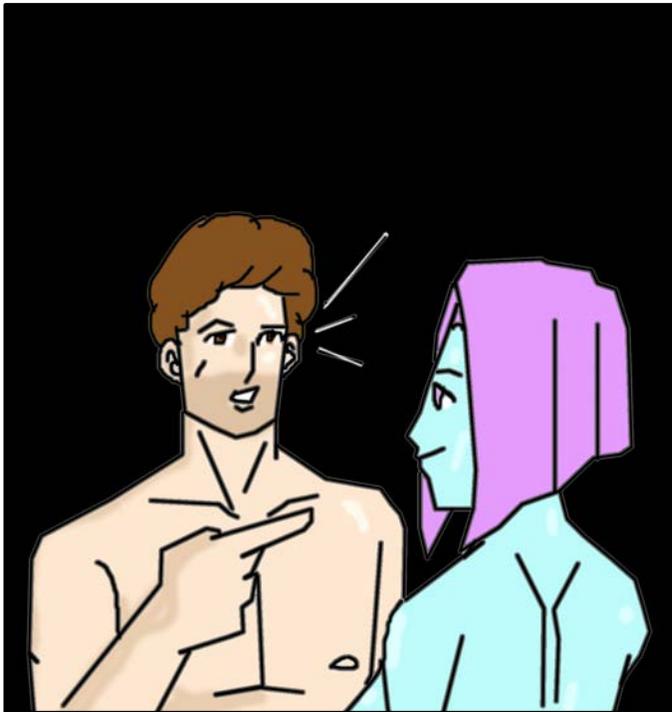
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He woke up next to her and smiled at the fact they were both curled up together, naked on the long cold table. She stirred.

“Hello, beautiful.”

“Hi,” she said.

Brushing her hair away from her face, he said, “That was amazing. I don’t want to get up.”



She smiled. “Me neither.”

Her skin was soft and any scars from her ordeal were gone.

“No scars?”

“Nope. Thanks to your healer.”

“I wasn’t sure if he could save you, but I had no choice.” He pulled her close warming his own raw body

with her warm velveteen skin.

“Sarantos, I honestly believe I began healing the moment he walked into the room. I felt his power. It was surreal!”

She did glow like an angel, as though she’d been touched by godly hands.

“His presence was amazing. I met him when I was just a kid. Okura has a lot of healers.”

“I feel blessed that you sent him to me. I know I wouldn’t have pulled through if it weren’t for his powerful energy and belief system.”

She ran her hand down his exposed back, sending tremors to his groins.

“You better not do that, I might not be able to leave here.”

She stood up, smiled, then dressed, very slowly.

“Fine, then Captain Sarantos. I suppose you’re right.”

“You’re wicked, you know that? Just completely wicked.”

Her head tilted to the side and her eyes smoldered with fire. He was like her plaything. She shook him to his core, holding his eyes while she pulled her hair into a ponytail.

“Why, do you say that, Mister Captain? I’ve never been called anything like that in my entire life.”

He laughed. “Oh, my beautiful creature, I’m sure that’s not true. You’re not a very good liar, because you first have to have something obvious to lie about. Or a least, a believable lie.”

She held out her hand pulling him up to his feet. His nakedness was obvious in the cold room. Grabbing his pants, he hurriedly pulled them on, as Addie straightened out his shirt and helped him on with it.

She buttoned the last button and pulled him by the collar towards her watering mouth. Her lips were warm and moist. He'd missed her so much.

"You know what?" He asked her when she finally pulled away from him.

"What?"

"I need you, as much as I need water. I can't be without you."

"Oh, Sarantos, you can be without me. You existed all those years without me. We do what we have to do, don't we?"



He grabbed her by the waist and pulled her close to his body. "That was before I knew what heaven was, and now you certainly can't expect me to live without you, can you?"

Drunk on her beauty, he smiled like a horny teenager infatuated like a puppy in love, but this was far from that. This was different. He couldn't believe that he wanted to marry this woman. He'd never felt this way before.

She pulled out of his arms and headed to the door. Turning her head, she flashed him a seductive grin and said, "Well, sir, if it's heaven you want then come and get it."

Her words hung on the air like candy dripping down from the ceiling and then she walked out of the room and left him standing there, alone. He was speechless. She always knew exactly what to say.

