

Fanatical Publishing's

Weekly Review

Issue #76

October 14, 2013

AND NOW, a word from the publisher:

Hello folks, Jochannon here; first let me say thank you for reading, and I hope you enjoy, and please feel free to share it with your friends, re-post it to your profile, spread it around; the more people who get to read it, the better!

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I've got a website, where you can download old issues:
<http://fanaticalpublishing.weebly.com/wr-archive.html>

If you want to contribute, I'd love to see your work, send it to me at the aforementioned e-mail address with: 'category(prose, fanfic, poetry), STORY TITLE, Author's Name' in the subject line: please include the text of your story in the body of the email, and please include a cover letter about you, your work, or whatever; include any links you want, and cover art if you have any.

Do you have any questions or comments? If you do, I'd to hear them; write to me at the aforementioned e-mail address.

I'm bad at stopping these things, so I'll just say again: thank you for reading, and I hope you enjoy!

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ORIGINAL LITERATURE

LET'S PLAY DETECTIVE?

CHAPTER 3

FaerieBox
of <http://FaerieBox.deviantart.com>

CliffVerge Lodge. Grandpa's home. It was the first time we were going there since we were really small children, so young we couldn't even remember.

I leaned over sister, on the back seat of the car, to peek through her window while we drove up. We were wearing the safety belts, what held me back a little, but I managed quite easily to put my hands on the door, just under the glass. And we both could still see clearly. We just passed a little group of trees, and then the cliff suddenly appeared at eyesight.

My twin raised her brows, in silence. I just glazed at the living picture in front of me. Looked like the beginning of an old horror movie.

It was late afternoon. We'd just passed a really small town on the mountain – the only town on this area - and after that the way was completely empty. Nevertheless, the road kept going, rising and snaking in front of us, with a few trees here and there. In the distance, it looked like a dark ribbon between falls and stones, till reach the top. Right on the top, was silhouetted a tall house, against a background of rainy clouds.

I swear I saw a lightening crossing behind it, when I looked.

Surely, it wasn't very inviting.

"That's Grandpa John's house?" my sister, Alice, asked.

It was Mom's turn on the wheel. She was driving us too easily up that slim, scary un-paved little road. She said, distractedly:

"Yes, dear. Why?"

"Nothing." sister replied "Looks very homely."

Eventually we reached the front of the house. It wasn't really so creepy, seeing it closer. There was ivy climbing the wall on the

outside. The lodge was an old-fashioned building, and appeared to be pretty big inside, and we knew that there was also a garden on the back. Mom sometimes told us stories of her childhood. Me and sister could've had an exciting time exploring it all, if we were a bit younger. Oh, well... now too.

Dad, Mom and the two of us reached the door. Mom lifted her hand to open it, but, before she could, a young woman with copper skin and dark wavy hair opened it for us. A maid, I supposed. Supposed right, because that was Zia.

"Ah! Daddy has a new care-taker!" Mom exclaimed, astonished "Nice to meet you. We are the Peppers."

"Welcome, mistress." she replied, with a smile and a soft foreign accent. "They were waiting for you four. But now everyone is already having tea."

"Oh, we arrived at tea time!" sister cried, in her Wonderland voice.

The maid turned to us. She stepped aside, cleaning the way.

"Please come in, twin misses. Mr. John talks a lot about you. My name is Zia."

"Hello, Zia." we said at the same time, stepping in with our big handbags.

She was pretty, and was wearing a loose Indian-like dress, dyed in nice other colours. She soon showed to be very friendly, especially with us. I exchanged a glance with sister, while we were getting in. We liked her dress. And we liked her.

We left our luggage on the hall, for Zia said she would get it to our rooms upstairs and tell Grandpa we were here. This, of course, after she led us to a sitting room, always chatting nicely about small things.

She just opened the door of the room for us four, and then gone. We came in.

"Daisy!" Mom hugged cheerfully her sister, who didn't look that pleased with being squeezed in a hug. "And Jackie!" she hurried to hug him too. "Hi, Henry." she added.

Our cousins were also there. Me and sister stood close to the door,

like the two little lovely dolls we can be, while the grown-ups were saying that usual grown-up greetings. Anne just looked from a chair, acknowledging our and our parents' presence, but Maxwell was more sociable.

"Hey, how your son is tall, now." Dad said to uncle Henry, while shaking hands with cousin.

Uncle Henry said something polite, and Maxwell gave Dad some easygoing answer.

Does he look nice to you? No. He's not nice. Don't be cheated. He smiled too much for us two to believe he was being sincere. He even send a "hi" to us! We answered in the same happy – but untruly - way.

We helped ourselves sweet weak tea and cupcakes, after all this. That was a classical, perfect, tea table: full of delicious things.

We sat down, sipping at our hot tea and taking small bites of the cupcakes, watching innocently the conversation. We also talked a little with aunt, as she asked about our school.

"They are free for the holyday." Mom told her. "So we could come to Daddy's birthday. Seventy-nine! Is he okay?"

"Yes, he is fine." Aunt said. Calmly, but appeared quite relieved, same as Mommy. I wonder what is like, your dad being old and you begin to worry about his health.

Uncle Jack grunted.

"Like always." he snorted.

He was sprawled on an armchair. There was a suspicious-looking crystal bottle already half-empty by his side, on the small low table, and he also had a full glass in his hand. He drank from the glass, with an irritated body-language, bright green eyes as sharp as knives. He grumbled:

"Sometimes I think the old man will never die."

"Jackie!" aunt Daisy immediately cried out loud, stopping this. She'd blushed.

I just stared, a little perplexed. I think my uncle was drunk. I blinked

for a few seconds.

Then, without warning, Grandpa was entering the room, merrily.

“Hello, everybody.” he nodded to Henry, and looked to aunt, saying just “Daisy.”

I would add a ~ sign, but it’s my grandfather talking. Doesn’t fit.

He looked after something across the room, till finally see my Mom on the other corner.

“Maggie! Why are you hiding there?”

“Hi, Daddy!”

She hurried from the sofa and hugged him, giving little shrieks of joy. Grandpa enlaced her waist and patted her head, very affectionately. Sister smirked. I glared at her, shooting invisible bullets. It was adorable.

Grandpa said:

“And you brought my two lovely granddaughters!”

We left our teas aside and stepped forward to him, smiling. He opened his arms and we threw ours around his neck, one on each side.

“Hi, Grandpa!”

He paced back for not falling.

“Oh, but you’re already two young ladies! You know, you have to make them debut this year, Maggie.”

He liked to poke his nose on all the family matters. But he always gave us gifts. We loved Grandfather.

“Really, Grandpa? We’ll use that beautiful dresses?” sister asked.

“Of course.” he caressed her cheek “You’ll be lovely, with this big brilliant eyes of yours. And it has to be a nice party. You know I can pay, Maggie.”

“You don’t need to, Daddy.” Mom replied.

“We can handle this.” my father assured. Grandpa snorted.

“Nonsense. The two of you can’t handle a half of what such pretty things deserve.”

Mom’s face showed worry – Grandpa wasn’t always nice to Daddy, though he liked him. It was just a money thing. But Grandpa released us to go place his hand on Maxwell shoulder, in that way all proud of his only male grandchild.

“Hey, and how is my boy? You should’ve been entertaining all these lovely women you have here.”

“Oh, sorry, Grandpa, but aunt is already a family woman, and cousins are too young for me.”

Seeing the two of them so close, and smiling, was startling. Even with all the age gap, they resembled each other astonishingly! Grandpa laughed.

He stayed a while, talking to everyone and making half-bullying jokes. Zia now was there too, helping with the tea. Anne and uncle Jack were the only ones completely quiet on their places since he’d entered.

“Daisy, dear, what are you teaching to your girl? She is so silent and perfectly dressed! Don’t make her become boring. One serious woman is enough here, sweetheart.” Grandpa John said, gently.

Anne blushed slightly and lowered her blue eyes, even more quiet. The pity was that she’s so beautiful! Fair smooth skin, fair hair, blue eyes matching with her child-like cute gray dress... But she was really boring.

Aunt Daisy didn’t answer, and Grandpa kept going on about this. He was sitting on the arm of a chair, with Mom still standing by his side. Soon he passed his hand on her butt.

“Girls look so good with pants, don’t you think, Maggie? They didn’t wear this stuff on my time.”

Aunt Daisy was wearing expensive social pants, but Mom wore a simple faded blue jeans, loosen and old, because she liked when she

was driving. Me and sister were also wearing jeans, but skinny ones, with pretty blouses. We smiled, and Mom too, though much less thinking it funny and much more sweetly.

“Daddy. Don’t be so harsh with poor Annie. I’ll make my girls also wear these lovely dresses tonight, when they play that old piano.”

“Oh, now they play the piano?” he looked at us, making a surprised face.

“Yes, Grandpa.” I answered, promptly.

“So you’ll play *Happy Birthday* to me?” he asked.

“It would be lovely.” Zia said quietly, picking up some dirty dish to carry to the kitchen.

We promised to play happy birthday to him. He went on talking, mostly seeming to barely notice the men in the room, except Maxwell. And when he made a sad face and said to uncle Jack he shouldn’t drink that much. And ruined it all next, adding that “he knew!” the perfect job to uncle Jack would be tasting drinks on that factories. I saw a lightening of anger cross uncle Jack’s face that time, though he just pursed his lips and passed an invisible iron stick through grandfather’s neck, like I did to sister before. Just the usual family love to one another.

However, soon aunt Daisy told Grandpa to sit and have some tea. Grandpa just looked at the tea, and turned up his nose. Excluding the strong drinks, we’d only hot chocolate and sweet chamomile tea, because it is what mother and aunt like. And we both too. Other teas are too stronger and bitter.

“No thank you.” he sighed “You don’t know how to enjoy a good English tea.”

He waved his head, sadly, and theatrically went to the door. But he turned briefly before leaving.

“I’m going to my library. But I *will* like some tea. True tea please, Zia my dear. Earl Grey.”

“Ok, sir.” Zia replied “It’ll be there in five seconds.”

She left right after him, but through the other door, which ended up

on the kitchen. She was carrying a lot of dishes on her arms, but still managed to be very graceful.

The things calmed down then, when Grandpa gone to his library. After a couple minutes uncle Jack also excused himself and also stood up, and hurried to escape from us, on a brisk pace. Soon everybody else was also leaving the sitting room.

We went upstairs, to get clean and change our clothes. Dad and Mom's room was the left one, and ours was the next.

I'd just finished to put a pair of lovely doll-like shoes, and was tying a golden necklace around my neck. Sister was wearing clothes identical to mine.

"Hey, can you help with my dress?" she asked.

I quickly closed the small buttons on the back. She turned, pouted looking at me, and arranged the ribbon on my hair.

"Better this way. You sing and I play?"

"Looks nice to me." I answered. "You're smelling like roses."

She smiled.

"You too. Are we pretty?"

"Lovely." I said to her.

"Nice."

We heard a knock at the door. It was Daddy. She turned.

"Let's go."

More a quarter of hour, and everyone was gathered in the dining room. Zia was too busy finishing the dinner - me and twin had gone to see her for a while before, but she said she didn't need help and we should go to our family meeting.

But Grandpa hadn't come yet, and the birthday was his. Sister and I were sitting on our chairs, swaying our feet on the air, bored.

"Anne" aunt Daisy end up calling, breaking a small silence between

two of Maxwell talks “Go and tell your grandfather we’re all here, please, or he’ll be late. I think he’s in the library.”

Anne nodded and left promptly, like an obedient daughter. I don’t remember if I have already heard her voice, till now. Aunt Daisy continued, with a soft complain:

“These servants today, they don’t know their place, but that poor girl must suffer to take care of all this house alone.”

“Well, mister John have the gardener, and that other woman who comes twice a week, too, dear.” uncle Henry replied, quietly.

“We don’t have a domestic in home, either.” Mommy said “I put Peter and the girls to do the cleaning.”

Maxwell smiled, amazed. I bet he’d never had to clean his own room in his whole life.

“Oh, this sounds wonderful, Auntie. But I don’t believe you would ever be able to do these evil things to them.”

Mom smiled her usual tender smile. She is too mild, really doesn’t match with the evil profile.

Maybe somebody opened his mouth to speak something and begin another light chat. Maybe uncle Jack tried to complain about waiting – which he really hates (and we understand). I can’t remember.

Because now I could be sure I’d already heard Anne’s voice. We all heard her screaming.

NIGHTMARE

Pocopagog
of <http://pocopagogo.deviantart.com>

Suffocating. Darkness engulfs you. Your chest tightens and you can't breathe. There is no sound, no color, no light. Three cards lay on the ground in front of you. On the left, a crystal serpent. The right, a menacing reaper. And in the middle bounces an adorable red ball, offset by the bleak dungeon behind it. The ball turns the corner and you follow it, not once seeing the bouncing stop. It's out of your view and you realize you're in a dimly lit cavern with dripping chandeliers. The walls, floor, and ceiling meld together with stone, making your footsteps crawl back in your ears a moment later. You catch every stain stuck to the cages that sink back what seems like miles.

