

The characters Jeffrey Alan Sakaar Andrews, Na'Krista Nahala Christina (nee Keth'lan) Keth'lan, Kamram Keth'lan, Na'Kesta (nee Cern'lan) Keth'lan, Tegram Keth'lan, Traci McDonald, Talram Keth'lan, Bosteg Haas'lan, Kestam Ramm'lan, Treman Baze'lan, Merret Treet'lan, Tascal Hone'lan, Hallett Trasc'lan, Hammet & Na'Kayla Nahala (nee Keth'lan) Craine'lan, Gillat Deen'lan, Marlett Blane'lan, Sa'Densa Nasia (nee Deen'lan) Andrews'lan, Argess & Arrissa Wrraal, Rellen Sandren'lan, Sa'Jenna Nasia Deen'lan along with the characters Torvald and Victoria Svensen are the properties of Kellan Meig'h and may not be used without express written permission.

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“Scribe”

by Kellan Meig'h

Chapter Thirty-Eight

“Point Of The Law”

Na'Krista was sitting on the cot in her cell, wondering what had become of her *One Love* earlier when they had arrived at the detention facility several *Heth* ago. They had been split up at the induction desk, with Jeffrey being escorted down one hallway while she had been taken down another. Once in her cell, she had been asked politely to remove her clothes and was promptly given single-use undergarments and a dark gray jumpsuit to wear in exchange.

The guard had taken Krista's clothes that would need to be washed with her, supposedly to be returned to her in the morning. A last meal had been brought to her, a meat and pasta dish of some sort. She wasn't sure what it was but it tasted okay and sat decently on her stomach. Krista had already taken a lap of her cell earlier, figuring out what was there by touch alone. Not being able to see what was happening around her was really rough on her, to the point she was starting to sob quietly.

Na'Krista was so upset she never heard the female guard enter her cell or felt her sit down next to her. She was only aware someone else was in the room when the guard put her arm around her and hugged her gently.

“Sub-Commander, is there something I can help with?” she asked in a soft voice.

“I . . . I'm just so upset over this.” was the response. “I mean, we somewhat expected this. We were breaking the planetary norm by entering into a mixed species joining. It was just a matter of time before we were tripped up.”

“I was actually coming to bring you some good news.” the unknown femme put forth. “Arbiter Temmer Frain'lan will be here early tomorrow. I will have your clothing ready for you before he arrives.”

“I would like to know how my *One Love* is doing, please?” Krista asked, once she gathered herself emotions up sufficiently.

“He is doing good.” the guard offered up. “You will see him tomorrow when Arbiter Frain'lan is here. Also, our medical staff is bringing your pills, something they said was vile smelling to drink and the equipment to perform your nightly Helox based treatment.”

“Thank you.”

“Commander, if I may ask, how bad is your eyesight? I mean, is it safe for me to leave you alone, that you won't hurt yourself if you stumbled over something?”

“I can't make out the big letter on the eye chart, if that's what you mean. My table is off to the left someplace and my combination toilet and sink is off in that direction.” She really didn't indicate the proper positions of the items in question, missing the marks by several quatre each time.

“Um, you weren't really close with your guesses.” her jailer put forth. “Listen to me, I will see what I can do to put both you and your *One Love* in the same cell. I don't think you should be left alone right now.”

Na'Krista heard the guard leave her cell, then the sound of the metal door closing. Thinking about it, the situation seemed grim at the moment. Had she known this would happen, she would have just stayed on Earth somehow and she would have been safe in Jeffrey's arms right now.

As it sat at the moment, Krista felt in her heart she might not see her husband ever again.

Morning had come and Dassan Trent'lan felt no more rested than he had when he went to bed, far later than he intended to. At one point early in the pre-light hours, Sa'Zarren had told him to either go to sleep or get out of bed. He then discovered the couch in his home office was not a suitable substitute to sleep on.

Out driving around the station in the early *Heth*, he wanted to make sure the harvesters were getting all of the Kebra fruit that were ready for market. He knew in a few ten-days they would have to come back and get the remainder that had ripened but this growing season might be different. It might be necessary to have the harvesters return for a third pass through the orchard, just to bring the totals to some profitable level. As it stood, he might not break even this season.