She drove him insane. He ran to the door just as it flew open and Brel came in.

“Captain, Lieutenant Stuart told me you were in here. Decan is waiting in the officer’s cafeteria. Is there anything else you need from me, or should I return to the ship?”

He took a deep breath trying to calm his red cheeks that must’ve made him look like he put on rouge.

“Yes, Brel, I’ll go see him now. Where’d Addie go?”

“She headed over to the cafeteria and told me to tell you to run if you want it. Whatever that means?”

She was back to her old ways. Playful and enticing. Always exciting.

“Brel, I know your race doesn’t celebrate, but I’d love it if you and Decan joined my family at their home this Sunday at noon. I’d love my parents to meet you.”

“I think I’d like that, Captain.”

“Good, you can join me if you like. I’m on my way to ask Decan and Addie too.”

“Captain, I’d like to go check out security on the ship first, if that’s okay?”

He put his arm around Brel as they walked down the hallway towards the dining area.

“Sure. You can join us there on Saturday if you’d like. They have plenty of room, horses, and lots to do. You might enjoy the weekend break.”

“Captain, I think I’ll do that. I could use a couple of days off. Thanks, sir.”

They stopped in front of the cafeteria.

“No problem, Brel. I look forward to it.” He patted Brel’s back and said, “See if you can get Sonny to join us too. I find him fascinating.”

“He would like that, but he has a family. Shall I extend the invitation to them, as well?”



“Sure, I don’t think my mother will mind. The more the merrier is what her and Brackish always say. I’ll let them know. Thanks, Brel.”

“Captain, see you Saturday and have a great rest of your day.” He started to leave but turned. “Oh, Captain, you two might want to keep down the noise next time. Just saying,” Brel cracked and was gone.

Great. He needed to compose himself and get control. That's what he always told himself, but it wasn't going to happen around Addie.

There was a lot of laughter as he entered the cafeteria. Addie was chatting to several officers and Decan. Then he saw Major Cleary.

"Captain, how're you doing? I was about to leave when Addie graced us with her presence. Most of the crew have gone back to the ship, sir. I was about to go myself. I have a date tonight. Can you believe it?"

"Well, Major, who's the lucky fellow?"

"A tall and very handsome OKurian. Major Stark Floun."

"Oh, I've met him on the battlefield. Very well done, Major. Good soldier, commander, and a nice guy. He is also OKurian, you can't go wrong."

"Don't I know it," Major Cleary said, as she laughed heartily.

"Well, have fun, Cleary," said Sarantos.

"Will do, Captain."

"Have a blast," said Addie.

Cleary waved bye and left the room.

He held out his hand to Decan. “It’s good to see you again, Decan. I’m honored to be in your presence.” Sarantos pulled out a chair and sat next to the holy man. Tears appeared in the corners of his eyes and he dropped his head in humble acknowledgement. “Thank you is not good enough for saving Addie. I’m forever in your debt and want to find a way to show my appreciation, although I know there is nothing in this world that could ever repay you, as Addie is my life.”

Addie took his hand in hers and gently squeezed his fingers. Decan shook his head.

“My dear Captain, there’s no need to thank me. You can thank the Lord. It was his hand that worked through me when I helped her on Easter. He showed us his own tower of love and in that I received the cure, and that cure is love. It freed me from the darkness and brought the light into my own soul. I thank you and Addie for giving me a chance to show the Lords power of love and share it with you both.”

