

# Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

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In March of 2003 Robert Jackson drifts off to sleep and dreams of his first mission into space in 1986, just before he is awakened and called to his second mission.

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## Chapter 1: Being Aboard

Dilemma 1.5

Being Aboard

\* Prologue\*

Robert Jackson sat down in his overstuffed chair to watch television on a nice and quiet Wednesday evening in Milwaukee Wisconsin on the twenty sixth day of March in the year two thousand and three. He was dead tired tonight after having worked out in the garage and in the attic all day, rummaging through everything that was going to the land fill and the big auction this weekend. He hated the idea of getting rid of things that he may actually have a need for in the future, but at the present these things from the past were taking up precious space for things from the present like his truck in the garage and his important paperwork in the attic. Not even half way through the show that he was watching, Robert Jackson drifted soundly off to sleep and the dreams came back again like they have night after night.

\* Chapter One \*

"You're telling me that you want me to be the captain of this star ship, from another world?" I said, taking a seat in front of an alien that reminded me of an Andorion on Star Trek.

"Yes Robert Jackson, that's exactly what I'm telling you." it answered, while I gazed about the room, scared out of my wits. I began tugging on an unseen object that had been placed in my left ear. I hated having anything in my ears at all, let alone without my consent.

"You're crazy and out of your mind, I'm no star ship captain!"

"Jackson, in order to save yourself, and your world, you will be the commander of this vessel, and please do not remove the translator from your ear!" he told me standing now and leaning over his desk.

"Just you wait a minute here, what do you mean, save myself and my world?" I asked gazing up at the alien while slowly lowering my left arm.

"Yours is not the only world destined for dominance or destruction, depending upon one of only two answers given, not only from yourself, but from your worlds highest leaders in command. There are others aboard this ship whose worlds have already been dominated or completely annihilated." he explained.

"Where's the original captain of this vessel that I'm on?" I asked pondering upon my question.

"She's dead, murdered by the aliens that destroyed her world and it's star ships, save the one that you are now aboard". he answered gazing upon me with one of his weird shaped eyebrows raised while retaking his seat.

"What about her second in command?" I asked as the oval door to the room zipped open and one of my best friends, Donald April was escorted in by two more strange looking aliens.

"Admiral, here's the other Earthling that you have requested to see." said one of them, while Donald walked over and stood by my chair.

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"Thank you, and that will be all for now, Lieutenants Tholari and Lumada." replied the alien that they had called an admiral.

After they had left I gazed up at Donald and he back down at me.

"I know that I'm having a bad dream if you're in it, Jackson!" he said.

"Dream, I seriously doubt that we're dreaming, Donald." I replied before the two of us turned our gazes back to the alien admiral.

"Are you Donald Sherman April?" he asked as Donald gazed about the room as I had earlier.

Ah yes, I suppose that I still am." Donald answered as the alien extended it's arm out to shake hands with him, but he just stood there unresponsive.

"Jackson, and April, I must inform you, that your world will be invaded in one of your earthen years by a race from another part of our galaxy. They have laid claimed to at least thirteen solar systems thus far, and a small portion of the survivors are aboard this ship, while others are being held in cells aboard the attacking vessels." he explained to us.

"Still, where's this ships second in command." I asked once again.

"Dead, along with the captain. Although we do have a few commanders from other worlds here, none are qualified enough to be---

"And if you should just so happen to say that I am, you're further out there in deep space than---

"Qualified for what Jackson?" Donald asked, gazing over at me as I arose up and out of my chair.

"He or it wants me to command this star ship that we're supposedly on, believe it or not." I answered and watched as his eyes opened wide.

"I don't, good lord what a dream I'm . . . dream heck, a nightmare, I'm actually having a nightmare!" Donald thundered as he fell into the chair that I had just vacated.

"It will be if this admiral fruitcake makes me the captain of this ship." I replied while placing my right hand on the back of April's chair.

"How did we get here, and how is it that we are able to understand one another?" Donald asked as he gazed up at the alien.

"You were all transported here while you were still asleep by our molecular transporters, and as to your other question, we had language aid translators placed into your left ears." he explained to us as Donald reached up with his left hand to feel the device.

"So, we've been abducted aboard a u.f.o. and you want me to play its captain and save the earth from destruction---

"Not play the part of a captain, you will be the captain of this vessel and April shall be its second in command!" the alien stormed.

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"Why don't you just send us all back home and you can get your head examined!" I thundered back as I stared him straight in the eyes.

"Because Jackson, according to Delindrian prophecy, you're the One." he replied calmly as Donald's and my very own eyebrows shot upwards.

"According to what, I'm a what?" I asked as Donald placed his right hand on my left arm.

"Don't worry Jackson, this is just a dream, and I know what caused it." he said.

"For your information Mister April, you're not dreaming, nor are any of the other inhabitants, that we've selected from your world, in a dream state." the alien said as he sat back down in his chair behind his desk.

According to the prophecies of a Delindrian prophet and scholar, long since dead, this is the world from which all of our worlds would find their savior from the Zaleens that want to subdue and rule our galaxy." the alien with the antennas for ears explained to us in a serious tone of voice.

"You're a little late in arriving here if you want the savior in the flesh." I replied. "He was hung upon a wooden cross almost two thousand years ago."

"I'm not referring to or talking about the Son of the Supreme Presence." he told me.

"You know about the Son of God?" Donald asked as he leaned forward in his chair.

The Son of the Supreme Presence in the universe is known by all the inhabitants in our galaxy, April, Jackson." he informed us as we sat there momentarily stunned.

"Well, I'm not him if that's---

"No, you're not the Creator, you're the one that is to save the worlds here, in our galaxy, from the Zaleens." he further informed me.

"Sure I am." I replied. "Now, if you'll just send us home maybe we can find you a physician that you can talk---

"Jackson, April, whether or not you are apt to believe us, we are at war, and shortly your world will be included in our galactic war of survival!" the admiral said, having raised his voice.

"According to our prophets, and since you are familiar with the Son of God, or the Supreme Presence, our world is to be destroyed and renewed by the Creator himself, not these Zaleens that you're---

"Jackson, think with your mind and not with your mouth!" the irate alien admiral thundered as he stood up from his chair.

"Oh but I am!" I thundered back. "I'm thinking about how far gone your mind is and how so unbelievable this all sounds coming from your mouth!"

The expression on the alien's face looked sadly as if it had changed to one of utter worry and dismay.

"Perhaps I should begin anew." he told us. "I am Admiral Kondulon Mazanurra from the planet Uorexua, a member world of the United Galactic Consortium of Inhabited Worlds and the last defensive unit against the

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Zaleens." the admiral explained as we halfway listened.

"Huh, the United Federations kind of thing." I said as I gazed at the picture of an alien world above the couch that sat by the oval entry door.

"The United Federation of Planets, Jackson." Donald replied.

"There is much that must be done to prepare yourselves aboard this ship and your world below it, and we must not waste the time." Admiral Mazanurra told us.

"And should we decline or refuse to play along and or go along with this---

"You would forfeit your world and all who dwell upon it, Mister April, Jackson?" the admiral asked angrily as he glared at the both of us.

"Just how do we know that all this isn't---

"You will be provided with all the information necessary for you to either complete successfully or fail miserably in your mission, gentlemen." he explained as he stood once more.

"I suppose that you've made first . . . second contact with our world leaders and they're all hunky-dory with the fact that you've taken a handful of our world's inhabitants to go and fight in this star wars of yours?" Donald April asked as he too stood upon his feet.

"More than a handful, Commander April." Mazanurra answered.

"Yeah right, Commander!" Donald said as the Uorexuan stepped out from behind his desk and motioned for us to follow him into a corridor.

"Our family and friends back home on the planet's surface, do they know where we are at the moment or are---

"No, not at this present time, but soon, everyone on your planet will know of the importance of your mission, Captain Jackson." the Admiral replied as we walked the corridor, that at this moment was void of anyone else but the three of us as we neared an elevator and boarded it.

"Jackson, want to know what's causing my nightmare?" Donald asked as the elevator or lift began moving.

"We aren't dreaming Donald, things seem to real for us to be dreaming." I told him.

## Chapter 2: We're On The Orion

\* Chapter Two \*

"So, what's the name of your . . . I mean, our ship, Admiral Madsnarer?" Donald asked as the elevator came to a stop and the oval door opened before we exited into a busy corridor of a great many species of aliens and earthlings, or I supposed them to be earthlings.

"Why I thought that the both of you would have guessed that by now." the admiral answered. "And it's Mazanurra, Commander April."

"Maybe you should refresh our memories, Admiral, because I for one haven't the slightest idea in the least---

"April, Jackson, many years ago, ten of your earthen years to be factual, or exact, a telepathic message was sent over a great distance to all the worlds in our galaxy from Uorexua's sister world Zanaria." Mazanurra began to enlighten us as we stood in the corridor together. "If your minds were receptive . . . I would ask that the both of you take the liberty to look about this ship, that it may be enough to stimulate your memories."

A short while later we stood before a large oval airlock portal that parted open slowly before us and we walked through two more great oval doors to enter into a rain forest with a blue green colored grass beneath our feet. We saw countless varieties of shrubs, flowers, trees, stone inlaid glow globular lit pathways and one of three overhead monorail tramways. Further above the trees was a large cylindrical tube adorned with high intensity lights running the entire span of the forest.

Donald and I turned towards each other and the both of us said at the very same time.

"I think I'm gonna be sick." we said after viewing the tops of trees, way above the tube at almost a mile away, or so it seemed.

"Do the two of you have any idea as to were the both of you are at this time?" Mazanurra asked , as his eyes gazed upon the both of us.

"Yes, in the twilight zone!" April answered as he vomited behind a bush.

"Not to forget the outer limits too!" I said, having joined him behind the bush.

"I don't know how the two of you pulled this off, but is this place for real or . . . Donald, Robert, are the two of you alright?" asked Alexander Scott as he stood by the bush that April and I were trying to use for cover.

"Sure, I'm just fine." April said sarcastically as he arose. "I like throwing up all over myself whenever the notion strikes me to do so, Alex."

I fell over into the grass at Donald's feet and burst out laughing while the admiral stood there unimpressed by our lack of maturity.

"It's not funny Jackson, not in the least bit is it even remotely funny!" April stormed at me while I laughed so hard, tears were streaming down my face.

"Whenever I wake up in the morning, this nightmare will be over, I hope, because it just keeps on getting worse by the minute." he added as Alex helped me up from the ground.



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"I thought so, it is you guys, isn't it?" Scott asked as I reached in my back pocket for my handkerchief.

"You look rather a mess Commander April." Admiral Mazanurra said as he walked over to Donald and passed him a handkerchief from a hidden pocket on his person.

"Thanks Admiral Mayonnaise, I've misplaced mine." Donald replied before wiping his mouth.

"Hey guys, where in heaven's name are we any . . . what's that, it, him!" exclaimed Donald's wife Marsha as she emerged nervously shaken, from behind a boulder with her two sons, Andrew and Benjamin.

"If I'm right Marsha, and of course I'm never wrong, we're---

"Oh Donald, are you sick?" Marsha April asked as she noticed her husband at point blank range.

"I was, but it just sort of left me by mouth all of a sudden, and if it doesn't come up again, I'll be fine." Donald answered his wife. "Especially when I wake up in the morning to find that I was only having a nightmare due to the pizza that I ate earlier before going to bed."

"Donald, no pizza is going to cause this to happen to all of us here." Alex replied as he gazed around at the scenery. "At least I don't think that it--"

"Honey, you were going to tell me where we were before I . . . you missed a spot." she said as she took the handkerchief.

"Oh yeah babe, I was going to tell you, that is, If I'm right, we're on the Orion, but that's impossible, and that's how I know . . . that I'm just . . . dreaming." he explained as she wiped her husband's face with the handkerchief.

"Yes, the Terran name that you have christened our ship, the Dorion Adriakar with, Commander April." the admiral replied as his eyes swept over each one of us. "I see that your memory is beginning to serve you well."

"And just what was it you called this ship, Admiral, the Dorito Avatar, or something like that?" April asked as he stared at the Uorexuan.

"The Dor . . . ion Ad . . . ria . . . kar, Commander." the admiral answered slowly. "This ship is from the world known to us as the planet Delindria."

"No, I don't believe a word of this crap!" Donald blasted off. "Jay and I . . . I mean Jackson and I thought this ship up and drew pictures of it while we were still . . . it's the pizza working on me, I know it is!"

"Is it Commander April?" Mazanurra asked as he swept his right hand from left to right.

"What's with the commander stuff?" Marsha April asked as she stepped up and into the alien's face with her very own.

"And I'm not a captain either!" I thundered as Alex and the children listened.

"You will all have a rank and a position on this vessel as the time goes by." he answered. "In your quarters, each one of you shall find a video communications unit, or vid com as we call it. Each vid com will be supplied with a number of disks, similar to the one that I now hold in my right hand. Pay close attention to the

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color of each disk, for on them you will find the answers that you seek. Above all and everything else, those whom you are leaving behind on your home world will be depending on just how successful you should become as you follow the commands of the One."

"Why not transport us back home and then have the military forces on Earth deal with---

"To release the Dorion Adriakar to the might of your military forces---

"Orion, Admiral Manure!" Donald stormed madly. "This ship is . . . is a nightmare!"

"Do not interrupt me again, Commander April, or you may find yourself waking up in the morning in the brig!" Mazanurra snapped at him very sternly. "And my name is Mazanurra!"

"Alright, we've got the mascara part, but what about the commander stuff?" Marsha April asked as she gazed down at Andrew and Ben while the admiral rolled his alien eyes at her.

"Missis April, there are those of you that shall obtain a military rank, though however none of you shall represent any earthen military force while stationed here aboard the Dor . . . Orion." the admiral explained to her while gazing over at her husband.

"Then if I may ask, Admiral, what military are we going to be a part of?" Alexander Scott asked as he hoisted himself atop a nearby boulder and sat down upon it.

"The United Galactic Consortium Space Command, Commander Scott." Mazanurra answered.

"It is my own opinion that your world would use the . . . Orion to destroy itself first before it would think of destroying an alien enemy from another world."

"I'm glad that that's your own opinion if not our own." I said as I took a seat on the grassy ground beneath my feet.

"Well, we aren't trained or qualified and ready to take on any alien threat to the planet Earth or to any life sustaining planet in our galaxy for that matter." Donald informed the Uorexuan as I tried to fathom all of what had transpired since my abduction while worrying about Patricia, and the children. Now, I had not only them to worry about, and to take care of, it looked as if I would be worrying about and taking care of the entire galaxy, but not without a little help from my friends.

"We know what we are doing by letting you and the other earthlings take command of this ship." the admiral said as he stood there like a statue in front of us.

"Well, I'm glad that you do, Admiral, because as sure as I'm sitting here, I'm not so optimistic about the idea." I told him in all honesty.

"Perhaps after resting in your quarters you will be more refreshed and alert enough to review the red colored disk until you are, Captain Jackson!" Mazanurra replied, heatedly.

"Yeah, Robert, I've got to go and get cleaned up and so do you." April told me as he helped me up upon my feet. "Lord, I hope and pray that my alarm clock goes off soon, cause once I'm awake I'm making a vow to never eat another pizza for as long as I live."

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"Aaah this little horror show has gone on for just a bit long don't you think, Donald, Robert, Alex!" Marsha April stormed at us. "I don't know how the three of you managed to get us into this haunted house, and how did you get . . . us . . . here . . . with out our . . . knowing about---

"Marsha,we didn't have anything to do with any of this" I replied as the three of us shook our heads no.

"You mean to tell me that . . . we're . . . really . . . up here . . . on a . . . on a . . . space ship?" she asked as the three of us shook our heads yes as Donald's son Martin came rollerblading down the pathway with some new found alien friends on some pretty outrageous looking skates.

"Hi dad, everyone." said Donald's son by his first marriage as he sat on the ground to remove his blades, along with his friends. "This place is really rad for roller blades, but how did we wind up here, where ever here is?"

"Pizza son, it was the pizza." Donald answered his son as he gazed upon the motley crew. "Had to be, couldn't have been any thing else."

## Chapter 3: What Did You Say?

\* Chapter Three \*

"I'll have security escort you all to your quarters." Admiral Mazanurra said before motioning for a nearby alien guard to come over.

"I want to go home Donald." Marsha said as she clung to her husband while Andrew and Ben visited with Martin.

"You're not the only one Marsha." Alex Scott said as he lowered himself from the boulder.

I now sat on an alien commode in our quarters and stared at the oval bathroom door. This dream has to come to an end and soon or else I've died and went to hell.

I could visualize the newspaper headlines about me now as I sat there, seeing in bold print, man killed by a pizza. Of all the things to have to die from.

"Goodness Donald, you went and threw up all over yourself." my wife said as the oval door opened and she passed me a wash cloth.

"You would too if you were having the same dream as I am now, Marsha." I told my nightmare wife as I stood up and wondered how one flushed an alien toilet as it commenced to flushing of its own accord scaring the daylights out of me.

"Donald, I doubt very seriously, that we are dreaming." she told me as I stepped into what had better be a shower stall and not a transporter. But hey, in a nightmare, I wouldn't be a bit surprised, so, I thought to myself, self, pinch yourself really hard to find out if it hurts, and guess what happened before I could do so?

"Donald honey, I pinched myself, and it hurts!" she yelled to me from the other room. "So, I'm not dreaming."

Not to be outdone by a nightmare wife, I pinched myself.

"Darn, darn, darn, it does hurt when you pinch yourself in a dream." I yelled, just before the hot water jets hit me square in the chest. "Hot, hot, hot damn water!" I screamed as I fumbled to find the cold water control.

I stood before an oval door in a corridor on deck . . . oh what difference did it make any way at this time of the night, because I was bushed and I wanted to make sure that Patricia and the children were safe and secure before I called it a night for however long that lasted on this alien ship. The door to my quarters zipped open and I stepped inside to find myself in almost total darkness.

"Alright, it would be nice if I had a bit of light to see by!" I said aloud as my eyes adjusted to the dark.

"Level, Captain?" said an unseen person hidden there in the dark.

"Who's there?" I asked as I tried to make out each shape in the room.

"There's no one in your quarters, Captain." the person answered as I nearly tripped over a chair.

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"Then who the devil said that, if there's no one in my quarters?" I asked as I stood by the chair while noticing the twinkling lights that were emanating from the wall.

"I did, Captain Jack---

"Can the Captain Jackson crap and come on out and show yourself, now!" I ordered, as I expected someone or something to come out of their hiding place and jump me. "Where are you hiding?"

"I'm not hiding, Captain, nor am I able to come out and show myself." the voice informed me. "I am not an android or robot, or a Galaxian of any known or unknown species---

"Okay, then what are you?" I asked as my eyes darted from wall to wall.

"I am Issac, the Dorion Adriakar's internal ships systems analytical computer---

"Lights to a moderate level then, Issac." I ordered while waiting for my command to be enacted before I began my search of the bedroom areas of my living unit for my wife and children, and, to no avail.

"Issac, where's my wife Patricia, and our children, Eric and Amber?" I asked into the air of the living room and shortly thereafter a flat screened television on the wall above a large desk activated automatically.

"Robert, I've got Patricia and the children here in the medical unit." said the voice of, and an image of, Doctor Barbara Jane Henderson from Milwaukee Wisconsin being transmitted from the wall unit.

"Are they alright Doctor Henderson?" I asked, filled with an unquenched concern and deep worry for my family as I leaned over the desk and gazed into the vid com unit.

"I had to sedate her, Robert, but the children are fine and being taken care of." Henderson explained. "She and the children were found on one of the view decks and---

"I'm coming to the medical unit right---

"Robert, I wouldn't advise that now, but I will suggest that you get some sleep." she told me. "They're resting in my care and you have nothing to worry about---

"Nothing to worry about Doctor, nothing to worry about!" I thundered at her while also noticing that she was twirling her car keys nervously in her right hand. "Better toss those car keys in a desk drawer, Doc, you won't be needing them out here."

"They're serving their purpose for the time being, Robert she replied.

"Sorry for the outburst, Doctor." I told her. "Take care of them Barbara, and yourself as well, and don't hesitate to reach me as soon as they're able to see me."

"I promise." she said as the screen blackened and the transmission ended and I found myself in what was to become my home away from home staring sleepily into a blank vid screen monitor. Surely this was just a dream I was having, like Donald kept telling us, wasn't it? I mean yes, Patricia and I took Eric and Amber to Marsha and Donald April's home for a pizza party, and Alex was there as well. I rose from my chair and headed for my bedroom and gazed at myself in a mirror above a set of drawers.

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"Captain, huh, what a joke, me, a space ship captain." I said to my image in the mirror before getting myself ready for bed.

"Inauctu so bevratum." the alien female said as she stood there leaning over me, while shaking me awake.

"Huh, what did you say?" I asked, as I rolled over and searched for the translator that had fallen from my left ear.

"Inauctu so overslept, Captain." she said as I checked the device to make sure that it was seated properly in my ear while she took a seat at the foot of my bed.

"I got the overslept part alright, but the inact two so part, I didn't quite catch." I said having pulled the covers up and around my neck.

"I said that you have overslept, sir." she replied.

"Oh, are you my alarm clock now?" I asked as I noticed her likeness to the admiral.

"I am your yeoman, Captain." she answered. "My name is Zaella Zaranazi, from the planet Uorexua."

"How long have I been asleep, Yeoman Zara-whatever?" I asked as I noticed my wrist watch was missing.

"I haven't any idea sir, when did you retire?" she asked me as she sat there emotionless.

"Well, most of my friends might tell you that it was when I graduated from kindergarten, but you probably have no idea what I'm talking about." I answered her. "I don't remember working too hard after that."

"What time was it when you went to bed, Captain?" she asks before cracking a grand canyon smile.

"Night time, Yeoman, only not enough of it!" I growled, and watched as her smile disappeared. "Sorry, Yeoman, I guess that I'm not dreaming after all, am I?"

"I'm afraid not, sir." she answered as she gazed at me.

"I could use a time piece, that is if you have such a commodity---

"Like this one, Captain?" she asked as she extended her right arm and gave me my first ever look at a universal vid com wrist watch.

"Nice watch, Yeoman." I answered as she took her arm back and placed it in her lap.

"It's a combination universal chronograph and video communication device." she explained to me before she stood up from the bed. "You have much to learn before the battle that is coming."

"Sayeela, sit back down if you would, and enlighten me about this oncoming battle that we're about to become involved in." I asked as I sat up in bed with the blanket still clutched about my neck.

"Well, Captain, to begin, Galaxians entered our solar systems and gave us two choices, the first choice being an unconditional surrender of each world and its inhabitants to suffer from complete dominance and slavery, or the second choice being the annihilation of each world and its inhabitants to suffer from complete destruction and captivity." the Uorexuan explained as she sat back down on the foot of the bed.

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"These Galaxians as you called them, they keep your worlds and you serve them till you die, or else they destroy your worlds and you become their prisoners until---

"Yes, Captain." she replied, having interrupted me before I could say, until they had no further need of you.

"My parents, brothers, and sisters, except for one sister, and all of my relatives, except for my Uncle Kondulon, were murdered." she told me, now on the verge of tears, letting me know that she was indeed capable of emotions after all, but hell, who wouldn't be an emotional mess after the horrendous ordeals that they had been through.

"I and my sister and uncle were on Zanaria at the time." my yeoman continued with her explanation. "The Zaleens destroyed Uorexua, Andulon, Delindria, Perinna, Sanarta, Talmurra, and Uda Thane. Zanaria was able to raise a planetary shield, but not before my capture. We saw other worlds fall prey to the destruction wrought upon them by the Zaleens that have sent us ahead of themselves, to your world, to warn and to prepare you to do battle with them, when they arrive."

"So, we're all in this proverbial boat together." I said as I gazed about my bedroom unit.

"Proverbial boat, Captain?" she asked as her eyes also gazed about the room. "Should you be unable to save your world as well as our people as was prophesied, then it will be added to the list of those inhabited worlds that are no longer inhabit---

"I still don't believe that your prophesy is referring to me, Sara . . . nessie!" I stormed as she made an attempt to take my right hand into her left hand and decided that it was best to withdraw it.

"My uncle believes it, Captain!" she thundered back at me as she bolted up and off of my bed.

"Yeoman, out, and that's an order!" I said as I sat there steaming. "Get me one of those watches and locate Donald April, and Alexander Scott, and tell them to meet with me and your uncle in my ready room."

"Yes, Captain." she answered as she tore out of my bedroom. "On my way, sir!" she growled.

"Damn." I said as I was left alone to shower and shave and put on the uniform that had mysteriously been laid out for me on the bed.

"Issac, am I alone in my quarters?" I asked as I peaked around the oval doorway between my bed chamber and the living area.

"Yes, Captain, you are alone." the ship's computer answered as I shrugged and returned to the bed and continued to get dressed. "Incoming communication on vid com, sir."

"Jackson, hey Jay, Robert, are you up yet?" said the voice of my best friend as the screen came to life above my desk in the front living room. "This is Donald, how about getting something to eat on this tub before we meet with you and Admiral Mahogany in your ready room?"

"I'm here Donald." I said as I hurried to the desk so that he could see me as I sat there slipping my shoes on my feet.

"I'm a little empty you know." he said as he stepped back and took to patting his stomach.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"I was feeling hungry myself until I saw your belly." I told him as I stood there gazing at his red sunburned stomach on the screen. "Did you overdo it in a tanning bed or fall into a toaster some---

"You don't even want to go there, Jackson." he answered, just as quick as he pulled his uniform top down to cover up the fact that he had gotten scalded in his shower.

"Alright then, let's meet at the vid com tower in the corridor and have Issac print us a---

"Oh, he scared the shit out of me too!" April thundered before he ended the transmission.

"See you in the corridor." I said to the blank screen.



## Chapter 4: What Did It Say?

\* Chapter Four \*

The oval door to my living unit zipped open as I neared it and closed behind me as I exited into the busy corridor. Other doors slid opened and closed and I saw Donald and his family leaving their living unit as well as Alex Scott from his. Then to my utter surprise, a hand shot out from the crowded corridor and grabbed me by my collar, hoisting me up and off of the decking beneath my feet. I had the breath knocked out of me as I found myself slammed hard against the wall behind me.

"Okay Bro, I want to know where the hell I am and how in tar-nations did the wife and children and I, myself, get here!" boomed the voice of my brother David, as he pinned me up against the wall with an iron grip. "Where ever here just so happens to be?"

"Hi David, and how are you today?" asked Donald April as he came to stand by my brother, which in this case happened to be the wrong thing to have done. My brother reached out with his other hand and Donald shared a place on the wall next to me.

"Apparently, he's not in a very good mood is he, Jay?" Donald asked as he turned his head so that he could see very clearly, that I was in the same predicament as he.

"No shit!" I replied nervously.

"I knew that April must have had a part in this some how, somewhere along the way!" David growled angrily. "You two connive things together!"

"Well big brother, if you would kindly lower the two of us connivers back down to the deck beneath us, we'll try our hardest to explain to you what we've been trying our hardest to find out for ourselves.!" I said as I blew up in his face.

"Yes, we . . . will try." Donald said a little more calmly as Alex Scott moved into our view and gave David a hateful look.

"He your friend too?" David asked, if one could call it asking, because it seemed to me as more of a demand to want to know than it was a question.

"Yes." April managed to squeak out.

"Wrong right answer!" my brother said as he dropped Donald and I to the deck flooring and made a grab for Alex.

"David Crockett Jackson, back off!" I thundered, almost gagging as my right hand shot upwards to my sore throat.

"David, no one knows to any great extent as to how or why we've wound up here." Alex Scott explained to my irate and younger brother as he prepared himself to tangle with David Jackson should he be forced to do so. I was now back up on the wall as both Donald and Alex stood there watching.

"Okay again, big brother, just you and me!" David spat out. "The two of us have gotta have a little talk, you and I!"

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

My brother held me as steady as steel on the wall and I had to think of something to get myself out of this mess.

"Are you hungry David?" I asked, now trying to appeal to his stomach if not to his brain.

"Hum, yeah, now that you mention it, yeah I am." he answered as I crashed to the floor, thanking God that at least David's stomach was co-operating with me.

"I can wait to pound on some body's head after I've eaten." he said.

If everyone will follow Donald and myself to that vid com tower over there, I'll get us some directions." I said as I managed to get myself up from the corridor deck and on to my feet.

"Why don't you ask one of these things!" David Jackson blared as he picked up a poor defenseless little creature that was trying to make its way down the corridor.

"Glart moy wadon sek nad!" the alien croaked as its hand shot out like a bolt of lightening to choke my brother.

"What did it say, hurry up somebody?" asked David as he began shaking the not so defenseless little creature. "Tell me?"

"It said, put me down or else." Donald answered as he translated for one of the crew members on the ship.

"Oh, well, in that case, if it will release my throat, I might be nice enough to put whatever it is, down." David said as his face began to lose a bit of color.

Naturally of course, David's wife, also known as, my sister in law, Janice, commenced to pounding on the poor thing's back and Alex stepped between them and forcefully removed the alien from David and sat it down on the deck. It then proceeded to kick my brother in his knee caps. David grabbed the being once more by the scruff of its neck and shoved it up on the wall. I felt for it, having been on that very same wall myself.

"Kavan, wat inactu toc sevor glart moy wadon sek nad, va murred!" it said heatedly to David and I myself.

"Now do what, twerp?" my brother thundered as he gazed over at Donald for an answer.

"You seem to understand this fur ball, April!" he stormed. "Tell me what it said!"

"David, I guess you don't have one of these." I said as I removed the hearing aid language translator from my left ear and placed it in my brothers left hand while he held the crew member with his right hand, rock solid against the wall.

"David, put him down very gently and make some kind of an apology or else he will have you thrown in the brig!" Alex ordered as he withdrew what appeared to be a weapon from some hidden place on his person.

"Okey-dokey, so I stick this here thingy in my ear and---

"And you'll be able to understand everyone aboard this ship." Donald broke in to explain as he gazed upon the weapon that Alex held on David.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Okay Toto, I'm sorry for having messed up your morning, but somebody has a lot of splaining to do, Lucy!" David roared. "Because me, and the wife and kids found out that we're not in Kansas anymore, Dorothy!"

"Getting beamed aboard the Enterprise without my consent is not something that I would normally do at . . . twelve fifty-six in the afternoon!" he said after having looked at the time on his watch as he put the alien back on it's feet

Alex Scott moved quickly between David and our fellow crew member.

"Robert, tell King Kong to put his toy pistol away and I may try to be on my best behavior!" my brother ordered as he lowered his hands to his side.

"I'd keep it on him, Alex." Donald said as Yeoman Zaranazi walked up to me from out of the crowd in the corridor and placed a vid com watch in my right hand. "David is not to be trusted until we know differently."

"Thank you, Yeoman." I said as I strapped the watch to my left wrist.

"Natu pron, Kavan, ren." she replied as she glanced at David Jackson, who along with his wife and children, stood there with their mouths wide open.

"I take it that you and the children have your translators?" I asked my sister in law as she still stood there statue like before finally shaking her head yes.

"Yeoman So . . . nose, I'm unable to understand you at this time." I said as I turned my head so that she would see that I didn't have my translator.

"She ah, said, no problem, Captain, sir." David said as he lightly tapped my translator that was now in his left ear. "Captain, of who, what, when, where, why, and, how come!"

"I knew it, by Golly, I just knew that you, and Donald, and the gorilla here, was in on this little charade!" my brother said as he heated back up and began looking up and down the corridor like a wild man. "Okay Hercules, you can put the gun away and bring out Allen Funt. He did a great job of hiding those cameras. This was good, a really good show, but . . . how . . . did . . . we ... get . . . here?"

David Jackson, born late in fifty-eight, was stumped as he fell into step with Donald April, once we began moving down the corridor in the opposite direction of the alien that tangled with my brother.

"You and my brother do this very often?" he asked Donald, in a more subtle tone of voice.

"Ah hum, do what very often, Dave?" Donald asked as he glanced up at him.

"You know, drug your relatives and friends and drag them to your playhouse to pretend that every one's in a spaceship?" he asked, glancing down at Donald. "I mean, even the little midget in the dog suit done a whiz bang job."

"I wish that it was that plain and simple, but---

"Oh, so you really do take off and leave Earth and take joy trips to other planets and stuff . . . like . . . that?" he asked.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"No, David, this isn't my normal type of dream." Donald answered as we neared a vid com tower and not the one further back down the corridor.

"So, you think that you're asleep, and are just dreaming this crap up, huh?" David asked as his temper flared again.

"Maybe I am, and maybe I'm not so quiet for certain." Donald answered. "But, I do know of one thing for a certainty."

"And ah, what would that one thing be?" my brother asked, and I, almost for a certainty, knew what Donald was going to tell him.

"I'm never gonna eat another pizza from Domino's ever again, dead or alive." he answered. "That's how, and why, you're all here in my nightmare, together."

"No kidding, I'd of never guessed it, that is, if you hadn't of told me." David said as his eyebrows raised and he ran his index finger around his right ear a few times before pointing to my best friend who hadn't seen him, because he was busy at the vid com tower.

"I hope that it's a nightmare." April said while fidgeting with the touch screen on the vid com unit. "What could be any worse than a nightmare?"

"The real thing." his wife Marsha answered, and he turned to face her long enough to give her a smug look before turning back to what he was doing.

"Issac, this is, I would assume, Commander April, of the Orion." he said as he faced the screen.

"Yes, Commander April, how may I be of assistance to you?" said the ship's computer.

"What I want, is a print out of the nearest place, from this point, to stuff our faces." he answered as he waited, along with the rest of us.

"Donald, it might not know what you mean by the term, stuff our faces." Marsha April told her husband as she leaned on his left shoulder.

"Your face looks as if it is filled out---

"Yes, yes, yes, eat, consume food, Issac!" Donald stormed at the computer.

"I do not require food to---

"Us . . . dag . . . nab it!" he blasted. "I want to eat and consume---

"Directions being printed, Commander." the computer said.

"Good, great, and oh, make sure that it's somewhere without pizza." April added as my brother made goofy faces behind Donald's back.

"Pizza, Commander?" Issac asked. "Pizza does not compute."

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Brother Issac, have you ever got that right." Donald replied as Marsha reached over with her right hand and tore the print out, from the tower.

"I can, in no way, be your broth---

"Issac, that will be all." Marsha said as the two of them turned around to face us.

"Really Donald, this thing about pizza has gotten way out of hand!" she said as she looked the map over. "I ate some, and I haven't suffered any ill effects."

"Oh yeah, a nightmare wife would tell her husband that she---

"Ouch Marsha, you stomped on my foot!" he said in a bit of pain as we all waited for what would transpire next. "Call me a nightmare wife will you."

"Well look where you're at woman!" Donald roared as he leaned on the vid com tower with his left shoe off, massaging his foot. "We aren't in Disney Land!"

"Okay everyone, which way to the yellow brick road diner in this nut house?" David asked. "Let's find lunch or else my right fist is going to be finding a head to thump!"

"David, did anyone at all on this ship---

"The Love Boat, that's what show we're---

"Did any . . . one . . . on this ship inform you about how you got here and why?" I asked my brother as we followed the others.

"They, or it tried to tell us, but my husband, being Mister Macho, clobbered the poor thing and stuffed it in our closet." Janice Jackson informed me while glancing up at her husband as Donald came hobbling along on his sore foot.

"It was a good fight too." piped up my nephew, David Jonah.

"Hush D.J.!" his mother thundered.

"In your closet?" Donald asked as we walked down another crowded corridor.

"If they were able to escape, they've probably gone for help, along with the other crew member that you pounced." Alexander Scott said from behind us.

I now knew where we were as we began passing through the triple oval air lock doors that led into the round jungle forest.

"Good heavens!" Janice yelled at the sight before her eyes.

"Yep, the Emerald Castle restaurant must be up ahead on this path Dorothy." David said as he gazed up at the trees way above the light tube, that we would learn later on to be, the central core of the ship.

"Maybe we're in Wonder Land instead of Disney Land, Alice." David said to his wife.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Shut up Ralph!" she blared.

"Wrong show, this ain't the Honey Mooners!" he stormed.

"I'll vouch for that." Marsha April said as she glared at her husband.

After traveling upon the stone inlaid foot paths and passing by different species of fellow Galaxians from the thirteen or more solar systems that shared the ship with us, we finally wound up at our destination..

"This place is built over the river stream." Janice Jackson said as we took our seats at a table by a long oval bay window that overlooked a small water fall below us.

"Yeah, nice view!" my brother David replied as he squeezed me up against the window as he sat down.

"David Crockett Jackson, I've taken just about all of the crap that I'm going to take off of you today, so---

"Are we going to start this bickering again, in front of our children and everybody else here!" Donald April belted out as he sat across the table from us, as I forced my brother to move over with my body.

"Alright then, Cro . . . magnon, I mean, Commander April, I'll leave him alone for now." David said as he punched me in the right arm. "That is if someone, body, or thing, tells me where in the sam hell we are!"

"I swear David, if you don't stop this---

"Hey, boy am I ever glad to see you guys." said a very familiar voice from behind me as I turned to make sure that it was who I thought it was, but before I could say a word, Donald yelled out.

"Kill him, Alex!"

"Do what!" my brother James Bowie Jackson stormed out as he took a seat at our table. "Where in the dickens are we anyway?"

"Just what in, or out of the garden, was in that pizza that you delivered yesterday evening, James?" Donald asked as he glared hatefully down the length of our table at my brother.

"You should know, Donald." James answered. "You ordered it the way you wanted it. And what's that have to do with where we are, anyhow?"

"You would ask---

"A lot!" Donald thundered as he stood up from his seat. "That's why you're here, in my nightmare now!"

