



Tis the Season for Tentacles (Tinsel and Tentacles 2.0)

Author: *Chloe Archer*

Category: LGBT+

Description: Felix

Combing the desert for aliens might sound a little out there, but I don't care. They're among us and I'm going to prove it.

Yet even I didn't expect to get sucked up by a tractor beam and whisked off to outer space!

Also, why the heck does the interior of this ship look like a Christmas store exploded inside it? And, swoon, why does the big golden alien scowling at me have so many... tentacles?

Najar

For a second time, we've been forced to bring a human aboard our ship. And once again, it's due to my crew mates' foolishness. Sigh.

Christmas is in the air—Galactic gods, save me—and we're exploring planets with similarly unusual holidays. So, Felix is stuck with us for a while.

But why can't I leave the inquisitive human alone? He's too tempting for his own good.

Our time together is limited, so hoping for something serious is ridiculous... right?

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Chapter One

Chronicles of Chaos: An Informal Record of Life Aboard the Sleigh Belle

Stardate: 78384.8

Origin: Helgar's Nebula

Destination: Earth

Yet again, I have been overruled by my crewmates. Logic and reasoning are far from their minds when concocting new “adventures.” In particular, their fanatical obsession with all things “Christmas” has not abated over the last two years. If anything, it’s gotten worse. After our captain and his human partner got married on Christmas last year, they’ve been bound and determined to celebrate the holiday—and their first anniversary—in full festive style. Our ship’s engineer is also enthusiastic about this plan. There is but one problem.

They have decided to return to Earth. Again.

In order to procure, what will no doubt be, a metric ton of decorations to adorn the interior of our once majestic ship. And with no concern about the Alliance capturing and imprisoning us for illegal trespassing.

Fuck my life.

— Najar Mezdel, First Lieutenant and Voice of Reason on the Sleigh Belle

NAJAR

“Why did I agree to go along with this ludicrous plan?” My tentacles twitch in agitation.

“Because you love us?” Luna says around a candy cane that our captain’s human husband, Sasha, acquired on his first trip into a nearby human town.

He’s now on his fourth run to the store.

My best friend and our ship’s captain, Khephren, waves his bright pink tentacles in the air. “Ooh! Because you’ve finally found your Christmas spirit. It’s infectious, isn’t it?”

He beams at me and I sigh.

Luna’s droid, Rambo, lets out several beeps and says, “Why so serious?”

He only talks in human movie lines thanks to Luna’s programming. Naturally, Sasha—a filmmaker and self-proclaimed cinephile—loves this, as do my movie-obsessed Dravethian friends.

I, however, wish there was a mute button on the little robot.

Two of my tentacles rub my temples, where I swear I can feel the beginnings of a headache forming.

“We’ve been here too long already. It’s only a matter of time before the Alliance discovers our presence. We don’t have the clearance to be here,” I remind them all for the umpteenth time.

Luna, evidently tired of sucking on her candy cane, takes a vicious crunching bite out of it. “Lighten up, dude. Rambo’s right. You’re far too serious.”

Khephren, who’s wearing the ridiculous elf hat Sasha gave him when they first met, chortles smugly and waves an admonishing tentacle at me. “Don’t underestimate my skills, my good man. I have spent months calibrating our cloaking device. We got past the Alliance atmospheric sensors without registering as so much as a blip on their radars. There’s no way they even know we’re here.”

Thankfully, Kheph did have the common sense to land out in the middle of the desert, far away from human eyes. That’s the one saving grace in all of this.

He also made a small automobile-like device with its own cloaking mechanism for Sasha to drive into towns and purchase the goods we need.

Or rather, the frivolous Christmas items my crewmates consider necessities.

Luna finishes off her candy cane. “Sasha should be back soon and we can be on our way. In and out in no time flat.”

The vehicle Kheph made for Sasha does travel faster than most things on this planet, so it has sped up the process quite a bit. The problem is that it’s small, meaning there’s only so much stuff that can fit inside and be transported safely. Hence Sasha’s multiple trips to the store.

I thought we had plenty after the first shopping round, but I was overruled.

By now, several trips in, the interior of the ship has become almost unrecognizable.

Before we abducted him—I mean, invited him on an adventure in outer space , as Kheph likes to say—Sasha used to work at a place called Santa’s Winter

Wonderland. I can only imagine it looked a lot like our ship does now.

Festive green garlands and strings of multicolored lights adorn every visible surface around me. Several artificial trees—I'm not sure what their purpose is in relation to this holiday—are set up in different parts of the ship and covered in an explosion of ball-like decorations and some strange, synthetic, furry substance Sasha calls "tinsel."

Khephren hums happily as he continues attaching an odd plant to the tops of doorways.

"What is he doing?" I ask Luna in a whisper.

She grins. "Hanging mistletoe."

I blink at her.

She rolls her eyes. "According to humans, if two individuals stand under that plant, they must kiss."

Note to self—avoid doorways when anyone else is around.

"How long is all of this going to stay a part of the ship's... decor?" I dare to ask.

"Who knows? Maybe forever?" Luna flashes me an unbothered smile and shrugs.

"Could be worse. Could be raining," Rambo beeps cheerily.

I close my eyes.

At least my room has remained untainted by the chaotic explosion of holiday decorations. It might be the only part of the ship that is still unscathed. That means I

have at least one place I can retreat to as I endeavor to retain my sanity.

Khephren pulls out his telecom pad and starts video-chatting with Sasha who's still in the store.

"Holy fuck, babe! They have a twerking Santa figurine. It just needs batteries," I hear Sasha say through the speaker.

Khephren's eyes sparkle as he stares at the screen enthralled. "It is quite amazing. Of course, we must have it."

"Natch," Sasha agrees with an evil laugh.

"Wait!" Khephren cries. "Back up. What is that?"

Sasha starts laughing. "The tag says 'it's an inflatable ninjabread man.' Heh. This is pretty cool."

"Do you think we could fit it on the ship?" Khephren asks, biting his bottom lip.

"Hmm. Supposedly, it's five feet tall when inflated but, ooh, it has LEDs inside."

"No," I proclaim, putting my foot down.

Khephren turns to me with pleading, puppy-dog eyes.

Too bad for him that I'm immune by now.

Mostly.

"Don't worry, Naj." Sasha raises his voice so I can hear him. "I'm grabbing a Grinch

pillow just for you.”

I scowl.

“Good work, my darling,” Khephren coos.

After a year of marriage, he and Sasha are still in their honeymoon phase. It’s as disgusting as it is sweet.

“Babe, what about this shirt?” I hear Sasha ask.

Khephren gasps and his tentacles do a full-on cheer routine. “Dear goddess, Thekmis. Does that say ‘Meowy Catmas’?”

“Sure does.”

Kheph’s eyes are practically glowing. “It is amazing .”

“I had a feeling you’d like it. I’ll grab a couple of the different cat-themed holiday shirts for you. Your simulator should be able to fashion the holes you need in the back for your... tentacles.”

He whispers that last part.

“You are the best husband a Dravethian like me could ask for.” Khephren makes a kissy face at the screen of his device.

“Ugh,” I mutter.

Luna growls. “It is pretty annoying, isn’t it? Those lucky bastards found love and are getting laid on the regular while you and I are sad and alone, with only our tentacles

to keep us company.”

“What happened to that Rendathian woman you met on Xiunderia? I thought you had plans to meet up again when we were next in that quadrant.”

Luna lets out a forlorn sigh. “The long-distance thing was too hard. She met someone new and ditched me in a hot second. We had fun, but I guess it just wasn’t meant to be.”

I reach a tentacle over and stroke her back. “One day you’re going to find the woman of your dreams.”

“How can you be so sure?”

“Any other outcome is unacceptable.”

She laughs and favors me with a soft smile. “Thanks, Naj. I hope you’re right.”

Rambo does a little robotic twirl. “If you look for it, I’ve got a sneaky feeling you’ll find that love actually is all around.”

Luna rubs his shiny chrome head affectionately.

Neither Luna nor I have ever been lucky in love. Granted, she’s been looking for it a lot more aggressively than I have.

To be honest, I’m not sure if I’m cut out for such things—namely, messy emotions.

I’ve had my share of bed partners over the years, but those arrangements were always about fulfilling a biological need more than anything else. I always made that clear

from the start and went out of my way to select partners looking for the exact same thing. Romance, and the complexities of connection with a lover that go beyond sharing mutual physical satisfaction, are tiresome—and a whole hell of a lot of work.

I will admit, seeing the unfettered joy that Khephren basks in every day since he and Sasha became an item does occasionally tempt me to wonder what if?

Being an orphan, I've had limited experiences with genuine affection.

Khephren's parents took me in and provided for my schooling, but it was all in service of protecting their son. I was never quite part of the family, more like the hired help. Having been born with a warrior's mark, just like my parents who died in battle, I was a perfect companion for their brilliant young child growing up. It was advantageous to them to put me in their debt so that they could make use of my talents to safeguard their son. While I don't believe their intentions were quite that mercenary, they were calculated to some extent. It all made perfectly logical sense, even to me as a young child, but such arrangements rarely foster deeper feelings.

Things could have gone very badly under the circumstances if I hadn't gotten along with any of them. But I came face to face with the undefeatable and unrelenting optimism of Khephren—and I didn't stand a chance in Helgar's Nebula of not falling under his spell. The man is so caring and earnest, and when he decided he liked me from the moment we met, my status had been elevated to friend in Khephren's mind.

It wasn't long before we became best friends, in only the way young children can. Growing up, we were thicker than thieves and always at one another's side. He won me over and earned my eternal loyalty from the get-go, having always treated me like a true brother. I will always love him for that.

Few can resist Khephren when his sunshiny personality is at full power. That's why it came as no surprise to me when Sasha succumbed as well. The formerly grumpy,

Christmas-hating human could not hold out against the power of Khephren's magical rays of pure happiness.

It was quite entertaining to watch, actually.

Oh, how the mighty grumps fall in Khephren's cheerful wake.

Because of the nature of our connection, Khephren and I never shared any romantic or sexual attraction. We weren't one another's type at all. Perhaps things would have been easier if we had been.

But now I know the universe had bigger and better things planned for my best friend, in the form of the tiny human we brought aboard our ship for a so-called "Christmas adventure" among the stars.

Newsflash: It was an abduction.

But on the whole, Sasha didn't really seem to mind and has taken to life aboard the Sleigh Belle like an Agarthian swamp-rat to water.

We all discovered that Sasha has a will of iron, and when he sets his mind on something, he goes all in.

It's no wonder he and my best friend are so well suited for one another.

I'm sure finding his soulmate made Sasha's transition that much easier as well. He does, of course, get homesick from time to time, mostly for things he misses on Earth, which is yet another reason we have ventured into the danger zone once more.

But he didn't leave behind much in terms of friends or family that would lament his absence from this world.

We were all shocked to learn that Sasha's parents had disowned him because of his sexual orientation—something that would be unthinkable among our kind.

While the Dravethian people have many flaws, we have never had qualms about different sexual preferences so long as both partners are consenting adults. Variety breeds creativity and innovation, and we have never seen diverse sexual preferences as wrong.

Luna, for instance, is attracted to women, or feminine-presenting individuals, while Khephren prefers men or male-presenting individuals.

I have much broader attractions. Over the years, I have enjoyed lovers from many different species and genders. I don't always know what will attract me to another, but I tend to trust my instincts.

Luna fiddles with the controls at Khephren's terminal and Christmas music starts playing softly over the ship's com system.

I study her as she tries to stealth-watch Khephren while he's talking to Sasha on his telecom pad, a look of longing evident on her lovely face.

Luna may act tough, but she's just as much of a marshmallow at her core as Khephren is. She's a lot snarkier than my best friend, but that's mostly a protective mechanism. Luna's been hurt before. Her generosity is abundant, and unfortunately, there have been others who've taken advantage of that.

Is it so wrong that she just wants someone to love, who will love her too?

I'm not really a passenger on this Christmas-obsessed train that my friends have climbed aboard, but if I could gift Luna a partner worthy of her this season, I would.

Of course, I know that isn't how these things work, but it would bring me joy to see her find true love.

I clear my throat and wave a tentacle awkwardly. "Maybe... you'll... meet someone on our holiday travel adventures?" I try to infuse as much enthusiasm and optimism into my voice as I can.

Luna arches a quizzical green eyebrow at me. "You okay? The face you're making reads as 'supremely constipated.'"

And there's the snark on full display.

I force a smile. "You never know. It could happen."

"Are you high? Did you eat one of those psychedelic mushrooms Kheph brought aboard the ship when we visited that fungi forest on Blarnox V?"

My tentacles coil and uncoil.

Her eyes narrow.

Dammit. She knows all my tells.

"I'm not high. Just trying to be... supportive."

The look she gives me screams, I call bullshit .

I sigh and relent. "Fine. I can tell you've been lonely lately, and I just want you to be happy. You're my other best friend, after all."

Her gaze wanders back to Khephren, who's humming merrily to himself now that

he's ended his call with Sasha.

"It's hard not to be envious when you're around two love birds like Sasha and Kheph all the time. Even though it's been nearly two years, they're still in their blissful and harmonious newlywed phase." She sighs wistfully. "Who wouldn't want that?"

I cringe. I'm not sure that I'd want that, but I don't say anything.

She reaches a tentacle over and pats me on the shoulder. "I appreciate your concern, but I'm okay. I'm still fierce and fabulous, even when I am single. And I have a lot going for me in my life. Getting to travel with my two best friends and explore the universe, all while escaping the stupid expectations of my parents and most of Dravethian society, is pretty damn sweet. I'm super fucking lucky."

Indeed, we all are.

"At first, when Kheph came up with his plan to escape the arranged marriage his parents had set up for him and pull a runaway groom, I thought our off-world travels might be a temporary thing."

Luna's tentacles do a happy little shimmy. "But two years in, we're still roaming the universe and living our best lives. It's great. I know Kheph has no intention of returning to our home world, and neither do I."

"Ditto for me." I have nothing to go back to.

Rambo beeps three times. "Together, we are, the three amigos!"

Luna high-fives him.

It's not that we hate our home world, but we were always misfits that didn't quite fit

in there.

I was born with the warrior's mark, but I have never wished to fight someone else's wars. That isn't the purpose of my existence. Yes, I will enter into battle to protect those I love—my found family—but that's different. I'm still searching for my personal passion, I guess, but I feel like I have a better shot at finding it out among the stars.

Kheph comes bounding over to us, grinning from ear to ear.

“Sasha is on his way back. Let's fire up the engines, my friends.”

I heave a huge sigh of relief. “We're done?”

Kheph nods happily.

“Affirmative,” Rambo chimes in with a series of beeps.

“Good, we really need to get going.” I don't like tempting fate when it comes to the Alliance for Neutral Alien Lifeforms and we're basically squatting in the backyard of their outpost here on Earth right now.

I study my view screen, and when I see dust churning in the air and coming straight toward us, I let down the ramp to our cargo bay.

Khephren hurries off to greet Sasha upon his return.

Once my monitor shows he and the vehicle are safely aboard the ship once more,

I close the ramp and fire up the engines.

Just as we begin to ascend into the air, Khephren and Sasha come hurrying onto the bridge.

“Hold on a second!” Sasha cries, waving his hands in the air.

I blink at him. “What is it? Did you forget something?”

He grimaces. “Um... so... we have a small problem.”

My brow furrows, and I feel that headache from earlier returning as my temples throb.

“What kind of problem?”

Sasha shifts nervously from foot to foot. “So, apparently, there’s a human lurking out in the desert here—and they saw us.”

My tentacles twitch as I bite back a curse. “Are you certain?”

Sasha winces. “Pretty sure.”

“Neptune’s motherfucking nads. What the hell are we going to do now?” I growl.

This is precisely the kind of thing that’s likely to sic the Alliance on our asses.

I run a tentacle over my face and sigh in defeat. “There’s no helping it. We’re going to have to call the Alliance in and have them wipe this human’s memories.”

Khephren’s eyes go wide and his magenta tentacles start undulating in the air around him. “Wait! I just had the most amazing idea.”

Luna bounces to her feet. “Is it the same idea I just had?”

They clasp tentacles and giggle.

“We should invite this human aboard the ship for an intergalactic Christmas adventure,” they chorus in unison.

“Dear Goddess Thekmis, please save me,” I mutter.

Sasha strokes his chin thoughtfully. “That might be a good idea. We can suss out this person and make a more informed judgment call about what to do next. If nothing else, we can still return them later and have the Alliance wipe their memory then. For now, I don’t know about you guys, but I don’t really care to spend Christmas in an Alliance jail or having all of our precious cargo confiscated.”

Khephren’s eyes widen and he gasps. “They wouldn’t dare.”

Sasha shakes his head sadly. “They could say we’re illegally importing goods we haven’t declared. After all, we weren’t exactly allowed in on the up-and-up anyhow. Hell, they might try to charge us with ridiculous customs fees and take our stuff. It’d be a giant mess.”

And that’s if they don’t throw us in an Alliance prison.

Khephren looks around at all of the holiday decor, and his bottom lip quivers. “Our precious Christmas decorations.”

I groan. Evidently Sasha has joined Team Christmas Nutcases and I’m all on my own.

Fuck my life.

All three of them turn their gazes on me and I know I'm sunk.

"Fine," I snarl. I launch the ship's sensors to perform a sweep of the surrounding area, quickly identifying where our troublesome human voyeur is lurking.

"Gotcha," I say with satisfaction and activate the tractor beam.

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Chapter Two

“Tentacles and Torment: Body Swapped” by FeliXFiles

Fandom: “The Tentacular Tales of Captain Starblade” by KirklovesSpock4eva

Tags: Lord Vardox, Captain Starblade, body swap, tentacles, 18+

Part 3 of Tentacles and Torment

With a groan, Captain Starblade blinked his eyes open in confusion and slowly sat up from where he was lying on the floor.

What the hell happened?

He recognized this room. It was Lord Vardox’s bedroom aboard his ship. By now, Starblade had spent far too much time tied up in this room, enduring the tender torment of Vardox’s talented tentacles.

His head throbbed and he held up a hand to touch it, his memory oddly hazy.

Something was not right though.

He lowered his arm and stared at it in disbelief. His skin was an unusual reddish-brown hue and his fingers were tipped with short, black, claw-like nails.

Sheets rustled and he whirled around to stare at the bed. He couldn’t make sense of

what he was seeing because the stunningly handsome blond man sitting up and gawking at him—was himself.

“What the devil?” he roared, and even his voice wasn’t the same.

Heart racing, he strode to the room’s connected bathroom and froze as he gazed in the mirror covering an entire wall.

He wasn’t quite sure how it had happened, but it appeared he and Lord Vardox had somehow switched bodies.

FELIX

It’s stupidly cold out in the Nevada desert tonight.

Despite being only the first week of December, there’s a sharp chill in the air, and I’m already lamenting the fact that I didn’t pack warmer gear for this reconnaissance mission.

One might wonder what I’m doing out here all by my lonesome, far from the rest of human civilization.

And no, I’m not a serial killer.

I just happen to be a sci-fi-loving, alien-believing, unexplained-phenomena-hunting enthusiast, and I’m out here to prove that aliens are among us.

Trust me, I am indeed mentally sound. For the most part. I have reason to believe aliens are hiding here on Earth, and in the Nevada desert in particular. You see, a few years ago, an author I admire, and who publishes my favorite long-running online space opera serial released an unsettling post on his blog. It detailed his real-life

encounter with bona fide aliens hiding in the middle of the desert less than an hour outside of Vegas.

To most, it might have seemed like utterly made-up conspiracy theory nonsense. But what instantly set my internal sensors off was that the post was taken down only a few scant hours after it went live. It wasn't until a day later that the author issued a hasty retraction, but that follow-up post seemed forced and oddly unbelievable in comparison to what he had written about so passionately the first time.

Needless to say, my curiosity was piqued.

Of course, KirklovesSpock4eva—as he is known—may have removed the original post, but as any Internet nerd knows, screenshots are forever. And you better believe I took screenshots!

I've spent the last couple of years trying to pinpoint the exact location in the desert where the author claimed to have found a secret alien base, but to no avail. Granted, I can't explore quite as often as I would like. But when I have free time, I come out here and continue to search for extraterrestrial life.

Right now, I have more free time than usual.

My phone rings, and I smile when my sister's name flashes on the screen.

“Hi, Gemma.”

“Hey, big bro. How's it going out there in the desert?”

“Good. Thanks for looking after Wanda for me.”

She snorts with amusement. “Looking after a fish isn't exactly hard work.” There's a

beat of silence before she adds, “Maybe with the changes going on in your life right now, you might actually be able to adopt some other pets like you’ve wanted to.”

I wince. For the last five years, I’ve been working at a veterinary practice in Vegas as their exotic animal specialist. Things had been going great, and I’d just finished paying off my grad school student loans, but the two owners of the clinic—a husband-and-wife duo—have decided they’re ready to retire. Now I’m stuck trying to figure out what to do next. I don’t have enough capital to buy the business from them, and I’m loath to go into debt again after finally paying off my degrees. Basically, I have to look at starting all over at a new clinic or going into business for myself.

For whatever reason, neither option has struck a chord with me.

Could I be experiencing a midlife crisis already? Thirty-five seems rather young for that, but what do I know?

“Yeah, I’ve thought about that too,” I admit to Gemma. “I feel like the last fifteen years have been nothing but working my ass off and ignoring everything else but my career.”

Gemma sighs. “Tell me about it. Becoming a doctor was always my dream, but now that I’m here, I’m exhausted. Healthcare in this country is in crisis and the fucking insurance companies make me want to pull my hair out on a daily basis. And there’s so much more bureaucratic bullshit and paperwork to deal with than I ever imagined.”

“How did we end up such miserable overachievers?”

She laughs. “Fuck if I know.”

“Nana and Gramps raised us right.”

“Damn but I miss them,” she whispers.

Our mother was a free spirit who had a tendency to dump her responsibilities on her loving and far too generous parents. When she got pregnant with me in her early twenties, she entrusted me to my grandparents’ care less than a year after I was born and disappeared to parts unknown. Almost six years later, she reappeared with my infant sister in tow. She stayed with us for two days before doing her vanishing act again, this time leaving Gemma behind.

Both of us were lucky that our Nana and Gramps loved us more than enough to make up for our shitty mom. Neither of us had an idea who our fathers were, although it’s clear we had different ones based on our lack of similarity in appearance.

“I still love being a vet,” I admit, “but the stress and the downsides of the profession are making me question a lot of things right now.”

“Hopefully, this long weekend will give you the time and mental clarity to figure out what you want,” Gemma offers, a note of encouragement in her voice.

I smile. “Thanks, Gemsy. I hope so. And I hope that things get better on your end too.”

She makes a noncommittal noise. “Maybe I just need a nice, long vacation of my own. Preferably on a beach by the ocean.”

I snicker. “With lots of beautiful single women around?”

It’s her turn to laugh. “Fuck yeah! Do you know how long it’s been since I got laid?”

“I bet I’ve got you beat, sister dearest.”

How the two of us ended up being totally queer, we'll never know, but we do consider it a stroke of good fortune in the face of everything else. Thankfully, our grandparents were completely supportive of us and marched in many a Pride parade over the years.

But when I was in veterinary school, Nana got sick. By the time she went to the doctor, the cancer had already spread to several of her organs. She didn't want to undergo the painful chemo and radiation treatments that may have given her a few extra months at best, instead opting to go into hospice care and be made as comfortable as possible until her time was up.

I think a core part of our grandfather died when she did. They'd always been the epitome of an ideal couple to both me and Gemma. Together since they were nineteen, the two of them had married young and made a beautiful life together. They doted on one another and knew how to communicate even when things got tough. The love they had for each other was precious and enviable. With Nana's passing, the light went out of Gramps, and less than a year later, he passed quietly in his sleep one night.

Gemma and I miss them both terribly, but we're grateful for all the love and care they gave us growing up. Neither of us cares all that much about our mom abandoning us. We've never known her. To be honest, I'm not even sure if she's still alive. She never showed up for either of her parents' funerals, so we've had no contact with her in decades.

"You'll be back on Monday night, right?"

I startle out of my reverie. "Yeah. I should be back by five. How about we grab dinner together at that little Mexican restaurant you like? My treat."

"You're on!"

“Cool. I’ll call you to check in tomorrow night and let you know I’m okay.”

“Sounds good. Be safe out there. Love ya, Felix.”

“Love you too, Gemsy.”

After ending our call, I pull out my printed grid map. Turning on my phone’s flashlight to help me see better, I mark off the most recent quadrant I surveyed today. The desert is vast, but over time, I’ll be able to cover every square inch of this place.

I’m nothing if not tenacious and meticulous.

With the pen cap between my teeth, I squint down at my map and try to decide where to head next.

I’m not a natural outdoors enthusiast by any stretch of the imagination, but I’m also fully aware that my best opportunity to potentially spy covert alien operations in the desert is undoubtedly under the concealing dark of night.

This evening I have a full thermos of coffee with me to keep me awake and warm for the next few hours at least. Staying up all night, however, isn’t as easy to do now that I’m in my thirties as it was in my twenties.

Add to the fact that tonight is brutally cold, and I can’t deny I’m just a bit miserable out here, but I refuse to give up.

I rub my hands together and blow into them as I stare up at the stars and marvel. If there are aliens here on earth, then there’s plenty more out there in the vast universe beyond. How fascinating would it be to meet them? What are they like? Do they resemble us? Are they friendly or hostile?

So many questions.

Pouring myself a cup of coffee from my thermos, I sip at the steaming beverage and open an app on my phone to check out comments on the latest chapter in my newest fanfic story.

ManHo4Vardox: Dude, this new story has such a great plot twist! I can't wait to see how Starblade exacts some sexy revenge on Vardox. Of course, he'd just be doing it to his own body but... still hot. I'm sure KirklovesSpock4eva would be majorly impressed.

StarbladeStan: Your writerly finesse when it comes to kinky tentacles is most impressive. Keep it—and the characters—up. *wink*

TentacleTart: Holy Freaky Friday magic! I am LOVING this concept. Can't wait for the next chapter. Gimme!

I smile to myself. My fanfiction is an homage to that same author who inspired my desert investigations. While I call his ongoing story a space opera, it's also very tentacle porny. It's a quintessential enemies-to-lovers-to-enemies-to-lovers ad infinitum narrative in which the very salacious and slightly sadistic Lord Vardox loves to torment Captain Starblade, the epitome of a himbo if ever there was one. Their various adventures and misadventures, both in and outside the bedroom, are vastly entertaining and take up an inordinate amount of my free reading time.

I don't know what it is about the story that draws me in so much, but I can't get enough of it, to the extent that I eventually had to start writing my own fanfiction of the story. So far, I've amassed my own tiny online following of Starblade fans who seem to appreciate my fictional contributions.

Plus, writing is a way for me to avoid thinking about the sad state of my nonexistent

love life and my uncertain future.

Needing to stretch my legs a little, I figure I might as well begin my next round of reconnaissance and pull on my backpack—packed with essential supplies—and start to hike up a nearby ridge.

When I get to the top, I look over the side and survey the valley below.

Everything appears still in the quiet of the night, but I blink a few times when I see under the faint glow of moonlight what looks like dust beginning to churn in the distance.

I frown. The weather report didn't indicate any impending dust storms. A quick check of my phone confirms the night is clear and the wind is calm.

I take off my glasses and rub my eyes before putting them back on and staring hard.

The dust is moving in a line, but I don't see a vehicle of any kind, which is even more bizarre. Reaching into my jacket pocket, I pull out my night-vision binoculars so I can get a better look.

Yes, I am that nerd. Don't judge.

With my binoculars, I can more easily study the moving dust, but I was right—there's no sign of a vehicle. I can't think of any animal that would be moving that fast either. In fact, even from this distance, it seems like whatever is causing the dust is moving faster than should be humanly possible.

Naturally, that's when it happens.

Where once there seemed to be nothing, a ramp of some kind all of a sudden

descends to the ground out of thin air. The air around it shimmers, and I watch as an odd-looking vehicle reminiscent of a Smart Car appears and ascends the ramp.

I whip out my phone and start taking as many pictures as possible.

“Holy shit. Holy shit, holy shit,” I whisper under my breath.

It’s got to be an alien ship. And it has a motherfreaking cloaking device!

My soul sings. I knew I was right about this. Aliens really are here on Earth!

I keep watching in complete awe, my binoculars letting me get a good view of things inside what seems to be a cargo bay. Someone gets out of the odd little vehicle that went in the ship, and I’m shocked to see that they appear to be human.

Not paying attention to my feet, I take a step forward as if to get a closer look only to stumble.

The next instant, I find myself tumbling down the side of the ridge like Wesley in The Princess Bride , only far less gracefully and shouting, “Sonofabitch!”

Eventually, I land in a dusty, painful heap on top of my still attached backpack.

Once my lungs start working again, I carefully survey my body. It would not be good if I broke anything while alone out here in the desert.

I wiggle my toes and my fingers. So far, so good.

After some additional cautionary attempts, I’m able to move my legs and arms without any difficulty, but I’ve definitely got some bruises that are going to be pretty painful later.

Glancing up, I see that, thankfully, the fall wasn't as far as it seemed when it was happening.

Although I hope I haven't broken anything inside my backpack. I do have some expensive equipment in there, including my laptop.

Just when I've decided to stop wallowing and try to roll myself over and get to my feet, I hear a strange vibrating hum start all around me.

“What the?—”

A bright beam of light shoots down from the sky and surrounds me, damn near blinding me in the process.

The very air seems to radiate with invisible energy, and I realize my body is shaking too.

And it's not from what is evidently a tractor beam that I now find myself in.

No, it's from my own uncontained excitement.

The aliens have found me and they're beaming me aboard their ship?!

Am I weird to view this as a dream-come-true moment?

Probably. But who cares?

I grin to myself and shout, “Beam me up, Scotty!” as I'm sucked up by the light and into the unknown.

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Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 11:43 am

Chapter Three

“Tentacles and Torment: Body Swapped” by FeliXFiles

Fandom: “The Tentacular Tales of Captain Starblade” by KirklovesSpock4eva

Tags: Lord Vardox, Captain Starblade, body swap, tentacles, 18+

Part 3.5 of Tentacles and Torment

“Well now, isn’t this interesting,” Vardox drawled with Starblade’s mouth.

The uncanniness of it was almost too much for Starblade. How the hell did they swap bodies?

Vardox rose from the bed with a fluid grace and began flexing his—or rather, Starblade’s—naked body, twisting around to admire his backside.

“Shtop that,” Starblade demanded, unable to stop unintentionally lisping around the fangs in Vardox’s mouth. The dang things were more awkward than he could have imagined.

Vardox arched an eyebrow at him. “Darling, I do believe we’re in a bit of a pickle.” He swept a hand down his body and then gestured at Starblade. “We seem to have swapped bodies.”

Starblade’s irritation rose to the forefront and several red tentacles whipped forward

to flail in the air around him, making him stumble back with a gasp.

Vardox smirked. “Tentacles are quite wonderful, don’t you agree? I must admit I feel oddly lighter without them.” He flexed Starblade’s biceps and gazed at them admiringly. “However, I’m rather liking this unexpected turn of events. Lovers need to try new things to spice up their sex lives after all.”

Starblade sputtered. “Are you out of your fucking mind?”

Vardox sauntered closer. “Come now, darling. Aren’t you the teensiest bit interested in taking the driver’s seat and seeing what it’s like to pleasure yourself with my tentacles?”

Starblade shivered.

Damn the man. Now that Vardox had put the idea in Starblade’s mind, he couldn’t let it go.

FELIX

One minute, I’m surrounded by an enormous beam of light lying on the ground in the middle of the desert, and the next, I’m flat on my back inside what is clearly an alien spaceship.

Glancing around, I try to process everything I’m seeing and not grin like I’ve lost my mind.

I’m on a real alien ship!

I’d expected extraterrestrial technology and even futuristic design aesthetics.

What I didn't anticipate was Christmas kitsch— everywhere . The interior of the ship looks like the set of a cheesy holiday movie on the Hallmark channel, but with a sci-fi flair. Every available surface appears to be covered in various types of Christmas-themed decorations and paraphernalia. Garland, tinsel, fairy lights, baubles, wreaths, and so much more.

It's a lot to take in.

Jolting out of my momentary stupor, I struggle to get to my feet. However, it doesn't go so well since I'm trapped by my heavy backpack. I resemble a large tortoise that's been turned over on its back, arms and legs flailing in the air as it tries to turn itself over.

Talk about awkward and a little embarrassing when you're trying to give aliens a good impression of humanity.

I stop breathing when a stunning golden-hued alien steps closer and looms over me. Wearing black cargo pants and a dark gray, tight vest-like garment over his bare and totally ripped torso, and with some kind of weapon in a belt at his hip, he's imposing as hell.

He's also quite possibly the sexiest being I've ever seen.

Tall, broad-shouldered, and muscular enough to give Jason Momoa a run for his money, he looks like a mighty alien warrior. His long, tawny hair is pulled back in a Viking-esque style that includes several braids, and he has an intriguing tattoo-like mark reminiscent of a sigil on his golden right cheek.

But what has my balls tingling and my heart racing are the eight motherfreaking tentacles coming out of his back.

“Am I dreaming?” I whisper.

The sexy-as-hell alien reaches a large hand down to me. “Let me help you up.”

I startle. “You speak English?”

His kissable lips quirk, and I can’t stop staring at them.

“We do, but our neural translators make occasional errors.”

“Wow,” I breathe. “This is so amazing.”

While I should probably be cautious—after all, these aliens just abducted me—I nevertheless reach my hand out and let Mister Tall, Golden, and Sexy pull me to my feet.

My body aches from my tumble down that ridge, and I wince.

“What’s the matter? Are you injured?”

I stare at him, immediately mesmerized by his multi-colored eyes that have a kaleidoscope pattern to the iris. I’ve never seen anything like it.

Feeling all kinds of awkward, I look down at myself and brush some of the desert dust off of my jeans.

“Oh, I’m fine. I took a bit of a tumble before you all... er... brought me aboard your ship. I’m a little bit stiff and sore from that.”

The majestic golden alien frowns at me. “We should have our med lab scanners check you out just to be on the safe side.”

A smaller, green-hued alien with vibrant green pigtails and also sporting beautiful tentacles steps closer.