You round the corner to find the toy motionless. It sits in a small girl's lap. You can't see her face but her skin is a sickly grey, rotting off in flakes. Her torn and ragged dress hangs limp over her crossed legs. Dark, greasy wires fall in tangles out of her drooping head, distorting the shadow underneath. You push yourself closer, surprised to hear the echoes wriggling in your head. Each beat is tripled by the ones pounding in your chest. The girl is now only feet away when you halt.

There's a quiet ticking noise, just barely loud enough to hear, sounding through the room. It's slow at first, but then the volume and speed gradually begin to increase. You're frantic, your head whipping back and forth trying to find the source, when you notice it out of the corner of your eyes.

Slowly but surely, the grotesque body is moving. Her legs dance like a marionette, spasms sending them in unnatural directions, her shoulders dislocating and relocating themselves over and over creating sharp notes like nails on a chalkboard. The ball is still firmly grasped in her hands while the wires scrape against her sunken cheeks. It is then you finally glimpse the jagged bones protruding from her face left exposed by her deteriorated lips. The teeth are razor sharp, cutting her gums to shreds, leaving the remains to dangle, bloody, from her gaping mouth. As she jerks her way to an almost comical version of a standing position, you begin to see more of her features.

Her face is peeling, giving you a full view of her maggot-infested muscles. Her eyes look as if they're melting inside their membranes. Yellow cheekbones pierce her disgusting leather skin. Her neck is a

broken rod, falling at impossible angles. Her macabre smile kills you inside, making every inch of your body shiver and convulse, mimicking the child's own movements.

She stands at your waist and looks even smaller with her shoulders hunched over. You force yourself not to step back as she lurches forward. The ball is thrust at your stomach, making you instinctively latch on to it to stop the blow. And she was gone.

The rusty wires whip around the same corner you came from, stumbling faster than thought possible. You're left alone with the red ball and the sound of your own ragged breaths. There is one thought that stands out among the million others cluttering your mind.
What was that?

It's this that drives you to steady your shaking, clench your hands around the ball, and collect yourself. You spin on your heel and begin walking, not stopping in fear that the momentum would vanish. Going back takes ten times longer than your leisurely stroll not even moments ago. Ice drips down your face as you break into a cold sweat. Your hands are clammy and the world is spinning around you. You hear your footsteps once again playing like a malevolent death march. They are sending you closer to that dark slab of concrete that conceals what lies behind. Fingers drag against the bone-chilling stone, your hand grasping the corner as you reach the end. You steady yourself and take one more gulp before thrusting yourself to the other side.

You smash your eyelids closed. You don't know where you are. There's a thick slapping of undulating muck lapping in your mind. An eye peeks open to find a mass of green, glowing goo, swaying back and forth in a monstrous pit deep in the ground. The plasma leaps out of the hole with each violent tide. Limp arms reach up and lick the plank precariously placed above them, leaving singed bite marks on the bottom of the wood.

The ball drops to the floor and small a gasp escapes your lips. Little Mary Janes are planted at the very tip of the board, the girl staring down into the endless burning mess. You can see droplets landing on her tattered shoes, searing through to her feet. Only seconds pass, but it feels like hours as you stand, mesmerized.

A frozen snake slithers up your spine. Every limb jerks as the feeling of fiery snow fills your blood. Fear grips you as the broken neck snaps; the girl tilts her head, and swings it around, her oozing eyes glaring straight through you. She opens her mouth and manages to gurgle out two words, giving you one last wicked grin before stepping into Hell.

You're next.

WEEKLY RANT

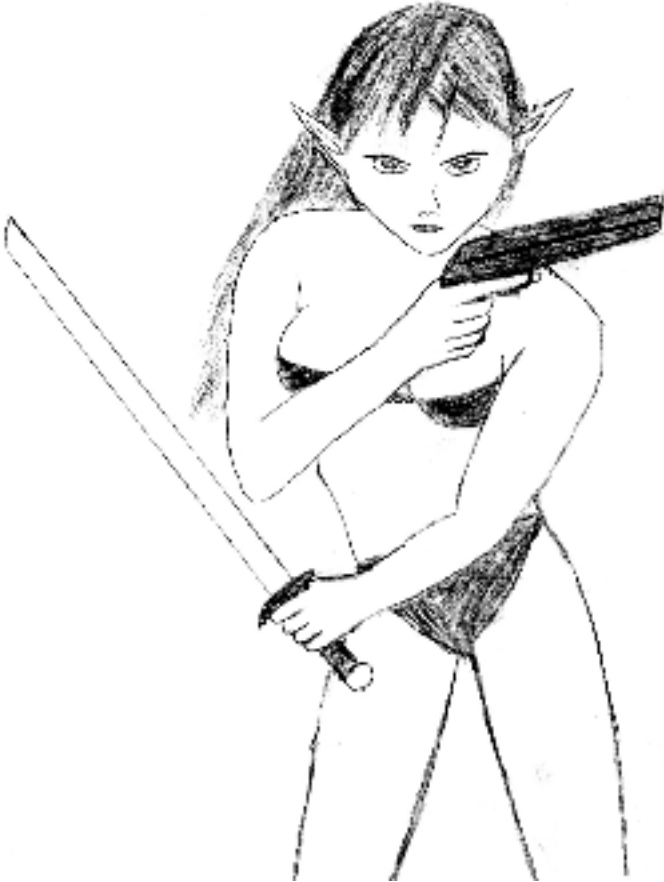
RANT #4

Angel-Rants
of <http://Angel-Rants.deviantart.com>

Alright, here we go.

Miley Cyrus's performance at the VMAs. People have been saying that Miley Cyrus is a disgrace to this world. Tell me. How? Because she twerks? No, not enough proof. Because she made 'We Can't Stop'? I'll explain why she did that. Because she wanted to get away from that stupid Hannah Montana image. And because she can make her own choices. That's why. Because she didn't want to be seen as a little girl. Another thing. You're bitching at Miley when Lady Gaga was practically naked? Wow, talk about shallow. 'But, Miley Cyrus is a SLUT!!!!!!' She's been with the same boyfriend for the past three years. Well, that's that. Bye. //rolls away

FAN FICTION



or: Leanna's Return

Your Fan Fiction is published here for free, but if you want to help keep it free, check out some other things I publish, like

ME2 HELLDIVER SAGA CHAPTER 43: THE ARRIVAL

Veyron722skyhook
of veyronmaster722@gmail.com

1 month it had been now.

Austin and Liara had finally returned from their honeymoon and had easily settled back in to their place on the Normandy.

Austin was currently up in his quarters checking all the messages he'd received while he was away. There were only a few messages he didn't need. All the rest were from the rest of the team and a few other close friends wishing him and Liara a happy return after their honeymoon.

As he finished sorting all the messages, a thought occurred to him. Although Traynor had probably had plenty of time to settle in properly on the Normandy by now, she hadn't had time to really get to know him.

"Traynor, if you're not doing anything, I've got a few hours free. Would you like to come up?" he asked into his comm.

"Your cabin is gorgeous. I've seen apartments smaller than this." Said Traynor as she admired Austin and Liara's quarters. "Well, Major... ready to play?"

"Play?" Austin asked, confused.

"I picked up a chessboard on Arkadia. GUI interface-- not nearly as nice as real pieces, but this takes up less space. So... interested?" said Traynor.

"This is a trap, isn't it?" Austin chuckled.

"I'm just a simple comm specialist, Major. I'm sure your real-world expertise and experience in the field will give you the edge." Said Traynor innocently.

Traynor made the finishing move easily and Austin soon found his king cornered.

"Ha!"

"Dammit!" Austin sighed. "Well done, Traynor. You win."

"My word, Major. It's almost as though you wanted to spare your pawns the indignity of living under my regime." Said Traynor smugly.

"In real life, that tactic would have worked." Austin argued.

"Well, in real life, one doesn't move on an eight-by-eight square grid." Said Traynor.

“You know what I mean. The pawns are infantry. A good infantry line, like the Krogan, can take a charge like that.” Said Austin.

“That reminds me of a joke: What’s the difference between Major Shepard and a Krogan?” Traynor asked.

“A joke about me? This ought to be interesting. What is the difference?” Austin inquired.

“One is an unstoppable juggernaut of head-butting destruction...” Traynor started.

“...and the other doesn’t have a smart-ass comm officer to keep him in line.” Austin finished.

“Ooh, that’s even better than the number-of-testicles punch line.” Traynor laughed.

“You’re not the only one with a British sense of humour.” Austin smiled.

“So I noticed. So... rematch?” Traynor asked.

“Sure.”

Much later, after Austin had still lost to his new comm specialist, Austin headed down to the CIC to pick a destination. He currently didn’t know yet what he was gonna do, but he certainly planned to try and get the word out about the Reapers and help the whole galaxy prepare for them in some way. Just as he stepped up however, Traynor spoke.

“Major, you have an incoming message from Admiral Steven Hackett, Alliance HQ.” she said.

“Major Shepard. I need to discuss a sensitive matter with you privately.” He heard Hackett’s voice say.

“I’ll take this in my quarters.” Said Austin.

Austin headed up to his quarters and activated the terminal. An almost lifelike, full colour hologram of Hackett was projected in front of him.

“Major. Thank you for your time. First off, it’s good to finally hear from you again. We’ve all heard about your victory against the Collectors.” Said the Admiral.

“Thank you, Hackett.” Austin nodded.

“Anyway, I’ll cut to the chase and keep it brief.” Said Hackett. “We have a deep-cover operative out in Batarian space. Name’s Doctor Amanda Kenson. Dr Kenson recently reported that she found evidence of an imminent Reaper invasion.”

“So why call me? Remember I’m no longer in the Alliance now.” Austin asked.

“Just this morning I received word that the Batarians arrested her. They’re holding her in a secret prison outpost on terrorism charges. I need you to infiltrate the prison and get her out of there. As

a favour to me. I'm asking you to go in alone." Said Hackett.

"I have Alpha with me. They'll be able to help with this." Said Austin.

"Kenson is my friend. If the Batarians see a squad of armed soldiers they'll kill her. This is serious, Major. Go in with discretion, or don't go at all." Said Hackett.

"Since you've asked nicely, Hackett, I'll get it sorted. If this does concern the Reapers, you were right to call me." Said Austin.

"The prison is hidden underground at a Batarian outpost on Aratcht. I'll upload the coordinates now. Once she's secure, confirm her discovery." Said Hackett.

"Got it."

"Hackett out."

All of Alpha had naturally recovered from the light injuries they'd received during the Eclipse raid. Despite that Hackett had told Austin to go in alone, the Helldiver had decided against it.

"You do realise you're going against Hackett's orders by bringing us, don't you?" Sandra asked.

"He didn't order me, he asked me. Besides, there's nothing he can do anyway since I'm not in the Alliance." Said Austin.

After spending almost a month without using his armour, it felt quite nice to be inside it again. The cape, the Blood Dragon logo, Excalibur, he'd missed it.

"Still doesn't explain why you're taking us with you. You'd do just as well on your own." Said Griffin.

"Hackett doesn't know you like I do. Besides, this isn't the first Batarian base we've infiltrated and we've all got into a lot of places more heavily guarded than this, most of them without firing a single shot." Said Austin.

Some of Alpha squad nodded at this and nudged each other.

"Now that, I do agree with. We'll have this doctor out of here before the Batarians can say "intruder alert". This'll be easy." Said Dash.

"Why would you say that, Dash?! Now you know it won't be!" said Ventra.

Ventra and Leena of course had also returned from their honeymoon. They'd mostly spent their time on Palaven since they couldn't visit Rannoch. They too felt quite pleased to be back again.

In a way, it was great catching up with everyone. They were like a bunch of bad boarding school boys who'd got back together again.

"Okay, everyone. You know the drill. Cloak on at all times. Stay out of sight, and avoid water." Said Austin as the drop ship door opened. The very second the doors opened however, he found themselves looking at a lot of rain.

“Oh crap.” Said Ventra.

“That might be a problem, sir.” Said Griffin.

“Shit!” Austin swore. “Guess we’re gonna have to do this the old fashioned way. If we’re lucky, it’ll be dry inside.”

Alpha took it very slowly through the base. Naturally of course, they did have to deal with some Batarian guards, but they did it nice and quietly. As Austin had said it was also dry inside, so they were able to use their cloaks to mostly stay out of sight.

When they finally reached Kenson’s cell, taking out her guard was easy. As Alpha secured the area, Austin worked on getting the doctor free of her restraints.

“Who are you? What are you doing?” she asked.

“Relax, Dr Kenson. We’re here to get you out. We’re friends of Admiral Hackett.” Said Austin.

“Hackett must have got my message.” Said Kenson.

“The evidence you have better be worth it. Wasn’t easy getting in here, and we risk some difficult diplomatic incidents if this doesn’t go right.” Said Austin, finally deactivating the clamps and freeing Kenson.

“It is. The Reapers are coming. Diplomacy is the least of our worries.” Said Kenson.