"Huh, have you flipped your lid and lost a marble?" James asked as he gazed back at Donald. "Anyways, I didn't fix your pizza, I just delivered it to you, and on time too."

"Robert, it was your idea to have that pizza party at my house, wasn't it?" Donald said as he turned his gaze towards me while everyone at the table watched and listened, and snickered.

"Alex, kill Robert instead!"

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Here, let me help!" my brother David said as he commenced to choke me while the Uorexuan Admiral stood at the foot of the table, unannounced, and slid a hearing aid translator down the length of the table til it stopped directly in front of me. David then let go of me and I hurriedly placed the device into my left ear, because I didn't want to miss out on the words that the very observant Admiral had to say to us.

"I've been observing, as well as listening to, each, and every one of you, and not only at this table." Kondulon Mazzanura said as he held both of his hands folded in front of himself. "If this is the way, that the human race of Galaxians, from the planet Earth, treats one another, then I dare say, that the Zaleens will have nothing to worry about, when it comes to entertainment from their slaves, on your world, under their domination."

"Hey, look everybody, an albino Martian." my brother David said as he stood up from the table. "Why aren't you green?"

"Ah yes, Lieutenant Commander, David Crockett Jackson, of the security division aboard the Dori . . . Orion." Mazanurra said as he glanced over at David who fell back in his seat.

"What did the antenna head say, Robert?" he asked me, now looking at a loss for anything sarcastic to reply back to the admiral.

"Here, let me check your translator." I said as I made an attempt to see if it needed adjustment, not that I would know how, and David slapped my left hand away from his ear.

"No, there's nothing wrong with the damn thing!" David growled. "I just want to know if I heard the Martian right!"

"First of all Lieutenant Jackson, I am not a Martian, I am a Uorexuan." the admiral explained. "And secondly, I want everyone from Earth that's here in this galley now, to take heed, and pay close attention to what I am about to tell you. Once you are through with your meals you will go to your quarters, and remain there, as all other areas of the ship will be off limits to you, until you have reviewed the red vid com disk, that at this time, is on the desk below each vid com monitor in your living units. Failure to comply will result in your spending the rest of your time on this ship in the brig, do I make myself clear on the matter, David Jackson?"

"Tell me this, Admiral from Uranus, where in the hell are we, and when do we get to go home!" David roared as he picked up a dinner roll and made his move towards the admiral while a group of beings, like the one that he had wrestled earlier, had gathered together on the other side of the galley. "Fun's over, and the show has ended, Blondie!"

The crew member, that my brother had fought with, raised its hand and pointed in our direction. They then decided, as a group, to walk across the room, in our direction and we all tensed up for our first bar room brawl aboard a Starship.

"You, the big ugly one!" belched our fellow shipmate as David stuffed the roll into his mouth and reached out for the admiral's neck only to have his right hand smacked away from the admiral by the being from another world.

"U agin!" my brother said while chewing his mouth full of bread. "Wha u wan is ime?"

"Slorpan Sliver, our fight isn't over, Thrug Shalurtling!" the not so poor, nor defenseless little creature snapped back.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Uh, wad he say?" David asked as he reached for the fur ball as he had called it. "I got the fight ain't over part though."

"Commander Adeez!" Mazanurra blared loudly. "Lieutenant Jackson, cease your hostilities towards one another now, or else you can both spend the rest of your time, on this vessel, in the brig, starting immediately. Do the two of you understand me, Perinnan, Terran?"

"For now Admiral, yes!" said Commander Adeez as he stared hatefully up at my brother David. "We will allow the Slorpan Sliver to live, for as long as he never crosses my path again, for if he does, he will be one less Thrug Shalurtling that the Zaleens, and I myself, have to worry about!"

"I am afraid Jalep, that this will not be possible, while the two of you both remain, aboard this ship, together." the admiral replied.

"No problem, Admiral." David said as he stared at Jalep Adeez with the same loving kindness as was shown to himself. "I'm ready for my dessert, and this Purnan looks mighty appetizing. I could finish it off in one or two bites at the most . . . grr!"

"Jalep Adeez backed off a few paces and I thought that he was preparing to make a flying leap to my brother's throat, but he stood his ground and continued to glare hatefully at David Jackson.

"That's right, I eat Purnan Peanut Brains for dessert!" David spat back at the Perinnan.

"Slorpan Sliver, Thrug Shalurtling!" thundered the Perinnan as it spun on its heels and shoved itself through the mass of fellow Perinnans and Galaxians gathered at the Round River Galley. "We shall surely meet again, and alone perhaps."

"Who was that pip squeak, Admiral?" my brother asked as he walked over to retake his seat at our table.

"That pip squeak that you are referring to, is Commander Jalep Adeez, the chief commander of the security division aboard the Orion." Mazanurra explained. "And, is also your commanding officer."

David could handle his liquor to the last man standing, but upon hearing this, he hit the floor and had passed out stone cold. Mazanurra very calmly walked over to our table and grabbed up a glass of cold liquid and poured it in my brother's face, bringing him back around to reality.

"You alright brother?" our brother James asked as he reached down to help David up from the floor. "You don't look so good."

"I'll take care of Commander Adeez, and hopefully the rest of you can enjoy your meals without any more outburst of violence." the admiral said to us. "Afterwards, return directly to your quarters until further notification from me."



## Chapter 5: Might I Ask?

\* Chapter Five \*

Admiral Mazanurra exited the galley without another word said, and David and James returned to take their seats with us at the table. I pressed a button on the table and a touch screen menu arose in front of me with a complete food index for every species aboard the ship. Naturally I chose the earthen cuisine which had been added shortly after the arrival of culinary chefs from all seven continents on the planet Earth, and not only that, it was written in English. David's appetite had diminished somewhat as he sat there without uttering a single word for the rest of our time in the galley. No one dared bicker back and forth or start or join in a fight started by anyone else in the galley. It was now deathly quiet here after the little face-off between David and the chief of security. There wasn't even any music from any world at all being played in the galley on the overhead speakers, if that's what they were. I turned around in my seat to face the table behind me and sought out and found my yeoman after finishing my meal.

"Captain Robert Andrew Jackson, and Commander Donald Sherman April, please be advised at this time, that you are to report to the bridge at seventeen hundred hours, earthen standard time, Admiral Kondulon Mazanurra, out." said the voice on those overhead speakers.

"Well Yeoman Zaranazi, are we ready to go?" I asked as I stood up from the table and prepared to head back to my quarters as was ordered by Admiral Mazanurra.

"Robert, I'm coming with you." David said as he arose from the table. "Janice, take the kids and go back to our quarters, my brother and I have to talk. And don't worry, I won't be long."

"No fighting or fussing and complaining?" I asked as I left the galley along with David, Zaella, and the others. I wanted to hurry back to my quarters and contact Doctor Henderson and check up on my family in the med unit before I viewed any red disc.

"Nah, not now any way." David answered as we all walked across the bridge and entered on the path that led us here.

"See you on the command bridge, Donald." I said as he readied to pass by with Marsha, Andrew, and Ben. "Where's Martin?"

"Around here somewhere." Donald answered. "He probably knows this part of the ship better than any of us."

"See you guys later." Jim said as he rushed past us.

"Darla and Summer with you?" I asked.

"Yeah, that's why I'm in a hurry." he said as he disappeared up ahead. "I think she went to see Patricia."

"Looks like you're going to have your hands full now with the Perinnan security chief." I said as David and I walked side by side and I checked the time on my vid com watch. Yeoman Zaranazi tagged along behind us with her hands folded behind her back.

"Heck, I never had the slightest idea that little twerp was going to be my superior officer or . . . Robert, tell me, where are we for real?" my brother asked as we continued down another pathway.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"We are aboard an alien space vessel from one of thirteen destroyed or dominated worlds." I explained, as best as I could. "We have one year to prepare ourselves and take this ship into a battle against an invading race and try above and beyond all and everything else, not to become the fourteenth world to fall."

"Commander Jackson, when you play your red disc in your living unit, you will know, even if you do not completely understand." Zaranazi said as she walked up beside and cut in front of the two of us, stopping us in our tracks.

"Who are you?" David asked.

"I am Yeoman Zaella Zaranazi, from the planet Uorexua which no longer exists, because of the Zaleens." she explained to my brother with tears in her eyes.

"According to the admiral and his niece here, ours is to be the next world on the Zaleens list for extermination." I said as I dug for, and passed her, my handkerchief. "That's why we are here to prevent, that is we are able, the destruction of our home world."

"So we've been drafted . . . abducted, or whatever else, aboard this space ark to save the Earth and our own bacon from an alien attack force." David replied as he folded his hands behind his back.

"The admiral believes that we are our worlds only hope for the continuation of life in our solar system." I said before he took me by the right arm with his right hand.

"I don't like any of this brother." David said as we stood by the airlock portal that would lead us from the sciences section to the command section of the Orion. "Something just isn't clicking right because we sure as hell aren't the military or freedom fighters or---

"I know, lets find out what we can decipher from viewing our red discs in our quarters and we'll take the next step from that point." I replied as we entered into a busy corridor.

"Yeoman, may I ask you what a Slopan Sliver and a Thrug Sherbet is?" my brother asked.

"A Slorpan Sliver and a Thrug Shalurt are . . . or were horrendously fanged creatures that once lived in the worst of filth and slime or garbage in the swamps and bogs of the planet Perrina." Zaella Zaranazi answered.

"I think I've been called a pig, more or less!" David stormed madly.

"David, I've got a little over three hours before I have to report to the command bridge on this ship, so, we had best get to our quarters while time is still on our side." I told him.

"Yeah, see you around bro." he replied as he moved on down the corridor to find the security section.

After contacting med bay and finding that Patricia was asleep, and resting well, and that the children were in capable hands, I then placed the red vid com disc into the player and sat back in my chair, and along with my yeoman who sat in a chair next to mine, we waited for the show to begin. Within seconds we were watching the Zaleens travel from one inhabited world to another taking the planets by peaceful surrender, or in all out bloody and devastating battles. Any resistance at all was met with death and obliteration as their punishment for disobedience. As worlds were blown apart, the lucky ones, or the survivors, got to watch from view port windows in their cells aboard the Zaleen battle ships. Home worlds were all wiped completely out of existence because they refused to give in to their invaders. One alien vessel from a previously lost battle was sent to the next inhabited world, such as the Dorion Adriakar had been sent to Earth, prior to the Zaleen

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

invasion forces showing up in their solar systems. Why not just show up and claim your next world win, lose, or draw, and forgo the preliminaries? My only conclusion was that we were being monitored in some way, manner, and or fashion, for our strengths and weaknesses, but why, they never lost regardless of the outcome. So, why in the hell would they want to take the time to toy with us, and train us, to fight a losing battle against them? Why the waste of time? David was right, about something not being right.

"Zaranazi, I've seen about as much of this red disc as I want to see in one day." I said as I stood in order to shut it down. "Enough of it, that is, to know that we'll either surrender peacefully to the Zaleens and become servants, or---

"Are you ready to go to the command bridge, Captain?" she asked.

"Why not." I answered as I shut down my vid com unit, and walked towards the oval entry door of my living unit and out into the busy corridor, while a short time later the oval elevator lift door zipped open and I stepped out and on to the upper deck of the Orion's massive bridge with Yeoman Zaranazi on my heels.

"Your late, Captain." Donald April said as Zaranazi and I joined him on the lower deck.

"Really now, me, late." I replied as I glanced briefly at my vid com watch. "Well, here we are, for better or for worse, Commander."

"Did you have to say or for worse." April replied as we began a tour of each station on the inner bridge. "I believe that I would enjoy our little adventure if not for the or for worse part."

The oval lift door parted and another of our earthly friends, who we hadn't had contact with in at least a thousand moons and a few minutes and half a life time, or so it seemed, stepped off of the lift and on to the upper deck of the bridge and froze, as if she had seen the devil, face to face while Zaranazi had decided to wander about the bridge.

"Laura, welcome aboard the Orion." Donald said in greeting as the two of us walked over to a set of steps that led from the lower to the upper portion of the bridge.

"I thought that it was hell, but if you want to call it the Orion, that will . . . how did we get---

"Sis, did you happen, by any chance what so ever, have a chance to look at the red vid com disc in your quarters?" I asked as she stood there, unmoving.

"If you mean the red d.v.d. , oh yeah, I sure did, and that's why I want to go home and dig a deep hole and bury myself in it till it's all over. Please tell me that this is just a very bad dream or a night---

"Don't say nightmare, or else Donald will tell you that it's all happening because of a pizza that we ate." I told her as Donald just shrugged his shoulders.

"If we aren't having a nightmare, we can kiss our . . . selves goodbye." April told her as the lift doors parted yet again to allow another old friend entry on to the bridge.

"Helmsman, they said, you're going to pilot this ship, they said!" Steven Allen Davis said aloud, and to himself, as he stepped on to the bridge, bumping into Laura Andrews.

"Oh shit, aliens that look like old friends from my high school days. Damn, what a hangover I'm having. Lord, I swear, if you'll let me wake up in the morning in my own bed, I'll never take another drink again, cross my

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

heart and fingers and all that other hope to die---

"Hello, Stephus." Donald said as he interrupted our friend.

"Oh no, it even sounds like April, and it even called me Stephus." Davis rattled on.

"Still don't know where you're going, do you Steve?" Laura asked as she moved a step or two away from him so that she could size him up.

"I'm in hell!" Steve cried out upon seeing who he had bumped into. "Hell has found me for sure!"

"What was in that last drink I had that killed me?" Davis asked as he sat down on the steps between the upper and lower deck of the bridge. "And why me?"

"Laura, what position did they pen on you?" I asked as I gazed down at Steve, noticing that he held his face with both hands while his elbows rested on his knees.

"Communications Officer." Laura answered as she stepped down to the lower deck, toeing Steve with her right foot. "But I think that I'd make a better helmsman than Steve."

Are you guys really April, Jackson, and Laura, Laura . . . whatever your last name is now?" Davis asked as he gazed up at us.

"Yes, it's us Stephus." Donald answered. "And something tells me that you may not have had a chance to see the red disc that---

"Oh I saw the damn thing alright." Davis replied. "Talk about a sobering and make you want to get drunk again experience of waking up in your bed and having an alien from Lost In Space staring down into your face. It would have made Doctor Smith proud to have heard my screams of unholy terror."

"I don't doubt it." Laura replied as she gazed down at him.

"Okay, where the devil am I supposed to sit on this ship of the damned?" Davis said as he lifted his head.

"Over there, and Steve, don't touch anything yet!" Donald answered as he pointed with his right hand to the helm station.

"We're as good as dead if he's driving Donald's nightmare." Laura said as she looked for her station on the bridge.

"No pizza or liquor is that good, or that bad to have---

"Robert, Donald, sorry for the interruption, but I think that we've got a grand scale problem that none of us are going to be able to alleviate." Alexander William Scott said as the oval lift door parted. and he. along with two other non Terran beings, stepped off of the lift and on to the command bridge. One of them walked over to the helm station while the other one went to the communications station. Alex came and joined us as we stood near the steps.

"This is going to be one fix or tight spot that will take every one of us---

"Straight to hell!" Steven Davis thundered as he staggered to the helm station, falling into his chair.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Is that Davis?" Alex asked.

"Yes, what's left of him." Laura Andrews replied as she took her seat on the bridge.

Davis just waved back at Alex and nodded before looking down at his console while the alien crew member pointed out something to him.

"If what we've seen on our red disc, and what the admiral has told us is indeed the truth or actual fact, then our own home world is in for a very rude awakening, especially if we are unable to fulfill our duties and come out of this alive." Alex said, explaining what we already knew to be the truth of the matter.

"Then you don't believe that I'm dreaming all of this, or all of us, up?" Donald asked as he leaned over and on to the railing that circled the bridge.

"I would like to know for sure, but may the Lord help us all if it's not a nightmare." Alex answered as the admiral came in on to the bridge and gazed over to find his niece, sitting at the sciences station, quietly observing us.

Donald, Alex, I pray that our galaxian crew members know exactly what they're doing, by making me their captain. It should have been your position, Donald." I said as I glanced over at the admiral, who happened to be looking directly over at us.

"Thanks, but no, Captain." Donald April replied. "At any other time, other than now, I might agree whole-heartedly with you Robert, but I feel more at ease manning the sciences computer station."

"I understand." I said as I turned to Alex Scott. "And what about you Alex?"

"Me, a captain?" Alex asked as he slapped me on the back. "I'm the weapons and defense engineer, and it'll take the likes of me to contend with the likes of your brother David, should he go on the rampage again."

"I can see your point too." I replied, as the being who stood at the communications station had a view of the Earth, up on the four vid screens above the outer bridge stations.

"Why's the admiral just standing there like a wooden Indian---

"Admiral on the bridge!" April yelled out as he snapped to attention along with Alex, the others and myself, that is, everyone but Steven Davis.

"So what, do you have to yell?" Steve yelled back at us as he turned in his seat. "I've got a splitting headache the size of . . . who the hell is that!"

"At ease everyone." the admiral ordered before walking down the three steps to the lower deck of the bridge and striding over to where we stood. "As you were."

"Admiral, has any of our world leaders seen the red vid com disc that we've been introduced to in our quarters?" I asked as I stood before him.

"Before they do Captain, I need to know what's going on in your mind?" he asked.

"My own opinion is that we don't have a third option to tell the Zaleens to go away and leave us the hell alone." I answered. "Understand me Admiral, when I say that I fail to understand, why our enemy just doesn't

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

show up unannounced and take possession of our world without giving us any warning. That is what I am having a major problem under---

"Well, I'm in no damn hurry for them to come any sooner!" Commander April stormed at me. "If that's what you're---

"Admiral, let me get this ironed out for all of us here." I said overlooking Donald's outburst. "You have beaten the Zaleens here by one earthen year, to warn us, if not to prepare us, for a war that we'll not win, in an uncertain future, alive as servants on Earth, or somewhere else, wishing that we were dead, as slaves, because our home world got blown to smithereens. Not a very pretty picture, either way you want to paint it."

"Admiral, I can't see the Orion going up against a fleet of Zaleen battle ships coming at us from all different directions, for one of them alone, by itself, would be efficient enough, to destroy us." Commander Scott replied.

"So, is there something else that you're withholding from us, Admiral Malaria, sir." Commander April added.

"You may as well draw me a detailed map of this damn thing, because two minutes from now I'll have forgotten everything!" Lieutenant Steven Davis thundered at his alien instructor.

"I hope that your insurance is paid up to date on this ship if he's going to be our fly boy." Lieutenant Laura Andrews said from her station.

"Sweetie, after I get the hang of this, I'll be able to fly around the rings of Saturn." Davis replied from the helm.

I'm not your sweetie, and if you so much as---

"We're going to get along really swell as a team Admiral." April said as he watched Steve turn back to his console while waving us off. "My, what a pizza."

"Let me assure you, Commander April, that what you consumed the night of your being brought here, has in no way altered your mind, nor it's ability to function properly, as it should." the admiral replied. "All of this . . .

Mazanurra stopped short and stomped his right foot down hard on the deck floor before he gave Donald a hard shove throwing him into Alex who along with Donald knocked me over and we all tumbled like dominoes to the deck flooring.

. . . is very real, earthlings!"

Steven Davis came quickly to his feet and shoved his instructor out of the way before springing up and over the helm station to leap on to the admiral, who swatted him away as if he were a fly. Alex tried the same tactic from Mazanurra's backside and was tossed off with a flip.

"Alex, Steve, enough already!" I ordered as Donald and I helped one another to our feet. "The admiral was trying to prove a point, or so I think."

Catching the admiral and all of us off guard, Donald tackled Mazanurra like a freight train plowing an animal off of its tracks, and bowled him off of his feet and he landed flat on his back with a hard thump as Donald rolled over the top of him like a bowling ball that had struck its pin dead on.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Donald, that little skirmish that we got into earlier today with David when he slammed us up on to the corridor wall outside of our quarters, should have woke us up and told us something!" I thundered.

"It did, I just needed the exercise." Donald said as he now knelt out of breath beside Steven Davis who still lay flat on his back.

"You okay Steve?" Donald asked as he helped Steven Davis to sit upright.

"Don't know, I think so." Davis answered. "Boy does that Martian ever pack a punch like Laura."

"You're pushing it Steve!" Laura growled as she arose from her seat while the admiral got back upon his feet.

"I don't believe that he's hurt to bad, gentlemen." Admiral Mazanurra said as he extended his hand to Steve and he pulled him to his feet as if it were effortless. "And the name is Mazanurra, Commander April."

"Well, Robert, Donald, Alex, Laura, how the heck are you?" Davis said nervously. "It's been an awful long time."

"Awful is right, Lieutenant Davis." I said. "Considering the fact that we're a bunch of misfits abducted aboard an alien space ship on our one way trip into oblivion."

"Howdy, Donny Boy, how's it going man?" Davis asked before he passed out cold on the deck.

"This is going to be one hell of a vacation." April said. "I can see that, right now."

"Well, Admiral, what's next?" I asked as I stood facing him."

"Your ready room, Captain." the admiral answered. "Instructors are waiting patiently for the rest of you at your stations, and Andrews, call for a medic, and Lieutenant Javreen, to come to the bridge."

## Chapter 6

\* Chapter Six \*

"Ah, Slorpan Sliver, I see that you've finally decided to report to me for your first training session!" thundered the security chief, Commander Jalep Adeez, who was sitting behind his desk in the security unit.

"You may be my commanding officer, alien twerp, but you and I are gonna get one thing straight! David Jackson said as he leaned over the desk and gazed down at Jalep Adeez.

"I can whip the crap outta you any day of the week, month, or the year, got that, carp face?" thundered David Jackson, as he shoved his finger into the alien's face.

"Earth man, you do show promise and have great potential. I'm going to mold you into a first rate security officer." said Jalep, now standing and gazing up at my brother.

"Look here piglet, is everything that my brother told me about this flying carpet with its Mickey Mouse crew and why you're all here, true?" David asked, shoving the commander back down in his seat.

"Your brother, I presume, is going to be the captain aboard this ship?" asked the alien security chief, standing up once again.

"Yeah, the Wizard of Oz. What a joke on us all. Some ignorant alien fool critter off of his rocket made my brother a Starship captain!" David thundered, once more shoving the Perrinnan back down in his chair.

"Anyway, ferret weasel, is what he told me the truth?" he blurted out, slamming his fist on Adeez's desk.

"What did he tell you, Thrug Shalurtling?" asked the commander as he stood one more time.

"Looks like you're headed for another fight!" David thundered. "Call me a pig will you!"

"I found out what a Slorpan Slimer and a Thrug Sherbet was, you baboon!" David said, as he moved nearer to Jalep Adeez's desk.

"That's Sliver and Shalurtling, Earth ... man!" the security chief said

"Whatever, I don't like being referred to as a pig in a slop pen, creep!" David continued as he grabbed the commander and pinned him to the wall behind his chair.

"There's something that I don't like about you alien, and I'm gonna find out why I don't. I don't believe all the bull crap that I've heard or seen so far, so you had better be doing some serious talking if you value your life, peanut brain!" said David as he tightened his grip.

"Is .ard .o .alk .hen .ome .ody is .hoking ..u .o .eath." said the Perrinnan as his face was deepening in color.

"Sounds alien to me, speak English." David told the poor creature as it hung suspended in his death grip.

From out of nowhere a club like weapon came crashing down quickly over David Jackson's head, felling him to the floor as he still clutched the little Perrinnan by its neck. The club should have knocked David unconscious but David's head was thicker than the club, which shattered.



## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"That done did it, now you've gone and made me mad, so if you're gonna mess with the best, you're gonna have to suffer like the rest!" he told him just before the fight broke out.

On the Orion's twelve outer pylon view decks, anyone could come there and be able to see out and into space from the large oval windows that spanned the pylons entire length on both sides on any of the four decks that they may be on at any certain time of the day or night shifts aboard the ship. Robert and Patricia Jackson's two children, five year old Eric, and four year old Amberle, along with their Uorexuan care taker had entered on to one of the view decks.

"When are you going to take us to the hospital to see mommy?" Eric asked while his sister walked over to one of the windows and gazed out at the Earth down below.

"It's called Med Bay, Eric." answered their alien baby sitter.

"Where's daddy?" Amberle asked as she turned from the window to face the female Uorexuan.

"He may be on the command bridge, Amberle. Do you know what a command bridge is?"

"Does it cross a river?" Amberle asked as Eric stood by one of the windows gazing out at the moon.

"No, it does not cross a river."

In another place aboard the Orion, David Jackson's wife, twenty seven year old Janice was being informed of her new profession.

"I'm going to be doing what?" Janice Jackson asked, surprised to have been told what her duties would be aboard the ship as the Talmurran female swiveled her chair around so that they were face to face

"I've told you once already, you shall be an educator, teaching the children aboard the Dorion Adriakar about your world and its histories." the Talmurran answered her for the second time. "I'm beginning to think that perhaps I've made a serious mistake in having chosen you."

"I don't believe that I'll be staying here for very much longer, whoever or whatever you are!" David Jackson's wife thundered.

You would leave your mate and children behind---

"Hey, he'll find a way to get us all home!" Janice Jackson boomed aloud.

"Janice, even if you should choose to return to your home world, and we will give each one of you here that option, the Zaleens may destroy it." her captor or savior replied.

In the Captain's Ready Room, Robert Jackson was having his long awaited meeting with Admiral Mazanurra.

"Admiral, my wife is in your medical section aboard this ship and my two children, Eric and Amberle, are hopefully being taken care of, while I try to make sense out of our current situation. I would like to be able to visit with them as soon as it is possible to do so, sir." I said as I sat in my chair behind the captain's desk while Mazanurra stood in front of it.

"In due time Captain, I will check in with the medical staff myself as to her health and welfare." the admiral replied as he took the liberty to sit in the chair in front of my desk.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"I should hope that in due time, means soon, Admiral." I said. "I haven't seen my wife nor our children since you brought us aboard your ship."

"And for this, I am truly sorry, Captain Jackson, but there are some things that we must take into consider---

"Security alert! Security alert!" said the voice and image on the vid com screen that arose from the top of my desk. "Security to Security! We have a problem down here! Admiral Mazanurra, Captain Jackson, can you come down here to Security?" asked the voice.

"On our way." answered the admiral over his vid com watch.

"Your brother David, Captain?" asked the admiral as he stood up from his chair and made haste for the security section.

"It would be a good bet, sir." I answered as I came around from behind my desk and raced out into the busy corridor and bumped into my yeoman, Zaella Zaranazi."

"Yeoman, follow me, and the Admiral." I ordered.

It seemed like it took us an eternity to get from the officers' deck to the security section of the ship, but once we had arrived there we got the surprise of our lives.

My brother David lay on a stretcher on the carpeted floor along side Commander Adeez and another alien security officer.

"Hey bro, Captain, they finally managed to get the . . . best of me." David said as he lay there wincing in pain. "But not before I taught these aliens a thing or two."

Jalep Adeez gazed up at the admiral and rather painfully tried to articulate his side of the story.

"Admiral Masnur, if all my over recoots pud up haff as muff fight as viff Earffing, then we've nuffing to worry bout, sir." he said, grimacing in severe pain while spitting out a bloody fang.

"He's exceptionally good." said the alien security officer who lay there beside them.

"It took five of us to get him off of Commander Adeez and Lieutenant Lumada." said one of the more fortunate ones as Jalep Adeez turned to my brother and placed his left hand on David's right shoulder.

"First lesson and training session over, Loot Manner, ackson." he said as he spit up blood.

"I still don't like you for some . . . reason." David said as Commander Jalep Adeez passed out just before medics began hoisting them up from the floor. "I guess I must have passed my first test."

"Get a cleanup detail down here, Lieutenant Tholari." ordered the admiral as he turned to exit the security section.

"Yes sir, Admiral." said security officer Lekton Tholari, from the planet Sanarta.

"Your brother knows how to fight rather well, Captain Jackson." Mazanurra said as he stepped around the overturned desk of Jalep Adeez.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"He hasn't lost his touch, Admiral." I said as I gazed upon the overturned furniture, broken glass, and the few heads that got thumped by my brother.

"Zaranazi, let's leave this mess to those who are better qualified at cleaning it up, unless you want to lend a---

"Just looking, Captain, just looking." she replied as she turned about and exited the disaster zone.

"It's twenty hundred hours, Terran solar time, Captain." the admiral said as he turned to face me in the corridor.

"The next shift is coming on duty." my yeoman replied as we began to move on down the busy corridor as a cleanup crew passed us by.

"You're all relieved to take any liberties aboard this ship that you and your friends deem it necessary for you to take, in order that you may acquaint yourselves further with this vessel." the admiral told them.

"Thank you Admiral." I replied as he continued on down the corridor while shaking his head in disgust at the way things had been going so far.

"Yeoman Zaranazi, you don't talk much, do you?" I said as I passed her my transcribe pad. "I hardly know that you're around at times."

"I am more of an observer and a listener, Captain." she replied as I neared a vid com tower.

"I don't doubt it Zaranazi, so where might I make an inquiry about my children, Eric, and Amberle?" I asked my yeoman as she stood beside the communications tower.

"Ask the ship's computer, Issac, and he will provide you with the information that you seek, Captain, sir." she answered.

After getting the information that I needed from Issac, Zaranazi and I proceeded on our way to find Eric and Amberle. It wasn't long however before the two of us ran into James, Darla, and Summer.

"Hey Robert, Zebra Nosey, over here!" yelled my twenty six year old brother Jim, who was walking casually down one of the ship's corridors with his wife twenty seven years old Darla, and their seven year old daughter, Summer

"It's Zaranazi." Zaella said correcting my brother.

"Still sounds like some kind of nasal condition to---

"Jim, Darla, wants to join Yeoman Zaranazi and me?" I said. "We are going after Eric and Amberle and after that it's on to the med section to visit with Patricia."

"That's where we're headed ourselves." Darla replied. "Sure, we'll tag along with you."

"Zaranazi, I have a question to ask you about something that has been worrying me." I said as I gazed down at my niece.

"And what would your question be Captain, sir?" my yeoman asked, as Jim, Darla, and Summer listened.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Yes, Yeoman, it's about the children aboard this ship?" I began. "The Orion's not going to be a very safe haven for them once we engage the Zaleens in an all out space battle."

"Neither were the planets safe that they all called home, Captain." she answered.

It's a crying shame that neither side that fights against one another gives thought to their children and how any battle will affect them, before they decide to kill one another off. "Some great role models that we are to our children. The dead that fought to have, have lost all, and those that are still alive have to clean up the mess and suffer to fight again another day. Why do we not try to live in and at peace with one another in harmony?" I asked, as Zaranazi gazed up at me in deep thought.

"Captain, when we encounter the Zaleens, they will care for nothing, for they believe that with the passing of time, they will be the only life left in this galaxy." Zaranazi explained.

"And we just happen to be next in line for extermination." my brother James uttered, as he picked a wrapper up from the corridor deck. "Our children aren't safe anywhere."

"Now, Captain, do you understand why we have come to Earth to seek you out?" Zaella asked, as she looked me straight in the eyes.

"If it's for experience in commanding a Starship, no. If it's because I care about my family, relatives, friends, both from earth and elsewhere, yes, but caring does not qualify me to command this ship or to give orders to kill another soul without justification." I said as we moved along in the corridor.

"And when do you determine that the killing of another soul is justifiable, Captain?" my yeoman asked.

"Whenever the Zaleens want to take our children's lives and futures away from them, and that includes our home worlds." I answered. "I still believe that you've made a mistake in choosing me for---

"That poses a problem, Captain, you do not have faith and you do not believe in yourself." Zaranazi replied.

"How's Patricia, Robert, or I mean---

"I know what you mean, Darla." I answered as we passed by our fellow Galaxians in the corridors leading us to the medical facilities aboard the Orion. "The last account that I received earlier was that she was still out of it."

"I know that I'd want to be out of it now. She's probably better off by being out of it. I would hate to think what would be going through her mind at a time like this." Darla replied.

"Let's just face the facts as they are, we're all in deep Doo Doo up to our knee caps." my brother Jim said as he handed the wrapper back to the alien that dropped it.

"You drop something?" he asked the Sanartan.

"Don't tell me that you touched it, Earthling?" the Sanartan asked in return as we made a sudden stop in the corridor.

"Yes, why, is there something wrong with my having picked it up?" Jim asked with a worried look on his face.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"No, not at all, I just wanted to see the reaction that you would give me." the Sanartan answered and began to laugh. "I'm Doctor Seladan Sarn, at your---

"Doctor, there will be no littering on this ship. Use a waste receptacle!" James thundered.

"That's an order!" I said, before the Sanartan physician should happen to want to drop it again.

"Yes sir, Captain, I was just checking his phys---

"Excuse me, I'm sorry . . . Candice, it is you, James, it's Candy!" I said excitedly after having bumped into our twenty one year old sister.

"Robert, James, Darla, Summer, man am I ever glad to see somebody that I know here in this madhouse of freaks." Candy asked with tears in her eyes. I pulled out my handkerchief and passed it to her. "Thanks, where the fu . . . oh, I mean where the hell are we, and are you guys dressed up for a party or something?"

"Sis, where have you been hiding?" I asked, as she stood there wiping her eyes.

"Hiding, yeah, I've been in hiding alright." Candy answered, as she passed my handkerchief back to me. "This place scares the sh . . . sorry, hell out of me."

"No sis, you keep it, I'll get another one, and tell me something?" I asked.

"What do you want to know." she replied as she stood there with us.

"You mean to tell us that you've been in hiding all this time and have no idea where you are?" I asked.

"Yeah, I've been in hiding, and no, I don't know where the fu . . . hell I am, so tell me, if it's not going to be too hard to believe." she answered and I grabbed her by the shoulders.

Come along with us, because if Patricia's awake then she'll want to know too." I told her as I let go. Let's be moving a little quicker I've got to find Eric and Amberle before their bedtime."

Finally, after locating Eric and Amberle, we made it to the med bay area and all of us stood just outside Patricia's room in the corridor.

"Yeoman, stay out here until I call for you, I'm not sure as to what kind of reaction Patricia would have at seeing you with us at this time." I ordered before entering my wife's room with James, Darla, Summer, Eric, Amberle, and Candice.

"Hi honey, how are---

"Robert, where am I?" she asked right off the bat. "And why are you, Jim, Darla, and the children, all dressed the same, except for Candice?"

"I'm just a party pooper." Candice said as she walked past the foot of Patricia's bed and dropped herself into a chair while Eric and Amberle found places to sit on both sides of their mother's bed.

"How are you feeling?" I asked as I bent over to brush a loose hair from her face with my right hand. Patricia's green eyes darted about the room, gazing at each one of us before she spoke again.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"I ... I ... I guess I'm feeling okay, just a little disoriented, that's all." she replied as she gazed up at me. "Wow, what a crazy amusement park ride the children and I were---

"Mommy, we're on a space ship." Eric said as he laid his head on his mothers left arm.

"Yeah mommy, a real spaceship." Amberle added.

"Robert, where . . . are . . . We?" Patricia asked nervously as her heart went racing.

"We're all here with you Pat." Darla said, as she sat down on the bed and took Patricia's right hand in hers.

"Where's here at, Robert Andrew?" she asked, really wanting a truthful answer from me and James decided to give it to her.

"Well, it's not the hospital." Jim answered for me. "At least not the one back home on Earth anyway."

"Not . . . on . . . Earth, Robert Edward Lee Andrew Jackson, where are we?" she asked having used my full birth given name, letting me know that I was in a heap of trouble.

"Patricia, we are on a real space ship in the orbit of Earth under clo---

"For real Robert, you and my brother Donald need to grow up." she said as she managed to sit up straight in bed.

"Has anyone here informed you as to where you're---

"No, and I'm scared." she answered.

"You're not the only one that's scared, Patricia." Candy replied as she stood up from her seat and began pacing the floor.

"Have you seen any non human looking doctors or nurses since you've been here?" James asked as he placed his right hand on my left shoulder. "Like they're all dressed up for Halloween or a costume par---

"No, I haven't, just Doctor Henderson as usual." Patricia answered as I sat down on the edge of her bed.

"She's scary enough." James Jackson said as a monitor, on the wall and up over the patient's head in the next bed over, began making a chirping noise .

## Chapter 7

\* Seven \*

Robert Jackson stirred from his dream state as he sat in his overstuffed chair while watching television on a nice and quiet Wednesday evening in Milwaukee Wisconsin on the twenty sixth day of March in the year two thousand and three. A video communications system that had been installed into the wall of his living room was chirping and had the noise awaken him. It was the first time that it had audibly chirped in thirteen years. He shut the television off with the remote and arose up and out of his chair to walk over and sit down the desk that sat below the chirping unit. He then activated the vid-com screen above him. Sleep, if not the dreams, would evade him one more time.

"Jackson here." he said yawning, as a visual of his long time friend, Donald April appeared on the viewer.

"Jay, I really do hate to bother you this evening, but as you can see I'm back aboard the Orion, in the orbit of Mars." April informed him.

"Alright Donald, I can see that." Jackson said, yawning again. "Why are you there?"

"A very old friend of ours has decided to repay us a visit. A Zaleen battle cruiser destroyer has crossed the Uorexuan-Zaleen neutral zone and is en-route to the Glammadren star system." April answered.

"There should be enough ships in the fleet to take care of things and make it change its course. I'm watching---

"Jay, it's Valakadria Tawn's flag ship, the Kalaketvia Tawn." April said, cutting Jackson off before he could finish.

"Okay. What does she want other than to make a social call after all these years?" Jackson asked.