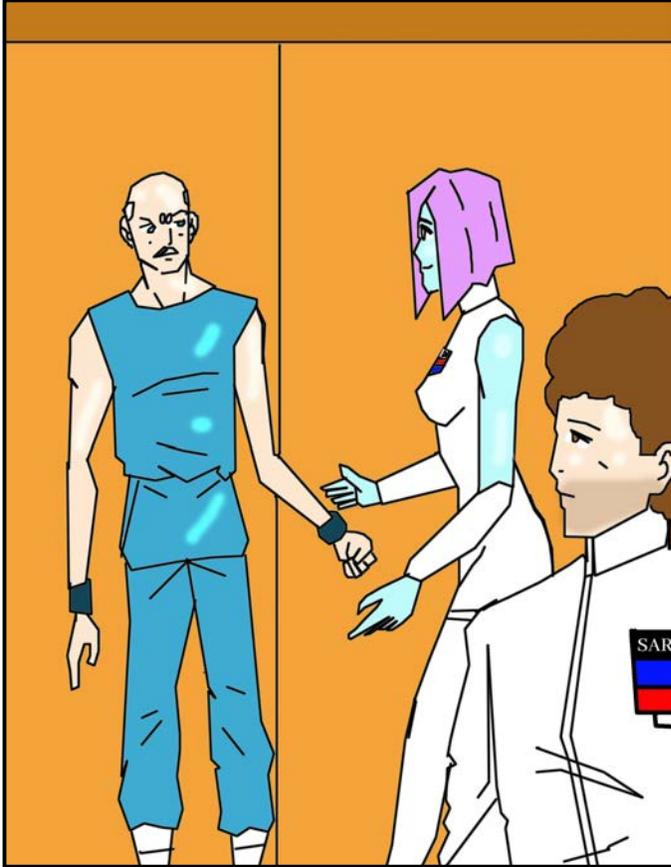
Sarantos looked into Decan’s eyes and the power of the Lord’s presence was so great on this holy man that he had to at last look away. Can purity be so strong that a mere man cannot see it?

“I understand what you’re saying, Decan. I’ve felt it myself over the years and I’ve always tried to walk on the path of light, but I’m not perfect. I don’t think anyone’s perfect until they fall in love. No matter though, thank you. I need the words at least.”

“You’re welcome, but my Lord made it all possible.”

“I understand.”

He looked at Addie and saw a more relaxed and cheerful look to her whole being. He wasn’t sure if it was there before, because he was in such a hurry to hold her. Or



maybe just by being in the presence of this holy man, it caused everyone within a certain radius around him to exhume a glow.

“Sarantos, I am forever indebted to him and the Lord, as well. I wouldn’t be here if not for the joint effort. I felt another presence in the room with us when he was working on healing me. He brought the energy of the Lord down into my body, like a vessel that transported love from all around me. It was incredible, and enlightening.”

He touched her face and said, “I’m so glad for all of it, and for the divine healing powers that we sometimes take for granted.”

He’d grown up on a planet that worshiped the divine and meditated towards the gift of guidance to wrap the world in love by first learning to love themselves as a person of the Lord. The energy of goodness was in abundance and that only needed to be tapped into by the gift of knowledge that it exists in the holiness of oneself. He was taught at an early age that he was a gift of God and by that right had a responsibility to the Lord, to himself, and to the blessed earth he walked on to take care of it. He never led the perfect life though. Living is never for the weak. There were many lessons he learned and there were many times he got burnt. How was he so lucky to have met someone like Addie??

Addie was glorious, and he was truly blessed.

“Sarantos and Addie, I must leave you both to continue my journey with blessings from above.”

The holy man pushed his chair out and stood up without a sound. He was like a whisper in the wind.

“Decan, if I may ask you a question?”

“Yes, Sarantos, you may.”