At that moment, the alarm sounded. Batarian reinforcements were converging on their location.

“What? I didn’t do it.” Said Dash innocently.

“If we can find a console, I can hack security... make us an escape path.” Said Kenson as she took a pistol from the Batarian guard.

“Then we’ll find one.”

“Ready.”

Alpha naturally did what Helldivers did best, fight Batarians. They pretty much carved a path through any Batarians that got in their way. When they finally hacked security and got to a shuttle and left the base, it was completely deserted and devoid of Batarians.

“Engaging autopilot.” Said Kenson. “We should be well out of range before they get their security measures unscrambled.”

“Will they come after you?” Griffin asked.

“I’m not taking any chances. Batarians don’t take kindly to humans who plan to destroy their mass relays.” Said Kenson.

“What?!”

“Well, to be fair, that’s only half the story.” Kenson explained. “My people and I were here investigating rumours of Reaper technology out in the fringes of this system.”

“I guess you found something.” Said Liara.

“We found proof the Reapers will be arriving in this system. When they get here, they’ll use its mass relay to travel throughout the galaxy. We call it the “Alpha Relay.” From here, the Reapers can invade anywhere in the galaxy.” Said Kenson.

“So you’ve decided to destroy it.” Said Kraan.

“Exactly. Doing that would stop the Reapers’ invasion. Even at FTL speeds, it’d be months or years before they got to the next relay. We came up with what we just called “the Project”: a plan to launch a nearby asteroid into the relay and destroy it before the Reapers could arrive.” Kenson continued. “Of course, the resulting explosion would probably wipe out the system.”

“Why’s that?” Liara asked.

“Mass relays are the most powerful mass-effect engines in the known galaxy. The energy released from a relay’s destruction would probably resemble a supernova. This is a remote system, but just over three hundred thousand Batarians live on the colony where they held us. The explosion would undoubtedly kill them all.” Said Kenson.

“Good. Maybe that will finally teach them a lesson and they’ll stop treating humans like slaves.” Said Griffin.

“You don’t get it, Griffin. These Batarians aren’t like the slavers we fight against. There are two factions of their race: the slavers, and the normal ones. The normal ones hate humans just as much as the slavers, but they deal with it maturely like they should. They don’t resort to terrorism. Killing them is not the same as killing slavers. They’re innocent, they’ve done nothing wrong.” Said Austin.

“Can’t believe I didn’t see that before.” Said Griffin.

“I don’t blame you for thinking that way. The normal ones may not seek hostilities with humans, but they don’t try to end the slavery and terrorism either when they should.” Said Dash.

“But you’re still right. That’s no excuse for wiping out an entire system of them.” Said Griffin.

“I still don’t see how you learned about this supposed invasion.” Said Austin.

“The evidence came from what we call Object Rho, a Reaper artefact we discovered among the asteroids near the relay itself. When we get back to Arcturus Station, I’ll explain everything and provide copies of all our notes on the artefact.” Said Kenson.

“Wait, if you’re working near a Reaper artefact, how have you avoided indoctrination?” Austin asked, suspiciously.

“We’ve been careful. We know what we’re dealing with. You’re not speaking to a child, Helldiver. I saw what Sovereign did at the Citadel. Trust me – I know what’s at stake.” Said Kenson.

“The stakes are high. If you were willing to destroy a whole system over this, I want to see your proof.” Said Austin.

“I guess I can’t argue with that. Give me a moment.” Said

Kenson. "Kenson to project base."

"Good to hear your voice, Doctor. You coming home?" Austin overheard from her earpiece.

"Affirmative. And I've got Helldivers with me. Tidy up the lab. They need to confirm the artefact." Said Kenson.

"Right. I'll get everything set up for your arrival. Project base out."

"All set. Just sit back and relax. We'll be there in no time."

The Batarian shuttle touched down and everyone stepped out.

"Here we are. Welcome to Project Base." Said Kenson.

"What's this?" Austin asked, indicating to a timer overhead.

"That's our countdown to Arrival. When that gets to zero... the Reapers will have come. Just over a few hours. Puts things in perspective, doesn't it?" said Kenson.

"You're saying the Reapers will be here in just a few hours? There's no time to waste!" said Austin urgently.

"Then let's show you that proof. That door exits the hangar. The artefact is in our central lab area." Said Kenson.

Austin couldn't help but feel as though something was wrong. The entire base personal seemed very quiet. Too quiet in fact. He was pretty sure that Alpha felt that exact same way as well.

"We have to get the Project running again. It's probably the only chance we have." Said Austin.

"One sec. Let me get the door." Said Kenson.

The door opened and a large artefact that was definitely of Reaper make was revealed.

"Major Shepard, I give you Object Rho." Said Kenson proudly.

Austin however was not feeling the same. The artefact had no barriers or clamps or anything. There was nothing to stop this entire base being indoctrinated.

"You have the Reaper artefact just sitting here... out in the open!"

"When we found it, it showed me a vision of the Reapers' arrival." Said Kenson.

"Kenson, this is not good."

"Give it a moment, Shepard. It'll give you the proof you need."

Sure enough, all of Alpha Squad felt a strange energy engulf their suits and visions of the Reapers arrival flashed in front of their eyes. The resulting shock of this disorientated them and they fell to the floor. Austin simply fell to his knees due to his strong will. He then suddenly felt the barrel of a gun touch his head.

"I can't let you start the Project, Shepard. I can't let you stop the Arrival." Said Kenson.

Austin's suspicions had been right. Kenson and everyone on this base were indoctrinated and were now the Reapers slaves. The other doors opened and the bases guards hurried into the room.

"Wasn't asking your permission, bitch!" Austin yelled as he swung around. He grabbed Kenson's wrist and disarmed her. The doctor screamed in pain as the Helldiver broke her wrist.

"Take them down!" she yelled as she fled the room, leaving Alpha to deal with the guards.

"Don't make this difficult, Shepard!" Kenson yelled over the loudspeaker as Alpha took cover and fired.

"Do not resist. Give yourself over and be spared." A voice boomed from Object Rho.

There was no mistaking the deep bellowing voice of Harbinger.

The Helldivers however remained focused and continued fighting. Guard after guard was sent in only to then be shot down by one of Alpha Squad.

"They won't go down!" one of the guards yelled.

"We don't want to hurt you, Major. Lay down your weapons!" said Kenson.

"Go to hell!" Griffin yelled as he let his minigun loose on several guards and even one of the security cameras and loudspeakers.

"Your galaxy is in sight. Your final days are at hand." Said Object Rho.

"That didn't sound like Harbinger." Said Liara.

It was true, that voice hadn't been Harbingers. It had been different, almost more... alive like.

"Now's not the time! Stay focused everyone." Said Austin as he blind fired.

The fight continued on with none of Alpha sustaining any injuries. Their shield or armour quickly sought to deflecting or absorbing anything.

"We can't keep this up much longer!"

"This will only get worse for you, Shepard." Kenson yelled.

"Speak for yourself, Kenson!" Austin retorted.

"The end of your species will come." Harbinger boomed through Object Rho.

"Activate the heavy mech."

Sure enough, a large Heavy mech stormed into the room. Alpha immediately took cover to avoid the heavy fire and were forced to blind fire from their position. Austin was now regretting not bringing X-5 along.

"Patience. It's only a matter of time." Said Kenson.

"Struggle if you wish. Your mind will belong to my masters." Said the strange voice.

The heavy mech made it slightly easier for the guards since it had Alpha pinned down. This was short lived however when Griffin suddenly through all the explosives he had at the mech's feet and Ventra shot them with an explosive arrow. The explosion destroyed the mech and killed the rest of the guards.

At that moment, the artefact suddenly charged up and released a wave.

"You shall be the first to witness our arrival." Harbinger boomed.

"LOCKDOWN! NOW!" Austin yelled.

As the wave swept over them, all of Alpha Squad quickly crouched down and activated their suit's lockdown. A small white field surrounded them just before the wave from Project Rho touched them.

Austin waited for a few long seconds before he finally deactivated his lockdown and checked the area.

"Everyone okay?" he asked.

"Just about. That energy was so strong it nearly broke through the lockdown shield." Said Leena as she and the others deactivated their own lockdowns.

"Not much time. We have to get this asteroid moving and get the hell out of here." Said Austin.

Kenson was starting to sound nervous after that. She'd been certain that the wave from Object Rho would take care of them. Since it hadn't, she was now becoming paranoid to the point where she was throwing all the guards they had at them.

Despite the guards best efforts however, they hardly slowed the Helldivers down at all. Pretty soon, they reached the control which would allow them to activated the project.

"Welcome to project control." Said the computer.

"Activate the Project." Said Austin.

"Warning. Activating the Project will result in an estimated three hundred and five thousand casualties. Do you wish to continue?" the computer asked.

Austin did hesitate for a moment before he activated. He took no pleasure in doing this, but it had to be done, if the Reapers arrived now while the entire galaxy was completely unprepared for their arrival, this war was as good as over before it had even started.

"Project activated in progress. Warning: Collision with mass relay is imminent. Begin evacuation procedures." Said the computer.

Sandra then walked up to the control panel and started tapping away at it.

"What are you doing?" Austin asked.

"We should try to warn the Batarians at least." Said Sandra.

“This is as secure as I can get.”

“To all residents in the Bahak system, this is...” Austin tried to say, but Kenson suddenly cut them off.

“Shepard! No! Do you have any idea what you’ve done? You leave me no choice. If we can’t stop this asteroid, it must be destroyed!”

“I’m just about ready to put an arrow through that bitch’s eye socket.” Said Ventra angrily.

“Computer, locate Doctor Amanda Kenson.” Said Austin, also making no effort to hide his anger at Kenson.

“Doctor Kenson is travelling to the reactor core module.” The computer replied.

“An eezo core meltdown should do it. Because of you, everyone on this rock will be obliterated!” said Kenson over the speakers.

“You had it coming, and not if I get to you first.” Said Austin.

With Kenson in the core, she had as many guards as possible trying to slow the Helldivers down long enough for her to destroy the core. Of course, this hardly slowed them down at all. Pretty soon, they were in the core. Kenson was on the other side of some glass.

“Don’t try to stop me, Shepard. I have to do this.” She said.

“You better give up, Kenson. I don’t care if you’re Hackett’s friend. We will kill you!” said Austin threatening.

“You’re forcing my hand, Shepard. You know that.” Said Kenson.

“There is no escape. There’s no redemption for what you’ve done. I will die never having seen the Reaper’s blessings. And you will just die.” Said Kenson.

“Get back here, Kenson!” Austin yelled as the doctor fled out of range.

Alpha had to continue battling through even more of Kenson’s guards before they finally were able to reach the reactor. Kenson was forced to accept defeat.

“Step away from the reactor.” Austin ordered, his M-76 Revenant trained on her.

“You’ve ruined everything! I can’t hear the whispers anymore.” Kenson wailed.

“Happy to disappoint you, Kenson. Turn around. Now!” the Major almost yelled.

“You’ve taken them away from me. I will never see the Reapers’ arrival.” Said Kenson, turning around, and revealing a detonator in her hand. “All you had to do was...”

But before she could finish, all of Alpha Squad suddenly emptied their weapons into her.

“All I had to do, was kill you when I had the chance.” Said Austin coldly.

Despite this however, Kenson still managed to press the button and the device exploded. The resulting explosion failed to damage the core, but it still sent the Helldivers flying. After a few brief seconds, Austin and the others got up.

“Ow. I’m gonna feel that in the morning.” said Austin, loosening his neck slightly.

“Get off me!” Kraan groaned as he pushed Dash off of him.

“Warning: Collision imminent.” Said the computer.

Austin went up to the console and once again tried to contact the Normandy.

“Joker, this is Shepard. We need pick up. Now.”

“Communication system damaged.” Said the computer.

“For god’s sake!” said Austin angrily as he banged the console.

“Evacuation protocols in effect. All personal report to escape shuttles.”

“Where can we find an escape shuttle?”

“Take the lift from this room to the external access. From there, proceed to the communications tower. The remaining escape shuttles will be located on the tower’s landing pad.”

“We have to get to that comm tower and take a shuttle. It might be our only chance left.” Said Liara.

“Move out!”

With Kenson dead, everyone else was trying to evacuate. Alpha headed out onto the landing bay through the airlock. The vacuum of space made it somewhat trickier for them to fight the guards, but they still prevailed in the end.

Sandra hurried up to the comm array and gained access to it.

“External communication open.” She said. “Okay, we’ve got a solid link.”

“Shepard to Normandy. Joker, do you read us?” Austin said again.

Before a reply could happen however, a large orange hologram of a Reaper suddenly appeared over one of the landing pads. It was Harbinger.

“Uh oh.” Said Dash.

“Shepard. You have become an annoyance. You fight against inevitability. Dust struggling against cosmic winds. This seems a victory to you. A star system sacrificed. But even now, your greatest civilizations are doomed to fall. Your leaders will beg to serve us.” The Reaper boomed.