“You’re probably freaking this poor guy out, Naj. Let’s introduce ourselves.” She beams at me and extends a light green hand. “I’m Luna Bazran, the ultra-talented engineer of this ship.”

There’s something rather charming and bubbly about her that instantly puts me at ease, so I reach out and give her hand a solid shake despite wishing it was a supercool tentacle. “Nice to meet you, Luna. Felix Taylor.”

She smiles. “Welcome aboard the Sleigh Belle, Felix.”

“Er, thanks.”

Hovering behind the gold hottie is a bright pink alien with tentacles. He has an arm and a tentacle wrapped around a short young human man with messy dark hair.

Lucky bastard.

Wait...

I point an accusing finger. “Hey! You’re the one I saw earlier.”

He gives me a sheepish look. “Yeah, sorry about all this, but we were supposed to be visiting under the radar. We didn’t want anyone to know.”

My mind reels. What exactly have I gotten myself into?

I pale. “Oh God. Are you going to kill me?”

The pink one shakes his head, his long pink hair moving with the gesture. “No, no, no, human friend. You have nothing to fear. I am Khephren Thrase, and this is my husband, Sasha Vasiliev. You are our guest and we intend to treat you with the utmost courtesy and care.” He flashes a blindingly bright smile and flaps his free tentacles in the air. “We are inviting you on an intergalactic travel opportunity of a lifetime. Will you join us on an epic Christmas adventure in outer space?” He rubs several of his tentacles together enthusiastically.

My mouth slowly drops open. For some reason, my mind gets stuck on Sasha and the pink guy. Husbands? This human and alien are married?

I can’t stop my eyes from straying back to the hunky golden alien who still hasn’t introduced himself to me, even though he’s the one I want to get to know first and foremost. I can’t help but wonder if he’s single and also into humans...

Wait. Christmas in outer space? What the what?

The golden god of a guy sighs loudly. “Sorry, Felix. I’m Najar Mezdel and these fools”—he gestures to everyone else—“are my friends and colleagues. For better or worse.”

Luna smacks him lightly with a tentacle. “You know you love us.”

Najar—even his name is sexy—grumbles something I can’t quite hear.

“You see, Felix,” Luna says, “we’re in a bit of a bind right now because you saw us. We’re not exactly here on Earth legally. We don’t have clearance. This was really supposed to be a quick in-and-out mission to get a few things for our space adventure.”

Sasha pipes up. “We honestly didn’t think there would be any people this far out in

such a remote part of the desert. Our initial scan showed the area was clear.”

My brow furrows. “I wasn’t here earlier. I was out searching a different part, a different quadrant, but returned here a little while ago.”

Najar groans. “Neptune’s nads. I told you guys that we shouldn’t have stayed so long.”

“Quite right. In fact, time’s a wasting.” Khephren hurries over to a seat in front of a panel of controls. “I think it would be best for us to ‘get out of Dodge’ as they say and then figure out what to do next.”

“Good call, babe,” Sasha says. “The last thing we need is an Alliance ship following us into outer space.”

Najar sighs again and takes hold of my arm.

With one of his tentacles.

And yes, I do let out an embarrassing noise.

He lets go.

Dammit .

He leads me over to a wall covered in shiny holographic snowflake stickers, where he folds down a hidden seat panel and straps me in gently like I’m a small child before he heads over to a seat next to Luna.

I gasp when a robotic creature reminiscent of a chrome-bodied R2D2 droid from Star Wars glides past me and beeps. “Buckle up, buttercup,” he says.

“Wha—” I start to say until the ship starts moving. “Aahhh! What’s happening?”

Sasha pulls down another seat next to me and buckles himself in. He grins at me. “Don’t worry, you get used to takeoff and landing after a while.”

For some reason, the question that pops out of my mouth in response to that is, “Are you really married to that pink guy, Khephren?”

Sasha has a wicked gleam in his eyes. “Let me tell you my own tale of alien abduction. Best thing that ever happened to me.”

My jaw nearly hits the floor while he relates the story of his abduction two years ago, and how he became a permanent member of the crew and Khephren’s husband. Who, it turns out, is also the ship’s captain.

As he continues his narrative, eventually the ship’s movement smooths out, and I can barely tell that we’re flying. When he gets to the end, Sasha unbuckles his seat belt and stretches.

“So, that’s how me and Kheph got together. We’ve been enjoying wedded bliss for nearly a year.” He sighs happily. “We’re going to celebrate our first anniversary by visiting a couple of planets with romantic appeal.”

Najar leaves his seat and comes back, a grim look on his handsome face. “I’m afraid you’ll be joining us for this...”

“Adventure!” Luna cries, giving me two thumbs up.

Visiting alien planets and learning about local customs? My brain is already awl with what kinds of interesting species I might get to meet.

“That sounds amazing.” After all, I’m between jobs at the moment and trying to figure my life out. Couldn’t really ask for better timing.

Plus, they’re aliens with freaking tentacles. It’s like the universe plucked one of the fantasies right out of my brain and manifested it for me.

Luna leads me over to a wall where she taps on a panel. A protective screen rises to reveal a panoramic window with an unfettered view of the universe.

“Oh, my freaking god,” I whisper. “This isn’t a dream. I’m actually in outer space.”

For some reason, the reality of the situation is only fully hitting me now. This truly is the opportunity of a lifetime.

Sasha comes to stand next to me. “It’s a trip, isn’t it? Never thought I’d get a chance to travel to outer space, and in far more style and comfort than those poor NASA astronauts. It never ceases to amaze.”

Luna scoffs. “Human space-exploration technology remains primitive at best. Several more millennia and your species might be able to get to where we’re at now.”

“Be nice, Luna,” Khephren chides her. “Humans can’t be good at everything. We must appreciate their special talents where they lie.”

They slap tentacles together.

“Like human movies!” they chime in unison.

“And Christmas,” Khephren adds with a contented sigh, and Luna follows with a similar noise.

I gaze around me again, taking in the veritable explosion of holiday decor here in what appears to be the bridge of the ship.

Sasha had told me Christmas was the reason he'd been kidnapped... abducted... I mean, invited on an adventure two years ago. But I still can't wrap my mind around why aliens from another world are so fascinated by a holiday celebrated on Earth.

However, Khephren immediately goes into raptures, enumerating all the things he enjoys about the season.

"It's such a beautiful and wondrous time to share cozy comfort with your loved ones. The decorations! Eating specialty foods and beverages! Sharing gifts with one another! Cuddling under blankets in front of roaring fires." He sighs dreamily. "It's all just so romantic."

Sasha wraps an arm around his waist and rises up on his tiptoes to kiss his husband on the cheek. "That's right, babe. And now it's even more romantic for us because it's also our anniversary."

Khephren's eyes dance with obvious delight.

I experience a sudden and unexpected pang of envy watching this interspecies couple in front of me. They appear to share a deep bond and powerful love for one another. It reminds me a bit of my grandparents and their beautiful partnership.

Someday, I want to find a love like that.

Khephren and Sasha seem blissfully happy together, and I can't help but wonder how it all works. I mean, between a human and an alien.

I've certainly fantasized about some interesting alien-on-human sexual scenarios in

my fan fiction, but what's the reality like?

Once again, my eyes stray over to Najar, who has a fond but slightly exasperated look on his gorgeous face. Everything about him is fascinating.

And inconveniently arousing.

Damn those tantalizing tentacles!

As if in a trance, I find myself moving closer to him.

“May I examine one of your tentacles?” I blurt out, practically gasping for breath.

Way to seem like a sketchy creep, Felix.

Najar startles, his eyes widening as he regards me.

Crap. Am I sweating?

I can't exactly sniff my pits subtly here, but I pray I'm not a stinky mess right now.

I'm just shy of six feet tall, but Najar's a good half a head taller than me. And quite a bit more muscular. I have a decent build—I need to for my job, especially when it comes to lifting larger animals—but he has me beat in all the right ways.

Am I being punished for writing tentacle porn fanfic?

Because Najar is like a stoic Lord Vardox fantasy come to life, and I'm more than a little beside myself. And damn if I don't finally understand what swoonworthy means.

As I continue to stare at Najar, my heart races and I have to concentrate on remembering to breathe. I'm strangely lightheaded and almost euphoric.

"Are you all right?" he asks with a frown.

I shiver at his voice and try to calm down, but without even trying, Najar inspires a lot of dirty ideas that I really shouldn't be having right now.

I try to get my big head to take the driver's seat again and kick my libido to the curb while I try to focus on the critical things right now.

Rambo whizzes by again. "Pal, you got that moisture on your head," he offers with several chirpy beeps.

On automatic reflex, I wipe my forehead.

Crap, it is sweaty.

My cheeks flush. "Uh... I'm fine. Maybe a little... disoriented from everything that's happened."

Najar's features soften into what appears to be concern. "Let me take you to the ship's med lab so I can run a scan and make sure you're okay. This is a brand-new experience for you, and I'd feel better if you let us check you out."

I let out an awkward and nervous laugh. "As long as there's no unwanted probing involved."

Consensual probing, I could be into...

Najar chuckles. "You humans are so amusing. Sasha asked us something similar

when he first arrived. There's no probing, I promise."

"I grew up on South Park . No way was I going to end up like Cartman," Sasha says with a challenging smirk.

Najar takes hold of my arm. "Shall we?"

I nod dazedly, trying not to melt into a puddle of vibrating goo at Najar's electrifying touch. My knees go weak and I stumble a little as I follow him.

This makes him frown even deeper than before. "I'm becoming quite concerned. Please excuse me, but I must take some liberties."

Before I can fully process what he's saying, he reaches over and lifts me into his powerful arms with the greatest of ease, then strides off the bridge and down a corridor. After several maze-like turns, we end up in front of clear double doors that automatically open for us, and I'm brought into a white, sterile room that appears to be part doctor's office and part hospital room.

Najar sets me down gently in front of a machine with an arch. "Please stand still for a moment while the BioNexus Med Scanner does an assessment."

One of his tentacles presses a button on the machine and I try to stand still as a blue light moves up and down my body several times.

After a moment, the light stops and Najar nods. "It's done. Please have a seat over there while I get the report."

I sit on the alien version of an exam table and try to calm my racing heart. Maybe there is something wrong with me? I've never responded to someone as strongly as I have to Najar.

I study him as he focuses on a tablet device, using a tentacle to scroll up on the screen as he reads.

“Hmm. On the whole, you appear to be in excellent health. Some bruises and minor abrasions in keeping with the fall you mentioned earlier, but nothing serious. Your heart rate is a bit elevated, but I suppose that’s understandable.”

I manage a weak smile. “This has all been a lot to process.” I clear my throat. “Actually, I could use some water if you have any.”

He hurries over to a small sink and pours me a glass of water, which he brings to me. “I’m sorry. We should have asked if you needed any refreshment when you first boarded.”

My lips twitch. “First-class service, huh?”

He blinks, not seeming to get the reference.

I shrug awkwardly, gulp down the cool, clear water, and heave a relieved sigh. “Thanks, I needed that.”

To my surprise, I follow that up with a jaw-cracking yawn.

Glancing at my watch, I realize it’s nearly 9:00 p.m. my time back on Earth. At thirty-five, and with very little social life to speak of, I find I go to bed embarrassingly early these days. Even that coffee from earlier isn’t helping. Maybe I’m crashing after all that adrenaline from a while ago?

“Sorry,” I say around another yawn.

“It’s quite all right.”

I glance down at my lap. “I apologize for earlier. That was probably really rude of me. Asking to touch your tentacle, I mean.” I dart a quick glance up at him. “You see, I’m a veterinarian on Earth, and I specialize in exotic animals. Not that I’m suggesting you’re an animal. Fuck.” My cheeks feel red hot. “I’m not explaining this well. As another species, you’re quite fascinating to me. I’ve had the opportunity to work with several aquatic species on Earth that possess tentacles, like giant squid and octopuses, during one of my training rotations at an aquarium. We don’t have many species on our planet that possess tentacles, but I find them truly fascinating.” I gulp. “In a purely scientific way.”

Okay, yes, I’m fibbing a whole lot on that one. But there’s no way in hell I’m going to tell him I read *The Tentacular Tales of Captain Starblade* and write my own tentacle porn fanfic. That would just be too mortifying for me to ever possibly survive.

Najar studies me for a long moment before extending a golden tentacle toward me. “I don’t mind.”

His voice is soft and husky in a way that makes me want to throw myself at him like a shameless, needy fool.

No, I’m not going to waste this opportunity. Get it together, Felix.

I reach a hand out and hesitantly take hold of the tentacle. A delighted gasp escapes me.

It’s warm and velvety soft, yet also strangely smooth. The fascinating appendage reminds me a little bit of larger species of snakes that I’ve worked with, but it’s far more supple and graceful.

I stroke part of the length of it, trying to figure out what kind of dermis covers it. Are

they scales or something else entirely?

I really wish I had a magnifying glass handy so I could take a much closer look, but I realize that would be super awkward and potentially offensive to my abductor slash host.

Just when I'm about to let go, I'm surprised to find the tip of the tentacle coil lightly around my wrist.

Najar clears his throat and shifts on his feet. "Sorry about that." He uses one of his hands to forcibly make his tentacle let me go.

"Do you not possess full control of them?" I have so many questions, and I'm itching to take notes on this amazing discovery. I want to know all about his alien species and how their biology works.

Najar steps back and crosses his arms, and it's like a weird invisible wall goes up between us. "You appear to be tired. Let me show you to your sleeping quarters for tonight. There will be plenty of time to answer your questions after a good night's rest."

I don't protest as he leads me out of the med lab and down another hallway. Eventually, he stops in front of a door and uses a tentacle to tap something into a panel on the wall next to it. The door hisses open and he leads me inside.

I'm grateful to discover that the room I've been brought to is free of any Christmas decor and more minimalist in its functional aesthetic. There's a large bed, a plain desk with a chair, and a door leading into an en suite bathroom.

Najar gives me a quick tour and shows me how things work in terms of their version of a toilet and the shower.

“There are some spare nightclothes of mine under the sink that should fit you,” he says, eyeing me up and down. “I’ll be sure to drop off some additional garments for you in the morning.”

“Thanks.”

He looks away. “Sorry,” he says gruffly, “this is one of our more basic guest rooms.”

I shake my head. “It’s perfect. I don’t need anything fancy.” I look around. “I’m just relieved this room isn’t covered in Christmas decorations.”

Najar lets out a startled laugh. “Yeah, there aren’t many places on the ship that remain unscathed from the Christmas brigade’s onslaught at the moment.”

I tilt my head at him in consideration. “Are you not part of the festivities?”

“Not in the way that the others are. They tend to go a little overboard with such things. I’m mostly here to try to keep them from doing anything truly foolish.” He winces and looks away. “I’m afraid I failed in that task when it comes to you.”

I give him a tentative smile. “They do seem like quite a handful.”

“That’s putting it mildly. But they’re good friends and they do mean well.” He gives me a soft smile. “Get some rest. You’ve been through a lot tonight. We’ll talk more in the morning.”

After he leaves, I hop into the shower to wash the dirt and grime of the desert off and let the hot water ease some of my aches and pains from my fall earlier. I have several bruises forming already, but there’s not much I can do about that.

Once I’m clean and feeling more like myself, I get out of the shower and dry off

before putting on Najar's spare pajamas. They're soft and a little too big, but I find I like knowing that I'm wearing his clothing. It doesn't make any logical sense, but I feel strangely protected in them.

Back in the bedroom, I hunt through my backpack and pull out my laptop. Thankfully, it isn't broken, but I quickly realize I don't have any Wi-Fi.

I pull my phone out of my discarded jeans pocket.

No signal.

I stumble over to the bed and sit down, my mind once again reeling.

Tomorrow night I'm supposed to check in with my sister to let her know I'm okay, but I'm starting to fear that won't be possible. And knowing Gemma, if she doesn't hear from me, she'll be out there combing the desert for me immediately.

The two of us only have each other, and I can't leave her thinking I've died or been kidnapped.

That helps me strengthen my resolve. Tomorrow, I just need to convince my "hosts" that I need to send a message to my sister.

Piece of cake, right?

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Chapter Four

Chronicles of Chaos: An Informal Record of Life Aboard the Sleigh Belle

Stardate: 78386.4

Origin: Earth

Destination: Glacius Major

As I sit here, I struggle to write these words.

We have abducted yet another human.

I blame this entirely on my foolish companions, who I warned numerous times about the dangers of a covert visit to Earth. They swore up and down it wouldn't be a problem. We'd be in and out before anyone had time to notice us.

But then they dawdled, making trip after ridiculous trip to stuff our ship full of Christmas crap. Yes, CRAP! And that's how a lone human spotted us.

Of course, my crewmates are once again calling our abductee a "guest" they've invited for "an intergalactic Christmas adventure." Conversely, I prefer to call a spade a spade as the Earthlings say. We abducted the poor human, Felix.

Oddly enough, however, Felix does not seem as terrified or upset as he probably should be about this situation. Apparently, he was actually out in the desert looking

for aliens. The fact that he found us appears to bring him considerable pleasure.

We'll see if that lasts. In the meantime, we are heading to Glacius Major and trying to figure out what we are going to do with our "guest."

—Najar Mezdel, First Lieutenant and Voice of Reason on the Sleigh Belle

NAJAR

I spend a restless night oscillating between anxious dreams about an Alliance ship on our tail and frustrating sex dreams about the human we brought aboard.

Felix is quite a tempting morsel of a man. Far taller than Sasha, he's still a few inches shorter than me but has a sturdy build and handsome features, with lovely hazel eyes and short dark brown hair. Sasha is quite pale but I find Felix's darker, olive-skinned complexion even more appealing.

My attraction isn't one-sided either. I noticed the way his eyes followed me repeatedly last night and the way his heart hammered when I carried him into the med lab.

Our connection was clearly mutual and instantaneous. But to say pursuing it is complicated would be oversimplifying the matter.

I don't know what's going to happen with Felix in the short time he'll be with us. In truth, we will probably have to have the Alliance erase his memories of his time aboard the Sleigh Belle once we return him to Earth.

The only reason we didn't have to do something similar with Sasha is because he opted to stay with us and become Kheph's mate. That was a once-in-a-lifetime stroke of luck.

So, even if Felix and I are attracted to one another, I can't imagine things turning out the same way. After all, what are the odds that two humans would want to stay aboard the Sleigh Belle and spend the rest of their lives traveling the universe with a crew of quirky Dravethians?

Not good.

I'm a realist, while Kheph and Luna are dreamers. No doubt they'd tell me that it could happen despite the improbable odds, but the more cynical side of me isn't going to take that bet.

Now, that's not to say Felix and I can't enjoy a brief and passionate affair together while he's aboard the ship so long as it's consensual.

The fact that we abducted him does make things a little tricky in that regard.

When I wake in the morning feeling frustrated and with a rock-hard erection, I vow to leave it to Felix to make the first move. If anything is going to happen between us, he's the one who's going to need to initiate it, just like when Kheph waited for Sasha to approach him.

After I clean up and take care of my rather insistent hard-on in the shower, I head to the canteen to forage for some breakfast.

I'm surprised when I find Felix there already, wearing my nightclothes and looking deliciously rumpled from sleep.

He smiles at me. "Perfect timing. I managed to find this room but I don't know where you keep your food." He looks around, confused.

I show him over to a panel on the wall that houses the food generator. "Do you eat

oatmeal?”

He nods. “Sure.”

I tap the necessary instructions on the screen and the generator begins to work. “Good. I’m afraid our food generator cannot make most dishes indigenous to your world, but we can make similar things based on what we have on our home planet of Draveth.”

Felix stares wide-eyed at the generator as it makes his meal. “Wow. That’s so cool.”

The generator beeps and I pull out the bowl and hand it to Felix. “When Sasha arrived, we learned that a porridge from our world and yours is essentially the same. Ours possesses a higher amount of fiber and protein but has a similar taste. Try it.”

He blinks at the porridge and then takes it. “Uh, sure. Sounds good.” He yawns and gives me a sheepish look. “Any chance that thing can make coffee?”

I grin. “Give me a moment.”

I work my magic and the generator hums to life again. Within moments I have a steaming cup of kavga ready for him.

“We do not have coffee on our home world, but we do have a beverage called kavga .” I lead him over to the meal table, where he sets down his bowl, and I hand him the steaming mug. “Try it and tell me what you think. Sasha likes it very much and tells us it reminds him of chicory-flavored coffee in your world.”

Felix arches an eyebrow but takes a cautious sip. He grins. “That’s pretty damn good.” He takes another drink and sighs with pleasure. “Please tell me this has caffeine too.”

“Of course.”

I quickly prepare the same breakfast for myself and join him at the table.

“You’re up rather early. Did you sleep okay?” I ask.

“Well, I fell asleep not long after you showed me to my room. I took a shower and then passed out pretty soon thereafter, so I got a solid nine hours.”

As he talks, my eyes keep roving over him, mesmerized by the sight of him in my pajamas. They’re a little too big on him, but I find the vision oddly compelling. Rationally speaking, I don’t know why, but I like seeing him in my clothing.

It’s confusing but I strive to ignore it.

Drinking my kavga helps as I try to corral my wayward thoughts. “I’ll get some more clothes for you after breakfast.”

He nods. “Thanks. It’s a good thing that you have some stuff that fits me.”

Luna pads into the room wearing a pair of black pajamas with neon cat faces printed all over them.

I narrow my eyes at her. “Where did you get those?”

She grins at me and heads over to the food generator. “Sasha got them for me when he was at the store yesterday. Aren’t they amazing?”

I sigh. “Thekmis, save me.” How am I the only sane person on this ship?

As if the divine goddess hears my call, Sasha’s cat, Jonesy, stalks into the room and

lets out a loud meow, demanding her breakfast. Her six furry children follow, providing a background chorus of hungry meows too.

Luna makes cooing noises at them. “Come here, my darlings. You all must be so hungry. Don’t worry, Auntie Luna will make sure you’re well fed.” She gets the generator going and prepares their morning meal, talking to the cats the whole time.

Felix watches the whole interaction with obvious fascination. “How did y’all end up with a colony of cats on this ship?”

“When we brought Sasha aboard, he happened to be with his cat at the same time,” I explain. “What neither he, nor we, understood then was that Miss Jonesy was pregnant with kittens.”

Luna beams at Felix. “And now we have a group of Thekmis’s emissaries here, protecting our ship and providing us with good fortune on our journey through space.”

Felix’s brow furrows. “Thekmis?”

“A goddess in the myths and legends of our home world of Draveth,” I explain. “She is a powerful protector figure with feline attributes, highly reminiscent of the creatures you call cats on your world.”

“How fascinating,” Felix murmurs. He glances at Jonesy and her brood. “You know, I am a veterinarian by trade. I could do a quick exam on each of them to make sure they’re all healthy.” He studies the younger cats. “You probably want to make sure the young ones have been spayed and neutered.”

Luna nods. “Yeah, we were able to find someone on another planet who helped us with that when the kittens were old enough. They got a clean bill of health at the

time, but it's been a while, so we'd certainly appreciate you doing a checkup on them for us."

Felix, smiles. "No problem. My area of specialty is exotic animals, but I did a training rotation with domestic ones too. I may be a little rusty, but I remember the essentials."

Luna beams at him. "That's great. Speaking of exotic animals, have you met our other resident on the ship, Howie?"

"Howie?"

She points over to a rather hideous little potted tree over in the corner. "Sasha told us he's kind of like a creepy Charlie Brown Christmas tree."

Felix tilts his head and studies the tree. "Wha?—"

He promptly falls out of his seat when Howie opens his eyes—positioned in his trunk—and gives a disgruntled grunt. "What the hell are you looking at?"

Luna laughs. "Ignore Howie. He's a bit of a grump, but we still love him."

Felix manages to get to his feet and takes a shaky step closer to the tree. "Oh, my God. It can talk."

"Course I can talk. Who the fuck are you?"

He swallows. "I'm Felix. It's a pleasure to meet you, Howie."

The tree grunts dismissively. "Whatever. Quit gawking at me and let me sleep." He closes his eyes again and in moments, he's snoring softly.

“Chumarg trees tend to spend most of their time sleeping,” I tell Felix. “Howie’s a lot grumpier than most of his brethren, but he helps purify the air on our ship.”

Felix comes back to the table and downs the rest of his kavga in one go. “That’s so cool. He’s absolutely amazing. I’ve never seen anything like it—I mean him.” He shakes his head in awe. “A sentient tree? We have nothing like that on our world.”

“There are a lot of strange and unusual creatures out in the universe,” I admit. “We encounter quite a few on our travels.”

Felix’s eyes are bright and alive with curiosity.

I want to drown in them. In him.

Where did that ridiculous notion come from?

Thankfully, before I do anything stupid and act on foolish impulses, Kheph and Sasha wander into the room, arm in arm, each with dopey grins on their faces.

My best friend is wearing a new T-shirt with a picture of Santa in a sleigh on the front and he’s tossing smiling cats over the side accompanied by the line, Cats for Everybody.

“Good morning, friends,” Kheph offers cheerfully as he struts around showing off his new shirt. “Did you sleep well, Felix? Isn’t my T-shirt fabulous?”

“Thanks. I slept well. The bed in my room is quite comfortable and so are the pajamas Najar lent me.” Felix’s lips twitch. “And your shirt is... festive.”

Kheph’s whole face lights up with satisfaction.

Sasha moans. “I smell kavga. Need kavga.”

He stumbles over to the food generator and Kheph chuckles. “My mate claims that he is a zombie until he gets his kavga in the morning. So please be patient with him,” he tells Felix.

Once we’re all seated at the table with breakfast and kavga, Kheph starts our morning meeting, making a clear effort to include Felix.

“Right now, we’re on our way to a planet called Glacius Major. It’s an ice planet that has a number of interesting holidays, but at this time of year, they have a fun festival going on and a winter market in the main town.”

Felix frowns. “That sounds amazing, but I’m afraid I don’t have any cold-weather clothing or other winter gear to navigate a planet like that.”

Before I can say anything, Kheph waves a pink tentacle dismissively. “Don’t worry about it. We’ll prepare everything you need to ensure your body remains warm, dry, and protected from the elements.”

Sasha winks at Felix. “We’ve got you, man.”

Felix nods agreeably. Then he looks at me with obvious worry in his eyes.

My body tenses. “What’s the matter?”

He shifts in his seat. “You see, I have a sister back on Earth that I’m supposed to get in contact with today to let her know I’m okay. Whenever I’m out in the desert, we have a plan where I have to check in with her every day, at least once, to provide proof of life so she doesn’t call the police to find me.” He steels his expression. “I know it’s probably a lot to ask, but I need to be able to have a way to get a hold of her

so she doesn't think something terrible has happened to me."

Sasha snickers. "Like disappearing off the face of the planet?"

I shoot him a withering look and he gives me a sheepish one back.

Felix ignores Sasha and continues, his expression serious. "My sister and I only have each other. We were raised by our grandparents, but they both passed away a number of years ago. I couldn't live with myself if I made her worry that I might be dead or missing."

It's no surprise to me that Kheph's eyes are sparkling. "Such loving siblings! How wonderful."

Felix smiles. "Gemma's amazing. She's a doctor, and I'm super proud of her."

Luna perks up. "Is she cute?"

"She's gorgeous," Felix says confidently.

Luna leans closer. "Is she single? Does she like the ladies?"

Felix's eyes go wide and then he grins. "Yes and yes. She's out and proud. Hasn't had a steady girlfriend in a few years though."

Luna's green tentacles start vibrating with obvious interest.

Kheph strokes his chin thoughtfully with one of his extra appendages. "There are ways we can facilitate such a communication exchange, but my concern is about telling her the truth of your current situation."

Felix blinks. “My sister is a trustworthy person. If I tell her not to say anything to anyone, she won’t—as long as she knows that I’m safe and that I’m coming back eventually.”

My chest clenches with sudden pain at his words. I already don’t want to think about returning him to Earth, which is utterly ridiculous. I barely know this human. Maybe I’ve gone too long being single?

I straighten in my seat. After all, one of us has to be a voice of reason here. “Are you willing to have her memory erased as well?”

A look of horror washes over Felix’s face, and I want to smack myself with one of my tentacles. I probably could have been more diplomatic about that.

“Why would you do that?” he asks, his expression turning wary.

I tell the hard facts none of my crewmates want to share. “When we return you to Earth, we’ll have to erase your memory of what happened during the time you were with us. We can’t run the risk of having you blab all about us to other people on the planet.”

“I don’t think anyone would believe me and my story,” Felix says with an awkward laugh. “It’s more than a little too far-fetched.”

I shake my head. “That’s not what I’m worried about. It’s the Alliance for Neutral Alien Lifeforms on Earth that’s more likely to catch wind of what happened and then want to seek us out for punishment. We’re not exactly following the law here in terms of bringing you aboard our vessel.”

“Najar’s right,” Kheph says, worrying his bottom lip. “We already got a bit of a slap on the wrist with Sasha, but that was less serious because he opted to stay with us and

become my mate.”

“What if Gemma and I both promise not to say anything to anyone else? We’ll keep it a secret forever.”

Kheph, Luna, and I all look at each other.

Sasha studies Felix for a moment, then nods his head. “I think we can trust this guy. I’ve got a good gut feeling about him.”

Luna gets a thoughtful look on her face. “It’s risky, but I’m willing to give you the benefit of the doubt. You’re going to be with us for a few weeks, Felix. That’ll give both you and your sister some time to prove your trustworthiness. At the end of it all, if you’ve both kept your word and earned our trust, I’d be willing to let you go with your memories fully intact.” She grins. “Screw the Alliance and their stupid protocol.”

Felix’s eyes fill with hope and he glances at me and Kheph.

As I expected, my best friend is practically incandescent as he beams back at Felix. “I love this idea. After all, we want to become friends with you, Felix. And even though your time with us will be limited, we’ll make lots of wonderful memories together.” His bottom lip quivers. “I’d hate for you to lose them and forget all about us.”

Sasha leans into his side and kisses his cheek. “You’re so tenderhearted, Tentacle Boy. I love you.”

Kheph snuffles and beams at his mate. “I love you, too, my mate.”

Luna makes a mock gagging noise but smiles. “Enough with the sickeningly sweet lovefest over there. You’re just rubbing it in for those of us who are single and not

getting any.” She shakes her head. “So not fair.”

Felix perks up. “So, we can call my sister?”

Luna rubs her hands and several of her tentacles together with glee. “Hell yeah! I want to get a peek at this hot, single sister of yours.”

I sit silently and watch them joke with each other. I’m not sure that this plan is the wisest course of action, but for once, I ignore the voice of logic in my mind. For some reason, my heart aches when I think of Felix losing his memories about his time aboard the Sleigh Belle.

I don’t want him to forget us.

But another part of me thinks that might be for the best—and the sooner the better.

In a short amount of time, this human has disrupted my equilibrium and inspired thoughts far too ridiculous to even entertain. Returning him and wiping his brief memories of his encounter with us would be wise.

I ignore the churning in my gut at the thought and decide I should at least attempt to persuade my crewmates to go along with this plan.

No matter how enticing Felix is.

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Chapter Five

“Tentacles and Torment: Body Swapped” by FeliXFiles

Fandom: “The Tentacular Tales of Captain Starblade” by KirklovesSpock4eva

Tags: Lord Vardox, Captain Starblade, body swap, tentacles, 18+

Part 4 of Tentacles and Torment

Lord Vardox was in the driver’s seat in Starblade’s body and merrily fondling himself in front of Starblade.

Who was trapped in Vardox’s body.

Damn and blast it!

“Quit that! We need to find a way to switch back,” Starblade said carefully around the fangs filling his mouth.

Ignoring him, Vardox stepped closer and grabbed hold of one of Starblade’s... tentacles.

This was all too damned surreal.

Grasping the squirming appendage, Vardox stroked the end of it until a clear lubricating substance glistened at the tip. Grinning in triumph, Vardox coated several

fingers and then sauntered over to the bed where he got on his hands and knees—and began fingering his, or rather Starblade's, ass.

“Oooh! Now this is fun,” he purred. “Normally I can't do this to you because of my claws. I suppose humans have one rather handy—pun intended—physical advantage when it comes to this.”

Starblade gaped as he watched the lewd performance with a mixture of disbelief and mounting desire. Although his consciousness resided in Vardox's body at the moment, apparently Vardox's physical attraction to him was hardwired to react to such a display of Starblade's body.

As he felt his—or rather, Vardox's—cock harden, he gulped.

“Ahhh!” Vardox cried with delight. “Your body is just as sensitive as I always suspected. How thrilling.” He thrust three fingers into his hole and gave Starblade a challenging stare. “Are you going to fuck me sometime this century, darling?”

FELIX

I can tell that Najar isn't as enthusiastic about my proposed plan of maintaining silence regarding the existence of extraterrestrials as the others. Not that I can really blame him.

In almost any other circumstance, there's no way I'd keep my mouth shut about something as life altering as this. But when it comes to preserving my and my sister's memories, I'm completely prepared to take this secret to my grave.

Which will hopefully be many, many years from now.

I will, however, take from this experience plenty of new inspiration for my fan fiction

endeavors. All things considered, I believe that's a more than fair trade-off.

After we finish our breakfast, I follow Najar and the others back to the bridge, where Khephren gets to work at his terminal.

"This will be a piece of cake." The pink alien chortles, his eyes sparkling as his tentacles fly across the controls so fast they're a blur.

I can't lie. It's rather hypnotizing to watch not only his hands but all eight of his additional appendages do their thing. Having extra pseudo-hands certainly comes with advantages.

My eyes wander to Najar again and I find my gaze drawn to his thick, golden tentacles. I wonder what he can do with his extra appendages...

Najar seems to notice me perving on him and arches a curious eyebrow.

Why am I acting like a horny teenage idiot around this sexy-as-sin alien?

Because he's even hotter than Lord Vardox, dammit.

I guiltily turn my attention back to Khephren and try to keep my cool. "Khephren's... skills are rather impressive. He's so fast I can't even keep up with his movements."

Najar nods in understanding and smiles softly. "We're not all like Kheph. Even among our people, he's special."

"Yep. Kheph's a programming genius," Luna agrees. "Especially when it comes to anything to do with computers and information systems of any kind." She flicks one of her long green pigtails over her shoulder. "I'm a genius also, at engineering. I'll have to let you see me work my magic while you're here."