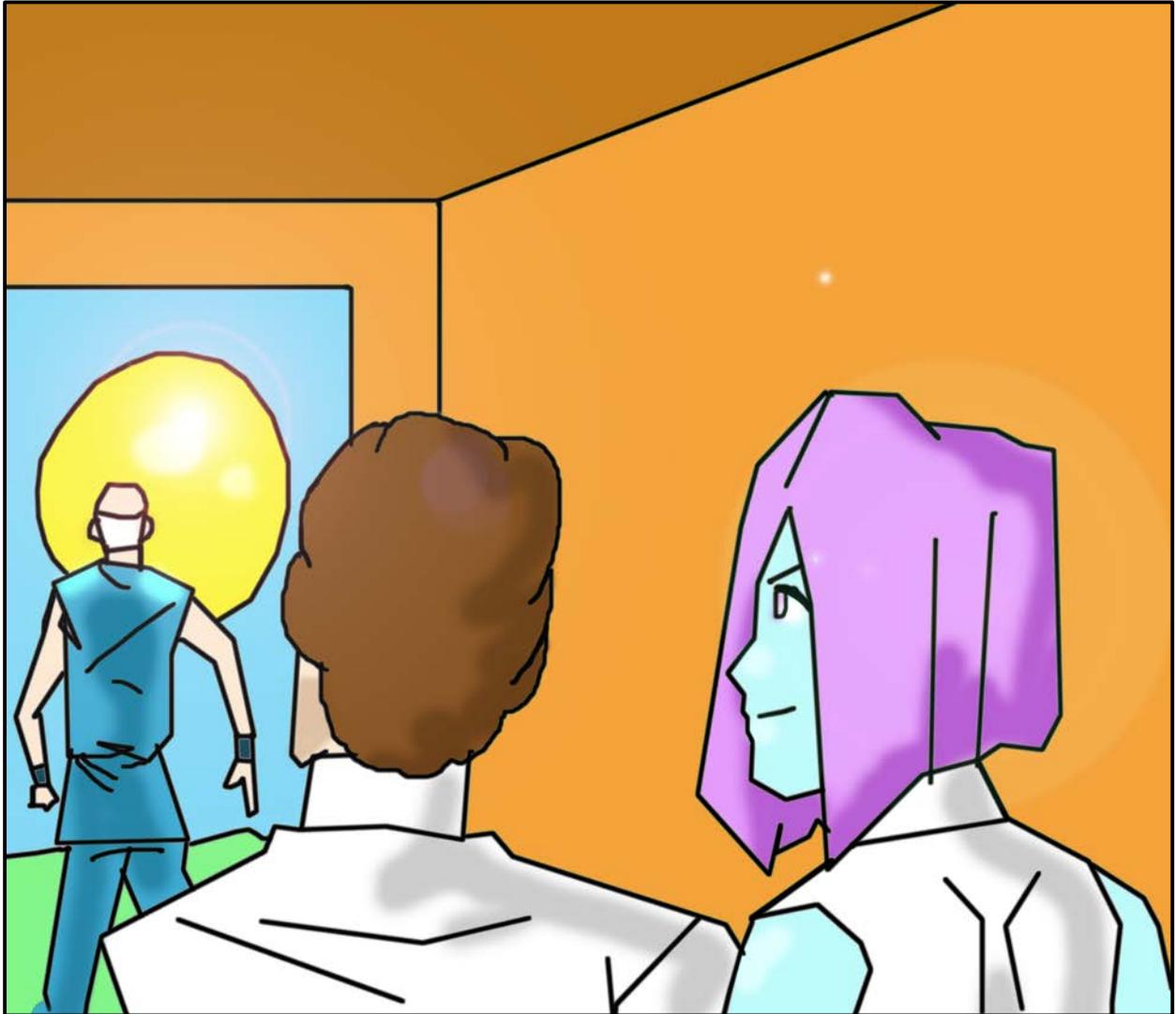
“We’re having a celebratory dinner at my family’s home in the valley and would love to have you attend dinner with us.”

“I’m very honored, Captain Sarantos, but I will need to regretfully turn that offer down. I’m due back at the Holy Temple on Saturday. We have a lot of ceremonies to attend to regarding the peace and love we’ve been given by our creator. There are certain ceremonies that must never be missed, as a holy commemorative.”

“I understand, Decan.”

He smiled at Sarantos. “I thank you and wish you God’s speed.”

Decan moved towards the exit with such swift speed that they should’ve heard the rustle of his robes or his footsteps pounding quickly upon the hard-stone floor, but there was only silence. Like the silence of a newly fallen snow that quiets the world around it.



Addie looked at him and smiled. “Well, that’s that. What a divine being.”

“Don’t I know it,” he said.

“What’s this about dinner at your parents’ house?”

“Sorry, yes I was going to ask you.”

Her head tilted. “Really?”

“Yes, believe me. Don’t give me that look, either.”

“What look?”

“You know what look, when you do that thing that you do. That face that makes me look like I did something bad, or naughty.”

“Kind of the same thing, darling.”

“What is?”

“Bad and naughty.”

“Well, not really, Addie. When I’m bad, it means I forgot something important or I’m bad tempered, or bad as in good. But when I’m naughty...let’s just say I showed you naughty earlier.”

“Oh, really? You humans are a strange lot with your little words to describe everything. I think you do that to get out of trouble sometimes. Confusing your opponent.”