“Yes, people will die. Maybe we’ll lose half the galaxy. Maybe more. But I will do whatever it takes to rid the galaxy of you and your kind. However “insignificant” we might be, we will fight, we will sacrifice, and we will find a way. That’s what we do.” Said Austin.

“Know this as you die in vain: Your time will come. Your species will fall. And when it is over, you will stand alongside the synthetic ones. Prepare yourselves for the Arrival!”

Harbinger’s hologram once again folded up into hibernation state and faded away.

“Major Shepard. Normandy inbound for pickup.” Said the computer.

Sure enough, the SR3 was coming in for pickup. Austin and the rest of Alpha didn’t need to be told twice.

“Let’s move it, everyone! Go!”

All of the Helldivers hurried into the airlock. Once the doors were sealed Austin ran into the ridge.

“Get us out of here, Joker! Now!”

The Normandy sped at full speed towards the relay. They were jettisoned forward by it with seconds to spare. From the galaxy map, Austin watched the explosion as it consumed all in its path. It was done.

“Anything?”

First thing Austin had wanted to check was that the wave from Project Rho hadn’t done anything to their suits without them knowing. The lockdown had certainly protected them but it was mostly intended to protect against physical attacks. For all they knew, Rho might have left something deadly hidden inside their suits.

All of Alpha were gathered in the medbay while Dell and Dr Chakwas checked them. Dell was using a special detector device.

“Not that I can tell. All your suit’s readings are normal, and I’m not picking up anything out of the ordinary. Just to be safe though, I’ll run deep scans of your suits when you take them off.” Said the Arkane.

At that moment, the doors suddenly opened and Hackett stepped in.

“Should we step outside?” Chakwas asked.

“I think you should.” Austin sighed.

“Good luck.” Said Dell sympathetically. Even he could tell this wouldn’t be easy to solve.

“Hackett.”

Sounds like you and your squad went through a lot down there. How are you feeling?” Hackett asked.

“Fine. Nothing out of ordinary either. Wasn’t expecting to see you here, though.” Said Austin.

“You went out there as a favour to me. I decided to debrief you all in person. That was before the mass relay exploded and destroyed an entire Batarian system. What the hell happened out there, Major?”

Hackett asked.

Austin handed Hackett the report he'd written. Hackett went over it as Austin explained in his own words.

"Kenson said the Reapers were the galaxy's salvation. Then she tried to capture us. Didn't work of course, but still..."

"Sounds like Amanda was indoctrinated. Well. That's... a damn shame. What happened after?" Hackett asked.

"Something about the Reaper artefact she was keeping made her go insane. She didn't want to stop the invasion but somehow she ended up doing exactly that. She activated the Project thinking that it would kill us and prevent us from stopping the Reapers. We knew of course this had to be done so we didn't try to stop her. We tried to warn the Batarians, but time ran out." Said Austin.

"I'm sure all the details are in your report." Said Hackett.

"Austin, what are you doing? That's not what happened." Liara asked telepathically.

"Just trust me on this Liara. I have to do it this way." Austin replied.

"I won't lie to you, Shepard: the Batarians will want blood, but they have no way of knowing who are what did this. There's risk they may blame the Alliance, and we don't want war with the Batarians. Not with the Reapers at the galaxy's edge." Said Hackett.

"What are you saying?" Alara asked.

"I understand you did all you could, but... there were more than three hundred thousand. Batarians in that system. All dead." Said Hackett.

"You think I don't know that?!" said Austin. "We know the difference between the slavers we fight, and the innocent ones. Letting this happen brought us no pleasure.

"Besides, any sacrifice is worth stopping a Reaper invasion." Said Griffin, trying to sound supportive.

"I happen to agree. Unfortunately, not everyone will see it that way." Said Hackett.

"Cut to the chase, Hackett." Said Austin.

"Obviously there's no evidence that you or any of your team were there, but the Batarians will naturally think it was the Alliance that made this happen. I'm without options, so I'm forced to turn to you. There's a chance that you might have to take the blame for this. If not, we risk full scale war." Said Hackett.

"No!"

"What?!"

"You're not pinning this on me, or anyone!" Austin nearly shouted.

"If we don't, the Batarians will wage war. Do you not see that? The galaxy needs to be united to face the Reapers!" Hackett retorted.

"I know that, Hackett! But there's no way I'm letting you blame me for this. We did our job! You're the one that sent us there!"

"Hard to argue with that."

"However, I don't think it'll be necessary for you to take responsibility for this. I have a better plan."

"I'm listening."

"You say there's hardly any evidence pointing to us or the Alliance being involved. I'd say that'd make it easy to create a good cover story. My friend, Xun is a very good information broker. She can create a false story saying that the blame is with Cerberus. They'd be more likely to do this anyway."

"You mean lie to them?!"

"You don't like Cerberus any more than we do, Hackett. The Batarians know fully well that Cerberus is not part of the Alliance, a multi species super soldier army fights against them, and they're often called terrorists. The blame goes to them, and a war is prevented."

"But being dishonest to them..."

"I'm not arguing with you over this, Hackett. I'm no longer part of the Alliance, so you're in no position to give me orders, especially since you and I are practically the same rank now. I'm not letting you blame us for simply doing our jobs. It's either blame Cerberus, or you, or open war. What would you prefer?"

Hackett was silent for a while before he finally replied.

"Fine. Admittedly, it would indeed be better to blame Cerberus. Maybe that way, they'll stop causing trouble and we can focus more on preparing for the Reapers." He said.

"You may not like it now, Hackett. But you'll thank me for this someday." Said Austin.

"Maybe."

Hackett left, leaving just Alpha alone with each other. Austin knew however, he wasn't quite done yet. He'd taken care of this part, but now he had another one to sort out, and this one would be a lot harder.

"Well, that went well." He said.

"You're crazy, Shepard. You just lied to an Alliance Admiral! Why?!" Dash asked in surprise.

"If I'm incarcerated, who else will there be to help prepare for the Reapers. So many people in the galaxy still don't believe us. Those Batarians would have died for nothing if the galaxy isn't anymore prepared than it is now. I take no pleasure in lying about this, about the fact that I made the choice, but it had to be done." Said Austin.

"We're not saying we disagree with you, sir. We just wanted to know why." Said Sandra.

"Trust me, I'm sorry that all those Batarians lost their lives, but having me take the fall would only give the Reapers another step

ahead of us. We stand a much better chance this way.” Said Austin.

“And admittedly, that is rather clever to blame it on Cerberus. The Batarians know that they practically stand apart from humanity, so they won’t seek war with the rest of us. And even if they do, the whole galaxy will fight alongside us due to the treaties.” Said Ventra.

“Thought you’d say that.” Said Austin. “I’m not asking you to forgive me for breaking a part of the Helldiver code. If your faith in me is shaken, I understand. I just want you to know that I had no choice.”

Alpha were silent for a moment. Admittedly, it did surprise them that their leader would break a part of the code. For nearly 14 years they had known and followed his lead. This was certainly something that they never thought would happen.

“Sir, if I may...” Griffin spoke up. “I’ve not been in this squad as long as anyone else, nor have I known you as long. But despite this, I’ve come to trust you like a true leader during my time serving under you. And I think I can speak for everyone else when I say that you did the right thing but not only destroying that Relay, but also doing what you just did. Besides, we did all we could to warn them. It’s no one’s fault that we failed. If anything, Kenson’s the one to blame.”

Everyone seemed to agree with this and there were a few mumbles of agreement.

“I don’t know if anyone else feels the same, but my trust in you hasn’t been shaken at all, Shepard. You can trust me to keep my silence, and I will continue to fight alongside you to the very end. You’re more than just a leader to me... Austin. You’re my friend, and I still trust you even after this. You broke a part of the code because you had to. You did it for the right reason, and personally... I think that puts God on your side.” Griffin continued, putting his hand reassuringly on Austin’s shoulder.

“Thanks, Griff.” Austin smiled. He did his best to hide his surprise. He had feared that Alpha would never forgive him for this. Perhaps he underestimated just how strong their bonds of friendship truly were.

“We’ve trusted you this far, Shepard. You have not lead us astray. Many times you have made some decisions that we have questioned at first, but have always found it was right in the end. There’s no reason why that should change now.” Said Sandra.

All of Alpha squad agreed with this and nodded. Austin was left lost for words for a while. Even after this long, his squad was still full of surprises.

“Thank you, all of you. You honour me with your faith and trust in me. As your leader, I couldn’t ask for anything better.” He said.

“We’ll keep our silence about this; even to the Arkane’s themselves. You have our word on it. Right guys?” said Dash.

Everyone nodded.

“Well, since that’s all sorted, I say we get back to work. We’ve delayed the Reapers for maybe another two years. I say we use that to its fullest advantage. Who’s with me?” Austin asked, putting his hand forward.

Liara of course was the first to do the same and put her hand on her husband’s.

“I am.” She said.

“Me too.” Said Griffin.

Both Ventra and Leena did the exact same and also added their hands to the combination.

“So am I.”

“And me.”

“We’re all bloody in!” said Kraan.

Sarah had heard what happened down there. Being smart and knowing her brother well of course, she knew the truth. However, Austin knew that, and she had just come out of having a little chat with him. Like Alpha, she understood why her brother had done it, and why he had been forced to lie to Hackett about this. As she walked through one of the hallways, she saw Traynor walking the other way.

“Hello, Traynor.” She smiled.

“Oh, hello... Sarah.” Samantha nearly stuttered.

“You know, I have some free time now. I’m happy to play that round of chess if you’re still interested.” Said Sarah.

“Of course. Great. Err... where shall we do it? Your quarters?”

Traynor asked, doing her best to hide how nervous she was. To be alone in a room with the person she had fallen desperately in love with would be torture. But at the same time, she could not refuse this beautiful woman.

“Nah! They’re not really the greatest place for a good chess game. I’ve got something else in mind.” Sarah winked.

To say that Traynor was nervous was a mild understatement. Sarah was a lot more attractive than she was in her eyes, more beautiful and also had a much sexier body than hers, one that many would kill to have. She was so far out of her league. Then there was the fact that she was Shepard's sister. Everyone had heard of the legendary Sir Major Shepard. How many women out there in the galaxy had fantasized about being able to at least kiss him alone? Sarah being related to him only added to her being 'untouchable'. Of course, there was also the fact that she was worried that Sarah might be disgusted with her, either because she was probably straight and therefore revolted at the idea of sleeping with another woman, or that she might indeed like other women but think that Traynor was not worthy of her, beneath

her. That would be even more unbearable.

Sarah could even get her brother to kick her off the ship. As much as Traynor considering it an honour to be stationed on the Normandy, the thought that she might never see Sarah scared her more than anything else. She felt shocked by this realization, but she did start to understand. She felt terrified at the idea of Sarah sending her away, so she did her best to herself, no matter how much Sarah's presence tempted her by the prospect of what she could never have.

“Commander, I don’t think this is such a good idea. We could both get in trouble for this.” Said Traynor nervously as Sarah began accessing the door controls to Austin and Liara’s cabin.

“I know, that’s what makes it more fun.” Sarah giggled naughtily.

“Where did you get the access code to your brother’s cabin anyway?” Traynor asked suspiciously.

“Samantha, my friend, what you don’t know can’t hurt you.” Sarah winked.

The door opened and Sarah stepped inside. Samantha reluctantly followed.

“I’ve never been in here before. Kind of jealous he’s got all this now. Perhaps I should ask nicely if I can get mine to look like this.” Said Sarah admiringly.

“This is actually my second time in here. Earlier today, your bother invited me up. I asked if he was interested in a game, so we played.” Said Traynor. She was doing the best acting she could to hide her nervousness and depression.

“Let me guess, he won?” Sarah asked.

“Actually, no. I did.” Said Traynor, somewhat proud.

“You beat my brother? Wow! Now I’m really impressed.” Said Sarah.

Traynor did her best not to blush. To have Sarah say something like that made this very difficult for there. Despite that Sarah might sound as though she liked her, she was most likely just being nice.

Trying to find something to tear her way from Sarah’s beautiful eyes, she looked at another door up on the higher level just behind the ship collection.

“What do you thinks’ in there?” she asked quickly.

“I think that’s the bathroom.” Said Sarah.

Samantha’s interest suddenly peaked. Perhaps she had picked the right thing to change the subject on after all.

“Ah, an actual shower!”

She sighed in delight as opened the door and had a look inside.

“Why’s that so special?” Sarah asked curiously.

“The faucets in the women’s bathroom are crap. Didn’t you know that?” Traynor replied.

“Well, I haven’t tried them since the Normandy got refitted. They worked fine last time. Must be a fault.” Sarah shrugged.

Traynor did her best to not create the mental image of Sarah I all her glory taking a shower. Watching the water cascade majestically down her smooth skin and beautiful body.

“In any event... shall we get on with our game?” Traynor asked quickly.

“I’m ready if you are.” Sarah smiled confidently.

“Check mate.” Sarah smiled smugly.

“What?!” Samantha cried. “How... how did you... I don’t believe it! You actually beat me.”

It was true. Somehow, Sarah had actually managed to succeed where her brother had failed.

