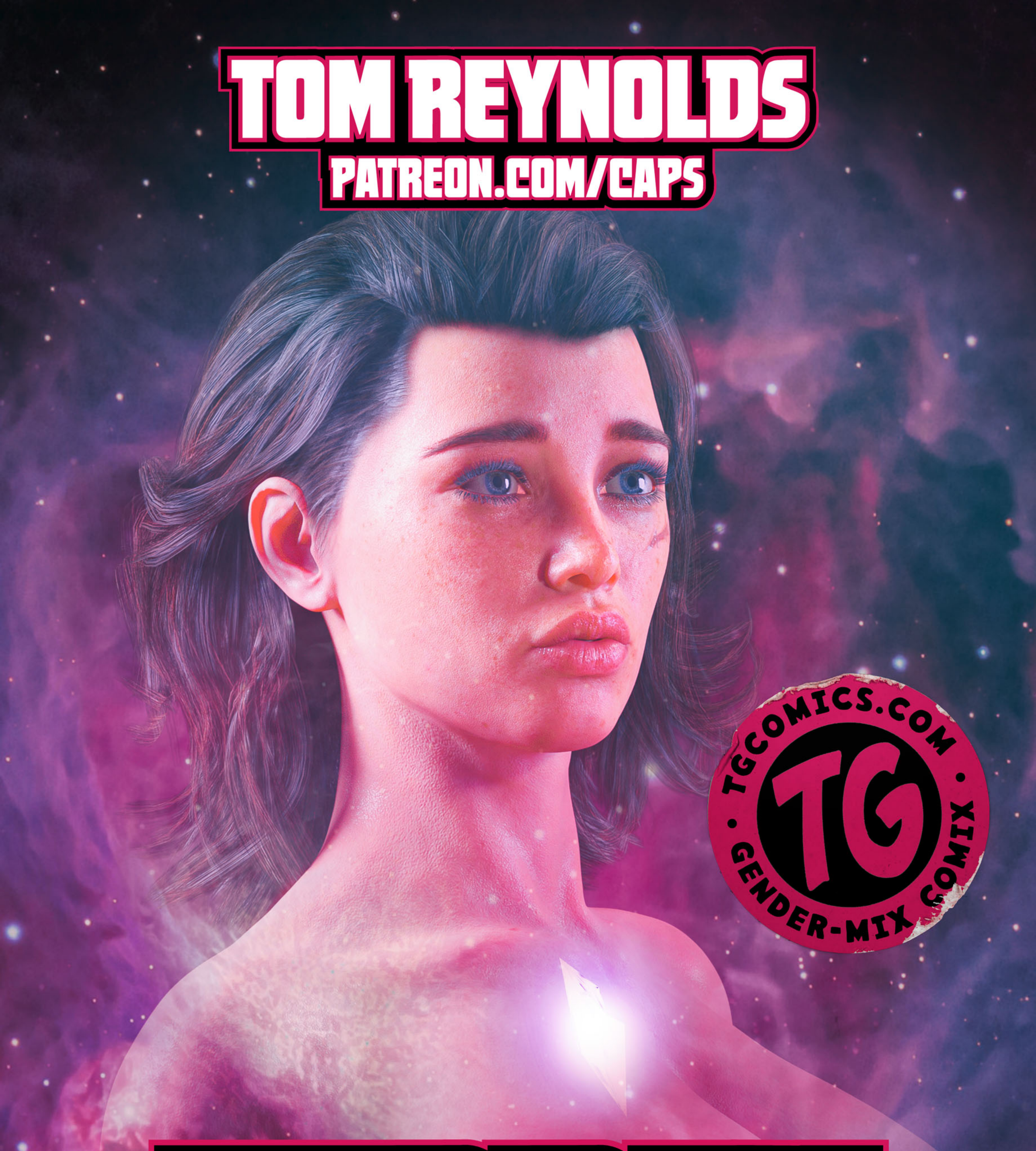
TOM REYNOLDS

PATREON.COM/CAPS



HIDDEN EMPIRE II

THEY'RE *CLOSING* THE PORTS.

I DIDN'T THINK THAT WOULD HAPPEN SO SOON.

WHAT'S HER CONDITION, SILVER?

SHE'S PAST THE WORST OF IT.

DO YOU *REALLY* THINK SO?

WELL, SHE'LL HAVE TO GET USED TO THE CHANGES, OF COURSE.

BLAM!

BLAM!

BLAM!

I'M READY.

ARE THEY HERE?

ROB! YOU SCARED US HALF TO DEATH!

GETTING ANTSY IN YOUR OLD AGE?

YOU BROUGHT HER TO A MORTICIAN?

IT WAS ALL I COULD DO IN THE MOMENT.