Turning onto the road that divided his property from Na'Krista's, he braked his utility vehicle hard to avoid a new obstacle. There was now a brand-new fence that bisected the length of the roadway, a link-bond fence topped with a coil cut-wire anti-personnel barrier. A sign near him stated the nasty truth in the matter,

**PROPERTY OF THE
TRANS-ATMOSPHERIC FORCES
NO TRESPASSING
DEADLY FORCE WILL BE USED**

Dassan looked closer, finding the information that stated this was a genuine military-issue sign, not a forgery. Returning to his vehicle, he traveled the length of the fencing, surmising it must encircle the property completely. Apparently, Commander Dangris Fellen'lan was going to play a hard game over this. Dassan knew he would have to get Sallen on top of this as quickly as possible if he were to acquire Ka'Krista's property.

Jeffrey was assisting his *One Love* to get dressed, glad that she had finally gotten her composure back. After he had been served his evening meal, some maintenance workers had swapped out his cot for a wider unit and his distraught wife had been brought to his cell. The femme guard explained that her supervisor had allowed them to be together, so he could keep his vision impaired life-mate from stumbling over something and possibly hurting herself.

Krista had sobbed for quite some time last evening until she probably just ran out of energy and fell asleep next to him. Jeff had been stirred awake several times by her tossing and turning and in a way, he was glad the morning had come. While Jeff buttoned her uniform blouse for her, she made a comment;

“I was so upset last eve, I don't recall the staff blunting my claws. How I don't remember that happening, I just don't know.” She ran her fingers over the tips of the claws on her other hand, shaking her head in disbelief. Her claw points had been clipped very short and they may have been filed smooth, at that. It would take more than four or five ten-days to grow them back to razor sharpness.

“You were very upset yesterday when they brought you in here.” Jeff put forth. “They might have trimmed your claws while they moved you to this cell.”

“Maybe.” Krista knew this was going to be stressful but not like this. “If I didn't feel so vulnerable because of my lack of sight, maybe I would feel better about things.”

They were interrupted by the female guard the Earther recognized and a buff tan male guard, standing by while the femme opened the cell door. Jeff hastily straightened out the front of Krista's uniform blouse, then turned to see what was up.

“Temmer Frain'lan is here to meet with both of you.” she offered, motioning for them to come out in the hallway. “Please stand still while I take care of this, please?” She brought forth a 'Figure Eight' cuffset, two bands joined at ninety degrees to one another. She opened the bands and once Jeff brought his arms up, she cuffed one wrist, then the other. Both bands contracted down on his arms snugly, then slacked off some for wearability.

“Is this necessary?” the Earther asked.

“They're not locked.” the guard replied. “See? Press this latch against something and it opens.” She demonstrated how the catches worked. “I was told we are only using them for the benefit of others, Commander. There are some here that are not happy with what is happening but others see it as justice. We are trying to keep something, whatever it may be, from happening.”

“I understand.” Jeff replied.

The guard followed up by putting cuffs on Krista's wrists, then the two guards guided their detainees to a conference room where their arbiter was waiting.

Temmer looked up from his notes to see his 'employers' being guided through the door to the conference room. They were both cuffed, which he was sure it was agreed upon there would be no need for cuffs but at this point, he was not going to disturb a sleeping *targ* if he didn't have to. Once the Commanders were seated, given water to drink and the door closed, Tem finally remembered to breathe.

“Jeffrey, Na'Krista, are you doing well?” he asked in English, just to set the tone of the meeting. “Jeffrey, we will speak your native tongue for this meeting. I have been assured nobody on this shift speaks English.”

“We're doing fair, I would say.” Jeff replied. “Um, these cuffs aren't locked, by the way.”

“That is always a good sign.” he offered up. “I understand the officials were reluctant to arrest the two of you, since Na'Krista is connected to the Keth'lan family.”

“Yes, they were very reluctant.” Jeff agreed. “The District Police turned the warrant over to the Regional Lawkeepers to execute. I understand from talking to one of the lawkeepers last eve while they were transporting us, the District Police did not want to get involved.”

“I suspected as much. I think you would call this a 'Hot Mess' on Earth.”