“To be fair though, Sam, I did only just beat you. You made a tiny mistake a few moves back. If you hadn’t, you’d have trampled me for sure. You’re very good at this.” Said Sarah.

“Thank you. I... that’s very kind of you.” Said Traynor, once again trying not to blush.

There was a bit of a long silence as the two tried to think of something else to say. Without any other options, Samantha simply resorted to the first thing that popped into her head.

“Erm, I remember a joke I told your brother earlier, you want to hear it?” she asked nervously.

“Sure.” Sarah smiled.

“Okay. What’s the difference between Commander Shepard and a Krogan?” Traynor asked, not realizing that she’d accidentally said Commander rather than Major. If she’d known that she’d quite by accident that she’d instead told a joke about the woman she was madly in love with... “One is an unstoppable juggernaut of head-butting destruction...”

“...And the other thinks you might like a shower.” Sarah finished.

“Sorry? Did you just say...”

“I can tell how excited you were about that and I could see the hopefulness in your eyes. You’d like to use it, wouldn’t you?” Sarah winked.

“Nothing gets past you, does it, Commander.” Samantha chuckled nervously. “Admittedly, yes. It would be nice to use a proper shower, I just hadn’t realised that was an option.”

“It’s an option.” Said Sarah.

“But suppose your brother comes in and...”

“He won’t. Trust me, Sam.” Said Sarah calmly. “And even if he does, I’ll take full responsibility. I was the one who suggested we come up here after all.”

“Well... I’ll just, get undressed.” Said Traynor.

“Don’t mind me. Nothing I haven’t seen before.” Said Sarah, respectfully looking away out of respect for Traynor’s privacy.

“You must’ve had quite a few men in your time.” Said Samantha as she slowly unbuttoned her top.

Secretly, this was terrifying for her. What if Sarah didn’t find her body attractive? What if it didn’t appeal to her?

“And women too. I swing both ways.” Said Sarah.

Samantha’s heart nearly stopped at this. Had she just heard right? Sarah swung both ways?! She was attracted to women as well?!

This news nearly made Traynor faint with shock and delight. Something about this was now telling the comm specialist that perhaps all wasn’t lost. Maybe there was hope for her yet.

“You do?!” she asked.

“Yeah. I’m bisexual. Didn’t you know that?” said Sarah.

“No. I thought you were... well, I just didn’t expect it.”

Samantha panted nervously, her heart pounding hard in her chest. She couldn’t believe what she was hearing. Her love was bisexual, there was a good possibility that Sarah might actually like her.

“That’s not a problem is it?” Sarah asked cautiously. The way Traynor that Traynor had spoken earlier worried her that perhaps that fact about her made the comm specialist uncomfortable.

“Oh no, of course not! No! It’s fine. It was just unexpected.” Samantha replied quickly.

“Are you okay? You sound nervous.” Sarah asked.

“Probably just the excitement.” Samantha chuckled nervously.

“Maybe I’ll feel better once I’ve had this shower.”

Samantha finished taking off all her clothes and now moved to her underwear. This terrified her even more. She was actually going naked in front of the women she’d fallen in love with. Once again, she was frightened that Sarah may once again not find her attractive.

Once Traynor’s underwear was off, the comm specialist stepped in and turned the shower on. The feel of the hot water really did help to partly take her mind off of her thoughts of Sarah, who was sitting just outside and could possibly see her. Once again in her nervousness, she’d left the door open.

“Oooh... hot water and room to stretch. I could get lost in here.” She moaned in delight as the water hit her body.

“Leaving the door open? Really, Sam?” Sarah thought.

The N7 marine didn’t show it, but secretly, he heat was beating very fast too. The women that she’d somehow developed a crush on was now standing in the shower, naked and with the door open. The

temptation it was giving was almost impossible to resist.

Something about the warm water changed something in Traynor. She suddenly felt a bit more bolder and confident. Some thoughts came into her mind. Thoughts that she wouldn't normally have thought of.

"Mmm... Oh, it's like a week's worth of stress is washing off. And the timing is perfect. I was hoping to look nice for somebody." She said.

Sarah suddenly felt her heart sink. Traynor had found someone? She'd met a man who might become a boyfriend?!

Sarah did her best to hide how disappointed she was and did her best to remain casual.

"Hot date lined up?" she asked, trying as best as she could to hide that her eyes were tearing up slightly.

"Hopefully more than just that. I play for keeps." Said Traynor.

"That... sounds serious." Said Sarah. She really did think that she'd burst into tears any minute. The one woman she'd grown to like more than anyone else and she was now taken.

"That depends on whether she's interested." Said Traynor.

Then it all clicked into place. All this time, Sarah had thought that Samantha had been talking about a man. But she hadn't, now Sarah realized who the comm specialist was referring to. Who else could it be, but...

"Oh my god! It's me!" she thought.

Her mind started filling with over a thousand questions. How long had she felt this way? Was this why she'd been so nervous around her? Did this explain why she'd taken some time off? And the most important question of all... How should she approach this now?

Samantha had definitely had that question aimed right her. She was asking her and now whether Sarah was interested in her.

"How do... actually, the hell with it." Sarah thought.

The N7 marine walked up the small stairs, up to the doorway, and shrugged everything off until she was as naked as the day she was born.

"She's interested."

And she walked in.

Traynor jumped as she suddenly felt a presence behind her. She felt her breath catch in her chest. She couldn't believe this was actually happening to her. She turned around just in time for Sarah to cup the specialist's plump cheekbones as she kissed her at last.

Traynor froze for a second, eyes bulging alarmingly wide. Then... it was as if something clicked deep inside. Her breathing slowly calmed to a less dangerous level and the convulsions that wracked her body transformed into shivers of pleasure. Nothing in her entire life could compare to that moment. After all the anticipation,

the kiss most definitely didn't disappoint. Sarah's heart melted instantly, as the feeling of Traynor's soft skin consumed her every sense. Closing her eyes, Sarah deepened the contact until the girl's nose brushed electrically across her cheek. Her arms auto-piloted their way to encircle the petrified specialist and pull her in deeper.

All notion of time disappeared from their minds. Everything revolved around the point of contact between them, and the delicious feeling of their lover's tongues against their own. Traynor finally closed her own eyes, and hungrily returned the favour, blissfully aware of every movement they made against each other. Sarah continued to soothe her, using her own lips to softly part the specialist's. Sarah's tongue slid from her mouth and began to slide across Traynor's teeth, seeking to penetrate the pearly white barrier. The young girl gasped involuntarily, allowing her eyelids to close as she too was swept up in the passionate moment. That was all the invitation Sarah needed to slip inside, delighting in the glorious feeling of tasting her lover for the very first time. Traynor began to respond, cautiously licking the tip of Sarah's tongue with her own. The electrically charged contact made the Commander actually whimper, encouraging the other girl to continue.

When they finally broke apart for air, they stared into each other's eyes before stepping back to admire the other's body for a while. Something about their connection made them find even the smallest detail to be impossibly beautiful. Despite the magical feeling she felt, after admiring the N7's body, Traynor still felt that Sarah was so far out of her league.

In Sarah's mind, she could hardly believe how amazing Traynor was. She couldn't help but marvel at how Traynor's richly tanned skin gave her such an exotic appeal. In her eyes, the lighting against her skin, combined with the glistening rivulets of water streaming down her body, Sarah could swear that Traynor's skin was practically glowing... almost like a young angel. Sarah just couldn't help how the sight made her feel, as she felt herself smile.

Samantha could have sworn she felt her very soul cry out in sheer joy when she saw Sarah's radiant smile. In that one moment, all her doubts washed away. It was true, Sarah had chosen her. HER! She felt as though her heart might explode from the emotions that were violently surging through it. Overcome with happiness, Samantha felt her body move of its own volition as she kissed Sarah once again.

At long last, flushed and panting, they separated. Samantha instantly missed the feeling of Sarah's skin on hers and felt her heart sing when the N7 pulled her into a firm hug. Sighing contentedly, she

wrapped her arms around Sarah's hourglass torso and nuzzled into her offered neck. It occurred to her then how truly miraculous Sarah's power over her emotions was. She had felt so powerful when they were kissing, ecstatic in the fact that she could bring pleasure and happiness to the woman she loved, and now, cradled in that same woman's arms, she felt safe and secure; as if nothing in the universe could ever hurt or even touch her.

As the two held each other in their arms, they washed each other a bit. Sarah even washed Samantha's black hair with some soap while Traynor focused in the N7 marine's body.

The comm specialist still could not believe how beautiful Sarah's body was. Beautiful curves, an hourglass form, a nice behind, and some excellent breasts. Just looking at it made Traynor feel very aroused.

They continued simply standing in the shower and kissing one another for a long time before they finally decided to get out before they wasted all the water and EDI suddenly picked up on this.

As the two towelled and dried each other, they couldn't help but still kiss. Sarah intended to take Traynor back to her own quarters for their first time together, but when they left the shower and felt the cool air hit their nude bodies, cold air clashing with the overwhelming heat of arousal, she changed her mind. There was a bed right there...

Acting purely on instinct, the two once again launched into each others arms and slowly made for the bed. When they felt their legs touch the edge, they fell down onto the soft mattress.

Even the slightest touch made them burn up. After "massaging" each other's bodies in the shower for a while, their arousal had got the point where they could hardly even stand up.

The two continued holding each other in their arms and kissing. Finally, Sarah's lips started moving down Traynor's body. The Comm specialist moaned in delight at the feel of her lover's mouth caressing her body like this. It was like having the shower water once again trickling down her, but this time in a very specific place.

Sarah continued kissing lower and lower until finally she reached Traynor's breasts. Although they weren't quite as big as her own, Sarah found them to be an excellent size. Not too small, nice and perky and no hint of sag. For her, they were perfect, and Samantha's beautifully smooth skin only added to it.

Samantha continued moaning and stroked Sarah's red hair as the Commander took one of her nipples into her mouth and caressed it perfectly with her tongue. It had done wonders to her mouth, now it was doing it again.

This continued for a long time until Traynor flipped them over and she was on top. She then gently started grinding against Sarah.

This elected moans from the both of them as Samantha gently thrust her hips into her lover's.

"Would've thought... we'd used... toys... by now. Sarah moaned in-between thrusts.

"They'd just spoil this golden moment. Besides, I don't have any. I'm not that kind of woman." Traynor panted.

"Nor am I." Sarah smiled as she once again kissed Traynor.

The mere touch of Sarah's lips on hers again nearly made Traynor faint. It was almost as though this woman knew exactly how to pleasure her, how to make this absolutely perfect for the both of them.

"Sam, I never thought I'd say this to anyone, but you definitely put every other girl to shame." Said Sarah.

"Stop it. You don't really mean that, you're just trying to make me blush." Traynor smiled, her cheeks turning a bit red.

Sarah however became serious. "No, I meant that. You mean more to me than anyone and anything."

A few tiny tears of happiness leaked from the specialist's oriental eyes, disappearing into her tamed locks. The two hugged each other for a while until Samantha felt she'd calmed down enough to become adventurous again.

Sarah caught on quickly and once again flipped them over so that she was on top. This time though, she turned around until they were in the 69 position.

"One of my favourites." Sarah smiled. You don't mind?"

"Not at all." Samantha smiled.

Sarah lowered herself down until her lips touched Traynor's pussy. The comm specialist was quick to return the favour.

She tasted divine. Traynor suddenly lapped at her wet folds as if her life depended on it. She couldn't compare Sarah's taste to anything, it was so much better than any food or drink. She was her drug and she was addicted to her. Sarah's moans only encouraged Samantha to drink from her oasis of tasty honey with more and more urgency.

They continued making love to one another for many hours, so much so in fact it felt like they'd been doing this for one whole day. Not that that was a bad thing course. One whole day of pleasure was something anyone would love.

Feeling both their imminent releases as they sixty-nined each other, they came together. Sarah herself nearly passed out form that, something she'd never felt or done before. This whole night with her new love had been absolutely amazing.

Sarah lay on her back for a moment. She then suddenly noticed that Traynor had actually blacked out from her last climax. Smiling tenderly, Sarah closed her eyes, basking, and slightly squirming, in the afterglow of the most incredible sex of her life. She had never felt

such pleasure, such amazing sensations before. It was almost an unbelievable, almost spiritual experience. Glancing at her passed out lover, she then smiled once again in absolute bliss. Traynor looked even more beautiful when asleep. Seeing such peaceful serenity and delightful content on her face brought unexpected elated warmth to Sarah's heart, until the point where she was almost certain she was hovering several centimetres above the bed. Snuggling closer to Traynor's warm body, Sarah ran her hand across her lover's unbelievably smooth skin, marvelling at the soothing sensation against her fingertips. She could spend hours just staring at the gorgeously tanned skin, admiring how perfect the specialist's body looked in the ethereal glow of the cabin. Leaning closely, she delicately caressed Traynor's lips with the sweetest kiss she had given her yet.