I THINK I DID A PRETTY GOOD JOB... FOR A MORTICIAN.

YOU'VE DONE A *FINE* JOB.

WHAT'S HER STATUS?

DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT. SHE'LL ***LIVE,*** THAT'S ***ALL*** THAT MATTERS RIGHT NOW.

THAT BAD?

I'LL NEED TO HAVE A ***LONG*** TALK WITH HER ONCE THIS IS ***DONE.***

I'M SORRY I COULDN'T GET HERE ***BEFORE*** THE EXCITEMENT.

YOU WERE A DAY BEHIND. WE TRIED WAITING FOR YOU BUT RAN OUT OF TIME.

IT'S ***NOT*** YOUR FAULT.

I ONLY MANAGED TO GET PLANET-SIDE BY USING MY ***DIPLOMATIC*** PASS. I DON'T KNOW HOW WE'RE GOING TO GET ***HER*** THROUGH.

I DIDN'T THINK ***BUREAUCRACY*** WAS GOING TO BE ***SUCH*** AN ISSUE.

IT'S AN ISSUE ***NOW.*** THE CITY'S ON HIGH ALERT.

STILL, I *MIGHT* HAVE A SOLUTION.

ONE OF MY AGENTS HAS MANAGED TO PROCURE *FIESTAL FURY* ARMOR. IT'S AN OLDER STYLE, BUT IT *SHOULD* CHECK OUT.

BAH!