“Not to change the subject but why the change in coloration?” Jeff asked. Temmer was now a smokey gray-black in hue, not his chattel blue tone.

“I needed to blend in at the law library. I didn't want to stand out like a sore toe.”

“That's *'sore thumb'* for the record.” Jeffrey corrected. “What do we know so far? Have you seen about maybe getting us released before trial?”

“We will be going in front of a magistrate this afternoon. We will plead 'No Guilt' and I will try to bargain your release deposit down as far as I am able to. It's not like there are multiple transports headed to the Sol system on a daily basis.” Temmer took a drink of water from his glass and continued. “Meanwhile, I'm going to meet with an associate arbiter at the law library. We are going to debunk this law and prove it is false.”

“That's what we need.” Krista commented. “Let my father know we may need additional legal assistance for you. He will know who to contact.”

“*That*, I would appreciate.” Saar Frain'lan put forth. “Is there anything you might need? Something like clothing? Spare uniforms?”

“The center washed our clothes for us.” Na'Krista pointed out. “A proper toothbrush and a large pelt brush would be nice.”

“Jeff?”

“Toothbrush and hair brush, if you can. And some of that minty toothpaste.”

Once he had wrote down the needs of his clients on a a padd, Temmer pressed a button on his side of the table, summoning the guards. Right before they arrived, he made his thoughts known. "I will do my best to get you out of this mess. We will meet again about fifteen minutes before the hearing starts, just to go over anything I may have discovered."

He stood and watched his employers, or clients as it were, leave the room. Waiting what seemed like an appropriate amount of time, he left the room, noting he had about twenty *Munar* to get to the law library.

Before he exited the building, Temmer approached the induction desk and greeted the officer siting behind it, the one in charge of incoming detainees.

"Officer Frain'lan, how is your day, today?" he offered.

"Doing very well, Arbiter Frain'lan." the buff-tan male replied. "Been kind of busy here, which is odd. I also had to call in a technician to do repairs on our video and audio surveillance system. Seems someone spilled that Earth drink, coffee, is it? Dumped a large cup of it right on the control unit."

"That must have been bad." Tem mused.

"It has been down since this morning after you came in, when I had talked with you about your clients. Might be three or four days to get a union affiliated tech out to fix it."

"Well, have a quiet day, officer." Saar Frain'lan offered as he prepared to leave.

"And you, too." the guard replied with a smile, lifting a steaming mug of coffee in salute.

Temmer sat across the table from Sallen and Gammal, working his way through some files on a padd. It had been a long morning that stretched into the early mid-day and as he thought about it, the smoke gray male had forgotten to eat a mid-meal, he had been so engrossed. So far, the three arbiters had failed to turn up something that would contradict the charges against Na'Krista and Jeffrey. Kennan Frain'lan, Temmer's nephew had joined them at the eleventh *Heth* of the morning and he had been the one to cross reference dates and times for them. The adjutant from *Post Fontaneauz* would be with them a bit past mid-day.

"Just a comment," Kennan offered up, "Only three Arbiters that could have voted on that law are still alive. Would it help to talk with them?"

"It might." Sallen replied. "You know this law is over ninety solar cycles old. You would think some other joined couple would have faced this law before Temmer's clients."

"That was my thought." Gammal mused. "That's why I think this law is not what we think it is." In truth, the white-pelted male was beginning to suspect the law was only a rumor, nothing

more. A piece of scuttlebutt, repeated over time, always had a way of becoming pseudo truth, until the real truth of that rumor was brought to light.

What he hoped for was a clue, some direction, that would show them the honest truth in the matter.

“Well, maybe we should work backwards.” Ken suggested. “We could look at all the references Gammal has, then work each lead backwards until we find the error or omission.”

Gammal picked up his notes and gave each of them a task to manage. The task given to Temmer was to validate the vote on that day. He pulled up the vote tally from that House session and noticed something odd. This was a poor photographic copy of the original, but the original seemed to be tampered with in some way. There were smudges that indicated marks had been erased in the “Notes” section of the tally. The lower fourth of the document had been obscured by another document when it was scanned and furthermore, the tally sheet itself had the appearance of being crumpled up, then straightened out.

“I’m needed at the Andrews’lan preliminary hearing.” Tem pointed out after checking the time. “Kennan, could you see if you could find the original tally sheet for the vote? It may be our best hope of clearing this.”