Najar rolls his eyes fondly and quirks his lips at me. “My crewmates are more talented than they are modest.”

I chuckle. His dry sense of humor suits him, and I like it. He clearly cares for his friends, which is a testament to his character in my book.

I grin. “I can see that.”

His answering smile is wry and we share a private moment of total understanding.

Khephren lets out a shout of triumph. “Aha! I have managed to tap into the Wi-Fi system in your sister’s home. Shall we try calling her?”

I blanch. “You were able to do that so easily and so fast. You don’t have aspirations toward invasion, right?”

He gives me an impish grin and waggles his tentacles in the air. “I have a gift. But no, I am not the conquering warrior type. Besides, I love Hallmark movies too much to ever risk losing them.”

“Uh... Hallmark movies?” I ask Najar.

He shakes his head. “Don’t even get him and Luna started on one of their many Earth-related obsessions, please.”

Luna scoffs. “Ignore Najar. He gets kind of grumpy on a regular basis. I’m starting to think it’s hormonal.”

Najar crosses his arms and glares.

Rambo does a little looping dance around the two of them and beeps three times.

“How many of them hormones you takin’, honey?”

Seemingly unfazed by his friends’ bickering, Khephren bounces in his seat. “Let’s call your sister, Felix!”

Najar clears his throat loudly and stands at attention. “I just want it stated for the record that I think this is a less than intelligent course of action. We should really err on the side of caution and return Felix to Earth immediately and... erase his memory of the short time he spent with us. It’s the safest option for us all.”

My heart stutters at his words and it’s like that time I was a kid and I fell backwards off a swing, knocking the breath right out of me. I couldn’t make my lungs work for what felt like a scary eternity.

Najar’s words are even more crushing.

What I’m feeling must show on my face because he looks away from me guiltily.

Luna pats me on the shoulder. “Don’t mind him. He’s a bit of a stick in the mud when it comes to keeping us, and this ship, safe.”

The rational side of my brain gets that. It does.

But a small part of me thought I’d had a spark of connection with Najar, one that was mutual. Once again, I misread things. Animals have always been much easier for me to understand than people. I guess that includes hot alien men who aren’t into me.

I understand why he doesn’t immediately trust me, and if our roles were reversed, I’d probably feel much the same way. But the rejection stings all the same.

Unaware of my inner thoughts, Luna continues. “Naj is the only one among us who

takes things super seriously. He's our main security force for the ship, so I suppose he has to. It's nothing personal against you, Felix. Honest."

I force an awkward smile and carefully move to put some distance between me and Najar. It's embarrassing, but I've basically been openly lusting after him since I arrived on the ship. I've probably given him the ick, as one of my young vet techs would say.

"Sorry, I don't want to cause problems. Maybe Najar's right and you should just take me back." A nervous laugh precedes my next words. "Not gonna lie, I'm utterly terrified about the idea of having my mind messed with, but if you can't trust me, then I don't know what else we can do." My throat is strangely dry and my heart's racing. "And I don't want to put my sister in danger, so please leave her out of this."

I steadfastly ignore Najar's gaze even though I can feel it boring holes into me.

"Dude, you're kind of being a jerk to poor Felix," Sasha says with a frown.

Khephren turns his chair around to face Najar and then crosses his arms, giving him a stern glare. "I love you, Naj, but you're too quick to distrust. There are plenty of good, honest beings in the universe, and we need to give them a chance. If you are immediately suspicious of anyone new that you meet, you're going to live a very lonely and sad existence." His bottom lip starts to tremble and his eyes pool with tears, ruining the severe approach I think he was going for. "I don't want that for you, Naj. You're my BFF, as the humans say, and a stand-up guy."

"Even if you have a stick up your ass," Luna adds brightly.

Rambo twirls and beeps loudly. "How many assholes do we have on this ship, anyway?"

Sasha snorts. “I love Rambo so much.”

Khephren holds his hands in a pleading gesture aimed at his best friend. “Please stop scaring our new friend. Just give Felix and his sister a chance.”

Najar rubs a golden tentacle over his face and lets out a loud sigh of defeat. “Fine, we’ll do it your way. But if things go south, you’re the one who has to take responsibility and clean up your mess.”

Ouch. Way to welcome a human you freaking abducted, by the way!

Khephren bounds to his feet and embraces Najar in a hug involving both arms and four tentacles. Najar awkwardly hugs him back with one arm that isn’t fully pinned in his friend’s embrace.

I experience a twinge of jealousy that I drop-kick in the ass. Najar’s outburst made his position clear. He doesn’t want me here and is only humoring his friends because he was outvoted. So, no matter how hot he is, I need to steer clear of him as much as possible while I’m on this ship and instead focus on solidifying my friendship with Luna, Sasha, and Khephren. They’re going to be key in keeping my mind from being messed with.

Who needs a hunky golden god of a man with eight glorious tentacles anyway? Not me. I’ve got my fan fictional Lord Vardox fantasies to keep me warm at night.

I shift from foot to foot. “I appreciate your kindness, Khephren, Luna, and Sasha. But I don’t want to create discord among friends. Najar doesn’t want me here, so I think I’d like to go home now.” I swallow thickly. “I’ll keep quiet. You have my word. Just please don’t hurt me or my sister.”

I’m utterly bewildered when Khephren starts to cry.

Sasha moves to his side and wraps his arms around him, petting one of his tentacles as they keep coiling and uncoiling in a manner that reads to me like a sign of distress. My vet instincts kick into high gear and I also want to help him relax, but I force myself to stay where I am.

“It’s okay, Tentacle Boy. Don’t cry,” Sasha soothes.

“But now we’ve s-scared F-Felix. This w-was all our f-fault, not his. W-we abducted him b-because of our own f-foolish mistake,” Khephren chokes out between sobs.

Sasha casts the scariest glare I have ever seen in Najar’s direction, and I shiver. He might be small but I suspect he’s no one to be fucked with.

“I just want us all to be friends,” Khephren murmurs, burying his head in Sasha’s shoulder.

Sasha strokes his back and mouths to Najar, “Fix this or I’ll fix you!”

I swear, his eyes look ready to fire laser beams at Najar’s balls.

Luna snickers. “Naj done fucked up now.”

Rambo beeps. “Keep firing, assholes.”

Khephren pulls back and wipes at his eyes. He must be a rather tender-hearted genius. I can see why Sasha protects him like a rabid hellhound.

“We can’t return now, even if we wanted to. Not right away, at least. We’ve been traveling at light speed for some time now and are thousands of light years away. We’ll need to refuel before we can make a return trip,” Khephren explains, biting his lip in obvious worry.

Clearly outnumbered and uncomfortable at the sight of his crying friend, Najar takes a step toward me.

I take a step back.

He frowns.

I cross my arms protectively and back up again.

Maintaining distance is the name of the game, Felix.

“I... apologize for what I said,” he grits out between clenched teeth.

I stiffen and narrow my eyes. “Don’t strain yourself, pal.”

Rambo beeps three times. “Can’t we all just get along?”

Najar closes his eyes, and I get the distinct impression that he’s counting to ten.

Good. Serves him right.

When he opens his eyes, a mesmerizing kaleidoscope of colors, he stares right into mine. “I’m not inclined to... trust those I don’t know well. My objective was not to frighten you but to protect my crew.” He sighs. “But Khephren is right. The fault for the entire situation lies with us, so we must be the ones to yield in this matter. It is too late for us to take you home right away. But we will accept your proposal and trust you and your sister to keep quiet about your time with us.”

I lift my chin. “And how do I know I can trust you?”

He studies me for several long moments before he goes to one knee and clasps a fist

over his chest. “I swear on my honor as a Dravethian warrior.”

My heart flutters a little at the sight, but I quell my foolish thoughts. He’s only doing this because his friends guilted him into it.

Kheph gasps, his eyes bright. “Oh, Naj! I knew you had it in you.”

Luna places a gentle hand on my shoulder. “That’s a Dravethian warrior oath, Felix. Naj can’t break it without losing his honor. He’d never do that.”

I can only hope she’s right.

“Good! Everything’s settled.” Khephren takes hold of my hand and pumps it, smiling brightly. “You’re our special guest and new friend. I hope you’ll enjoy this adventure with us.”

“Thank you. Uh... how long will this adventure last?”

He considers this for a moment. “A few weeks. We’ll have you home before the new year on Earth’s calendar.”

My shoulders relax. “Sounds good. I’m excited to travel with you all and see the universe.”

Khephren, who resembles a champagne bottle ready to pop, plants a giddy kiss on Sasha’s lips before hurrying back to his seat. “I’m powering up the view screen and I’ll be placing the call to your sister momentarily. Are you ready, Felix?”

Rambo loops me in a circle, beeping happily. “We have clearance, Clarence.”

I let out a startled laugh.

The last few minutes have been a roller coaster of emotional ups and downs but I'm choosing to believe in my friends—minus Najar—and focus on the positives.

“Thanks, Khephren. This means a lot to me.”

“My pleasure, Felix. Here we go.”

I wait, my heart thumping so loudly I swear I can hear it, until my sister's beautiful, familiar face pops up on screen.

Strangely, it almost makes me tear up.

Her wild mane of curly auburn hair is in disarray and it looks like we just woke her up. She yawns widely.

God, I love her.

Gemma blinks at me for a moment and then her eyes go huge. “What the fuck is happening right now? Am I still dreaming?”

I give her an awkward little wave. “Hey, Gemsy. So, yeah, some crazy stuff happened last night, and, well... surprise!” I hold out my arms and do the jazz hands things she taught me when she was doing drama club in high school. “I found aliens in the desert.”

Gemma makes a choking noise, and I hurry to continue, aiming to get it all out before she loses her shit. “And they... er... invited me aboard their ship for an intergalactic adventure.”

She goes so pale I can count every freckle on her nose and I'm worried she might pass out.

Khephren waves a few pink tentacles in the air. “Fear not, sister of Felix. Your brother is our guest, and we will take very good care of him.”

“What in the tentacle-porn hell is going on right now?” Gemma demands.

Luna steps forward. Or should I say, she sashays closer, eyeing my sister with obvious interest. “Hi, there, gorgeous. I’m Luna, the ship’s engineer.” She waves a green tentacle. “We are part of the species known as Dravethians, and we possess a few more appendages than you humans. They come in quite handy for all kinds of things.” Luna follows that up with a wink.

To my surprise, my sister’s cheeks turn a surprising shade of pink. “Uh, hi, Luna. I’m Gemma. What kind of trouble did my brother get himself into this time?”

“Don’t worry. Felix is a sweetheart. He did nothing wrong. The fault was entirely ours, you see. He happened to spot us and our ship when we were trying to remain hidden from human eyes. We basically panic-abducted him to try and figure out what to do.”

Gemma glares. “You guys better not be planning to hurt him.”

Kickass little sister to the rescue!

“No way.” Khephren hurries to respond. “We’re just taking him along for the ride while we tour a few planets before heading back to Earth. I promise we’ll keep him safe.”

“You can trust us,” Luna adds.

“I’ve never met an alien before, but I must say you’re quite beautiful.” Gemma’s expression relaxes and she twirls an auburn curl around her index finger. “Green’s

actually my favorite color.”

My mouth drops open. “Are you... flirting with one of my abductors?”

“Not abductors. Friends ,” Khephren chides.

Luna licks her lips and stares at my sister. “I’ve always had a thing for redheads. And your curls?” She practically purrs. “They’re divine.”

“What the hell is happening right now?” I ask.

Sasha snickers and rips open a bag of dill pickle potato chips. “Luna’s hitting on your sister. She likes the ladies.” He pops a chip in his mouth and crunches on it. “Fuck yeah, I missed these.”

“Be sure to save a little so the food generator will know how to recreate them,” Khephren tells him while stroking his back with a tentacle.

Sasha licks crumbs from his lips. “Thanks, Tentacle Boy.”

“Gemma,” I say firmly, “you do understand that I’m light-years away from Earth right now and roaming the universe with a bunch of aliens on their ship, right?”

“I’m just getting to know your new friends.” Her brow furrows. “Are you seriously in outer space right now?”

“We’re on our way to Glacius Major,” Najar interjects matter-of-factly.

Rambo beeps several times. “To infinity and beyond!”

I need to regain control of this conversation. “It’s wild and out of this world—pun

intended—but I really am.”

Worry flashes in Gemma’s blue eyes as she surveys the crew. “You all aren’t trying to use my brother for some kind of weird medical research or experimentation, are you?”

“No, beautiful,” Luna says with a chuckle. “We don’t even have a scientist or medical officer on the ship. Besides, we’re more interested in human movies than human physiology.” She eyes Gemma with a grin. “Although, I’d like to explore your body if you’re interested.”

“Gah!” I cry. “Will you two stop flirting in front of me? It’s weirding me out.”

Also, it’s seriously unfair that my sister is hitting it off with a tentacled alien when I’ve struck out with Najjar.

Gemma perks up, a curious twinkle in her eyes. “You don’t have a medical officer on the ship?”

Uh-oh. I have a bad feeling about this.

“Gemsy,” I warn.

She ignores me. “I just so happen to be an MD.”

Luna’s practically vibrating, and her tentacles start undulating. “You don’t say?”

“Nope. Gemma, you’re staying out of this,” I say, putting my foot down.

My sister keeps her gaze trained on Luna, and I swear she has hearts in her eyes. “I hope I’ll get to thank you in person for taking care of my brother when you bring him

back to Earth.”

“Oh, I’ll make sure of it. We’ll give you our desert landing coordinates to come and meet us. After all, he’ll probably need you to pick him up anyway.”

“Perfect!” Gemma says before turning to me with a pout. “I suppose it’s a good thing I’m scheduled to work at the hospital over Christmas, or I’d be spending it all alone.”

My heart twinges at her words. “I’ll miss you, kiddo.”

She crosses her arms over her buxom chest. “You do know I’m an adult now and have been for a long time, right?”

“You’ll always be my kid sister.”

“And you’ll always be my annoying older brother.”

“I’m sorry we have taken your brother away from you during this most wonderful of holiday seasons,” Khephren says. “But we will return him to you safely. Right now, we’re on course to visit several planets to experience their cultures.”

“It’s a shame you weren’t out in the desert with your brother when he discovered us. We could have brought you along as well,” Luna adds.

“Over my dead body,” I growl.

Gemma blushes again. “I’ll just have to look forward to meeting you in a few weeks.”

“It’s a date,” Luna says.

Rambo does a little twirl accompanied by several beeps. “You had me at hello.”

“Aww! Your robot is so cute,” Gemma coos.

Luna beams, pride written all over her face. “He’s my droid. I programmed him myself.”

To my surprise and relief, Najar returns us to the more pressing matter at hand. “If I may interrupt again, Gemma, I’m Najar and in charge of security on the ship. Felix has sworn an oath to keep our existence a secret. He has also promised that you will keep what you have learned to yourself.” His expression goes steely. “Failure to stay quiet will result in having your memories wiped.”

Luna promptly smacks him upside the head with a tentacle. “Way to ruin the mood, Naj. Geez. Catch a clue.” She turns back to Gemma with an apologetic smile. “Naj is a bit of a stick-in-the-mud and not the greatest at being diplomatic. But he’s right, this is a serious situation. We do need you and your brother to keep our existence a secret, or it could lead to some undesirable consequences for all of us.”

Gemma nods slowly. “That makes a lot of sense. I’ll do whatever I have to in order to get my brother back safely. You can count on me. In the meantime, I hope that you’ll treat him right. He’s the only family I have left, and vice versa.” Her throat catches on those words.

It hasn’t even been a full day and already, I miss her terribly. Being away from her for several weeks is going to be hard. Usually, we don’t go more than a few days without seeing one another, and we talk at least once a day.

Gemma sniffles, fighting back tears. “Will you at least check in with me periodically to let me know you’re okay?”

I direct an inquiring look Khephren's way.

He taps his chin with the tip of a tentacle, a thoughtful expression on his face. "We may not be able to video conference as frequently as you might like since the distance from some regions will make that difficult, but Felix should be able to relay written messages to you."

"Text messages, babe," Sasha corrects around a mouthful of chips.

Gemma sighs with relief. "Okay, that makes me feel a bit better. But this is all a lot to process."

"I know," I whisper. "Everything will be all right."

"It better," she declares, getting a fierce gleam in her eyes. "Otherwise, I'll have to hunt down those aliens of yours and kick some serious ass."

"Your sister is so hot," Luna whispers to me.

I groan.

"I love you, bro," Gemma says. "Be safe."

"Love you too, Gemsy. Talk soon."

Khephren ends the transmission and I rub at the unexpected ache in my chest. The pink alien takes one look at me and flashes a megawatt smile. "Felix needs a group hug, everyone!"

"Wha—"

Before I can even finish what I'm saying, Luna and Khephren pull me into a tight hug, complete with all their arms and tentacles. It's surreal but also weirdly comforting.

Khephren pats my head with a tentacle. "We'll keep you safe, don't worry."

Sasha sets aside his nearly empty bag of chips and gives me a thumbs-up. "I'm giving you a hug in spirit. Not much for the real deal, except with Kheph."

I dart a glance at Najar, who remains conspicuously distant, and heave a mental sigh. I can only hope his attitude will improve and that we can remain cordial during the next few weeks otherwise it's going to be a long-ass flight...

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Chapter Six

Chronicles of Chaos: An Informal Record of Life Aboard the Sleigh Belle

Stardate: 78389.0

Origin: Euphorian Star System

Destination: Glacius Major

I'm forced to admit that I've made a bit of a monumental fuckup.

In my defense, I had our crew's best interests at heart. My suggestion that we return the human we panic-abducted back to Earth and wipe his brief memories of us was the smartest course of action. I still stand by that assessment.

However, in retrospect, I should have known that my crewmates were never going to agree to that plan. So vocalizing it in front of everyone, including Felix, just made me the biggest asshole on the ship.

At present, things are beyond awkward, and Felix is avoiding me.

I understand why. I get it. But it bothers me more than I would wish.

Now I'm restless and frustrated—and stuck on this ship with a human who probably loathes me for the next few weeks.

Once again, fuck... my... life.

—Najar Mezdel, First Lieutenant and Voice of Reason on the Sleigh Belle

NAJAR

L una was right. I fucked up.

Felix is avoiding me.

And it fucking sucks, as Sasha would say.

I do understand why he's acting this way toward me. But I don't like it.

He's not overtly rude or even antagonistic. Perhaps if he were, I wouldn't feel so wretched.

Instead, whenever he sees me, he gets this awful wounded look in his eyes and does everything in his power to flee whenever we happen to run into each other. Nothing has ever made me feel so shitty.

It's already been a couple of days since my ill-conceived suggestion was overruled and we agreed to trust Felix and take him with us on our holiday tour of several planets. He seems to be having a good time with the others, but I only catch glimpses of him from afar.

If the last few days are any indicator, the next couple of weeks are going to be rough.

Sighing, I sit down at our communal table with my breakfast and a large mug of steaming kavga. There's no one to blame but myself.

But that doesn't make me feel any better.

I'm sipping my morning brew when a sleepy-eyed Felix, with tousled hair and clad in the too-big pajamas I left him, appears in the doorway of the ship's canteen.

He freezes in place, staring at me wide-eyed.

I force an awkward smile. "Good morning."

He whirls around and disappears. My shoulders slump. Even making simple pleasantries seems a no-go.

Seconds later, Luna peeks her head into the room, and upon seeing me, shakes it. Her green pigtails bob disappointedly. "Should have known I'd find your sorry ass in here," she says as she strolls into the room, heading straight for the food generator, with Rambo gliding along at her side.

I scowl. "Excuse me."

She arches an eyebrow at me. "Felix came hightailing it down the hallway like he was being chased by a pack of Ingarian wild wolves. I invited him to join me for breakfast, but he said he was going to eat in his room instead." She looks me up and down knowingly. "Now I understand why."

I set down my kavga and cross my arms over my chest, settling my face into its sternest expression. "I don't have any control over what Felix does or doesn't want to do."

Rambo chooses that moment to comment. "I wish I knew how to quit you."

Glaring at the droid only makes him beep at me cheerfully.

Ignoring my attempts to look forbidding, Luna joins me at the table with her own mug of kavga and toast with Dravethian nut butter. “Let’s be real, Naj. You’ve made things super awkward on the ship. Now Felix is afraid of you.”

Her words are like unexpected daggers to my heart.

I know he doesn’t like me. Not anymore. But... afraid?

Before I can say anything, Luna continues, “I understand why you pushed for returning him and erasing his memories, even after the rest of us had agreed to trust Felix’s word. But don’t you think it might have been better to wait to talk to us when he wasn’t in the room?”

One of my tentacles rubs my throbbing temple. I seem to get a headache every time I see Felix run away from me.

“We’re already in hot water with the Alliance after the whole Sasha debacle. A second Earthling abduction isn’t going to win us any friends and allies with them.”

She reaches over and takes hold of my hand, squeezing it. “I agree but what happened really was our fault. We never should have suggested poor Felix pay the price for our mistake simply because he was in the wrong place at the wrong time.”

I narrow my eyes at her. “None of this would have happened in the first place if you all had just listened to me when I said visiting Earth again was a bad idea.”

And now we’ll still have to come back again to return Felix in a few weeks. A third time feels even riskier.

She sips her coffee and nods. “True. It wasn’t our most rational hour.” She glances around happily. “Although the ship looks festive and fantastic.”

I scowl again and she nibbles at her toast without any repentance.

“You need to find a way to make up with Felix,” she declares after swallowing a mouthful of food. “We’re going to be together for a while, and it’ll be super uncomfortable and irritating if you guys do this the whole time. No harshing on our Christmas spirit, man.”

I look away. “It’s only a couple of weeks, then we’ll send him back and won’t have anything else to do with him. Surely, you can tolerate a few weeks of awkwardness.”

Rambo beeps three times. “I am serious. And don’t call me Shirley.”

It’s Luna’s turn to cross her arms and level me with a challenging stare. “Najar Mezdel, you’re acting like a bratty little kid right now. Why can’t you just admit that you were wrong and try to mend fences with Felix?”

I bang a tentacle hard on the table, and I let a sliver of my irritability show. “I did apologize to him! I even swore the warrior’s oath, but he is avoiding me like I’m the plague—or something worse.”

Luna strokes her chin thoughtfully. “You know, humans have the expression ‘actions speak louder than words,’ and I think it’s an apt one, particularly in this case.”

My brows draw together. “What do you mean?”

She rolls her eyes at me like I’m a dumbass. “I’m saying that maybe the apology was good but it wasn’t enough. You have to put yourself in Felix’s shoes. He doesn’t know us or our ways. He was abducted against his will. Until recently, he’d never met an extraterrestrial being before, let alone traveled off his home planet. All of this has got to be really overwhelming, but he’s handling it incredibly well, all things considered.” She gives me a sad look. “Najar, you’ve been a great friend to me for

decades, so don't take this the wrong way. Dude, to those who don't know you well? You can come off as a little... intimidating. I think Felix is still worried you might try to forcibly erase his memories."

The very idea that Felix might think I would forcibly do something without his consent makes me nauseous.

"What can I do to get him to talk to me again?"

She lets go of me and cradles her mug in her hands. "Hmm. Let me think..."

I know Luna well and I can tell she's trying to mess with me. "Help!"

She smirks. "Fine. You need to woo him."

I choke on air. "W-what?"

She bats her eyelashes at me innocently. "Woo him with friendship. Make friendly overtures."

"How? He runs away the instant he sees me."

"That is a challenge," she admits. "But I'll help you out. We're going to be arriving on Glacius Major soon. I'll find a way to leave you two on your lonesome when we split up to explore."

I heave a sigh of relief. "Thanks."

"I got you, bro." Her smile turns mischievous. "Besides, it's in my own selfish best interest to help smooth things over with you and Felix. I'm trying to get in his sister's good books—among other things."

“Are you being serious right now?”

“Totally. We’ve been messaging each other daily.” Luna twirls a pigtail around a tentacle. “Gemma is amazing and so wonderfully luscious.”

Indeed, while Felix possesses a lean, tall physique, his sister appeared to have a fuller figure when we saw her on the viewscreen.

“What my tentacles could do to her...” Luna muses, licking her lips.

“You can toss that idea right out of your head. We’re returning Felix, not picking up more humans—and most certainly not his poor sister.”

“We’ll see.”

I want to tear my hair out. “Listen, this is a bad idea?”

One of her tentacles whips out and covers my mouth. “Hush. Yes, I know you aren’t in touch with your inner romantic. And let’s be honest, if there is one in there, he’s seriously crusty and dusty.” She eyes me dubiously.

I growl.

“In any case, let the rest of us romantics dream. Besides, Gemma and I are just getting to know each other for now. There’s no harm in that.”

I remove her tentacle from its position over my mouth and groan. “You chose this life. This was your decision,” I mutter to myself as a reminder.

Luna beams at me. “That’s right, Naj. Learn to live a little. It’s the month of our Christmas festivities, and we want to have a good time. No downers allowed.”

The com suddenly crackles to life and Kheph's voice comes through, all bright and cheerful as usual. "Good news, friends! We have entered orbit around Glacius Major and are just waiting to be cleared for landing. Please find a seat and strap in."

Luna and I make our way to the bridge where we find Kheph, Sasha, and Felix.

My gaze tracks Felix as he takes a seat next to Sasha. He looks nervous but excited to visit his first planet other than Earth.

"I know it's a bit late to be asking," Felix says, suddenly, his eyes trained on Kheph and Luna, "but is this planet safe for me as a human? I mean, do I need a space suit or anything?"

I clear my throat. "The planet's gravity is similar to that of Earth's, and its atmosphere produces sufficient oxygen to not require any breathing aid."

The way Felix eyes me is suspicious before he looks to the others for confirmation.

Ouch.

"Don't worry," Sasha tells Felix. "Kheph wouldn't take us anywhere that wasn't safe for humans. My husband is adorably protective of me."

Khephren is focused on his control station, but two of his tentacles move above the top of his seat back and form the shape of a heart.

"Love you too, Tentacle Boy," Sasha calls out.

I take my seat as we enter the planet's atmosphere and begin our descent. Glacius Major is a peaceful planet, so we won't have to worry about much in the way of danger. We'll be exploring parts of their winter market, which makes it a valuable

opportunity for me to spend time with Felix and repair some of the hurt I caused.

Once we land, Khephren and Luna begin handing out the necessary winter gear we'll need to go outside.

"This reminds me of the snowsuit that poor kid has to wear in A Christmas Story ," Felix says as he starts climbing into the bulky garment he's been given.

Sasha snickers. "I wouldn't be surprised if that was part of the inspiration to this design."

"Quit bitching. These will keep us nice and cozy. And look." Luna flaps her tentacles, now covered in material from the suit, around behind her. "Rambo helped me design a special version to keep our tentacles mobile but warm too."

Rambo gives a few merry beeps. "Show me the money."

Felix lets out a startled laugh and smiles at Rambo.

As I stare at Felix, an odd warmth fills my chest. He's quite handsome when he's like this.

I want to be able to make him laugh and smile too.

Eventually, once we're all encased in our thermal suits from head to toe and have durable boots on our feet, we troop down the gangway and out into the winter wonderland known as Glacius Major.

All around us are vast fields of shimmering snow, and tall trees coated in white dot the landscape. We're a good distance from the nearest town as we had to land farther away in keeping with visitor regulations. However, we are expected, and I'm relieved

to find two snow carriages awaiting us.

Luna immediately rushes forward, squeezing herself between Sasha and Khephren as she locks arms with both of them. “We’ll take the first carriage! You two take the second.”

“W-what?” Felix says, but Luna ignores him and shoves our friends into the first carriage, then waves her thermal suit-clad tentacles at us and hops in behind them.

I love Luna, but I wouldn’t necessarily call her smooth.

Taking a steadying breath, I turn to Felix with the warmest smile I can muster. “Shall we?”

He looks adorably flustered. The thermal suits we’re wearing are quite ridiculous, but I can’t seem to look away from him.

“Oh... uh... right.”

The Glacian driver steps forward and is about to offer Felix a hand into the carriage, but I beat him to it.

Startled, he takes my proffered hand and climbs into the carriage. I quickly follow, my hearts racing.

Even through the thick fabric of our gloves, I could feel the warmth of his touch, and it has left me tingly all over.

When the carriage coachman takes off, I focus on calming my racing thoughts as I strategize how I can extend the olive branch of friendship to Felix.

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Chapter Seven

“Tentacles and Torment: Body Swapped” by FeliXFiles

Fandom: “The Tentacular Tales of Captain Starblade” by KirklovesSpock4eva

Tags: Lord Vardox, Captain Starblade, body swap, tentacles, 18+

Part 4.5 of Tentacles and Torment

Starblade didn't know what the hell he was doing, but his—or rather, Vardox's—tentacles sure did.

The unruly appendages extended toward Starblade's naked body on the bed, as if eager to touch his flesh once more.

Starblade was still experiencing a disorienting kind of vertigo as his mind tried to adjust to the fact that he and Vardox had somehow swapped bodies.

“Come now, darling. A lovely orgasm or five will help you relieve that pent-up stress,” Vardox drawled at him, still fingering himself in preparation for sex.

Starblade gulped, feeling his cock harden beneath his cloak.

That did make him wonder. Was Vardox experiencing the same kind of need?

The notion made Starblade feel faint. His real body wouldn't be able to conceal how

much it yearned for Vardox and the pleasures that only he could give Starblade.

“Fuck,” he whispered.

Vardox licked his lips and purred. “That’s the idea, my sweet captain.”

FELIX

I don’t know what Luna is scheming, but she clearly has something planned because she and the others beat a hasty retreat, leaving me and Najar alone in the second carriage.

Yeah, this won’t be awkward at all...

I was shocked when Najar helped me climb into the contraption. It resembles a cross between an enormous snow sled and a horse-drawn carriage, although this one is pulled by a most unusual creature I can only assume is indigenous to the planet.

Once we start moving, I clear my throat to break the awkward silence and dart a quick glance at my no doubt unwilling companion.

“Sorry you got stuck with me,” I say with a wince. “Not sure what Luna was trying with that move. I had nothing to do with it.”

Najar shifts uncomfortably. “Uh... that...”

Just looking at him, I have to bite my lip so I don’t laugh. These snowsuits—or thermal suits—as they call them, are utterly ridiculous. They keep us plenty warm, which is necessary on this planet. However, the normally imposing Najar looks so goofy in his.

Honestly? It's kind of cute and helps me relax a little.

"The thing is—" he starts to say.

I interrupt him. "So what kind of animal is pulling this contraption?" I keep my tone bright in an attempt to evade whatever uncomfortable conversational direction Najjar was heading in.

He blinks for several moments. "Oh. It is a Frosthorned Snowdeer. Native to this world, they are capable of withstanding the harsh climate."

I study the majestic creature from my vantage point in the carriage. It reminds me a little of a caribou in terms of its coffee-and-cream color coat, only larger and hairier—well, and possessing six legs. The animal is easily the size of a moose with an enormous, deadly looking horn in the center of its forehead.

Not exactly the unicorn of fairy tales, that's for certain.

The thick, shaggy pelt covering its hide is no doubt why it survives in these frosty temperatures.

As we glide through the snow, I peer out at the winter landscape around us. I can't help but marvel at this strange and fascinating world. As far as I can determine, rather than being a powdery, soft accumulation, the snow on the ground appears to be comprised of thicker, crystalline flakes that glitter in the sunlight in an almost blinding fashion. The deep layer of white all around us looks pristine and nearly untouched.

As we pass through a canopy of trees that resemble Douglas firs, only much larger and tinted an unusual blue color, I gasp at the appearance of an enormous glacier in the distance.

Najar follows my gaze. “From what I understand, there are quite a number of ice caves and tunnels within the glaciers on this world. Some of them are safe for exploration.” He shifts in his seat. “That is, if you’d like to see them.”

I shiver and shake my head. “That certainly sounds amazing, but I tried spelunking once and that was more than enough for me. I discovered caves tend to make me claustrophobic.”

“I see,” Najar says before lapsing into silence.

Awwwkkkkwwwaaarrddd.

I’m adult enough to admit that part of this is my fault. I’ve been the one avoiding Najar on the ship.

Did he deserve it? Yes.

Was it a bit childish on my part? Probably.

I sigh. No doubt Luna arranged this situation so that we could spend some time together and get over our bullshit.

I take a fortifying breath and decide to act like an adult who can communicate with others. “Listen, I’m sorry I’ve been avoiding you lately.”

Najar’s eyes widen. “There is no need for you to apologize. I am the one who should be apologizing to you.”

“You already did. I just... didn’t want to see you after all that went down, so I was being an idiot and avoiding you.”

“Luna told me that you were probably... afraid of me.” Najar’s voice trembles. “I’m sorry if I frightened you. The idea of it makes me deeply ashamed.”

His tentacles droop in his thermal suit and the miserable expression on his face looks full of remorse. Part of me wants to comfort him, but I shut that down fast. No way am I making a fool of myself yet again.

“The prospect of having my memories altered against my will is terrifying. It would be for just about anyone. But I also understand why you thought that was the most logical course of action.”

Hope blossoms in his colorful eyes. “You understand?”

I steel my resolve. “I do. However, that doesn’t mean it didn’t hurt my feelings or scare me.”

His face falls.

“Sometimes, in life, the logical course of action isn’t the best one, let alone the most humane. As a veterinarian, I’ve learned that we can’t let reason allow us to lose sight of critical empathy.”

Najar studies his lap. “I... have never been... very good with...”

“What?”

He looks up at me, and my heart clenches.

“On my world, if you are born with the warrior’s mark”—Najar points to his cheek—“you are trained as a warrior. We are taught to protect and defend our world, with extreme force when needed.” He looks away. “When dealing with a potential

threat, warriors are conditioned from childhood to set aside emotions and prioritize logic and reasoning.”

My heart stutters. “From childhood?”

Najar nods. “We start training from an early age. My parents were both warriors, but they died in battle when I was quite young.”

Orphaned and forced to become a child soldier? That’s a real stab to the heart.

“As a result, when you first joined us, I was simply operating on ingrained instinct. I hope we can move beyond this and get along for the next few weeks.”