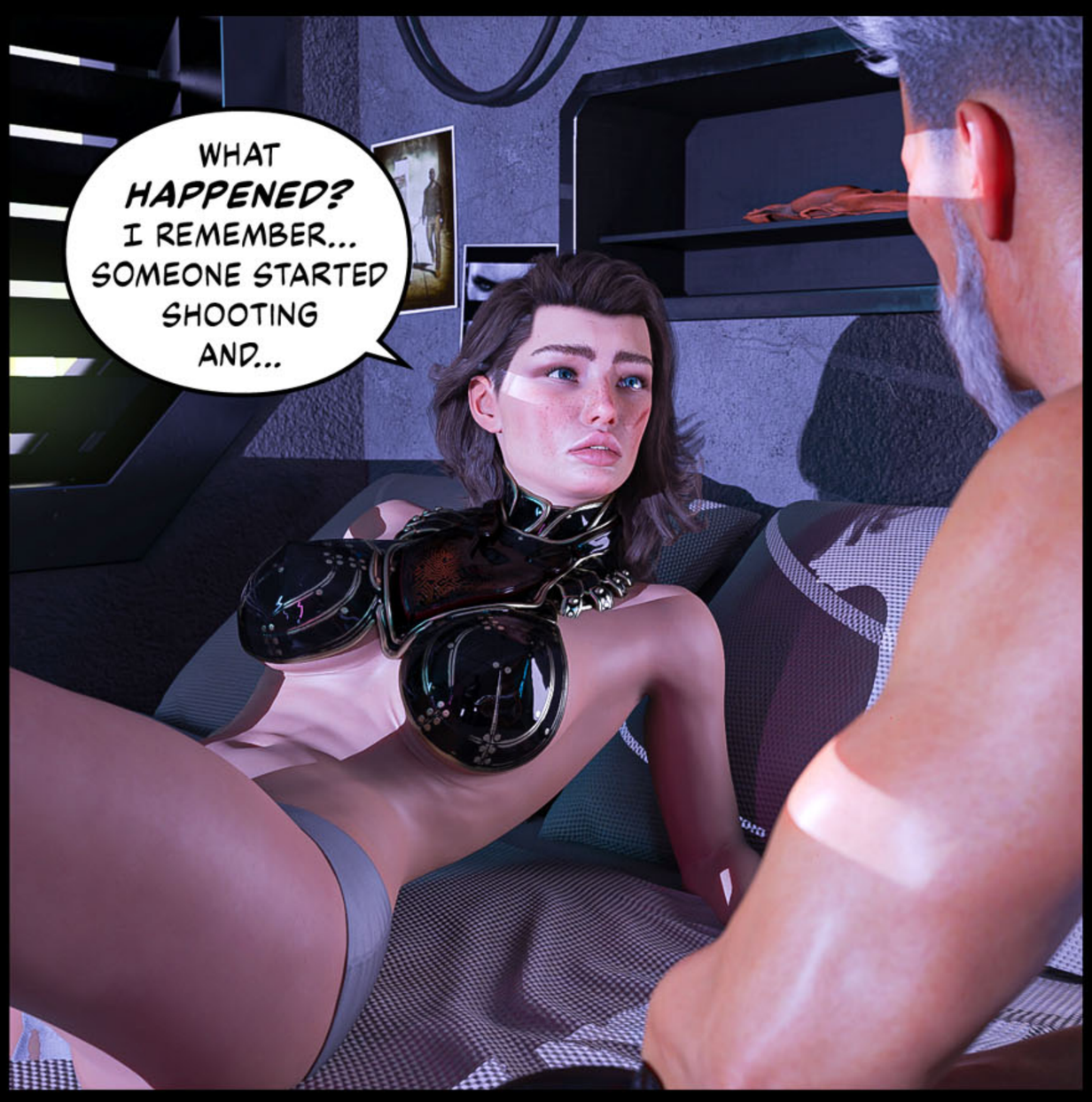
IBN. WE *NEED* TO GET PAST SECURITY. OTHERWISE, WHAT'S THE *POINT?*

HMM...

SO FAR SO GOOD...

IBN?

I'M HERE, MY DEAR. I'M HERE.


WHAT HAPPENED? I REMEMBER... SOMEONE STARTED SHOOTING AND...

HATE
SO FAR SO GOOD.
GIVE US A MOMENT, WILL YOU? SHE'S HAD A HARD ENOUGH NIGHT WITHOUT YOU TWO IDIOTS CROWDING HER.

WE NEED TO MOVE. SOON. IT'S NOT SAFE HERE.

AYE, I'LL JUST GET ON WITH IT, THEN.

SHARK
THE HORROR CABIN

HATE
KARAN, I'M SO SORRY YOU WERE INVOLVED IN ANY OF THIS.

HATE
SO FAR SO GOOD...

WHAT *HAPPENED?*

YOU WERE SHOT. ***RIGHT*** THROUGH THE LUNG.

IT TOOK ***EVERYTHING*** THE DOCTOR COULD DO TO PATCH YOU UP.

THE MACHINERY HAS WORKED ITS MAGIC. YOU'LL BE RIGHT AS RAIN IN A FEW HOURS.

C'MON, LET'S GET YOU ***UP.***

A FEW ***HOURS...***

IT FEELS LIKE THE LAST DAY HAS BEEN A ***LIFETIME'S*** WORTH OF PAIN.

IT PROBABLY HAS, FOR ***MOST.***

THOUGH YOU NEED TO REMEMBER HOW ***IMPORTANT*** IT IS FOR US TO CONTINUE TO MOVE FORWARD. IF YOU STOP NOW, YOU'RE GOING TO HURT ***EVEN*** MORE.

YEAH, I'M FEELING PRETTY ***PUNCH-DRUNK*** RIGHT NOW.

THAT ***MIGHT*** BE FOR THE ***BEST.***

YOU KNOW, I'M ALIVE BECAUSE OF YOU.

YEAH?

AND THAT BLOODY ***BRAVE*** STUNT YOU PULLED...

DO YOU KNOW WHAT THAT OUTFIT *WAS?*

THE ONE YOU PUT ON.

I SUDDENLY FELT SO...

CONSTRICTED... IN MY NORMAL CLOTHES.

I NEEDED SOMETHING ELSE TO WEAR, AND IT JUST...

CALLED TO YOU?

YEAH. WHERE IS IT NOW?

WE HAD TO ***BURN*** IT.

WE COULDN'T LEAVE ***ANY*** TRACES BEHIND.

OH, I'M SORRY.

IT'S OKAY. DON'T WORRY.

THERE'S MORE VALKYRIE SQUADRON TRAINING ARMOR OUT THERE.

VALKYRIE SQUADRON?

I'LL EXPLAIN LATER. BUT IT'S ***SIGNIFICANT*** THAT IT CALLED OUT TO ***YOU*** IN PARTICULAR.

WHAT'S WRONG, KARAN? ARE YOU OKAY?

IBN, WHY DID YOU CALL ME ***SOPHIA?***

I...
UH...

AM I OKAY TO TAKE THE NECKLACE...

HUH?

I JUST WANT TO FEEL NORMAL FOR A MINUTE.

IBN, **WHERE'S** THE NECKLACE?

I'M A GIRL, **BUT...**

THAT'S THE ***OTHER*** THING I MEANT TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT.

THE LASER BOLT SHATTERED THE CRYSTAL NECKLACE AND MELDED THE SHARDS INSIDE YOUR CHEST.

IT MEANS THE MAGIC IS INSIDE YOU NOW... AND WITH THE ***MEAGER*** MEDICAL TECH WE HAVE AVAILABLE, YOU'RE...

...STUCK.

AT LEAST FOR THE MOMENT.

STUCK?! ARE YOU FUCKING ***KIDDING*** ME? DAMN IT, IBN!

I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN *DO* THIS... KEEP IT TOGETHER. IT'S *TOO MUCH!* I FEEL LIKE I'M GOING INSANE.