“I can do that, Uncle.” the gray male replied. “I will go to the archives right now. I sort of know where those vote tally sheets are. I observed the boxes of tally sheets near the back of the West wall and they’re dated, too.”

Kamram Keth’lan was sitting the courtroom, trying his best to patiently await the preliminary hearing. He supposed he would have to straighten out his office when he returned to it later today after the initial charges were filed. At least he had only thrown light items that would not break or do damage. What he did know was a return trip to Dassan’s office might be in order. This time, there would most likely be no holding back.

Na’Krista and Jeffrey were brought into the courtroom, wearing cuffs similar to the ones they were restrained with earlier, only these were locked. They were guided to a table on the left side of the courtroom and bid to sit down. Temmer came from the back of the room, sat down to their right and began to arrange his paperwork and pads for the hearing. While some quiet discussion went on between the trio in English, the arbiter for the prosecution made his appearance. Instead of immediately taking his seat at the right hand table, he stopped in front of the accused.

“I am Zannel Tanret’lan, the abiter for the prosecution.” he offered up. “This is just a preliminary hearing where we decide what charges to pursue and what your ‘Release Amount’ will be. Personally, I don’t see the House winning this argument because I have this gut feeling you will in any case prevail against this false narrative.”

Once the arbiter had taken his seat, the Adjudicator made his appearance, making his way to his seat behind the tall dais. He looked around, then made his announcement;

“Jeffrey Andrews’lan, Na’Krista Andrews’lan, are you present?” he asked.

“My clients are present.” Temmer replied.

“Jeffrey Andrews'lan, Na'Krista Andrews'lan, you are being charged with an illegal . . .” The Adjudicator stopped and read the charges, then read them again. After a moment to think about this case and do a quick search on his computer, he called the arbiters to a sidebar.

“Saars, this is highly unusual. I have never tried a case even remotely like this one. Any thoughts on this? The judge asked. “How old is this supposed law? I can tell you I've been practicing for sixty-something solar cycles and I have never prosecuted an illegal joining. Even the number designation fails to appear in the law database. The number convention is too old to search for at least a scan of the original documents, having too few digits to work with.”

“Saar Cavvet'lan, I have been doing my search of the laws.” Temmer replied to the judge. “I have gone back seventy cycles and I still have not found any trace of this law.”

“Saar Tavret'lan, your thoughts?” the adjudicator asked of the prosecutor.

“Saar, I'm as puzzled as the two of you are. Where this piece of work has come from, I'm not sure. Some arbiter is certainly a great sleuth when it comes to finding an obscure law. I know I have not found a trace of this law past a bad photographic copy of a partial original.”

“Thank you, Saars. You may take your positions again.” The judge waited a *Munar* or two for the arbiters to regain their positions, then he continued. “Jeffrey Andrews'lan, Na'Krista Andrews'lan, the two of you are being charged with an illegal joining. How do you plead?”

“No Guilt.” Arbiter Frain'lan replied. The judge nodded and continued.

“Normally, I would set release deposit and allow you to return to your home until the fact finding phase begins. Since Jeffrey Andrews'lan is not Elazi-born, I will have to ask both of you to stay in the detention center until the next court date. Court is adjourned.”

The guards began to usher their charges out of the courtroom so Jeffrey took a moment to see what Kam was going to do. He could see his *Father Through Joining* talking with a guard, trying to keep his voice down to a pseudo-indoor level.

They were escorted down a different hallway to another cell, this one quite a bit bigger than the last. It had a normal sized bed that could accommodate two, a table with two chairs and a shower-equipped latrine. Sitting on the table were their jumpsuits, more of those single use undergarments along with the items they had requested. The female guard stood by while they changed into their detention uniforms and gathered up the clothes that needed to be washed.

Before they could get settled in, they were escorted back to that conference room again, once again with locked cuffs. The door opened for them to see Kamram, waiting very impatiently for them. The accused sat down and drinks were given to them again before the jailer left the room.

“Daughter, are you doing well?” the father asked. It was very clear by his body language he was upset at the very least. Maybe more like pissed off, to be more accurate.