"Well Jay, for starters, Empress Kalaketvia has just recently passed away. And secondly and most importantly, there has been a shift in power, if you catch my drift." April replied, as Jackson watched Donald's eyebrows raise.

"What's Valakadria's reason for not wanting to meet with us in Martian orbit?" Jackson asked as he reached over to grab a cup of hot steaming coffee that he had just poured.

"There ah ... wasn't one, Jay." April answered.

"Donald, can't you handle this problem? There's a real good television show on right now."

"We, and that includes you Jay, have got to go meet with her in the orbit of the planet Glammadren, Captain sir." April replied as his face loomed larger on the viewer.

"I would rather that she was en-route to Mars, Commander!" Jackson said, heatedly.

"Get yourself ready for immediate transport, First Officer April out." he said, and seconds later the screen turned pitch black.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"What a minute!" Jackson thundered. "Shit! Damned it Donald!" he yelled as he stood and nearly spilled coffee on himself, while the deafening noise of the engines on his transport shuttle rattled and broke windows throughout the house and caused lamps to slide off of tables and books to shake from shelves, along with everything else that wasn't glued or nailed down. The thirty foot long silver gray and lavender shuttle craft was attempting to land in his driveway, it's forward floods filled his living room with their ultra bright blinding light. When Jackson saw the first of these shuttles seventeen years ago they reminded him of a lava lamp turned on its side with lava lamp engine nacelles.

"Well there goes my house, the neighborhood, and my sleep." he said to himself as he headed for the front door while covering his eyes

"Kill those damn lights!" he yelled. "And the pilot too!"

Dogs barked from one neighborhood to the other and cats meowed and hissed as they ran for cover anywhere that they were able to find it, along with a few of their owners as well.

"Son of a bitch, Jackson!" yelled one of his next door neighbors. "Why can't you go to the airport like the rest of us?"

"What the Sam hell is that thing that just landed in your driveway?" yelled another.

"Somebody is paying for these broken windows!" yelled yet another one of his neighbors.

"Your windows any better than mine!" Robert Jackson yelled back. "Like yours was the only damn---

"Hurry up Bro, before they call the Air Force on us! We don't have all night you know!" yelled the voice of David Jackson as he motioned for his older and practically blinded brother to hurry up and board the shuttle, while at the same time a police car tore down the street and squealed to a stop in front of his house.

"Gotta go officer. I'll explain later!" Jackson yelled as the officer and her passenger got out of the still running car and made haste up the driveway and onto the shuttles ramp.

"Not without us your not!" Amber Jackson yelled as she and her brother Eric raced to enter the shuttle before David closed the hatches to deaden the sound of the noisy engines.

"Sis, shouldn't you have at least killed the motor on the patrol car?" Eric yelled as he picked out their seats.

"Backup can take care of it!" Amber yelled as she dropped down into the vacant seat beside her brother. "There goes my career with the Milwaukee police."

"Come on every body, take your seats, so we can get under way!" yelled Steven Davis, from the front of the shuttle.

"Alright, we can all stop yelling at one another!" Robert Jackson yelled as he dropped into a seat across from his children.

"Are you sober this time Steve?" Candice Jackson Simmons asked as they all began buckling up.

"He had better be. I'm not going into space with a drunken shuttle pilot." Amber Jackson said as she tried to strap herself in.



## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Amber, we'll throw him in the brig if he's been drinking." her father told her as the shuttle lifted off and away from the not so nice and quiet neighborhood. "I should throw him in the brig any way for wrecking my house."

"If we should just happen by chance to make it that far." David Jackson said, having put in his two cents worth.

"For your information, I haven't been drinking," Davis told them.

"However after tonight, that's liable to change. But for now, you'll all make it to the mama ship safe and sound." he said as he gently nudged the shuttle forward and upwards into the evening sky while Amber desperately struggled to strap herself in.

"Hello to the Jackson family." Jim Jackson said as he leaned back in his seat.

"Donald was able to reach us us on our vid-com systems, Dad." Eric Jackson said as he gazed over at his father.

"The whole cotton picking crew was contacted by our illustrious Commander April!" David Jackson stormed aloud from his seat behind Robert's.

"I'm one of those that didn't want to make this---

"The Consortium went through the trouble of locating the entire ships complement from all over the Earth, and every one of us are on our way to the Orion, like it or not." Davis cut in to inform us.

"Why couldn't Davadra and Donald go meet Valakadria and call it a day?" Robert Jackson asked.

"I'm just a lowly helmsman and shuttle pilot, how the heck should I know." Davis said as the shuttle made its quick departure for Earth orbit. "You're an agent for the government, so, you tell me?"

"The United States Government, Davis." Jackson replied. "Not the United Galactic Consortium of---

"Yeah, yeah, yeah, can it you two!" Candice Simmons yelled from her seat.

"Will somebody help me buckle my seat belts, pleeeeeeease!" Amber screamed.

"Holy crap!" David uttered nervously, as he watched his niece struggle with her harness from across the aisle.

"Will she be ready to make the trip to Glammadren?" Robert Jackson asked as he watched, unable to help Amber with her straps because everyone was pinned back into their seats by the tremendous g-forces as the shuttle accelerated into space.

"She can't even get secured in her seat," David Jackson thundered. "How the hell can she be ready---

"Oh she's ready alright, Captain," Davis informed every one as within minutes the g-forces slowly began subsiding. "The Consortium has overseen the Orion's refit in Martian orbit from start to finish." he added.

"They won't like turning the reigns back over to---

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"They don't have to turn anything back over to us if they don't want to David." Jackson said, cutting his brother off as the shuttle's view port and starboard windows began opening after they had made it safely into orbit.

"Davis, I know that this shuttle has stabilizers, artificial gravity and all that!" he blasted as he hurriedly unstrapped and darted across the aisle in order to help his niece with her safety harness.

"Course set and locked in for planet Mars." Steven Davis said, paying David Jackson little if no attention at all as he made preparations to leave Earth orbit.

Other shuttles took off from different countries on the planet's surface, making their ascent into Earth orbit, following the captain's personal shuttle now on its way to the Orion.

"Activating phase drive." Davis said and the shuttle began accelerating in speed, leaving their home world behind them.

"I'm not exactly sure as to how we're going to successfully, and once again, explained to the rest of humanity, about this mass exodus off the planet." Robert Jackson said, breathing a little easier now that his daughter was securely strapped in. "Everyone's going to be teed off like they were seventeen years ago when this happened." he stated.

"Like I am right now!" James Jackson thundered. "Davis, either you, or April, is going to pay for all the damages done to my---

"A lot of people, including myself, are teed off for having been dragged back up here after thirteen years of shore leave." David Jackson said, now strapping himself back in just in time as we watched the view port and starboard windows close.

"--- house." Jim Jackson finished saying.

"He wreak yours too?" his brother Robert asked.

"I know I'm teed." Darla Jackson said from her seat next to her husband Jim.

"Yes, he did." Jim Jackson answered.

"I'm teed too." Summer Dawn echoed.

"They had better have some Delindrian coffee waiting for me when I get there, or I'm gonna be teed off at somebody big time." said Candy Simmons, Robert's, David's, and Jim Jackson's baby sister.

"I don't know about the rest of you but I think I've wet my pants." Amber Jackson said as they whisked pass the moon.

"Going to phase zero point six. Phase zero point seven. Phase zero point eight. Phase zero point nine. Phase one. Phase one point one. Phase one point two. Phase one point three. Phase one point---

"Has it been thirteen years?" Robert Jackson asked.

"Just get us the hell to Mars, Stepheus! And count to yourself, will you! I for one don't want to know how fast we're going!" David Jackson yelled to the front of the shuttle. "And yes dear brother, for your information, it's

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

been thirteen years." he added.

"Phase one point five." Steve finished the count aloud anyway.

"I'd say that we're going pretty fast. Wouldn't you say so, Mister Davy Crockett Jackson?" Steve asked aloud.

"If you weren't flying this heap, I'd be thumping your head, just as fast as we're going, too!" David yelled back. "You house wrecker!"

"That ought to about do it. Killing phase drive on behalf of David Jackson!" Steve yelled back as he took us out of phase drive.

"You just wait!" David replied.

"Alright you two!" Candy yelled at the top of her lungs. "Settle it! And I mean right now!"

"Some things will never change." Jim Jackson said as Darla and Summer both agreed while they waited for the red planet to appear out the view port windows once they had reopened.

"Just a slight course correction and we should be seeing Mars at about any time." Steven said as the shuttle's speed continued to decelerate.

"This is Lieutenant Steven Davis, aboard the captain's shuttle, Patricia Gayle. Orion, do you acknowledge, over?" Davis asked, turning in his seat to face Robert Jackson who had a stunned look on his face from the mention of his late wife, Patricia's name.

"They've renamed a few of the shuttles after our deceased loved ones and crew mates, as a memorial to them." He told us as we sat there in our moment of silence.

"Patricia Gayle, this is Commander April aboard the Orion. The captain's shuttle can dock when ready." said the voice of Donald April over the vid-com system.

"Steve, do you think that you can safely dock this shuttle without crashing us into one of the engine nacelles and killing us?" David asked as the Orion appeared in the orbit of Mars.

"Just like riding a bicycle," Steve answered as we neared the mother ship. "You never forget."

True to Steve's word, the United Galactic Consortium of Inhabited Worlds had made some major improvements to the outside of the three mile long ship from bow to stern as she rotated in her titanium steel girdered dry dock that their shuttle slipped easily enough through. There were no port or starboard sides of the ship because for the most part, the Orion was cylindrical. An aft and forward gangway tunnel connected the Orion to the four-mile long bay via the Orion's central core air lock entry ports.

The Patricia Gayle along with many other shuttles slowed to match the speed of the Orion's rotation and looked as if they seemed to hover magically over their oval shaped docking bay doors, all along the three mile long star ship's hull, between the twelve engine nacelle view deck pylons. Steve then rolled his shuttle over, or turned it upside down, and the huge solar paneled covered oval door slowly opened above them.

Shuttles from everywhere on the planet Earth now hovered over and under their individual docking bay doors all about the Orion's outer hull, and were either rolling over or turning upside down so that their bay doors were above them before being pulled up and into the ship.

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Steven Davis held their shuttle steadily in place until a grappler arm attached itself to the top of their small craft and pulled it upwards and into the first of two air locks.

During this moment in time Davis began his shut down procedures.

The outer doors slowly closed and they continued upward into the second air lock. They hung suspended inside the lock until the middle set of doors slid shut beneath them before they ascended to the main shuttle deck.

While still hanging suspended, the last set of doors slid shut beneath their shuttle before the re-tractor arm settled them gently down onto the door itself, which then doubled as the deck flooring beneath their feet.

Unstrapping, David hurriedly opened the hatches while the others unstrapped from their seats and made their way down the shuttle's ramp. He waited up for Steven Davis so that he could thump his head.

Robert Jackson walked slowly down the ramp to stand alongside his family members and friends that had gathered about in the docking bay as they departed the shuttle. His eyes riveted on three people that stood at about six or so feet in front of the ramp that he had just stepped off of as other shuttles began settling down in the bays that were forward, aft and on either side of their own.

Davrina Adriakar who slightly favored Catherine Zeta Jones stood to the left side of the person in the middle and Sathrana Celane who slightly favored Sandra Bullock stood to the right side of the person in the middle who slightly favored Jane Seymour. It was the person in the middle, now handing him a language aid translator that he inserted into his left ear, who would speak with him first.

"Well, this had better be good," Robert Jackson said as his eyes gazed around the shuttle bay for the first time in thirteen years. "Now that everyone on Earth has been thrown into a worldwide panic, again." he said as the others came to semi attention.

## Chapter 8

\* Eight \*

"Permission to come aboard granted, Captain." said the one in the middle.

"The earpiece must be working, Davadra," Jackson informed her. "Or is it Admiral Adriakar now?" he asked stepping forward to take her right hand in greeting.

"Not entirely," she said whispering her answer into his ear so that only he would hear. "Welcome back aboard the Orion." Adriakar said as he shook her right hand. She stood there, along with her crew mates and friends, awaiting conformation from the bridge that all the shuttles had arrived safely aboard, before she would give her welcoming speech. As soon as she received the conformation and was completely satisfied that everyone had been given a language translator, she would begin.

"Davadra, Donald told me that Kalaketvia has died and that Valakadria wants to meet with us in the orbit of Glammadren, rather than Mars." Jackson told her as they all gathered together on the shuttle deck.

"Yes," Davadra answered. "But who ever spoke for her gave us no bonafide reason as to why, at that particular rendezvous point. And feeling that something just isn't right about the situation, I've recalled the Orion's entire crew complement back from Earth." She said as conformation from the bridge came through over her vid-com watch.

"You think that she's going to give us trouble or something?" Jackson asked.

"Anything's possible at this point in time." was all that Davadra replied before she walked over to the podium that had been erected for their arrival and stepped up to activate the vid-com system so that she could begin her welcome aboard speech.

"I want to welcome everyone aboard the Consortium star ship Orion." she began while looking over the vast crowd of newcomers.

"Not all of you have been here before, and this marks your first trip in to space. There arises no need to fear the other extraterrestrial members of the crew aboard this vessel. You will all be led from here to your quarters by a personally appointed counselor that will be your guide and informer for the rest of your stay aboard the Orion. May it be a much shorter stay, this time around. None of you, and I may and will repeat myself," she said.

"None of you will be granted or given any liberties or freedom to traverse this vessel until you have been fully educated on your duties and responsibilities for which you have been brought aboard." she told the ones that stood before her and that heard her from shuttle bays all over the ship via the vid-com system as each word was being translated into their own language.

"For those of you that have been here before and have traveled in space, your quarters are as you left them thirteen of your earthen years ago. You also shall be assigned a personal counselor that will be your guide and informer for the rest of your stay aboard the Orion. All of you will be granted and given liberties and the freedom to traverse this ship as you have been brought up to date on your new duties and responsibilities for which you have been brought aboard," she continued to speak as they all listened.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Before any of you leave the docking bay areas you will all pass by the entrance portals to receive a language aid translator calibration if necessary, a transcribe, and a video communications chronograph. Upon entry your personal counselor will be awaiting to take you to your quarters. No visitations until you are further ordered. And once again, welcome aboard the star ship Orion." the admiral informed them all before she deactivated the vid-com unit and stepped down and off of the podium.

"Captain, shall we?" she asked as she motioned for Robert Jackson to follow, before she turned and headed for the Orion's version of a customs checkpoint desk.

"Yo, Admiral Driakar. What about the rest of us?" David Jackson asked as he made his way across the deck, carrying his hearing aid translator in his right hand.

"Captain Jackson, after, and not one minute before, I find that your brother has inserted his translator, I will then speak with him," the admiral sighed as she turned back around.

"Tell Commander Jackson to insert his translator, get his transcribe, and vid-com watch, and I pray that the creator will be with his personal counselor," Davadra Adriakar told the elder Jackson.

"Please have him go with him or her to his quarters and hopefully they will remain there until further notice. I know that he doesn't understand me, Captain." she said pleading with Robert Jackson while slightly dipping her head and raising her eyebrows at David.

"Why, I understand you completely, Admiral Driakar," David Jackson answered. "I've learned to speak enough Delindrian gibberish to get me by." he told her to Robert's surprise and her own as he finally placed the translator in his left ear.

"That's ... that's good," Davadra replied. "I was ah ... hoping that ... you ah ... may have matured somewhat ah ... since your last tour of duty among us." she said at a loss for words before turning back around to face his brother Robert with a stunned look upon her face.

"Good Lord David!" Candy Simmons stormed. "Try not to tick her off again, like you did seventeen years ago." his sister said as she and her children followed behind David and Tiffany.

"Yes. Try and mind your manners for a change, David." Darla Jackson told him as her husband Jim stood there on the shuttle deck laughing while Steven Davis gently massaged the bump on his head.

"Captain, shall we, again?" she asked once more as he turned to get one more look at the shuttle that bore Patricia's name.

"I sure could go for a good strong cup of Delindrian coffee right now." Candy said before yawning, as she stood in line with the others.

"After you Admiral." Robert answered, turning back to face Davadra, as she led the way with her sister Davrina while Sathrana Celane followed close behind.

"We'll see you around a while later Dad," Amber Jackson told her father, having noticed that he had been gazing at the shuttle as well as Eric and herself. "I've got to get out of these wet pants." she added as she, Eric, and Summer Dawn now stood in one of the many lines that had started up ahead of them so that they could receive their things.

"Yeah, later Dad." Eric said as he waved them on.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"See ya, Uncle Robert." Summer said as they all watched him wave back before he began following Davadra, Davrina and Sathrana.

"Yeah, see you Uncle Robert." Candy's children all said in unison.

After Davrina Adriakar had passed him his transcribe and vid-com watch, Robert Jackson strapped the watch to his left wrist and tucked the transcribe under his left arm before continuing to follow the admiral, her sister, and the captain through a set of oval shaped air lock doors and into one of the many corridors on the ship. He continued onward without uttering so much as a single word. A series of corridors and turbo shaft elevators later, they rode a mono tram into the Round Forest Sciences Section and descended one of the vine covered tram towers to the grassy forest floor, still without uttering a single word. Walking down a familiar rock inlaid pathway lined with trees, shrubbery and flowers, they strolled across a vine covered arch bridge and up onto the vine covered veranda of the galley that sat over Round River where the four of them seated themselves at a round table. The admiral sat with both arms on the table holding her chin with both hands and gazed across at Robert Jackson while both Davrina and Sathrana copied her.

"He'll never change." the admiral finally said, not releasing her chin.

"He's still the same as far as I can remember." Davrina Adriakar added as she looked over at Jackson without any show of emotion.

"Beyond the shadow of a doubt." Sathrana Celane inputed, also showing no emotion.

"Okay. I know that the three of you didn't bring me all the way out to the orbit of Mars just to talk about my brother David." Robert Jackson told them as he slammed his transcribe down on the table with his right hand.

The three of them then broke into laughter loud enough for everyone in Round Forest to hear while Robert sat there shaking his head in disbelief. Soon, though however, the laughter abated and Davadra Adriakar became a little more civil, as did her sister, and Sathrana.

"No, we didn't bring you all the way out here to talk about David Jackson," Davadra Adriakar replied. "We haven't seen or heard anything out of you for the past thirteen years." she told him as they sat there.

"Nor I, any of you." Jackson told them. "Except for the dreams."

"Well, we haven't always stayed within the confines of your solar system, seeing as how your world isn't as advanced as ---" Davrina Adriakar added and stopped herself short, seeing the look that Robert was giving her. "Dreams you say?"

"Yes, each and every night, over and over since the day that I returned to---

"Anyway, my sister has become the newly elected president of the United Galactic Consortium of Inhabited Worlds, and can not always be at just anyone in particular's beck and call." she said, knowing that Robert sat there for a moment, not quiet being able to get over just how much she favored his beloved late wife Patricia.

"By anyone in particular, I suppose that that would be me," Jackson said as his gaze was redirected over at Davadra Adriakar.

"Davadra, out on the shuttle deck, you whispered in my ear that you're not entirely an admiral. Is it because of your being elected to president of the Consortium?" he asked changing the subject.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"For your ears only Robert," Davadra replied. "Present company included of course, I am not an admiral, as we have led others to believe. And, yes to your question, but, I don't want the crew to know about it at this time."

"With Admiral Mazanurra on ice, who's left to lead us then?" he asked as he looked out over Round River.

"That's one of the reasons why you are here, Admiral Jackson." she answered him, watching as he nearly fell out of his chair.

"Now wait just a ... damned minute!" Jackson thundered as he steadied himself.

"Hi-jacking me to the captaincy of this ship seventeen years ago hurled the comet clear out of the solar system. I'll be the first to tell you, right here, and right now, that this sends the comet clear out of the galaxy. I will not accept a grade promotion to the rank of the admiral of the galactic fleet!" Robert Jackson fired away at the three of them as they listened to him.

"I played the part of your galactic hero for four years and what happened?" he paused for a few seconds before answering for himself. "It killed me deep down inside, Davadra, when that damned Dorkonian father of yours, killed my wife and . . . I wish that I would have died, right along with her!"

"Robert, no one else is as qualified for the position as are you." Davadra told him.

"Bull shit, I haven't seen nor have I logged active duty aboard the Orion in the past thirteen years!" Jackson uttered aloud, and the three females just shrugged their shoulders to acknowledge that they didn't understand the remark that he had made in anger.

"Slorpan Sliver shavrida!" he said, nodding his head yes, hoping that they understood this time.

"That's gross." Davrina said, almost gagging.

"I decline the promotion, and that ... as they say ... is that. No more discussion on the matter." he told them as he made ready to leave for his quarters in a huff.

"And what is your other reason for not accepting promotion?" Davadra asked, awaiting his answer.

"Well, to be honestly truthful with you," Jackson replied before he went on. "The other reason is because of Valakadria Tawn's present situation. What makes you think that I'm going to be able to find out any more about her than you yourself? he asked raising his voice an octave or two.

"And oh yes, Davrina, you can now lead me to my quarters, Counselor Adriakar." Jackson finally ended as he arose up and out of his chair.

"How did you know that I was assigned to be your personal counselor?" Davrina asked as she too arose up from her chair while Sathrana and Davadra remained seated.

"I just took a calculated guess that you were." Jackson answered Davrina while he was turning to leave.

"Captain, Counselor, sit back down, and that's an order!" Davadra said a bit forcefully and watched as the two of them quickly retook their seats.



## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"As I told everyone earlier, and that includes you, Captain Jackson, you will be granted and given the liberties and freedom to traverse this ship as you have been brought up to date on your duties and your responsibilities for which you have been brought aboard." she bellowed, while watching the captain tap on his hearing aid translator.

"You are refusing to cooperate with us." she further informed him as the four of them sat there together.

"Robert, I may not be your commanding officer any longer, and that's because no one has yet to fill that position, but I am the president of the Consortium, and---

"Davadra, I sat back down, didn't I?" Jackson asked, having interrupted her.

"Yes you did." she answered sighing.

"You know Davadra," Jackson said as he sat there. I used to like you a little bit, but your starting to get under my---

"I think that he still does." Sathrana said all of the sudden as she had hoped to head off an oncoming fight between these two friends.

"Most definitely." Davrina added as Davadra sat there shaking her head and sighing heavily.

"Commander April to Admiral Adriakar," Donald April said as his voice emitted from Davadra's wrist unit.

Thank you, thank you, she thought to herself, very thankful for the interruption. "Yes Commander?" she replied instead.

"It seems as if we've brought a lot of hungry passengers aboard,' he told her. "The bridge has been receiving a lot of complaints from all over the ship, as well as threats of mutiny, Admiral." April said as everyone listened.

"Led by my sister no doubt." Robert Jackson said to himself.

Davadra raised her arm to within inches of her mouth and began speaking into her vid-com watch.

"This is Admiral Adriakar to all ship's counselors. The galleys will reopen in half an hour. At this time liberties and freedom to traverse the ship will be to the galleys only, Adriakar out," she said lowering her arm back to the table.

"Well, as long as we're already here, I may as well grab a late evening snack." Jackson said as the galley lights brightened inside. "Before you send me back home!"

"Captain, Valakadria is thought to have defected with almost a third of the Zaleen fleet on her side." Davadra said as she looked over at Robert.

"A third of the Zaleen fleet in the Glammadren system!" Jackson thundered, throwing his chair back and standing back up on his feet. "You sure as hell know how to ruin someone's appetite!"

"I did mention that they were on Valakadria's side, didn't I?" Davadra replied, noticing the evil squint of his eyes

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Why she could destroy and dominate our galaxy with a third of the Zaleen fleet!" Jackson boomed aloud.

"And Donald did say earlier that her mother had passed on." he said while rubbing his chin with his left hand.

"Hells bells!" he stormed. "Now that Valakadria Tawn is the queen bee, she could wipe us off the star charts."

"That's why I've requested that only her ship be allowed to rendezvous with us in the orbit of the planet Glammadren. This way we might get to the bottom of things." she told him.

"All it takes is but one Zaleen battle cruiser destroyer to ... well, destroy us, Madam President of the Consortium!" Jackson bellowed at Davadra Adriakar.

"And now, for the part that I know your still not going to like," she said rather than to bellow back at him.

"She's expecting the admiral of the galactic fleet to be there with us when we meet with her. Robert, I most assuredly do not believe that any one other than you will be able to find out what my half sister's intentions are at this point in time." Davadra said, having laid all of her cards on the table.

"Oh really now! " was all that Jackson replied at that moment.

"So, how does it feel to be the captain of the Orion, Sathrana?" he asked while crew members began filling Round Forest with their presence.

"Donald April referred to himself as the XO of this ship when he hailed Davadra from the bridge earlier, so the new CO has to be you." Robert added.

"You're right Admiral," Sathrana Celane replied. "I'm the captain of the Orion now, sir, and it's an honor to be in command of the Consortium flagship." she informed him, knowing that he hadn't, as of yet, accepted the promotion.

An admiral does have certain advantages that a captain doesn't. Jackson thought.

"Alright Davadra, as long as the Zaleens pose us a threat and not a minute longer, I'll accept the promotion. After that, another admiral with more experience will have to fill Kondulon Mazanurra's position, should I have to travel to the far ends of the galaxy and find him, she, or it, by myself." Robert stated the facts to them as he turned to enter the galley.

## Chapter 9

\* Nine \*

David Jackson walked down the stone inlaid pathways that led to Round Forest River Galley with his new woman, Tiffany. James Jackson and his wife Darla, along with their daughter, Summer Dawn, followed them. Amber and Eric Jackson followed close behind them. Candy Jackson Simmons followed after them with her children. Far behind them, there came someone that Robert Jackson hadn't expected, though however, the Consortium of Inhabited Worlds had called upon her as well. Rhea Warner walked along side Candy Simmons and was conversing with her, while she pointed to the flowers, shrubbery, trees, and one of the three mono trams, passing by overhead, their towers connecting to the central core way up above them. They all continued along the pathways to the vine covered bridge and galley, while Donald April tagged along behind them with Marsha, and her two sons, Andrew and Ben, who brought up the rear.

"Shall we take ourselves inside?" Robert asked, grabbing his transcribe and entering the galley to take a seat at the head of the officer's table.

A while later, after the galley had filled to capacity, Robert Jackson pressed a touch control pad on the tabletop activating the ship wide vid-com address system before he stood up.

"Silence every one." he said as his voice rang out all over the ship.

Davadra, Sathrana nor Davrina, had expected what was to come next.

"Welcome aboard the Consortium star ship Orion." he yawned and waited a few seconds before continuing.

"For those of you that are here for the first time, you are now, as we were then, bewildered, scared out of your wits, and ah, ticked off." he said with a grin on his face.

"But then again, so are our families, neighbors, friends, and co-workers back at home on Earth. Not to forget, the major authorities and world leaders as well." Jackson said, getting a few laughs from those that were here for the second time.

"Just be thankful that you have an appointed counselor with you now, as we did not have one then, that we knew of on our first voyage, until much later."

"As we have all now been informed, our liberties and the freedom to move to and fro on this star ship will be earned, or as they are granted, once we have been fully brought up to par, as to our duties, and or, our responsibilities, for which we have been brought aboard." he further explained.

"I hope, that I've recited our welcome aboard speech as correctly as it was given to us upon our arrival, just a short while ago." Jackson said as he stopped speaking long enough to take a drink of what he had hoped was water.

"Not bad." he said, licking his lips before continuing on.

"I also hope, that my sister Candice, got her coffee." he added, getting a laugh or two.

"Whatever we do, let's not lose our hearing aid language translators, or our video communications watches." he said, pointing to his left ear and his left wrist with his right index finger.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Also, let us remember to keep order here, and order will be kept, in an orderly fashion, because my brother, Commander David Jackson, will probably be seeing to that." Jackson said, as everyone halfway listened while placing their orders on the menu screens that arose from the tabletops in front of them.

"A Zaleen battle cruiser destroyer has just crossed the Uorexuan neutral zone and is en-route to the planet Glammadren as we prepare to journey there shortly ourselves." he explained while watching as every one's eyes finally gazed towards him.

"Its commander, Commodora Valakadria Tawn, along with a third or more of the Zaleen fleet, has led some, if not all of us, to believe that she may be defecting to the Consortium of Inhabited Worlds, to help us battle a newly arising Zaleen imperial government. It will be our mission to find out if this is true, or not, and take the appropriate actions from that point onward." Jackson said, having gained everyone's undivided attention.

"Just a short while ago, after having left our shuttles, we were greeted personally, and or visually, by Admiral Davadra Adriakar, Captain Sathrana Celane, and Counselor Davrina Adriakar. Having been informed that we should not take it upon ourselves, to seek out and explore any portion of this ship, unaided and uninformed, it is only right for those of you that are newcomers here, on your first space voyage, or tour of duty, to abide by those rules." he rambled on.

"And now, that I have everyone's undivided attention, I want to take it upon myself, as this ship's former captain, to inform you all, that after having met with the three aforementioned officers, I stand before my family and my friends, of the past voyages of the Orion, our present voyage, and if it should be, whatever future voyages we may, and or may not, share together, and do hereby, at this time, accept the vacated position, and grade promotion, to an admiral of the galactic fleet. However, though I shall only retain the admiralty of the fleet for as long as the Zaleens pose a threat to us, and to the free and inhabited worlds of the consortium." he told everyone that cared to hear, or to whoever was still listening, to his speech.

"Admiral of the galactic fleet!" David Jackson thundered as expectedly, as usual.

"David, Commodora Tawn is expecting the admiral of the galactic fleet to meet with her in the orbit of the planet Glammadren," Robert Jackson explained to his brother. "I now intend to, as an admiral, to know myself, beyond the shadow of any doubts whatsoever, whether or not the past thirteen years has changed Valakadria back into her old destructive, and domineering self."

"It might very well be, that she's coming to join forces with us, should the Zaleen empire decide to attack the consortium, or Earth." he told not only his brother, but the others gathered there as well.

"If you're going to replace Admiral Driakar over there, then who's going to be my commanding officer on this one way trip to hell?" David asked.

"Is it Donald April?" he inquired before Tiffany pulled him back down and into his chair.

"Not this time David." Donald informed him and David very quickly, stood back up.

"If not you, or my brother, or Admiral Driakar, then who?" David asked as Tiffany poked him hard in the leg to make him sit down, while everyone awaited the answer as well.

"Would you happen to know, Donald?" Robert Jackson asked before anyone else could ask, or even answer for that matter.

"I hadn't given it much thought until now," Donald answered as he scratched his head.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Heck, I'm just as much in the dark about this as everyone else." he said, a little teed off at not having been informed himself.

"You've been here far longer than the rest of us, and you don't even know yourself?" David Jackson uttered.

"Nope, I haven't been informed, one way or the other." April answered

"Will the real commanding officer of the Starship Orion, please stand up, and let his, or hers, or its, presence, be made known, in our dire time of need." Robert Jackson ordered, and as Sathrana Celane stood up, David Jackson passed out, and fell back down into his chair, while at the same time, Donald April, fell completely out of his.

"Now, I know I'm having a nightmare." Donald said as Marsha helped him to retake his seat and Tiffany took it upon herself to revive David.

"Yes, now we all know." Robert Jackson said as others who had paid close attention either laughed or cried, as food was being carried to their tables.

"Oh, and one last thing, before I sit down to order my meal," "Our now former admiral, Davadra Adriakar has been recently elected to the position of the president of the United Galactic Consortium of Inhabited Worlds." Jackson informed everyone as he turned to notice the icy stare coming from Davadra just before he sat back down to press the touch control pad that would stop the vid-com recording of his soon to be released transmission.

Most, if not all the passengers and crew, gave her a standing ovation which lasted for almost five earthen minutes before they retook their seats to eat their late evening meal. Jackson finally pressed the touch pad once more, to deactivate the com system.

"Admiral Jackson, I wanted the personal privilege of telling the crew, myself!" Davadra growled as she smacked him on the arm.

"In a way, it feels great to be back aboard the Orion, and in another way, it hurts to the core." he told everyone at Captain Sathrana Celane's table this time, while rubbing his sore arm.

"How soon before we get under way, Captain?" he asked, pressing the touch pad once again to raise the menu screen and order his food.

"Tomorrow morning, Admiral, after everyone's had sufficient rest." Captain Celane answered as Jackson looked across the table at Rhea Warner who held her chin in her right hand and gazed at Robert Andrew Jackson as if she had never met him before.

"Sathrana, she's your ship now." Jackson told her as he turned his gaze away from Rhea.

"I know Admiral, sir," Sathrana replied as she noticed how he had looked at Rhea.

"Your ship, and your crew," he began. "Take care of them both and they'll take care of you."

"If not, you'll be smacked on the arm, with or without a choice of which one." April said, gazing over at his friend.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"I'll try to do my very best, Admiral." she said as her eyes gazed about the table, at the faces she wanted to burn into her memory, for as long as she would live and serve with them.

"I'm hungry." Amber said as she looked at her father.

"Are we there yet?" Eric asked as he looked at his sister, putting everyone back in stitches with laughter.

"Valakadria, as others of us have a greater reason to believe, may still want to wipe us out of existence." Donald April said, voicing his opinion while at the same time noticing David Jackson giving him the thumbs up.

"You know," Jackson said, just to change the subject. "At first I declined the admiralty of the fleet, and very heatedly so. I thought that the mission of playing hero to the destroyed worlds had been completed. We've all experienced some very great . . . and painful . . . losses in our lives to the Zaleens. Some of us may recall, that a devastating virus, brought aboard the Orion, from her sister ship, the Daneka Amoria, about ended our last voyage. It all but took the lives of our Uorexuan and Zanarian crew mates."

"That's something that none of us will ever forget," Donald April said with a solemn look on his face.

"Until a cure can be found for them, they'll have to remain in suspended animation, on the ice planet Kristonia, for the rest of their lives." he added sadly, and more or less, to himself.

"I played Valakadria's hero, by saving her life, and thus, preventing her death. I think she owes me the same service in return for my mercy upon her." Jackson continued on, having heard clearly, what his best friend had said as their food arrived.

While eating, he gazed about the galley in all directions to see Alex Scott, Laura Andrews, Steven Davis, Tekorr Tharashaen, Bohemeah Javreen, Josette Sanchez, Khaba Satria, Lektan Tholari, Mardai Lumada and the countless others that were here, perhaps on their last voyage together. He thought back to the time that he went against his own better judgment to save the Zaleen princess, Valakadria Tawn. He had entered her littered cell where she lay naked in the filth. The only thing that had, for some unknown reason, managed to stay clean and shiny on the girl, was her golden neckband or birth collar. Valakadria was completely covered in the muck and the mire from head to toe. He remembered the stink that the ventilator mask was unable to filter out. She had cringed and hidden her face from him as he made his way into the corner of her cell where she lay drawn up into a tight ball on the cell floor. She cried weakly and was nothing but skin and bones from the lack of nourishment. They had broken her down both body, soul, and mind and he found out that she was unable to walk. They had degraded her to the point of eating the flesh of the dead Zaleen's thrown into her cell. Yes, he had saved her after she had him hunted down on his own ship, and having him shot in the back, taking six month's of his life away from him as he lay in a coma in med bay. And now, thirteen years later, the memory of his Uorexuan and Zanarian shipmates, left behind, perhaps forever, on the subfreezing and barren planet of solid ice, had come back to haunt him.

"You haven't heard a word that I've said, have you Dad?" Amber asked, very loudly this time, knowing that her father may have been thinking about her mother.

"No, I've been in deep thought for the past few minutes. I'm sorry, but I haven't been totally here with you." Jackson told his daughter as he rose up from his seat, yawning.

"I'm going to bed. It's getting late. We'll be leaving our solar system tomorrow. Pray that we're all prepared for what's to come." he told everyone before leaving the table.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Amber, follow me." Davrina said, getting up and excusing herself as well, making a grab for Robert Jackson's forgotten transcribe.

"You wouldn't mind if I tagged along too, would you?" Rhea Warner asked as she pushed back her chair.

"She can come, Davrina." Amber replied.

"Sure, why not." Davrina said as Amber and Rhea walked beside one another, yet lagging further behind the counselor as she sought to catch up with Robert Jackson.

"I'm going to let your counselors know that you're all with me." she said as she stopped for a moment beside a vine covered vid-com tower to send word to their counselors.

"Robert ... Admiral Jackson, wait up!" she yelled, almost out of breath, after having crossed the bridge at a run with Rea, Amber, and Eric, now hot on her heels.

"Davrina, Amber, Rhea, what is it that you want?" Jackson asked as they finally caught up with him while Eric stopped to tie a shoe lace that had loosened.

"Amber," Davrina said, as she handed the transcribe back to him. "Tell him."

"Tell me what, Amber?" her father asked as he stood there trying to shake the sleep from his head.

"What I wanted to know earlier, while you were further out there in deep space than we are right now is, are Eric and I going to get to spend any time with you while we're here? Or, is it going to be pretty much like it was seventeen years ago? I mean, we no longer have mom with us any more, and even though we're older we---

"Amber, as long as we're not in a meeting with the staff or in another war with the Zaleens, you, Eric, and I, can spend as much time together as you'd like." Jackson told his daughter as Eric walked up to meet them.

"And what about me?" Rhea asked as she stood there with them.

"You too. That is, if you want to." he told her, as he tucked the transcribe under his left arm.

"Listen up, I'm hoping that this trip to Glammadren will be short and sweet and that we don't have to battle with the Zaleens. I'm also hoping that when we are all able to return to Earth, we may also be able to continue on with our regular, and sometimes boring lives." Jackson said as everyone listened.