My traitorous heart gives a hopeful thump. “Are you really okay with me tagging along with you guys and promising to take this secret to my grave?”

His golden cheeks flush. “That’s right.”

Najar seems like he’s going to say something more but then the driver interrupts us. He resembles the mythical Yeti creature of legend on Earth but he seems like a super friendly guy.

His words come out in a garbled tongue that makes no sense to me at first but then the aural translator earpiece Khephren gave me when we landed interprets what was said and speaks in a computerized voice, “We’re almost there. That’s Glaciala Village up ahead.” He points a thick, hairy arm toward what appears to be a small town in the distance, one that keeps getting closer as our carriage moves along.

I lower my voice and whisper. “This device Khephren gave me is fabulous.” I point to my ear for emphasis.

“The device is quite effective,” Najar agrees. “However, for long-term use, a neuro-linguistic adapter grafted in the brain is much better. It enables the recipient to be fluent in most languages, both in terms of comprehension and speaking.” His eyes widen and he hastens to assure me, saying, “Don’t worry. We would never perform such an invasive procedure on a guest from another world. The earpiece is a good alternative for short-term use.”

Having anyone mess around inside my head does not sound remotely appealing, even if it could give me the ability to understand and speak other languages. These aliens are way too quick to want to tinker with folks’ brains, if you ask me.

I give him a nervous smile. “Yeah, I’ll stick with the earpiece, thanks.”

As we glide over the shimmering white snow, I try to take in everything I’m seeing.

Never in my life did I imagine I would get to travel the universe and visit other planets like this. I want to make the most of this entire experience, and that means letting bygones be bygones with Najar.

Luna will get some big thanks from me later for forcing us together to confront our crap and move past it like adults.

I made the mistake of thinking there was a whisper of attraction between me and Najar when we met, but it’s not the first time I’ve misread a situation. No doubt I was seeing what I wanted to see. I mean, who wouldn’t want a hunky alien with a hot bod and eight tempting tentacles to show some interest in them?

Well, let’s just say I’m confident every fan of The Tentacular Tales of Captain Starblade would be right at the front of the line to get in on that action—me included.

Najar’s still an annoyingly handsome man, and my libido has not lost an iota of its

initial interest in him. But I'm not going to embarrass myself with any more humiliating overtures of interest. From here on out, I'll just focus on us being platonic acquaintances traveling together.

Maybe, if I'm lucky, we might even make it to tentative friends by the end of my journey with the crew of the Sleigh Belle.

When we finally arrive at our destination, I eagerly clamor out of the carriage, not waiting for anyone to assist me. No more Najar hand-holding temptation for me.

I hurry over to thank the driver, pressing the button on the earpiece and holding it down when I get closer to him, just like Khephren showed me. "Hi, there. I didn't get to introduce myself properly earlier. I'm Felix Taylor and I'm from Earth."

The earpiece relays a computerized voice in the driver's language, and his eyes flash with understanding. He says something and the device translates, "Nice to meet you, Felix of Earth. I'm Mecknos Garpabalous."

I extend a free hand and hold down the earpiece button again. "On my world, we often shake hands as a form of greeting. Would that be welcome?"

At a good seven feet tall, Mecknos towers over me, but when the translation comes through, he grins around the shaggy white hair that covers most of his face and would put Santa Claus to shame.

He reaches out an enormous, furry paw of a hand with three large fingers, and we shake.

"Thank you for the ride, Mecknos. If it wouldn't be too much trouble, could you introduce me to your beautiful companion?" I say, gesturing toward the Frosthorned Snowdeer.

His eyes widen and his smile grows even larger, revealing some scary-looking fangs.

My earpiece translates his next words. “Of course! Let me introduced you to my pride and joy, Helgula. She is the best beast in my herd.” He leads me over to the amazing creature, and I marvel at her heavily muscled legs and powerful body. I’ve spent years around exotic animals, but it never gets old. And right now, I feel like I’m back to the very start of my rotation days, full of wonder and awe.

“May I pet her?” I ask.

Mecknos nods his head. “She loves a good chin scratch.”

I remove my glove and hold out my hand, palm down and fingers slightly apart so that she can sniff me.

Studying me with curious, dark eyes, Helgula hovers her head near my hand, her large nostrils inhaling my scent, and then huffs out warm breath on my tender skin. It tickles and I chuckle.

Seemingly deemed acceptable, I carefully begin to rub under her chin. She makes a nickering sound of contentment.

“You’re a beautiful, strong girl, aren’t you?” I coo at her, using my other hand to stroke her neck. “Thank you for ferrying us to our destination.”

She leans her head closer and nudges my ear, making me laugh out loud when she nearly knocks me down.

I turn to Mecknos. “She’s amazing. Thank you.”

He puffs out his big chest in obvious pride. “You’re welcome. Enjoy the festival.”

We say our goodbyes, and a quiet Najar follows me as we begin to walk toward our friends, who are already waiting for us across from the town's Welcome Center.

Luna comes bouncing over to us—which I'm not quite sure how she manages in her bulky thermal suit, but somehow she does. "How did it go? What did you think? Wasn't that ride into town amazing?"

I grin at her. "It really was." I arch an eyebrow. "And Najar and I cleared the air. We appreciate your meddling."

Najar grunts.

Luna throws her hands in the air in a solo version of the wave. "Thank the freaking galactic gods! It's about time you two quit acting like idiotic men."

"Touché," I say, then rub at my chilled nose. "Enough gabbing though. I don't know about all of you, but I think I need a hot beverage."

Her eyes sparkle merrily. "I like how you think, Felix! Follow me. They have a fun holiday market up ahead, and there are loads of vendors selling food and beverages. Let's all get something to warm up."

We follow as she leads the way.

Khephren may be the captain of the ship in name, but I'm beginning to suspect Luna is the real shadow captain. Oddly enough, she reminds me a bit of my sister. They're both feisty and independent, full of a take-no-shit type of confidence that I truly admire.

I can't wait to tell Gemma all about this planet. She's going to be so jealous. My sister has always wanted to travel the world but hasn't had the time or the money to

make it happen. An alien planet would be just as cool to her, I have no doubt.

As we stroll down the main street, I try to take it all in. The town itself is oddly reminiscent of a quaint European village decked out for the holidays, although the one celebrated here is not Christmas. Instead, the decorations adorning buildings appear to celebrate snow and ice.

But I suppose that makes sense on a world that only has one season—perpetual winter.

The residents here are distinctly alien—no pun intended—to me. I see a number of beings who share the same appearance as our sled-carriage driver, but there are others as well. Most of them appear to be from species that have a lot of natural hair or fur covering their bodies, which also makes complete sense for the environment of the planet.

In fact, we are clearly the oddballs here in our thermal suits, but Sasha and I, the lone humans, stand out even more. We get quite a few stares, which isn't surprising.

I must admit, I'm grateful to have Sasha around. He's been helping me adjust to life aboard the Sleigh Belle quite a bit. The tales of his travels have been astonishing to hear, but I find myself most envious of his relationship with Khephren. Their bond is full of affection and respect for one another and is beautiful to see. It reminds me a bit of my grandparents, whose relationship was unshakeable. Together, they could weather any storm and conquer any challenge that came their way. I've dreamed of finding that kind of connection with someone.

But it hasn't happened yet, and I'm not sure if it ever will.

Shaking off my moodier thoughts, I follow my companions to the town square, where we find a dizzying array of booths lining the square. Vendors are selling everything

from food to clothing, and the scene is lively with the smiling and laughing townsfolk filling the square.

“So aliens have Christmas markets too,” I murmur to myself.

I’m startled when I realize Najar has stealthily moved to my side. “Many extraterrestrial species are not all that radically different from humans. Most sentient beings value community, culture, and traditions. Or so I have found.”

I nod thoughtfully. “I’m sure a fair number of human anthropologists would sell their souls for an opportunity to study extraterrestrial peoples and their ways of life.”

He gives me a wry smile. “Although I doubt most species would welcome such observation. Humans tend to consider themselves the superior beings in the universe. They do not realize they are very young and far less advanced than other beings out here.”

“That’s very true. But we do have a lot of stories that imagine what other folks in the universe might be like. The sheer number of sci-fi movies and TV programs dealing with that subject is astonishing. Although, what I’ve seen so far suggests Star Trek and its various spin-offs were a lot closer to the truth than most other franchises.”

Najar lowers his voice. “For the love of Thekmis, please do not say anything like that to Sasha. Otherwise, he’ll talk your ear off about human movies.”

I laugh. “Duly noted.”

Luna leads us to a booth selling some kind of hot spiced cider that tastes like a cross between apple and pear flavors. It’s sweet and a little bit tart, with a nice tang from the spices. While we take a little break, we savor the warm beverage and I’m relieved when I feel my nose and cheeks warm up.

After we resume our wandering, I spot something that immediately has me interested.

“Ooh! Can we go over there?” I ask everyone, pointing to my goal.

Sasha grins and reaches over to fist-bump me. “Right on, man! I used to do that all the time back in Chicago when I was a kid.”

“What exactly are they doing over there with those strange objects on their feet?” Najar asks.

I grin at him. “Ice skating.”

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Chapter Eight

“Tentacles and Torment: Body Swapped” by FeliXFiles

Fandom: “The Tentacular Tales of Captain Starblade” by KirklovesSpock4eva

Tags: Lord Vardox, Captain Starblade, body swap, tentacles, 18+

Part 5 of Tentacles and Torment

Starblade stared at the tip of one of his tentacles as it started to secrete a copious amount of natural lubricant. The now sensitive appendage throbbed with arousal.

He never knew that Vardox’s tentacles felt like this.

Vardox—wearing Starblade’s form—smirked at him. “You don’t want to abandon this opportunity to experience things from my end, now do you? I can recognize the interest in your eyes.”

Starblade swallowed, feeling his cock pulse with desire. He took a hesitant step closer to the bed.

Vardox stroked his cock with one hand while continuing to finger his hole, eyeing Starblade with obvious anticipation.

Damn and blast!

He might be stuck in this body, but he didn't have full control over it. It pulled him toward the other man, tentacles reaching out to touch.

"That's it, darling," Vardox purred. "Come and fuck this ass that wants my cock and tentacles so badly."

Starblade's shaky control snapped and he lunged for Vardox, ready to give him exactly what he wanted.

FELIX

Sasha and I eagerly pull the rest of our group over to the town's equivalent of an outdoor skating rink.

We follow a queue of folks to rent some skates, although I quickly realize from looking at others around us that these aren't like the ice skates on Earth. They actually seem to be contraptions that attach to the bottom of one's footwear, like removable spike cleats for getting traction on the ice. On these attachable devices are double blades that support both sides of the foot rather than a single blade in the center. I'm sure they'll take a little bit of getting used to, but I'm game to try.

"Are you from Vegas?" Sasha asks. "When did you learn to skate?"

I grin. "Nevada born and raised, but I used to play hockey as a kid. My gramps loved taking me to the indoor rinks."

Najar tilts his head. "Gramps? What is that?"

"A nickname for my grandfather. He basically raised me along with my nana—my grandmother."

Najar considers this before studying me with a solemn expression. “Did your parents die when you were young?”

I understand why he’s asking, especially since he was orphaned so young. It makes my heart hurt just thinking about Najar being without any family as a child.

Given even the small tidbits he’s shared, I’m beginning to understand why Najar doesn’t trust outsiders and has a lot of emotional walls up.

My answering smile to his question is tinged with sadness. “No. I don’t know who my biological father is, or if he’s even still alive. He never stuck around and has never tried to search me out. As for my mom, I haven’t seen or spoken to her in years. I’m honestly not even sure if she’s still alive, either.” I sigh. “She was never the responsible type and tended to run from her problems. Gemma and I were left in her parents’ care when we were really young, so for all intents and purposes, my grandparents were my parents.” I look away, feeling tears come to my eyes. “Unfortunately, they both passed away a few years ago. That’s why Gemma and I only have each other now.”

“I’m very sorry for your loss. Your grandparents sound like they were wonderful people. They raised you well.”

I blink away my tears and smile at Najar. “I was incredibly lucky. In all likelihood, I probably wouldn’t be here today if it weren’t for them.” I chuckle. “My nana would be so excited to know I’m on an adventure with extraterrestrial beings. She was big on alien conspiracy theories and used to watch lots of those investigative shows on Roswell and stuff.”

Finally, it’s our turn in line to rent our ice gliders, as they call them.

Luna takes one look at them up close and deftly steps aside, shaking her head

vigorously. “I’m gonna sit this one out, friends. It seems like it would be a good idea to make sure one member of our crew doesn’t sustain any potential injuries while we’re here.”

“Oh, ye of little faith,” Sasha chastises with a grin.

“Trying to glide around on ice with sharp metal blades attached to my feet sounds like a recipe for disaster. Hard pass, thanks.” Luna gives us two thumbs up. “But you all have fun and try not to incur any serious head trauma out there.”

When Najar is handed his pair of ice gliders, he regards them with a furrowed brow. “I believe Luna had the right idea. I will just return?—”

“Ahem.” I put my hands on my hips and stare Najar down. “No more bailing on ice skating allowed. Besides, this will be fun. Just try it.”

He purses his lips as he studies the ice gliders. My peer pressure tactic seems to be having little sway.

Sitting on an empty bench nearby, I pat the seat beside me. “Come join me, and I’ll help you get them on.”

He grimaces but does what I say.

I fit my ice gliders to my boots quite easily. I’m not sure what material they’re made from, but it molds to the size and shape of my boot almost organically and then locks in place nice and tight. I marvel at the technology.

To test things out, I stomp each of my feet and am relieved to see the gliders are quite secure and stable.

Najar continues to look skeptically at his gliders as he puts them on with obvious reluctance. I decide to goad him a little bit.

After all, fair is fair, right?

“Don’t tell me the big, mighty Dravethian warrior is scared to try ice skating?”

He fixes me with an irritable glare. “I am not frightened. I simply do not see the point of this activity.”

Okay, maybe Luna was right about the whole stick-up-the-ass side of Najar’s personality. He might be sexy as all get out, but he also needs to lighten up a bit.

But my sensible brain reminds me that, given his upbringing, he probably never had a chance to indulge in fun just for the sake of fun. It’s a sad thought and one that immediately makes me want to help Najar get in touch with his inner child.

“You told me this planet is safe. You’re not on duty, so why not live a little? There’s a festival going on, so let’s be festive .”

Khephren hears that and waddles over to us on his gliders, his tentacles in their coat sleeves waving all over the place and his eyes bright. “Yes! Felix is right, my bestie. We must indulge in the fun around us. When on Glacius Major, do as the Glacians do!”

Sasha leans into his side. “Skating is actually fun. Give it a chance, Najar.”

Najar folds like a deck of cards under our joint attack.

“Fine. I yield. I shall try the... ice skating.”

Sasha takes hold of his husband's hand. "Let me teach you, Tentacle Boy."

"I can't wait, my love!" Khephren replies giddily, hearts in his eyes as Sasha leads him toward the rink.

They are ridiculously cute together. I can't help but feel a pang of envy.

Najar gets to his feet a little unsteadily, and, deciding to be bold, I reach out and take hold of one of his gloved hands. "Come on. I can teach you too."

He grumbles but lets me drag him with me. It's a good thing I keep him close because the rink is a happening place and there are already quite a few folks enjoying themselves on the ice.

It takes me a moment or two to adjust to the differences of these ice gliders to traditional skates. They balance my body in a way that reminds me more of four-wheeled roller skates from my youth. Keeping that in mind helps me reposition myself a little as I move.

"Let me take a quick loop or two of the rink and once I'm confident I've got the hang of these gliders, I'll come and teach you," I tell Najar as I lead him over to a low wall where he can hold on for support.

I do a couple of laps around the rink, smiling the whole way as my body remembers the old movements and easily adapts to the new footwear. It's been years since I last did this. But I know why. Once I started grad school, I was swamped with so much work that I had no time for extracurricular activities. Then, after Nana and Gramps died, I stayed away because it brought up too many painful nostalgic memories.

But right now, I feel freer and more lighthearted than I have in far longer than I care to remember.

The fact that it took aliens abducting me and taking me to another planet to rekindle my love for ice skating seems to perfectly fit the weirdness that characterizes my life at this moment.

Sasha pulls up next to me, arm in arm with his husband, who appears to be finally getting the hang of things. Khephren beams, his face downright incandescent.

“Isn’t this so much fun? I love it!”

Sasha gazes at him with a smitten look. “So glad we found a new activity that we both like and can do together, babe.”

Khephren leans over and kisses his cheek before whispering to me, “Please go and help Najar. He’s stubborn, I know, but I think he would have fun if he just loosened up a little bit.”

I nod and head over to the glowering man who’s holding on to the wall so tightly I’m afraid he might leave permanent indentations from his grip.

“Okay, I’ve got the hang of these gliders now. Let me teach you some basics,” I offer.

The look he gives me is distinctly wary.

I roll my eyes. “Come on, big guy. I’ll help you. It’ll be fun.”

“I do not believe I enjoy this... ice skating.”

I laugh. “You haven’t even tried yet. Come on.”

He lets out a disgruntled huff and holds out his hands.

I take them in mine and carefully skate backward as I pull him along with me. “Take it slow and get a feel for the way you need to move your feet. Go with the forward glide, don’t fight it.”

Shakily, Najar manages to stay mostly upright as I pull him along.

“Try not to look at your feet the whole time,” I urge.

His mesmerizing eyes lock with mine and we almost skate into someone ahead of me.

Focus, Felix!

We successfully make it around the rink once.

“You did it! Pretty fun, huh?”

“Thank you for helping me.” His tone is gruff but sincere.

Aww. The guy’s definitely awkward when it comes to social niceties, but he’s not a bad person.

“My pleasure. Shall we do another lap?”

He studies me for a long moment, his expression unreadable.

Finally, he nods. “One more.”

I grin and decide to shift positions, moving to his side and looping my right arm with his left. “Let’s try it like this.”

His eyes widen but he nods. We move slowly at first but pick up a little speed as

Najar's movements become less jerky and stiff.

But just when I think it's smooth sailing—or skating—ahead for us, Najar loses his rhythm and does a comical mock dance of waving tentacles and skittering legs as he tries to stop himself from sliding on the ice.

I try to help but an instant later, his feet go out from under him and he falls backward, pulling me with him.

We land with a thump, and I'm surprised that it doesn't hurt.

When I open my eyes, I realize I've landed on top of a very big, golden alien who has somehow managed to not only support himself with a couple of his tentacles but also has wrapped two of them around me to keep me safe when we fell.

Do I swoon a little?

Hell yes, I do. But I keep it from showing on my face.

I swallow and bite my bottom lip. "Um, thanks for bracing my fall."

"Think nothing of it. It was my fault, after all." Then he scowls. "The damn thermal suit sleeves for my tentacles restrict my movements too much. I'm sure I would have been able to maintain better equilibrium if they were free to move more naturally."

I pat him on the shoulder placatingly. "I'm sure you're right."

We stare into one another's eyes and I realize I'm still lying on top of the poor man. Blood rushes to my cheeks as I awkwardly clamber off him— stupid bulky thermal suit —and manage to get to my feet.

I offer him a hand but he shakes his head, instead getting to his knees and knee-crawling over to the exit.

Luna is standing on the non-ice side of the rink door, laughing her fool head off and pointing a finger and three tentacles at Najar. “Hahahaha! Never thought I’d see the day you’d be brought to your knees, Naj! That was hysterical to watch, by the way.”

He glowers at her and makes his way to a bench to remove his gliders. “I doubt you would have done much better.”

She smirks. “Probably not, but then again, I wasn’t fool enough to go out there to begin with.”

It’s my turn to glare at her. “Najar was very brave for trying something new. And he did quite well for his first time skating. Everyone falls when they first start out. Heck, even professionals fall sometimes.”

She winks at me and I join Najar to remove my own gliders.

His expression is clouded so I give him a friendly elbow in the side. “Hey, don’t pout. Seriously, you did great for your first time. We managed a nice couple of laps around the rink. Falling is just part of learning how to skate. Don’t feel bad about it.”

He grunts. “I believe one time was more than enough for me when it comes to ice skating.”

Wanting to get back to the lighter mood we had going before he fell, I suggest, “Why don’t we go and do something you’d enjoy?”

Luna flashes us a knowing look and starts waving us off. “Great idea, Felix! You two go and have fun. I’ll stay here and watch over Sasha and Kheph.” She gestures to the

rink. “Seems like they’re still having some super lovey-dovey time together. We can meet back up when it’s time to return to the ship.”

“Sounds good. What do you think?” I ask Najar.

He considers me for a moment, and I kind of wish I could read his mind because the guy can be rather inscrutable at times. Although I suppose that adds to his sexy warrior mystique.

“Why don’t we wander around and see what catches our fancy?” he finally offers.

My lips curve into a relieved smile. “I like that plan.”

I reach out and link my arm with his naturally just like earlier—because I can be a smooth motherfucker when I want to be.

“Let’s stick close so I don’t get lost. There are lots of folks around.”

He blinks at me for a second but then nods his assent.

We wend our way through the dense crowds in the center of town, where the majority of the festivities are happening. Eventually, we discover an interesting ice sculpture garden we heard others talking about, but there’s a huge line so we decide to try again later.

After wandering for an hour, we get hungry and decide to explore some of the food stalls. I’m not entirely sure about most of the meat dishes on another planet like this, so I opt to try what resembles a mini-baguette that is filled with a local variety of melted cheese, which the vendor assures me is safe for humans. Najar selects some kebabs with grilled Glacius boar meat that smells quite good.

He notices me studying his food. “This meat is probably safe for human consumption.”

“I’d rather not take too many chances,” I say. “Food poisoning is no fun and meat tends to be riskier than a lot of other things.”

And I don’t want to contemplate alien meat-borne parasites...

Focusing on my own snack, I take a bite of my gooey cheese baguette, moaning with pleasure. The bread is crispy on the outside and wonderfully fluffy on the inside, and the accompanying cheese reminds me a bit of a mix of brie and gouda.

“This is delicious. It would be great with some sautéed mushrooms and onions.”

“Much the same as some places on Earth, there are limited fruits and vegetables grown in this region due to the constant winter climate. As a consequence, the diet of most inhabitants leans to mostly meat and fish along with dairy and heartier grains.”

“Don’t they do any greenhouse cultivation?”

“From what I understand, they do cultivate some vegetables that way, but it’s expensive and difficult. Instead, they focus on the few durable kinds of produce they can raise naturally. Some arctic greens, root vegetables, and one natural fruit that grows year-round in the winter climate.”

My eyebrows arch with interest. “What is it?”

He flashes a brief but genuine smile. “Let’s see if we can find someone selling it here.”

We wander around until Najar spies what he’s looking for and leads me to a yeti-like

vendor selling candied frost plums.

“This is a local delicacy,” the vendor explains.

“Is it safe for human consumption?” I ask.

He nods. “There are no species we are aware of that cannot eat this fruit.”

We buy a bag full of the berry-sized treats to share.

Taking a modest gamble, I remove my glove and pluck out one of the delicacies from the bag, then pop it in my mouth and pray it doesn’t make me sick.

It’s sweet and a little tart, reminding me of a cross between a cherry and a cranberry, with a hint of red grape. As I crunch on it, it releases a final burst of refreshing juice flavor.

“Mmmm. I can see why these are so famous here.” I hold the bag out to Najar. “Try one. They’re delicious.”

Najar fishes one out of the bag and pops it in his mouth. “Mmm, yes. Quite lovely.”

“We should save some for the others.” I close the bag with only a bit of reluctance.

Najar nods and his lips quirk. “They will, no doubt, enjoy them—especially Luna. She has a rather significant sweet tooth, as you Earthlings like to say.”

I laugh. “Good to know if I ever need to bribe her.”

We stroll through the streets, enjoying the festival-like atmosphere of the winter market, and I’m relieved that Najar and I have finally found a comfortable vibe. My

hopes for us kindling a friendship are growing, and I'm pleased to discover that we manage to converse with greater ease as time goes by.

Najar is not the most talkative of men, but I also don't need to fill every moment with conversation. I'm perfectly all right with sharing companionable silence while we walk arm in arm.

It's getting closer to the time when we are scheduled to meet up with our group and head back to the ship for the night. Already, the sun is starting to set amidst a sudden onslaught of snow flurries.

When we finally reconnect with the others, the weather has taken a rapid turn for the worse, and all the festival vendors are packing up and retreating.

"This isn't good," Najar says, lines of worry on his face.

"Let's hurry to the carriage station so we can get back to the Sleigh Belle," Khephren suggests.

We hasten in that direction but when we arrive, we find they're closing up shop as well.

"I'm afraid there will be no more carriage service to the landing site today," the hairy bear-like manager says. "We have a sudden snow squall coming on. I suggest you seek shelter quickly."

"Can you direct us to an inn nearby?" Najar asks.

"Most places are fully booked up for the festival, but there's one place I know that might still have some rooms available." The carriage-shop manager shares what appear to be GPS coordinates with Najar who inputs them into a handheld mini

tablet-like device.

“Thank you, sir. Please be safe on your way home,” Najar offers.

We part ways, and Najar leads us, using his device to guide us. After turning down several side streets, we finally reach a quaint, European-style inn reminiscent of ones I encountered in Salzburg, Austria.

By now, the snow is coming down heavily, and the wind is so strong that visibility has become limited. When we enter the front door, we find ourselves in a cozy tavern with a large fireplace keeping the space toasty warm. All of us are ready to escape the cold and find some respite here, so we stomp and shake off the snow that’s accumulated on our thermal suits and boots before moving toward the bar.

Another Yeti-like creature, this one sporting a bartender’s apron, comes out from behind the counter with a toothy smile. “Good evening, travelers. Are you here for dinner?”

Khephren pulls back his hood, releasing his mane of vibrant pink hair, and smiles. “We’re from off-planet and just arrived today. Unfortunately, we missed the last carriage to the landing site before the storm hit. Now we’re looking for a place to stay until the snow squall passes since we’re unable to get back to our ship until then.”

The innkeeper studies us with a frown. “Hmm, I don’t have many rooms left, but let me check my register. We’ve been very busy with all the festival attendees and now the storm is pushing most places in town to capacity, I’m afraid.” We follow him over to the bar, where he pulls out a ledger and studies it closely. “You’re in luck. I still have two full rooms available, plus a bed left in the women-only dormitory.”

Luna raises her hand. “No worries. I’ll take the bed in the dormitory.”

The innkeeper smiles. “Oh, good. I think we can make this work, then.” He uses a device to scan her hand before giving her a flat metallic object. “Here’s your biometric key card.”

“How does that work?” I whisper to Najar.

He leans closer and I try to ignore the fact that he smells like musky man magic. “The device he used takes a scan of the guest and syncs the key card and door access to only that person’s biological signature.”

My eyes go huge. “Like a DNA key card?”

His lips curve in obvious amusement. “Something like that.”

“So cool,” I mutter to myself.

The innkeeper hands Luna a small bag. “Here’s a complimentary overnight kit. I’m thinking you didn’t bring any necessities with you for a day trip to the festival? Just let me know if there’s anything else I can do to make your stay more comfortable.”

“Thanks, I really appreciate this.”

“My pleasure. The communal showers for the dormitory are just across the hall from the sleeping quarters. Very convenient and clean.”

Luna beams. “Perfect. I’m all set.”

The innkeeper goes through the same hand-scanning procedure with Khephren and Najar, then hands them biometric key cards too.

“Would you all like meals included with your stay?” he asks.

Khephren speaks up for our group. “Yes, please. For now, we’ll at least want dinner and breakfast tomorrow. But we may need to extend our stay if the storm lasts longer than that.”

The innkeeper bows. “Of course, sir.”

“Wonderful. We’ll go get situated and then come back. I’m sure looking forward to enjoying a hot dinner in your lovely tavern here.” Khephren grins at all of us. “How about you guys?”

We all agree that hot food sounds amazing and my stomach actually decides to growl making everyone laugh.

The innkeeper goes over the cost of our stay with Khephren, who scans a device that contains his intergalactic credits information to pay for our stay.

I feel bad having to rely on them for all of this, but I have no currency that would be accepted in the universe. Then again, I am their abducted guest, so I don’t let myself get too stressed about it.

Luna flashes us a big grin. “Let’s all meet back here in twenty minutes. Sound good?”

We all agree, and she skips off to the women’s dormitory the innkeeper directs her to at the back of the building. Meanwhile, he leads the rest of us up a flight of stairs to the private guest rooms.

That’s when I belatedly start to realize this situation is going to get real awkward real fast, because unless I miss my guess, I’m going to be rooming with Najar.

Well, crap.

The innkeeper stops in front of one door and favors Sasha and Kheph with a smile. “You mentioned that it was nearly your one-year anniversary, so you’re the perfect pair to enjoy the inn’s Honeymoon Suite, which happens to be vacant right now.”

Khephren’s eyes are very nearly shooting sparks of excitement. “How wonderful! I can’t wait to see it.” He uses his high-tech key card to open the door.

He and Sasha head inside and Najar and I stand awkwardly in the hallway.

Khephren’s voice trails out to where we hover. “This is like an early anniversary present.”

“Ooh!” Sasha exclaims. “Talk about cozy and romantic. I love it.”

Khephren peeks his head back out the door, his face flushed. “I do believe my husband and I might have an early night tonight.”

The innkeeper rubs his furry hands together. “I’m so glad you’re pleased. And congratulations to you both.”

Sasha peers around his husband. “Actually, do you offer room service?”

“For a small additional fee, we’d be happy to bring a hot meal to the suite,” the innkeeper offers with a bow.

“Make it so, Tentacle Boy,” Sasha says, giving his husband a playful smack on the ass and disappearing back inside the room.

Khephren places their dinner order with the innkeeper and gives us an only slightly apologetic smile. “Looks like my love and I will be enjoying our meal privately tonight. We’ll meet up with you all in the morning.”

Before we can even respond, he slams the door in our faces.

I'm starting to panic a little now, but I bite my tongue and silently follow the innkeeper as he leads us to a room at the far end of the hall.

He beams at us. "I gave your friends our Honeymoon Suite, but that's not the only themed room we offer." He waggles his hairy eyebrows at us. "I could tell just by looking at you two that you'll benefit from this room. It's for those looking to rekindle the spicy flame in their relationship."

Panic sweat forms on my brow and I turn my horrified gaze on Najar, whose face has gone worryingly blank.

The innkeeper continues happily. "Because of their specialty themes, these two rooms aren't booked as regularly as my others, so you're quite lucky I still had them on a night like tonight."

With obvious reluctance, Najar carefully uses his key card to open the door and steps inside.

Warily, I follow him for two steps, only to come to a screeching halt.

We've ended up in a room that is a cross between an alien bordello and some sort of love hotel that rents specialty rooms by the hour.

I stare around me, trying to take it all in at once.

The walls are covered in a wallpaper that features a disturbing pattern of what looks to be a variety of alien penises. Against one wall are several clear shelves lined with what appear to be a colorful array of extraterrestrial sex toys designed to suit a wide range of personal preferences.

A heart-shaped indoor hot tub bubbles away in one corner, next to the window that looks out over the town. The window ledge has a shelf full of colorful bottles that look like they might contain perfume or oils.

But the thing I'm most worried about is in the center of the room—namely, an enormous round bed covered in a blanket that looks uncannily like velvet. It could seriously give a Vegas theme hotel a run for its money.

“There's only one bed,” I squeak, trying not to hyperventilate.

The innkeeper cocks his head at us in confusion. “It should be more than big enough for the two of you. It's designed to fit up to four medium-sized beings. Why, a few weeks ago, we had a Morgelyff polycule with five partners that managed to squeeze in there just fine.” He stops and strokes his beard with a chuckle. “Of course, they were from Graxlog V and that planet's known for some wild sexual practices. But never fear. The floor is waterproof, and we hose it down and disinfect it after every guest visit.”

Oh, sweet Jesus.

“Could you possibly see if any other guests might want to switch with us?” There's a faint note of desperation in Najar's voice that makes me feel a little better.

The innkeeper guffaws. “Come now. Don't be intimidated. This room has revived many a relationship over the years. Give it a chance.”

“Would there be any other inns nearby that might have a double room available?” I dare to ask.

He shakes his head. “Doubtful. And I wouldn't recommend trying to go outside again tonight anyway. It's quite dangerous when the weather gets like this.”

Najar forces a smile. “We’ll be fine. Thank you. We’re very grateful to have such a... lovely room to stay in.”

The innkeeper’s eyes sparkle. “Oh good! I know you’ll love it if you give it a chance. Trust me. You won’t regret it. This room is fully stocked with anything you might need.” He gestures to the ledge by the hot tub. “There are aphrodisiac oils for your pleasure and several types of lubricant to suit your taste. Oh, and all our sexual aids are all properly sterilized between guests and free for you to enjoy as well.”

“Uh...” is all I manage as I stare at the three rows of shelves lined with toys.

The innkeeper claps his hands together decisively. “I’ll let you get settled. Dinner will continue to be served in the tavern for another two hours, so come down at your leisure.” He winks. “Or feel free to order room service if you don’t want to leave your love nest.”

Whistling to himself, he retreats down the hall, and we’re left alone in our very own alien sex room.

I dart a quick glance at Najar, who’s calmly unbuttoning his thermal suit like the campy porn set we’ve walked into is totally normal.

Damn him.

“How are we going to make this work?” I ask.

He shrugs out of the suit and goes to hang it up in a wardrobe, where I also spy pajamas along with bathrobes and slippers.

And some leather and lace items I’m going to ignore.

“It’ll be fine,” Najar says dismissively. “The bed’s huge. We can share it easily.”

“B-but...” I sputter.

He turns and frowns. “What’s the problem?”

Evidently, he’s not remotely bothered by this situation.

Talk about a kick to the balls of my ego. So much for my meager sexual allure.

“Never mind,” I mumble.

Najar’s frown deepens. “I can sleep on the floor if the idea of sharing a bed with me is so repellent.”

Okay, now I’m just acting like a jackass.

“No. Ignore me. We can share the bed.”

I focus on undoing my thermal suit and once I’m free of the bulky garment, I hang it up in the wardrobe beside Najar’s and retreat into the bathroom and give myself a minute to calm down.

After all, Najar and I can totally share a sex-dungeon bed as platonic pals, no problem.

Right?