"I'm on edge." she replied. "My vision is still not worth a blast and all I can think is, I'm going to jail for at least ten solar cycles and Jeff is headed back to Earth."

"Keep your spirits up." Kam offered. "I am loaning Temmer two of my best arbiters. We all know Dassan is behind this; he called *Post Fontaneauz* this morning, trying to put in an advance offer for your station. We need to catch him while his hands are dirty. There are people watching him, waiting to pounce when he makes that fatal mistake."

"Loaning Temmer your arbiters will help out." Krista agreed. "How was my harvest so far? Did we do well?"

"Your staff harvested five thousand *Zet* of Kebra from the early zone as of a *Heth* ago and Sa'Densa thinks they will end with at least twice that much by end of today. They are going back to the Orlemberries tomorrow early. We think they can harvest maybe eight thousand *Zet* of berries, according to Sa'Densa's estimates. I would trust her numbers, too."

"At least my station is doing well." she mused.

"Dangris called me today, telling me about that 'Special' land transfer." Kamram put forth. "Dassan can't touch that land until you decide to sell. Not that you would, though."

"I'll never sell to him." she growled. "He makes me so angry and I'm beginning to believe he was responsible for our family member's deaths."

"Trust me, daughter. He has killed. I know this in my heart." Before Kam could continue, the guard opened the door.

"Time is up, Saar Keth'lan." he announced. That seemed to upset Kam further, that he had to leave. He reached across the table and took his daughter's hands in his before he spoke his mind.

"I must go now but I will be back, as will your mother. Be strong, Krista. You too, Jeffrey."

Commander Hallett Carver'lan met up with Kennan Frain'lan, who was already going through the incredible number of storage boxes in the Law Archives. Originally, the bins on the shelves would have been carefully organized by the fifteen *Saens*, or months as they were called on Earth, by the solar cycle year. They were currently looking for the tubs that would be for approximately ninety-three years in the past, for the *Saen* of *Velzast*, the seventh *Saen* of the cycle.

"Kennan, this is getting more disorganized by the cycle." Hallett offered up. "This shelf is from Solar Cycle Four-two-eight-seven to eight-nine. There are several *Saens* not here."

"My side of the shelf is for Four-two-eight-four to eight -five. Where is Four-two-eight-six? That's the range of bins I think we are looking for." Ken questioned. "And I am missing at least four or five *Saens* worth of bins for the other dates."

The gray Arbiter turned around and leaned back against the shelving, trying to clear his mind. All the numbers and letters were starting to blur together and it didn't help that the text was written in an old script that was out of date by more than fifty years. Rubbing his eyes to clear them, he noticed the shelf that was behind him during the his last search was badly jumbled as far as dates went. Oddly enough, there was a date range that should have been on the shelving he was leaning against.

“Hallett, would you take a look at this? I think I may have discovered our problem.”

The buff tan toned commander came around the end of the shelving and as he was asked, looked at the situation at hand. Somebody had been through the boxes and haphazardly replaced them on the shelves.

“Our day just became longer.” he commented, looking to see some tubs that belonged one row over. “I suppose we need to try to organize this zone, Kennan. We're not going to make any progress until the date ranges make sense.”

“I agree, Hallett. Erm, start with these, since they belong on the next aisle?”

“I concur. Move these tubs, making some space for the ones that actually belong on this shelf.”

The two arbiters had to work together to reorganize these archival bins, since they were sealed and had been purged with an inert gas before storage. They were heavy and this looked like it would take a long while to complete this task.

Evening had come for the two that were accused of breaking the law and they were trying to eat a last meal served by the detention center personnel. It might have been fresh *targ* meat at one time but what was on the plate sure didn't taste like it. It was tough, stringy and the meat left a bad aftertaste in the mouth.

The side of steamed vegetables was downright soggy in texture and the slices of bread tasted old and stale to the palette. The issue was, Jeff and Krista were really hungry because mid-meal wasn't edible, either. Jeff managed to finish choking down the veggies whereas Na'Krista had finally given up on her meal for the most part.

“This can't be the way it will be until we're released,” the femme Elazi mused, “I will be losing weight on this horrible diet.” She begrudgingly tried another small piece of the meat, managing to get it down after chewing on it for quite a while.