"Our exodus from Earth was anything but regular and boring." Eric Jackson said. "Getting chased in the police car was---

"What if it's not so short and sweet? What if we do just happen to go to war with the Zaleens? What if we can't return to Earth for any reason, whatever that reason might be?" Rhea asked, very much afraid but doing her best not to let it show as she interrupted Eric.

Robert Jackson stood there, thinking about his answer.

"Dad, answer her please." Amber said, awaiting his answer for herself as well.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"That's a lot of what it's to answer. We'll work this out together, somehow." he answered as he gazed passed Rhea Warner to give Eric and Amber an icy stare.

"Do you need me for anything right now?" Rhea asked point blank and it made Robert Jackson think once again before he answered.

"We need each other." he answered.

"Robert Jackson, do you need me to help you with Eric and Amber or not?" Rhea asked, somewhat irritated this time.

Robert Jackson hung his head as if he had just been defeated in a battle all ready.

"I would deeply appreciate your help, Rhea. And so would they." he answered as Rhea's daughters and her son crept slowly up behind her.

"Hello mom." they all said together, making her jump.

"Rhea, we all are here because of a need to be, rather than a want to be. And I need to be in bed and want to be asleep right now." Jackson told them all, but their attention had turned elsewhere for the moment.

"We've been looking all over for you, Mom." Sabrina said as she grabbed her mother by the left arm to keep her from falling while placing a video com watch on her wrist at the same time.

"I must have dropped it while running in the jungle." Rhea said as she let Sabrina help her fasten her watch band.

"Oh my, it's Sabrina Warner." Amber Jackson said before she passed out on the grassy round forest floor.

"She's a big fan of yours Sabrina." Robert told her as Davrina revived Amber.

"And big faller, or I mean follower too." Eric said as he laughed at his sister.

"I'm going to go find a bed and get some sleep," Robert said as he stepped into the mono tram elevator tower that stood nearby.

"I would suggest that the rest of you do the same." he told them as Davrina managed to squeeze in before the oval shaped doors slid shut leaving Eric, Amber, Rhea, and her family, outside.

"I'm your counselor, you know. I'm coming along too, Admiral." Davrina told him.

"You'll have to find your own bed, Davrina." Jackson told her as the elevator ascended to the top of the vine-covered tower.

"Very funny." she replied, glancing over to find Robert Jackson leaning against the elevator wall, asleep.

She too was very tired all of the sudden, and about fell into a trance like state. Memories of the past and the present came crashing together. Robert had lost Patricia a few years back on Delindria by the hands of her very own father. Robert had never pursued her sister Davadra after wards and neither she nor Davadra ever pressed the issue after Patricia's death. Davadra never told Robert Jackson as of yet about the daughter he had left behind. He would find out soon enough though about Valdara Adriakar Jackson.



## Chapter 10

\* Ten \*

Robert Jackson lay in his bed, safely inside his quarters and couldn't sleep.

"Issac, are you still online?" he asked into the air.

"Internal Ships Systems Analytical Computer is always online, Admiral Jackson." the ship's computer said in answer.

"Lets us see if all the old records are still in your memory banks," he said, sitting up in bed.

"Replay David Jackson, Jalep Adeez, first meeting, Security, on screen." he ordered as the video-com screen came to life on the far wall of his bed-chamber.

"Ah, Slorpan Sliver, I see that you've finally decided to report to me for your first training session!" thundered security chief, Commander Jalep Adeez, who sat behind his desk in the security unit.

"You may be my commanding officer, alien twerp, but you and I are gonna get one thing straight! David Jackson said as he leaned over the desk.

"I can whip the crap outta you any day of the week, month, or year, got that, carp face?" thundered David Jackson, as he shoved his finger into the alien's face, just as Davrina Adriakar walked into Robert Jackson's bed chamber and sat herself down in a chair to find out what Robert was watching on his vid-com.

"Earth man, you do show promise and have great potential. I'm going to mold you into a first rate security officer." said Jalep, now standing.

"Admiral, what are you watch---

"Hush, Counselor !" Jackson ordered.

" ... that my brother told me about this flying car ...

"Issac, replay that entire sentence from the start." he ordered into the air while giving Davrina the zip her lip signal.

"Look here piglet, Is everything that my brother told me about this flying carpet with it's Mickey Mouse crew and why you're all here, true?" David asked, shoving the commander back down in his seat as Davrina spun her chair around and stared weirdly at Robert Jackson, who placed his finger to his mouth and shook his head for her to remain quiet, before she turned back around.

"Your brother, I presume, is going to be the captain aboard this ship?" asked the alien security chief, standing once again.

"Yeah, the Wizard of Oz. What a joke on us all. Some ignorant alien fool critter off of his rocket made my brother a Starship captain!" David thundered once more.

"This---

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Freeze Issac," Robert ordered as Davrina wished to speak.

"Alright Davrina, go ahead and have at it." he said as she sat there grinning from ear to ear.

"This recording was made shortly before I was brought aboard the Orion and you were given command." she stated.

"No kidding Princess. Shall we continue." he said, pointing back at the screen as Davrina pivoted back around in her chair.

"Alright Issac, continue." he ordered.

"Anyway, ferret weasel, Is what he told me the truth?" he blurted out, slamming his fist on Adeez's desk.

"What did he tell you, Thrug Shalurtling?" asked the commander as Valdara Adriakar Jackson slowly opened the oval shaped closet door just enough to hear the vid-com more clearly.

"Looks like you're headed for another fight!" David thundered. "Call me a pig will you!"

"I found out what a Slorpan Slimer and a Thrug Sherbet was, you baboon!" David said, moving nearer to Jalep Adeez's desk.

"That's Sliver and Shalurtling, Earth ... man!" the security chief said

"Whatever, I don't like being referred to as a pig in a slop pen, creep!" David continued as he grabbed the commander and pinned him to the wall behind his chair.

"There's something that I don't like about you alien, and I'm gonna find out why I don't. I don't believe all the bull crap that I've heard or seen, so you had better be doing some serious talking if you value your life, peanut brain!" said David as he tightened his grip.

"Is .ard .o .alk .hen .ome .ody is .hoking ..u .o .eath." said the Perrinan as his face was deepening in color.

"Sounds alien to me, speak English." David told the poor creature as it hung suspended in his death grip.

Davrina and Robert watched on and Valdara listened as a club like weapon came crashing down quickly over David Jackson's head, felling him to the floor as he still clutched the Perrinan by its neck. The club should have knocked David unconscious, but David's head was thicker than the club, which shattered.

"That done did it, you've gone and made me mad. If you're gonna mess with the best, you're gonna have to suffer like the rest!" he told him just before the fight broke out.

David Jackson could hold his own in a hand to hand battle, or at least he could seventeen years ago.

"Security alert! Security alert!" said the voice on the screen. "Security to Security! We have a problem down here! Admiral Mazanurra, Captain Jackson, can you come down here to Security?" asked the voice.

"On our way." answered the admiral over the vid com in the security unit.

"Enough Issac." Jackson said as Davrina swiveled in her chair to face him and noticed at once that his oval shaped closet door was partially open and hadn't been before. She slowly rose from her chair and made her

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

way across the bed-chamber floor and yanked the door open.

"Valdara, what are you doing hiding in the admiral's closet? Get out of there this instant!" she ordered, and the girl stepped out into the light so that Robert could see who his intruder was. A miniature version of Davadra stood near the closet door while Davrina held her by the arm. No words uttered from her mouth nor had they for eight years.

"Davrina, bring her here to the side of the bed." he gestured with his right hand.

"The only place that Valdara's going is---

"To the side of my bed, and that's an order, Counselor!" he ordered.

"Yes sir, Admiral." Davrina said reluctantly as she led the child across the floor and to the side of Robert Jackson's bed.

"This girl is your niece, isn't she, Davrina?" Jackson asked.

"Yes sir, she is." Davrina answered as her eyes wandered about the room.

"This girl can belong to no one else aboard this ship than to Davadra Adriakar. Am I right in assuming that much?" he asked as he looked from Valdara to Davrina.

"Yes sir, you're right again." Davrina answered nervously this time.

"Davadra would have died if she hadn't been allowed to produce a child. I haven't forgotten this Davrina." he said as he placed his left hand on Valdara's right arm.

"Sit here on the side of the bed Valdara," he told her and she obeyed.

"You know who I am, don't you?" he asked as he looked into her blind eyes.

"She can't speak Admiral, nor can she see. She hasn't uttered a single word in the eight of her fifteen years. And she's been blind ---

"Valdara, you know who I am, don't you?" he asked once again, cutting Davrina short about the fact that his daughter had been blind since birth.

Valdara knew that this day would come, and she had prayed and hoped that it would, but she had to know beyond the shadow of a doubt. Oh yes, she knew who her father was but he had to acknowledge her.

"Valdara, I know who you are." he finally told her as he continued looking into her sightless eyes.

Yes, she thought to her inner self, perhaps the time was now.

"You, Valdara, are my daughter." he told her and she jumped slightly at his acknowledgment of the fact.

Yes, it was true and he had acknowledged it, she said to herself as she worked up the saliva to wet the inside of her dry mouth.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Yes, you're right for the third time, father." she said as Davrina Adriakar passed out on the floor in front of them.

"I thought she said that you couldn't talk." he said with a smile on his face.

"I am only blind, not dumb. I chose not to speak until after we met and you acknowledged me as your daughter." she said.

"Won't your mother be surprised." Jackson stated as he tossed her hair while thinking about just how dumb it was of her not to have spoken until now.

"Not if aunt Davrina awakens to tell her first." Valdara told him having known that her aunt had passed out.

"For now we'll leave her be," her father told her.

"She can wake up later, so how about going to the living unit for a bit so I can get dressed. After that, you and I will take a walk to the round forest science section together." Jackson told his newly found daughter.

"I'll be waiting, but are you going to just leave her lying on the floor?" she asked as she rose up from the bed.

"Looks like she's found her bed for the night," he answered as she slowly walked unaided, to the living unit.

A short time later, the both of them passed through an air lock that led into and out of the enormous, and round, forest sciences section. Jackson slowly led his daughter along a glow glob lit stone inlaid pathway, lined with a countless variety of shrubbery, flowers and trees. They soon came upon a vine covered ornate bridge that spanned this particular section of Round River. This was known as the midway point of Round Forest. Crossing over the bridge, Jackson found that Valdara's mother, and Captain Celane, were sitting out on a flower covered wrought iron wrap around veranda, connected to the galley that sat dead center of the river bridge itself. What a terrible thought that Valdara had never seen the beauty of the round forest sciences section of the three-mile long Starship, he had thought. The lighting that circumsferenced the outer hull of the central core, a half of a mile above their heads, had dimmed, and like a moon, it reflected off the water's surface below. Robert Jackson's head tipped back and he let his eyes gaze upwards, way beyond the central core, to where he could, but barely see, hundreds of treetops that pointed towards the core from his viewpoint on the bridge.

"Now to become as a beast in this forest." he said silently to himself before turning his eyes upon Davadra Adriakar.

"Davadra!" Jackson bellowed out her name, making Valdara jump again.

"I found this intruder in my quarters and I thought to bring her before Captain Celane and you, yourself. I should have had her tossed in the brig!" he said as he put on an act of being mad.

"Seeing as how I'm the admiral of the fleet, I could have just taken her there myself. However, though I thought that perhaps the two of you might know who she belongs to and why she was in my quarters." he added as he helped Valdara up the steps to stand in front of her mother, who lowered her head slowly into her hands.

"Perhaps I should call Security to handle this matter---

"Valdara!" her mother stormed heatedly.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Go on back to bed, Admiral, we can handle this situation." Sathrana said as she rose from her seat to take the now nervously shaken Valdara, by the hand.

"And just how will this situation be handled? Doesn't her parents know her whereabouts at this time of night? Shouldn't they keep a better watch over her? Don't they care about her welfare?" Robert Jackson roared his questions, ferociously so.

"One of them will, Admiral Jackson!" Davadra yelled as she took Valdara by the arm and led her to a seat in one of the nearby chairs.

"Both of them will, Davadra." Jackson voiced himself barely above a whisper while he stood there on the veranda steps.

"Wha ... what ... did you say?" she asked nervously, being thrown off her guard.

"Both of her parents will know where she's at all times. Both of her parents will keep a better watch over her, and both of her parents will care about her welfare." he answered her, having calmed the beast within himself.

"She only has one parent, Robert." Davadra informed him.

"Davadra." Robert Jackson said and waited a few moments before he continued.

"Valdara just so happens to be our daughter." he informed her as he trekked up three stair steps to cross the veranda and take Valdara by the hand, helping her up from her chair.

"It seems to me that Captain Celane and you, yourself, are in a discussion, so I'll take Valdara, and myself, else where. That is, if the two of you don't have any objections?" he asked.

"I'll be with you a while later mother." Valdara said as she was led by her father, over to, and down the steps, hand in hand.

"Yes, she'll be with you later, Davadra." Jackson said as both he and Valdara disappeared on the other side of the bridge while the dim light of the flowery vine covered glow glob posts and the moonlight of the core lit their way.

"He knows, Davadra." Sathrana said as she glanced over at her.

"She can talk." was all that Davadra uttered.

"She told him then." Sathrana said.

"Oh no," Davadra uttered.

"He knew. The moment that he laid his eyes on her, he knew. This was his way of letting me know that he knew. Calling Security and taking Valdara to the ... she can talk Sathrana." Davadra said as her eyes teared up.

"I know. I heard her speak too, Davadra." Sathrana replied.

A while later Robert Jackson toed Davrina gently in the side before helping her up from the carpeted floor and onto her feet.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Davrina, take Valdara to her mother so I may get some rest, if you would please." Jackson said as he fell on his bed and fell, just as fast, to sleep this time.

"Valdara, your mother is going to kill me." Davrina said as she took Valdara by the hand.

"Don't pass out on us again Aunt Davrina, alright?" she asked.

"All these years, and you pick right now of all times to speak." Davrina said as she led Valdara from the room.

"He knew, and he told me that I was his daughter. I didn't have to tell him, because he knew Aunt Davrina, he knew." Valdara told her aunt.

"And later this morning, so will everyone else." Davrina said nervously under her breath as they left Robert Jackson's quarters.

## Chapter 11

\* Eleven \*

Robert Jackson was sitting in his ready room reading the crew roster when a name arose from the transcribe unit and slapped him squarely in the face.

"Victoria Dawn Buckingham!" he said aloud from behind his desk.

"It can't be the Tori Buckingham that I know." he added as he looked up from the transcribe.

"Who?" Davrina asked from a couch along side the wall.

"A red headed friend of mine from back home, on Earth. Or at least she use to be." Jackson answered as Donald April came flying low through his oval shaped office door without an invitation.

"Jay, Admiral sir, there's a certain hot tempered, red headed female acquaintance of yours that just about ripped---

"Tori Buckingham!" Jackson boomed, as he flew up and out of his chair, interrupting his best friend at the same time.

"Yeah, that's right, Tori Bucking ... whatever," Donald April said as he stopped short, by the couch.

"She about tore Sathrana's head off when the two of them met." he continued on.

"She's peed off big time about being here. I stopped Sathrana short of throwing her in the brig. It wasn't easy. Man, can that girl ever fight. I told Sathrana that she and you were very close," Donald said as he fell onto the couch in a sweat beside Davrina.

"I was just thinking about ... just ... how ... close ... did you say?" Jackson asked very slowly.

"Crap, I've got to divert her here before she tangles with Davadra!" Robert Jackson thundered as he raised his left wrist to his mouth.

"Donald, you hail for her to report to my---

"I'll do it, sir," Davrina said as she raised her vid-com watch to her mouth, noticing that Donald April was nearly out of breath.

"Security, see to it that a Victoria Dawn Buckingham reports to the admiral's ready room immediately, Counselor Adriakar, out." Davrina ordered, before lowering her arm.

"Alright!" Jackson said in a panic. "Out with the both of you, and keep Davadra and Sathrana away from here!"

"I'm leaving it up to the both of you as to how you do it, and I don't care how, just ... get it ... done!" he rattled on as Donald quickly got up from the couch.

"You don't have to tell me twice. Come on Davrina, we've got some serious work to do, and fast." Donald April said as he grabbed Davrina Adriakar by the arm and led her out of Robert's office.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

Jackson lowered the lights to near darkness then swung around in his chair, now facing an alien painting on the wall that he could barely see, and awaited her arrival, which didn't take long.

"Admiral, it, or I meant to say, she's here." said Lieutenant Commander, Lektan Tholari as he stood in the oval shaped doorway.

"Send her in and see to it that no one bothers us until further notice, and I do mean ... no one." Jackson ordered as Tholari left to escort her to Jackson's ready room.

Tori Buckingham marched herself right into his office and stopped very quickly, just inside the doorway.

"What the hell is this?" she asked as she let her eyes adjust to the dark.

"Have a seat, or stand, your choice." Jackson said, barely above a whisper.

"I think that I'll ... stay right here ... where I'm at, thank you." Tori said, a little nervously.

"Have it your way." Jackson said, continuing to speak at just above a whisper.

If not for the fact that Tori had crashed out because she was on a weekend drunk when she arrived on the Orion, well, Jackson would have been her's for the killing yesterday evening. He would not have seen a morning after. The rest of the crew would not be advised as to who was who, and what was what, until around eleven o'clock today. It was only a few minutes after nine a.m..

"You requested to see me?" she asked as he smiled and thought to himself. Good, or bad, she doesn't know yet.

"Yes, I did." he said.

"You started a fight with the captain of this ship, and that's your first, if not your biggest mistake. I'm really surprised that you're not in the brig and facing court martial." he informed her, still above a whisper.

"In all actuality, we were stopped short and ... ship, did I hear you say sh---

"She let you go?" he asked, interrupting her.

"It wasn't as easy as that. This officer stopped us and I had no idea who in the hell they both were, or where in the---

"If not for Commander April, you would be in the brig. If not for me intercepting a run in with Davadra Adriakar, you'd most likely be taken directly to the brig, no questions asked." he told her, having interrupted her once more.

"I can't even get on a drunk without being dragged off some---. Where ... in the hell ... am I?" she asked cutting her own self short as her knees began shaking.

"Where do you think you are?" Jackson asked, still yet, above a whisper.

"I remember being thrown into this big ass taxi," Buckingham began. "The next thing that I remember is waking up in this strange looking bed."



## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"I then find myself in this outrageously huge motel corridor where it looks as if this Halloween party is going on. Then I think to myself, it's nowhere near friggin October." she continued on with her story.

"Buckingham, you have no idea at all where you are, do you?" he asked as he shook his head in disbelief.

"Not ... really. " She said as she collapsed, while shaking nervously, upon the couch by the wall.

"Issac, lights slowly to full." Robert Jackson said in his normal tone of voice as he swung back around to face Victoria Dawn Buckingham.

"You son of a bitch!" she stormed heatedly.

"Admiral my ass!" she blasted, as Robert stood up in his full dress uniform. Though however and at this point in time, it made no difference to her at all.

"Scare the hell out of me why don't you, Robert Andrew Jackson!" she yelled.

"Not yet," Jackson replied. "That's coming shortly."

"That is, if you're still sober after today, Tori." he said as he came out from behind his desk, which was his fatal mistake. Tori rose from the couch to walk over and slap him as about as hard as he had ever been slapped before in his life.

"I deserved that." he told her calmly, but red faced, as he ran his fingers lightly over his throbbing left cheek.

"Damned you, Robert Jackson, take me home, now!" she thundered out of control, in his face.

"It's not going to be as easy as you might---

"Don't make me slap you again, Robert. You're going to take me home or else!" she thundered once again, interrupting him as he raised his wrist unit to his mouth.

"Admiral Jackson to the Bridge," he said into his vid-com watch.

"Captain Celane here, Admiral." said her voice as Robert witnessed the look on his hot tempered, red headed female acquaintance.

"I have a certain acquaintance of mine in my ready room at this time," he began.

"She has put in a rather forceful request to be returned to her home, immediately." Jackson informed the captain.

"Admiral, may I speak candidly and freely, sir?" Sathrana said over his wrist unit as Tori stood there, unable to believe any of this, as she listened in.

"What's on your mind, Captain?" Jackson asked as he glanced over at Tori while she continued to stand there with both hands on her hips, waiting impatiently.

"I mean no disrespect to you personally sir," the captain said, from the safety of her seat on the bridge.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"If I were you, which I'm not, I would send your friend out the nearest airlock and fry her ... aft engines at maximum phase." Sathrana said very freely.

"Captain, my office, nowww!" he ordered, growling like a lion.

"On my way ... sir." she said as Jackson slowly lowered his arm.

"What's going on Robert, and just where in the hell, am I?" Tori asked as she stepped a few paces back to bump into Sathrana Celane as she came running through his ready room doorway.

Sathrana gave Tori a shove that about knocked her to the carpeted floor. Tori miraculously regained her balance and made way to swing her right fist into Sathrana's face.

"Tori, Sathrana, have a seat !" Robert Jackson belted out the order, and both Tori and Sathrana quickly did as he demanded while he bolted around his desk to activate the ship wide vid-com link.

"Listen up everyone." he said as he took a seat.

"For those of you that were unable to attend yesterday evenings social gathering in the round forest sciences section, today just might not be your day. Perhaps you flew into a rage and are spending some quiet time in our brig for assaulting someone that you were totally unfamiliar with, because you are in unfamiliar surroundings. Perhaps you are resting in our med-bay because you aren't healthy enough to spend some quiet time in our brig, because you were assaulted by someone." Jackson said as he gazed over at Tori and Sathrana.

"Perhaps you flew into a rage and are on your way to our brig, for assaulting someone that you are familiar with, because you're getting the run around in these unfamiliar surroundings," he continued.

"Welcome everyone. This is Fleet Admiral, Robert Andrew Jackson, aboard the United Galactic Consortium flagship, Orion," Jackson said as he gave his little speech.

"Maybe, and providing that the human race lives long enough, we'll become members of the United Galactic Consortium of Inhabited Worlds." he stated.

"Not all of you have been here before, nor for that matter have you ever traveled into space. By now, some of you should know where your quarters are and be somewhat acquainted with your personally assigned counselor who should be your mentor and guide for the rest of your stay on this ship," Jackson informed the entire ship's crew and passenger complement.

Tori Buckingham raised herself up from her seat and direly wanted to say something, but Sathrana reached up and pulled her back down and onto the couch. Tori gave Sathrana Celane a light shove. The look that Robert Jackson gave them made them cease from starting a new fight.

"A few of you have granted yourselves the liberty and or freedom to traverse this vessel without being fully informed as to your duties and responsibilities for which you have been brought aboard. This has gotten you into the deep trouble that you are now, unable to get yourself and or selves out of," he went on to say.

"Yes, we are all on a star ship, presently in the orbit of the planet Mars, and as of now we're preparing to depart the solar system and arrive in the orbit of a planet, by the name of Glammadren. Once there we will rendezvous with the Zaleen battle cruiser destroyer, Kalaketvia Tawn," Jackson further informed the crew while Tori Buckingham sat there, along side Sathrana Celane, disbelieving every word.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Our current mission is to determine, beyond the shadow of any doubt, what her captain's true intentions are. And that being in regards to the safety and welfare of all the inhabited worlds in our galaxy," he informed everyone throughout the ship.

"Once again, welcome aboard the Orion, and hopefully your stay will be a short one. Fleet Admiral, Robert Andrew Jackson, out," he said as he cut the link.

"Shall we commence to the bridge and get under way, Captain." Jackson ordered as he made his way toward the door, motioning for the both of them to take the lead while he followed.

"I'm having one unholy terror of a nightmare." Tori Buckingham said as she exited the admiral's ready room. "What in the hell did they put in my drinks last night?"

## Chapter 12

\* Twelve \*

Captain Celane led the way into the octagon shaped corridor and across to the bridge while Tori Buckingham and Admiral Jackson followed on her heels. One of the three oval doors parted to the main bridge and Sathrana, Tori and Robert entered onto the outer ring section. Sathrana made way to her chair on the rotating command section and Jackson nudged the nervous Buckingham down a few steps to stand in the inner ring section of the bridge, where she could face the main view screen.

Donald April hadn't arrived on the bridge as of yet, but Alexander Scott was in his seat, at the engineering station. Laura Andrews was in her seat, at the communications station. Bohemeah Javreen was in his seat, at the helm operations station. Aleta Soltari was in her seat, at the navigation's controller station. Tori Buckingham gazed about the vast area of the huge bridge on the alien ship and Donald April exited the turbo lift elevator and took his seat, at the sciences and main computer station.

"We ... really are ... in the orbit of ... the planet Mars." Tori uttered as shivers ran up and down her spine.

"Yes, Tori, we really are in the orbit of Mars." Jackson replied as her eyes bore into the main view screen between the engineering station and the environmental control station. Four smaller screens above the outer ring stations showed different views of the ship as it spun around in its four mile long titanium space dock bay stationed in the orbit of the red planet.

"Damn what a trip." she uttered. "And I don't even remember it."

"This is Captain Sathrana Celane, commanding the United Galactic Consortium Starship, Dorion Adriakar, to all crew and personnel." the captain's voice echoed throughout the ship.

"We'll be departing the Terran solar system in ten minutes and will be setting course for the Glammadren solar system to rendezvous with the Kalaketvia Tawn. All outer view ports will be closed and sealed shut in eight minutes," she said as she glared hatefully at Tori.

"I've got to sit down." Tori said as she walked over and took a seat at the weapons and defense station D, while Robert Jackson stood next to her and watched the central command station rotate around until the captain, helmsman and navigator faced the main view screen.

"This is Space Dock Control to the Orion." said a voice over the com system speakers. "Retracting forward and aft, central core gangways and docking rings."

"Hold us steady, Lieutenant Javreen." the captain ordered as she looked down over the helm station.

"Helm responding, Captain." the Lieutenant said as his fingers danced magically over the console in front of him.

"Gangways and docking rings released. We are holding steady." Boh Javreen relayed the information to his captain as they watched the forward gangway which held the outer docking ring, swing away from the ship while all the grid lights began shutting down, one by one.

"Central Core entry air locks are shut, sealed and secured, Captain. External running beacons are on." Javreen said from his station.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Secondary engines are on line and ready." he added as he turned in his seat.

"Secondary at zero point two five, Lieutenant." the captain ordered as she turned to face the admiral and smiled before swinging back around in her chair.

"All ahead at zero point two five, Captain." said Javreen as his hands moved expertly over his console once more.

The Orion crept slowly out of her docking bay, in it's own orbit of Mars, as everyone on the bridge kept watch on their view screens.

"Engage all deflectors." Celane ordered as her ship cleared itself of the gargantuan space dock.

"All deflectors are on line and functioning at the norms." Alex Scott responded.

"Take us out of orbit, at zero point seven five, Lieutenant Javreen." the captain said as Davadra Adriakar entered onto the bridge and ventured over to stand beside the admiral.

"I've a ... how do you Terrans say it on Earth ... a bone ... to pick with you, Admiral." she told him as she grabbed him by the right arm. "But for now, it can wait."

"That bone that you have to pick with me wouldn't just so happen to be sitting here on the bridge with us, now would it? the admiral asked her as he detached Davadra's death grip on his right arm with his left hand.

"What do you think of her, Robert?" Davadra asked.

"The refit really does her---

"Not the ship, Robert," Davadra replied. "I mean---

"Well, Tori may be a little rough around the---

"Not her, Robert," Davadra said, interrupting him once again. "I mean---

"I think I'm going to be sick." Buckingham said aloud as she began heaving her cookies on to the bridge decking, interrupting Davadra this time.

"She'll make a fine captain aboard the---

"I don't mean Sathrana Celane, Robert, I'm talking ... about our daughter!" she said angrily, interrupting him yet again.

"You Terran imbecile!" stormed Sathrana as she spun around in her seat to see the mess that Tori had made.

"Later on in years ... she'll make a fine ... ah ... I haven't had that much ... ah ... time ... with her to ... ah ... rightly say," Jackson stuttered the words out to her.

"She favors you ... a ... lot though ... however." he ended in telling her as he stood between one mad Talmurran female star ship captain and a sick Terran female that wasn't feeling so hot right now.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Do you really think so?" she asked and watched amazingly, as Robert Jackson nodded his head yes in answer to her question while holding Sathrana at bay with his right hand.

"Captain, we're clear of the asteroid field." Commander April said as he turned in his seat to face her, but not before having noticed a slight shimmer on his scanner.

"All ahead phase one until we're out of the Terran system, then set and lock in course for the Glammadren system, Lieutenant Javreen." Captain Celane ordered as her eyes gazed about her bridge, before retaking her center seat, and forgetting about Tori for the moment.

"All ahead phase one, Captain." Javreen replied as the helm responded.

## Chapter 13

\* Thirteen \*

Out in the octagon corridor, Robert Jackson stood with Tori, Davrina, his son Eric, and his daughter Amber, along his newly found daughter, Valdara.

"Dad, I mean Admiral, she's whacking out on us again." said Amber Jackson as she stood there in her new security uniform.

"Whacking out?" her father asked. "What do you mean, whacking out, and just who's whacking out---

"She is, sir." Amber said, interrupting her father as she pointed to Valdara.

"I've taken care of one whacked out person today." her father told her. "I'm not looking forward to two in a row."

"Admiral, Eric and Amber know about Valdara." said Davrina Adriakr as she held Valdara's hand.

"I ah, can see that Counselor Adriakar." Jackson said. "Right now we're trying to determine why Amber's telling me that Valdara is whacking out."

"I'm not as you keep on saying, whacking out, father." Valdara said, not being able to see her half brother and half sister as they stood there together.

"Let's go to the briefing room and get out of the corrid---

"You must take me to the bridge father, so that I may speak with the captain." Valdara explained as she interrupted her father.

"You can't just go waltzing in on the bridge to speak to the captain, Valdara." Jackson told his daughter.

"Davrina, do you have any idea as to what's going on here?"

"She senses or believes that a Zaleen battle cruiser destroyer is on its way to the planet Earth from the far side of the sun. And if we don't turn back around to investi---

"Red alert, all hands to battle stations, this is not a drill, I repeat, this is not a drill!" Robert Jackson ordered over his vid-com wrist unit as he turned and ran to the bridge. "Red alert, all hands to battle stations, this is not a drill!"

"Eric, Amber, take Valdara and go to your quarters, immediately!" Davrina yelled over the alert klaxons as she hurried to the bridge.

"Eric, Amber, Valdara, Davrina, on the bridge!" Jackson yelled as he quickly made his way there.

"Or you can follow your father!" Davrina yelled over the irritating noise.

"I'm not going back in there with that she bitch captain!" Tori Buckingham yelled, as she ran off in the opposite direction. "I'll see you all later!"

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Lieutenant Javreen, turn us about, one hundred and eighty degrees hard to port!" the admiral ordered aloud as he stormed in on the bridge. "Phase one point five, up and over the asteroid field!"

"Aye, aye, Admiral, veering about one hundred and eighty to port!" Javreen yelled in response. "Phase one point five!"

"Captain Celane, I'm taking over the center seat until further notice!" he yelled as she stood up and gestured with her hands that he take her vacated chair.

"Scanners to maximum, Commander April!" he yelled as he turned the captain's chair towards Donald April while seats at battle stations A through D were being filled.

"Andrews, get someone to clean up this mess!" Celaine yelled. "Where's that Terran female that defiled my bridge?"

"What's up, Admiral, sir?" April asked, yelling back as he set his hands in motion on the Sciences computer console.

"My daughter ... Valdara has reason to believe that ... Lieutenant Andrews, can that noise!" Jackson boomed aloud, over the sound of the red alert klaxons on the bridge, silently thanking God, that Victoria Dawn Buckingham wasn't still on it.

"Valdara has reason to believe that while we're exiting out the front door, the Zaleen's are sneaking in through the back one!"

"Going to silent red alert!" Laura Andrews yelled back as she shut down the klaxons all over the ship.

"That may explain that shimmer ... that I'm going to check up on." April said, almost yelling as he tuned his mind to the task at hand.

"Admiral, we're turning around and going to full red alert status on a whim or whatever, from your daughter?" Celane asked as Eric, Amber, Valdara and Davrina stepped down and into the lower ring of the bridge, without the red headed beast from Earth.

"Yes Captain, that we are." he told her as President Adriakar entered on to the bridge unseen by Celane.

"Admiral, your family is going to get us into---

"Into what, Captain?" Admiral Jackson and President Adriakar both asked at the same time.

"Nothing, Admiral," Celane answered, turning now to see Davadra. "President Adriakar, I'm sorry, I---

"Commander April, what can you tell us?" Davadra asked, interrupting the captain while she leaned on the railing behind Laura Andrews

"President, Admiral, Captain," April replied as he turned to face all three of them. "There's definitely something cloaked out there on the far side of the sun, and it's heading ... is earthward."

"Lieutenant Javreen, kill all exterior beacons and running lights and cloak the Orion."the admiral ordered.



## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Engines to phase zero point seven, and take us into orbit on the dark side of the planet Mercury." Jackson further ordered as Davadra raised herself up and off of the railing.

"Commander Scott, is the hyper sonic emitter still functional, should we have need of it?" he asked as he looked over at the weapons and defense engineer.

"It will be by the time we arrive at our destination, Admiral." Aex Scott replied.

"This is Admiral Jackson, to all fighter decks. We are tracking what may be a Zaleen battle cruiser destroyer on the far side of the sun. I want all Starvette's prepped and ready for launch at a moment's notice, Jackson, out." he said over the arm rest vid-com unit.

"How did she know, Dad ... I mean Admiral, sir?" Amber asked as she watched the main vid-screen.

"Valdara's an Empath," Jackson answered. "Like your grandfather, on the Jackson's side of the family.

"Her blindness has awakened her empathy or visionary senses." he explained to his oldest daughter.

"Your father was blind, sir?" Amber asked as she turned to face her father.

"Yes, and well, I'll explain it to you later." he told her.

"Do the Zaleens know that we know, that they are out there, Da ... Admiral?" Eric Jackson asked as he sat down on a set of steps that lead up to the communications station.

"The Zaleens have not, at this moment in time, detected that we are out here." Valdara answered instead, and all eyes on the bridge gazed upon her.

"Perhaps I should vacate my seat and give up my duty station to Valdara." Donald April said as he turned to face her.

"Commander April, what do you and or the Zaleens know right now, that we don't?" Jackson asked as he left the center seat and walked up the steps to lean over Donald's shoulder.

"If we keep the planet Mercury between us and them, we ought to ... for the most part, by being cloaked ourselves, stay undetected." April answered.

"But?" asked Jackson as he stood to stretch, hearing and feeling his back pop.

"But, I'm not that up to date on Zaleen technology enough to be for sure, Admiral." he answered as he glanced up at the admiral of the entire consortiums galactic fleet.

"Passing by the planet Venus." Captain Celane said as she stood behind her center seat on the bridge watching the main view screen.

"Madame President, care to take your old seat back?" She asked as she patted the back of her chair.

"No, thank you, I'll just stay where I am." Davadra answered as Robert Jackson stepped down from the upper ring of the bridge and then back up onto the rotating command center and into that center seat.

"Alright, all unauthorized personnel off the bridge," the admiral ordered.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Take us to phase zero point five, Lieutenant Javreen." he further ordered as Davrina ushered Eric, Amber and Valdara off of the bridge.

"Phase zero point five it is, Admiral." the helmsman replied.

"They're uncloaking, Jay ... Admiral!" April yelled surprisingly as he swung around in his chair.

"That's a bit unusual at this time, wouldn't you think?" Jackson asked as he turned to face April.

"Planet Earth would have been the most vulnerable for a surprise attack." April said as he turned back to his console. "Damned unusual."

"I disagree somewhat with you," Alex Scott said from his station. "That twenty-mile long ship of ultimate destruction may have detected us, and we are their top priority at the moment."

"I did say that I'm not that up to date on their technology enough to know as to whether we've been detected or not." Commander April informed him.

"Commander April, try a long-range scan, sweeping out past their ship for any other surprises that may be following them." Jackson said as he watched the main vid-screen. "And Andrews, have Valdara Jackson brought back to the bridge."

"I've already thought of that too," April replied. "As of right now, the answer is no, they're not being followed nor pursued."

"Valdara Adriakar, please report to the command bridge, Lieutenant Andrews, out." Laura Andrews ordered from her station post at communications.

"Keep the planet Mercury between us and them for as long as possible Lieutenant Javreen." Jackson ordered.

"Aye, aye, Admiral." Javreen said as he watched the containment doors slide shut over the river in the Round Forest on a smaller monitor above the environmental control station before turning to face the admiral.

"I just have this gut feeling that they know that we're out here now." April said as he continued working at his station.

"Take us into high orbit, Lieutenant Javreen," Jackson ordered.

"This is Admiral Jackson to all fighter decks, launch all Starvettes and maneuver them around to the light side of the planet Mercury, so that they come up on the destroyer's backside."

"Lieutenant Javreen put the Orion into Mercurian orbit, and just as soon as all our interceptors are ready, decloak us and up the shields once the last one is off its deck and clear of the ship."

"Admiral, I'm receiving a very weak and garbled audio signal from the Zaleen ship. It may be due to the solar radiation from the sun." Laura Andrews said as she turned to face the admiral.

"Put it on the speakers, Lieutenant Andrews." Jackson ordered.

"Thi. is .al.....ia .... to .he Or... ar. ...u re..... .e ov... ?" the noise and static mix repeated, a few more times over the bridge speakers.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"I can't seem to clear it up." Andrews told the bridge crew.

"Do what you can, Lieutenant." Jackson said as he tried to pick up on the bits and pieces of the garbled communication.

"The planets masking most of the transmission as well." Andrews said as she continued to clarify the noise.

"Decloaking the ship," Bohemeah Javreen said from the helm. "Starvette's ready for launch."