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Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 11:43 am

Chapter Nine

Chronicles of Chaos: An Informal Record of Life Aboard the Sleigh Belle

Stardate: 78391.9

Origin: Glacius Major

Status: Grounded due to weather

The crew of the Sleigh Belle is currently taking refuge in Glaciala, a town on Glacius Major, due to an unexpected snow squall that descended with fast and ferocious intent.

Fortunately, we were able to secure the last available lodging at a local inn that appears to be well prepared to deal with the weather. From what we've been told, such storms are common occurrences on Glacius Major and the residents here are appropriately equipped to withstand days of being stuck inside until such weather passes.

Khephren and Sasha are worried about the cats back on the ship, but as Luna and I have reassured them, Rambo will feed them and clean their litter box per Luna's pre-programmed orders. Anytime we are off-ship, Rambo is at the ready to care for the cats and Howie. He will also keep the ship warm enough to sustain all life-forms aboard while waiting for our return.

My only concern right now is sharing a room with our human guest, Felix. We have

established a tentative truce since I behaved like an insensitive jerk. Things are far more comfortable between us, but that doesn't mean we're ready to share a bed.

I tried to play it cool, as Sasha says, and acted like I had no qualms about it. But inside I am sweating bullets.

I have a feeling this is going to be a very long night.

— Najar Mezdel, First Lieutenant and Voice of Reason on the Sleigh Belle

NAJAR

My training comes in handy as I keep my expression blank so that I don't add fuel to the fire of Felix's obvious anxiety about sharing a room with me.

I don't think it's because he hates me either.

Granted, I'm not sure that he likes me a whole lot at this point, but I do know that we have an obvious sexual chemistry, and as two single adult males in our prime, it's understandable he might feel awkward about sharing a bed with me.

Especially in a room themed for kinky sexual escapades.

As the innkeeper said, we are indeed quite lucky to get it, but I'm not sure what to make of the fact that he assumed Felix and I were a couple—and one in need of rekindling our sexual spark, as well.

I heave an internal groan. Clearly, I have to set the tone to keep things platonic and comfortable between me and Felix, despite the awkward situation we're in.

We head down to the tavern and join Luna, who's already gotten us a booth in a far

corner.

She arches a quizzical eyebrow and several of her tentacles wave questioningly in the air. “Where are the two lovebirds?”

“They’re getting room service in the... Honeymoon Suite,” I explain.

Luna grins. “The Honeymoon Suite?”

“Apparently, it was one of the two rooms still available. And the moment Khephren began gushing about his impending anniversary with Sasha to the innkeeper, which evidently he did within moments of meeting the man, he secured that room for the two of them.”

Luna chuckles and takes a gulp of her ice ale. “Good for them. No doubt they’ll be full of adorable but annoying smiles in the morning.”

I’m grateful when a server comes by and deposits two more mugs of ice ale on the table for me and Felix. The tavern has one set meal for the night, so we all order that.

Felix takes a sip of his ice ale and his eyes widen in surprise. “This is really good.” He licks his lips and takes another drink. “Mmm. It’s like a cross between a sweet cider and a pale ale.”

I take a hearty swig of mine, enjoying the crisp, refreshing flavor.

The server returns and sets down steaming bowls of stew along with a basket of fresh baked bread, homemade butter, and several cheeses.

Felix takes a moment to check with the server that everything in the meal is safe for human consumption, and once he’s satisfied, we all start digging into our meal.

We're all quite a bit hungrier than we realized, and the hot stew is filling and comforting. It's a simple recipe but well balanced and flavorful, with tender chunks of some kind of local meat and hearty winter root vegetables. It pairs well with the ice ale and the bread and cheese.

After we eat our fill, I lean back with a contented sigh.

Glancing out the window, all I can discern is a wall of white obscuring the world beyond the inn's doors. Although snow squalls are common on this world and the local residents are well prepared for them, it's still rather unsettling to be trapped in this inn until the elements subside.

Right now, there's no telling quite how long that will take.

Luna flags down our server and gets herself a second pint of ice ale, settling in to chat.

"So what's your room like?"

Felix, who was taking a sip of his ice ale, ends up doing an awkward spit take halfway across the table at Luna's question.

Her eyes sharpen with interest. "Oh, do tell me all about it."

Felix coughs. "It's like some kind of alien sex dungeon meets porn set."

"Say what?"

Felix starts regaling her with a detailed description of the room, and within moments, Luna is slapping the table and howling with laughter.

“Oh, my galactic gods,” she wheezes, “that’s epic. You’ve got to show it to me.”

I scowl at her. “Hell no.”

“Party pooper. You’re no fun.” She shrugs it off and rubs several tentacles together. “Whatever. I’ve got a whole bevy of beautiful ladies to talk to in the dormitory tonight. If I’m lucky, I’ll be getting lucky, if you catch my drift.”

I send her a withering glare and then deadpan, “We have plenty of sex toys we could lend you if you need them.”

Luna bares her teeth. “Honey, my tentacles and my tongue are all I need to make the ladies scream.”

Felix snickers and shakes his head. “Oh, my God. You and my sister might be meant for each other. A match made in intergalactic heaven.”

Luna rests her elbows on the table and cups her chin in her hands, eyes sparkling. “Tell me more about your sister. I liked what I saw. She’s absolutely luscious and lovely.”

Felix considers this for a moment. “Well, she’s super smart. Graduated top of her class from med school. She’s tough as hell and way more adventurous than me. Hasn’t had a steady girlfriend in a couple of years. Her work schedule makes it pretty hard to maintain a romantic relationship.” He sighs. “I don’t have it much better. As a veterinarian, I work insane hours, and there are parts of the job that can get really depressing.”

I cock my head, a twinge of worry in my gut. “Like what?”

“Well, I work primarily with exotic animals. Species that, in general, ought not to be

held in captivity, but for a wide range of reasons, some of them end up there. Sometimes, animals can't survive on their own in the wild due to injury, abandonment, or health complications, and need to be kept in captivity for their own safety. Some wildlife refuges, sanctuaries, and zoos can also provide critical interventions with regard to breeding and rebuilding populations of animals that might have otherwise been leaning toward extinction. There are lots of places doing good work for the animals."

"But not all places are like that?" Luna asks.

He frowns and stares into his mug of ice ale. "No. Some exotic animals have been acquired for use as human entertainment in circuses and other shows. Vegas has a lot of them. The conditions for the animals can vary greatly, and some situations are not always ideal, let alone humane." He shakes his head. "It can be hard to see, and there aren't always simple or easy answers for what to do instead since these animals have been raised in captivity and can't be released back into the wild."

"Human encroachment on natural habitats probably further complicates matters," I muse.

Felix nods. "That's a major problem for sure. Humanity is destroying the planet at an alarming rate, and wildlife are some of the first casualties of such widespread environmental and ecological devastation."

Luna's expression turns serious. "Unfortunately, humanity is far too reliant on fossil fuels and other energy sources that cause pollution. Developing clean energy sources, as most other species in the universe already have, will be critical to humanity's long-term survival."

"Politicians and lobbyists with less than ethical agendas dictate much of what goes on in that arena," Felix replies, looking into his ale glass. "It's frustrating. I just want to

help animals, you know? When I started out, I was so enthusiastic and optimistic, but these days, I feel conflicted. I'm not always able to reconcile my ethical beliefs with the circumstances I'm called into and asked to treat animals in. On top of that, sometimes I can't save them. Animals die, and it takes a toll that gets harder to deal with over time." He looks up and flashes a faint smile. "When you all picked me up, I was at a bit of a crossroads in my life, trying to figure out what I want to do—if I want to continue being a veterinarian or pursue something else entirely."

Luna studies him for a moment. "Didn't you study for a long time to become an expert in this field? Could you really leave it?"

"I did. And I'm not sure if I could leave the whole field behind. I've considered looking for positions with wildlife refuges or sanctuaries, but most of those would require me to move far away, maybe even to another country. Not sure I could leave Gemma behind, and I certainly wouldn't want to make her feel like she had to follow me."

"Families are complicated," Luna agrees. "I'm the misfit in my household. My two older siblings followed the traditional Dravethian path, but I wanted something different. I wasn't going to be a housewife to a Dravethian warrior, even if she ended up being smoking hot. I want adventure and excitement in my life, not domestic monotony."

Felix studies me. "You mentioned you aren't like most warriors on your home world either."

I drain the last of my ice ale. "No. I was trained in the same way all those in my cohort were, but I didn't feel the sense of duty to protect the planet that most do. For me, I always considered what I was learning to be intended for protecting those few, precious friends in my life that I care about."

“In other words, me and Kheph,” Luna says with a grin. “And now Sasha.”

A wistful smile plays on Felix’s lips. “You all are incredibly close. Found family at its finest. Honestly, I’m rather envious.”

Luna’s brow scrunches up. “Don’t you have friends back home?”

To my surprise, Felix shrugs. “No one I keep in regular contact with these days. Because I was raised by my grandparents, a lot of my free time over the last few years of their lives was spent helping them out as they got older. While my peers were out partying and dating, I was taking care of Gramps and Nana, as well as Gemma before she went to college.” His lips quirk into a wry grin. “It didn’t exactly lend itself to a bustling social life. And school was really demanding on top of the part-time jobs I worked. I ended up in my own little bubble for a really long time. When I went to grad school, I did make a few friends, but after graduating, we all went off to wherever we could find jobs. Some moved far away, others I simply lost contact with.”

Luna bites her bottom lip, her eyes sad. “Sounds really lonely.”

A strange ache has me rubbing at my chest and frowning. I don’t like seeing Felix so dejected.

“For too long, I’ve made school and then my job my whole life. I’m passionate about caring for animals, but I realize I’ve lost out on other things. And the job can be brutal. There is an incredibly high rate of suicide among professionals in my field.”

I jolt at his words. “Why?”

His melancholy smile makes the ache in my chest even worse. “There’s a lot of pressure and stress. For most of us who went into this profession, we did it because

we love animals and always have. But the reality is that typically, when a veterinarian is needed, it's not for the happier and healthier moments in an animal's life. It's more often when they're injured, ill, or dying. That can get hard to handle, especially when you have very minimal control over such things. It's incredibly difficult for most of us to see an animal in pain."

Luna's eyes glisten with unshed tears, and she reaches out to take hold of Felix's hand. "Thank you for sharing that with us. I had no idea what all you have to deal with. It all sounds incredibly challenging. I hope you can figure out a happier but still fulfilling path when you go home."

Felix wipes at his wet eyes. "Me too. Thanks for listening. Not gonna lie, it feels kind of good to get that off my chest. Haven't really had a lot of people I could talk to about this stuff in a long time."

I study his profile, my worry mounting. "You have not experienced thoughts of ending your life, have you?"

For a moment I stop breathing as I wait for him to respond.

"Not at all. I just think I need to do something new going forward. Now I have to figure out what that is."

His words send relief rushing through me.

Luna drains the rest of her ale and gets to her feet. "Well, friends, I'm off to bed. This has been real, but I need my beauty sleep. I'll catch up with you in the morning." She gives us a sassy wink. "Enjoy that kinky sex room of yours. I can't wait to hear all about it tomorrow."

Felix lets out a nervous laugh, and I scowl at her as she saunters away with a little

swing to her hips.

I love Luna, but she is a troublemaker with a capital T.

Felix and I accept the inevitable and quit stalling. We make our way back to our room in the first uncomfortable silence we've had together all day.

Damn and blast.

When we get inside the room, I try to ignore the suggestive decor all around us and clear my throat. "Would you like to take a shower before bed?"

Felix's eyes widen.

"Alone, of course," I hasten to add.

Felix blushes a little, and it's charming.

Quit that , I tell myself.

"Oh, uh, yeah. Sounds good."

"Why don't you go first? I'll take my shower after you."

He goes to the wardrobe and looks inside for a long moment.

I recall the various clothing choices in there and wince.

Finally, he pulls out a warm pair of sleep garments and a fluffy robe then heads into the bathroom, closing the door behind him.

The room is pleasantly warm, but I have discovered that humans seem to have a lower natural body temperature and are more sensitive to heat and cold than my kind.

I sit on the end of the bed, which is covered with soft and fluffy pillows and blankets. It's the most normal thing in the whole room, thank the galactic gods.

Settling my elbows on my knees, I lean forward and rest my head in my hands.

It's not like I'm going to lose my mind and ravish Felix tonight. Or vice versa.

I rub my temples with the tips of two tentacles and focus on regulating my breathing.

Felix and I can share this bed platonically without any issue.

I continue repeating this mantra over and over again in my head as I meditate to find inner serenity. Although I don't know that I actually achieve it. However, by the time Felix comes out of the bathroom followed by a waft of steam, I am more settled and calm.

That is, until I get a whiff of his fresh, clean scent straight out of the shower. The citrusy tang from the body wash he used and the underlying aroma that is his own unique scent tantalize my senses.

Perhaps I really have gone too long without finding a temporary partner to help fulfill mutual sexual needs. Because normally, I'm not like this.

Fuck.

Felix's hair is damp and tousled, and he's still running a towel over it to dry it.

Thankfully, he's covered up well in the sleep garments and bathrobe, but somehow,

he still manages to make them look sexy.

Galactic gods. I'm losing my damn mind.

I hastily grab some sleep garments of my own and fly into the bathroom like I'm being chased by an intergalactic Alliance patrol cruiser.

As I shower, I studiously avoid thinking about how sweet and vulnerable Felix looked—and how much I want to see what he looks like without anything on.

I'm not very successful though. Flashes of him from throughout the day keep flitting through my mind, and I fight to ignore my half-erect cock, which is quite eager for me to pay it attention.

No, I am not going to jack off in the shower while Felix is in the other room and I'm thinking about how fucking good he smells.

Nope. That would just make me kind of creepy.

I get out of the shower and towel myself off angrily, my cock still at half-mast. My tentacles help me comb and braid part of my hair again. Sasha tells me it's my "hot Viking hair," whatever that means.

Donning the pair of sleep pants I grabbed, I'm brought to a halt when I realize I did not grab the matching top in my hurry to get away from Felix and his tempting aroma.

I study myself in the mirror. My torso is not as badly scarred as the average warrior my age, but remembrances of my training and the battles I have fought are etched in my skin forever. Hopefully, it will not be too off-putting to Felix.

I step out of the bathroom and Felix, who's sitting on the bed, stares up at me wide-eyed.

"Do not be alarmed," I start to say.

He scrambles off the bed and backs away from me.

I frown, attempting to read the situation and failing miserably. Is Felix afraid of me?

He gulps. "Forget the nutcracker. You could crack walnuts with those abs."

I stare down at my torso in confusion. "What?"

"Chris Hemsworth wishes he was you. Holy shit," Felix mutters, still unable to look away from my chest.

My tentacles twitch with uncertainty. Who is this Chris Hemsworth? "I hope you do not find my body... offensive. I will cover it up."

"That's not a body, that's a whole temple—and boy, do I want to kneel and worship," he whispers, almost in a daze.

That's when it clicks that Felix actually likes what he's seeing.

And damn if I don't grin with smug satisfaction, flexing my pecs a little.

Felix licks his lips, his cheeks flushed.

Oh .

I like him like this.

Very much.

I strut a little bit closer, wanting to see what other reactions I can elicit.

But to my dismay, Felix loses his balance and stumbles back into the wall.

And right into a big red button.

Instantly, the lights turn down low and take on a red tint as an artificial voice intones, “Activating room intimacy mode. Enjoy!”

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Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 11:44 am

Chapter Ten

“Tentacles and Torment: Body Swapped” by FeliXFiles

Fandom: “The Tentacular Tales of Captain Starblade” by KirklovesSpock4eva

Tags: Lord Vardox, Captain Starblade, body swap, tentacles, 18+

Part 5.5 of Tentacles and Torment

“That’s right, darling. Loosen this naughty hole with your tentacle,” Vardox purred from where he lay sprawled naked on the bed.

It was a real mindfuck to be getting ready to fuck himself, but Starblade’s reservations over the matter were vanishing by the second.

He’d had no idea Vardox’s inner libido was so strong, but it was taking control of things and Starblade decided to let it.

The wet tip of one of his red tentacles moved of its own accord and began to trace circles on the outer rim of Vardox’s entrance.

“Oh! You’re quite sensitive, aren’t you, my precious Captain,” Vardox mused, his eyes gleaming.

Starblade hesitated. “Isn’t this... weird? Are you really up for getting fucked in my body but with me in yours?”

This body-swap business was beyond bizarre.

Vardox opened his legs wider. “Darling, I can’t wait to know what you experience when I fuck you. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.” He winked at Starblade. “And I’ll carefully log all the details so I can enhance my performance with you once we get our bodies back.”

FELIX

When the automated voice starts talking and the lights dim, I don’t fully freak out.

But I soon realize, there’s oh so much more in store when it comes to this room.

Smooth music reminiscent of old-school R&B but with some ’80s saxophone vibes starts playing over invisible speakers to set the mood.

The change in the lighting has somehow made the penises on the wallpaper glow all around us, and the hot tub in the corner starts shooting graceful arcs of water into the air like it’s become a fountain.

But clearly, that isn’t all.

The automated voice interrupts again. “Pheromone gas activated for maximum arousal.”

I cough as the gas starts to come through the vents in the room.

Officially panicking now, I hurriedly press the button on the wall again, trying to deactivate the system.

“Sexual device selection randomizing,” the voice intones.

I gape like a deer in the headlights when a spotlight appears over the three shelves of sex toys. The light roves over the items before finally stopping on an enormous double-dicked alien dildo the length of my forearm.

“Random selection made. Enjoy your lovemaking,” the automated voice says.

“Oh, sweet baby Jesus,” I moan.

I back away from the button on the wall like it’s possessed and stumble into the side of the bed, where I collapse.

“Oh, God. How do we make it stop?” I ask Najar.

He’s frozen in place but looks equally horrified. “I don’t know. This is… words fail me.”

The dreaded automated voice begins speaking again. “Mattress motion activated.”

That’s when the bed underneath me begins to vibrate.

Because of course it does.

Fuck. My. Life.

I hurriedly look around for a way to make it stop, and Najar comes to assist me.

The bed’s vibrations grow stronger and I start tossing pillows in my efforts to find the damn off switch.

“Aha!” Najar cries. “I think I found the power button.”

Before I can protest that I'm not sure if we should be messing with any more buttons at this point, he presses it.

I hold my breath.

Amazingly, the bed stops vibrating.

I slump back in relief. "Oh, thank Go—"

The automated voice interrupts me. "Sexual restraint mode activated."

Hidden bondage gear springs up from the sides of the mattress and wraps around my ankles and wrists, pulling me spread eagle on the bed.

"What is happening?" I cry out. "Help me!"

For the first time since I met him, Najar has a distinctly panicked look on his face.

He hurries to my side and tries removing the restraints with brute force, but they hold firm.

"Just so you know, I'm freaking the fuck out right now and am on the verge of a panic attack!"

He kneels on the side of the platform bedframe and we hear an ominous click.

"Uh... Felix?"

"Don't say it."

"I seem to have pressed another button."

The automated voice of doom returns. “Cocoon sleep mode activated.”

Beneath me, my side of the mattress starts to soften and I begin sinking into it.

“Abort, abort!” I struggle valiantly to escape but it just sucks me deeper into the fluffy void to hell. “I saw A Nightmare on Elm Street when I was a teenager. No fucking way do I want to end up like Johnny Depp did in that waterbed!”

Am I a little bit screechy at this moment? Yes, but deservedly so. This fucking mattress wants to bury me alive.

I focus on my breathing so I don’t entirely lose my shit. “Najar,” I say in calm even tones, “get me the fuck out of this death trap pronto, or I am going to scream my motherfucking head off.”

Najar growls with anger and rushes over to the wardrobe.

Just when I’m about to follow through with my promise, he comes back brandishing a small sword.

“Holy shit,” I whisper.

With a mighty roar, he brings it down on the far edge of one of my restraints, severing it neatly.

Now that I have one arm free, Najar manages to partially pull me out of the deep crevice in the mattress and then uses his blade to cut the last of the restraints.

He liberates me from the chasm in the bed and holds me tightly in his arms.

His very bare and muscular arms, I might add.

I'm surprised to find that he's the one shaking, not me.

My natural instinct is to soothe. "Hey, it's okay." I reach my arms around his lower back, just under where his tentacles are positioned. "That was really scary, but you were able to save me. Thank you."

I look up into his eyes, which are filled with a feverish need that renders me momentarily breathless.

Without any warning, Najar's mouth descends on mine with possessive intent.

Everything about him is scorching hot—his skin, his mouth, his breath mingling with mine. Wrapped in his arms, I'm enveloped in the essence of him while his lips devour mine with eager hunger. A tentacle starts massaging my head and he tilts it back to get better access to my mouth. I open my mouth and allow his tongue inside, moaning as it lays claim to me so thoroughly that I just want to scream "Take me now!"

I press closer to him and start running my hands all over his rock-hard chest and abs. When I get a little weak in the knees— who knew that was a real thing? —his powerful arms easily hold me upright, and I sigh with pleasure. If I'm being honest with myself, I could probably kiss him all night long. But my cock has aspirations for a whole hell of a lot more.

Even through my pajamas and thick robe, I can feel Najar's hot and hard arousal pressed up against me. From what I can tell, it's just as impressive as the rest of him.

Would it be a bad idea if I started grinding on him?

But before I can test that out, Najar suddenly pulls back, lets me go, and steps back, putting some distance between us.

I sway on my feet, more than a little disoriented.

Najar's breathing heavily, and as he studies me his nostrils flare and his chest heaves.

So damn hot.

He also has a very obvious tent in his pants, and I can't help but feel a smidge smug.

I'm still trying to regain control of my mental faculties so I can form coherent words after the most arousing kiss of my entire life when Najar strides over to the wall with the button of doom.

"No! Don't touch it!"

He ignores me and holds down the button for several seconds until the automated voice says, "Intimacy mode deactivated."

I watch in amazement as the bed re-inflates to its normal state, the hot tub stops spurting water in the air, and the lights go back to the way they were before.

"Oh thank fuck," I whimper as I collapse in a heap on the floor.

Najar helps me up and sits me down on the end of the bed.

I shudder. "I think I'll sleep on the floor. I'm going to have nightmares about that bed for life."

He makes a weird sound, and I look up into his eyes, startled to find him on the verge of laughter.

And just like that, he can't hold it in anymore, and he starts laughing with wild,

raucous abandon.

I can't even be mad at him for it because he looks so beautiful when he truly lets go like this.

"Pff... you... looked so... ridiculous," he gets out between gasps.

I cross my arms and level a challenging glare at him. "Laugh it up, pal."

He wipes at the corners of his eyes, still snickering. "I'm sorry. I know it was scary but it was also... kind of hilarious."

"Har-dee har-har. Let's see how you feel when you get eaten alive by a mattress," I grumble.

He studies the destroyed restraints and grimaces. "Looks like I'll have to explain that and pay for them too."

"Good riddance. Those things were practically sentient the way they strapped me down so easily." I glance over at the shelves of toys. "Just so you know, if that double-dicked dildo came at me next, I was going to take my chances out in the storm."

Najar throws his head back and lets out another bark of laughter that makes me smile.

He grins back. "Who needs toys like that when my tentacles are far more effective?"

I freeze at his words and swallow hard, my already hard dick ready to do a damn cheer routine— T-E-N-T-A-C-L-E-S! Tentacles are the best! Ra-ra! I wanna feel them in my ass!

That smoldering heat from moments ago rekindles in Najar's eyes, and I foolishly want to give him carte blanche to do whatever he wants to me tonight.

But I cling on to my last shreds of reason and ask him the question I need him to answer for me first.

“Why did you kiss me?”

Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 11:44 am

Chapter Eleven

Chronicles of Chaos: An Informal Record of Life Aboard the Sleigh Belle

Stardate: 78393.2

Origin: Glacius Major

Status: Still Grounded

Our first night on Glacius Major was... eventful. Providing full details would be both too embarrassing and too personal. I shall merely say that Felix and I have come to a new and mutually beneficial understanding.

— Najar Mezdel, First Lieutenant and Voice of Reason on the Sleigh Belle

NAJAR

At first, I'm not sure how I should answer Felix's question.

Part of me acknowledges that one of the reasons we're both so aroused right now is likely due to the pheromone gas that still lingers in the room, marked by a cloying scent.

However, I also recognize that's not the only reason. Our attraction to one another was instantaneous, but I've been trying to ignore it.

But after experiencing the unparalleled bliss that came with kissing Felix, I can hold back no longer.

I decide to take a chance and be honest with him.

“I wanted to kiss you,” I admit. “When you were being sucked down into the bed, I didn’t like seeing you so scared and not being able to help you right away. But when I freed you, I felt so much relief that you were safe. All I wanted was to be closer to you and prove to myself that you were fine.”

“And kissing me senseless is how you go about doing that?” he quips with a smirk.

I flush. “That wouldn’t be my response to just anyone, no.”

Felix studies me for a long moment. “So the attraction between us is mutual. Man, you have been sending me the most mixed signals.”

I hang my head. “I know, and I apologize. My attraction to you was unexpected and threw me off-balance. I tried to deny it because I know how foolish it would be for us to start up something in the short amount of time you’re going to be with us.”

“That’s why you’ve been hot and cold with me?”

“Mainly,” I admit. “But also because I probably can’t give you what you want.”

Felix crosses his arms and I find myself drawn to the steely glint in his eyes. He’s such an interesting man, one who can be tender one moment and strong and defiant the next.

“How do you know what I want?”

Okay, that's fair.

I grimace. "Indeed. I am once again assuming when I shouldn't. From various comments you've made, I thought you were looking for a committed partner to share your life with."

Felix sighs. "I won't lie and say I don't want that, but I'm also a realist. Sometimes that doesn't happen, and I'm not willing to settle for anything less than the kind of love my grandparents shared. But that doesn't mean I plan on being celibate until I find true love. Are you opposed to a fun fling with me? A friends-with-benefits situation?"

I stare at him, more than a little flummoxed. "Honestly, I didn't think that was something you would be interested in."

Felix chuckles. "I'm a thirty-five-year-old man with plenty of needs. A no-strings arrangement with plenty of good sex sounds a-okay to me. And don't worry. I'm not under any delusions that it would be anything more than that."

I should feel relieved at his words, but for some reason, they make that ache in my chest return.

Felix continues, seemingly unaware of the unexpected conflict waging war inside me.

"If we keep things casual, we can both have fun and make some nice memories to remember our short time together."

I frown. "Entering into a sexual union with you is problematic given the circumstances under which you found yourself among us."

"My abduction, you mean?"

I nod.

Felix cups his chin in his hand and makes a humming noise. “I can see where your concern comes from, and I’m not going to suggest there isn’t a worrying power imbalance in this whole scenario that is totally skewed in your favor.” He steps closer, eliminating the distance I put between us. “But I want to trust you because I believe you to be an honorable man.”

His words send a wave of giddy warmth throughout my body and the tips of my tentacles tingle with pleasure.

“How can you know that?” I ask softly.

He smiles. “Your friends speak very highly of you. They trust you with their lives. And they’re not lying.” He chuckles. “Especially Khephren. I don’t think he could lie, even if he had to.”

It’s my turn to laugh. “You’re right about that. My best friend is foolishly open and honest with everyone.” I shake my head. “It gets him into a world of trouble sometimes, and I have to be there to pull him out of it.”

Felix’s features soften. “He’s lucky to have such a loyal and loving friend.”

I swallow thickly at his words of praise. “Thank you. Kheph is one of a kind, and I trust him with my life as well.” I hesitate. “I’m still not sure this thing between us is wise.”

My rock-hard cock silently screams at me in opposition. It’s fully on board for a friends-with-benefits fling with Felix.

“How about this?” Felix suggests. “Why don’t you swear one of your warrior oaths to

me that you won't do anything untoward and that you'll uphold your earlier promise to see me home safely at the end of our journey?"

I brighten, hope blossoming deep within. "That would make me feel much better. Would it alleviate your concerns as well?"

He nods and then flashes an amused smile. "Besides, if you act like a jerk, I'll just tattle on you to Luna and Khephren, and then you'll have to deal with them."

I give him a slow clap. "I never knew you were so devious. Well played."

He winks at me and my foolish hearts flutter just a little.

I drop to one knee and hold my hand to my chest. "I do hereby swear to uphold my promises to you and to treat you fairly and equally during the time we are together."

When I rise to my feet, Felix's cheeks are flushed as he licks his lips. "Good. Now what do you say to making the most of this room tonight?"

My cock strains against my sleep pants, raring to go at Felix's suggestion. Even my tentacles, which tend to be more restrained than most, begin undulating in the air with obvious approval.

I glance at the bed. "I suppose that might be too traumatizing right now."

Felix shudders. "Good guess. Let's avoid the bed for now, shall we?"

I grin, pulling him into my arms and savoring the feel of his body against mine.

Felix looks toward the corner and gets a mischievous gleam in his eyes. "How about we anoint the hot tub?"

“I like how you think, Earthling.”

He waggles his eyebrows at me. “You haven’t seen anything yet.”

I lean down and brush my nose along the sensitive line of his neck and up to his ear, inhaling deeply and memorizing Felix’s amazing scent. “Why don’t we get you out of these pesky sleep garments?” I suggest, tugging on the belt of his robe.

He pulls back a little, his cheeks flushing as he bites his bottom lip. “Can your tentacles do it?”

I still at his suggestion and study him while he gazes at me with longing. For some reason, I erroneously believed a human like Felix might find my tentacles off-putting, especially in the bedroom, but once again, I was woefully wrong.

Felix continues to surprise me in all the very best ways.

More than happy to oblige him, two of my tentacles reach out and peel off his bathrobe and sleep garments until he stands before me gloriously naked and fully erect.

He puts his hands on his lean hips. “I’ve shown you mine, now show me yours,” he taunts with good humor.

I don’t need any further encouragement and drop my sleep pants to the floor, hurriedly stepping out of them.

We share a long moment of mutual appreciation as we admire one another’s bodies.

“Wow,” Felix whispers. “You really are golden all over.” He gulps. “And big all over.”

I glance down at my erection and then back at him. “At least it isn’t as big as the dildo the room chose for us.”

Felix’s mouth drops open. “Did you just... make a joke?”

“I am quite funny.”

“I’ll take your word for it.”

With a playful growl, I pull him closer, our cocks brushing against each other.

His is certainly smaller than mine, but nothing to be ashamed of and proportionate to his build. But I’m most fascinated by the fact that his cock is smooth all over.

“You do not have pleasure nodules,” I observe.

Felix stares with fascination down at my erection. “Is that what those bumps are?”

“Yes, they are something all males among my species possess.”

“What do they do?”

“The name is rather obvious. During sexual stimulation, they vibrate to enhance my pleasure as well as my partner’s.”

“I’ve never even written about something like that before,” Felix mutters to himself.

I frown in confusion. “What?”

He startles out of his dazed stupor and waves his hands in the air. “Oh, nothing, nothing. Um, why don’t we get in the hot tub?”

Felix is quite handsome but also strange at times. I chalk it up to interspecies differences in communication.

Once we submerge ourselves in the water, the jets automatically turn on and the water bubbles around us.

Felix groans. “Damn, that feels good. I swear, I know I’m only thirty-five, but some days, my body feels ancient.”

“The waters here are said to have healing properties.”

“What, like a hot spring?”

“Yes, there are many underground thermal hot springs on this planet. They supply much of the heated water to the town’s residents.”

Felix sniffs at the water. “I can smell the minerals. Very cool.”

I gently pull Felix onto my lap so he faces me with his legs bracketing mine. Our cocks make contact once again and we both groan in unison.

Drawing him in for a leisurely kiss, I take my time savoring his delicious moans and whimpers that are all for me. Felix’s responsiveness excites me even more with every passing minute.

When he’s panting with need, I reach between us and begin to stroke our cocks together. The water helps with the glide, but I soon make use of the oil from one of the vials along the shelf by the tub.

Using my now slick hand, I jack us together under the water. When my pleasure nodules begin to vibrate, Felix throws his head back with a gasp. “Oh, damn. That’s

amazing.”

My naturally self-lubricating tentacle pushes forward, swaying hopefully in the air.

Felix opens his eyes and stares at it with a mix of hunger and uncertainty.

“Would you allow me to pleasure you internally with my tentacle?”

Felix chuckles. “Wow, you can be adorably formal at the most amusing moments. I totally had a second there where I imagined an extraterrestrial version of Bridgerton involving polite tentacle sex.”

I blink several times. “Ah, I see. Now you are making a joke.”

He wraps his arms around my neck. “I am. But I only do that with people I like.”

My tentacle waves at him, not wanting to be forgotten, the tip glistening with clear natural lubricant.

“What do you say?”

He starts to nibble on my earlobe, which is unexpectedly distracting.

“I’d be delighted to give your tentacle the honor of fucking me,” he says.

I growl.

He giggles, and it’s a sweet sound I haven’t heard from him before.

“Just be gentle and take it slow. It’s been a while since I’ve had anything in my ass

besides my favorite dildo at home.”

Fucking galactic gods. The thought of Felix using a dildo on himself is even more distracting—and arousing.

“I will take it slow and keep the penetration shallow until you get more comfortable. Then we’ll see if you’d like me to go farther.”

Felix licks his lips and nods eagerly. “I’m eager to ride your tentacle to O-Town.”

I let out a startled laugh. “You are surprisingly naughty when you shed your inhibitions.”

“Sex should be fun and feel good. What’s the point in not being honest about what you want?”

I nod appreciatively. “On that point, we entirely agree.”

My tentacle lunges forward and curves around Felix’s back. In his current position, his legs are spread wide enough to make his entrance easily accessible to my flexible appendage.

It dives under the water and explores the crevice between his supple ass cheeks until it finds the sensitive rim around his entrance.

To my supreme satisfaction, Felix jolts and cries out, “Oh, God!”

“Easy,” I soothe him. “Relax. I must make you ready for my tentacle.”

The eager tip of my appendage continues to swirl against his rim before I feel him loosen just enough that the slick tip is able to enter as far as a finger might.

Felix moans as the tip of my tentacle moves in slow clockwise and then counterclockwise directions.

His entrance clutches tightly around me, and I rub soothing circles on his naked back. “There’s no rush,” I remind him. “We have all night. Relax and let yourself enjoy this.”