“I can't eat the rest of this.” Jeff offered up as he sat his utensils down.

“I don't blame you.” she retorted. “I'll see if I can have our meals delivered by some of our staff. I can't eat this . . . this . . . garbage.”

Jeff put their trays on the shelf designed for them, a place where the serving platters could be put into and out of the cell without opening the door. He helped his *One Love* to clean up, then he went to the wall over the table and retrieved the keyboard connected to a computer terminal. A few keystrokes brought up the evening news for Kas'madelle and the surrounding areas.

The usual news was being disseminated by the news anchor, not much different from Earth. He talked about the current weather, the political climate, a bad accident at the spaceport involving two civilian skimmers, the upcoming events and what was happening concerning the military engagements on Earth. Some troubling news was the development of the Terran version of the Elazi railgun. Apparently the new Earth manufactured weapon was just as devastating as the Elazi version. The newsman was of the opinion the Trans-Atmospheric Forces were going to be put on the defensive by this new turn of events.

The next bit of news was further upsetting. Their legal plight was now public with the news anchor actually playing up their position as being innocent. He went on for a bit, talking about this law, a very old one, that provided for their arrest. He then interviewed an arbiter from the House. That male, a solid white hue with amber eyes, conveyed the difficulty in researching the document in question. It would seem the original documents were being extremely difficult to obtain.

Further discussion of the issue seemed to be just rehashing what they already knew but one snippet of information garnered Jeff and Krista's attention. Their arbiter, Temmer Frain'lan, had obtained an order from a judge, sealing the archives to only those on a very short list. This was to deter tampering with evidence, since the Global Senate was now keeping an eye on the proceedings. No doubt at the insistence of one of Krista's parents.

The news changed to the local fishing reports so Jeff was just listening to it to keep his mind off of this situation. That's was when they were joined by one of the doctors assigned to the detention center. She was not that tall, maybe shoulder-high to Jeff but more importantly, she was not Elazi.

The medical technician sort of looked like a bipedal red fox vixen, coloration and all. Her eyes, however were a light shade of blue with round pupils. She was dressed in the pale purple scrubs common on the planet with a pair of white clogs for her feet. With her was an Elazi male in purple scrubs, pushing the cart with the Helox treatment tanks on it.

"I here . . . ah . . . look Na'Krista." she spoke in broken Elazi. "I doctor . . . look in eyes for troubles." she added.

"Do you speak *Fask'aal*?" Na'Krista asked in turn, hoping they could find a common language to converse in.

"Yes! I speak the *Fask'aal* language! Ah, I was so afraid I would have to use my poor grasp of the Elazi language with you!" the diminutive femme offered up. "I am Doctor Vemma Az'Ronaan. You might be with us for a while so I was asked to look at your eyes and make sure your treatments are correct for your diagnosis."

The doctor had her stand by one wall while the technician with her set up an illuminated vision chart on the opposite wall. The light to illuminate the chart was turned on before the medic asked Krista to try to read the top letter of the chart.

“I can't see much, Just a white rectangle with a gray triangle inside it.” Na'Krista offered up.

“Step one step closer.” Doctor Az'Ronaan requested.

“Sorry, still the same.” the Elazi femme put forth.

“Keep stepping closer until you can see the chart to read the top letter.”

Krista kept stepping closer, covering one eye or the other in hopes of making out the letters on the chart. Eventually, she was almost nose to chart, trying her best to see.

“It's the letter *Vaand*, I think.” she put forth. “I'll be honest; I'm not sure but that's my guess.”

“Yes, that is right. Now, if you would sit in a chair, I would like to look at your eyes.”

The medical professional used several different lights to look at Krista's eyes, shaking her head from time to time. Some drops were administered to dilate Krista's pupils, then a third green light that made a very narrow vertical beam was employed.

“You can see this light, correct?” the doctor asked.

“I can see the beam, it looks like a vertical stripe to me. It's not clear, though.” she replied.

“Very good.” Doc Az'Ronaan commented. “At least there seems to be no damage to the retinas. There is a substantial buildup of that byproduct on your lenses from that Trinn gas, however. I'm going to increase the additives to the Helox mix so this will clear up quicker.”

“How bad is it?” Na'Krista asked.