"Andrews, hail all fighter decks to launch their interceptors now!" the admiral ordered.

The bridge crew watched the interceptors taking off from the front of the Orion on the main screen while the others took off on the aft side as the admiral glanced down at another smaller screen just ahead of his chair.

"This .. th. Kal...via .awn to .he Ori.. ar. ..u reci..... me ple... ack..... ?" the noise came again over the still open bridge speakers.

"I wouldn't swear wholeheartedly to it," Laura Andrews told everyone. "But I think it's the Kalaketvia Tawn trying to contact us from the other side of Mercury."

"This is Admiral Jackson to forward fighter deck A, launch a scout ship immediately."

"I want to know who we're dealing with, as soon as possible, Admiral Jackson, out." he said as the Zaleen cruiser slowly edged its way around to their side of the planet Mercury.

"It may be a setup, Jay." April said as he turned to face Jackson.

"I'm well aware that the Tawn is supposed to be en route to the planet Glammadren, and that there's no possible way other than a time warp to bring Valakadria into our solar system this quick, unless--- ." Jackson stopped himself short.

"Unless that's the setup, and this is the real thing." President Adriakar said as she stepped down onto the lower portion of the bridge.

"Thanks to Valdara, we're going to be finding out here shortly." Jackson said as Davadra now stood beside his chair and watched as a lone scout ship took off from the front of the Orion.

"I sw... Rob... aks... if you. .ot in .his sol.. syst.. I don't know wh.. I'm going. to do." the noise said, a little clearer this time.

"That sounds like Valakadria." Davadra said as she listened.

"If it is, she sounds more frightened than anything." Andrews said as she turned to face the president of the consortium.

"It is Valakadria, mother." said Valdara, as she let herself back onto the bridge to stand just inside the oval door.

"Well, I never doubted you before, and I'm not going to start doubting you now." her father said.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Stand down from red alert battle stations, but keep us on yellow alert until Commodora Tawn is safely aboard this ship. Hail our interceptors back to flank positions and stand by for further orders.

"Open hailing frequencies Andrews." he ordered as he stood up from his seat.

"Hailing frequencies open to the Zaleen ship." Andrews replied, a minute or two before she opened another channel to the Starvette fighter squadrons.

## Chapter 14

\* Fourteen \*

The red alert lighting on the bridge changed to yellow and the exterior lights and beacons lit up all over the Orion's hull.

"Captain Celane, you have the conn." Jackson said as he gave his seat back to Sathrana.

"This is Captain Sathrana Celane, commanding the star ship Orion, to the Zaleen ship." she said as she retook her seat on the bridge. "Please identify yourself at this time."

"Thank the stars," said the frightened voice over the bridge speakers. "I thought that I would be too late in arriving here on time to---"

"This is the captain of the star ship Dorion Adriakar to the Zaleen ship, identify yourself at this time!" Sathrana said more forcefully.

"Damned it Sathrana!" stormed the voice of Valakadria Tawn. "You know damned well who this is, so stop playing around over there and put--"

"This will be my final repeat!" the captain thundered. "This is Captain---

"Orion, this is blue team scout leader, Emanon Tey." said the voice over the bridge com system. "It's the Kalaketvia Tawn."

"Commodora Tawn, this is Admiral Jackson---

"Admiral you say?" Commodora Tawn asked.

"Yes, I did say." Jackson answered.

"Would you kindly toss Captain Celane out of an air lock for me." Valakadria Tawn said as her twenty-mile long ship slowly, and finally, came to a halt in front of the Orion.

"You were supposed to have been en-route to the planet Glammadren, Commodora Tawn." the admiral told her as her visual shimmered to life on the main vid-screen.

She favored Cindy Lawless so closely that Robert's brother, David, called her Zena the Zaleen one time to many over thirteen years ago. She had decked him in payback for his rude and cruel mistreatment of her on their first voyage together aboard the Orion.

"So were you, Captain, Ad ... miral. I raced as quickly as I could to get here, in the hopes of stopping you from heading into a very dangerous trap." Valakadria Tawn said over the bridge speakers as he stayed glued to the view screen ahead of him.

"I'm glad that we were turned back around or else you would have lost us for sure." Jackson told her as he stood beside the captain's chair with Davadra at his side.

"In more ways than you could possibly fathom." Valakadria said.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Now that we know who we're dealing with, how about transporting over to the Orion?" Jackson asked her.

"I'll ready my personal shuttle and see you aboard shortly." she said yawning just before the vid-com link was severed.

"Land on the forward Starvette interceptor fighter deck a-one." he told her.

"Understood, Admiral." she replied, as the view changed from the bridge of her ship to an exterior view of the colossal cruiser.

"This is President Adriakar, all department heads meet with me on Forward View Deck A in one hour. Davadra Adriakar, out." she said as she lowered her left arm to her side.

"In the meantime, Captain Celane, you have the bridge." Jackson told her.

"Commander April, come along, and Lieutenant Andrews, have Commander Jackson beef up security on Forward Starvette Deck A-One. We don't want to have to deal with any last minute surprises." he said as he made his way off the bridge with Commander April in tow.

"Admiral, I don't like all the little surprises we've received thus far. Something tells me that we had better concentrate our sights on the Uorexuan-Zaleen neutral zone." Donald April went on to say as they entered the octagon corridor that surrounded the bridge.

"I'm coming along too," Valdara said as she stood in the corridor. "Of course though however, you'll have to lead me."

"In order to keep you from getting yourself and us into any more trouble, I'll be more than happy to." Davrina Adriakar said as she bounced seemingly from out of nowhere in the corridor.

"This is Jackson, to the Bridge." the admiral said over his wrist unit. "I want an updated report from the Uorexuan neutral zone as soon as you can provide me with one."

"I'll get on it at once, Admiral." Captain Celane said from the bridge.

"Let's go meet Commodora Tawn." Robert Jackson said as he stepped inside a turbo lift.

David Jackson stood in the flight deck control booth and looked down over the security team that had lined both sides of the bay. He was for certain that nothing would go wrong for as long as he was in command or someone or something would taste his wrath for far longer. From the first day, seventeen years ago, David Jackson had never cared for the Zaleen Princess, Valakadria Tawn. He really didn't care too much for her now nor did he think that he would in the future and he couldn't shake the feeling as to why. Her shuttle was now birthed inside one of the Starvette interceptor bays and sat between the male and female forces of Andulonians, Delindrians, Earthlings, Perrinians, Sanartans, Talmurrans, and countless others. His brother Robert, Donald April, Davadra and Davrina Adriakar, and Valdara Adriakar entered the control booth.

"Commander Jackson, do you feel confident that nothing will go wrong?" Davadra asked him.

"I'm sure that you'll settle for no less than the truth," David Jackson answered truthfully. "No, I do not."

"Stay on your toes, David. A chain is only as strong as its weakest link." his brother Robert told him as he stepped inside the turbo lift that would take them to the flight deck below.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"I'm sincerely hoping that you're not referring to me as the weakest link, Admiral!" David growled.

"I sincerely hope not also, Commander." Robert Jackson said as the others joined him in the lift.

"Are you coming?" Donald asked.

"Why the heck not," David Jackson answered. "If Zena the Zaleen flinches the wrong way, then I would like nothing more than to personally escort her to the brig myself." he uttered as he stepped inside the lift.

"Just stay on your toes, Commander." his brother told him once more.

"You know," David said. "I take it that you're not feeling right about this either." he stated as the lift began its decent.

After exiting the lift Davadra took up the lead with Donald April at her side. Robert Jackson walked across the flight deck beside Davrina with Valdara between the two of them. David Jackson followed behind them while looking from left to right and nodding his approval to the security personnel as he passed them by.

Up ahead Valakadria Tawn approached being followed by another female Zaleen that looked like or who favored Joanie Laurer, aka former wrestler, Chyna. Davadra Adriakar and Donald April parted enough so that she and her bodyguard could pass between them with ease. Davrina and Valdara Adriakar broke formation to stand together behind Robert Jackson and of course, David Jackson brought up the rear.

Valakadria now stood before Davadra and Donald.

"Madame President Adriakar, Commander April." she said bowing her head before them.

"Commodora Tawn." Davadra replied as they stood face to face.

"This is my escort, Keletivia Torl," she said introducing her security officer who neither bowed nor showed any emotion other than radiating fear.

"Vandesekor Torl's daughter, no doubt." David Jackson uttered under his breath.

As Valakadria Tawn approached Robert Jackson, she unstrapped her sword and held it in her right hand. She then knelt down upon her left knee and placed the sword across her right leg before lifting it high above her head with both hands. The admiral reached out, taking the sword with his right hand and held it until she stood up before him.

"Admiral Jackson." she said as he passed the sword back to her escort, much to David's disappointment and Keletivia Torl's utter surprise.

"Commodora Tawn, welcome aboard the Orion." he said extending his right hand towards hers, gently taking it in his own.

"It looks as if your brother has out done himself again. Keletivia and I have come here alone." she told the admiral and the others that stood on the deck.

"He's stayed on his toes at red alert status for the most part of his life. It's his way." Robert Jackson replied as he let go of Valakadria's hand.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"A chain is only as strong as its weakest link, and so far, I see no weak links here." Keletivia finally said as she gazed about the interceptor flight deck while also watching the expression on Admiral Jackson's face.

"Nor will you see one," David Jackson spoke aloud as he came from around Davrina, Valdara, his brother, and Valakadria to stand face to face with Keletivia Torl. "Your Vandeseke Torl's daughter, aren't you?"

"And just what if I am, Earthling?" she asked in return, still holding Valakadria's sword in her right hand.

"Let me put it to you as straight as an arrow and as sharp as the point of that sword your holding, as I possibly can," David Jackson said as he stood close enough to have kissed her. "If you take no action of aggressive force against any member of the crew aboard this ship, then no force of aggressive action shall be taken against you."

"I'm hoping that we understand each other." he said as he tapped his hearing aid translator.

"Commander Jackson, we come before you and the members of this crew, peacefully, and as family and friends." Valakadria said as she turned to face him. He though however did not turn from Keletivia to face her.

"Just so that we understand one another." David said as everyone stood at alert and listened attentively.

"I hope that you, David Jackson, understand fully what I meant by saying, we come before you and the members of this crew, peacefully, and as family and friends." Valakadria explained to him once more.

"Valakadria, Keletivia, if you would follow me please." Davadra said as she turned and began walking across the deck toward the turbo lift elevator, hoping to ward off a confrontation between David Jackson and Keletivia Torl.

Valakadria turned and started to follow her but stopped short, to stand before Davrina and Valdara.

"Davrina." she said while Keletivia and David continued with their face off.

"Iylandra." she replied just above a whisper.

"And who might this be?" she said as she laid eyes upon the young female, whose eyes may have been blind from the time of her birth, but she saw much more without sight, than those who had sight but saw much less.

"David Jackson, I believe that you should stand down your hostilities towards Keletivia Torl, for Valakadria Tawn speaks truly. I shall inform you on this matter, Valakadria. Keletivia Torl came here to kill Captain Celane for killing her father. However, though she has had a change of heart." Valdara informed them all as they listened to the sightless daughter of Robert Jackson and Davadra Adriakar.

"It's because of me!" David Jackson stormed.

"No, David Jackson, it is because of a Zaleen ritual executed by my father, and you would not understand, so I will not even begin to explain it to you." Valdara told him as one of the crew members walked over to the admiral with an urgent message.

"Admiral, I know that you have a meeting scheduled with Commodora Tawn," The messenger said. "An Ambassador Kamadees requests your presence at River Galley, in Round Forest." they told him as they turned to leave.



## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"She also requests that you would come alone, sir." they added as they departed.

"President Adriakar, I have an urgent matter that needs attending to before I commit myself to the one on View Deck. This shouldn't take long." Robert Jackson said as Valakadria spoke with Keletivia.

"We'll wait for you, before we begin." Davadra said as he took his leave of the heated reunion on the interceptor deck.

## Chapter 15

\* Fifteen \*

Jackson made his way quickly to the round forest river galley that set over Round River in the round forest sciences section of the Orion. Along the way he happened to notice another long lost friend.

Adrienne Barnes sat on a bench that circled one of the many beautiful trees in the forest. Flowers of all varieties lined the pathway in front of her. Jackson noticed her and he thought for a moment that she noticed him, but she paid him no attention since she was in a conversation with Penny Ridgewood, another friend from the past.

Robert Jackson continued onward until he crossed over the arch bridge and up the veranda steps to enter the double ornate oval glass doors of River Galley. He began to search out Dara Kamadees. He soon found the ambassador who favored Kirsti Alley, seated over in a dark corner of the galley, by herself, and very much, alive.

"Ambassador Kamadees, you're not on the crew roster, and as I recall, you were supposed to have been killed on Earth." the admiral said as he quickly sat down beside her.

"It would have been to our mutual benefit if I had of been," Ambassador Kamadees answered. "Your world reminds me so very much of my own home world, that it's frightening to think that your civilization will one day traverse the stars---

If it survives." she told him as a single tear rolled down her face, unnoticed for she hurriedly wiped it from her cheek.

"The Zaleens destroyed Delindria, and we earthlings can destroy ourselves without any invasion from deep space." he explained to her.

"Admiral Jackson, you must understand that I no longer have Admiral Mazanurra as my master any more, and since he is still in suspension, I am no longer his---

"Dara, you're not making much, if any, sense to me right now." Jackson interrupted, as he tried in vain to figure her out.

"Dara Kamade Tekka." she said, rattling off a name that he failed to comprehend at the moment.

"Ambassador Kamadees, I'm meeting with Valakadria Tawn shortly," he told her. "Will you please get to the point of the matter for which you have urgently requested my presence!"

"My world was not destroyed by the Zaleen's, Admiral." she replied and Jackson homed in on her statement.

"I am a Zaleen, and we are destroying ourselves, from within, as are you, and even though you seek to be an equal with all the inhabitants in this galaxy and enslave no one, we on the other hand are---

"You're â Dara ... Kamade ... Tekka?" he asked as he gazed straight into her eyes, finally comprehending at last.

"Yes, I am." she answered as another tear rolled down her cheek.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Dara, you've summoned me here and told me that you're a Zaleen, so now that I know this, what am I to expect next?" he asked as he gently wiped a tear from her face with his hand.

"You're making it very difficult for me to continue, Robert Jackson." she said as she gently removed his hand from her face.

"Oh, I'm all ears if nothing else." he replied as he sat there with her.

"One of my own people was sent here to kill you. He almost did but you survived. I was sent to finish his work, should he have failed to succeed. He failed as well as I myself, but---

"Your heart is not as wretched and as evil as you have led yourself to believe, Dara Kamadees." Robert Jackson told her as the tears flowed freely down her face.

"We Zaleen's are an evil and a wretched civilization bent on destroying the rest of the galaxy if not stopped." she said as he handed her his handkerchief.

"Dara, dry your tears, for you and I have a meeting to attend to, together." he ordered her as he stood to take her hand in his.

"I'm an outcast without a home." she told him. "Should I have accomplished what he failed to do, I would have been the next queen empress of the Zaleen Empire."

"Now, I am nothing but dust under my own people's feet, to do with as they so please." she explained as she took his extended hand.

"Dara, a family is only as strong as the weakest member of that family." Jackson said. "We may be weak, but we are a family aboard the Orion."

"As long as you are on the Orion, you can consider yourself family." Jackson told her, and she managed a small but teary eyed smile as they left the darkened corner of the galley and walked out into the light.

Robert Jackson had let the ambassador freshen up before they both entered on forward view deck A together.

"I'm only going to say this one more time and one more time only! I'm hungry, and I am tired! I have traveled millions of miles at top speed to arrive here in time to stop you from going on a mission of death!" Valakadria Tawn stormed in a rage as the admiral and ambassador stepped out of the turbo lift and into the verbal battle.

"Ok, what's going on here?" Jackson said as he looked about to find that every department head sat at or stood around the table that arose from the center of the view deck floor.

"Admiral, please talk some sense into these airheads. I didn't come hurling my ship at her fasted speed all the way across this galaxy to be drilled like a cadet! I came here to warn you, and if also possible, perhaps to save your lives. The Zaleen's are going to cross over the Uorexuan neutral zone on their continued quest to conquer all the inhabited worlds in the galaxy. If they are resisted, they will kill and destroy all the inhabitants of those worlds in their path. In the meantime they have taken up their quest to seek out and find the one person in this galaxy that will be able to stop them." Valakadria said as Keletivia stood statue like at her side.

"Just one very quick question Commodora Tawn," Admiral Jackson said as he walked over to stand by her.

"Admiral, please forgive me, but---

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"I overheard you saying something about your being tired and hungry?" Admiral Jackson asked, instead of what he really wanted to ask, because he could see it in her eyes that she was not herself.

"More so tired than hungry. It's late night on my ship and I've been up for far longer than I've been down. So, if you will please excuse me, I would like to go to my quarters and rest. I really don't feel all that well at the moment." she answered him as she gazed momentarily at Dara Kamade Tekka, who, turned away in shame.

"Over here Zena my dear, it's mid morning and you'll---

"This meeting is adjourned until everyone has rested up." the admiral said to everyone on the view deck.

"Not till I say that it's adjourned, Admiral!" Davadra thundered.

"Madame President, I've not had anything to eat this morning, and I'm rather hungry myself---

"Robert Andrew Jackson, you may be the galactic admiral of the galactic fleet, but I'm the president of the consortium, and rather you happen to know it or not, countless billions of inhabitants in this galaxy are depending on what we find out during this particular meeting!" she said as she lashed out at him.

"Davadra, I'm well aware of our current situation," Jackson replied. "There's a Zaleen battle cruiser destroyer out there, en-route to the Glammadren system. And we are going to continue on our journey to rendezvous with that ship as was requested---

"What! Are you out of your mind?" David Jackson asked heatedly as others in the room spoke up in opposition to what his brother had said as well.

"If we don't go, then our hands may be dipped in the blood of a few million inhabitants on planet Glammadren! Meeting adjourned!" Admiral Jackson forcefully ordered.

"We have to go ... " Ambassador Kamadees said and paused. " ... because just as many worlds in this galaxy will be obliterated if we continue to waist precious time."

"Meeting adjourned until further notice!" Davadra growled in frustration, along with a few others until Valakadria Tawn staggered and then passed out, falling back into the arms of Keletivia Torl.

"Help, get her to med-bay, on the double!" Jackson barked, as David Jackson came from around the table and hoisted the Zaleen commander into his own arms.

"She hasn't rested, nor has she eaten in days." said Keletivia Torl as she gently released Valakadria over to David Jackson. "She has pressed herself to get here in time to---

"Keletivia, I just so happen to know about these things," Admiral Jackson said, having interrupted her.

"What about you?" he asked, as they followed his brother David over to the turbo lift elevator.

"Nor have I." she answered as David Jackson looked down into the face of Commodora Tawn then stopped short of the lift to turn and face his brother Robert.

"Look Bro, I don't actually hate her, it's just that I don't care for her like you do." he said turning back to follow Doctor Barbara Henderson and Keleketvia Torl into the lift.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Perhaps not, Commander Jackson, but you do today." Henderson told him as the oval shaped lift doors slid shut.

"Admiral to the Bridge." Robert Jackson said over his wrist unit.

"Bridge here, Admiral." Captain Celane replied.

"Any word from the Uorexuan neutral zone?" he asked as he gazed over at Ambassador Kamedees momentarily.

"Nothing as of yet, sir." she answered.

"Have all our interceptors returned to the ship?" he asked.

"Yes, Admiral," Celane answered. "They have, sir." she added.

"Anything happening over on the Kalaketvia Tawn that we should be made aware of?" he asked, while yawning at the same time.

"Nothing that would cause us to have to go to red alert status at this time, Admiral." Celane stated.

"Very well, keep me posted, Jackson out." he said as he lowered his arm.

## Chapter 16

\* Sixteen \*

"Donald, you've been quiet. How come?"

"Jay, what is there to say except, here we go again." April answered as Jackson dropped down and into an empty chair, resting both of his elbows on the conference table, before holding his face in his hands while everyone else exited the view deck, except for Donald April, Dara Kamadees, and he, himself.

"Donald, I think they're waiting for us to get to old to continue on with this cat and mouse game." Robert Jackson said as he raised his head and lowered his hands to look over at April, who's hair had begun to thin and turn gray far sooner than his own.

"Hell Jay, you're only forty five, and I'm ... well I'm a whole lot younger than you are, it's just that we are way out of shape man." April told him as they sat there, shaking their heads in agreement with one another.

"Donald, you're not that much younger than I am. You actually look somewhat like Santa Clause. Just what in the heck have you done to yourself?" Jackson asked.

"To many worries Jay," April answered. "And if you don't come back around to being your old self again and stop pining over my sister, then you'll sink to the bottom before I do." he stated as he put his feet up on the table.

"Right now, I'm beginning to believe than we're all on a sinking ship." Jackson said as Dara Kamadees turned away from the view port window to walk over and stand by the admiral and first officer.

"Then we shall all be going down together." she told them as Donald sat and gazed up at her.

"She's right you know." Jackson said as he smacked the table top with his right hand.

"Yes," April replied.

"We've got to come up with a plan to keep this ship afloat for as long as we're able to tread water together." the commander said as he arose up and out of his chair and lightly pressed a touch pad control on the conference table, so that it lowered itself just below the deck flooring. A carpeted door then slid shut above it.

"Dara, will you and Donald kindly accompany me to the Med Bay?" Jackson asked as he arose from his chair.

"If you insist, but---

"I insist, and that's an order, Ambassador." he said, interrupting.

"Very well ... Admiral ... Commander." Kamadees nervously replied.

"Is there something wrong, Ambassador Kamadees?" Donald asked.

"I ah ... Admiral, ... Commander, I can't continue keeping this to myself any longer." Dara said. "I must... tell ... someone...or its going to---

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Ambassador Tekka, are you going to accompany me to the med-bay along with Commander April or not?" Jackson asked a bit heatedly.

"Tek ... ka?" asked April as he slowly followed the two of them to the lift.

"I'll explain it to you on the way." the admiral said as they stepped inside the lift. "Lights to dim."

"Commander April, meet the ambassador of Zaleena, Dara Kamade Tekka. Ambassador Tekka, I would like for you to meet the first officer of the Orion, Commander April." Robert Andrew Jackson said as he reintroduced them to one another as the oval shaped lift doors zipped shut.

"Med bay, level...level... oh brother, what level is it--"

"Level seven." Dara said aloud as she looked at the admiral and tried hard to smile but couldn't.

"Lots of changes." he told her.

"Alzheimers." Donald added as he gazed over at Robert and broke out into a grin.

"What ... Who?" Dara asked as the lift moved to its destination.

"Alzheimers is not a who," April replied. "It's a disease or serious disorder of the brain as our Admiral Jackson here has contracted."

"No wonder he wishes us to accompany him to med-bay. I didn't think that the blow he received to his head seventeen years ago was all that severe." Dara said, and Robert stretched to look around her at Donald April while the lift changed directions.

"Oh, he's had this disease for far longer than I can remember." April told her. "And I can remember everything."

"I wouldn't go as far as to say that, Donald." Robert said as the lift doors parted.

"Admiral, you must forgive me for laying my present problem upon your shoulders at this time." Dara Kamadees said. "I have been trying to get this off of my mind because I have no one else that I can turn to or that I can--"

"Ambassador, I understand you completely, I really do, so don't take me wrong at this time, but your making my headache worsen by--"

"Sorry." she uttered above a whisper as they entered the corridor that led them to Doctor Henderson's office.

"Admiral, something told me that you would be making a personal visit here to see me. How are you feeling today?" Doctor Barbara Jane Henderson asked as they stepped into the med-bay.

"I'm feeling fine," the admiral answered. "Thank you for asking, Doc. How's Valakad--"

"Doctor?" Dara asked, interrupting the admiral as she gazed at him with the greatest of worry written all over her face. April just stood behind Jackson and tried awfully hard not to burst into laughter beyond immeasurable control.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Yes, Ambassador, what can I do for you today?" she asked from her seat behind her desk as she glanced up at her.

"I suppose that I must take it solely upon myself, to tell you that I have accompanied Commander April in order to escort Admiral Jackson to the med-bay. He is suffering from a serious disorder of the brain and I'm sure that you should be made aware of this." the ambassador explained to her as April waved his hands and shook his head no to indicate that the joke was on Dara.

"Admiral, I do believe that it is high time that you've had a physical. And, you too as well, Commander April," Doctor Henderson told the two of them.

"Thank you very much Dara, for bringing this to my attention, and they should be thanking you as well," Henderson said as Robert turned slowly around to glare hatefully at Donald, as his mouth gaped wide open.

"Gentlemen, have a seat over there, and no lip from either one of you." the doctor told them both. "I'm having the two of you taken off of active duty until after you've both been checked out thoroughly, and or, completely."

"Dara, if you would like to take your leave now, you may." she said as she looked from them to her.

"Thank you very much Doctor. I'll be nearby if you or they should require my services." Dara said as she turned to leave.

"Admiral, Commander, I'll be right outside, waiting." she told them as they sat with an empty chair between the two of them.

"There's really no need Ambassador. We'll be quiet alright, I think." Jackson said as he gazed over at Donald.

"If you are for certain, Admiral." she said as she reached down to take his right hand.

"I'm not for certain about anything, but for now, I'll be fine, thank you Dara," he said as she let go his hand and exited Henderson's office.

"Barbara Jane, I didn't come to med-bay for a physical, I came here to---

"Robert, calm down, Admiral." Henderson said as she cut him off at the pass. "I know exactly why your here."

"Great, and now that you've managed to let Ambassador Kamadees off of Commander April's hook without disgracing her, I'll go do what I came here to do in the first place." Robert Jackson said as he began raising up and out of his chair.

"Sit!" Doctor Henderson barked, and Robert fell back down and in to his chair.

"Neither of you are going anywhere until after the both of you have had your physical exams, do I make myself, as your personal physician, perfectly clear?" she asked as she stood up.

"Very." Jackson said as he clapped both hands together while his elbows rested on his knees.

"Commander?" she asked looking over at him.

"Perfectly clear, Doctor." he answered as he scratched his head with his left hand.



## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Great, then we shouldn't have any more trouble out of either of you." she said as she went into another portion of her office and out of earshot.

"I didn't come here for a physical, Donald!" Robert told him heatedly, as he swung around in his seat to face his old friend.

"Neither did I Jay." Donald uttered above a whisper.

"I hope that you've got a plan for getting us out of this hot water, because I sure as hell don't!" Robert thundered.

"Don't say hot water!" Donald thundered back.

"Is there something wrong in there?" Henderson asked loudly enough for the both of them to hear her as she purposely rattled things around in the back room.

"No, not one blasted thing." Jackson said as he buried his head in his hands.

"You really ought to have something done about your headache, Jay." Donald told him.

"Don't tempt me!" Robert replied.

"This is Captain Sathrana Celane to all passengers and crew. We are preparing to leave the orbit of the planet Mercury and continue onward on our predestined flight to the Glammadren star system." she said as her voice traveled the entire length of the Orion.

The Zaleen battle cruiser destroyer, Kalaketvia Tawn will accompany us on our trip to the planet Glammadren to rendezvous with an unknown Zaleen vessel, also enroute to Glammadren from the neutral zone." she continued.

"Here shortly, Galactic Fleet Admiral, Robert Andrew Jackson, will be contacting the fleet to rendezvous with us in or very near the Glammadren star system in order to hold or turn back any Zaleen attack force that may threaten our free systems in the Consortium." she stated as everyone listened over the ship wide com system.

"Doctor Henderson, I really do need to make contact with the fleet." Jackson said as he sat in the examination cubicle.

"And you will. But, not until after you've had your physical examination, and not one minute before!" Henderson boomed as she carried an alien instrument back with her and momentarily laid it on the cart in front of her.

"Barbara, I really came down here for the purpose of checking in on the health and well being of our Zaleen guests. I did not come down here ... up here ... over here ... or where ever the here we are aboard this ship, to be the one getting treated myself!" he boomed aloud as she folded her hands in front of her face placing her thumbs on her lips.

"And April, did he come along with you as well, to check in on our Zaleen guests, or was it to embarrass the ambassador?" Henderson asked very seriously.

"I asked him to accompany myself and the ambassador here to the med-bay." Jackson answered as she removed his hearing aid translator and began probing his ears and looking into his eyes with the odd looking

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

instrument that she had picked back up.

"Then was it also your intention as well to embarrass the Ambassador?" she asked almost nose to nose with the admiral.

"Why are you asking me all of these questions, Doc?" Jackson asked as she then began checking his blood pressure with yet another strange piece of equipment.

"Robert, you for one, are now in the high and mighty position as galactic fleet admiral and it requires professionalism, duty and responsibility, and other very important things. That leaves out horse playing and cutting down another member of the crew." the doctor informed him.

## Chapter 17

\* Seventeen \*

"Doctor, I'll admit that I acted like a thirteen-year-old insubordinate and out of line horses rear end with Davadra, Davrina and Sathrana, when I at the first declined the admiralty of the fleet." Jackson informed her.

"I know nothing about that, but do continue on with your story." she said as she listened to his heartbeat.

"I'll admit to jumping to the wrong conclusions about Valakadria and a few other friends since I've arrived back aboard the Orion." Jackson told her.

"Okay." she said, handing him his translator back.

"I'll admit to being a part time parent and or no parent at all to my children," Jackson continued as he placed the hearing aid translator back into his left ear.

"You've been a very busy man." she told him.

"I've gone for thirteen years without any contact with my extraterrestrial family and friends." he stated.

"Davadra and Valdara?" she asked as she continued to pick, poke, and probe, the admiral in more ways than one.

"Yes, if you really must know!" Jackson said somewhat irritated.

"Robert, this is your story." she quickly let him know.

"I'm in love with Rea Warner, but now would be a hell of a time to let her know it. Of course then was a hell of a lot better time than now. And considering that I now have a fifteen year old daughter by and with an off world---

"I blame Davadra for that." Henderson voiced her opinion, having interrupted him.

"I couldn't let Davadra die!" Jackson said as he heated up again.

"No, you couldn't, could you." she replied.

"Then there's Victoria Dawn Buckingham." Jackson said.

"I can't wait to hear you explain that red headed bombshell." Henderson told him, point blank.

"I take it that you don't like her." Jackson said.

"I don't know how to take her." Henderson replied.

"To me, my festive, feverish, forgiving, fun filled friend, is a foolhardy, farsighted, fastidious, free spirited, fiery, flirtatious, feline flower, on miracle grow that's wilting fast without a future ahead of her." Jackson explained to the doctor.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"You could have made it simple and told me that she's a beautiful spring flower ... in full bloom ... being burned up by the summer sunshine of life." Henderson said, very slowly.

"It just doesn't describe her as well as telling you that she's a foolhardy, farsighted---

"Jackson, I get the picture quiet clearly!" she boomed as she checked his reflexes a little harder than she should have.

"Ouch, damn it, Doc!" he uttered in a bit of pain.

"You tell me that she's fading fast without a future?" Henderson asked.

"So am I," Jackson said in a bit of pain. "If I keep you for a personal physician very much longer!"

"About Tori Buckingham?" she asked to change the subject from one hurt to another.

"Well, it's like this Doctor," Jackson began. "She finds the right man in her life and---

"He turns out to be mister wrong, am I right?" she asked, interrupting him again.

"I thought that you said that this was Robert's story. " Donald said as he listened in from the other room.

"Barbara Jane, will you hurry up and get this interrogation over with. I really have to contact the fleet!" Jackson said in a huff.

"Yes, you were telling me about Buckingham?" she asked inquisitively as she walked over to close the oval door, shutting April out.

"Why don't you just interrogate her yourself, Doc!" Jackson blasted.

"And the point that your trying to make? " Henderson asked.

"The point is that you'd make a better bar tender than a doctor," he stated. "Can I go now?"

"No, I'm not finished with you. You're not resting well. Are you getting enough sleep?" she asked.

"Not really," he answered sighing, and in a defeated tone of voice as he rubbed his left temple. "How can I, when the dreams and nightmares come back night after night to haunt me?"

"Robert Jackson, I'm going to have you admitted under my care until you've had the proper amount of rest that you require or else," she informed him.

"Or else what, Doctor?" Jackson asked seriously worried.

"Or else you are going to be burned up by the summer sunshine of life, Admiral." she answered.

"Barbara, Davadra needs me and the crew---

"We all need you to be well rested for what's to come. So that you can be your old self again." she replied, interrupting him yet one more time.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Old is right, where's my bed Doc?" Galactic Fleet Admiral Robert Andrew Jackson asked, as he about dozed off to sleep on the exam table while talking to Doctor Henderson.

"Yes, Davadra, the admiral is resting soundly, thanks to Commander April," Henderson informed the president of the consortium.

"As his personal counselor, I wish to be kept informed about the admiral, Doctor Hender---

"We'll manage without him for as long as we know that he's going to be alright and rested up, come show time." Captain Sathrana Celane added as she abruptly interrupted Davrina.

"David Jackson is keeping a close watch over his newly recruited niece, and Eric is in Engineering." Davrina Adriakar told the doctor. "And their counselors are nearby, may the heavens help Commander Jackson's."

"As long as he's in my care, Robert Jackson will be fine," Henderson told them all as the screen went blank on her vid-com unit.

"I most sincerely hope so, for your sake and the sake of the crew of the Orion," said Valakadria Tawn as she stepped out of her room into Henderson's.

"Valakadria, you scared the life out of me!" Henderson said as a tingle of fear shot up her spine.

"Not as much as we're all going to have it scared out of us Doctor." Valakadria Tawn stated before turning to go back to her bed, leaving Henderson to ponder over her statement.

"I've never been so picked at, pulled at, poked at, pushed at, and prodded, by anyone other than you on our wedding night, as I was in Med Bay---

"Donald Sherman April, I spent the night on our bedroom floor, while you, wound up hogging the whole bed to yourself, on our wedding night." Marsha April said as she smacked him hard on the right arm while they both sat on the couch in their quarters.

"Ouch Marsha, that hurts!" April uttered as she upped and went to their bed in the next room.

"Marsha, I was just telling you about how bad Doctor Henderson treated me in med-bay earlier!" he yelled from the living room cubicle.

"You've got the whole couch to yourself so that I don't hurt you, honey!" Marsha April yelled back at her husband.

"Hey, I was only kidding with you Marsha, sweetie!" he yelled back.

"I wish that you would grow up Donald!" she yelled right back.

"Growing up is hell." he said more or less to himself.

## Chapter 18

\* Eighteen \*

The Orion as well as the Kalaketvia Tawn were now both en-route to the Glammadren system. The bridge of the Orion was now manned by the noon shift change and Tori Buckingham hurried to med-bay to check about Robert Jackson's health and well being before she went on to the galley to eat lunch.

"Doctor Henderson, I'm---

"Victoria Dawn Buckingham." Henderson said interrupting her.

"I'm here to see and find out about the admiral's condition," Tori continued to finish what she really meant to say.

"And yes, I'm Tori Buckingham." she added as she stood in front of Henderson's desk.

"Young lady, if it weren't for the plain and simple fact that the admiral thinks very highly of you, I would send you packing yourself right out of my office and to the brig for the way you burst in here without an invitation." Doctor Henderson explained as she eyed Tori Buckingham up and down for the first time.

"I'm on noonday chow time," Tori explained. I'm really in a hurry and---

"He's resting peacefully, as long as he's not bothered, and I intend to see to it that he's not disturbed until he's had the proper---

"Are you always this bitchy, Doctor?" Tori asked, as she fired both barrels at her.

"No, not always, Cadet Buckingham." Henderson answered, closing her right hand into a tight fist.

"After I slapped Robert, he ... I mean, after I slapped the admiral, he still thinks very highly of me?" Tori asked as she looked around in Henderson's office.

"You also fought with Captain Sathrana Celane." Henderson reminded her without answering her question.

"And don't touch anything."

"Did Robert ... I mean, did the admiral himself tell you that he thinks very highly of me or---

"No," Doctor Henderson answered quickly. "He didn't come right out and directly tell me that he did, I can tell."

"I'm really sorry about ... how can you tell?" Tori asked.

"Anyone else would be stewing in the brig right now, facing a court martial, and perhaps even the death penalty." Henderson explained as she tried to read Buckingham. "If not for the plain and simple fact that the galactic fleet admiral is thought of very highly aboard this ship, you would probably be dead, or somewhere else, wishing that you were dead."

"How can you tell that he thinks highly about me?" Tori asked, as if she hadn't heard a word of what Doctor Henderson was telling her.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"He told me that you were his festive fun filled friend, and that you were a free spirited, fiery, feverish, flirtatious, feline, that reminds him of a beautiful spring flower on miracle grow, that's blossomed fully into life at such a fastidious and foolhardy, farsighted pace, that the summer sunshine of life is going to cause you to wilt and die prematurely, before your time, and oh yes, I almost forgot that he also told me that you were very forgiving," Henderson explained to her but not quiet in the same way that Jackson had explained to her.

"What did he really tell you about me, Doctor?" Tori asked, as she tried to reading the doctor, who began fiddling with some touch pad controls on her desk.

"Then there's Victoria Dawn Buckingham," said the voice of Robert Jackson over the vid-com recorder.

"I can't wait to hear you explain that red headed bomb shell." said the voice of Barbara Henderson over the vid-com recorder as Tori now listened with the utmost interest.

"I take it that you don't like her." he said.

"I don't know how to take her." she replied in answer to his question, over the recorder just as a female friend of Tori's burst into Henderson's office.

"Tori, hurry it up, or we'll be in big trouble girl!" her friend explained at the same time that Henderson stopped the recording.