The specialist's lips were so beautifully soft and tender against her own and it made Sarah want to cry. It felt like she had waited so long to kiss her even though it had only been a few minutes in real time. Slowly, Traynor began to stir and moan under the loving ministrations. As before, something clicked inside her, and her arms instinctively wrapped themselves around Sarah's slender neck as she eagerly returned the kiss. Several more minutes were lost as the tender kiss enraptured both women and submersed them in the feelings they shared for each other.

When they finally stopped to catch their breath, Sarah lay down with Traynor resting her head on Sarah's breasts. This was something the both of them loved doing. There was always something always so loving and tender about it.

"I can't tell you how much I needed that." Traynor sighed.

"Are you using me for my brother's shower?" Sarah chuckled.

"Not anymore. You're all I need, Sarah. I... I love you. I can't deny that anymore." Said Samantha.

"I love you to, Samantha. Ever since I first saw you, I knew you were the one." Sarah smiled, once again kissing her true love. "We'd better get dressed. If my brother finds us like this, god knows what he'll say."

"Does he know that you're bisexual?" Samantha asked as they began pulling their underwear and clothes on. Due to both their releases, they were still a bit wobbly on their legs.

"Yes, he does. Although I don't know how he'd react to finding out that his own sister is sleeping with the new girl." Sarah replied.

"We've made love but we haven't got to that stage yet." Samantha winked.

"Why don't we go down to my quarters then. It's comfortable enough for that sort of thing." Sarah suggested.

“Thank you. You’ve no idea how happy you’ve made me.”
Traynor sighed happily.

“You’ve no idea how happy you’ve made me.” Sarah smiled.

“Why don’t you show me then?”

“Well I’ll say this at least. I’ve made my mind up... I’m definitely staying.”

At this, Traynor practically threw herself into Sarah’s arms and hugged her tightly. The two couldn’t help but grin at this.

Just as the door opened, they found none other than Austin walking in. To their surprise though, he walked right past them and simply nodded.

“Sarah. Traynor.” He said.

“Hi.” Sarah replied nervously.

Without even waiting for a reply, both she and Traynor bolted for the elevator and immediately pressed the button for the crew deck. It was just as the doors closed that Austin suddenly stopped dead in his tracks

“What?” he slowly turned around confusedly. “Sarah and Traynor... just came out of my cabin. How did... what were they...”

The Helldiver looked around. Nothing out of the ordinary, although the bed sheets looked a bit strange. Something suddenly clicked in Austin’s mind. Had they...

“EDI, what were Sarah and Traynor doing in my cabin?” he asked.

“Your sister used the access code to unlock the door to your quarters. She then entered with Operative Traynor.” Said EDI.

Austin was certainly confused. What had they been doing?

“What happened exactly?” Austin asked, worried that he knew what the answer would be.

“First, they played a game of chess like you did with Operative Traynor earlier this morning. Afterwards, they began to engage in extracurricular activities that prompted me to engage privacy mode on the security cameras.” The AI replied.

Austin’s eyes widened in shock. Traynor... and his sister?! Normally someone would be hugely protective of a sister like this. Austin however wasn’t that sort of person. He knew Sarah was just as grown up as he was and she was allowed to make her own decisions. Still, one question was on his mind.

“Did any of them say the L word?” he asked.

“Yes.” EDI replied.

Austin simply smiled and shook his head.

“Sarah, you minx.” He chuckled.

Things had gotten so quiet now without anything to do. For now, the Normandy was just drifting in space until Austin thought up

something or they got a call for another mission.

Sarah was currently taking some time off to make a requisition order to have her quarters refitted. Having seen how fancy her brother's were, she suddenly found herself wanting something similar. That, and she wanted to impress her new girlfriend.

At that moment, there was a knock on her door.

"Come in." she said.

The door opened and Austin stepped in. Sarah felt her heartbeat pick up a bit suddenly. Did he know? Was that why he was here?

"Ah, brother. What brings you here?" she asked.

"We need to talk, Sarah. I know about you and Traynor." Said Austin, quickly cutting to the chase.

Sarah's heart started beating even faster now. She feared this would not end well.

"You found out about that, huh?" Sarah sighed. "Look, I know how this may seem to you, but I promise you it is more than that. I love Traynor and she loves me. We said that to each other. You have no idea how much that girl has been suffering without me."

Austin was silent for a minute before he finally spoke.

"I'm happy for you two."

"This may be your ship, that doesn't mean you... what? Did you just say you're happy for us?" Sarah asked in disbelief.

"Traynor's a sweet girl. I'll admit it was unexpected that you found piece in the arms of a women. I know mum and dad are certainly gonna be surprised, but they won't be disgusted. It won't matter to them, and it doesn't matter to me that she a girl." Said Austin.

"You're serious? You're okay with... this?" Sarah asked.

"We're both grown ups, Sarah. I think we're allowed to make our own decisions. Besides, I'm now married to Liara and we started off just like you did. Who am I to judge?" Austin smiled.

Sarah was almost left lost for words at what her brother was saying. He approved of her relationship with Traynor. The N7 marine walked up to Austin and they hugged each other.

"You're best brother I could wish for." She said.

"I'm the only brother you've got, sis." Austin chuckled.

"I know, but I've always wanted to say that." Said Sarah.

"I am going to talk with Traynor though." Austin advised.

"Just be gentle with her though. She's a lot more timid and shy than me." Said Sarah. "Oh and I've finally made up my mind, I'm gonna stay."

"Glad to hear it, Sarah." Austin smiled.

Ever since she and Sarah had got together, Traynor had been

in a much better mood. Her performance at work had improved greatly as well. No longer being distracted by her undying love for Sarah and having it eating away at her from the inside had allowed to her to focus properly on her work again.

As she continued typing away at her console, Austin exited the elevator and cleared his throat so that she would hear him.

“Major, what can I do for you?” she asked happily as she saluted.

“You seem in a very good mood, Traynor.” Austin inquired.

“I guess life’s been very good to me.” Said Traynor.

“So I’ve heard. You and my sister make a good couple.” Said Austin.

Traynor feared she might have a heart attack after hearing that. This was it. Her career board the Normandy was over. She’d never see Sarah again. How could she have been so stupid?!

“I guess I’ll get my stuff then. Shouldn’t take too long since I’ve barely got anything but a toothbrush.” She said, doing her best to hide the tear forming in her eye.

“What are you talking about, Traynor?” Austin asked.

“You’re kicking me off the ship aren’t you?” Traynor sighed.

“What?! No! Of course I’m not. You love my sister don’t you?!” said Austin.

“I do, but... I thought you’d be mad about it.” Said Traynor.

“Traynor, listen to me. Sarah is my sister and she loves you deeply. I just talked with her and told her that I have no problem with the two of you. Besides, I’m married to Liara and we started off just like this. I’d be a pretty cold husband if I stopped my sister from seeing her first real girlfriend.” Said Austin, putting his hand reassuringly on Traynor’s shoulder. “What matters is that you two love each other and get along well.”

Traynor’s tears of sorrow suddenly turned to tears of joy as soon as she heard that. She almost felt as though this was a dream and that she’d wake up. Sarah’s brother, THE Sir Major Austin Shepard, actually approved and was blessing their relationship.

“You’re serious? You’re okay with your sister, your own sister, being with... someone like me?” she asked.

“Why wouldn’t I? I think I speak the truth when I say that you and Sarah are made for each other.” Said Austin. He then had a little idea. “In fact, I know a good way to prove it. Take the rest of the day off and spend it with Sarah. That’s an order.”

Traynor was once again left lost for words. She couldn’t believe this was happening.

“I... thank you, Major. I don’t know what to say.”

Austin simply smiled and nodded as the comm specialist left the CIC and headed for the elevator. As the doors closed, Austin suddenly heard his private terminal bleep with a message. He was

surprised when he saw the message.

“Joker, plot a course for Alchera. Seems we have one more goodbye to say to a very old friend.”

Sarah turned to her cabin doors as they suddenly opened and they revealed the person she'd just been thinking about.

“You look happy, Sam. What's going on.”

Traynor didn't say anything and simply unbuttoned her top until she was only in her black bra.

“You just talked with Austin didn't you?” Sarah smiled.

“He just gave me orders to take the rest of the day off and spend it with you.” Traynor winked as she worked on sliding her trousers off until she was only her underwear. “As he is the commanding officer, I must follow his orders.”

“How can I resist then?” said Sarah as she pulled Traynor into her arms and kissed her as she too worked on taking her clothes off until she was also just in nothing but her red underwear.

“You wanna sleep here tonight?” she asked.

Traynor simply responded with a kiss and the two fell onto the bed. They kissed for a while before finally breaking for air.

“Aren't you going to let me take your underwear off?” Traynor asked.

“Not if we're just sleeping together tonight.” Sarah replied.

“You sleep in your underwear?” Traynor asked in amazement.

“Yeah.” Sarah replied, her voice suddenly turning to surprise when she realized why Traynor was amazed that. “Wait, you do too?!”

“I do.” Traynor smiled.

“I love you so much.” Sarah sighed.

“I love you too.” Traynor replied.

Just as the two were about to kiss, Sarah quickly stopped them.

“One last thing: I want you to move in with me.” She said.

“Of course... Princess.”

The dropship touched down and Austin, Liara, Garrus and Tali stepped out. All around them, they could see the wreckage of none other than the Normandy SR1. They were on Alchera; the same planet where the Collectors had attacked them two years ago and Austin had died.

The message he'd received not too long ago had been about where the wreckage of the Normandy was and it had been forwarded him in case he'd wanted to pay some respects to those who had also died when the Collectors attacked. Not to mention that it had been his ship.

The four of them split into two with Garrus and Tali heading off in one group and Austin and Liara heading off in the other.

“It’s a shame that Ashley and Wrex aren’t here.” Said Austin.

“I agree.” Liara nodded.

The two groups simply walked around in silence. Despite that they had learned to move on from this and overcome the sorrow, seeing all of this, a ship they had once thought could never be spoilt or destroyed, in pieces, and close to buried, was rather saddening. Austin had also been asked by the Alliance to see if it were possible to collect all the dog tags of the Alliance crew who had died during the Collector attack. Liara obviously had recovered Austin’s a long time ago, so it was just the crew now.

Garrus and Tali had also been told about this, so they too were keeping an eye open for any silvery objects glinting on the ground.

As Austin and Liara continued walking around together, gathering up what tags they could find, they came across several familiar parts of the SR₃. The crew deck (which easily reminded the both of them of Kaiden) the ruined remains of the CIC (reminding them of Navigator Presley) the ruined Mako (a vehicle they remembered had taken them through some very rough times) and above all, what remained of Austin old quarters. The place where they had first become bond mates and had their first Union. The both of them would never forget that night.

After many hours of combing the entire place and finding all the dog tags, it was time for the final part. Placing a memorial. Picking a spot was easy since there was a large piece of the hull that said SR₁. Everyone agreed that would be the best place to place the large golden memorial that had been built for this occasion.

“Anyone like to say anything?” Austin asked as the four of them stood back.

“I’ll never forget the many things I learned from the SR₁.” Said Tali. “I made many new friends, learned so much knowledge, not just on engines, found a perfect gift to help me complete my pilgrimage, and met a brilliant captain.”

“Back when I was a C-sec officer, I didn’t think I’d ever serve on a human ship. In fact, if I hadn’t, perhaps I never would’ve been a Helldiver and I wouldn’t be here today.” Said Garrus. “I’ll always remember the SR₁ as the ship that changed my life for the better.”

Austin and Liara didn’t really have anything more to say, so they remained silent. After about a minute, Tali could see that the married couple could do with a quick minute to themselves.

“We’ll wait for you in the shuttle. Give you two a moment.” Said the Quarian.

Garrus and Tali headed back to the dropship, leaving just Austin and Liara stood hand in hand in front of the memorial.

“Reminds me of a little saying.” Said Austin.

“What’s that?” Liara asked.

“A good captain goes down with his ship.” Said Austin.

“You’re more than just a good captain, Austin. You’re a leader, and eventually you’ll have to be more than that. I know it may sound a bit much, but when the time comes, the galaxy will depend on you.” Said Liara. “I fear we’ll never truly know why or how your suit brought you back, but I think that maybe it sensed it wasn’t your time yet. It knew there was more to you. You had...”

“A destiny.” Austin finished.

Liara could sense her bond mate’s feelings and held his hand.

“Whatever happens out there, whatever the future may hold for this, I will be at your side no matter what.” She said.

“I make that promise too, Liara.” Austin smiled.

The Helldiver then reached into one of the punches on his combat belt and took out his Alliance dog tags.

“One more thing I need to do.” He said.

He walked up to the memorial, unclasped the tag’s chain, wrapped it around the memorial and relapsed it. The dog tags now hung there as he stood back.

Liara would normally have asked why Austin had done that, but being his bond mate and wife, she understood.

“You’re sure you want to leave them here?” she asked.

“I’m sure. You know as well as I do that although my suit brought me back, there was a small part of me that never did come back.” Said Austin. “I’m a Helldiver. I always have been, and I always will be. The part of me that was an Alliance soldier died a long time ago. In reality, I stopped being one when I first put on this armour. It only stayed because the Alliance was reluctant to let me go.”