“Confusing? You make me laugh. I don’t think I could ever confuse you.”

“Yes,” she said.

“Yes, what?”

“Yes, I’d love to join you and your family for dinner before we get off this planet for good. I’ve never had the experience of meeting a lover’s family. It’ll be sort of fun.”

“I’m so glad you want to come.” He grabbed her hand and pulled her up from the chair to nibble on her delicate but firm neck.

She pushed him away.

“Just one thing, Mr. Sarantos, sir.”

“What?” He wrapped his arms around her waist and pulled her back towards him again.

“Are you even listening to me,” she said.

“Mmm...” That’s all that came out of his mouth. He had already moved his mouth down to her shoulder and was too busy tasting it.

“This dinner date at your family home doesn’t mean we’re getting married or anything of that sort, just because you introduce me to the parents. I’ll still demand respect in my position as Lieutenant Addie Stuart. No hanky panky.”

He laughed. “What does that mean, exactly?”

“Oh, I think you know, Captain Sarantos.”

“I think I should be entitled to a little hanky panky.”



She smacked him on the arm and he giggled.

“Let’s go Captain. Since we have leave we should take advantage of it.”

“Sure.”

“Are you going to check the ship first?”

“Yes, and relieve John of his post for the weekend. He’s entitled to a break too and to be home with his family for a bit.”

“Good idea, Captain, good idea.”

The beep of his wristband was engaged. “Captain, here. Two to beam aboard The Chicago.”

“Yes, Captain.”

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The stars were brighter than he remembered as he and Addie stood out on the porch of his parent's home on the majestic land of Okura.

It was great to be home, again. The day had gone well. He and Addie had taken Sonny, his family, and Brel on a horseback ride in the early hours of dawn. The birds were especially vocal and the sunrise especially vivid with pinks and passive purples, and a hint of ornate orange.

Sonny, had three children, all created by lovemaking like regular humans would do of course. It was unbelievable. His two girls, twins Charm and Violet were the oldest and very creative, talkative, and obviously talented. His younger child was a son, named Oaken, after the strong oak trees that grew in the northern part of Okura where they had a home.



Oaken was nine and full of strength and endurance. He was an excellent horseman and rode bareback for the better part of two hours, before breakfast.

Addie got along great with the girls. Violet who was studying to be a bio-chemist was a mere eleven years of age. She was born 20 seconds before Charm. Charm was determined to be a commander of her own starship one day. She'd

already learned how to fly and had broken so many records in the academy's test classes.

Sonny's wife Clara was a teacher, physicist, and lecturer at the local college and surrounding schools. They were in love. She appeared to be an incredible mother and the children loved both her and Sonny. It was indisputable.

Brel had enjoyed himself immensely from what Sarantos could tell. He got along great with Brackish and his mother.

It was late and most of the guests had gone to bed for the night. They readied certain foods for tomorrow and the feast was vegetarian. The OKurians were vegans. He tried to follow the diet but being away at school had corrupted some of his better habits but he was going to remedy that, as of this moment. At least he would try. It wouldn't be hard. He'd spent most of his life raised on a clean vegan diet.

Addie leaned into him and he took her hand and led her to the porch swing. He loved and missed the simple way of life sometimes.

Addie whispered in his ear. "I love it here. Okay."

"Okay, what?"

"I'll stay here forever, and you go back and Captain your ship."

"Very funny. I'm taking you with me. You're never going to be apart from me again!"

Just then the door swung open and his mother came out on the porch and set down some cold ice tea and then relaxed in a cushioned chair that faced them.

“Thanks for the tea, mom.”

“I’m glad you appreciate it.” Francine turned to face Addie and said some words to her that Sarantos didn’t understand.

Addie’s face lit up like a flashlight and she spoke back to her. Then they both laughed.

“Okay, you two, not fair. I think you’re teasing me.”