"Doctor, you will take care of him, wont you?" Tori asked as she turned to leave. "I'd be lost out here in space without knowing that he was here with me, because we've managed to look out for each another in our greatest times of need, if you should happen to know what I mean."

"If you should happen to know the answer to that yourself. Tori." Henderson stated, effectively stopping Tori Buckingham in her tracks.

"And just what the hell did you mean by that statement, Doctor Henderson?" Tori thundered as Valakadria Tawn stepped once again into Henderson's main office.

"Doctor Henderson, play the last portion of the recording, before she tears you limb from limb!" Valakadria commanded.

"I don't know how to take her." said the voice of Doctor Henderson over the vid-com recorder as the doctor restarted the recording.

"To me, my festive, feverish, forgiving, fun filled friend is a foolhardy, farsighted, fastidious, free spirited, fiery, flirtatious, feline flower, on miracle grow, that's wilting fast without a future." proclaimed the voice of Galactic Fleet Admiral Jackson over the vid-com recorder just before the doctor stopped it from continuing. Tori listened to her friend's words and pondered over the last portion of his statement.

"What did the admiral mean when he stated that you are wilting fast, without a future ahead of you?" Henderson asked.

"I believe, that that's between her, and the admiral, Doctor." Valakadria replied in answer to her question.

"And just who the devil are you?" Tori Buckingham asked as her friend decided that they had waited to long for comfort so she, herself, split the scene.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"I am the daughter of King Jaeluken Adriakar, of the planet Delindria, who is also known as, Ambassador Iylerra Tawn, of the planet Dorkon." Valakadria explained as Tori stood there with a so what kind of expression on her face.

"I am also the daughter of Empress Kalaketvia Tawn, of the planet Zaleena, Commodora Valakadria Iylandra Adriakar Tawn, Commander and captain, of the Zaleen battle cruiser destroyer, Kalaketvia Tawn." Valakadria further explained to her, as she listened.

"Sister, do you ever have a messed up family life, that is, if you should ask me." Tori replied.

"I am but a small part of the reason that your future here with Robert Andrew Jackson from the planet Earth may be severed, as well as my own." Valakadria told her point blank.

"Just how well do you know Robert Andrew Jackson from the planet Earth?" Tori fired her question back as she took a seat in front of Henderson's desk.

"I don't have the time to explain this to you, except to say that I know him well enough." Valakadria Tawn answered before she turned and exited Henderson's cubicle. "I'm going back to my sleep, I'm tired from my trip here to save you from the trap that your all going to get caught in any way."

"How dare she to leave me hang---

"Buckingham, of all the persons aboard this ship, no matter from what inhabited world they should call home, she, of all these persons, has every right to leave you hanging." Henderson stated to her. "She, of all these persons, thinks the highest of your Robert Andrew Jackson."

"He's never made mention of her, to me." Tori replied as she gazed into the darkness where Valakadria seemingly vanished.

"Would you, or anyone else that's never been here before, have believed him?" Henderson asked as her eyebrows raised.

"I see your point Doctor." Tori answered as she stood to leave.

"Tori, I'm going to save your bacon this time, so that your executive officer doesn't throw you out an open Starvette launch bay." Henderson told her.

"Thanks Doctor, for putting up with me." Tori said as she turned to exit med-bay, via Robert Jackson's room, providing that she could get away with it. She found that he was indeed asleep and decided to let him rest before she hurried off to find Candice Simmons.

Candy Jackson or Simmons had decided to wait just outside med-bay as was requested by Tori Buckingham.

"Goodness girl, what the hell took you so long in there anyhow?" Robert Jackson's sister asked in her normal manner.

"Candy, tell me what you know about this Valiant Pina Colada chick that Robert knows?" Tori asked as they stood in the corridor.

"Wow, don't tell me that you had a run in with Valakadria Tawn, girl." she said as she took a seat in the corridor near med bay.



## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"That's her, only her name was this long." Tori told her as she extended her arms out to full length. "It wasn't exactly a run in Candy, it was more of a run out on."

"Tori, if you've ever listened to my advice and acted upon it in the past, please dear sister, don't hesitate to do so now, in the present." Candy said as serious as she could possibly be.

"So, what's with this Zaleen chick that has got everybody kissing her booty?" Tori asked in a huff.

"My God girl, have you even seen a small portion of the red vid-com disk in your quarters?" Candy boomed.

"A small portion, yes ... no, wait a minute," Tori answered, confusing Candy to no end. "It was a reason."

"What in the world are you talking about, Tori?" Candy asked, as she looked Tori Buckingham straight in the eyes.

"That witch said that she was but a small part of the reason that my future here with your brother might be severed, including her own," Tori explained.

"Girl, you have no knowledge what so ever in that cute little red haired head of yours about Commodora Valakadria Tawn, but I'll tell you this much," Candy thought a second or two before continuing. "Don't ever let my brother Robert hear you calling Val a witch, or your future with him, and us as a whole, may be severed sooner than you think." Candy explained to her friend.

"My sentiments exactly." Barbara Jane Henderson said unexpectedly, as she strolled down the corridor to stand with Candy and Tori.

"Valakadria and Robert have saved each others bacon far more times than can be accounted for out here in the cold and endless depths of space, and our bacon is by far, more than thankful to the both of them." she said as she stood in front of the two girls. "Together, they have attempted to save the lives of family, friends and fellow crew members of the Orion and the inhabited worlds in and out of the Consortium."

"Then perhaps I should be thankful and go back in there and kiss her booty as well." Tori said as her exec and counselor walked down the corridor towards them.

"Perhaps you should start with mine." Henderson said as she went to head off an oncoming disaster while Candy and Tori looked on.

## Chapter 19

\* Nineteen \*

"Remember Eric, when we played in this forest, over thirteen years ago?" Amber Jackson asked as she and her brother sat on a bench that circled one of the countless variety of trees that grew in Round Forest sciences section of the three mile long extraterrestrial star ship from the planet Delindria.

"I remember." Eric Jackson said as he leaned back against the tree and thought back to those by gone days and nights, seventeen years ago. Nine years before their mother was killed on the planet Delindria.

"Mom was here, Amber." Eric said as he turned to face his sister.

"She'll always be here, Eric." Amber told him as she pointed to her heart while Davrina walked up with Rhea and Valdara.

"How's dad?" Amber asked as she stood to greet them in her security uniform.

"He's resting up in med-bay, Amber." Davrina said as she took a seat on the bench next to Eric.

"He's going to be alright." Rhea Warner added as she too sat on the bench and watched a mono tram whisk by on it's track, way up above the tops of the trees.

"Hey, here comes Summer Dawn." Amber said as she spied her cousin on one of the many pathways that snaked through the forest while Valdara drifted down the same way in the opposite direction, alone.

"Hey, Valdara, where are you going?" Amber yelled as she went to lead her back by the hand.

"I did not think that you wished for me to join you." Valdara answered.

"What would give you that idea?" Amber asked.

"Your my little half sister, extra terrible or not." Amber told her before the two of them broke into a laugh.

"Robert, are you awake?" Valakadria asked as she stepped lightly into his room.

"For you, yes I'm awake, but don't press your luck because I'm really bushed." he answered her as he pulled the covers back to let her lay down beside him.

"I'm in worse shape for rest and relaxation than I thought that I was." he added as she snuggled up next to him.

"Robert, I know how tired you are." Valakadria replied as he slipped his arms around her.

"Tell me what you know about this wild Buckingham creature that you are acquainted with back on planet Earth?" Valakadria asked as she lay in Robert Jackson's arms.

"Wow, don't tell me that you've had a run in with Tori Buckingham, Val?" Robert asked as he pulled the sheet up and over her shoulders.

"Not exactly." Valakadria answered as she slipped her arms around Robert as well.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Val, it's best to stay on Tori's good side," Robert Jackson said quiet seriously. "And please dear friend, believe me when I tell you, that Victoria Dawn Buckingham does have a good side."

"So, what's with this earthling female that has everybody running to give her aid?" Valakadria sighed.

"My goodness, Val, where were you when she got into a fight with Captain Celane and myself?" Robert Jackson boomed. "Oh yes, that's right, you were aboard your ship, please forgive me."

"Buckingham ... fought ... with Sathrana?" Valakadria asked in deep thought as she glanced up and gazed into Robert Jackson's face.

"She smacked me a good one while I was in my ready room too ." he explained to her as he glanced down and gazed in to her eyes.

"The witch hit you as well?" Valakadria asked, just to make sure that she had heard right.

"Valakadria, you have no knowledge what so ever, in that cute little raven-haired head of yours about Tori Dawn Buckingham, but I'll tell you this," Robert thought a second before continuing.

"If I were lost in space, and Tori was with me, I would feel safe and secure in my greatest time of need because she would be there at my side, win, loose or draw."

"No doubt." Doctor Henderson said unexpectedly, as she came in on the two of them unawares.

"Barbara, I'm having a private conversation with Val at this time, so if you don't mind leav---

"Robert, if the two of you don't get some sleep then I will have the two of you separated by force," Henderson told the two of them as she turned to exit the room. "Private conversation or not."

"Understood, Doctor." Jackson replied before she left.

"Sleep Val." he commanded and looked down to find that she had drifted off already.

"I'm telling you Doc, that all I remember is telling Valakadria that we ought to be getting to sleep right before you left, and now your telling us that we need to be getting up." Jackson said as he threw his legs out of bed first.

"The night goes by fast, Admiral." Henderson told him as Valakadria Tawn sat up in bed.

"It had better not be the morning of the next day!" Jackson thundered, and the doctor shook her head yes.

"Oh my!" he replied.

"I feel much better, thank you Doctor Henderson." Valakadria said as she got up and out of the bed and stretched.

"We've got to reach the fleet sometime today," Jackson replied as he to stood up and stretched.

"You know, it's against rules and regulations that patients share the same bed together, but ..." said Henderson, cutting herself short.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"But what Doctor Henderson?" Valakadria asked.

"I don't know." she answered. "It just seemed like proper therapy at the time"

"Doc, are you going to release us now, so that we can return to duty?" Jackson asked.

"Yes, get out of here, and Robert, I do believe that this belongs to you." Henderson said handing him his transcribe.

"What's this?" he asked as he read it.

"If you do as I've prescribed then you'll slowly return to your old, sorry, new self," she told him as she exited the room.

"Care to join me and whoever else shows up for breakfast at the Round Forest River Galley?" Jackson asked Commodora Tawn.

"Sure, let me find Keletivia." she answered as the two of them prepared to leave the med-bay.

Robert Jackson found Eric, Amber, Valdara and Davrina and they all headed for breakfast at the Round Forest River Galley. They picked up Rhea and Sabrina Warner along the way. They were also joined by others who were slowly making their trek to the forest floor and down the pathway that led them to their favorite place to eat on the ship. There were other places to eat, but this particular galley was their pick, just as was the one makeshift briefing room on forward view deck pylon A that attached to the outer three mile long engine nacelle, their favorite place to meet while in planetary orbit. Today they were not in planetary orbit and at near and above light speed the view decks were closed tight and sealed shut.

"Admiral Jackson, Commodora Tawn, I hope that the two of you rested well." the president of the Consortium, and former admiral and captain of the Orion, Davadra Adriakar said, as she walked over and prepared to take a seat next to the present admiral and former captain of the Orion, Robert Jackson, as both he and Valakadria Tawn sat at the officers table.

"As a matter of fact, I feel almost as good as new, thank you for asking, Davadra." the admiral replied as he stood up and held her chair for her before she sat down.

"Yes, I felt as if I had slept in the arms of an old friend that I have missed for the past thirteen years." Commodora Valakadria Tawn said carelessly as she took her seat, watching as Robert Jackson's face turned a crimson red.

"The Orion has that effect on me as well." said Doctor Barbara Henderson as she took her seat, having noticed Robert's face also, along with a few of the others that sat or stood nearby.

"Was it with my father, Valakadria?" Amber Jackson asked before she burst into laughter along with Eric, Summer, and a few of the other younger crew members.

"Amber, that's not a very nice thing to ask of our guest!" Counselor Davrina Adriakar said heatedly as everyone within earshot of the table had heard.

"Counselor, Amber asked a question in, as you call it, fun, but, I will answer her question in, as I call it, the truth," said Commodora Tawn as the admiral gave her a death stare.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Thirteen years have passed since we were parted, and with those passing years, we have all grown older, if not the wiser." Valakadria said as ears tuned in to her every word.

"I was thirty earthen standard years of age old when Commander David Jackson fought with, and apprehended, me seventeen years ago. By this time I had been away from my home world of Zaleena for six hundred and twenty eight earthen standard years. I was in suspended animation for six hundred and twenty two of those years." she explained as they all sat and listened, especially Tori Dawn Buckingham.

"Today, seventeen years later, I am forty-six earthen standard years of age old, though however, I have now been on the run, and away from my own home world, for six hundred and forty five years." she continued as a single tear rolled down her cheek.

"Amber, your father and I were sworn enemies before we ever met, and for a short time thereafter." she said as Amber tuned in on every word.

"For six months your father lay in med-bay on this very ship, recovering from a near fatal wound that I had inflicted upon him, indirectly. For those same six months I lay in a cell in the brig, on this very ship, suffering and hovering at the brink of a death that I would have welcomed with very weak and fragile arms." she further explained.

If not for the one, that I came here seventeen years ago to destroy, then I would not be here to tell you, and you would not be here to listen, so, I tell you the truth, yes Amber, it was your father that I've missed for the past thirteen years." Valakadria told Amber Jackson as the tears flowed like twin water falls from her eyes, while she shoved her chair back and arose and ran from the table and the galley, only to run right smack into Commander David Jackson who had been standing there, listening to every single word that issued from the Zaleen Commodora's mouth.

## Chapter 20

\* Twenty \*

David Jackson took her gently by the arm, which in itself, was very unusual, and led her from the galley while all heads turned towards the admiral.

"I'm the one to blame for this." Doctor Henderson stated as all heads turned towards her.

"No, you're not, I am." Admiral Jackson replied, and all heads turned back towards him.

"Valakadria came to my room enquiring about Tori Buckingham---

"And Tori wanted to know about Valakadria." Candy Jackson Simmons said, having interrupted her brother and eyes now shifted towards her.

"So, my half sister slept with you to find out about Victoria Buckingham?" Davadra asked as she turned to face the admiral, who sighed and held his face in his hands, rubbing his next on coming headache with his fingers.

"For yours and everyone else's information," Jackson said calmly as everyone listened. "I don't feel like eating breakfast right now."

"And, all we did, was sleep." he told them as he shoved his chair back from the table in order to go find Valakadria.

"There's a briefing room on the backside of the command section," he stated as he looked out over the table.

"Everyone with enquiring minds will meet me there, in an hour, after I've contacted the fleet to rendezvous with us in the Glammadren star system." the admiral said as he left the galley.

"Doctor Henderson, explain?" asked Davadra as she bore her sights on her.

"Valakadria and Robert slept well." Henderson told them as she to, shoved her chair back in order to leave the galley.

"I've got a meeting to attend in an hour, so, I must get prepared." she added as she made her way across the galley floor while Amber gazed across the table at Davadra.

"Just tell me and I'll go away and leave you to cry the whole damned Round River full of tears!" David Jackson stormed as harshly as usual, though however, he did promise to go away and leave her be if she would answer his question truthfully.

"Alright, anything to get you to leave me alone!" Valakadria stormed back as Keletivia stood ready to attack Jackson, if only she could, for Alexander Scott held a ray pistol at her back.

"Ah ... ah ... ah ... ah, not anything woman, just the right thing." Commander Jackson told her as they stood near a tramway tower in Round Forest.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Yes, David Jackson," Valakadria thundered in his face. "And I don't care what you, or anyone else on this one way trip into oblivion thinks about it!"

"That's all I wanted to know." Commander Jackson said as calmly as if he were talking to a child, while they stood nose to nose. "I'm going to go away and leave you alone now." David told her as he motioned for Alex to lower his weapon.

"I could kill the both of you if he wasn't---

"Stand down, Keletivia!" Valakadria commanded as she tried to control her own rage, interrupting her security officer.

"I don't doubt that, out of either one of you, in the least bit." Commander Jackson said as his brother Robert headed in their direction after having contacted the fleet just to find out that Davadra had already beaten him to the punch.

"I'll be seeing the both of you at the briefing, come along Alex." David Jackson ordered as he and Alex stepped through the oval door of the tower and on to the lift.

"What did he ask of you Commodora?" Keletivia asked, for she had arrived at the tower just after David Jackson asked her his question.

"He asked if I were in love with his brother Robert." Valakadria answered as he found her and Keletivia standing by the tramway tower.

"Val, are you alright?" he asked as he now stood before her.

"You are not a Zaleen, Admiral, address the Commodora by her---

"Keletivia, stand down, it's alright for him to address me in this way." Valakadria explained to her.

"I meant no offence, Kel." the admiral said, right before she decked him.

"Keletivia!" yelled Valakadria.

"It's quiet alright Val, I guess that I deserved that one." Jackson said as he slowly got up and went for Keleketvia's legs and bowled her to the ground.

"What the hell!" Donald April yelled as he made his right hand in to a fist.

"Shit!" was all Robert Jackson said as Keleketvia made a dive for April, after she got back to her feet.

"Keletivia, return to the Tawn!" Valakadria yelled her order as Commander April side stepped in time for a few other crew members to see the Zaleen security officer land in the shrubs.

"Enough!" Admiral Jackson stormed.

"We've got a meeting to attend to in half an hour, and I want us all there together, in one piece, peacefully," he added as Valakadria helped her security officer to her feet.

"To the ship with you!" Valakadria commanded forcefully.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"No, Commodora, she may stay, I had completely forgotten about the Zaleen femininity rite." Robert Jackson said as Donald April walked up beside him.

"Jay, I didn't know that I had interrupted a love spat between---

"Shut up!" Valakadria and Robert both said at the same time, having interrupted him.

"The only thing that you interrupted at all, was our own stupidity," Valakadria Tawn told Donald April as she grabbed Keletivia's arm and marched her to the tramway tower.

"You know Jay, I'm beginning to understand now." Commander April said as he and Admiral Jackson both watched the girls disappear into the lift as its oval door slid shut behind them.

"What is it that you're beginning to understand, Donald?" Robert asked as Tori Buckingham came waltzing down the pathway towards them.

"I'm beginning to understand why you went into hiding for thirteen years, back on Earth." April answered.

"Robert, there you are." Tori said as Robert and Donald reluctantly awaited her arrival.

"It's too late for me to hide behind you now." Jackson said as Tori marched up to stand beside them.

"I'm not that fat!" Donald bellowed as Tori gave the two of them a weird once over stare before she laid her piece of mind on them.

"Somebody around here is lying out the teeth!" she thundered.

"Well, maybe I do need to lose a few more pounds here and---

"I'm not talking about your weight Commander April." Buckingham said. "Can we sit down somewhere around here more privately, like in one of our shuttles or something?"

"I think your not going to want to hear what I really wish that I didn't have to say, but, you know me," Tori rattled on as April and Jackson stood there with dumb looks on both their faces.

"Tori, are you alright?" Jackson asked as he reached up to feel her forehead.

"No, none of us are, that is, none of us will be." Tori answered as Robert Jackson took her by the arm and headed for the new briefing room with Donald April in tow.



## Chapter 21

\* Twenty - One \*

"Issac, lights." commanded the admiral as the oval shaped door to the aft command section briefing room slid open to allow them entry.

"Wow, nice big conference table for twelve---

"Spare me Commander April, we haven't got all day to take inventory of everything that's in the briefing room!" Tori grumbled as Jackson glanced at the both of them and shook his head in disgust.

"Issac, seal off access to the aft command section briefing room until further notice, by my voice command only." Admiral Jackson ordered as he walked down the length of the table to the view port window.

Robert Jackson pressed the touch pad control on the table and the oval view port window slowly opened.

"Oh my, what a view." Tori said in awe as the three of them looked out over a very large section of Round Forest.

"Impressive, isn't it?" April asked as he gazed out over the mile long jungle forest.

"Alright, we've got a little bit of time to kill before the meeting Tori." Jackson said as he and Donald April managed to pull themselves away from the view port window.

"How to begin?" Tori asked.

"At the beginning, that's where I would start." April said as he took a seat with his back to the view of the round forest section of the Orion.

"Yes, shall we?" Robert Jackson asked as he pointed out a chair for Tori to sit down in while he grabbed another one.

"In the Round Forest River Galley, I heard every word that Commodora Tawn spoke." Tori told them as they sat and listened to her.

"Yes, I know," Robert Jackson replied. "So did we."

"Today, seventeen years later, I am forty-six earthen standard years of age old, and I have been away from my own home world for six hundred and forty five years." Tori said, quoting Valakadria Tawn.

"Can you kindly get to the point Buckingham!" Commander April thundered.

"Yes, do continue." Admiral Jackson ordered as he listened while Donald April strummed his fingers on the table as the time for the meeting drew closer.

"My question Robert, is this, how long has Valakadria Tawn been chasing everyone around in the galaxy?" Tori asked as Robert and Donald both pondered her question.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Can you focus in a little bit clearer on what you wish you didn't have to say?" Donald asked as Robert rubbed his whisker stubbled chin.

"Think about it Commander April, but please, don't strain yourself." Tori told him. "If Valakadria left Zaleena over six hundred and forty some years ago and spent most of that time in suspended animation, where were her half sisters Davadra and Davrina during this time that she's in the ice box."

"Oh, you'll have to excuse me, I meant to say, the freezer?" Tori asked as she gazed at Jackson and April.

"So, you're trying to make connections between her and her half sisters." Robert replied, more or less to himself.

"Yes, what am I not comprehending?" Tori asked as she stood up from her seat to gaze upon Round Forest once again.

"How can Valakadria Tawn, born on Zaleena, and Davadra and Davrina Adriakar, born on Delindria, be half sisters, when it took Valakadria six hundred and twenty two years to get from Zaleena to Delindria in the first place?" Robert asked as he too stood and walked over to the view port to stand with Tori.

"Yes, that's it exactly, I think." Tori replied.

"Now that's a brilliant question from a dull mind." Donald April said as he spun himself around in his seat to face the hypnotic view of the forest from the briefing room view port.

"It's all on record, that is, if you care to look it up on the vid-com monitor." Robert Jackson said, as he walked back to the table and lightly pressed a touch pad control that raised an access terminal, complete with a monitor, directly from the conference table top.

"And, Tori's mind, is anything but dull. " he added as he tapped in his password.

"Thank you." she said as she eyed the vid-com screen.

"Right now, Valakadria is forty-six years old, Davadra is forty-four, and Davrina, is forty-two, if we go by earthen years." Jackson continued as he brought up the information Tori was searching for. "Davadra and Davrina have, or had, an older brother, Dorion, who, if he were still alive, would be forty-six years old."

"How can Valakadria Tawn and Dorion Adriakar be the same age?" Donald asked as the time for the meeting was nearly upon them.

"Iylerra Tawn, or Jaeluken Adriakar, worked mighty fast to produce two totally different families separated by six hundred and twenty two years." Tori explained as the voice of David Jackson thundered over the briefing room speakers.

"Open this damned door!" he shouted.

"Issac, grant access to the aft command section briefing room." Admiral Jackson ordered.

The oval door slid open and Commander David Jackson shot through to stand at the foot of the large conference table.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Admiral Jackson, and as if I didn't know." the commander and chief of security said as he gazed down the length of the table at Tori Buckingham.

"Somebody is late for work!" he boomed aloud.

"She's been with me, Commander Jackson," the admiral told him as Davadra, Valakadria, and Keletivia entered along with Davrina and Amber and Dara Kamadees.

"Is that a permanent promotion to personal secretary or temporary, Admiral?" Commander Jackson asked sarcastically as the girls entered the briefing room and made their way down the room's length to take in the magnificent view of the round forest section of the Orion.

"Temporarily, Commander." Tori answered for herself.

"Oh, okay, I suppose we can handle that for the time being, Buckinghorse." Commander Jackson said as he grabbed a chair, sat down, and began entering something on his transcribe.

"I see that you brought Amber along." the elder brother said as he turned in his seat to watch the girls as they took in the breath taking view from the view port.

"Experience is the best teacher, Admiral." the chief of security stated as Captain Sathrana Celane entered the briefing room with the chief medical officer, Doctor Cenneva Falaikon, from the planet Uda-Thane, followed by the chief engineer, Commander Barthalon Adronadius, from the planet Delindria, and the helmsman, Lieutenant Commander Bohemeah Javreen, from the planet Talmurra.

"It looks as if everyone's here," Davadra Adriakar said as she took a seat next to the admiral.

"Be seated everyone, and thanks for telling me that you've already contacted the fleet, Davadra." Admiral Jackson said as Commander Alexander Scott slithered through the oval door before it slid shut.

"Or stand, if you wish." Captain Celane added as everyone sat around the table with the exception of Amber Lea Jackson whom David had posted as sentry, just inside the briefing room door.

"This meeting will now come to order, and I just didn't have the time to tell you Robert." Davadra said having gained every one's attention after reaching over and loudly smacking the touch control pad that shut the view port window overlooking Round Forest.

"No distractions." she added, shortly before she shoved her chair back to stand at the table, all eyes now trained upon her.

"We are currently en-route, along with the galactic fleet, to the Uorexuan neutral zone, where we shall rendezvous with an unknown Zaleen battle cruiser destroyer in the orbit of the planet Glammadren." Consortium President Adriakar re-informed everyone while they listened in as a few late arrivals showed up for the meeting. "Previously we were led to believe that this destroyer was the Kalaketvia Tawn, commanded by Valakadria Tawn herself, leading a third of the Zaleen fleet to join us against the new Empress of Zaleena."

"You have all been lied to." Valakadria said as she stood up and gazed into their faces. "My ship, its crew, and myself, are the only defecting party from the Zaleen fleet." Valakadria explained before everyone.

"I knew we were headed right into another damned trap!" Commander Jackson exploded as he came up and out of his chair.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"You would have been if I hadn't of---

"Would have been hell!" David Jackson heatedly replied. "I don't know why we're having this little pow wow!"

"It's useless to talk about a war, that I, for one, know that we ain't gonna win, Zena!" Commander Jackson thundered as he pointed his finger at Valakadria.

"Are you through, Commander Jackson?" Davadra asked as she locked eyes with him.

"No, I'm not!" he answered as he walked around the table to stand toe to toe with Davadra Adriakar if not face to face. "All that we've ever managed to accomplish since being abducted into this cowardly lion of a tribe seventeen years ago, is to have these little pow wow's and retreats."

"Another pow wow, and another retreat." Commander April said aloud. "I hadn't quite thought of it that---

"I have to agree with Commander Jackson." Valakadria said having interrupted April as she sat down, and you could have heard a pen drop as David Jackson turned from Davadra and gazed in Valakadria's direction.

"Wow!" Commander Jackson exclaimed. "And you're the one that had to sit down."

"Commander Jackson, you do have a way with words and facial expressions." Davadra stated as he walked back to his chair and dropped back down into it, eyes still riveted on Valakadria Tawn.

"Just why are we continuing on this trip into oblivion alone?" Tori Buckingham asked as she leaned against the closed view port window

"We're not going alone, Tori," Admiral Jackson replied as he turned in his seat to face her. "Davadra made contact earlier today with the galactic fleet."

"They're spreading themselves the entire length of the Uorexuan neutral zone," Davadra Adriakar told her as well.

"Pretty damned thinly too, if I might add my input." Commander April said, stating his opinion.

"I dread taking us all to our deaths." Captain Celane said with folded hands in front of her face. "I lost my ship, the Atrebella Edohr and her crew, in the orbit of Odaralockia."

"I'm not thrilled at the prospect of having to lose the Orion in the orbit of Glammadren." she added.

"It wasn't your fault Captain." said Commander April. "We about lost the Orion at Odaralockia too."

"The Zaleen's have sent a decoy ship across the neutral zone to rendezvous with us at Glammadren, and with the help of Commodora Tawn, her ship, and it's crew, the decoy ship, pretending to be the Kalaketvia Tawn, will be our immediate concern right now." Admiral Jackson said as he read the information about Valakadria on the vid-com monitor screen.

"The other worlds in the Consortium will deal with the rest of the Zaleen's, as, and if, they are able." Davadra said as she sat back down beside Admiral Jackson.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

Tori Buckingham had come to this meeting for one reason and that was to determine who their enemy really was if she could get things into perspective.

"Commodora Tawn, you were born on the planet Zaleena?" Tori asked out of the blue as she turned to face her.

Valakadria placed both hands on the arms of her chair and shoved herself out of it in anger, but she let the anger slowly pass and sat back down in her seat and sighed.

"Yes, I was born on Zaleena, why do want to know this?" she asked as Tori spun around to face Davadra.

"Davadra, you were born on the planet Delindria?" Tori asked as she waited her answer.

"Where are we going with this Bucking---

"Let's just hear her out Davadra." Admiral Jackson said as he placed his left hand on her right hand and held it under the table.

"Yes, I was born on Delindria." she answered as Robert Jackson lightly squeezed her hand under the table and she smacked his with her free hand.

"Davrina, you, your sister Davadra, and Valakadria, are half sisters, having the same father?" Tori asked as she turned to her this time.

"Just why are you asking these things of us?" Davrina asked as she slowly arose from her seat to stand while giving Robert Jackson an evil eye.

"We didn't come here for history lessons Cadet---

"Answer her Davrina." Admiral Jackson ordered as he tried yet again to hold her sister Davadra's hand.

"Yes we have, or should I say had, the same father." Davrina answered somewhat reluctantly as everyone listened to Tori.

## Chapter 22

\* Twenty - Two \*

"Valakadria, explain how a Zaleen and a Delindrian can have the same father, when it took you six hundred and twenty two years just to reach Delindria from Zaleena, in suspended animation?" Tori asked as a few minds in the room started thinking.

"Our father, Iylerra Tawn, was a Dorkonian, from the planet Dorkon." Valakadria explained to everyone who may and may not have known this.

"My father met my mother, Kalaketvia DhuleVahgen, in the Zaleen year thirty nine hundred and twelve, and I was born in the Zaleen year thirty nine hundred and fourteen, which at that time would have been the earthen year thirteen hundred and thirty four." she continued as eyebrows shot up all around the room.

"That was one hundred and fifty-eight years before Columbus discovered America!" Commander April exclaimed aloud. "Hell, she's six hundred and sixty nine years old!" he added just as loudly, causing everyone to gaze at him.

"Commander!" Davadra stormed.

"Sorry." April said as he did his math more personally to himself.

"Continue on, Valakadria." Davadra commanded.

"My mother's father became furious, and ... I'm forty-six Terran years of age old, Commander April." Valakadria said glancing over at the first officer.

"My mother's father became furious, and vowed to search for and to kill my father for leaving us to die." she continued as a tear rolled down her cheek.

"To die, Valakadria?" Admiral Jackson asked. "Explain."

"Our sun was dying, Admiral, so we set out in our sleeper ships when I was twenty-four earthen years of age, to find a new home, and my father." Valakadria answered.

"We knew that the Dorkonian's shared the same orbit, as did our planet Zaleena, on the far side of our dying sun." Valakadria went on to enlighten everyone in the room. "They refused to help us find my father, so, my mother's father warred with the Tawn family, and we nearly destroyed each other looking for him."

"He had escaped on a Dorkonian sleeper ship." she further went on to tell her story. "We managed to journey the six hundred and twenty two years that took us to the seven world systems, destroying these worlds, because they would not let us settle there!" Valakadria thundered from her seat.

"My mother's father settled us on the planet known as Delindria, and they, the Delindrian's, welcomed us with open arms, while our father Iylerra Tawn, masquerading secretly as Jaeluken Adriakar, fathered Dorion, Davadra and Davrina, for he had arrived on Delindria many years before us." Valakadria said as Admiral Jackson and the others listened to her.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"You Zaleen's started this damned war just because you had no place to live!" Commander Jackson blasted from his chair.

"We destroyed Andulon, Corellkalon, Nurella-Mega, Perinna, Sanarta, Talmurra, Uda-Thane, Uorexua, and finally, Delindria itself, as well as countless others, in part because of my father, the Dorkonian, Iylerra Tawn, who left my mother and myself to die on a doomed world over six hundred and forty some earthen years ago, and he did nothing to help us." Valakadria told them.

"These worlds were being wiped completely out of existence over an elusive father?" Tori Buckingham asked as she walked over to the conference table.

"The Zaleens arrived when six of those worlds were at war with the seventh world of Sanarta." Davadra stated.

"Our father never told us that he was an off worlder with a price on his head and the blood of his former family on his hands." Counselor Davrina added.

"Shortly after the Zaleen's arrived, our brother, Dorion Adriakar was killed in the Sanartan Imperial War, while I was yet the captain of this ship, named in his memory." Davadra informed them.

"Iylerra Tawn, from the planet Dorkon, arrived on the planet Delindria, twenty-nine years ahead of Kattherras DhuleVahgen, the father of Kalaketvia Tawn." Ambassador Kamadees explained as everyone tried to piece together, the Zaleen, Dorkonian, and Delindrian histories.

"What do you know of Zaleenian history?" Tori asked, now turning to the ambassador.

"Outside of a chosen few, and Admiral Jackson, everyone knows me as Dara Kamadees," the ambassador answered as Robert Jackson took Davadra's hand in his once more.

"I am Dara Kamade Tekka, from Zaleena, sent aboard the Orion seventeen years ago to kill the earth man, Robert Jackson, spoken of, in Delindrian prophecy," she informed everyone.

Commander David Jackson and Commander Alexander Scott both stood at the same time and withdrew their side arms.

"Commander's, holster your weapons and be seated." Admiral Jackson ordered. "The ambassador no longer poses us any threat or harm."

"I prefer that things stay that way, that is, if you don't have any objections, Admiral?" Commander Jackson asked as he walked around the table to stand behind Dara Kamadees.

"Commander Jackson fails to understand ...that I am no longer a threat." the ambassador told them as they sat listening.

"Perhaps what we are really failing to realize Zaleen, is that you, the enemy, has lied to us ...all this time!" David Jackson stormed as he made ready to lay hands on her.

"Commander Jackson, stand down, and leave her be." his brother, the admiral ordered.

"As you wish, dear brother." David Jackson said as he backed away. "As you wish."

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"After finding that Valakadria's father had eluded them or had escaped, the Zaleen's put themselves into suspended animation for a six hundred and twenty two year long trip to these worlds that would not give them a home," Tori Buckingham said as things returned somewhat to normal. "And at some future point in time, while Iylerra Tawn was found to be masquerading as Jaeluken Adriakar, the Zaleen's obtained the Delindrian's phase warp drive technology and incorporated it into their battle cruiser destroyers."

"The Zaleen's then traveled to the other worlds, taking them by utter force and enslaving the civilizations that inhabited them, and then, whenever resisted, as they were, they killed those inhabitants and destroyed their planets," Davadra Adriakar added as everyone was taught a history lesson in the briefing room aboard the Orion starship.

"It's somewhere around about this time that the Zanarian's sent out their mental distress call to the planet Earth, in the early nineteen hundred and seventies, to prepare a select group of chosen believers in extraterrestrial life for the then unexpected future visitation, in nineteen hundred and eighty six, by the Delindrian star ship Dorion Adriakar, and the Zaleen battle ship Iylerra Tawn, and that, was seventeen years ago, give or take a month or two." Commander April further added.

"When I was thirty earthen years of age old, my mother and I, entered the orbit of Earth's moon, in the earthen year nineteen hundred and eighty six, on the Iylerra Tawn." Valakadria Tawn told everyone. "We then sent the Dorion Adriakar, to orbit Earth, to obtain or collect most of, if not all of, the crew that is aboard her now, thirteen years later, in the earthen year two thousand and three."

"Delindrian prophecy foretold of a savior on this third and only inhabited world, in the system where a ringed planet orbits it's sun," Counselor Davrina Adriakar said as she educated those in the room that knew nothing about this particular prophecy. "And that savior was and still is, Robert Andrew Jackson."

"Just how many lies are we going to have to sort out before we get to the truth!" Commander April thundered, as he came up and out of his chair while his best friend, Robert Jackson sat with his elbows on the conference table, hands folded and with thumbs to his mouth in deep thought.

"You mean that after all these years you still believe that my brother Robert is the savior of the Delindrian's, when he's more of a puppet on a very thin string!" Commander David Jackson thundered as well.

Robert Jackson calmly and silently stood up from his chair and motioned with his sore hand that everyone pay him attention.

"From that very first night, that we set our feet and eyes on this ship, seventeen years ago, we were only taught as much as was necessary, for us to complete our part, of the still ongoing, and continuously unfolding mission, that lies ahead of us." Admiral Jackson stated as everyone tuned their attention to him. "Admiral Kondulon Mazanurra and unnamed others, were afraid to tell us everything, and today, we know and understand, that everything, meant the Zaleen's."

The admiral continued speaking non stop as he held up his hand to silence David and a few others who had questions and comments.

"Admiral Mazanurra, the Delindrian's, and Zanarian's, still believe in their prophecy of finding a saviour on the planet Earth, that will deliver them from the Zaleens that enslaved them." Admiral Jackson went on to explain to himself as well as everyone else that had gathered in the briefing room. "It would be the Zaleen's that brought them to the planet Earth, in it's infancy, to turn those of us that were here then, and those of us that are here now, into instant, over night, star ship troopers."



## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"For one thing, it didn't happen over night, and for another, it couldn't happen in the short amount of time that we were allotted." he ended in saying.

"We were in many ways blindly forced into traveling to the planet Earth by our prophecy, the Zanarian's, and the Zaleen's." Davrina said as she folded her hands on the conference table.