“A bit like me.” Said Liara.

“True. But you did it for love. That’s more powerful than anything.” Said Austin.

“So you’re sure you want this? You truly want to put that part of your life behind you?” Liara asked.

“I’ve wanted to for a long time. Dying once really helps put things into perspective. I made some mistakes in my first life; I don’t intend to do them in my second life. After all, as they say...” Said Austin.

“You only live twice.” Liara finished for him.

“You’ve been watching too many human films again.” Austin laughed.

The two simply stood in silence for a moment as they looked at Austin’s dog tags still moving very slightly.

“I love you, Sir Major Austin Shepard.”

“I love you too, Liara T’soni Shepard.”

Words ceased as they simply hugged one before walking back to the dropship hand in hand. Whatever the future would eventually

throw at them and while they had many challenges ahead of them, they would face it together.

Legion stood before a shadowy figure. This figure was without a doubt a Geth; in fact it was the current Geth leader. With all of the heretics now rewritten, Legion had worked hard to help its people prepare for an imminent war with the Reapers. The Old Machines could offer all they liked, but they would build their own future.

Currently, Legion was reporting to the Geth what it had learned about the Helldivers. For a long time the Geth had been watching these super soldiers, unsure whether to consider them a threat or not.

“The Helldivers are most definitely formidable. It logically makes sense why the old machines perceive them as a threat. It would be advisable to work with them rather than against them.” Said Legion.

The Geth in the shadows uttered a Geth language unrecognizable to organics.

“To challenge them, is to court death.” Said Legion.

The Geth Prime that Legion had been speaking too turned to face it. All that could be visible of it was its burning red eye, flaps, and two long horns...

A long time ago, in a galaxy far far away....

STAR WARS

THE CLONE WARS: BATTLEFIELD CRISTOPHSIS

Chapter 1

Slade Eide-Ettaro

The Clone Wars have begun, not two months have passed since the opening battle of the war on Geonosis and the planets of the Galactic Republic are under grave threat from the Confederacy of Independent Systems and their Droid Army. The Separatists control many of the hyperspace lanes that link the Republic together, effectively isolating member planets across the Republic and leaving them all but defenseless.

One such planet is the rich world of Christophsis. This planet is not only a major economic hub for the Republic, but it is one of the few planets which has allowed refugee camps upon its surface. Senator Bail Organa of Alderaan has been a major sponsor of these camps and was touring the planet when the Confederacy struck.

With only limited defensive forces, Christophsis was no match for the might of the Droid Army which quickly swept across the planet and conquered it save for a few scattered hold outs. Desperate both to secure the vital economic world and save Senator Organa, the Republic hastily formed a fleet under the command of Jedi Generals Obi-Wan Kenobi and Anakin Skywalker to break through the Separatist blockade and retake the planet along with their clone forces in the 7th Sky Corps.

While unable to defeat the Separatist force in orbit around Christophsis, Kenobi and Skywalker were able to land with just enough troops and supplies to reinforce the beleaguered hold outs in the planet's capital city. Meanwhile, in orbit, Admiral Wulf Yularen was forced to retreat, defeated by the dread Admiral Trench, leaving the two Jedi and their troopers to fend for themselves on the planet's surface.

With no support, Kenobi and Skywalker dig in to wait for further reinforcements as the Droid Army, led by General Loathsome, closes in around them and prepares to wipe the Republic from Christophsis once and for all....

Republic Haven Space Station

“We can't support Christophsis without more naval forces.”

Admiral Yularen said tersely, his arms crossed as the planet in question floated in the center of the command room, casting its blue glow across the chamber.

“Brought you more ships we have.” Master Yoda said simply, leaning forwards on his cane intently. “Rescue Senator Organa and liberate Christophsis we must.”

“There are nearly twenty major warships between us and the planet!” Yularen protested. “My forces were no match for them and are now badly damaged!”

“Master Kahan, explain you will to Admiral Yularen what we bring, yes?”

The stooped green Jedi Grand Master stood aside as Jedi Master Kahan stepped forwards and began reading from the datapad he carried, his long black hair cast a shadow over his dark blue eyes as he read.

“Five star destroyers, seven assault ships, ten cruisers and eight frigates.” he looked up at Admiral Yularen. “That is in addition to your seven star destroyers six assault ships and five frigates.”

Yularen swallowed nervously, shaking his head. “This is insane, that dreadnought will tear us to pieces.”

“Maybe.” Kahan said flatly. “You let the Typhon worry about that.”

Admiral Yularen frowned. “The Typhon?”

“It's one of the new Tector-class star destroyers.” Kahan said with a thin smile. “I think it will take care of your dreadnought problem.”

“Make haste we must.” Master Yoda said urgently. “Hold out forever Generals Kenobi and Skywalker cannot.”

“My ships won't be able to leave for another three hours at least.” Admiral Yularen said gruffly. “They'll be nearly useless as they are now.”

“Send help we must.” Master Yoda stated. “Master Kahan,” he turned to the young Jedi master. “An idea you have?”

“I'll take a single assault ship ahead and deliver the initial reinforcements. That should buy Kenobi and Skywalker additional time to do whatever it is they need to.”

Master Yoda nodded. “Approve this plan I do, suited to your skills it is.”

Admiral Yularen frowned. “One assault ship?” he threw out his hand dismissively. “They'll be torn to shreds before they get anywhere near the planet!”

Master Yoda eyed Kahan with a sage smile. “Underestimate us you do Admiral, learn you will why Kahan a Jedi master is.”

Kahan bowed at the waist and left the chamber, leaving Master Yoda to discuss the follow on forces. He checked the datapad,

scrolling through the forces under his command. Amidst all the clones he spied a name that was definitely not among their number. He frowned. Aira-ty Nokta, Commander, GAR. What was a non-clone woman doing in the clone ranks of the GAR?

Crystal City, Planet Christophsis

Obi-Wan swatted aside the incoming blaster fire from the advancing droids as his clone troops held the barricade they'd set up along the thoroughfare blocking the approach to the capital building of Christophsis. His eyes widened as three AATs rolled around the corner and turned their cannons on the barricade.

"Everybody get down!"

Obi-Wan and the clones around him all crouched down behind their makeshift barrier just as the roar of the cannons sounded. He felt the heat from the blast as the energy bolts either struck home or whizzed overhead. He slapped his comlink.

"Cody! Fire on my position!"

Commander Cody's voice came back hesitantly. "General, we might hit you—"

"There are three tanks just north of us, fire!"

"Yes sir, shots incoming."

Obi-Wan hunkered down and waited. Good as his word, a volley of artillery shells rained down just ahead of the barricade, kicking up debris that showered Obi-Wan and the troopers with bits of ferrocrete and duraplast. He stood up and surveyed the damage the artillery had wrought. Where the tanks and battle droids had been there was now a series of craters.

"Good job Cody."

"Thank you sir. Sir, Senator Organa is requesting your presence in the Crystal Palace."

"Of course he is." Obi-Wan said tiredly. "Where is Anakin?"

"General Skywalker is scouting beyond the perimeter with Captain Rex." Cody replied.

Obi-Wan sighed, wondering what sort of trouble Anakin was looking for this time. He was concerned for his former Padawan, since the war had broken out he'd become even more reckless and aggressive. Obi-Wan feared that Anakin would become too much the warrior to ever come back to what a Jedi was truly meant to be.

"I don't like this sir." Rex grumbled under his breath.

Anakin smiled at the clone captain. "What's wrong? You worried the droids'll get the drop on us?"

"That has been the trend." Rex replied flatly. "Every patrol we've sent beyond our perimeter has been ambushed."

Anakin shrugged idly as they walked through the war torn cityscape. Just a few short days before these buildings had marked the main battle line of the Republic forces but they'd been pushed back almost seven blocks before managing to dig in again and then only because they were able to find clear lines of fire for their artillery. Anakin would never admit it to Obi-Wan but he found war thrilling. He would certainly never tell Padme how much he loved the constant rush he got from combat. It was as if all the pent up rage and energies he had harbored all these years had finally found an outlet.

"Relax Rex, no one is going to ambush us in the middle of an attack. They were pushing the barricades just a moment ago."

"Which sounds like an excellent reason to get back to the barricades and reinforce them." Rex retorted, adding respectfully. "Sir."

"Obi-Wan can handle the barricades Rex, and we have no intelligence beyond our lines. We need to know what's out there. Besides," Anakin waved behind them idly. "We have the walkers."

Rex glanced over his shoulder at the trio of walkers, grateful for their blasters and concussion grenades. At the very least they'd have fire support if things went to hell which they had been doing of late. Rex didn't like it. He was sure there was a spy in their camp but he couldn't work out who it was. None of the refugees were allowed into the defensive perimeter that the clones had setup and it was unthinkable that either of the Generals could be giving information to the Seps so...who then? The Senator? That didn't seem to make any sense either but...well he was a politician.

One of the troopers ahead of them held up a fist. The platoon froze in place, their weapons scanning the buildings around them.

"Trooper, report."

"I heard something Captain, 0300."

"Roger that." Rex swept his hand over his head and pointed towards the building in question.

The platoon reformed and headed for the door, stacking up besides it as Skywalker took up a position in front of the it. Rex hated letting the General do that but he'd had no success in stopping him from pulling stunts like this so instead he planned around them.

Anakin took a deep breath and steadied himself as he readied his lightsaber. Then something changed and his eyes widened.

"Get back!"

He leapt away from the door as did the rest of the platoon just as the explosion shattered it. A destroyer droid came tramping out of the blown doorway. A grenade struck the droid and it shattered under the explosive impact. Blaster fire tore through the wreckage as a line of super battle droids came marching forwards, their blaster arms upraised and firing. The clones and walkers returned fire, the walkers

blasters sweeping across the line of battle droids with murderous effect. Anakin deflected bolt after bolt of the incoming fire, shielding his men from the attack.

A concussive blast tore through the platoon then and Anakin fell to the ground amidst the debris. Anakin's ears rang and he tried to shake the ringing from his head as he looked around. Most of the platoon was still intact but two of the walkers were down.

"Get the pilots out!" Anakin shouted as he turned to look down the street.

"AATs!" Rex shouted. "Move!"

One of the tanks fired, Anakin swung his saber and swatted the round high into the buildings above.

Rex swore under his breath. "Everyone fall back to the perimeter. This is Captain Rex, fire mission on my coordinates! General, get back!"

Skywalker followed after Rex and the other clones as they fell back. It was another ambush Rex grumbled as the artillery rained down behind them. This was one too many times.

Orbit of Planet Christophsis, Separatist Dreadnought Invincible

Admiral Trench paced the bridge of his dreadnought Invincible. These obnoxious clones and their Jedi were proving annoyingly resilient despite his best efforts to dislodge them. Even without their fleet to supply them they were still fighting.

"And you're sure that this spy of yours is reliable?"

The cloaked woman with the pale skin smiled dangerously.

"Reliable enough." she said darkly.

"Mm, according to Loathsome it would be far easier to eliminate them if they were without their heavy cannons."

"That can be arranged." the woman said with a dark chuckle.

"Admiral, hyperspace signature detected."

"Hmm," Admiral Trench buzzed. "We are not expecting any more ships. It must be Republic, destroy it."

"My my," the cloaked woman chuckled. "You are as ruthless as they say."

The Admiral said nothing as he watched his gunners train their weapons on the vector where the hyperspace signature was projected. His many eyes narrowed as nothing appeared on the screens.

"Where is it?" he hissed, leaning forwards intently.

"Unknown Admiral, we detect nothing in the space where the signature was detected."

The cloaked woman canted her head to the side as if listening to something, but the Admiral ignored her, intent on finding the source of the anomaly.

“I sense something.” she murmured, her brows knitting fretfully.

Orbit of Planet Christophsis, Republic Assault Ship Jelial

“You sense nothing.” Kahan said quietly, his eyes closed serenely in meditation.

Commander Aira-ty Nokta looked over her shoulder at the Jedi Master uncomfortably. As one of the officers of the 13th Assault Corps she'd been in on the briefing where General Kahan had explained his plan. She had volunteered her 44th Battalion to be part of the two legions from the corps to take on the task of infiltrating with reinforcements and supplies aboard the assault ship heading towards Christophsis and the beleaguered forces on its surface. She still thought this was insane though, but despite that, she wanted a chance to fight the ones responsible for Jango's death.

She didn't blame the Jedi, no, it had been them after all that had commissioned the clone army. No, she blamed Count Dooku and his Separatists for killing her husband. If he had simply remained on Kamino and continued his work with the clones instead of taking on that last job with Dooku....

She clenched her fist tightly. All she had left were the clones that Jango had created. Boba had vanished, and with him the last truly personal trace of her husband had fled from her save the precious memories she held within herself. The clones were the last thing she had of Jango's, and if she didn't fight besides them as they fought and died for the Republic...she would never forgive herself.