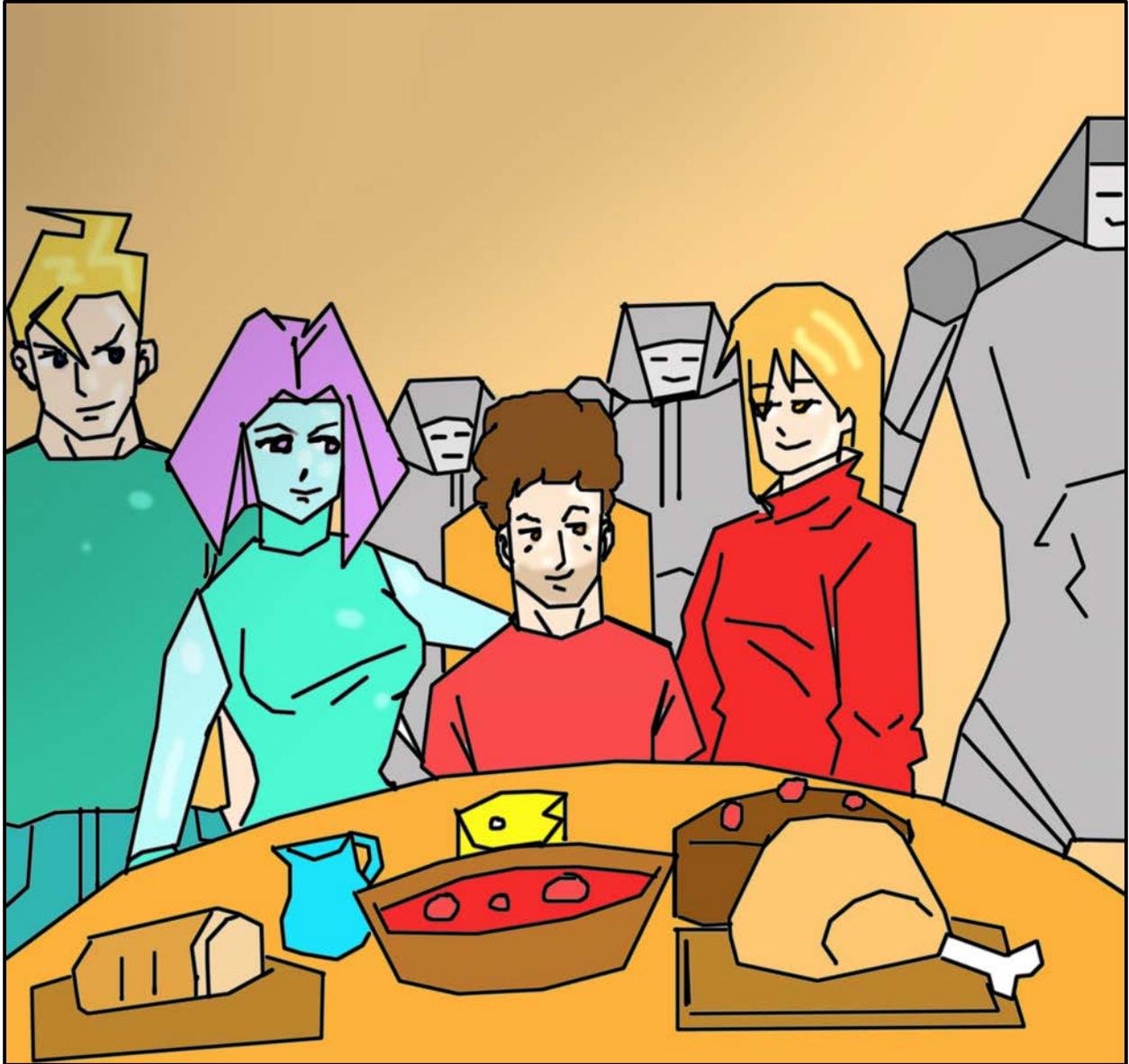
His mother was a Linguist and knew many different languages, Satorian was one of the many. This could be trouble for him.

They enjoyed a quiet evening before retiring to bed.

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The morning had been busy with preparations, and everyone contributed. The feast smelled and looked amazing.

He glanced over at everyone seated at the table. His grandparents were there, as well as the people he found most dear in his life, a variety of people that rewarded him by being there.



He smiled and reveled in the power of love and friendship. He felt forever changed. He felt a peace because his love was saved, and his friends and family gathered to be thankful together with him for this wonderful dinner celebration. Addie loved him for who he was, even with all his imperfections. He was like a rose without a stem but she love him anyway. He was no longer walking down an empty road by himself.

Though he was never perfect, maybe he did finally deserve happiness...