"Davrina, you knew, perhaps blindly then yourselves, just how much you could reveal to us, when you arrived." Admiral Jackson said from that point onward. "We knew how blind we were, back then, and the Delindrian's and Zanarian's were the only ones that could and would, eventually, give us the proper amount of milk necessary for our survival out here in the depths of space." Admiral Jackson told them.

"As for my being your saviour, I still believe that you were a little late in arriving on Earth by a few thousand---

"Jay, we're going out there to rendezvous with a ship that's going to blow us to smithereens, and I don't have to be blind, and you a savior, or not, to know that." Donald April said as everyone sat in stunned silence. "Our survival depends on what we've got to fight them with."

"Dad?" Amber Jackson said as she left her post by the door and walked over to where her father sat.

"Yes Amber?" he asked as he looked up at his twenty one year old daughter.

"What have we got to fight them with?" she asked.

"I'm afraid ... that we don't have much," April replied as he gazed over at Amber.

"But, we'll have to face them sooner or later, whenever that time comes," Robert Jackson said as he stood once more. "I'm afraid that it'll be sooner."

"It's down right suicidal if you should ask me!" David Jackson blasted.

"What everyone has heard at our meeting here today, about the relationship between the Tawn family and the Adriakar family is not as secretive as it once was." Davadra said before anyone left the briefing room.

"Admiral, I would have preferred, that you would not have shown, Cadet Buckingham, our family---

"I thought that most of everyone aboard the Orion, and everyone in the Consortium, knew?" Robert Jackson asked as he interrupted Davadra.

"I can only say this for myself, if not my sisters, I want everyone here, in this room today, to keep as much as it be possible, this information to yourselves, and say nothing of what you now know, to anyone else, outside of this room or off this ship." Davadra Adriakar said as she turned away from the table, and Robert Jackson, and exited the briefing room.

"Counselor Adriakar, Commodora Tawn, I'm truly sorry," Tori Buckingham said as she hung her head in shame. "Don't blame the admiral, blame me and my big ego, or mouth."

"Buckingham." Commodora Tawn called from across the room. "If not you, someone else would have put all the pieces together, sooner or later."

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Captain Celane, Commodora Tawn, ready your ships for battle." the admiral ordered, having heard enough banter. "Doctor Falaikon, ready the medical staff for casualties."

"Commander Adronadius, ready damage control and engineering to hold us together for as long as your able." he continued to order. "Lieutenant Commander Javreen, it's going to take some fancy maneuvers, that I know your capable of, to get us out of the mess that we're going to be getting ourselves into this time."

"Commander Jackson, I don't suppose it would do any good for me to tell you to check each link in the chain and tighten security." his brother said as he looked over at him.

"If it breaks then I'll be breaking some heads and tightening my hands around some necks, Admiral." David Jackson said as he saluted his brother Robert before turning to leave the briefing room with his niece in tow.

"Commander Scott, are we locked and loaded?" the admiral asked, just before he yawned.

"As far as I am concerned, Admiral, we're armed to the teeth." Alexander Scott replied in answer to the admiral's question.

"We'll soon find out just how sharp our teeth really are." Commander Jackson said as he stood at the door along side Amber.

"Commodora Tawn?" Tori Buckingham yelled out from across the room.

"Yes earth woman?" Valakadria answered as Keletivia walked up to David Jackson.

"I just want to wish you good luck," Tori told her as she walked over and extended her right hand to the commodora.

"Luck and success do not travel the same path." Valakadria stated to her as she extended her hand to Tori.

"Then I wish us success, Valakadria." Tori said as she grasped Valakadria's hand.

"Thank you, Victoria." Valakadria replied before the two of them separated.

"You and I will have to fight at sometime in the future, one on one." Keletivia told David Jackson as she eyed him up and down.

"Is that a promise?" David asked calmly for a change as he looked into the prettiest set of green eyes that he had ever seen.

"A test of strength." she answered as he eyed her up and down.

"In the shape that I'm in right now woman, you'd probably win." he told her.

"No doubt." she replied as the oval door slid open and they made their exit, although however, Commander Jackson returned shortly.

## Chapter 23

\* Twenty - Three \*

"Admiral, I need to see you as soon as possible," he told his brother. "Alone."

"Very well Commander, I'll be waiting right here when you return." Robert Jackson said as everyone exited the briefing room.

A short while later Admiral Robert Jackson stood before the view of Round Forest from the oval window when Commander David Jackson walked swiftly back into the briefing room.

"Alright David," Robert Jackson said. "It's just the two of us now, so what's on your mind?" he asked, turning from the window.

"Well, for starters, we're on our last one way voyage to you know where for sure." David began. "But what else is new?"

"You had better sit down Bro." he said as he took a seat at the conference table himself. "You know, we haven't always seen eye to eye, and it's not because I'm taller than you." David told his older brother.

"I need to check up on the fleets position David, so can the crap and tell me what's bothering---

"Alright, damned it to hell, that Zaleen witch is in love with you Robert." David stormed as he sprang back up from his chair and onto his feet. "There now, I've said it, see you later, you can handle her, I've got other things to attend---

"That's it?" Robert asked his brother while closing the oval view port window and exiting the briefing room. "That's what your all fired up about?"

"Issac, lights off," he commanded as the oval shaped door to the aft command section briefing room slid shut behind them.

"She's your puppy, not mine, so you take care of her." David Jackson replied as they walked down the corridor only to run into Valakadria Tawn, standing there by herself, and all alone.

"Admiral, might I have a word with you?" she asked as David excused himself in a huff and made his way on down the corridor to check out the links in his chain.

"Sure Commodora," the admiral said. "How might I be of service to you?"

"Would I be correct in assuming that Commander Jackson has been conversing with you in regards to me, personally?" Valakadria asked.

"Your very perceptive, Val." Jackson answered as they began walking down the corridor to the nearest lift.

"What did he tell you about me Admiral?" she asked as others walked past them in the corridor.

"My brother told me that you're still in love with me, and that I should take care of you." he answered stepping in front of the oval lift door.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"And just what did he mean by saying that you should take care of me, Admiral?" Commodora Tawn asked as the two of them stepped into the lift together.

"Exactly that, Valakadria." he answered as the lift doors closed.

"What kind of puppy food would you eat I wonder?" he said to himself.

"What kind of what would I---

"Main deck entrance to Round Forest Sciences Section." the admiral spoke into the air.

The elevator turbo lift started it's decent as the two of them stood gazing at one another.

"Do you love me, Robert Jackson?" Valakadria Tawn asked as the lift continued on its downward journey.

"We've been over this before, Valakadria, and the answer is, as it always has been before, as a friend only." Robert Jackson answered nervously.

"Why do you continue to evade me Robert Jackson?" she asked as the lift began slowing.

"When I was out here in space seventeen years ago, I was actually accomplishing something in my miserable life." Jackson explained to her. "I had a purpose for living, and other lives were effectively changed . . . and some were lost."

"One of those lives that was effectively changed was my own Robert, because if not for you, I wouldn't be out here trying to purposely accomplish the impossible in my life, now why ... do you ... evade me?" Valakadria asked.

"Because I'm back out here doing what I have to do." Jackson answered. "What I need to do, what I want to do, and what must be done, even if reluctantly so."

"Val, this is most definitely not the time for this discussion, for you would be a distraction and hinder me from getting the job done this time." he told her.

"And just what is it that you're trying to get done, Robert?" Valakadria asked as the lift finally stopped and the oval door opened.

"What I set out and failed to accomplish on our last voyage, Commodora." Admiral Jackson answered as he stepped off the lift with Valakadria Tawn in tow.

"After you've succeeded in what you set out originally to do, but failed to accomplish, then what are my chances at becoming the distraction that you truly need?" she asked as the admiral made his way to one of the three triple oval air lock portals that led into the round jungle forest section of the Orion.

"You'll be the very first to know, Commodora Tawn." Admiral Jackson answered as he stood in front of the crowded portal.

"I had better be, Admiral Jackson." Valakadria replied as Robert Jackson reached out with his right hand to pull her into his arms and hug her tightly in front of everyone that had stopped or was passing through the portal.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Damned it, to hell with regulations, Val." he said as he kissed her for the first time in over thirteen years, and she didn't hesitate to hold him as if she would never let him go.

"I'm holding you to it, Robert," she said as the kiss ended.

"You're ... holding me ... too tight!" Jackson said in a little bit of pain.

"You're ... squeezing ... the breath ... right out of me, Val!" he gasped as everyone stood gasping themselves, at the scene going on before them.

"I'll do more than that if you should let me down, Robert." she said as she let go of him.

"I ah, don't doubt that in the least, Valakadria." he replied as she slowly turned around and started walking back to the lift, in order to return to her ship.

"Valakadria?" he called aloud as the crowd began to move along and disperse.

"Yes Robert." she answered as she quickly turned back around to face him.

"Don't let us down." Jackson said as he walked back to where she stood, noticing the tears in her eyes.

"We need your help, I need your help." he told her as he reached into his jacket and pulled out his handkerchief and passed it to her.

"See, Robert Andrew Jackson, you can't succeed without me in your miserable life." she told him as she took his handkerchief to conceal a pill like object that he had transferred to her mouth from his, before she continued on down the corridor to disappear inside the lift.

"Perhaps not." he said above a whisper to himself before turning about and walking through the triple oval air lock portal doors that led into Round Forest.

## Chapter 24

\* Tewnty - Four \*

Adrienne Barnes and Penny Ridgewood stood on the other side of the portal to greet him as he made his way into the forest.

"Adrienne, it's been forever since I've---

"Shut up, and follow us." Adrienne said as Penny came out from behind a tree and stepped onto the rock inlaid pathway.

"I take it that your apart of the us that I'm to follow." Jackson said as Adrienne took him by the left arm with her right while Penny followed close behind as the two of them led him deeper into the forest.

"We saw you kissing Valakadria Tawn in the command section like it was nothing at all." Penny informed him as Candy Simmons slipped out from behind another tree to follow along side Penny.

"Don't think that we don't keep a close watch over you big brother." Candy told him as they walked off the path and into a more secluded area.

"You too!" Robert Jackson boomed at his sister.

"We understand whole heartedly, your attraction to, and relationship with Valakadria Tawn, but why not in the privacy of your own quarters?" Adrienne asked. "Not out here in the open for all to---

"Is that what this friendly reunion is all about, her and I?" Jackson said interrupting Adrienne as she led him to a boulder where the two of them could sit while the others found places of their own.

"How stupid can the two of you be, Robert Andrew?" his sister Candy asked as Adrienne sat down beside him for the first time in forty years.

"Right now sis, we need Valakadria Tawn on our side of the galactic fence whenever we reach planet Glammadren within a few hours, and if kissing her in front of the crew gets the job done, then I'll be damned if I'm going to let a little embarrassment get in the way of putting one more Zaleen battle cruiser out of commission!" he thundered, as Adrienne slipped off the boulder that the two of them shared.

"Oh really now!" Davadra Adriakar stormed, as she came from around the back of the boulder to help Adrienne retake her seat.

"Why did I have this gut feeling that you'd be here too?" Robert Jackson asked.

"Because of me Bro." Commander David Jackson said as he came from around the other side of the boulder.

"You told Davadra about Valakadria?" Robert asked as his eyes darted between the two of them.

"When it comes to Valakadria and your well being big brother, you had better believe it," David Jackson said as he picked a spot on the grassy forest floor and sat down.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Well Admiral, what are Valakadria Tawn's true intentions at this point in time?" she asked as Davrina and Sathrana walked up and out of the thick jungle growth.

"I mean, after all, if anyone could, or would, be able to find out about Valakadria, that anyone is none other than you." she added as Davrina sat down beside David while Sathrana leaned up against a tree.

"Personally, if you should ask me, and you haven't, I believe that we should all be kissing her booty." Victoria Dawn Buckingham said from up above them, as she sat in one of the branches of the tree that Sathrana was leaning against.

"Buckingham!" Captain Celane yelled out as she turned and began shaking the tree hard enough for Tori to fall out. "You can't get away from me now!"

"Sathrana, that will be enough!" Robert Jackson also yelled as the captain moved off to find another spot while the cadet starvette pilot slid down and out of the tree.

"Aren't you supposed to be in training, Bumbling ham?" David Jackson asked as he gazed inquisitively over at her.

"I'm sick." Tori told him as she sat down on the grass.

"I'll vouch for that, in any way that I possibly can to help you out." David replied.

"No, seriously, I'm not feeling very---

"Alright already, don't get your panties all in a bunch!" he told her as Robert gazed and looked sadly at both of them. "I heard you the first time!"

"Tori, I respect your judgment on this matter, whole heartedly," Robert Jackson stated so that the others would know that he placed a lot of trust, and his very life, in the hands of Victoria Dawn Buckingham. "So, give us your input about Commodora Tawn." he ordered as everyone turned to face the red headed bombshell from earth.

"You asked, so, I'm not going to withhold any thing." Tori replied. "If anyone has ever loved Robert Andrew Jackson more than Valakadria Tawn they would both be married and living happily ever after, and I don't believe that anyone for the past six hundred and umpteen years has ever done what Robert Jackson has done for her."

"Tori, just what have I done for her?" Robert Jackson asked as everyone sat or stood there silently.

"All that Valakadria Tawn ever knew was war, death and destruction, then you came along and showed her what you have shown me in the past, and that is, that she doesn't have to be, nor is she, the witch that David Jackson and everyone else believes her to be." Tori told him and the others straight from her heart.

"At least not a wicked witch, but if Robert Jackson turns his back on her, then I dread knowing what she, or the outcome, will be." she added.

"Like I said before Bro, she's your puppy, not mine, so you take care of her, because your the one that let her out of her cage on our last exciting vacation into space together." David Jackson said right before Davadra Adriakar turned to run down the pathway and Robert Jackson's eyes followed her every step.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"If my puppy, as you so call her, needs to be re-caged, then I will see to it personally, myself, but, I have reasons to believe that she's going to be the least of our worries and woes." Robert told his brother David as he turned around to follow the path that Davadra had taken.

"You know," he said as he turned back to face everyone that had gathered nearby. "We're all at the great risk of loosing our lives from pure stupidity, if we, as a crew, do not take this mission seriously."

"I know that we're all uptight and afraid, and it may very well be one of the reasons why we are acting the way we do, in order to mask the fears of what lies ahead of us." he continued.

"The time has almost passed us by and we haven't been acting at all like professionals, but who am I to say as to whether or not we truly are." the admiral finished in saying as he left everyone to ponder over what he had just told them.

Robert Jackson followed the path that Davadra Adriakar took, just seconds earlier, to find her all alone, at one of the many gazebos placed about the forest. He knew, way beyond the shadow of any doubt, that she was hurt emotionally over his relationship with Valakadria Tawn. He takes this time with her, and explains the unique relationship that he shares with the Zaleen commander, and much more to his satisfaction than Davadra's, on and about the subject, the two of them depart the round forest science section, but not before he decides that it is the right time to give her a poem that he had written just for her, and upon her wanting him to read it to her, he began to do just that.

Well, we can't always be where we want to be

When we're truly not

we're truly not

Can't always see that one we want to see

They're so far away

so far away

I've went and found that while out here I'm free

but to my own doom

our own doom

Why you and me

me and you

Mind fell from my body

my body from my soul

my soul from my heart

but that's the way it goes



## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

that's the way it goes

Just lost my self

lost my self

From my head

to my toes

on my way to...

Well, we can't always be where we want to be

When we're truly not

we're truly not

Can't always see that one we want to see

They're so far away

so far away

I've went and found that when I set you free

twas my own doom

my own doom

Drove you from me

and me from you

mind fell from our body

our body from our soul

our soul from our heart

but which way did they go

which way did they go

Just lost ourselves

lost ourselves

From our heads

to our toes

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

on our way to...

Hell

Then, they both made their way to the bridge, hand in hand, together.

"We'll see Robert, we'll see." was all that she said with tears welling up in her eyes.

## Chapter 25

\* Twenty - Five \*

"Lieutenant Andrews, put me on ship wide vid-com." Admiral Jackson commanded as he walked in and onto the bridge, being followed closely by President Adriakar.

"You're on, Admiral." Lieutenant Andrews replied from her post at communications.

"This is Admiral Robert ... Edward ... Lee ... Andrew ... Jackson, to everyone aboard the Orion." he began, as ears perked up from all stations on and off of the bridge, especially the ears of President Adriakar, who had never heard him use his full birth given name, ever.

"I may only be acting, as the admiral of the galactic fleet, until all is said and done, but be though as it may be, I will expect not only from myself, but also from every officer aboard this ship, conduct, in a more appropriate and respectable manner, worthy of the rank, and or office, that we all presently hold." the admiral continued as his voice filled the entire ship from end to end.

"If we can't, or else have no desire to do so, then I suggest that this be the time that we relinquish our rank, and or office, to someone who is better qualified." Jackson said as everyone on the bridge looked around at one another as if for the first time.

"Unless we all strive most seriously to do our best, then our chances of survival during this mission will be slim to none." the admiral went on to say. "This could very well turn into the blood curdling battle that we've all prayed about, and have hoped to avoid."

"The Zaleens only bring death and destruction, dominance and misery, to every free and inhabited world, apart of, or apart from, the Consortium." Admiral Jackson added.

"We are nothing to them but a contaminating virus that needs to be exterminated and gotten rid of." Commander April said to himself as he turned around in his seat to recheck his monitors.

"Right you are, Commander April." President Adriakar replied as Captain Celane stood up from the center seat to stretch her limbs.

"Our main objective during this mission will be to combine forces with the rest of the galactic fleet and try as hard as we possibly can, to keep the Zaleens from crossing the neutral zone, and into Consortium space." Admiral Jackson explained.

"During our voyage, this ship and its crew will begin the process of shaping up for whatever lies ahead of us in the orbit of the planet Glammadren." Admiral Jackson, out," he said before Andrews cut the ship wide transmission.

"Captain Celane," Jackson went on to say. "We're going on to Glammadren without the aid of Commodora Tawn."

"What, are you mad, Admiral!" Davadra Adriakar and Sathrana Celane both thundered, flinging their arms all about in the air, as if ready to fly right into him.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Madam President Adriakar, Captain Celane, and all bridge personnel, I'm just being cautious." Jackson answered as he walked over to stand at Donald April's station while her eyes bore hatefully into his back. "You all fail to see, that whoever is going to be meeting with us, in the orbit of the planet Glammadren, wants us to believe that it's Commodora Tawn."

"We can't have her ship tagging along beside us when we get there, now can we?" he asked as he gazed over to see Sathrana Celane sitting slowly back down and into her seat.

"I see your point, Admiral, but just how many ships will the fleet be sparing from duty while they patrol the Uorexuan neutral zone?" the president of the consortium asked as she gazed over at the admiral of the galactic fleet.

"And please, don't address me as Madam President Adriakar!" she flared.

"Davadra, one lone Zaleen battle cruiser destroyer has crossed the neutral zone in violation of the treaty, and regardless of that fact, we are now ourselves, en-route to---

"How many ships will the fleet spare, Admiral?" Commander April asked, glancing up at his old friend since junior high school days.

"Just two ships, Commander." Jackson replied glancing down at April.

"We're going to our doom against a twenty mile long battle cruiser destroyer, and all the fleet can spare are two ships!" Captain Celane stormed again as she flew back up and out of her seat while turning to face the admiral.

"Captain, if the Zaleen's suspect that we are on to them, they'll blow us out of the Glammadren solar system." Jackson stated.

"They might just decide to do that any how." Commander Scott said as he made one last check of his console before he stood up to face the admiral.

"Sure enough, Commander Scott." the admiral agreed. "Commodora Tawn has warned us, that we might be heading into a trap, so, we must be prepared to escape that trap before it's sprung." Jackson said as he walked over to one of the oval bridge doors.

"We'll be weapons hot, if nothing else." Commander Scott said as the admiral exited out and into the octagon corridor alone.

"I believe the ship is fit enough to deflect whatever the Zaleen's might throw at her." Scott went on to say to the others on the bridge.

"You seem awful sure of yourself, Commander Scott." Commander April replied as the oval doors to the bridge zipped open and allowed the Helmsman, Lieutenant Steven Davis an entrance and Davadra Adriakar an exit.

The Orion entered the Glammadren solar system without incident and two star ships from the consortium's galactic fleet flanked and escorted the flagship to the orbit of the planet Glammadren itself.

"Zaleen battle cruiser destroyer dead ahead in Glammadren orbit as well, Captain." Commander April said as he turned from his monitors to the main view screen.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"They're hailing us, Captain." Lieutenant Andrews added as she too turned from her monitors to the main view screen.

"Put them on the speakers, Lieutenant." the Captain ordered as the Orion closed in on the twenty mile long Zaleen star ship.

"Bridge to Admiral Jackson." said the voice of Captain Celane over Jackson's vid-com wristwatch. "The show's about to start, sir."

"I'm on my way, Captain." the admiral said as he walked from his ready room over to and on to the bridge, before training his sights on the main view screen just ahead of the helm and navigation's stations, on the wall of the upper deck, between the engineering and environmental stations.

## Chapter 26

\* Twenty - Six \*

"This is Empress Kalindra Vohaydren, of the Zaleen Empire." said the voice over the bridge com system, as the crew gazed at the image on the view screen that bore a close resemblance to Angelina Jolie.

"I'll come straight to the point as to why I had the Orion summoned here." she said as everyone on the bridge watched and listened attentively.

"I order the admiral of the galactic fleet to seek out and find Princess Valakadria Tawn, and deliver her personally to me, in the orbit of this puny planet, along with her birth collar," the Zaleen empress demanded as she leaned forward in her throne chair, aboard her massive castle fortress which orbited the planet Glammadren.

"And why should I follow through with such an order?" Admiral Jackson asked as he walked around to the front of the helm station.

"If you do not, the peace treaty between the former government of the Zaleen Empire and the rest of the free and inhabited worlds in the United Galactic Consortium of Inhabited Worlds will be voided and terminated, and a full scale galactic war between the consortium and the newly formed Zaleen government will be unavoidable." the new Zaleen empress answered as she sat back on her plush throne. "That is, if you do not follow through with my order, Admiral."

"Empress Vohaydren, do you not already violate that treaty yourself by being on this side of the neutral zone?" Jackson asked his second question, as Davadra and Davrina Adriakar entered on to the bridge and turned their full attention to the main view screen.

"Take as much time as you need, Admiral." the empress answered his second question as she stood up from her throne and drew closer to her view screen. "Which shouldn't take very long, since I firmly believe that you already know where she may be found."

"Empress, do you not ... already ... violate ... the treaty ... yourself?" Jackson asked his third question slowly this time.

"Admiral, do you not ... already ... harbor ... an enemy of the Empire?" Vohaydren replied just as slowly.

"And should Valakadria Tawn refuse to be apprehended and delivered to you?" Jackson asked his fourth question.

"Then she for one, and you for the other, will be held responsible for starting something that won't be stopped, until one of you, or the both of you, are dead, Admiral." the Zaleen empress replied, in answer to his fourth question. "Starting with the inhabitants of this innocent, and unsuspecting world, that my ship will destroy first if you should fail to comply."

"This is Empress Kalindra Vohaydren, of the Zaleen Empire, and I have spoken." she said before she terminated the transmission, from her end.

"Of all the things." Robert Jackson said as the main view screen no longer showed the face of the Zaleen empress, only the one of her twenty mile long flagship, in Glammadren orbit.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"I thought that I was ready for anything, but most definitely not this," the galactic fleet admiral said as he turned around and faced his fellow crew mates on the bridge.

"Helm, prepare to engage weapons and fire at---

"And just what good would that do, Captain Celane?" Jackson said, firing back at the captain.

"---will." she ended in saying.

"The Admiral's right," Commander April said from his station. "Firing on the wicked witch's ship might be the only provocation that the Zaleens need to start the war that we've been trying so hard to avoid." he added.

"And all that their empress wants, in order that we may avoid that very war, is Valakadria Tawn." Davadra Adriakar said as she walked across the deck to stand at Robert Jackson's side.

"Where to now, Admiral?" Captain Sathrana Celane asked as she gazed over at Jackson from her seat.

"Zanaria, Captain." he answered as he dared to take one last look at the main screen before turning back around to face Davadra.

"Why the planet Zanaria, Admiral?" Davadra asked as Captain Celane ordered the helmsman to set course for the Zanarian solar system at phase three.

"That's where we'll find Commodora Tawn." Jackson answered as he placed his right hand on her left shoulder.

"We're going to meet with Valakadria and find out the course of action that she wishes to take before we proceed any further." he added as he let his hand drop from her shoulder before walking up the steps and exiting the bridge.

"Lieutenant Andrews, hail the commanding officers of our escort ships." ordered Captain Celane as the Orion slowly maneuvered out of it's orbit of the planet Glammadren and headed for deep space.

"This is Captain Sathrana Celane of the Consortium starship Orion," she began as she watched the split view of both captains on the main vid-screen. "I want to thank the both of you for having escorted us to the planet Glammadren."

"Now if you'd be kind enough to stick around for awhile and keep an eye on our uninvited guest, we'd sure appreciate it." she said before the two captains bowed their heads and the screen went blank.

"A meeting will be held in the bridge briefing room of all heads of staff in half an hour." President Adriakar announced as she activated the ship wide com at the helm station.

"Alert secondaries to man all stations in twenty minutes, President Adriakar, out." she said, before grabbing her sister Davrina by the arm and leading her off the bridge at a run.

Out in the octagon corridor, Galactic Fleet Admiral Jackson waited for President Adriakar and Counselor Adriakar to arrive, and of course he didn't have to wait long, as they about bowled him over on their way out of the bridges left side oval sliding door.

"Davadra, why did you call for another meeting of all---

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"We've got to put our heads together and find a solution to the immediate problem at hand Admiral." Adriakar answered. "We need to know what course of action that we are going to take before we proceed in finding out which one Valakadria will pursue."

"Davadra, Davrina," the admiral said. "I personally believe that this new Zaleen empress will not be satisfied with any thing less than what she has ordered me, and or us, to do," he stated as he now stood facing the oval door to the male head or privy that slid open in front of him.

"And that is ... for me ... and or us ... to deliver in full ... Valakadria Tawn ... into her very hands." he said as he stepped inside the lavatory and left the two women on the other side of the door as it slid shut and hid the tears that had welled up and stung at his eyes.



## Chapter 27

\* Twenty - Seven \*

"I, President Davadra Alurra Adriakar, of the United Galactic Consortium of Inhabited Worlds, call this meeting to order." Davadra Adriakar said as everyone sat around the table in the bridge briefing room. "This meeting is being transmitted live to every planet and star ship in and of the consortium."

"At this time I will replay the vid-com disk recording of Empress Kalindra Vohaydren's demands from the Zaleen Empire." she said as she activated the vid-com system on the podium where she stood.

After the recording had ended Davadra's face filled screens on countless worlds and star ships that picked up and transmitted the signal. She explained that the Orion was currently en-route to the planet Zanaria where they would meet personally with the former princess of the Zaleen Empire, Valakadria Tawn, in order that with, or without her aid, the Consortium of Inhabited Worlds would seek out and find a way to prevent a full scale galactic war from starting.

"In order to keep the peace treaty between the consortium and the Zaleen Empire in effect, and prevent a full scale galactic war from taking place, we must find, and if necessary, use force, and turn the former princess and daughter of Empress Kalaketvia Tawn of the planet Zaleena over to their new empress, Kalindra Vohaydren." President Adriakar stated for the record.

"The charges brought against ... Valakadria Tawn, and the punishments that ... she may or may not receive, are unknown at this present time," she said while tears flooded her eyes and she gestured for Admiral Jackson to take the podium because for reasons unknown to anyone else but herself, she could not continue, and Jackson, not knowing exactly what he would say for sure at such a short moments notice, took over.

"I, Galactic Fleet Admiral Robert Andrew Jackson, of the United Galactic Consortium of Inhabited Worlds, and Galactic Fleet am now at this time placing all inhabited worlds and all star ships in the consortium and the fleet under red alert standby status." Jackson said as everyone around the table in the bridge briefing room exchanged glances and words with one another. "If war with the Zaleen Empire is inevitable, and then we must prepare to make ourselves ready for war."

"Our main objective from henceforth onward, and thereafter today, will be to keep the Zaleens from crossing the neutral zone into consortium space, at all cost, Galactic Fleet Admiral Robert Andrew Jackson, out." he said as he deactivated the vid-com unit on the podium before stepping down and walking over to stand at the head of the table, his eyes now on Davadra Adriakar.

"That was short but sharp," Commander Donald April said as he scratched his beard with his right hand as his elbow rested on the low table.

"If we don't turn the old witch over to the new witch, then we can all rest assured that we won't be getting any rest in Oz." Commander David Jackson, the chief of security said as he looked up at his older brother.

"We can all rest uneasily assured of that, oh great and mighty brother wizard." he added.

"How was it that we survived seventeen years ago, David?" Robert Jackson asked heatedly. "Sixteen years ago, fifteen years ago, fourteen years ago, David!"

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Tell us how we managed to be right back where we are now, after thirteen years?" David's brother asked while staring hatefully down at his transcribe.

"Valakadria had a heart," answered starvette fighter pilot, Captain James Jackson, younger brother of David and Robert as he gazed about the table. "This Calendar Of Hated Men or what ever her name is, doesn't have one, that I'm aware of," he added.

"That much is for certain, Admiral." Commander Donald April replied from his seat at the table. "Your not going to melt what Vohaydren doesn't have." he said as he looked up at his old friend while giving James a thumbs up gesture.

"Kalindra Vohaydren says what she means and she means exactly what she says." said the Zaleen ambassador, Dara Tekka as she stood to speak.

"I will represent Commodora Tawn if she has need of my services, and, idle talk and wasted time are not apart of this new Zaleen empress's makeup." she added as she looked about the briefing room table.

"Dealing with the likes of her will in no way be an easy task, Ambassador, Admiral." Davadra Adriakar stated as she wiped the last of the flowing tears from her eyes.

"Well," the admiral said as he glanced once more over at Davadra. "Time is wasted with idle talk, and right now time is one commodity that we are very hurriedly running short of." he said.

"Valakadria Tawn will determine our next course of action, based on how she will handle the matter, once she has been briefed," he ended in saying.

"And that is if she hasn't already been informed, via the galactic transmission to the planets and ships in the Consortium." Counselor Davrina Adriakar said as she took her sister Davadra by the arm.

"I would say that she has, Davrina." Admiral Jackson replied.

"Admiral, and present company included," Commander Jackson said as he stood up from his seat at the table. "Why don't we---

"Meeting adjourned." President Adriakar said, interrupting the security chief, as she walked toward and through the oval doorway, along with her sister as the others got up from the table to follow.

Admiral Jackson made his way to exit the bridge briefing room out into the octagon corridor to stand with Davadra and Davrina, having left his transcribe behind on the conference table.

"Are you alright Davadra?" he asked as he placed his left hand on her right shoulder and his right hand on Davrina's left shoulder. And you Davrina, are you alright?"

"Yes Robert." Davadra answered as her sister Davrina shook her head no.

"Captain Celane, Commander April, see to it that we arrive in the orbit of Zanaria as soon as---

"I for one, am going to the galley and refuel my stomach," Donald April said, interrupting Davadra before she could proceed to change the subject of her hurt, herself.

"I second the motion," Sathrana Celane chimed in.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Sounds good to me," David Jackson said as they stood by the turbo shaft between the briefing room and the officers' lounge.

"I haven't any objections," Robert Jackson said, before he went back to the briefing room to retrieve and tuck his transcribe under his left arm, after releasing his light grip on Davadra's and Davrina's shoulders.

"If the bridge needs us then they can suffer until after we've had something to eat," Alex Scott said as he punched the touch pad control for the lift. "I mean they can suffice until after we've---

"We get the message Alex," James Jackson said as he leaned on the corridor wall and waited with the others.

"Should you over stuff yourselves, please don't come crying to me." Barbara Henderson said as she glanced down at her transcribe.

"Don't worry Doc, I'm not a pig like some of us here may be." Steven Davis said as he covered his head so that David Jackson wouldn't thump it.

"Okay, who's hogging up the damned elevator this time?" David Jackson bellowed just as the oval door slid open and Dara Tekka side stepped around the irate security chief to take a seat in the lift.

"Davadra, is it, or is it not, true, that Vohaydren's ship is in violation of the treaty which states ... no ships in the Consortium or the Zaleen Empire are allowed to cross over the Uorexuan-Zaleen neutral zone into each others space, except to offer aid, as per request by the other party, and that being in a time of peace?" he asked as the others listened in while ordering their food.

"Yes." Davadra answered, somewhat surprised that the admiral hadn't forgotten this portion of the treaty after thirteen years.

"Then might I suggest that we contact the fleet and have them send enough ships to the Glammadren system to immobilize Vohaydren's ship and place her and her crew under galactic arrest." he said as everyone remained silent during his and Davadra's short conversation with one another. That was until David Jackson piped up.

"Now you're showing a little backbone, brother." the security chief said.

"That action in itself would be more than enough of a reason to provoke the Zaleens to start a war of gargantuan proportions," Davadra Adriakar replied.

"Yes," Davrina Adriakar said as she stood. "The very war that we want, so very much, to avoid at all costs."

"Even at the cost of your half sisters life?" Robert Jackson asked as he stood.

"That ... was ... as they say on Earth, a very low blow, Admiral!" Davadra stormed as she stood also.

"We either do as I suggest or else we hand Valakadria Tawn over to the newly formed Zaleen Empire!" Admiral Jackson stormed back as everyone squirmed uneasily in their chairs at the table. "Getting the former princess and ourselves out of this mess at the same time will be no easy task, Madame President Adriakar."

"I am well aware of the dangers and the risk that we would be ta---

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Empress Vohaydren wants Commodora Tawn and has violated the treaty in coming across the neutral zone after her," Donald April said as he stood at the table stopping his friend short before he, Jackson, blew a fuse. "This in itself is a spit in our faces if we sit here and do absolutely nothing about it."

"I agree wholeheartedly with you Commander April." David Jackson replied.

"I do have a plan," the admiral said as he fought to control his anger. "But, it's a spur of the moment plan and it's ... not completely thought out," he said as he and April slowly sat back down in their chairs.

"And what may I ask, is your incomplete plan, Admiral?" Davadra asked as both she and Davrina retook their seats at the table.

"It is a plan of deception, Davadra," Jackson answered as his food was brought to the table and set before him. "That is ... if it works, because I'll be needing the cooperation of everyone on this ship and everyone available to us on the planet Zanaria."

## Chapter 28

\* Twenty - Eight \*

"Admiral," Donald April said as his food arrived. "Are you planning on having a substitute robot drone stand in for, and replace Valakadria?" he asked as he watched Robert dig into his food.

"Yes Commander," Jackson answered. "It's that or do as I have previously suggested, but, either way, we're taking a calculated risk and the chances that we're going to be drawn into a galactic war is very high, our main enemy right now is the time wasted that we are quickly running out of."

"President Adriakar, Admiral Jackson," said Ambassador Tekka as she stood and pulled down the top of her sweater to unveil and to reveal a golden neckband. "This prevents deception of any and all kinds."

"Crap!" Robert Jackson uttered aloud, knowing deep down inside that the ball was safely back in Kalindra Vohaydren's court and may never have left it. "Your still connected."

"Yes." Tekka replied. "My birth collar prevents me from being anyone other than who I really am, therefore a robot drone or any galaxian is out of the question, and I can go nowhere in this galaxy that my own people will not be able to find me."

"That means---

"I ah, have a question to ask of you, Ambassador Tekka," Donald April said as he stood back up. "That is, if I may ask first, Admiral?"

"Oh, by all means, yes, Commander---

"Yes, Commander April," Tekka replied while she recovered her neckband and retook her seat, also having interrupted Admiral Jackson.

"I hope that I'm not the only one at this table that has been given the revelation," the first officer of the Orion said as he gazed up and down the length of the officers table. "The queen bee of Zaleena knows that you never died like we thought that you had at first. She knows that you're right here with us, and has known all along since having left the planet Mars. She also knows our present position and before too much longer, will know our final destination."

"Am I right so far in the telling of these assumptions, Ambassador?" he questioned Dara Tekka as Commander David Jackson slowly got up and out of his seat, keeping his eyes locked on to the Zaleen ambassador and a hand on his side arm.

"Yes Commander April, you have assumed correctly." the ambassador answered as her eyes locked on to the chief of security.

"Vohaydren is in Consortium space demanding that we turn Commodora Tawn over to her, so that for whatever reasons, she can return to Zaleen space, and all will be well between the two parties mentioned, but ... what ... about ... you ... Dara ... Kamade ... Tekka?" April asked, pausing between each word that he said as he continued to question her. "Just how do you fit into the grand scheme of things at this moment in time?"

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"I wish to congratulate you, Commander April," the ambassador said as she sat there in her chair while a single tear rolled down her cheek. "President Adriakar, Admiral Jackson, my last performance in the presence of everyone aboard this ship must be to make sure that the former princess of Zaleena, Valakadria Tawn, is returned to the planet Glammadren and deposited into the hands of the Queen Empress, Kalindra Vohaydren, or, my life functions will be terminated."

"As you have seen, I ... am not as free ... from my birth collar ... as is Valakadria Tawn," the ambassador answered, and when she had finished giving her answer, Commander Jackson, the chief of security, slowly sat back down in his chair.

"Aren't you going to place this Zaleen under arrest and throw her out the nearest air lock, Commander Jackson?" asked Davadra Adriakar as she sat there stupefied, along with the others, wondering why David hadn't suggested it himself.

"No I'm not," David Jackson answered as he witnessed tear after yet another tear rolling down the face of Dara Tekka.

"And just why the hell not?" Commander April asked as he fell back down in his chair.