Felix’s eyes flutter shut. “This is so much better than I even imagined.”

“So you imagined this, did you?” I ask, my voice going husky.

His cheeks, already flushed, darken. “Maybe a little.”

I like the sound of that.

I concentrate on jacking us together as my tentacle works on loosening Felix up. When I feel the subtle hint of the muscle relaxing, I press farther inside. His tight, hot heat is almost more than I can bear, and I moan at the exquisite sensation around my sensitive tip.

Felix blinks his eyes open again. “Does that feel good to you?”

“This tentacle is sexually sensitive, so yes. But not all my appendages are.”

He deliberately squeezes his channel around me again, and I inhale sharply.

“Oh yeah, you like that,” he purrs.

My tentacle pushes a little further inside.

That’s when I hit the jackpot, and Felix screams in pleasure.

Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 11:44 am

Chapter Twelve

“Tentacles and Torment: Body Swapped” by FeliXFiles

Fandom: “The Tentacular Tales of Captain Starblade” by KirklovesSpock4eva

Tags: Lord Vardox, Captain Starblade, body swap, tentacles, 18+

Part 6 of Tentacles and Torment

“Harder! Right there!” Vardox shouted, as demanding as always even though he was currently in Starblade’s body.

And Starblade was fucking him with one of Vardox’s tentacles.

Things were definitely weird, but temptation had won out over logic and reasoning.

“See how you torment me with your tentacles?” Starblade panted. “The shoe’s on the other foot now.”

Vardox leered up at him. “And your body loves every moment of it. Now I know just how much you crave my tentacles and my cock.”

Starblade felt a growing panic rising in him. Vardox was discovering all the things he’d tried to keep secret for so long. Especially just how much he desired the villainous mastermind.

Vardox reached between his legs to take a firm hold of the tentacle in his ass and began forcing it to do exactly what he wanted.

I'm royally screwed, aren't I? Starblade thought to himself.

FELIX

When Najar's tentacle makes contact with my prostate, I think I start to believe in heaven just a little.

The way his skilled appendage repeatedly rubs and presses against that ultra-sensitive gland has me seeing stars. I'm already ridiculously close to coming at that point, and I'm thoroughly overwhelmed by Najar's attentions. He's also talented enough that he doesn't let up on stroking our cocks together while his tentacle fucks me. With his pleasure nodules vibrating against my dick and his talented tentacle in my ass, I don't have a hope in hell of lasting very long.

Moments later, I end up coming with such intense force that I worry I might pass out for a moment.

Yep, heaven exists and it's called tentacle sex with Najar.

He is quick to follow suit, reaching his climax with a loud moan of pleasure.

I collapse into his arms as we both come down from what was, for me, quite possibly the best sex of my life.

Naturally, that's when I have a post-orgasm moment of crystal clear understanding.

Najar and his talented tentacle have probably ruined me for every human man now.

But I don't regret it.

Even if I only have this short time with him, I'll remember it for the rest of my life. And I damn well intend to make the most that I can of every moment!

Oh so gently, his tentacle removes itself from my channel, and I shiver at the way I'm still throbbing and deliciously sensitive from his fucking.

I fantasized about tentacle sex a lot before actually experiencing it.

Far too much, perhaps, but basically ever since I started reading The Tentacular Tales of Captain Starblade .

But the real thing is sooo much better than anything I've ever fantasized about.

Although, I will admit, I'm now tempted to know what Najar's cock feels like inside me too. Those pleasure nodules are amazing. I hope I get a chance to experience them against my prostate very soon.

But I'm not in my twenties anymore, and I'm unlikely to be able to go for another round tonight.

In the pleasantly hot water bubbling around us, Najar kneads and strokes my back until I feel like I might turn into a puddle of relaxed goo. This guy is seriously multitasking. I can't help but be curious as to why he hasn't been snatched up already.

I'm rather embarrassed when I let out a loud yawn.

"Sorry," I mumble against Najar's firm, muscular chest.

He leans down and kisses my forehead with a chuckle. “It’s been a long day and you’ve been through a lot. Why don’t we dry off and get some sleep?”

I peer over at the bed warily. “Not sure I trust that piece of furniture.”

“Don’t worry. I’ll be in bed with you, and we’ll make sure not to touch any buttons.”

I hold up my hand and extend my pinky. “Swear?”

But rather than giving me his pinky, the slender tip of one of his tentacles gently wraps around my digit and shakes.

I swear. Damn the man, but he just keeps getting sexier. And I love the fact that he’s already very comfortable using his tentacles with me. It’s good because I want so much more!

He helps me out of the hot tub and we towel off together.

“Uh, do we need to clean the tub?” I ask. “We probably made a bit of a mess in there.”

Najar shakes his head. “It has a self-cleaning filtration system. Nothing to worry about.”

I nod and yawn again, my eyelids so heavy that I’m having difficulty keeping my eyes open.

“Hate to be that guy,” I mumble, “but I do tend to fall asleep pretty quickly after an orgasm. It’s like I let go of all the stress and tension in my body and it knocks me the heck out.”

Still naked, Najar picks me up in his arms and carries me over to the bed.

I let him because I'm tired and embracing my utter shamelessness right now.

He wraps his body around mine and we lie together in the center of the mattress with the fluffy blankets pulled over us.

"Do you always sleep in the nude?" I mumble.

"Not always, but usually when I'm sharing a bed with a partner. My body heat tends to run higher than some species, including humans."

I snuggle into him with a contented sigh, reveling in his warmth. "Well, I like it," I say around another yawn. My eyelids are on strike and refusing to stay open now, so I don't get to see Najar's reaction.

I'm just drifting off when he says, "Let me try something."

He clears his throat and says loudly, "Activate room sleep mode."

"Sleep mode activating," the dreaded automated voice intones.

I squint open one eye in time to see the lights wink out and blissful silence descend over the room. Pressing into Najar's warmth, I drift into darkness.

The next thing I know, I'm blinking my eyes open against sunlight streaming through the window in our room.

I try to sit up, but Najar is spooning me from behind and has his arms and four of his tentacles wrapped around me in a firm grip I can't seem to escape.

Not gonna lie, it's flattering but less comfortable now that I'm awake.

"Najar," I whisper. "It's morning. I want to go check out the window."

He squint at me and yawns, then he reluctantly untangles his tentacles, one of which he has to yank away to free me.

I bound out of bed and hurry over to the window to witness a veritable winter wonderland outside. Fresh snow sparkles in the sunlight, and I marvel at the sight.

Being from Nevada, I've spent most of my life in the Las Vegas area. The only times I ever saw any serious accumulation of snow was when I visited Reno once.

But this is something else entirely. It's like a picturesque backdrop in a fairy tale.

"Wow," I say, my breath fogging the window in one spot.

A sleepy Najar comes to stand behind me, wrapping his arms around my midsection while one of his tentacles massages my bed head.

Like I said, multitasking. But I'm beginning to realize all the advantages of having extra appendages.

"Do you think we'll be able to get back to the ship today?" I ask him.

"Not sure. It looks like there are some machines out plowing the snow now, but it might take a while. The innkeeper will no doubt have more information for us when we go down to breakfast, which we should do soon. We slept later than I anticipated."

By now, my hair is sticking up all over the place, so I give Najar a flirtatious look of entreaty. "Do we have time to take a shower together?"

His eyes flare with lust. “We shall make time.”

Together, we race one another into the bathroom and get the shower going. The stall is large enough for several people, which means Najar’s tentacles also have a bit more room to move around.

To my amazement, Najar drops to his knees under the hot spray and gets to work on taking care of my morning wood.

His mouth is just as talented as every other part of his body that I’ve had the pleasure of enjoying thus far. He licks and sucks with single-minded focus, paying attention to every whimper I make and doing more of what I like, playing my body like I’m a rare and precious violin and he’s a top-tier virtuoso.

In an embarrassingly short amount of time, I’m coming in his mouth, and he swallows my release with a rumble of satisfaction.

“Where the hell have you been all my life?”

That makes him chuckle as he gets to his feet again.

“Give me a sec to catch my breath,” I say, leaning against the shower wall and panting, “and I’ll happily return the favor.”

The sultry grin he directs at me sends shivers through me and has my cock valiantly trying to rise to the occasion for a second time but with no success.

“Turn around and place your hands against the wall,” he purrs. “I want to get myself off while fucking your ass crack.”

Holy shit. Najar could probably give Lord Vardox a run for his money if he wanted.

I try not to swoon and immediately position myself the way he asked.

A wet sound has me craning my neck to glance over my shoulder in time to witness Najar stroking his cock while using some of the natural lubricant from his tentacle.

My spent cock throbs at the sight, and I turn toward the wall with a moan.

So. Fucking. Sexy.

Najar places both of his big hands on my hips and settles his thick cock between my ass cheeks. He manipulates the globes of my ass, pushing them together tightly as he begins to thrust between them.

The sensation is unbelievably hot, and I have to bite my lip to stop from begging him to fuck me for real.

When Najar's pleasure nodules start to vibrate and he picks up pace, I fail to hold back a long, deep moan.

"You feel so good, Felix," he says, his voice hoarse with need.

"Ahh!"

He leans in closer to whisper in my sensitive ear, "I can't wait to fuck you. It's going to happen. You want that, don't you?"

My legs start getting shaky and my whole body trembles. "God, yes. I want it so bad."

He grunts with satisfaction, and his hips jerk forward a few more times until he moans and I feel his hot release coating my back.

“Fuck, that’s hot,” he murmurs, rubbing his come into my skin.

My legs go out from under me and Najar catches me.

“Holy hell,” I whisper. “I’m not sure I’m going to survive having you fuck me with your cock. I might expire from too much pleasure.”

Najar throws his head back and laughs, then kisses me, long and deep.

Once we’ve calmed down again, we tenderly wash one another and then get dressed to meet our friends down in the tavern.

Luna is already chowing down on food with Khephren and Sasha when we join them. Khephren is wearing a Christmas sweater with the image of a group of cats in scarves singing accompanied by the words “Oh, Furry Night.”

“Sorry we’re late,” Najar says.

She takes one look at us and drops the bread roll she was holding, her mouth hanging open as she gapes at us. “Get the fuck out of here. You guys totally hooked up!”

It’s my turn to gape back. How the hell did she know?

“You totally fucking did.”

Najar attempts a scowl. “What makes you think that?”

She gestures a hand and a tentacle at both of us. “You’ve got the same dopey grins and blissed-out expressions as these two,” she says, pointing at Sasha and Khephren.

“Busted,” Sasha says with obvious mirth.

Meanwhile, Khephren beams at us like a proud father. “You two are lovers now? How wonderful! I’m so happy for you both.”

Najar holds up a hand. “Whoa, Kheph. Slow down. I know what you’re probably thinking, and this isn’t that.” He darts a glance at me, and I nod back, even though I feel a faint twinge of pain in my chest.

“Felix and I have agreed to enjoy a no-strings-attached, friends-with-benefits arrangement during the short time he’ll be traveling with us.”

Khephren’s face falls, but then he immediately rallies. “That’s not a bad place to start. Even a casual relationship can turn into something far more serious given time and the necessary encouragement to grow.”

Najar wipes a hand down his face with a sigh. “No matchmaking, Kheph. I mean it.”

His best friend bounces in his chair and chortles to himself. “We’ll see.”

We awkwardly take our seats at the table, and Luna shakes her head. “Don’t pressure them, Kheph. Not everyone is like you and Sasha.”

“Thank you, Luna,” Najar says.

She takes a fierce bite of her bread roll. “Damn and blast. Now I’m the only one not getting laid around here. So unfair.”

A short time later, the innkeeper joins us and explains that the trails should be clear by midday for us to return to our ship, and we thank him for his hospitality. I watch as Najar covertly takes him aside to explain what happened with the restraints he destroyed on the bed. Thankfully, the innkeeper doesn’t appear too troubled by it, especially when Najar pays him to have the equipment replaced.

He bustles off and we finish a leisurely breakfast.

That afternoon, we end up being ferried back to our ship by our previous carriage driver, Mecknos. This time, Najar and I sit on the same seat in the carriage, cuddling together in our thermal suits under a warm blanket as we glide over the pristine white landscape. It's truly breathtaking, and I commit every detail to memory that I can.

"I'm grateful to you all for bringing me here," I tell him. "It's been a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and I'm glad I got to share it with you."

"This was my first time visiting the planet too, and I must say, I will be taking some very fond memories with me."

He quirks his lips at me, and I grin back.

Once we arrive at the ship, we bid farewell to Mecknos and wade through a deep snow drift until we can finally board the Sleigh Belle. After shedding our thermal suits in the cargo bay, we head into the main part of the vessel.

"Oh, my ship! How I missed you," Khephren practically sings as he hurries toward the bridge.

"Babe, I'm gonna go check on Jonesy and the fur babies," Sasha calls out before heading toward the canteen.

Just as Najar and I start to follow Khephren and Luna onto the bridge, the bright pink alien whirls around, his eyes sparkling as he points a hand and two tentacles at us. "Halt right there!"

We freeze.

One of his tentacles points upward, and we both crane our necks to see the sprig of mistletoe secured above the doorway.

“You’re both standing under the mistletoe.” Khephren claps his hands together with glee. “You know what that means?”

Luna joins him and they say in unison, “You have to kiss!”

My cheeks warm at their over-the-top display, but I quirk an eyebrow at Najar.

He looks down at me and his lips twitch with amusement. “Challenge accepted,” he says and leans down to ravish my mouth.

The world falls away when his lips meet mine.

God, he’s a good kisser.

I’m really starting to get into it and moaning my enjoyment when Luna pipes up. “Okay, okay. Enough of that. Goodness gracious. Now you’re just trying to taunt those of us who aren’t getting any.”

Najar pulls back with a smug smirk on his face. “Haters are just jealous.”

Rambo whizzes by us, emitting a trail of beeps. “I’m sorry that people are so jealous of me, but I can’t help it that I’m popular.”

I immediately start laughing, and Luna stares at Najar like he’s grown a second head.

Or maybe another set of tentacles.

“Who the hell are you and what have you done with my grumpy, stick-in-the-mud

friend?”

I clear my throat suggestively. “Ahem. You can thank me for that. Evidently, all he needed was to get laid.”

Luna cackles and Najar rolls his eyes but favors me with a fond smile.

Eventually, we have to part ways because Najar has to assist Khephren and Luna with some of the system checks on the ship so we can take off.

So I use this opportunity to go to my room and text my sister.

Me: Sorry for not texting sooner, but we got stuck in a snowstorm.

Her reply is instantaneous.

Gemsy: Dude, I was starting to freak out. Not cool.

Me: There wasn't anything I could do. Sorry, kiddo.

Gemsy: I'm just glad you're okay. How was the ice planet?

Me: Utterly amazing and fascinating. I got to explore their version of a winter market and even went ice skating on these weird cleat things they call ice gliders. Oh! And I met an indigenous creature reminiscent of a caribou, but with six legs and a horn on its head. They call it a Frosthorned Snowdeer. It was marvelous!

Gemsy: Sounds like you're making the most of this intergalactic vacation.

Me: I'm having a great time.

Gemtsy: Have you figured out what you want to do about everything once you get back?

Me: Honestly, I haven't been thinking about it too much.

Gemtsy: I hear that. The other day I was really tempted to just quit.

Me: What happened?

Gemtsy: Just more of the usual. Insurance companies are a bunch of evil scavengers. Hospital staffing issues make me want to tear my hair out. And on top of that, a violent patient assaulted one of the nurses and the cops had to come. It's been bananas.

Me: Are you off now?

Gemtsy: I've got two days and then I'm back in the thick of it.

Me: Sending you big bro hugs.

Gemtsy: Thanks. I love you too.

Me: Um. So, there's something else I need to tell you.

Gemtsy: *wide eye emoji* What?

Me: I kind of hooked up with Najar. Although, in my defense, the room only had one bed and he's too sexy to resist.

Gemtsy: *exploding head emoji* You banged the gold guy with the ripped body and all the matching tentacles?!?!?!?

Me: The very same one.

Gemsy: Wow. I'm kinda impressed, bro. You finally got to experience tentacle sex, not just write about it!

Me: Har-dee har-har.

Gemsy: So how was it? Spill the tea. Inquiring minds want to know.

Me: *heart emoji* It was, quite literally, out of this world.

Gemsy: *laughing face emoji* Pun intended!

Gemsy: So what's going to happen now? Are you two an item? How will that even work?

Me: We've agreed to a no-strings FWB situation for the duration of my time on the ship.

Gemsy: And you're cool with that?

Me: It's not like I wouldn't love something more, but I don't know if the connection he and I have would even lead to that in the long term. We certainly won't have enough time to find out. After all, I'll be home in a few short weeks, and he'll be sailing off to distant parts of the galaxy light-years away.

Typing those words is harder than I expect, and I rub at the ache in my chest, shoving aside foolish thoughts that want to infiltrate my mind.

Gemsy: Well, you should get as much pro-level fucking in as you can in the time you two have left together.

Me: Don't worry. I fully intend to.

Gemtsy: Good, or I was going to have to talk some sense into you. This is kind of a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, you know?

Me: No kidding. And Gemtsy, let me tell you, he has the Midas tentacle touch. You remember that old James Bond song, "Goldfinger?" I want to write a new one called "Goldtentacle."

Gemtsy: You crack me up.

Me: For real though. He's next-level. He has skills that make me look like a damn virgin newbie in comparison.

Gemtsy: Hmm, I can't deny I'm intrigued by the whole tentacle experience. Luna's told me some very interesting things about them. Did you know the tentacles on the females of their species are different from the males'?

Me: ??? You've been talking to Luna?

Gemtsy: Yeah, we text each other sometimes. We're cool.

Me: Please tell me you're not starting some kind of long-distance lesbian romance with her.

Gemtsy: No comment.

Me: Gemtsy!

Gemtsy: Look at the time. I've got to get some shut-eye. TTYL!

I toss my phone aside and sigh.

Things might just be getting a bit more complicated than I anticipated.

Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 11:44 am

Chapter Thirteen

Chronicles of Chaos: An Informal Record of Life Aboard the Sleigh Belle

Stardate: 78409.3

Origin: Boreas Star System

Destination: Ferus Bankolia

A week has passed since we returned to our vessel and left Glacius Major on our way to the next planet on our itinerary. While I don't believe in destiny, I find it a rather fortuitous coincidence that we had planned to visit Ferus Bankolia long before we ever picked up Felix.

The planet is renowned for its wildlife refuges, through which visitors can take guided tours. At my urging, I have asked the others not to reveal this information to Felix just yet. I want to surprise him. There's no doubt in my mind he's going to be in his element while we're exploring this world.

These days I find myself looking for ways to make our human guest happy. He's a fascinating man and I'm honored to be spending time with him.

Already, I begin to feel anxious about how little time he has left with us. After our time on Ferus Bankolia is over, we'll be refueling and setting a course for Earth. We'd planned to see more together but Felix is anxious to get back to his sister shortly after Christmas. The days slip away faster than they ever have before, and my

hearts are uneasy. I suspect saying goodbye to Felix will be far harder than I ever imagined—not only for me, but for the rest of the crew of the Sleigh Belle.

— Najar Mezdell, First Lieutenant and Voice of Reason on the Sleigh Belle

NAJAR

The past week has flown by at light speed.

We've all been busy, and I've been spending all of my free time with Felix.

Although I would have preferred to be with him even more, I still have daily duties to attend to on the Sleigh Belle and other responsibilities I am now regretting agreeing to.

Namely, Sasha's ongoing project, The Cat-tacular Tales of Princess Jonesy.

Somehow, I ended up being roped into helping Sasha film a new Christmas holiday special episode of the show for his fans.

The low-budget show has been a long-running hit with extraterrestrial audiences ever since Luna leaked the first few episodes on the intergalactic web. Since then, we've been making a new episode once a month, and for whatever reason, the show's fans particularly enjoy having me play the straight man to Jonesy, voiced by Luna, as the comedic heroine.

I only participate because I know how much it means to my dear friends. So, while I don't exactly share their passion, I help them because I care about them.

They're the only ones who can bring out my soft side.

Well, them, and now Felix.

Just thinking about him makes me smile.

Of course, I haven't told him about the show yet. In fact, I've been studiously avoiding it. I know the others want me to share it with him, but I'm not ready for that particular brand of humiliation.

In truth, I may never be ready for that.

Just thinking about it makes me cringe.

But despite my busy schedule, Felix and I have managed to carve out plenty of time to explore one another's bodies to our hearts' content.

That human song, "Walking on Sunshine," could be the soundtrack of my life most days lately. Everyone has noticed that my mood is vastly improved. And while some of it is no doubt due to regular and very enjoyable sexual release with Felix, I know that's not the only reason.

I like spending time with him even when we aren't having sex.

He's funny, smart, and endlessly surprising.

And I love the fact that he is so enthusiastic about my tentacles—even when we aren't using them for sexual activities. Indeed, he's taken to petting and cuddling them in ways that soothe something deep inside me, something I never knew needed that kind of attention.

Of course, we've also had plenty of sex while getting to know one another better. My one point of concern is the fact that I've only fucked him with my tentacle so far.

Felix told me he wanted to work his way up to more than that. In the meantime, he's been more than eager to take my tentacle for a ride, as he likes to say, and I'm happy to let him.

I grin to myself recalling last night and what he called riding me "like a rodeo."

At that moment, Luna passes me in the corridor and raises her eyebrows. "Careful there, Naj. You're starting to look like a lovesick doofus."

I frown. "No, I'm not."

She laughs. "Sure. Go look in the mirror. You're sporting that same dopey, smitten look on your face that Khephren always wears around Sasha." Her expression turns serious. "Be careful, my friend. I don't want you to end up heartbroken at the end of all of this."

I swallow thickly at her words, wanting to deny what she's implying, even though a very small part of me can't help but acknowledge that what I feel for Felix is more than simple friendship.

But there's no way what we have can lead to anything more.

Our time together is short, and I don't want either of us to go down an emotionally murky path that could leave us bitter and full of regret.

Best to keep things simple and light, the way I always have.

I find Felix in the canteen with a notebook and pen as he studiously interviews a disgruntled Howie.

"Tell me more about your species. How do Chumarg trees propagate? Is it similar to

the nonsentient trees we have on Earth, or is there a mating process specific to your kind?"

I clear my throat. "What's going on here?"

Howie rolls his eyes. "Thank the galactic gods. Please take this human with you and let me get my midday shut-eye. I can't handle much more of his endless nagging questions."

Howie closes his eyes and Felix pouts.

Dear Thekmis, he's adorable.

"Come on. We're going to be landing soon, so we need to head to the bridge."

Felix studies me with open interest as we walk. "You've all been so mysterious about where we're going next. Can't you give me a clue?"

I shake my head. "Nope. I want you to be completely surprised. Trust me, you're going to love it."

He grins back. "You sound mighty confident."

"That's because I am."

Felix chuckles. "I like that confident side of you, Najar. Your candor is refreshing. I've met too many men who lie and pretend to be someone or something that they're not, but you're always very distinctly you, and I admire that."

A warm, sticky-sweet sensation fills my chest, one that I'm becoming all too familiar with whenever I'm around Felix.

“Your words humble me,” I say, giving him a short bow.

His eyes shine with amusement. “You’re an odd mixture of gallant and noble, but also surly and stern.”

“Hey, I resemble that remark,” I reply blandly.

Felix throws his head back and laughs. “And you are surprisingly funny.”

“Thank you. That’s what I’m always trying to tell Luna and Kheph.”

We hold hands as we make our way to the bridge and take our seats with the rest of the crew.

“Beginning our descent,” Kheph announces, and we hold on tight as the Sleigh Belle enters the planet’s atmosphere. Our descent is a lot rockier here than on Glacius Major, but it isn’t long until we complete a smooth landing in a special field set aside for off-world visitors.

Once we’re all ready, I lead Felix down the gangway, keeping his eyes covered with one of my tentacles.

“Is this absolutely necessary?”

“It is. Surprises require a grand reveal.”

I ignore the knowing looks Khephren and Sasha give me and focus instead on Felix. When we set foot on the ground, my hearts are racing with excitement as I remove my tentacle and let Felix take it all in.

We’re surrounded by vast planes of verdant green mixed with vibrant splashes of

pink, purple, and orange. Two suns shine brightly in the sky above us, and in the distance are snow-capped mountains.

A hover vessel pulls up near us and the Igzok driver hops out to greet us. Like most members of his species, he's small in stature, with a barrel-shaped torso, short but powerful arms and legs, and a muscular tail. He's covered all over in green and brown scales, and he's wearing a hat on top of his reptilian head.

"Welcome to Ferus Bankolia. I'm Jeernit and I will be your guide for our tour of the Upper Bankolia Wildlife Sanctuary today."

Felix gasps, his eyes alight with excitement. "A wildlife sanctuary?"

I smile at him. "This planet is famed for its many wildlife preservation initiatives. I was right, wasn't I? You love it."

Felix's face shines so brightly I can't look away. "This is the most amazing early Christmas gift I could ever get." He turns to Jeernit. "Will we get to see many animals on this tour?"

"Of course. Although our routes are designed to maintain an appropriate distance from the wildlife, a lot of them are so used to us they will come closer than you might expect. We also provide long-range binoculars for viewing them in closer detail."

Overcome with excitement, Felix jumps up into my arms and wraps his legs around my hips as he kisses me soundly. "Thank you, thank you, thank you!"

"You're very welcome," I say, feeling unexpectedly breathless at the intensity of his affection.

The guide smiles at all of us. "Are you all ready to start the tour?"

We hurriedly agree and board the open-top hover vessel.

I lean toward Felix. “This planet, like many others, maintains what you on Earth would call a zero-carbon footprint. They have developed technology and energy sources that are environmentally safe.”

“That’s amazing. I wish humans would do that.”

The hover vessel moves at a fast, smooth clip while we follow a dirt road into the wildlife refuge.

“This is like going on a safari,” Felix muses while he looks around. “I’ve always wanted to do that but never had enough time or money to make it happen.”

“What is a safari?”

He briefly explains how the experience works on his world, and I nod in understanding. “Ah, yes. This will be similar, but I believe the people here treat the safety of the animals and their environment as the foremost priority.”

“I love it.” He reaches out and pets one of my tentacles. “Thank you.”

For the next few hours, we travel through the sanctuary. Along the way, our guide Jeernit points out different animals that call this place home and tells us about their habits and characteristics.

Sasha has his camera with him and documents as much as he can. I know I can’t give these pictures to Felix to take with him when he returns to Earth, but he can at least look at them as much as he likes before he returns home.

Felix barely blinks the whole time we’re touring the sanctuary, eagerly absorbing

every detail and bombarding Jeernit with a barrage of questions. However, our guide seems only too happy to answer and is clearly pleased by Felix's enthusiasm.

As if in silent, mutual agreement, the rest of us stay quiet and let Felix ask as many questions as he wants. It's clear that he's truly passionate about animals and loves learning everything he can about them.

Seeing him like this makes me hope that he can find a way to continue pursuing his passion for animals in a way that is more fulfilling for him.

If he stayed with you, he could explore animals from so many different worlds. He'd never be bored.

The thought brings me up sharp.

I know our time together is finite, so why am I suddenly entertaining ridiculous notions?

By the time we arrive at our accommodations for the evening—it will take us several more days to tour all of the sanctuary, which encompasses hundreds of miles—the suns are setting.

In contrast to Glacius Major, this planet is currently experiencing early summer in the region we're in. While it did get quite warm in the afternoon, now that evening is upon us, a hint of cooler night air is already setting in.

We thank Jeernit for his excellent work as our guide and check in at the reception cabin located at the entrance. Our sleeping quarters, farther into the forest, prove to be as unique as the sanctuary.

"Our guest units are actually built around the trees in the forest and made from all-

natural materials,” the clerk on duty explains.

Felix’s eyes light up. “That sounds amazing!”

“If you’ll follow me, I’ll show you to your units,” the clerk offers.

We’re taken through the forest down a path lit by some type of solar-powered light source. Felix stumbles along at my side, staring up and around him the whole way.

“It’s like the Ewok village in Return of the Jedi ,” he marvels.

Sasha gasps behind us. “Oh, my fucking god, you’re right. How fucking cool is that?”

Khephren beams at his husband. “You like it?”

“I fucking love it!”

Sasha jumps into his arms and they start making out.

“Kill me now. It’d be a mercy,” Luna says as she scurries past them. “Otherwise, I might slowly suffocate to death from all this lovey-dovey sweetness all around me.”

We finally arrive at a large tree that easily looks at least a good thirty feet wide and is too tall for me to estimate its height from where we stand below it.

Felix gapes up at it in wonder. “It’s like a cross between a giant sequoia and a Montezuma cypress tree on Earth. Granted, I’m no expert when it comes to trees, but I do find them fascinating.” He reaches out a hand to gently stroke the trunk. “And beautiful.”

You’re beautiful .

Neptune's nads. Where the hell did that thought come from unbidden?

But I find I can't look away from Felix's face, filled with so much awe.

He really is beautiful. I can't deny it.

Luna sidles up to me as Felix starts asking the clerk questions about the tree.

"Careful, Naj. You appear downright affectionate when you look at Felix. It's written all over your face."

"He's different from anyone else I've ever been with. When I'm with him, I feel..."

She gives me a side hug. "That says it all, my friend. You feel for him. I won't say what those emotions are, that's for you to figure out, but they're already more than anything you've ever had with a lover before. Don't just ignore them or you might live to regret it."

She squeezes me tight one more time and wanders over to investigate the tree.

My gut tells me that she's right, but my brain instinctively shies away from what it probably means.

Once the clerk finishes his lively discussion with Felix, we board a mechanized lift and begin our ascent to the different levels of our accommodations.

At least a good fifteen feet from the ground, we stop at the first level.

"This is our floor, so to speak," Sasha says.

Kheph blows us all a kiss. "Have a good evening, friends, because my husband and I

certainly will.”

“You bet your fucking ass we will,” Sasha growls.

But he soon starts laughing when Kheph picks him up and slings him over his shoulder, then hightails it to their sleeping quarters.

Felix and I get off at the next level, leaving Luna to ride up to the top level where she’ll be staying.

“This is seriously out of this world—no pun intended,” Felix murmurs as we head down a short rope bridge walkway that leads right to the entrance of our abode for the night.

“The clerk told me there are no locks on the doors, so we should be able to go straight in,” I say. “Don’t worry, though. They haven’t had any crime here in years.”

We open the door and stare in amazement. Even I’m impressed. The entire space is built in a circular fashion around the trunk of the tree, which forms the central anchor of the dwelling. The floor is made from repurposed wood, and the walls are a mixture of an indigenous form of binding clay mud, stone, and a bamboo-like material. Open windows without any glass or screens are evenly spaced around the diameter of the room.

We wander around the open circular space and discover a stunning partly open-air shower with a glass-bottom floor that looks down at the ground below. A simple but comfortable-looking bed with a net canopy over it is positioned by a window that allows the morning suns to shine in on us and wake us naturally. There’s also a small table and two chairs on a veranda that juts out into the air and provides a vista of the plains with a glimpse of mountains in the distance. On the table, we discover a picnic basket with our dinner meal and a note of welcome.

“Let’s eat and watch the rest of the sunset together,” Felix suggests with a smile, his whole face still glowing.

We sit down at the table and unpack our food. They’ve provided an impressive spread of fresh vegetables, a pureed bean dip, dried meat, a selection of local cheeses, a homemade type of flatbread, and some regional fruit for dessert. It’s light and refreshing fare, perfect for the warm climate.

Together, we snack on the food and enjoy the spectacular sunset as the two orbs slowly disappear over the horizon, leaving stunning trails of purple, orange, and red in their wake.

“Stunning,” Felix murmurs, his eyes on the sky.

It is, but I can’t seem to draw my eyes away from him. When Felix is happy, he shines brighter than any star in the universe.

I want him to be happy like this forever.

He turns his attention back on me. “I know I’ve said this already but thank you. Today was one of the most memorable days of my life. I’ll never forget it.”

“It was a pure stroke of luck that we’d already planned to come here. The wildlife sanctuaries here are famous across several galaxies, so we were all interested in visiting.” I grin. “But the main factor in the decision was that Khephren knew that Sasha would love the unusual accommodations.”

Felix laughs. “He really loves his husband something fierce. It’s a wonderful thing to see.”

“They’re almost nauseatingly happy together. When Sasha first arrived on our ship,

he was even more of a grump than I can be. But it didn't take long for Kheph to work his magic on the man. Now Sasha's a very different person." I pause. "Well, he's still snarky and sassy, but he's happy now. He smiles and laughs all the time. You never would have thought it possible if you'd met him a few years ago."

Felix sighs, his eyes full of something suspiciously like longing. "That's the power of love, I suppose."

His words make my hearts stutter in a strange fashion.

I'm relieved when he shifts gears and begins excitedly talking about the different animals he saw during the day and how some of them bear similarities to species on Earth.

His enthusiasm is contagious, and I listen attentively, smiling the whole time and just happy to be here with him in this fleeting moment in time.

When we've eaten our fill, I manage to persuade him to try out the shower with me. After riding around in the open-top hover vehicle all day, we're a bit sweaty and grimy.

I'm relieved to find a clothing sanitizer machine tucked into a nook beside the toilet and adjacent to the shower. We toss our clothes in there and I set them to clean so we have fresh garments in the morning.

I coax a nervous Felix into the shower, which is just big enough for the two of us as long as I keep my tentacles tucked into my back. The entire thing is made of some kind of thick clear glass-like material, although the walls only come up to waist height.

I turn on the rainfall showerhead and grab the biodegradable soap to begin washing

Felix and myself.

He sways a little in my arms when he looks down. “Oh, boy. That’s freaking me out a lot.”

“Fear not. It’s perfectly safe.”

He looks down again and gulps. “You promise this glass floor isn’t going to break underneath us and send us plummeting to our deaths far below?”

I pull his naked body closer to mine. “I promise.”

As I wash him, Felix starts to relax more and embrace the experience.

“You can see everything from here,” he murmurs.

“When researching this place before coming, we learned that these shower units were designed specifically to create a more immersive experience in nature during one’s stay. Even the soap in this shower is safe and actually beneficial for the soil around the base of the tree.”