Kahan could sense the roiling emotions within the 44th's commander and considered reaching out to her and easing her pain but decided against it, such intrusions were rarely welcomed by those who were not Force sensitive. In any case, he had more pressing things to consider, such as maintaining the web of bent light around the Jelial as she continued on her course towards the planet before them. That, and defending against the searching probes of the Force user aboard the Separatist dreadnought. Her presence was an added complication that he had not anticipated and did not need. However he had to deal with it nevertheless.

Orbit of Planet Christophsis, Separatist Dreadnought Invincible

Asajj Ventress snarled in annoyance. Something was there, she was sure of it. Everytime she reached for it with her mind however she was rebuffed by whatever it was. As if there were a wall she could not cut through. This she would not accept. There was nothing in this galaxy she could not defeat. She would crush whatever this was and

find the answer to the mysterious hyperspace anomaly.

“Where are you?” she growled.

Admiral Trench ignored the mumblings of his guest as he directed his crew's attentions where they were needed.

“Are you sure there is nothing there?”

“Affirmative Admiral, there is no trace of any ship that we can detect. Merely a drifting ion trail.”

Trench stopped and frowned. “Ion trail?” his eyes glittered darkly. “Can you follow it?”

“Affirmative, tracing now.”

“Excellent.” Trench said wickedly. “Follow it, and once the trail ends fire on its projected coordinates.”

Ventress' eyes widened. “There is a Jedi out there!” then she clutched at her head. “Get out!”

Orbit of Planet Christophsis, Republic Assault Ship Jelial

Kahan withdrew from the Sith's mind, his eyes snapping open as he rose from the command chair.

“Shields up, engines at maximum, plot an entry course at maximum angle and velocity, get us planetside now!”

Aira-ty was startled out of her own thoughts by the Jedi General's outburst and she turned to look at him in bafflement.

“What's going on? I thought you wanted to maintain a low profile.”

“I did, but their admiral has smoked us out.” Kahan said with a tight smile. “Luckily, we're already past the dreadnought and there aren't any ships able to intercept us.”

The deck bucked violently and Aira-ty struggled to maintain her balance. Kahan she noticed smugly also had to struggle to keep his feet. She couldn't be seen to be any less than the Jedi she was serving with. She would not allow it.

“Shields holding, almost within the atmosphere.”

“Won't we still be vulnerable once we're down there?”

“I'm hoping that the proximity of our forces to the enemy will prevent them from firing on us.” Kahan replied stoically as the ship continued downwards towards the planet.

Aira-ty swallowed nervously, doing her best not to show it. That was a hope she did not want to place any bets on. Those were just droids down there, the Separatists could build more droids anytime they pleased.

Orbit of Planet Christophsis, Separatist Dreadnought Invincible

“Fire! Fire!” roared Admiral Trench. He was furious that the

Republic vessel had managed to get so far through his lines before he'd thought to check for the ion trail. He should have thought of it sooner. "I want them dead, NOW!"

"Admiral, we risk missing the target and striking General Loathsome's forces below us." one of the bridge droids intoned.

Trench clacked his mandibles in annoyance, damned Republic tricksters.

"Do not worry Admiral." his guest said quietly. "I will take a shuttle down to the planet's surface. I need to contact our informant, and while I am there I will deal with these Jedi Generals as well."

Admiral Trench nodded, his red eyes glittering dangerously. "Make sure they suffer."

Ventress smiled, showing her teeth as her eyes reflected the murderous shimmer in Trench's gaze.

"Oh, believe me I will."

Crystal City, Planet Christophsis

Obi-Wan walked into the wing of the capital building which had been put aside for the Senator and those civilians and refugees that had decided to take their chances with the Republic forces.

"General." Senator Organa greeted him with a wry smile. "It's strange addressing you like that Master Obi-Wan, I must admit."

"These are strange times Senator." Obi-Wan replied candidly. "Did you require something?"

"I was wondering if there had been any word from the Republic regarding a relief force."

"You mean a further relief force." Obi-Wan stated, feeling a slight twinge of annoyance that the Senator did not consider his and Anakin's presence as the relief force it had been meant to be.

"Yes of course." the Senator said hastily. "Forgive me, is there any word?"

"None that I am aware o—" Obi-Wan's comlink blared insistently. "Yes?"

"Obi-Wan," Anakin said breathlessly. "There's another attack, it's a big one."

"I copy." Obi-Wan looked back to the Senator. "Senator, if you will excuse me."

Senator Organa bowed. "Of course, may the Force be with you General."

"May it be with us all Senator." Obi-Wan replied as he headed to rejoin his troops.

Cody hated General Skywalker. It wasn't a personal hatred, no, nothing like that. It was a professional hatred. Skywalker was going to

get them all killed with his antics. Cody had assigned Captain Rex to Skywalker in the hopes that the capable Captain would keep the rampant General in check but such had not happened. Instead it seemed that all Rex could do was be dragged along in Skywalker's wake. The best laid plans.

He turned as General Kenobi joined him on the barricade.

"Report?"

"Skywalker's unit is beyond the perimeter still. We haven't seen signs of them yet but we are in communication with them, they're under heavy fire but are falling back in good order."

The General nodded. "Alright, be ready to give them supporting fire, are the guns armed?"

Cody nodded in turn. "Yes sir, their crews are standing by and ready."

"Very well, then lets get ready for them."

"Commander, we have incoming."

Cody tapped his comlink. "Yes, we know that lieutenant."

"No sir, it's above."

"An aero attack?"

"Negative Commander, it's not an attack, it's a Republic transport."

"The blockade is broken?" Cody asked in disbelief. Surely they would have noticed something like that before now!

"No sir, as far as we can tell it's a single Acclamator heading for the central plaza. They're broadcasting the correct IFF codes."

"A single assault ship?"

"Yes sir, Jedi General Kahan is aboard."

Cody cursed silently. Another Jedi? Did he really want a third one to keep an eye on? General Kenobi was a good enough commander but he still wasn't sure whether Kenobi or Skywalker was indicative of the norm.

"Orders sir?"

"Give them landing permission lieutenant, make sure there's sufficient space for them to touch down."

Aboard the Republic Assault Ship Jelial

"We're cleared to land General."

"Ready gunships, I want them to sweep the perimeter, do we have communications with General Kenobi?"

"Ready now sir."

Master Kenobi's features appeared in the holotank and Kahan inclined his head with a solemn bow.

"Master Kenobi, it seems I have arrived just in time."

"Yes Master Kahan, is it just your ship?"

"I'm afraid so, my powers were strained enough as it was with a single ship."

Master Kenobi frowned. "Powers?"

"I promise to explain everything Master Kenobi, for now it seems you have a large enemy presence advancing on you."

"Yes, can your troops sweep the area?"

Kahan nodded to the flight officer. "We're launching now."

Aira-ty stood in the bay door of the gunship as it was launched from the assault ship's hangar. It soared over the city below with dozens of others of its kind.

"Orders commander?"

Aira-ty smiled beneath her helmet at Jesp's voice, it was so like Jango's...though the accent was missing.

"Do we know where the enemy are?"

"We ma'am."

Aira-ty keyed in the command circuit on her comlink and began issuing orders.

"All craft, we're going to sweep up the main boulevard where the enemy are advancing. Weapons free, show them you're better than a whole army of droids."

The gunships swept in over the advancing droid forces, their beam cannons and missiles tracing paths of destruction across the mechanized ranks.

Aira-ty watched as anti-aircraft fire reached up and blew one of the other gunships in the formation out of the air, she found it with her helmet mounted sensors.

"Pilot, drop us on that AA."

"Yes ma'am."

She turned to look at the troopers with her. "Get ready boys, we're going in."

The troopers all hefted their rifles and readied themselves as the gunship peeled up and over, diving towards the deck to get under the enemy fire. The bay doors opened and Aira-ty leapt from the gunship along with her clones, their jetpacks kicking in as they descended in amongst the droids. Their blaster fire swept through the metal ranks, cutting down droid after droid as more troopers dropped in amongst them. However there were more of the droids and their tanks and walkers were coming up to join the fray and there was no denying the press of numbers was telling.

Then a new fusillade of heavy fire joined the fray. Aira-ty turned to see more clones and a single Jedi advancing up the boulevard at a run. Then, from above a new force of clones repelled down the side of a building and landed in amongst the tanks and walkers, planting detpacks on the heavy armor before dropping to the

deck amongst the clones and droids and firing their blasters at point blank range as the enemy armor erupted around them.

The death knell came a moment later as what must have been several heavy guns opened fire and artillery shells rained down amongst the rearmost ranks of the droids, sending hundreds of broken metal limbs flying into the air.

Shortly thereafter, the droids ceased their advance and fell back under the covering fire of their tanks and spider droids.

Aira-ty turned to the Jedi who had come to join her, there were now two of them, she didn't bother removing her helmet, instead turning back to her clones.

"Alright, sweep the area, check the buildings, I want everything—"

The roar of a cannon silenced her words, even over the internal comlink she maintained with the troopers. Aira-ty looked up to see three massive energy blasts sailing through the atmosphere towards the incoming assault ship.

Rex watched with a mixture of horror and taciturn acceptance as the assault ship took the three hits and shook violently for a moment before it pitched over and began to fall out of the sky towards the central plaza where it had been descending.

Commander Cody's voice cut across the command circuit. "All units, brace for shock!"

Another voice cut across the circuit. "This is Master Kahan to Master Kenobi and Jedi Skywalker, I require your assistance."

"We'll help however we can Master Kahan." General Kenobi replied.

"Very well, if you would help me land this thing I would be in your debt."

Rex blinked, what on earth were they talking about? How could General Kenobi and Skywalker help to land the ship from down here?

"I've never moved anything that big." Skywalker said dubiously.

"We have to try Anakin." Kenobi replied. "Size matters not."

Rex frowned, and then his eyes widened in shock as both Jedi raised their hands and gestured towards the ship as it came down.

Were they really trying to—if his eyes had been wide, now they were out of their sockets. The assault ship righted itself until it was again even keeled. Rex watched as it came down into the central plaza, still too fast for a real landing, but it did land on its struts at least. The foremost landing leg bent as the nose of the ship touched down, and then it snapped, sending the assault ship's fore into the ferrocrete of the plaza.

However the ship rested there on its remaining two struts, for all intents and purposes intact. Rex turned to look at the two Jedi

Generals, both were sweating.

“All available troopers, head towards the crash site and conduct recovery operations.”

Rex wasn't entirely sure recovery operations were needed, he was still looking at General Kenobi and General Skywalker in something akin to disbelief. If he survived this war, he wasn't sure he would ever see something that impressive again.

SOMETHING MAGIC IS BREWING CH

cxdlover
of <http://www.cxdlover.deviantart.com>

TITLE

Author
of

Cover Letter goes here: something about the work, the writer, or whatever else the writer wants to talk about.

POETRY

MY SECRETS

TheMeTheyDontSee
of <http://TheMeTheyDontSee.deviantart.com>

My secrets held since i was a kid.
Wish I could have ran and hid.
Hearing a voice since I was ten.
Now that's out in the open.
Don't know what Mom would say.
Expected her to shy away.
Instead she seems perfectly fine.
With this strange diagnosis of mine.
I didn't know that that could be.
Someone could truly accept me.
With relief I breathe a sigh.
No longer do I need to lie

FLIRTING WITH REGRET

Natasha S.

I'll do anything to forget.

Anything to make the colors blur, make my head whirl.

Anything to convince myself I am real and I don't need anyone but me.

I can't kiss you like I kiss those pills on the tip of my lips, and deeper into my mouth.

I want nothing more than to forget what I've said, and how you responded.

A NIGHT ON THE TILES

Kela Lewis-Morin

She was not a natural socialite.
But her friends suggested they all went out tonight.
They told her she was always over worked and uptight.
And that it was about time she took them up on their invite.

Despite her initial reluctance,
They persisted to infiltrate her circumference.
As a result masses alcohol was consumed in abundance.
Until she was no longer fit to make any logical judgements.

When they finally arrived at the function,
She had already drunk well over her consumption.
And could not handle or distinguish the subtle forms of seduction.
Or gage how quickly a seemingly sweet male can turn into a
hunter.

She was then propped across the busy street.
Before she knew it she was in the passenger seat.
With her head nestled between her legs staring at her feet.
And none of her friends available to help her escape and retreat.

The door opened and she was put on to a sofa.
Unable to move or talk she felt like she was in a coma.
And still the man took off his shirt and pulled her in closer.
She lifelessly lay there as he began to undress, caress and grope her.

She woke up the next morning completely naked.
Crying and touching her body that was previously invaded.
Wondering how any human being could forcibly take something so
sacred.
Now the act of love has been compensated, fornicated and selfishly
desecrated.
And for her will forever be associated with feelings of suffering and
hatred.

You wonder how and why these things happen.
The most disgusting things anyone can fathom and imagine.
Committed by someone who under the influence you considered
handsome.
Even the most spontaneous and festive occasions can be tarnished

and dampened.

If there is one thing this innocent girl has learnt is that this entire world is up for ransom.