"Because, Dara has a heart," Commander Jackson answered. "And with that time bomb welded around her neck, she's being forced into this at the risk of her own bacon ... life."

"I wanted so much to tell you earlier, Admiral, when Valakadria first came aboard." Dara said as she wiped the stinging tears from her eyes.

"But we wouldn't let you." Admiral Jackson replied as he buried his head in his hands.

"Dara, we have to remove your neck band some---

"Not this time, Counselor Adriakar," Dara Tekka said, interrupting the former princess of the former kingdom of Lorea Lundae on the planet Delindria. "Any attempt made to release me of my birth collar not only terminates my life, but will destroy anything within the measurement of a planets radius."

"Oh what a tangled web we have weaved for ourselves," Commander April said as he shoved his plate away. "It just keeps getting bigger by the minute."

"If that she spider doesn't have Commodora Tawn within a short span of time, then all she has to do is send a signal out to the Ambassadors neckband and, poof ... we ... are ... all ... history."

"Commander Scott," the admiral said as he stood. "You, Commander April, and Doctor Henderson may use all the resources available to you to put Ambassador Tekka's golden birth collar out of commission without endangering the ship or it's crew."

"If it or the ship takes a special shielding to jam incoming signals to her neckband, then make it happen, whatever it takes." Jackson told them.

"It'll be a challenge, because we have to remove the neckband from the Zaleen without removing the Zaleen from the neckband." Alexander Scott said as he stood up from the table. "But I do love a good challenge."

"As I said earlier, our number one enemy is time itself," Robert Jackson informed everyone at the table. "Do what you can for her ... for all of us."

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Does this mean that there may be a slight chance that we'll survive this ordeal?" Dara Tekka asked as she looked out across the table.

"Anything's possible, if we are able to make it happen." Valdara Adriakar Jackson said, having answered Dara's question from the next table over as she stood up, with a little help from Eric and Amber Jackson. "It's when we do nothing, that we can be assured that things will happen as they are meant to, without intervention."

"It is only when we intervene and change things so that they happen in a different way, that we can be assured that we made it possible." she ended in saying.

"In short, let's get to work and make it possible, if we are able, so that Dara Tekka and the rest of us can be free of her blasted neckband," Commander April said as he pointed to the ambassadors neck.

"You could have left out the blasted part, Commander," Admiral Jackson said as his vid-com watch beeped.

"Bridge to Admiral Jackson," said an unknown voice over his wrist unit.

"Admiral Jackson here." he answered having raised his watch to his mouth.

"We are entering the Zanarian system, sir." the voice relayed.

## Chapter 29

\* Twenty -Nine \*

"This is Zanarian Space Command Central," said a female voice over the bridge speakers. "State the nature of your business in our solar system." she added as Captain Celane sat back in the command chair.

"This is the United Galactic Consortium flagship Dorion Adriakar en-route from the planet Glammadren," Celane replied back. "Captain Sathrana Celane in command. Our business is with Commodora Valakadria Tawn of the Zaleen battle cruiser Kalaketvia Tawn, that's now orbiting your planet as we---

"You are to conduct whatever business you may have while in orbit and then you will be escorted from our solar system at the conclusion of your business." she said having had interrupted the captain of the Orion.

"That is unsatisfactory," said Admiral Jackson as he entered onto the bridge. "This is United Galactic Consortium Fleet Admiral, Robert Andrew Jackson."

"You are to conduct whatever business you may have while in orbit and then you will be---

"This is United Galactic Consortium President, Davadra Allura Adriakar," Davadra Adriakar said, cutting in as she walked on to the bridge from the octagon corridor. "I request an audience with Uonitor Zonalua at Consortium headquarters."

"You are to conduct whatever bus---

"Listen!" thundered Admiral Jackson as he spoke through the vid-com system. "Your people called us into your service, seventeen years ago, to deal with the Zaleens! Galactic Fleet Admiral Kondulon Mazanurra gave us our mission orders and directives! Now that we travel here to seek your aid, you want to turn us away! We have requested an audience with Uonitor Zonalua at Consortium headquarters on the planet's surface and nothing short of granting our request will be acceptable! I'll have the fleet removed from Zanarian space and the Zaleens can blow your precious planet off the star charts!"

"Do I make myself perfectly clear on the matter?" the admiral said as he stood directly in front of the main viewer while the others on the bridge looked on, stunned at the force of the admiral's words to the Zanarians. "And I do mean ... to make the removal of the galactic fleet ... my business in the Zanarian solar system, the conclusion if we aren't---

"Stand by, Orion." said the female voice having had interrupted the admiral once again.

"Jay, Admiral," First officer Donald April said from his posted station on the bridge. "Your going to have a nervous break down if you don't chill out a little. I've never seen you this hot before---

"Commander April," Robert Jackson said as he done an about face to gaze over at his long time friend. "It seems as if I'm not the only one on this ship with a touch of alzheimers." he went on to say after a short pause, while he awaited an answer from Zanarian Space Command Central. The answer was quick in arriving as the main vid-screen came to life.

"Galactic Fleet Admiral Jackson, Galactic Consortium President Adriakar, your request will be granted, providing that you adhere to certain limitations and or restrictions that will be placed upon your landing parties." The Zanarian female said as she leaned back in her chair. "You and all members of your landing



## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

party will be quarantined and shall not be allowed off of Consortium grounds, nor will you or they be allowed to converse with anyone other than those of us that are necessary to conduct and conclude your business until your departure from our planet."

"Failure to comply with these limitations and restrictions will terminate your business and your stay with us," she informed the crew of the Orion as everyone watched and listened throughout the ship. "Do you understand, Admiral Jackson?" she asked, directing the conversation solely at him.

"That is satisfactory." Jackson answered as he gazed hatefully into the vid-screen.

"Very well," she replied. "Your shuttle will be brought to the surface by remote control to the landing site."

"We will be bringing Commodora Tawn along with us when we---

"That is not allowed." the Zanarian female said cutting the admiral short.

"As was mentioned earlier," Davadra Adriakar said, before Robert Jackson had a chance to blow his stack again. "Our business is with Commodora Valakadria Tawn of the Zaleen battle cruiser Kalaketvia Tawn."

"You are to conduct whatever---

"Your making this very hard on yourselves for not granting us so little of what we ask of you," Admiral Jackson said in a calmer state of mind. "Which isn't much, considering Valakadria Tawn is a member of our crew---

"All enemies of the Consortium and the planet Zanaria are denied access to the planets surface." the blond Zanarian female responded as she interrupted the admiral yet again.

"There will be no more discussion on the matter." she added.

"Then you leave me no choice but to withdraw the fleet from---

"Normally, we would have no further dealings with alien visitors to our world," said the voice connected to an elderly male Zanarians face on the main vid-com screen on the bridge. "But since the fleet admiral and president of the consortium are visiting us, we have no other choice but to grant you your request."

"Though however, the Zaleen must adhere to the rules and regulations as pertaining to off worlders. Zueaston Zonalua, Unitor of Zanaria, out." he said shortly before the screen darkened and the transmission was ended.

"Admiral," Davadra said as she turned to face him. "Why, of all the planets in the galaxy, did you want to come to Zanaria for our ... business with Commodora Tawn?"

"I'm asking that very question of myself." Jackson answered as he returned the look that Davadra was giving him.

"Our dilemma began with the Zanarians regardless of your Delindrian prophecies. Somehow and in some manner it must end with the Zanarians." he told her as the image of Valakadria Tawn filled the main screen.

"I've done as you have asked of me in your message capsule, Admiral." she said as Jackson and Adriakar returned their gazes back to the vid-screen. "I take it that we need to meet on the planet's surface via a shuttle from the Orion."

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Yes, Commodora Tawn, that we do." Jackson said as the former princess of Zaleena sat back in her command chair.

"In regards to the earlier transmission from Empress Vohaydren?" she asked, having let them know that she knew.

"Yes, Commodora ," the admiral answered as he gazed into the viewer. "Permission to come aboard is granted, Jackson---

"I believe, Admiral Jackson, that it was I that made contact with you," she quickly said before he thought to end the transmission himself. "Commodora Tawn, out."

Valakadria Tawn's personal shuttle came in to land on Forward Starvette Interceptor Deck A-One. Keletivia Torl descended the shuttle's ramp behind Valakadria as Robert Jackson, Davadra Adriakar, Sathrana Celane, Davrina Adriakar, DaraTekka, and David Jackson stood at the foot of the ramp awaiting their exit.

"I want to take this time to tell each and every one of you that any attempt to delay the inevitable will only make matters worse," Valakadria said as she stepped off the ramp of her shuttle. "Not only for my crew, and myself, but also for you, Admiral Jackson and the crew of the Orion."

"Valakadria, I thought that I had a plan in the works, but Dara showed me that it would be futile to pursue it any further," the admiral replied as he took her hand momentarily in his own. "According to Ambassador Tekka, your golden birth ring collars prevent someone else from impersonating you or they prevent you from impersona---

"The Ambassador has spoken the truth to you Robert," the commodora said as he released her hand. "Our only alternative is to surrender ourselves over to the empress of Zaleena."

"Shall we talk privately, Valakadria?" the admiral asked as Keletivia Torl walked passed the two of them to speak with the chief of security, Commander David Jackson.

Valakadria Tawn stood alone with Robert Jackson in the command section briefing room. Both of them were gazing out the oval view port window at the round forest sciences section of the ship, but their minds were not on the breath taking view. Valakadria's eyes had welled up with tears that fell and trickled down her cheeks as she turned to face the admiral of the galactic fleet in the consortium of inhabited worlds. Robert Jackson gazed into the eyes of the commanding officer of the Zaleen battle cruiser destroyer, Kalaketvia Tawn.

"As much as I would wish it to be otherwise, I have to make the trip to Glammadren with my crew and Ambassador Tekka, in order to save every innocent galaxian in our galaxy." Valakadria explained to him. "And you have no other choice but to escort us there." she said as she leaned back against the window.

"And as much as I sincerely hate the idea of having to do so, your right." Robert Jackson replied. "It is the only way to prevent the new empire and the consortium from going to war. I wish that there were another way of saving---

"There isn't Admiral, Robert," she informed him. "Keletivia, Dara, and the rest of my crew are at our end and there's absolutely nothing that you nor the crew of this ship can do to prevent the inevitable from happening."

"Off the record, how was it that I was able to win you over and not Empress Vohay---

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Kalindra Vohaydren is a full blooded Zaleen with no mind or heart for her enemies. Her only goal in life is to divide, conquer, and dominate worlds and their inhabitants, without regards as to who or whatever gets in her way, and tries to stop her ... and why am I having this conversation with you ... there's nothing that you can do for us, except to take us to her, for our disposal." Valakadria said as the admiral sat on the edge of the conference table.

"Your disp ... your disp ... damned it all to hell!" he thundered.

"You can't always get the girl ... or at least that's somewhat of how your brother David explained it to me." she told him as she shoved herself away from the oval window glass.

"Just how did he explain it to you exactly, Val?" Robert Jackson asked as he stood.

"We were discussing you of course," she replied.

"Naturally." he said as he walked over and took Valakadria in his arms.

"David, I mean, Commander Jackson came out and told me that I couldn't always get the guy ... meaning you of course." Valakadria went on to explain as she let Robert Jackson hold her.

"Well, it's not that I don't want to be caught, Val," he said as he lightly brushed her tears away while they stood there alone together. "I've got some very serious responsibilities that are of the utmost importance, and anything else at this time will have to wait."

"I know," she replied. "How many times have I heard you tell me ... and there you go again---

"Hey!" Jackson roared. "I didn't---

"Just deliver us to the empress, Admiral," Valakadria said as she pushed herself away from him. "After that, your responsibilities won't be as serious or so important any---

"No!" Jackson blasted. "They'll be magnified, because if that Zaleen witch so much as ... I'll kill her myself if I have to ride the Orion down her phasonic emitter shaft in order to---

"You really do love me, don't you Robert Andrew?" Valakadria said as she drew closer to him and stared him straight in the eyes.

"Yes, I do, and I always have." he finally told her, without saying, just as friends only. "That's why it's making it difficult for me to just throw you to that she spider and then be done with those very serious responsibilities of the utmost importance that I have."

"Me," Valakadria whispered in his ear. "But, it has to be done. As I said, I have to make the trip to---

"I know what you said," Jackson cut in to say. "It still doesn't mean that I have to like the idea."

"No, it doesn't." Valakadria Tawn replied. "And, it doesn't mean that I have to like saying it."

"Well, let's see what the Zanarian counsel has to tell us at Consortium headquarters," he told her before grabbing and kissing her as if there were no more tomorrows.

## Chapter 30

\* Thirty \*

"You damned betcha I'm tagging along!" stormed security chief Commander David Jackson as he slung a ray rifle over his shoulder. "I bagged Valakadria Tawn seventeen years ago, and if I'm lucky again this time, I'll bag Kalin ... whatever the hell her name is!"

"This is not a massive rescue operation like the last time, David." Candy Simmons said as she sat on her brother's couch next to Tori Buckingham.

"Yeah, that may be!" her brother belted out. "But, it's the same old me, and---

"Old is right, David." James Jackson said as he sat on the right arm of the couch next to their sister Candice.

"Look at it this way," David said in a calmer but still deeper tone of voice. "I've beat myself in the head a few times already for having come to this dim witted conclusion. I've never come to ... what's that word ... love, that's it, love Valakadria Tawn, the way that you all seem to, but, she's had the hots for our brother Robert for ... hell ... he may have for her, but regardless, she's in a fix, and I for one am going to fix the problem, with or without your help." he told everyone that he had invited to his and Tiffany's quarters aboard the Orion, as she passed out drinks to their family members and friends.

"You can count me in." Tori Buckingham said, getting Candy's undivided attention.

"You're both crazy!" Candy Jackson Simmons blared, as she tore herself up and off the couch. "It's suicidal! It's just to damned risky!"

"It's suicidal and risky by our being millions ... I mean billions of miles, from Earth," Tori replied still keeping her seat on the plush alien couch. "But, you can still count me in."

"Do we do it just like last time Davy?" Steven Davis asked as his feet swung up and off of David Jackson's desk that set beneath the wall mounted vid-screen. He then spun himself around to face the others, while taking a drink from Tiffany's tray in the process.

"Why, with your expertise at flying, and with my familiarity with old Betsy here, its going to be a no brainer," David Jackson answered.

"No brains is right!" Candy Simmons bellowed. "I can't believe this ... out of any of you. Help me out here, Jim!"

"Listen sis," her brother David quickly said before his younger brother Jim could jump back in and have his say. "Space is the new frontier, where a man of my caliber can live up to his namesake. I mean, where would Davy Crockett be if he had of stayed home?"

"Alive!" Candy boomed.

"Very funny sis," David Crockett Jackson said as he shook his head in disgust.

"Well," James Bowie Jackson replied as he gazed over at his brother. "You did ask."

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Your coming here serves no purpose, other than to delay that which must be done, in order to prevent a full scale war from breaking out in our galaxy, Admiral Jackson, Madame President Adriakar." said the unitor of the planet Zanaria as he stood behind a podium in the central rotunda of the United Inter Galactic Consortium of Inhabited Worlds headquarters.

"Unitor Zonalua," Jackson said as he stood before the Zanarian leader. "A Zaleen battle cruiser destroyer orbits the planet Glammadren, on this side of, and I repeat myself, on this side of the neutral zone, in violation of the treaty between their empire and the Consortium of Inhabited Worlds, and we do nothing about it."

"Admiral Jackson," Zonalua said in reply as he gazed down at the galactic fleet admiral. "A Zaleen battle cruiser destroyer orbits the planet Zanaria, on this side of the neutral zone, in violation of the treaty between their empire and the Consortium of Inhabited Worlds. Now, we would ask that you escort it along with it's crew and commander to Glammadren and relinquish any feelings that you once had, have now, or will ever have, in the future, for ValakadriaTawn. If you do not, then the queen empress of Zaleena, Kalindra Vohaydren, has assured the Consortium that a war is forth coming. Valakadria Tawn and Dara Tekka are to be considered, along with the entire ship's compliment, aboard the Kalaketvia Tawn, enemies of both the Zaleen Empire and the Consortium, to be returned to Glammadren and released over to the empress. This ... Admiral Jackson ... is the decision ... of the consortium counselate. There will be no more discussion on the matter, as this meeting is adjourned."

"You are to conduct whatever business you may have, while here on the planets surface, and then you will be escorted from our solar system at the conclusion of your business," the blond haired Zanarian female said as she stood, and took over, behind the podium. "All enemies of the Consortium and the planet Zanaria are denied access--"

"Fine!" thundered Admiral Jackson, just milliseconds before President Adriakar began tugging at his shirt. "As of now, the planet Zanaria will have no more protection by the galactic fleet, whatsoever, for the fleet will be escorting the Kalaketvia Tawn and the Orion to the Glammadren system! Let's go, for we have no more business here."

"Admiral Jackson," the unitor of Zanaria said as he walked up to him. "Worry not, for help ... is ... on its way, and after you have completed your current mission, your services to the consortium, and to the fleet, will no longer be needed, nor necessary."

"I'm taking Valakadria, Keletivia, and Dara, to their deaths ... and ... you ... tell me not to worry, because help is on it's--"

"It's not for them Admiral, it's for the benefit of the consortium, as a whole." the unitor explained as he placed a hand on Jackson's shoulder. "You see, the Zaleens must all perish if this galaxy is to see peace of any kind in the near future. Then, shortly after the problem with the Zaleens has been taken care of, we'll concentrate on the Dorkonians next."

"And just how are all the Zaleens going to be taken care of, Unitor Zonalua?" Jackson said as he removed the Zanarian's hand from his shoulder.

"Help will arrive shortly, from afar, Admiral. I'll say no more, except to warn you, to stay out of their way when they get here." Zueaston Zonalua warned the admiral before walking off to speak with someone else.

"Davadra!" Jackson stormed. "You're the president of the consortium, so, say, or do something, if you haven't already!"

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Robert, I've had no time, nor the right time to tell you this." she said as she gazed about the massive hall to be sure that only he would hear what she had to say, before looking him straight in the eyes with her very own. "I've known, for some time, what the counsel voted unanimously upon, against us."

"What?" the admiral thundered. "I can't believe that you'd side with---

"I resigned." Davadra calmly informed him as she turned and made haste to exit the building with the very stunned Admiral, on her heels.

A short while later while standing at the foot of the ramp and before they entered their shuttle to return to the Orion, Davadra Adriakar pulled Robert Jackson off to the left side of the ramp in order to speak with him privately, while the others boarded.

"I pray that you tell no one, Admiral." Davadra said. "Let me be the bearer of this message to the crew, if you will."

"I don't know what else to say to you right now, other than, my lips are sealed." he told her as he took her right hand and the two of them walked up the ramp together.

## Chapter 31

\* Thirty - One \*

The Orion was on its way back to the Glammadren system while Valakadria Tawn, Keletivia Torl, and Dara Tekka stood on the bridge without uttering a single word.

Due to thirteen years of updated technology, Dara's golden neck collar could not be tampered with, or in the least bit, altered. Valakadria's on the other hand was taken from the Orion's phasonic emitter and placed back around her neck as was demanded by the empress of Zaleena, Kalindra Vohaydren.

In less than an hour, the three of them and the crew of the Kalaketvia Tawn would be turned over to the new queen and nothing short of a miracle would prevent it. The question that was now floating about the ship was that when the deserters were back in Zaleen space, would the Zaleen Empire and the Consortium live in peace with one another for as long as Kalindra Vohaydren ruled. The wait was about over as the Orion put in to orbit around the planet Glammadren and the rest of the galactic fleet escorted the Kalaketvia Tawn to a place in orbit as well before surrounding the empress's flag ship.

"Admiral Jackson," the empress said as they descended the shuttles ramp on to the battle cruiser destroyers fighter deck. "It was very wise of you to follow through with my orders and bring me that which I demanded of you."

"We found that we simply didn't have any other choices allotted to us," Jackson replied as he stood in front of Valakadria, Keletivia, and Dara.

"As I knew you all would ... eventually, Admiral." the empress stated as she offered her right hand for a friendly shake but withdrew it when the admiral wouldn't offer his.

"Until later, your highness," he told her as he gazed directly into her eyes. "I may offer you my hand in greeting, or when departing, many times in the future, if, and only if, you would but grant this one thing, that I beg of you."

"And just what would that one thing be, Admiral Jackson?" she asked as she gazed deeply into his eyes.

"I only plead that you would not harm Valakadria Tawn, Keletivia Torl, Dara Tekka, nor the crew of the Kalaketvia Tawn in any way, as to deprive them of their---

"Admiral," the empress interrupted to say. "You are in no viable position to ask, beg, or plead of me for anything. All I have to do is to give the word, and you, yourself, would be joining your three female, and traitorous friends, as prisoners of the empire."

"You .. speak ... the truth, your highness." Jackson gulped.

"This is the truth of the matter, Admiral!" the empress roared like a lioness. "I'm going to deposit Tawn, Torl, and Tekka on the uninhabited planet Kylodius to live out the remainder of their lives, undisturbed by the Empire, or by the Consortium, from the day that they are exiled there, until forever. You, on the other hand, are free to leave, so that we may be as free as well, to leave consortium space, and return to our own. Then, for as long as the three of them remain on Kylodius, all will be well between the Zaleen Empire and the Consortium of Inhabited Worlds. But, if any ship in this galaxy, at any time, makes an attempt to rescue them, they shall all be utterly destroyed."

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Kylodius is dead center of the---

"That's right, Admiral," the queen empress said. "Dead center of the neutral zone. And now, to prove to all, that I mean exactly what I say."

The Kalaketvia Tawn came up on the viewer behind Kalindra Vohaydren and a few seconds later it, not the viewer, exploded into oblivion.

"Until later, Admiral." she said as she spun around on her heels and gestured for the guards to escort Valakadria Tawn, Keletivia Torl, and Dara Tekka out of Robert Jackson's life forever.

"Until later." the admiral said as he slowly turned and walked back to the Patricia Gayle.

"I pray to God, that my brother knows what he's doing on Vohaydren's ship," Robert Jackson said as his personal shuttle headed back to the Orion.

"If anyone can ... pull it off, as I've heard it said, David Jackson is apt to be able to succeed." Counselor Davrina Adriakar said as she sat next to the admiral.

"Well, he's studied the plans of the ...

"What's wrong, Admiral?" Davrina asked as Robert Jackson paused for longer than she thought that he should while he gazed over at her sister.

"I called it off, big brother," David Jackson said as he raised up in his seat and scared the life out of Robert and Davrina. "That witch holds three cards and we hold none. I couldn't risk our lives by knowing that all she has to do is send the right wrong signal to Dara Tekka's birth collar, and ... poof."

"Valakadria was right," Tori Buckingham said as the others arose up in their seats. "There's absolutely nothing that any of us can do to---

"Incoming hail from the Visalcoa Vorna," Steven Davis said from the front of the shuttle as he put the transmission on the vid-com screen, forward of the passenger compartment. For some unknown reason, audio was transmitted only.

"Admiral Jackson," said the voice of Kalindra Vohaydren. "It was very wise of you to have kept the security team, that you did not need to bring along with you, aboard your shuttle. But, since you deemed it necessary, and since the security team came here for no justifiable reason that I could fathom, I must take the appropriate action to be assured that this does not happen in the future."

A ray rifle was heard, firing over the vid-com speakers and then, dead silence followed for the space of half a minute.

"Keletivia Torl has paid the price for your mistake, Admiral Jackson." the empress informed him, as Keletivia's body was ejected from an air lock on Vohaydren's ship and was immediately caught up in a transporter beam from a nearby Consortium star ship.

"For your information, Empress, it was my idea to bring security along, just in case it was deemed necessary for us to be there," David Jackson said into the air. "The admiral was against it from the start, but I wouldn't have it any other way."



## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"Then I can be assured that the admiral will take appropriate actions to make sure that you are penalized for jeopardizing the life of one of my prisoners." the empress said before she ended the transmission.

"I'd love to get my hands around---

"David," his brother stormed as he turned around to face the chief of security. "Me first!"

"By all means, Admiral, sir." his brother replied. "As long as I can get my hands around her neck, next."

"Lieutenant Davis," the admiral yelled to the front of the shuttle. "Patch me in to the fleet."

A few minutes later, Steven Davis had the fleet captains and commanders online.

"You're patched in, Admiral, sir."

"This is Galactic Fleet Admiral Jackson, to all ship commanders in the Glammadren system, you're to escort the Visalcoa Vorna safely to the neutral zone before proceeding to your next port of call. Jackson, out." he said as he gazed over at Davadra Adriakar who had remained silent with her head bowed.

One lone Consortium star ship pulled away from the rest of the fleet and sped off to the planet Calistra as the admiral's shuttle made it's way back to the safety of the Orion.

"Captain Celane," said Lieutenant Commander, Laura Andrews from the communications station on the bridge. "Incoming hail, on a secure channel, from Captain Talcrys of the medical transport ship, Asorednop."

"Put him on Lieutenant," Celane said as the main vid-screen shimmered from a view of space to one of a bridge on another ship.

"This is Captain Suvon Talcrys of the Calistran medical transport ship, Asorednop. We have a Zaleen female aboard, in med-bay, condition critical, but stable."

"Kele ... tivia ... Torl," Celane said as she arose up and out of the command chair to stand.

"Yes, Captain Celane," Talcrys replied. "We managed to transport her as soon as she was ejected from the Visalcoa Vorna."

"Do all that you possibly can for her, Captain," Sathrana said as she made her way across the bridge to stand closer to the monitor. "And thank you for transporting her as quickly as you did."

"There's no need to worry that her people will track her. She was shot in the neck, and for the most part, her birth collar just may have saved her life. When transported aboard our ship, she wasn't wearing it," Talcrys informed the commander of the Orion. "We're en-route to Calistra, where she'll be taken good care of, Captain Suvon Elah Talcrys, out."

"I suppose that we are all going back to our boring lives on planet Earth, providing that we have them when we---

"I'm afraid not, Commander Jackson," Counselor Adriakar said as she turned in her seat to face him. "Your exodus from your home world has ... well let me just say that someone has got a lot of explaining to do."

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"How do you go about explaining all those mass abductions from every continent on the face of the planet?" David Jackson said as he sat further back in his seat.

"Why not just take the Orion straight home ... and put her into earth orbit, to begin with?" asked Tori Buckingham as she sat forward in her seat.

"And let everyone on Earth know that---

"They're going to want to know where all of our shuttles came from." she said. "That would be my first best guess."

"She's right, Admiral," David Jackson said as he gazed over at Cadet Buckingham. "All of our shuttles had to come from a larger vessel. It's not as if the peoples of planet Earth haven't got a clue."

"Then we'll all be spending the rest of our lives explaining how we managed to be on the larger vessel in the first place," the admiral said as their shuttle closed in on the mother ship. "Not that some of them don't already know from our last voyage into space."

"With an extraterrestrial crew from umpteen inhabited worlds," his brother David added. "I believe that for the most part everyone back home on Earth will understand after we explain it to them ... not."

"Planet Earth, it's your wake up call." Tori Buckingham said as Steven Davis maneuvered their shuttle around for docking.

"And ours as well." Robert Jackson replied.

"I seriously doubt that we've seen or heard the last of Kalindra Vohaydren." he told them as he took one last look out the view port window before the shuttle was taken aboard the Orion.

"Unitor Zueaston Zonalua informed me that the Zaleens must all perish and that I should stay out of the ... executioners way, whenever they arrived from afar," Jackson went on to say as their shuttle was lifted upward through it's airlocks. "Counselor, who will be taking care of the Zaleen problem, and when should we be expecting them from afar?"

"This is news to me Admiral," Counselor Adriakar answered. "Other than the Consortium, the Dorkonians would be the only---

"No," Admiral Jackson quickly said. "The Zanarian Unitor also told me that after the Zaleens had been taken care of, the Dorkonians were next in line."

"The Dorkonians would be the only other force to be reckoned with Admiral," Davrina Adriakar continued to say as their shuttle sat down on the deck. "I would need to speak with Unitor Zona---

"Do it then," Robert Jackson ordered her as David Jackson popped the seals and the hatches opened.

"But, Ad---

"That's a direct order, Counselor Adriakar," the admiral said as he unbuckled his safety harness and waited on Davadra, before he followed her off of the shuttle.

## Being Aboard Dilemma 1.5

"I'll see what I can do, Admiral, sir." Davrina said as she too released her safety harness before standing to exit the craft.

"That's more like it, Davrina." Jackson told her as they exited the shuttle and made their way down the ramp only to bump into Captain Sathrana Celane.

"Keletivia Torl is alive, and being transported to the planet Calistra aboard the Asorednop, Admiral." Captain Celane informed him as they stood at the end of the ramp.

"And I would assume that we too, are on our way to Calistra?" the admiral replied.

"I didn't think that---

"This is your ship, Captain." Jackson told her before she could say her piece of mind. "Her last voyage, so make it last as long as you want."

"Thank you, sir." Sathrana replied back. "I didn't think that you would mind a delayed trip back to Earth."

"No," Jackson said sighing deeply. "It'll give Davadra and I some time to figure out how we're going to let the populace back on the home world know about our past two voyages. Now if you'll all excuse us, we've got a few things to take care of before we reach Calistra."

## Chapter 32

\* Thirty - Two \*

"It was nice of your Uncle David, Engineer DeAngelo and your personal counselors to give you both a little break away from your security and engineering duties." Robert Jackson told his son and daughter as he, Amber, and Eric rowed their boat out on Round River.

"I imagine that you had something to do with that." Amber Jackson replied as she took in the beauty of Round Forest from the center of the river.

"We couldn't have gotten time off if it hadn't of been for dad, sis." Eric Jackson said as he look over the edge of the boat to see the different species of fish swimming through the water that was as clear as glass.

"I told Davadra and Donald that we weren't to be bothered except in an extreme emergency." their father told them as they passed under tree branches that were intertwined and covered with moss across the river. "I really came out here with the two of you so that I could wind down and cool off over the fact that I had to turn Valakadria, Keletivia, and Dara over to the new witch of Zaleena."

"There was nothing that you could have done otherwise dad." Amber said as they moved onward at a leisurely pace.

"I've been telling myself that very same thing over and over again ever since I left the three of them behind. I just wish that I believed it enough to leave it be and---

"Isn't that Rea Warner waving at us from the shore?" Eric Jackson said cutting his dad short as he waved back.

"She wants us to row to shore, dad." Amber said as she waved along with her brother.

"---get on with my life." Robert Jackson finished saying as he waved right along with his children while they rowed ashore.

"May I come aboard, Admiral?" Rea Warner asked as she stood on the sandy beach portion of Round River.

"Sure, climb on in and let's get under way before we get caught." Jackson answered as Rea got into the boat. "Rea, as soon as we're through with our little mission to Calistra, we'll be headed back to Earth where I can make a fool out of myself in Washington and the whole wide world."

"Oh, I think that you'll do just fine." Rea replied as the boat made its way back to the middle of Round River.

The Sclorsenians were coming from afar, just as the Zanarian unitor, Zueaston Zonalua said that they would. They were still a great distance from the galaxy but that distance was rapidly closing fast as they approached at never heard of nor conceived of ultralight speeds. The Sclorsenians had not only mastered traveling at these magnificent speeds; they were also experts on the complete annihilation of any race any where once they were called upon. They are an insectoid race that resides in the andromeda galaxy, called to this galaxy by the Zanarians. How the Zanarians knew of their existence was at this point in time irrelevant. The Zanarians called them by deep space mind projection ages ago after their first disastrous contact with the Zaleens and the Dorkons. It was shortly after this that the Consortium was established. The Zanarians sent their distress call out to blanket the galaxy for help, never knowing, that someday soon, their call for help would be answered, not by any race in this galaxy, but by another race from an alien galaxy, where someone was always listening

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for signs of life beyond their own realms of space. The Sclorsenians would answer the call to finally rid this galaxy of the Zaleens and the Dorkons to the very last breathing male or female of both species and, nothing would or could stand in their way until that mission was completed. That is, nothing but another call from the Zanarians to end the extermination process once it had started. That call would never come. Not that it couldn't come after a portion of time had passed, before it was almost too late. No, that call would have to wait until certain things had happened at another time and place, in the not to distant future.

"I'm glad that you have such faith in me." Robert Jackson said as they all continued on with their little trek around Round River in Round Forest aboard the star ship Orion as it headed from the Glammadren system to the Bendu system where the planet Calistra was located, the second world from it's sun.

"All you have to do is to tell them the truth about our mission into outer space." Rea said as Eric and Amber paddled the row boat under the self supporting bridge below Round Forest Galley.

"You make it sound as if it's going to be the easiest thing that I've ever done in my life, Rea." Jackson told her as he gazed up at the bottom of the bridge.

"I know that you'll probably be nervous at first in front of such a large assembly---

"It's not that part that will make me nervous ... it's the telling of our journey out here where no man nor woman from Earth, other than we ... have traveled." he said as they passed from under neath the bridge.

"Your really worried about Valakadria Tawn and Dara Tekka, aren't you?" Rea asked, as she looked him straight in the eyes.

"You're right on the money, Rea, I'm extremely worried about the welfare of Valakadria and Dara."

"You'd really of had no other choice, but to drag us into a war that none of us would have been prepared for." she replied.

"I didn't have the time to---." Robert said as Captain Celane signaled his vid-com wrist watch.

"Admiral Jackson, we are entering the Calistra Bendu star system, sir." she said from the bridge.

"Signal me again, once we've put into orbit, Captain." the admiral replied into his wrist com unit.

"Very well, sir, Celane out." she said, cutting the transmission.

"Admiral, you're right about not having the time to do much of anything." Warner told him as they looked for a place to dock their boat once the second call from the bridge came.

A grappling arm had attached to the top of the admiral's shuttle and lifted it a few feet up and off of the deck door.

As soon as the oval door slid open the thirty foot long Patricia Gayle was lowered into it's first air lock chamber where it waited until the deck door slid shut above it.

Once that door was sealed above them the next one below their shuttle would slide open so that the Patricia Gayle could be lowered into the last air lock chamber just seconds away from being released into space.

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The middle door slowly slid open and the shuttle was lowered into the second air lock chamber where it waited until the middle door slid shut above it.

Once that door was sealed above them the outer shuttle bay door below their shuttle would slide open so that the Patricia Gayle could be lowered into space, just seconds away from being released by the grapppler arm.

During this time Donald April began his start up procedures. The outer door slowly opened and they continued downward, or at this point, outward, into space. They hung suspended in space until the oval shuttle bay door slid shut above them and the grapppler arm had detached from the top of the admiral's shuttle.

Donald April moved the Patricia Gayle further away from the Orion, as it orbited the beautiful world of Calistra, so that the admiral's personal shuttle could make it's decent to the medical facilities on the planets surface below.

"Admiral," Commander April said as he turned to face his best friend. "What the hell just happened?"

"Commander," Admiral Jackson said as he turned to face his best friend. "We just left the ship."

"That's not what I meant, Robert." April said. "We came out here and dumped Valakadria, Dara, and Keletivia off to that unemotional witch of Zaleena, and that's about all there was to it?" he explained.

"No battle, no war, no nothing, other than the loss of the Kalaketvia Tawn and the near loss of Keletivia Torl, this has been a pretty boring mission."

"It has been anything but boring, Donald." Robert Jackson replied. "Nerve racking is more like it."

"Why didn't we just blow Kalindra Vohaydren into the past and take the chance that the rest of the Zaleens would leave us the hell alone once they knew that we wouldn't tolerate their crap?" Donald April asked as he flew their shuttle down through the atmosphere of Calistra.

"I, or should I say ... we, prevented a full scale galactic war from breaking out should there have been that slightest chance that the rest of the Zaleens wouldn't leave us the hell alone and show us that they wouldn't tolerate our crap." Robert Jackson answered as their shuttle descended through the clouds.

"In other words, we just showed them how weak we are and how strong they are." April replied.

"Yes, I guess you could put it that way for the lack of explaining it any other.," Jackson said as their shuttle suddenly broke through the cloud layers over the continent of Morden Zore.

## Chapter 33

\*Epilogue \*

"Keletivia, you were very lucky that my brother David planned ahead for your salvation." Admiral Jackson said, as he gently took her left hand in his right. "Having a medical transport ship ready to take you all aboard should Vohaydren had of decided to eject the three of you into space from an airlock, was his idea."

"Perhaps he is still looking forward to our fight later on, Admiral." she replied, as she sat up in her bed.

"Perhaps that, or else he is looking forward to your fighting by his side in the battle against the new Zaleen Empire." Commander April said, as he stood at the foot of her bed.

"If that is true I would be more than honored to do so, but I have to rest now and recover from this injury." Keletivia Torl said, as she pointed to her bandaged neck.

Robert Jackson sat on the co-pilots side of the Patricia Gayle and drifted off to sleep on their way back to the Orion and the dreams came to him once again.

"Yeoman Zaranazi, I thought that I told you to tell Captain Jackson that I needed to see---

"She did Commander, come on in Donald." I said, as he walked over to stand beside me while grinning at his sister at the same time.

"I take it that we're not going back home to Earth anyways soon." my brother James said, as he got up and out of his seat in Patricia's room and walked out into the corridor with Candice.

"No, we're most definitely not." Donald replied, as he turned from me to gaze upon his sister.

"Sis, I guess that by now they've told you where we are, and why." Donald said, as he bent down and kissed his sister lightly on the forehead.

"Are you sure that this isn't a dream, or a nightmare, Donald?" Patricia asked, as she gazed up at her brother.

"Here we go again." I said, as I dropped myself down into Jim's vacated chair and began rubbing my worsening headache .

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