“The peoples of this world are quite brilliant. They’ve figured out how to make the best use of the natural resources they have while preserving the environment.”

“Indeed. The natural beauty of the landscape and flourishing wildlife are the main tourist attractions that bring off-world visitors to the planet,” I say.

Two of my tentacles massage soap into his hair as my hands use the washcloth to clean the rest of him.

“Mmmm,” Felix moans. “Your tentacles give the best head massages. Man, could I

ever use a massage like this after a hard day of work back home.”

He seems to realize what he’s implying and hurriedly says, “My bad. I didn’t mean that like it sounded.”

I find I don’t want him to apologize to me for such a thought, so I silence his flustered lips with a kiss.

By the time we’re clean and the water starts to turn cold, Felix is pleasingly dazed from our kissing and I draw him with me to the bed.

We tumble onto the mattress and I roll him onto his back and lean over him.

I finally voice the words I’ve been holding back for days.

“I want to feel my cock inside you. Are you ready for that?”

Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 11:44 am

Chapter Fourteen

“Tentacles and Torment: Body Swapped” by FeliXFiles

Fandom: “The Tentacular Tales of Captain Starblade” by KirklovesSpock4eva

Tags: Lord Vardox, Captain Starblade, body swap, tentacles, 18+

Part 6.5 of Tentacles and Torment

“Get your cock inside me,” Vardox demanded.

Starblade started to withdraw the tentacle in Vardox’s ass to do just that but Vardox reached out and gripped the tentacle hard, refusing to let it go.

“No, my dear captain. I want your cock and your tentacle at the same time.”

Starblade swallowed. He knew from experience just how amazing that form of double penetration felt.

He also knew that it turned him into a wanton fool who tended to lose all reason.

But right now his cock ached with a need so strong he quickly lost his futile battle of wills with it.

Carefully, oh so carefully, his cock began to breach Vardox’s entrance where his tentacle already wriggled enthusiastically.

“That’s it, darling,” Vardox purred. “Give it all to me. Your sweet hole is so wonderfully greedy.”

His nemesis was clearly getting off on experiencing what it was like for Starblade to be fucked by him, and damn if it wasn’t making Starblade more than a little irritable. For some reason, it felt like he was losing to Vardox yet again.

With a growl, he thrust all the way inside Vardox.

They both shouted and there was a strange flash that had Starblade seeing spots.

His head whirled like he was experiencing momentary vertigo and when he blinked to clear his vision, he realized he was now looking up at a grinning Vardox.

Somehow, they’d managed to switch back to their own bodies.

“Oh, goody,” Vardox drawled. “While I had a fun time being fucked, I do so prefer fucking you myself. Let’s continue, shall we?”

FELIX

S till reeling from the sensual overload of Najar’s exquisite, next-level kissing and massaging skills in the shower, I’m rocked by his words.

A jolt of desire shoots down my spine and straight to my cock.

I lick my lips in anticipation, because I don’t even have to think about my answer. “Yes. A thousand times, yes.”

It’s weird. I’ve never been so unabashedly needy with a partner before, but Najar brings out a side of me I’ve never fully allowed myself to indulge in—my desire to be

cared for and protected.

For so much of my life, I've had to be the mature older brother in charge who could handle everything. While my grandparents were amazing caregivers to me and my sister, their health was declining by the time I became a teenager and they had slowed down a lot. They started struggling with basic household chores and errands, and I had to step up and take over everything that had become too much for them. I was happy to do it—I owed them so much—but I also quickly found that with these new responsibilities, my desires came dead last.

I also wanted to be available for my younger sister whenever she needed me. Caring for Gemma and my grandparents became my first and only priority, to the point where I finally gave up trying to have any sort of personal life separate from them.

But here and now, in the short blink of time that I have with this golden god of a man, I can allow myself to let go and take what I want.

What I damn well need .

I've been delaying having penetrative sex in the typical fashion. For one, I really freaking love his tentacle and all the things it can do. It's unlike anything I've ever experienced before. But as I stare into Najar's mesmerizing eyes, I'm forced to admit to myself that I was mainly trying to protect my heart.

Yes, I know it's been a stupidly short amount of time, but I already care about the big, stoic warrior with a well-hidden heart of gold. More than I've cared about anyone else in a very long time.

To be blunt, I'm starting to fall in love with him, and the idea is utterly terrifying.

Did his amazing tentacles play a role in that? Probably. But the rest is just him.

I can relate to his strong sense of responsibility and his desire to keep his loved ones safe. He's usually so serious that I get a kick out of these surprising glimpses of humor and playfulness to him. On top of that, I admire how brave he is, defying expectations and leaving behind his home world to explore the universe with his friends. Being with him is fun yet also comforting—and every day I look forward to getting to know him better both in and out of bed.

But we have so little time left together, and if I let myself keep falling, I fear how catastrophic the heartbreak will be when I have to say goodbye.

For tonight, though, I decide to indulge in all I want to physically share with this man. I'll just have to keep my emotions in check—he doesn't want to hear words of love from me, nor would he welcome overly sentimental overtures.

I'm well aware of where I stand with Najar. He's been honest with me about that from the start. While there might be a kernel of feeling for me on his side too, his walls have been in place, I suspect, most of his life.

And for good reason.

My heart aches at the thought of him as a young orphan, thrown into training to become a warrior. He didn't get to enjoy much of a childhood as a result.

The nomadic lifestyle he and the rest of the crew live must also make it difficult to even entertain the prospect of a long-term romantic relationship.

Like Khephren, he'd have to find someone willing to share that path.

If I'm truly honest with myself, I have a growing conviction I could be that kind of person.

But I can't leave my sister behind. She's all the family I have left and vice versa.

I can't put my desire to be with Najar above my family, especially when I don't know if whatever this is between us is built to last. Even in a perfect scenario, I could never abandon my sister.

Not like our mother did.

No, there's no way I can do that. There's simply no win-win endgame to my predicament that I can see.

I shove aside these angsty uncertainties, instead letting tonight simply be about tonight and nothing more.

"Are you sure?" Najar asks, hesitation written all over his face.

"Yes. I want to feel your cock inside me too."

Najar closes his eyes for a moment and his whole body relaxes, like he was tensing himself up in order to prepare for rejection.

I see these brief glimpses of vulnerability that he's willing to show me and guard them close to my heart.

"I will make this very good for you," he promises, his voice husky with desire. "Let me take care of you."

There's a faint look of entreaty in his eyes that I can't deny.

Besides, those magic freaking words are music to my ears. It's like he can read me easily, too, and knows precisely what I want.

I swallow thickly. “I’m not worried. I trust you, Najar.”

He leans down and takes my lips in a searing kiss, his mouth laying claim with a passion that threatens to sweep me away.

When I’m writhing with pleasure and my cock is straining against my belly, he moves and positions himself between my legs.

“I will make you ready for me now,” he says, his expression so serious it makes my chest tighten with longing.

But my heart nearly stops when Najar suddenly lifts my hips into the air and places my legs over his shoulders with the greatest of ease.

I’m not ashamed to admit I squeak a little in surprise.

Look, I’m not a small man by any stretch of the imagination, but Najar? He somehow makes me feel downright delicate and precious.

Despite his superior strength and size, he’s very gentle with me as he uses his hands to spread my cheeks apart. Taking his time, he kneads and massages them and then bares my entrance to his lustful gaze.

Sweet merciful heavens, that’s hot.

I throw an arm over my eyes, feeling my cheeks flame with awkward embarrassment.

Sure, I may be thirty-five years old, and yes, I may have had my fair share of men inspect my ass before, but something about Najar’s hungry observation is both stimulating and highly embarrassing.

Just when I think I'm going to die if he keeps staring at my hole for much longer, he changes it up and gets down to licking instead.

The moment his tongue makes contact with my sensitive rim, I whimper and want more.

Although I've been rimmed a number of times over the years, no one has been as skilled at it as Najar. I don't know if he's had a lot of experience or is just insanely good at reading even the smallest of cues from my body.

Perhaps that's something his warrior training taught him? All I know is it proves awfully damn handy in the bedroom.

One thing's for sure, the man's got a gifted mouth, and he's not afraid to use it on me.

When his tongue presses inside me, I moan, a sound that ends in a gasp when one of his slicked tentacles sneaks forward and coils itself around my cock, squeezing and stroking me while that tongue fucks my hole.

All rational cognition goes offline at that moment and I get lost in a mind-numbing haze of unending pleasure. At this rate, I won't last long, and when my legs start shaking, I know I'm close.

Naturally, that's when Najar's tentacle lets go of my cock and his tongue vacates my ass.

"Nooo," I cry. "Sooo close. Don't stop."

He grins at me, a devilish gleam in his eyes, as he lowers my hips back down. "No coming until I've got my cock inside you. All right?"

I whimper but nod in agreement.

Damn the man.

I mean, alien man.

He kneels between my legs again and I watch with avid interest as he uses the natural lubricant from his tentacle to coat his hand and cock.

Once he's glistening wet, he positions himself over me and guides his cock to my entrance.

"Breathe out for me, Felix."

I take a deep breath and let it out slowly, concentrating on loosening my muscles as the thick, flared head of his cock nudges inside me. He's big, but the last week of fucking his tentacle on a daily basis has done a good job of preparing me to take his dick.

Nonetheless, his penetration is slow and steady, allowing me time to get used to him as he gradually fills me up in more ways than he knows—and I'm overcome by a wave of powerful emotions I can't quite process right now.

When he's fully seated inside me, we both remain still for a long moment and I will my channel to stop clenching around his shaft like I won't let him go.

Najar kisses me languidly and waits with infinite patience for me to get used to him.

Eventually, we start to move together, finding our perfect rhythm like our bodies were made for one another.

The ridges and pleasure nodules on his cock are so electrifying inside me, I swear I see fireworks explode behind my eyes. Every time he thrusts in and out of me, they scrape along my inner walls and against my rim—and make me feel like I’m going to lose my mind.

I’ve never experienced anything quite like it and undoubtedly never will again.

Yep. As I suspected since that first night we spent together, Najar Mezdel has officially ruined me for any other man.

But I don’t let that detract from the ecstasy I’m experiencing right now. Instead, I try to carve every second of it into my mind—maybe even my very soul.

After all, I’m sure I’ll have many lonely nights ahead with only my hand to comfort myself when all I will be able to do is conjure up memories of this time together.

I’m so lost in the bliss Najar’s bringing me that when the head of his cock makes contact with my sensitive prostate, it’s so much sensory overload I nearly shoot upright in the bed like a young Linda Blair in *The Exorcist*.

Najar flashes a devastatingly gorgeous grin. “Right there, is it?”

“You’re evil,” I moan.

“I’m just ruthlessly committed to bringing you to the heights of ecstasy, my dear.”

I can’t help but think it’s woefully unfair that this amazing man is single.

But then the thought flits away as Najar focuses on nailing my prostate with unerring accuracy and devotion.

“Ohgodohgodohgodohgod,” I chant.

At least, that’s what I think I say. I’m not entirely sure.

The pleasure is almost too intense and yet somehow not quite enough. I sprint for the finish line.

“Close,” I gasp out, my hips rising to meet his forward movement.

Najar’s hips speed up and my back arches when I finally crest that magical peak and tumble over the side into pure bliss.

For a moment, it’s as if I’ve achieved some kind of astral projection into another dimension, and I’m floating on a fluffy cloud. Then I plummet back down into my body right when Najar finds his own release, emitting a long, low moan as he empties inside me.

The gush of heat inside me is unfamiliar and far more intimate than I could have imagined.

I’ve always practiced safer sex with my partners, even the few men I had long-term relationships with. We never had penetrative sex without condoms.

I’ve certainly had some men try to persuade me into it in the past, but I’m not much of a risk-taker, and if I’m honest with myself, I don’t know that I ever trusted any of them enough to take that kind of gamble.

With Najar, it’s totally different.

Of course, at my urging, we completed in-depth health screenings in the medical bay on the Sleigh Belle to confirm that we’re both negative for any illnesses. We’d also

researched quite a bit and discovered that cross-species transmission of most illnesses is rare.

All of that certainly helped me get comfortable with the idea of not using protection and alleviated my anxiety about any kind of health risks involved.

But what really sold me was my unwavering belief in Najar.

Maybe I'm a fool, but I trust him to keep me safe.

And I wanted to have something special with him—something I've never had with anyone else.

Gradually, I recover from what was most certainly the best sex of my life. Of course, that's also when I have yet another moment of post-orgasm super-clarity.

I'm seriously falling in love with Najar.

And I don't think there's any turning back now.

Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 11:44 am

Chapter Fifteen

Chronicles of Chaos: An Informal Record of Life Aboard the Sleigh Belle

Stardate: 78419.3

Origin: Zelphara Celestia Galaxy

Destination: Intergalactic Space Station

After spending several days on Ferus Bankolia touring three of their wildlife sanctuaries, we have finally departed and are making preparations to return Felix to Earth. First, however, we must make a brief detour to an intergalactic space station about a day's journey from our current location. We will need to refuel and stock up on some essential supplies for the ship before we can make the trip back to Felix's world.

Everyone is putting on a brave face and gearing up for our upcoming Christmas celebration, but the mood aboard the Sleigh Belle has become notably somber. I am not the only one dreading saying goodbye to Felix. He's friends with all of us now, and the prospect of never seeing him again is weighing heavily on everyone—but probably me, most of all.

I'm trying not to reveal just how conflicted I am right now, but Felix is nobody's fool. He reads me far too well. What's even harder is the fact that he's kindly not forcing me to talk about it.

I have never let myself be overcome by feelings that can compromise my ability to protect those I care about. Romantic relationships are something I've avoided like the Temerengi Plague. But for the first time in my life, I'm at war with myself because there's a strange conviction growing inside me that I should never let Felix go.

What the hell should I do?

—Najar Mezdel, First Lieutenant and Voice of Reason on the Sleigh Belle

NAJAR

When a Dravethian warrior comes to a crossroads in his life and doesn't know what to do next, he turns to his best friend.

“Tell me how you knew Sasha was the one for you?”

Kheph sits across from me in his Augmented Reality Simulation Environment, which Sasha refers to as his holodeck, where he's created a cozy Christmas coffee shop setting for us to have this private little chat.

He tells me it reminds Sasha of home, and that's why he created it.

Kheph's eyes widen but, seeming to sense the significance of my questioning, he answers seriously.

“Hmm. I'm not sure exactly when I realized Sasha and I were meant to be. It started gradually and then, before I knew it, my feelings came crashing over me.” He shakes his head, a fond smile playing on his lips. “My thoughts were filled with him and all the things I wanted us to see and experience together. Every special moment I wanted to share with him and no one else.” He sighs happily. “When I would think about my future, I couldn't envision it without him by my side anymore. The thought of losing

him was more than I could bear.” He tilts his head. “Does that answer your question?”

I lean my elbows on the table and hold my forehead in my hands. “Great. Well, I’m royally screwed, aren’t I?”

One of Khephren’s pink tentacles reaches out and gently strokes my arm. “What do you mean?”

I tell him what I haven’t even been able to fully admit to myself.

“I think I’m falling in love”—I nearly choke on the word love —“with Felix. And I’m scared.”

Kheph’s eyes soften and I detect a hint of sadness in them. “Love can be scary. Letting someone in requires trust and a leap of faith. Until now, you’ve never truly let your walls down to allow anyone in—except for me and Luna, of course. But we’re family and therefore safe, aren’t we, unlike a lover who could break your heart.”

His words sting as they hit their mark.

Kheph can be disarmingly sharp when the situation calls for it.

It was no lie when I told Felix he’s a genius, and he probably knows me better than almost anyone else in the entire universe.

“Do you think... I’ve started to let Felix in?”

Kheph cocks his head again, one pink tentacle waving in the air. “You tell me. Do you think about him often? Is he the first person you want to talk to in the morning and the last person you want to speak to at night? When you think about your future,

do you see him in it?”

Damn and blast, but he’s speaking hard words of truth I can’t pretend to refute.

“Yes,” I rasp out, my hearts clenching with fear.

“Oh, my dearest Najar.” Kheph reaches out to clasp my hands in his. “You are a brave and wonderful man who deserves to find love. I know why you protect yourself so diligently. Anyone with your background would feel the same, but I don’t want you to close yourself off to what could be your one chance at true happiness in this lifetime. Don’t abandon what you have with Felix.”

I swallow, struggling to breathe for a moment. “Do... do you think he cares for me too?”

He smiles at me brightly. “While I can’t say for certain, and that’s something you definitely need to talk to Felix about directly, I will say I would bet every space credit I possess that he does.”

His words help something suffocating inside me unclench and I can breathe again.

“Right. So I just have to talk to him...” I hesitate. “About feelings .”

Kheph laughs. “Good galactic gods, Naj. They’re not contagious, let alone terminal. Emotional connection, especially love, with another being can be a beautiful and magical thing.”

“If you say so,” I grumble, rubbing absently at my chest. All this anxiety and uncertainty, and the swinging back and forth that seems to go with it, is far from enjoyable at the moment.

All the same, I can't stop thinking about Felix.

"Like I said, it's time to have a heart-to-heart with Felix to find out where you two stand."

Yeah, that doesn't sound terrifying at all .

"What if he... rejects me?"

One of Kheph's tentacles reaches out and holds on to one of mine, just like when we were kids. "Then all of us will be here to help you get through it."

I'm surprised to find my eyes tearing up. "You know I love you like my brother, right?"

He beams at me, his face glowing with happiness. "Of course, because I feel the same way about you. Forever and always."

"Okay." I nod decisively. "You're right. It's not like me to dither and worry about what may or may not happen. I prefer to be a man of action."

"Exactly." Kheph gives me an amused smile. "Go get him, Tiger."

I roll my eyes at him fondly. "All in good time. I have to plan my mode of attack."

Kheph looks incredulous. "You do realize you aren't going to war, don't you?"

I cross my arms. "As Sasha likes to say, love is a battlefield."

He strokes his chin. "Hmm. An interesting analogy and perhaps quite appropriate for you." He waves a finger and two tentacles at me. "Just don't make Felix a casualty of

the fight.”

“I won’t,” I promise.

“Good.” He gets up. “We’ll be docking at the intergalactic space station soon for a quick in-and-out trip. I don’t want to linger there any longer than necessary, especially if there are any Alliance agents lurking about. But once we get back to the ship, you’ll have plenty of free time to have that much-needed talk with Felix.”

As we depart the Augmented Reality Simulation Environment and make our way to the bridge, I dare to ask him, “Any final tips you want to give me?”

To my surprise, he stops and pulls me into his arms, giving me a fierce hug. “Be honest and speak the truth of your hearts. To do that, you need to let yourself be vulnerable and open with Felix. But be brave and trust in the one you have given your hearts to.”

With that, he lets me go, and I stand frozen for a few moments as I digest his words and acknowledge the wisdom of them.

I’m truly lucky to have Khephren Thrase as my best friend.

When we dock at the intergalactic space station a short time later, Felix joins me by the station’s market entrance, while Luna heads off with her list of items and Sasha and Kheph go to complete their assigned errands.

Felix and I have been put in charge of the stocking up on some essential

ingredients for the food generator that it needs to learn how to replicate. Holding hands, we enter the bustling market full of energetic vendors selling foods from all over the universe.

Since we're on a bit of a strict schedule, I steer us to the stalls with the ingredients appropriate for our ship's food generator to use in creating new items. We rent a hover cart into which we load our food cargo as we move from one vendor to the next. I even indulge Felix and spend some of my own personal credits, separate from the ship's budget, on a few rare and exotic fruits he wants to try.

I find I want to indulge him just to see a smile on his beautiful face.

Is this what being in love is like?

Not having been in love before, I'm not really sure, but I do seem to be a bit of a fool for Felix Taylor—and I don't care.

I just want to be with him and make him happy, and I suppose that tells me everything I really need to know. Somehow, that sets my mind at ease, as if the final constraint holding me back has loosened.

I can hardly wait to get him back on the ship so I can tell him all of this.

Just as we're finishing up with the final vendor, a furry streak of bright blue whizzes past us, followed by an angry Grethorian shaking his four fists in the air.

"Get back here, you thief!"

Not wanting to get caught up in any trouble, I glance to my side, only to find Felix has disappeared.

Momentary panic sets in until I look around and find he's chased down whatever flew past us and is now holding the creature in his arms.

The irate Grethorian storms toward Felix, his naturally red skin flushed even darker.

“That thieving little furball stole meat from my cart!”

Moving fast, I put myself between him and Felix.

Thankfully, the Grethorian isn’t as stupid as he appears. He takes one look at me—and the mark on my cheek—and backs off.

“What seems to be the problem here?” I ask, my voice stern and unyielding.

He gulps before pointing an accusing finger toward the creature in Felix’s arms. “That little menace stole food from my cart.”

I frown at the animal. I’m not even sure what it is. But then again, it’s hard to memorize all the animal species in the universe.

“Does the creature belong to someone here?”

The Grethorian crosses all of his arms, a scowl on his oblong face. “I doubt it. Probably a stray. Lots of folks come through here, and you’d be surprised how many of them abandon their pets before taking off for parts unknown.” He shakes his head. “It’s a damn shame, but I can’t afford to give away my merchandise for free to every stray that comes by. I’m trying to make a living here.”

Holding up my tablet, I say, “I’ll pay for whatever this creature stole, but don’t even think about trying to claim more than you’re owed.”

He gulps and nods. I end up paying him a few measly space credits for the stolen meat and he slinks off back to his stall, grumbling the whole way.

When he’s finally gone, I look over to see Felix studying me with a warm, gentle smile that makes my hearts flutter.

“You were amazing. Thank you.”

“Ahem. Well. I didn’t like how that jerk was acting. I just wanted to make sure he didn’t turn violent.”

Felix looks down at the shivering blue furball in his arms and gently strokes its head. The creature has a pointed snout, two big, cute eyes, and two large triangular ears that stand at attention, swiveling here and there in response to the sounds around us.

“Isn’t he adorable?” Felix coos sweetly as he pets the blue fluffball. “And he’s so soft.” Felix’s gaze hardens as our eyes meet over the animal’s head. “People who abandon their pets are the worst kind of scum.”

Uh-oh. Angry Felix is really... sexy.

But we don’t have time for that. I clear my throat again, opting for sense and reason. “Let’s go to one of the information kiosks and see if we can track down its owner or any other information about it.”

Felix agrees that this is a sensible course of action, and we push our hover cart full of goods through the station until we find an information kiosk.

The representative at the desk smiles at first, then falters when she notices the animal in Felix’s arms.

“Greetings, we found this creature in the market. One of the vendors told us it’s an abandoned stray, but we wanted to check that you didn’t have anyone looking for it. Perhaps it has a microchip for scanning?”

She pulls out a small handheld device and runs a quick scan over the stray, who regards her warily and presses its face closer to Felix’s chest.

The representative squints at her screen. “I can’t find any kind of microchip with details on ownership, but my device tells me this animal is a male Volengi Foxhound.”

I’ve never even heard of the breed before.

Felix laughs with obvious delight. “Oh, my God, that’s perfect. He looks like a cross between a Pomeranian and a fox, only blue! Don’t you, boy?” He starts rubbing the ears of the stray, who tilts its head up to lick his chin.

Felix has hearts in his eyes now.

“Isn’t he absolutely precious?” he asks me. “And so interesting too. I can’t wait to learn more about his species.”

Oh, dear galactic gods. I know I’m going to regret this, but...

I turn back to the information kiosk representative. “What happens to strays on the station?”

She winces. “If they’re caught, we send them on a cargo ship to the closest planet that has facilities to care for them.”

Felix growls and clutches the creature tighter.

I close my eyes and pray I’m not making the biggest mistake of my life.

“And what if someone on the space station finds a stray and wants to adopt it?”

I don’t dare look at Felix or I might lose my nerve.

Also because I'm pretty sure my face is flaming red by now, which is a feat in and of itself when your natural skin tone is gold.

The representative beams at me. "Well, that would definitely be the best-case scenario if they could provide a loving home. In fact, I can help you process an adoption here in my system. Would you like to adopt this little foxhound?"

I nod.

"Oh, Najar," Felix murmurs, but I keep my eyes on the screen that the woman behind the desk hands me.

"I just need you to fill out a little bit of information. Then we'll run a final health scan on the foxhound, and you can name him and take him with you!"

I start filling out the digital forms, and I have been transferred ownership of one tiny blue furball in short order.

"What do you want to call him?" I finally ask Felix, daring to look at him.

I soon realize that's a mistake. Felix is giving me the most intense come-hither looks I've ever seen.

Evidently rescuing animals in need gets him a wee bit hot and bothered.

I should have known.

"I can really name him?" he asks, something tender and soft reflected in his eyes.

"Yes, of course. You saved him, after all."

He looks down at the furball, who gazes up at him with utter adoration. “How do you like Cosmo, little guy? After all, I found you on my very first journey to the cosmos.”

The foxhound seems to like that and gives Felix’s chin another couple of licks, which makes him giggle.

My hearts flutter at the sound.

I hastily add Cosmo’s name to the form and hand the screen back to the representative.

She has us bring Cosmo over to a small table beside her station, where a larger scanning device does a quick sweep over him. After, she pulls up a report on her screen, which she taps a few times. “Okay, I’m sending this report to you, but surprisingly, he has a clean bill of health. He’ll require some vaccinations if he’s going to be traveling in outer space, but I assume those are things you can handle on your ship?”

I nod. “Our medical bay is already equipped for that.”

We’d had it upgraded for Jonesy and her kittens a year ago.

“Excellent. Thank you for saving a life in need and safe journeys to you and your crew.”

I push our hover cart as Felix walks at my side, clutching Cosmo in his arms as we make our way back to where the Sleigh Belle’s docked.

“You didn’t have to do this,” Felix whispers softly.

I glance at him and then look away, feeling all kinds of awkward. “I know, but I

wanted to. For you.”

He makes a choked noise, but before he can say anything else, I redirect things.

“Come on, we need to hurry. We’re already running late, and we’ve got to get back on the ship. Kheph doesn’t want to stay here too long.”

I wasn’t lying to Felix when I told him I rescued the animal for him.

But it might have been a bit self-interested too. After all, if it might induce him to stay with me forever then I’ll count my lucky stars.

Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 11:44 am

Chapter Sixteen

“Tentacles and Torment: Body Swapped” by FeliXFiles

Fandom: “The Tentacular Tales of Captain Starblade” by KirklovesSpock4eva

Tags: Lord Vardox, Captain Starblade, body swap, tentacles, 18+

Part 7 of Tentacles and Torment

Stuffed full with Vardox’s cock and tentacle, Starblade could only gape as he tried to process this unexpected turn of events. How had he switched back to his own body?

“You look confused, darling,” Vardox drawled as he rocked his hips in time with his tentacle.

The sensations coursing through Starblade’s body were so overwhelming he could barely think.

“I’m glad my talent at fucking is so legendary it leaves even you tongue-tied, my sweet captain.”

Starblade struggled to focus. “H-how did we... switch... ahhh ... back?”

Vardox smirked. “Well, if you must know. I suspect it was when the ship passed out of the Mirror Retrograde Nebula.”

Starblade balked. “We traveled through that dangerous territory?”

“It is a quicker route to my destination. I will admit, I never thought the rumors about it were true, but evidently they are.”

Starblade narrowed his eyes, nostrils flaring. “You planned this?”

“Not exactly. Let’s just remember it as a happy coincidence.”

“You—!”

“Now, let’s get back to fucking,” Vardox said, his forked tongue flicking out as he began to nail Starblade’s prostate with his tentacle and cock at the same time.

FELIX

“This is Cosmo,” I tell everyone once we’re settled back on the Sleigh Belle and starting on our ten-day route back to Earth.

Khephren’s pink tentacles do an excited Kermit flail in the air. “He’s so adorable and fluffy! May I pet him?”

I nod, and he and the others take their turns meeting Cosmo, who is a model foxhound. He sniffs them all, decides they are acceptable, and lets them pet him while giving everyone his precious puppy-dog eyes the whole time.

When they’re done, Cosmo snuggles contentedly in my arms and makes a happy sighing noise.

That produces a resounding “Awww!” from Khephren and Luna.

“Can you believe some asshole abandoned this sweet angel on that space station?” I say, unable to keep the lingering outrage I feel from my voice.

Khephren frowns. “It’s a common problem, unfortunately.”

I scowl. “I guess there are plenty of heartless folks among other species as well. Humans don’t own the market for that.”

Luna shakes her head. “It’s a terrible thing. Happens a lot at different space stations and most of them aren’t well equipped to deal with rehoming the poor animals.”

I rub Cosmo’s big ears. “Don’t worry, boy. You’re safe now.”

Sasha arches an eyebrow, studying me and then Najar. “How exactly did you two end up with this little fluffball?”

I enthusiastically launch into the tale, and when I get to the climax, I can’t help but beam at Najar. “Like a knight in shining armor, he swooped in and offered to adopt Cosmo. Isn’t he just the absolute best?”

Luna’s eyes go wide in disbelief as she stares at her friend. “Shut the ship door. You adopted Cosmo?”

Two of Khephren’s tentacles clasp together in front of him in a weird prayer-type pose. “I’m so proud of you, Najar! Look at how you’ve grown. I feel like I’m witnessing a true miracle right now.”

The big, sexy, golden alien I’ve fallen hard for looks distinctly uncomfortable under all the attention. Underneath it all, he’s a big softy but doesn’t like for others to know. Even I almost missed it at the start.

I selfishly want to keep this side of him—well, and just him really—all to myself.

By adopting sweet little Cosmo, Najar won the final piece of my heart—and my eternal gratitude.

But the thought of leaving Najar and Cosmo behind all too soon makes my heart ache so much it's hard to breathe. I clutch the sweet little foxhound to my chest, my entire being rebelling against the idea of abandoning him yet again.

I don't want to leave Najar behind, either.

The very notion feels wrong.

It's almost like all of this—me ending up getting abducted and traveling with the crew of the Sleigh Belle—was meant to happen. And I fear that letting it all go could be the biggest mistake of my life.

But I don't know how to reconcile my growing desire to stay with my lifelong need to be there for my sister.

Could we somehow make a long-distance sibling relationship work—especially when it might take me days to be able to travel back if she has an emergency?

That doesn't seem realistic.

I rack my brain, trying to come up with a plan that could work, but all I end up with is a headache.

Once we reach our cruising speed, I give Cosmo some time to explore the ship, but he sticks close to my side and remains my shadow the entire time.

Jonesy and a couple of her kittens come out at one point to investigate, but they seem disinterested and rather unimpressed with the foxhound—pretty standard for cats in my experience. Cosmo also doesn't show much interest in them and instead continues to stick to me like glue.

Again, my heart aches. The little foxhound is becoming attached to me.

Stray animals often develop strong, and sometimes fast, bonds with the people who rescue them. Cosmo is already showing clear signs of that. While I am confident that Najar will take excellent care of him when I'm gone, I find myself not wanting to hurt the precious little guy. I don't know what to do.

Throughout our communal evening meal together, I wrestle with the conflicting desires weighing on me only to find no clearer solutions than when I began.

After eating, we all head off to do our own thing. As if in silent agreement, Najar and I head to his room, and Cosmo trots along at my heels, a goofy grin on his furry blue face.

When we get back to the room, I look up and realize I'm not the only one with something on his mind.

Paying closer attention, I can tell that Najar is an odd mixture of serious and nervous, the latter of which brings me up short. It's not something I've witnessed with him before, but the way his tentacles are coiling and uncoiling tells me something's wrong—especially since his tend to be far more controlled than Luna's or Khephren's.

I've started to realize tentacles often reveal the state of a Dravethian's emotions. Najar keeps his tentacles close to the chest—or rather, technically, his back—than the others. But that fits his personality and the walls he has around his heart. For his

tentacles to be moving around so much, something must be seriously bothering him.

“Are you okay?” I ask, worry growing inside me.

He startles, and one of his tentacles jerks a bit in the air. “Uh... yes. I just need to talk with you about something important.”

Well, that doesn't sound ominous or anything. My stomach drops and I'm momentarily lightheaded.

We settle on the couch and I clutch Cosmo to me like a life preserver.

Cosmo gives a contented sigh as I start to pet him in an effort to soothe myself.

Najar's body is rigid with tension and there's a hint of wariness mingled with determined resolve in his eyes.

“Okay, what do you want to talk about?”

“I...” He swallows. “At the start of all of this, we agreed to a no-strings-attached, friends-with-benefits situation for the duration of this trip.”

Oh, God, does he not want to have sex with me anymore? Was I a bad lay? No, surely not.

He stalls for a moment, rearranging the pillow behind him until he continues, “The time we've spent together has been amazing, far more enjoyable even than I ever could have imagined. I've found profound joy in building our friendship, not just sharing our bodies.” Two of his tentacles begin to twitch nervously. “But in getting to know you better, and learning all your beautiful depths, I've also come to care for you more than I have for anyone in a long time.”

My heart thumps loudly in my chest, and there's a strange ringing noise in my ears.

Najar cares for me . My feelings aren't entirely one-sided.

He clears his throat and sits up straighter. "What I'm trying to say—poorly, I realize, probably because I've never said it to a partner before, but"—he fixes me with a steady gaze—"I've fallen in love with you, Felix."

For a moment, I can't breathe and I'm lightheaded again.

I want to jump for joy, cry, and scream all at once.

His tentacles sway in the air and he smiles. "I know the timing is horrible, and that it goes against what we promised one another. But I've discovered that, although there are many things in my life I can control, my feelings are not on that list when it comes to you."

My heart aches. He has no idea how much harder he's making all of this for me.

Najar's voice grows hoarse. "I know we don't have much time left together, and I hope me telling you this is not a burden, but I felt I needed to come clean and be honest—not only with you, but also with myself." A trembling hand reaches out and cups my cheek. "When I think about my future, I see you in it, right beside me. Please, tell me truthfully, is there any chance that you could love me too?"

I carefully set Cosmo on a pillow and fling myself into Najar's arms.

He catches me with a surprised grunt and has to steady himself so we don't fall on the floor.

I don't give him a chance to catch his breath before I kiss the daylights out of him,

only pulling back when I need oxygen.

For the first time since I met him, Najar Mezdel looks stunned.

“Believe me, I love you, too. I’ve just been too scared to say anything. Considering how we first met, I didn’t think there was a chance in this universe that you might feel the same.”