KARAN, *LISTEN* TO ME. YOU CAN DEAL WITH THIS.

I HAVE TO.

WHAT?

YOU'RE NOT EXACTLY *ALONE* IN THE WHOLE "BEING A WOMAN" THING.

IT'S A POWER THAT ***ONE DAY*** YOU'LL BE ABLE TO CONTROL.

RIGHT NOW, THOUGH, YOU ***NEED*** TO TRUST ME. YOUR POWERS AREN'T DEVELOPED ENOUGH TO CHANGE THE BALANCE OF THINGS.

IN FACT, IT MIGHT BE BEST IF YOU KEEP THEM ***HIDDEN*** UNTIL I'VE HAD A CHANCE TO TRAIN YOU.

KARAN, MY TRUE NAME IS ***CHRISTINA VAN KRIEZE.*** I WAS THE SECOND SWORDSWOMAN OF THE VALKYRIE SQUADRON.

MY WIFE ***DIED*** DEFENDING YOUR LIFE.

YOU MEAN ***MORE*** TO ME THAN ANYONE ELSE IN THE SOLAR SYSTEM.

ONLY A FEW MONTHS AFTER YOU WERE BORN, THERE WAS A ***REVOLUTION.***

YOUR PARENTS, YOUR ***TRUE*** PARENTS, WERE MEMBERS OF THE ROYAL HOUSEHOLD.

THE KING AND HIS WHOLE FAMILY WERE ***MURDERED.***

EVER SINCE, THE MEMBERS OF THE SQUADRON WHO ***BETRAYED*** HIM, AS WELL AS THE ***HIDDEN EMPIRE,*** HAVE BEEN CONTROLLING THINGS FROM BEHIND THE SCENES.

THE ***TRUE*** POWER BEHIND THE THRONE.

WHY ARE YOU TELLING ME ALL ***THIS?***

SO YOU'LL REALIZE THAT YOU ***CAN*** GO ON LIVING AFTER THE ***WORST*** DAY OF YOUR LIFE.

BUT THE KING *ISN'T* DEAD. I *JUST* SAW HIM AND HIS DAUGHTER DEDICATING THE NEW BOTANICAL GARDENS ON THE VIEWSCREENS.

MAGIC. IF WE DISGUISED YOU AS A BOY FOR YOUR ENTIRE LIFE, THEN DON'T YOU THINK IT WOULD BE *EASY* TO HAVE SOMEONE STAND IN FOR A *KING?*

I... I *REALLY* AM A GIRL? HOW DOES THAT FIGURE INTO ALL OF THIS? *WHY* DID YOU NEED TO CHANGE *ME?*

YOU WERE IN THE CASTLE, AND...

SORRY, WE *DON'T* HAVE TIME TO GO INTO ALL *THAT* NOW.

WE *NEED* TO GET YOU OFF WORLD AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

OFF WORLD?

TO MY PLANET, *DEADWATER.*

YOU'LL BE *SAFE* THERE.

EWS — Downtown attacked this morning

KARAN, THIS IS PRINCE ROBESPIERRE TANTA. HE'S HERE TO HELP YOU GET OUT OF THIS STICKY SITUATION.

I PREFER TO BE CALLED **ROB**, IF THAT'S OKAY.

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF RATHER **LARGE** CONSPIRACIES THAT REVOLVE AROUND YOU, KARAN.

YOU'RE AT THE CENTRE OF A LOT OF SHIT. IT'S **NOT** GOING TO GET EASIER, NOT FOR A **LONG** TIME.

BUT IF YOU VALUE YOUR LIFE, THEN YOU DON'T HAVE MUCH CHOICE OTHER THAN TO GET THE **HELL** OUT OF HERE WITH A DODDERING OLD MAN, A PRINCE, AND A MORTICIAN.

WHO SAID *ANYTHING* ABOUT ME COMING?

YOU CAN HOLD A *RIFLE,* CAN'T YOU?

IF THEY FOUND *KARAN,* AND FOUND *ME,* HOW LONG DO YOU THINK IT'S GOING TO TAKE THEM TO FIND *YOU?*

SO, I HAVE NO CHOICE, IS WHAT YOU'RE SAYING? IBN MAJID, YOU'RE A *CRUEL* MAN.

I'M NOT EVEN A *MAN.*

NEXT STEPS?

WE NEED TO GET KARAN OFF WORLD. THAT'S GOING TO MEAN BYPASSING ROYAL SECURITY MEASURES AND OUT INTO THE DOCKS.

SUGGESTIONS?

I'VE GOT ***ONE...***

BUT THIS ONE'S **NOT** GOING TO LIKE IT.