“To be honest, this is the worst case I have ever observed. It is reversible, though. This is not permanent.”

Doctor Az'naan set her up with her pills, what was now a double dose of that vile concoction and lastly, her Helox treatment.

“Are you her *One Love*?” she asked of Jeffrey.

“Yes, but I don't speak *Fask'aal* fluently.” he replied, since he had just started to learn the language through the Elazi learning system.

“Just watch me and learn.” she offered. While Na'Krista fit her mask/hood combo to her facial features, the small doctor showed Jeffrey the settings for each bottle, now five in all. She then made sure Jeff could read the settings chart, just in case. “Are you Comer?” she asked. “No, maybe A'Pari?”

"I'm from Earth, the Sol system." Jeff replied.

"You look A'Pari. May I give you a short exam? I have never met an Earther."

Once Na'Krista had her mask/hood combo on and the gasses flowing, the diminutive med-tech checked Jeffrey over. She was careful to write down what she could determine as far as what his vital signs seemed to be.

"You're the same as either Comeri or A'Pari by your readings." she offered up. "How far away is your home world?"

"It's about one hundred and ninety light years from here."

"That is odd. I still say the Gods sprinkled the stars with our kind. How else could evolution turn out like it has?" Vemma mused. She then turned to Na'Krista before speaking. "By the time on the chrono, I need to go. This treatment should last two and one half *Heth* for you. After a few rotations, we will reevaluate your situation."

After the doctor and her assistant had taken leave, Jeff helped Krista to lay down on the cot by positioning the hoses out of the way for her. He then settled down in a chair, retrieved the keyboard again and started to surf the Elazi InfoWeb to see what he could find. He was curious now about the A'Pari and the Comeri races. It had intrigued him how they were so close in makeup to humans.

Looking back over at his *One Love*, he hoped her vision would come back as soon as possible.

Temmer and Gammal left the Law Library, the last ones to leave for the day before the doors were locked and sealed. The Troopers standing guard acknowledged them as they went down the steps and across the street to the parking lot. Once they were by Gammal's roller, Temmer spoke up.

"This was a long evening." he commented. "We have at most, three more rotations before the fact finding begins."

"We have the tubs mostly organized." the white-pelted male retorted. "Tomorrow, all of us need to attack the storage bins, getting them in order the rest of the way."

"That will help." Tem agreed. "We will have two of Saar Keth'lan's arbiters to help us with this. He has conveyed they will help out until we're through the trial."

"That is good." Gammal agreed. "I will see you at Ten, correct?"

"Ten in the early *Heth* it is."

Gammal watched Temmer get into his roller, a Simmon Electric sedan, and silently drive off to his temporary home at his client's station. While Gammal's Tafra sedan's turbine powerplant came up to speed, he thought about the rotation past; the tubs were just randomly distributed, as if some being didn't want them to find the needed paperwork. The thought as to why that would be, eluded him. Why would someone want to see Na'Krista jailed and Jeffrey sent back to Earth? This all made no sense to him.

Dassan sat at his desk, upset over the last tally for production. It had been so poor, he had walked the orchard for over a *Heth* to see if ripe Kebra fruit were being overlooked. From his reconnoiter, the harvesters were doing a good job. This was just a poor solar cycle, he guessed. Just as he was ready to call it done until morning, his communicator icon on his screen flashed for an incoming call. The face on the screen after Dassan accepted the communication was his arbiter, Sallen Fenn'lan.

“Sallen! How are you? Did you get an answer from *Post Fontaneauz*? Will they sell?” he asked.

“Saar Trent'lan, the answers are I'm tired, I received the answer and it is still no. Actually, the post commander said, '*The Eternal Fires No*,' to be exact. They will not sell.” This information caused Dassan to slam his fist on the desk.

“Sallen, I paid you good Crown to put this all together and I . . .” Saar Fenn'laan interrupted his tirade.

“Saar, I will no longer be representing you.” Sallen put forth. “I could end up in jail just by presenting that request you demanded to the House Arbiters if it turns out to be a false claim. I'm distancing myself from you because I see this as a dead end for my career if I continue in your employ.”

The image on the screen faded out just before Saar Trent'lan sent the monitor across the room to its destruction.