His arms and two tentacles wrap around me, holding me tight as his features soften in awe. “You truly love me, too? I am not the only one who’s been made an emotional mess by all of this?”

I can’t help but laugh. “Are you kidding? I’ve been a wreck for days. I’ve been falling for you for quite a while and my heart decided early that there was no turning back. But I was prepared to stay silent and endure the heartbreak of leaving you all on my own.” Curled in his lap, I lay my head against his chest and let out a heavy sigh. “Najar, I want to be with you too. I’ve thought about my future a lot, and traveling the universe with you and all your friends seems so much more fulfilling than returning to my old life.”

“Then you should stay,” he whispers, squeezing me tight.

“I want to, I really do,” I reply, “but I can’t just leave my sister behind. We’re the only family we have left. If something terrible were to happen to Gemma while I was traveling light-years away, I’d never be able to forgive myself.”

He starts massaging my back with his hands and tentacles, and my tense posture gradually loosens. “This is indeed a complex conundrum, but not necessarily one that cannot be solved in a mutually beneficial manner.”

I lift my head. “What do you mean?”

“Give me time to think on this, and I swear I will formulate a plan that will make all of us happy.”

I search his face. “You honestly think we can make this work?”

“I do.” He reaches up and cups my cheeks tenderly. “I’ve lived a life of duty and responsibility ever since my parents died. After losing them, I never wanted to let anyone else into my life.” He gives me a wry grin. “Well, apart from Khephren and Luna, who basically forced their way in during childhood—the way they still butt into my personal life for my own good. But I never let myself even entertain the notion that I could have a life partner of my own.” He lovingly strokes my cheek with one of his tentacles. “Until I met you, that is.”

Oh, freaking hell. This is turning into the most swoonworthy moment of my life. I just pray my heart doesn’t explode from the emotional overload I’m experiencing.

“You make me want things I’ve never dreamed of before,” Najar says. “You make me need in ways no one else ever has.”

Damn .

“Me too,” I whisper. “I think we understand one another so well partially because we have similar backgrounds. We were both forced to become adults at an early age and didn’t have many people in our lives that we could rely on. We quickly learned that being self-sufficient was easier, less painful. When you only rely on yourself, no one lets you down.” I pet his tentacle. “We’re kindred spirits in that regard.”

“You speak sound words of wisdom.” Najar’s eyes are full of a tender affection that I want to bask in forever.

It’s a struggle, but I force myself to be an adult and ask the hard questions.

“So, how do you think this would work? Not even considering the question of Gemma, we’ve only just started dating. It’s been fast and overwhelming. Sometimes that can lead to everlasting love, but it can also flame bright and then fizzle out. If I leave Earth behind to be with you, what happens if, in a week, a month, or a decade, we break up?” I hate thinking of that but I have to. “Afterward, I can’t imagine we could stay together on the ship very easily, and trying to return to life on Earth would be a logistical nightmare for me if I’ve basically gone off the grid for an extended period of time.”

Najar considers this, digesting all of my concerns. “You are right. There is greater risk on your side of this equation. But I will do everything in my power to make you happy. There are no guarantees when it comes to love. So I can’t promise anything about our feelings. But I can prove just how dedicated I am to you.” He repositions me on the couch and kneels on the floor in front of me. “While I’m not an expert when it comes to Earthling customs, but I am offering myself to you, heart and soul, for the rest of our lives.”

I gape at him, and for a second, I think I might swoon—as in, literally faint. Najar is being so serious and so gentlemanly, it reminds me of how Gramps always treated Nana—and damn does that ever work on me.

Najar clears his throat. “I believe that, in the customs of your people, I am asking for your hand in marriage, Felix Taylor. This is a calculated risk for me too. You’re the first man I’ve ever given my hearts to. Who’s to say you don’t grow tired of me and want to end things? I could be the one left brokenhearted—and that scares the hell out of me. But I’m willing to take that risk because you are the one and only man in the universe that I want to spend the rest of my life with.”

It’s all too much. To my surprise, my vision becomes blurry as hot tears roll down my cheeks.

Several of Najar's tentacles flail with worry. "I have upset you. How?"

I shake my head. "You haven't. I'm just on a bit of an emotional roller coaster right now." I sniffle. "You really want to marry me? You're willing to risk your heart for me?"

His answering smile is breathtaking. "Yes, I am. I want us to be monogamous life partners until the end of our days. How do you feel?"

My rational brain tells me it's too fast. Too soon. Too... reckless .

But I tell those thoughts to go to hell. For once in my life, I'm willing to take the risk and be a little reckless.

If not for love, then for what?

Besides, I'm rather certain there's no other man quite like Najar out there and I won't let him get away without a fight.

"I want to be your life partner too. Our feelings may have happened fast, but my instincts tell me I can trust you to protect my heart." I lean forward and put my hand on his chest. "And I, in turn, will protect yours."

He grins sheepishly. "Just so you know, I have three."

I blink at him kneeling before me. "Three what?"

"Hearts."

I sputter. "Y-you have three hearts? How did I not know this before now?"

“Well, it hasn’t happened to come up in conversation until now.”

I facepalm. “God, I feel like an idiot. I’m a veterinarian, for Chrissake. How many times have we been naked in bed together and I never noticed you have three freaking hearts!”

His lips twitch. “To be fair, we’ve usually been quite busy in bed with other things, and once done with our lovemaking, you tend to fall asleep right away. It’s only natural you wouldn’t notice.”

My cheeks warm. “Hey, I told you, that’s just how it is with me. No making fun allowed.”

He leans in and kisses my forehead. “I promise, but just so you know, I think it’s rather adorable.”

“Yeah, yeah.” My smile fades and I turn serious again. “Even marriages don’t always last. Being your life partner sounds amazing but there’s so many unknowns ahead of us.”

“That is true,” Najar agrees. “There is risk for both of us in making such a commitment. As Kheph often reminds me, nothing in this universe is guaranteed when it comes to love, but to have loved and lost is better than to regret never loving at all.”

“He’s surprisingly wise,” I say.

“You don’t even know the half of it. The stories I could tell.” He chuckles and then sighs. “I’m sure we will face challenges. Even I can admit, I’m not always the easiest man to live with. Being in touch with my feelings is not something I am naturally good at, but I am willing to do the work to be with you.”

“If things don’t pan out, what then?”

He clasps my hands and kisses my knuckles. “We would cross that bridge if we ever came to it. What I can promise you is that no matter what happens between us, my honor as a warrior would never allow me to rest until I made sure you were able to find a new life that would make you happy, whether that be helping you reintegrate into human society on Earth or perhaps settling down on another planet somewhere. I would do everything in my power to assist you, even if that meant asking others for help.”

I believe him. There isn’t a single doubt.

Besides, I also know that Khephren, Luna and Sasha would hold him to his promise to help me.

He gazes deep into my eyes, hope shining on his face. “If I can find a way to resolve the situation with your sister, will you stay and be my life partner?”

“Yes,” I say, my voice hoarse with feeling.

His entire face lights up, and it’s stunningly beautiful to witness.

“Trust me, Felix. I will find a way for us to be together no matter what.”

“And Cosmo,” I add with a wink.

He chuckles. “Yes, and Cosmo. We already have our own ready-made little family, don’t we?”

He’s right about that, and it warms my heart.

I'm not sure how we're going to resolve the matter of Gemma, but for now, I plan to follow his advice and trust that Najar will somehow engineer a winning plan for us to be together.

Source Creation Date: July 18, 2025, 11:44 am

Chapter Seventeen

Chronicles of Chaos: An Informal Record of Life Aboard the Sleigh Belle

Stardate: 78429.1

Origin: Elysium Lunar System

Destination: Earth

I never thought I'd be writing this in the ship's log, but I've fallen in love. Our captain, Khephren Thrase, was right when he warned me that such emotions can slowly creep up on you before suddenly bowling you over. But by that point, you're happy to be swept away.

Will I ever be as lovey-dovey and ridiculous as Khephren and Sasha? Probably not. Or, at least, not around others. Maybe just when Felix and I are alone...

I've asked him to marry me. Never in my life did I think I would be the marrying type. Not because I'm against marriage, per se. Rather, I just never believed it was in the cards for me. But the minute I pulled Felix onto our ship with that tractor beam, I changed my destiny—and his.

Because the greatest miracle of all is that he loves me too and wants to share his life with me.

And Cosmo, our newly adopted foxhound, of course.

If I didn't already know that it would set Luna and Khephren off into annoying raptures, I'd almost say it's a Christmas miracle...

—Najar Mezzdel, First Lieutenant and Voice of Reason on the Sleigh Belle

NAJAR

After our heart-to-heart, Felix crashes and falls fast asleep with Cosmo curled up protectively by his head.

"You keep an eye on him," I whisper to the little foxhound.

He yawns back, which I take for agreement.

I waste no time in rounding up Luna, Khephren, and Sasha so I can share the plan that's been slowly developing in my mind over the last hour.

When I get to the end, Sasha nods his head in approval. "Wow, man. Didn't know you had it in you."

Khephren grabs me in a tight hug, his tentacles vibrating. "I always knew you had it in you! I'm so proud of you!"

However, Luna nervously jiggles her foot. "Do you think this will really work?"

"I don't know for certain, but we have to try. Are you all willing to help me?"

"All for one and one for all," Rambo says and beeps as he twirls around us.

Sasha gives me a fist bump. "We've got your back, man. And for the record, I think you two are a good match."

“Of course, they are,” Khephren adds with a dreamy sigh. “They were brought together by the magic of Christmas. It’s destiny .”

I would normally quibble with such rhetoric, but for once, I keep my mouth shut. After all, what are the odds that I would find my one true love in this big, vast universe the way that I did? Even to me, it feels pretty magical.

Luna laughs. “It sure has been fun watching the mighty fall. Never thought Najar would become a big schmoopy fool for love.”

I give her a mischievous side-eye. “Well, if the Christmas romance tradition holds, we all know who’s next in line, don’t we?”

Everyone stares at Luna, who backs up, hands in the air. “Whoa, let’s not start talking out of turn here, folks.”

However, I have a sneaking suspicion that if my plan works, I might just be helping orchestrate a romance for Luna too.

“Do you think we can make it to Earth by Christmas Eve?” I ask Khephren.

He immediately hurries to his station and begins recalculating our route. “Hmm, I think we can make it work—just barely.”

Originally, we had planned to arrive closer to Earth’s New Year’s Eve, but with my new plan, I want us to get there before Christmas.

“Now here’s the most important part,” I tell everyone. “For the next few days, you have to keep this a secret from Felix. I don’t want to prematurely get his hopes up, and if this works out the way I’m hoping it will, then it will be my Christmas present to him.”

“Aww!” Khephren says, hearts in his eyes. “That’s so sweet. Felix brings out the best in you, my friend.”

On that, I cannot disagree.

However, I soon discover that keeping things a secret from Felix proves more challenging than I anticipated. Every time he looks at me and gives me that smile he saves just for me, I want to bare my soul. I’m probably more relieved than anyone when it’s finally Christmas Eve.

“Don’t worry,” I tell Felix for the umpteenth time. “My nearly foolproof plan is already in motion.”

Felix nibbles on his bottom lip while stroking Cosmo’s fur. “I trust you, I really do, but I can’t help but be a little anxious. Won’t you let me in on at least part of what you’ve figured out?”

“Everything will be revealed very soon.”

“The man-of-mystery thing you have going on is not helping my nerves,” he grumbles.

I pull him into my arms, and he rests his head on my chest. “I can’t believe it’s Christmas Eve already,” he says with a sigh.

“I know, but this is the season of miracles, isn’t it?”

He pulls back and arches an eyebrow at me. “I thought you didn’t believe in any of that kind of stuff.”

“Well, I didn’t until you came into my life. What bigger miracle could there be?”

He smacks me playfully. “Smooth talker. Although, to be fair, I am pretty miraculous.”

Just as I’m about to show him how special he is, Khephren’s voice comes over the comm system. “Attention, crew. Ho, ho, ho and Merry Christmas Eve to you all. Tonight, we have a very special surprise in store for our very own Felix Taylor. Felix, please report to the bridge ASAP.”

I offer him my arm. “Shall we?”

He takes it and leans into my side. “I’ve told you before that I love this rather gentlemanly side of you, haven’t I?”

“Perhaps, but I’m always happy to hear praise from you.”

He reaches out his free hand and pets one of my tentacles while Cosmo gives me a dirty look, something that happens often when I’m getting Felix’s attention instead of him. I do not blame our little foxhound. Getting petted by Felix is one of my new favorite things too.

“Very well, then. Najar Mezdal, I find that side of you quite enchanting.” He smiles and then flutters his eyelashes at me. “So, want to tell me what this surprise is?”

I laugh. “Well, it wouldn’t very well remain a surprise if I told you now, would it?”

He growls in frustration.

“Think of it as a collective gift from me and the rest of the crew of the Sleigh Belle.”

“Color me intrigued,” he murmurs. “I warn you, it better be awesome. You’ve built up way too much hype to let me down now.”

Once the elevator arrives at the bridge, the doors open to reveal a beaming Khephren. “You’re here. Okay, everyone strap in. We’re going to be landing momentarily.”

Felix frowns. “Landing where? I didn’t think we had any stops on our route back to Earth.”

Khephren waves a finger and a tentacle in admonishment. “Uh-uh. That’s part of The Surprise. You’ll see very soon. Have some patience.”

My love grumbles but straps himself into a seat, and we all follow suit.

In moments, we’re hurtling through Earth’s atmosphere and straight toward the Nevada desert once again.

Talk about déjà vu.

I’m surprised to find myself smiling, an oddly nostalgic sensation washing over me. Was it only a few short weeks ago that we came here and picked up Felix?

I glance at him, admiring every line of his handsome face that has become so dear to me.

That old adage of “When you know, you know” certainly proved true for me. I don’t have any doubts about being with Felix—only an eagerness to start this new chapter of our lives as partners.

Now I’m just keeping my fingers, toes, and tentacles crossed that the final piece of the puzzle comes through as promised.

Once the ship has completed its landing, we all head toward the cargo bay, where Khephren lets down the ramp.

I guide Felix down it and we emerge into the early evening air of the rather chilly desert.

Felix looks around bewildered for a moment. “Uh... are we back on Earth? I thought we wouldn’t arrive until closer to New Year’s. What’s going on?”

Thank goodness he still doesn’t know how to read the ship’s navigation system or else he would have figured out what we were doing right away.

His gaze shifts directions and he squints. “Wait, what is that?”

In the distance, a pair of vehicle lights come ever closer, and the tension in my gut eases.

Thank you, dear goddess Thekmis.

The automobile comes to a stop a short distance away, and the lights turn off. Then the driver’s door opens and out steps a full-figured woman with curly auburn hair and an enormous smile on her face, a mirror image of Felix’s, immediately reveals something she shares with her brother.

None of us are surprised when Felix suddenly starts running toward his sister, sweeping her up in a joyful embrace.

“Gemsy, is it really you?” He clutches her tightly. “Oh, my God. I know it hasn’t been that long, but damn have I missed you.”

She lets out a tear-filled laugh. “I missed you too, bro.”

He pulls back, holding her shoulders. “What are you doing here?”

Gemma grins and dashes away her tears. “Ask your friends.”

Keeping his arms around her, Felix turns back to us as we move to stand closer to the reunited siblings. “What on earth—no pun intended—is going on here?”

“Merry Christmas, from all of us,” I say.

He blinks at me like I’ve sprouted an extra tentacle or two.

Gemma lets go of him, tosses her hair over her shoulder, and pops the trunk of the vehicle.

“Nice to finally meet you all in person. Now, can you guys help me get a couple of things out of the car?” She eyes Luna with interest. “After all, you have quite a few extra appendages on you, so I say, all the better to help carry my bags with.”

“So feisty,” Luna whispers.

“Be careful, I think you might be drooling,” I tell her, my tone sardonic.

Luna scowls at me, wipes her mouth surreptitiously, and hurries to assist Gemma.

In no short order, we all start carrying several heavy suitcases to the ship.

“Wait, hold up. What the hell is going on here?” Felix demands as he trails his sister, looking utterly bewildered.

Gemma puts her hands on her hips and raises a brow at him. “I’m saying sayonara to Earth, big bro, and coming along for the ride of a lifetime while exploring the universe with you, your hubby-to-be, and all your new friends. That’s what’s going on.”

Felix's mouth drops open. "Say what now?"

His sister rolls her eyes at him fondly. "Stay focused, will you, Felix? Here's the dealio. Your fiancé and the rest of the crew reached out to me a couple of days ago and told me of your predicament." She shakes her head. "Honestly, you should have called me yourself as soon as possible. We could have figured this out together from the start."

Felix's eyes start glistening with unshed tears. "I didn't know how to tell you I wanted to stay, and I couldn't bear the thought of leaving you alone."

"I don't know, maybe you could have done what they did and invited me to join you? Duh!"

He bites back a sob. "I thought about it, but I didn't want to unintentionally pressure or even guilt you into doing something you didn't want to do."

Her expression softens. "As if that would ever happen. You, of all people, should know that I have a backbone and a will of my own." She grins. "But that being said, wherever you go, I go. We're family, and we always will be."

I have to say, I'm already looking forward to becoming family with them too.

Felix stares at his sister with a mixture of amazement and awe. "I know, but this is such a big ask. Are you really prepared to leave behind all that you've worked for?"

Gemma shrugs. "I've already quit my job, so I'd say so."

Even I'm surprised to hear that part.

Felix's eyes practically bug out of his head. "You what?"

She laughs. “Don’t get me wrong. I love helping people as a doctor, but I’ve become really fucking jaded by the American healthcare system. Before all of this”—she gestures to us—“went down, I was seriously contemplating moving to New Zealand or something, just to try a new experience in a place that might value actual lives over profit—unlike most of the hospitals I’ve worked at during my career.” She shrugs once more. “Then the universe saw fit to open up a different path, and I’m totally down to try it out. Besides, I can always come back if I want to. Najar and Khephren have promised me that.”

Indeed. Kheph and I quickly learned that Gemma Taylor is a ruthless negotiator.

Felix looks to us questioningly, and we both nod.

Gemma continues, “I’ve told most of my colleagues that I’m taking some time off to deal with personal family issues but that I might be back in a couple of years or so. Who knows? They were actually all pretty cool about it. Some of them were even envious.”

The smug look on her face reminds me of her brother and I’m certain she learned it from him.

“B-but what about your medical license?”

She cuts him off. “That’s for me to worry about, not you. I love you, big bro, but I am a full-fledged adult now, and I have been for a long time. You’re not responsible for my life choices.”

“I know,” he whispers. “I just don’t want you to be making a rash decision that could leave you unhappy and full of regret. Your happiness is just as important to me as my own.”

She pulls him back into a hug. “Sure, it’s a comparatively quick one, but not rash. For instance, I’ve asked all of your new friends about a million questions in the process of making my decision.”

“She really has,” Sasha agrees. “It was seriously intense. I was way impressed.”

Felix doesn’t even know the half of it. His sister was able to intimidate me a little, which I respect as a warrior.

“I thought it was totally hot,” Luna adds in a dreamy whisper.

Gemma grins. “I’m not the kind of person who’s going to make an uninformed choice that affects my life in a massive way. I’ve done my research.” She gestures to the Sleigh Belle. “And talk about kismet. This ship of yours didn’t have a medical professional on it, and now it will. I’ll be responsible for keeping the crew healthy and medically safe during our travels.” She rubs her hands together. “And I’m super pumped to check out the high-tech equipment Luna told me your medical bay contains.”

Luna twirls one of her pigtails with a flirty tentacle. “I’d be happy to give you a tour, Gemma.”

I smirk.

Yep, I have a feeling it won’t be long until Luna gets bitten by the Love Bug too.

Felix takes hold of Gemma’s hands. “You’re completely sure about this?”

She smiles at him, affection written all over her face. “I love you, Felix, and I want you to be happy. You found someone special you want to spend the rest of your life with. There’s no way I’d stand for you turning him down because of me. I refuse to

be an impediment to true love, dammit.”

Felix sputters. “B-but I didn’t even tell you he’d proposed.”

“Honey, you didn’t need to tell me. I knew you were falling in love with him almost from the start. Then, of course, Naj shared all the details when he called.” She glances at me. “You’re totally his type, by the way.”

“Oh, really?” I drawl. I can’t wait to interrogate Felix about that later.

“When Najjar told me what was going on, I honestly wasn’t surprised.” Gemma’s expression turns mischievous. “Besides, you’ve always had a weird fascination with tentacles, ever since you started reading?—”

He hastily lifts a hand to cover her mouth, and I’m immediately curious. That sure sounded promising. I add it to the list of things I plan to pry out of my delectable human fiancé.

“Enough of that now. Ahem,” Felix says, looking all kinds of awkward. Then he frowns at Gemma. “What about all of your stuff here on Earth?”

She waves a hand dismissively. “I’ve already moved all my important stuff into storage. I had your apartment packed up and put your stuff in my unit too. By the way, you totally owe me for that. I closed out your lease and did the same for mine. The storage unit’s set on an auto draft, so my bank account will stay active and pay it on a monthly basis. I’ve got plenty in there to pay for that unit for at least several years. Otherwise, I don’t have a whole lot tying me down here.” She tilts her head in thought. “I’ll have to figure out how I’m going to earn money while we’re gallivanting across the universe, but your friends assure me it shouldn’t be a problem.”

Again, Gemma has really thought of everything. She's going to be a valuable addition to our crew for multiple reasons.

Felix shakes his head in amazement. "Damn. I haven't even considered what I'm going to be doing in that regard."

Gemma grins. "Your head's just been too full of lovey-dovey thoughts for you to think about anything else, don't worry. But there are options for us. Believe me, I've grilled Khephren and Najar on this extensively over the last few days."

I shudder a little, remembering. She could have made a skillful Dravethian warrior specializing in interrogation.

Felix studies all of us. "You guys would really be okay with my sister becoming part of the crew?"

My best friend steps forward. "We might be an odd band of misfits, but we're one happy family here on the Sleigh Belle—and we already consider you part of that family, Felix, so your sister was an honorary member before we ever talked to her. After getting to know her better over the last few days, we're confident she'll fit right in, and we're happy to have her."

Gemma claps her hands loudly. "Okay, now that we've got that all cleared up, let's get a move on. No point in spending too long out here. We don't want any randos spotting us, do we?"

That kicks us all into gear and we spend the next fifteen minutes loading all of Gemma's stuff—of which she has quite a bit—on the ship. She definitely came prepared to be gone from Earth for a very long time. Oddly, it makes me feel even more confident about things working out well.

As we're finishing up, she pulls out a strange tank and a bag holding water and... a fish?

Felix gasps. "You brought Wanda!"

"Of course, I brought Wanda. There's no way I was going to leave your beloved pet behind."

Felix gives her a big smacking kiss on the cheek and grins. "Thank you. You are seriously the best. Just wait until you meet Cosmo. I hope he and Wanda get along."

"The picture you sent me when we texted the other day was adorable. I can't wait to make friends with him."

"We also have many wonderful cats aboard our ship, beloved by Thekmis," Kheph adds enthusiastically. Today, he's wearing his Meowy Catmas shirt and a Santa hat.

Gemma gives him a sincere smile. "That's cool. I like cats too. We're pretty much a pro-animal family."

Finally, we have Gemma's vehicle emptied of all her belongings, and she leans in to put the key in the ignition, then leaves the door unlocked when she closes it.

"Don't worry," she tells Felix. "I have someone coming to pick it up later, and they said they'll take it with them for good. People will do weird shit to get a good deal, especially on a car these days."

"You really are on top of things," Felix marvels. "Nana would be so proud."

"I think so too."

We all make our way onto the ship and help Gemma move her things to the room that will be hers.

Luna got it all prepared for her in advance, and I'm not surprised to see she chose the room next to hers.

"I'm right next door if you need anything," Luna says, licking her lips, which Gemma can't seem to stop staring at.

Hmmm. I think there's going to be a lot of love in the air this Christmas season.

We give Gemma a tour of the ship, and she goes into raptures when we get to the medical bay. Sasha stays pressed against Kheph's side, smiling indulgently while he and Luna spend quite a bit of time explaining all the machinery and equipment to her, most of which is substantially more advanced than what she had available to her on Earth.

But based on her questions, I get the impression that Gemma is a quick study and will no doubt master most of it quite fast.

While she's chatting away with the others, Felix presses into my side, and I wrap an arm and tentacle around him before leaning down to kiss the top of his head.

"Happy early Christmas," I tell him. "Was it a good surprise?"

"The best. I never thought..." His voice fails him for a second. "I was really starting to worry we might not be able to make this happen." He gazes at his sister in gratitude. "She's truly remarkable, you know."

"I have gotten that impression, for sure."

He nods to himself. “Let’s make sure we do all we can to help her adapt and get comfortable. I want her to enjoy traveling the universe with us.”

I study her and Luna, who has inched quite a bit closer to Gemma, her green tentacles straining as they try not to touch the human woman.

“Oh, I don’t think we have to worry about that too much,” I murmur.

Eventually, Khephren informs us that we need to, quote, “get the hell out of Dodge before the Alliance notices us” and we take off.

I can breathe a little easier once we’ve left Earth’s orbit and are heading en route to our next destination.

But then my moment of harmony is shattered.

“It’s time for the Christmas Eve Extravaganza,” Khephren announces with glee. “Let us all adjourn to the movie theater.”

Felix blinks in surprise. “There’s a movie theater on the ship? How did I not know that after all this time?”

I try not to groan, having an awful notion about what this extravaganza is going to entail.

But I resign myself to my fate and trudge after everyone heading to the ship’s movie theater.

Gemma’s bright-eyed and obviously intrigued, which I take as a good sign, and when she sits down in one of the theater seats, I’m not remotely surprised that Luna parks herself at Gemma’s side.

Felix and I take our own seats, and I grip the arm rests until my knuckles turn white.

Sasha moves to the front of the room and turns on the screen. “Good evening, friends. In honor of this festive holiday eve, I’m delighted to debut this year’s special Christmas episode of The Cat-tacular Tales of Princess Jonesy .”

Khephren begins clapping loudly. “You are so amazing, my love!”

I hang my head and cover my face with one of my tentacles.

Felix lets out a nervous laugh. “Haha. You know, uh, that kind of reminds me of this obscure online story I like to read.”

Sasha zeros in on him like a man on a mission. “No fucking way. Please tell me you also read The Tentacular Tales of Captain Starblade .”

Felix’s eyes go wide. “This is so surreal, but yeah, I’m a huge fan.”

I startle. Felix has read that story?

A slow smile starts to spread over my lips. That would explain so many things.

“Fucking A,” Sasha says. “I’m a major fan too, although I only discovered it when a bunch of extraterrestrials introduced me to it. You know it’s, like, a mega sensation on the intergalactic web, right?”

Felix sits up straighter. “No way. Hardly anyone on Earth knows anything about it. I honestly felt a bit weird for my level of investment in it.”

Sasha shakes his head. “Dude, it’s amazing, and totally inspired the title for my show. But we’ll get to that in a minute.” Sasha grins at him, puffing his chest out with pride.

“I actually know the author.”

Felix gasps. “Shut the front door. You know KirklovesSpock4eva?”

“Fuck yeah. His real name is River Sullivan. And, get this, he works for the Alliance for Neutral Alien Lifeforms on Earth.” He smirks. “We call it ANAL.”

“No freaking way! You’re joking.”

Sasha shakes his head. “For real. I’m fucking pen pals with him. We write each other emails on the regular. He hasn’t had a chance to travel to outer space yet, but he’s dying to do it, and from what he’s told me, he should be able to in a couple more years.” He winks.

“We’re gonna try to meet up and go to Tentacular Tales Con.”

Felix jumps to his feet, eyes alight. “What???”

Sasha grins knowingly. “That’s right, there’s a fucking intergalactic fan convention for Tentacular Tales that happens every year. It’s one of the biggest conventions around the universe.”

Felix reaches out and grabs his hands. “We have to go.”

Sasha gives an evil grin. “Fuck yeah, we do.” He looks over at Khephren and mock glares. “Make it so, Tentacle Boy.”

Kheph happily flaps several tentacles in the air and blows Sasha a kiss. “Anything for you, my love.”

I can’t hold back any longer. “So, you read that tentacle porn space opera, huh?”

Felix's cheeks turn bright red.

Gemma starts cackling with laughter. "You don't know the half of it, Najar. Not only does he read it and fanboy over it like nobody's business, but he also writes his own Tentacular Tales fanfic."

Felix groans and covers his face with his hands. "Gemma," he whines, "I hadn't told him about that yet."

She shrugs unrepentantly. "You snooze, you lose, bro."

"Are you sure we need to bring her along with us?" he stage-whispers to the rest of us.

Gemma reaches over and flicks him on the forehead.

"Oww!"

"Serves you right," she chortles.

A warm sensation that's starting to become familiar unfurls in my chest just watching them. The sibling love and affection between them is very evident, and I'm so thrilled I could make this happen for both of them.

Selfishly, of course, I'm also happy for me, because I was going to do whatever it took to be able to be with Felix.

Even if I had to bribe Gemma or fight the Alliance to do it.

"I'd love to read some of your fanfic... together," I whisper in Felix's ear.

He blushes but the way he squirms in his seat tells me he likes that idea too.

Everyone soon settles down, and Sasha finally starts the special Christmas episode we recently finished producing.

Felix is entranced the entire time and keeps grinning at me.

When the end credits start to play, he leans over and whispers in my ear, “You were amazing.”

I shrug awkwardly. “I don’t know why, but the fans of the show really seem to like having me in it. If it weren’t for Kheph, Sasha, and Luna, I wouldn’t do it.”

“But you’re too good a friend to say no,” he says, reading me like a book. “I love that about you,” he murmurs softly. He takes hold of one of my hands and kisses it. “Thank you for arranging everything, for figuring out how we could be together so I wouldn’t have to leave my sister behind. Like I told her, I don’t think I could have asked her myself. I thought about it, of course, but it felt like I would be subtly pressuring her, not only as her older brother but also as her only family. The fact that you all wanted to, and were able to convince her yourselves, means the world to me.” He stares deep into my eyes. “It’s the best Christmas present I’ve ever gotten, Najar. Thank you.”

Then he kisses me and everything else falls away.

The things this man makes me feel.

“May we have many merry Christmases to come,” I tell him once his mouth lets mine go.

In response, his eyes shine with joy. “I know we will. After all, we’re proof that

Christmas miracles do exist.”

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Ten months later...

FELIX

“The space station is waiting for us. They’ve rounded up the latest group of abandoned strays for us to rescue,” I tell Najar over breakfast.

He sips his kavga and strokes my thigh with one of his tentacles.

It’s been nearly a year since we got together and in that time, Najar has grown much more comfortable being affectionate with me, especially around others.

“We should be arriving in a few hours. Do we have enough room to bring them all aboard?”

“Yep. Our kennel facilities are more than equipped to handle things. It’s only six this time.”

In the past ten months, I haven’t sat idly by like a kept husband or anything. Not long after Gemma joined us, I realized I wanted to do something about helping those animals abandoned at intergalactic space stations. It didn’t take long for me to learn these busy ports have a chronic problem with folks dumping their pets and few resources to help with safely and humanely rehoming them.

That’s where the crew of the Sleigh Belle comes in.

Luna and Najar helped me transform one of our large storage rooms into a

comfortable kennel facility with a small veterinary med bay. We now have a regular schedule for visiting different space stations during our travels and collecting any animals who need help.

Saving Cosmo inspired me, and I'm finding this new calling to be incredibly rewarding. I still get to interact with and learn about exotic animals—of the extraterrestrial variety—and help rehome them or, in some cases, reintegrate them into the wild when able.

Right now, Cosmo's curled up in a ball at my feet, having his morning nap. Needless to say, he's living his best life too.

Gemma and Luna, still in their pajamas, come into the canteen giggling at one another.

Just like Najar predicted, those two ended up falling hard for one another, and I'm grateful. Seeing my sister so happy has eased so many of my worries.

Now we're a ship full of lovey-dovey couples, and it's kind of awesome.

I swear, instead of the Sleigh Belle, the ship should probably be called the Love Space-Boat—or something like that.

“Let me get some kavga for us, babe,” Luna offers.

Gemma yawns and smiles. “Thanks, gorgeous.”

“We've got a pickup at the space station,” I tell her.

“Ooh! How many this time?”

“Just six. A Gemellian fire-lizard, two bonded Rebu songbirds, a Carmathian

monkey, an elderly Levitron tortoise, and a Scythian two-headed pig.”

She chuckles. “Sounds like an early Christmas present for you.”

I rub my hands together in anticipation. “I’m so excited. They’re all fascinating species.”

Najar nuzzles my ear and I sigh happily. “I love it when you get so excited.”

Luna joins us at the table and hands my sister her coffee, which earns her a kiss.

My sister and I smile at one another, silently sharing our happiness.

Kheph and Sasha are the last to arrive for breakfast, and I fill them in on the plan for once we dock at the station.

A sleepy-looking Sasha nods along and takes a sip of his kavga. Then his eyes go wide. “Oh! Guess what? I was able to buy our tickets for Tentacular Tales Con last night. You owe me big time, Felix.”

I blink. “Didn’t they go on sale at some ungodly hour?”

He grins. “Yep. I totally had Kheph help me stay awake so I could grab tickets as soon as they went on sale. It’s a good thing I did, too. They sold out in five minutes.”

I gape. “Really? It’s that popular?”

Sasha gives me an incredulous look. “Dude, you still haven’t realized how massive that story is?”

I wince. “My bad.”

“I heard that the author might be attending this year,” Najar offers dryly.

Sasha and I flip out and instantly start bombarding him with questions before Sasha finally says, “Screw this. I’m going to email River right now!” and races out of the room.

Everyone starts laughing, and I lean into Najar’s side. One of his tentacles wraps around my shoulder while another massages my neck. I stroke the tentacle in my lap in response, and Najar makes a pleased noise.

Every day I’m thankful for how my life turned out. Traveling on the Sleigh Belle with those nearest and dearest to me has been a non-stop adventure filled with wonder, joy, and more love than I ever dreamed of. Life is good out here among the stars—and I can’t wait to see where our journey takes us next.

With Najar at my side, the universe is the limit.