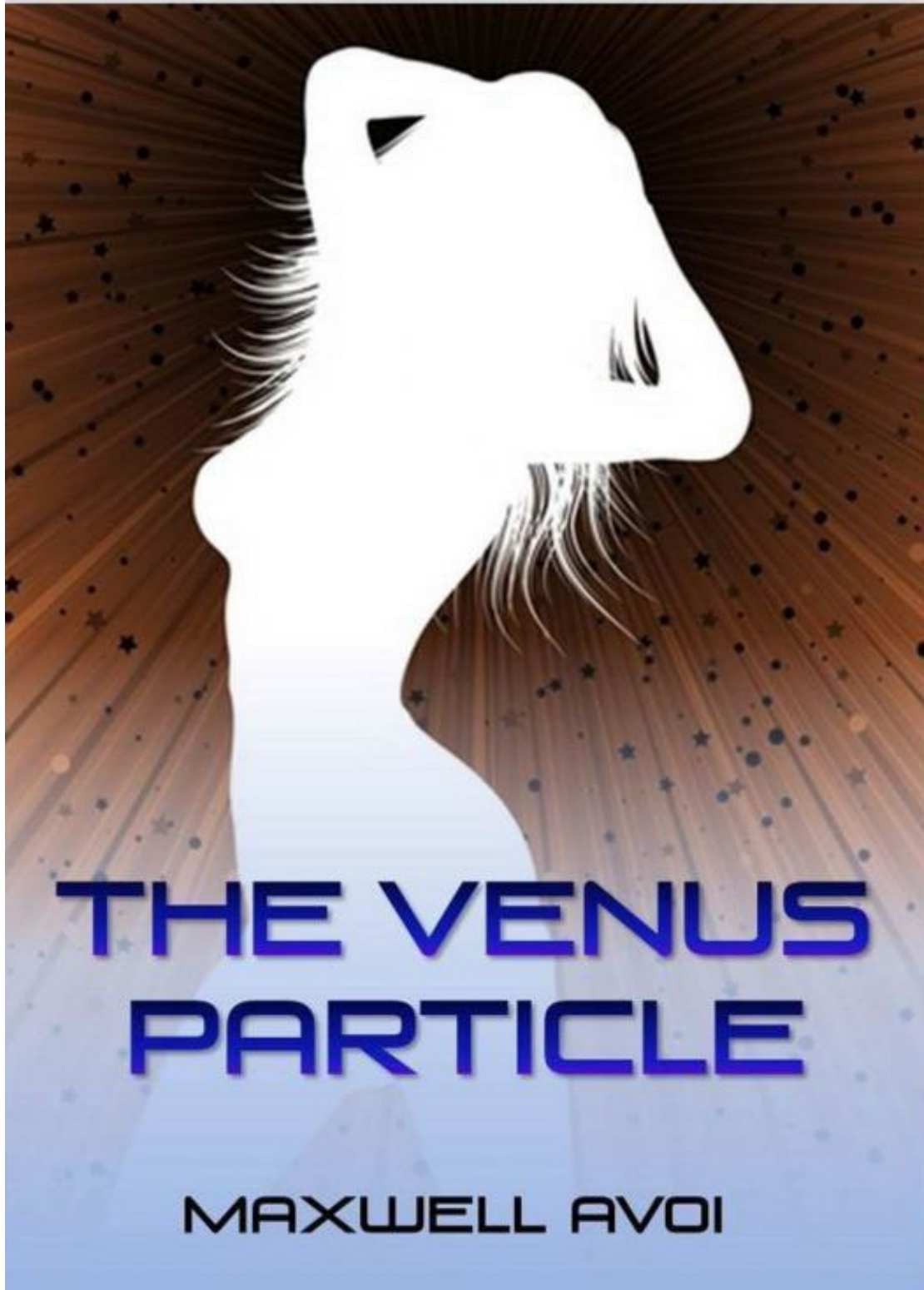


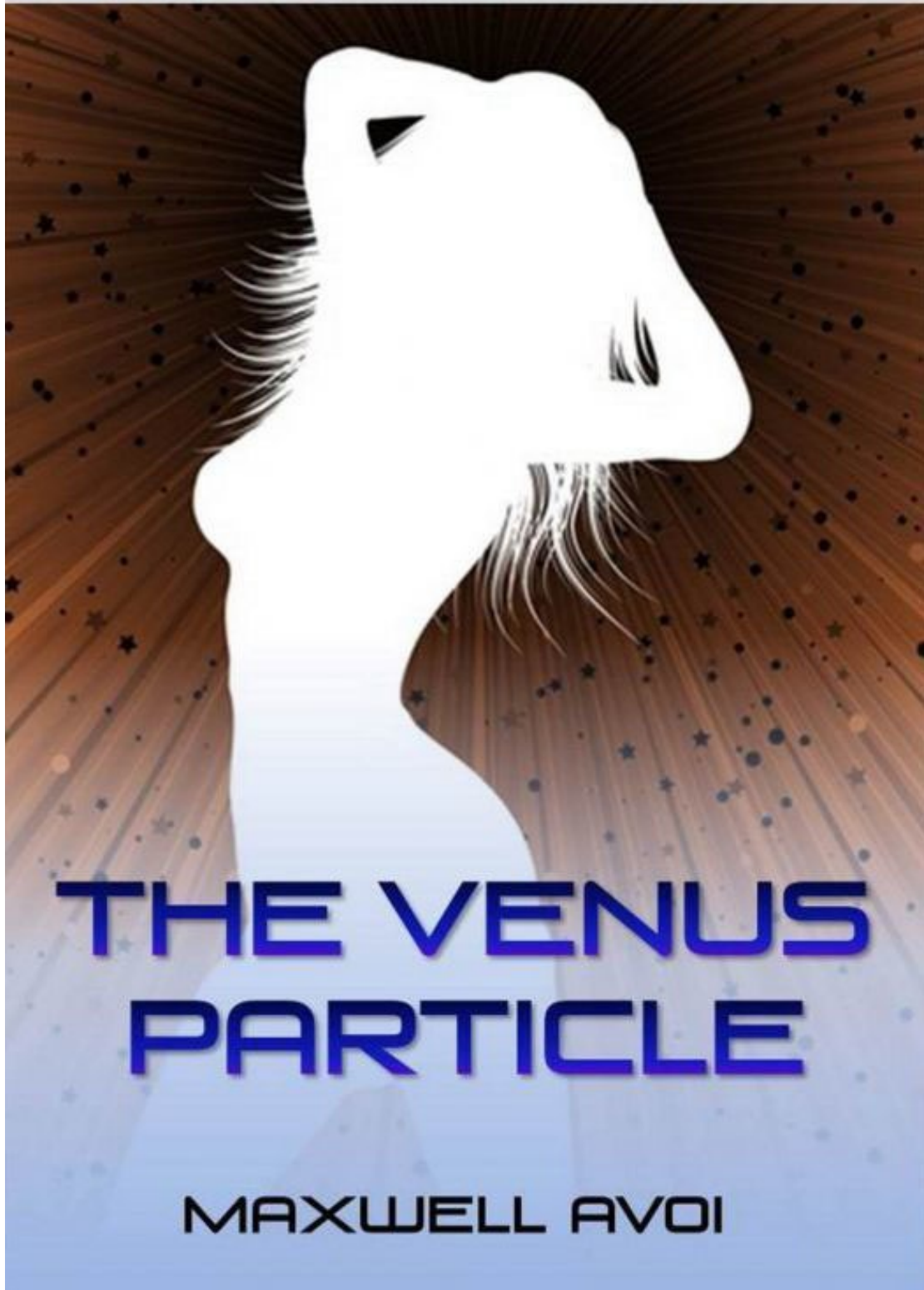
**PLANETARY UNION**



# **THE VENUS PARTICLE**

**MAXWELL AVOI**

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# **Planetary Union: The Venus Particle**

By Maxwell Avoi

*Smashwords Edition*

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They lay on a blanket on the sand, their bodies cooling in the dry air. Both of them were naked, enjoying the feel of the sunlight on bare skin. There was no one else on the beach, the glowing white sand stretching for miles without blemish.

She was tall, though the word “long” would apply better now that she was stretched on the blanket. Her perfect skin was the color of coffee and cream, her eyes slightly tilted in a way that didn’t immediately imply a particular Human nationality. Her body was superlatively formed, muscled like a panther and just as sleek. Broad hips and ideally-proportioned breasts finished the impression of a woman designed to be a model for heroic statues.

Her partner was about an inch shorter, though he didn’t seem to mind. His hair was the same color as the sky that stretched forever above them, his eyes golden and his smooth skin the color of a night scattered with faint stars. In certain ways he was much longer and wider than the average Human, and he had a more muscular ass than most Human males. He was sweating, having just finished using his body in ways that they were obviously intended. She was in the same state, smiling as she stroked his head.

“That was...truly exceptional,” he said, relaxing into her amazing body.

“I’m glad you thought so,” she said. “I enjoyed it as well.”

“Yes, I could tell when you scared the birds from the trees,” he said, grinning.

She laughed and kissed him, her lips just as talented as the rest of her body. “You know why.”

“I do. It’s a little intimidating, you know, that you’re designed to be the best at everything.”

“Not everything,” she said, her smile leaking into her voice. “And it’s not like it’s my fault.”

“I know, I know. Blame Doctor Travis, right? Well, if he was still alive I’d arrange for him to get some kind of major award. Look, this right here. This one knee. It’s more perfect than anything else I’ve ever seen, at least until I look at

another part of you.” He kissed the knee and then kissed his way to her face.

“I do love you,” she said.

“I love you too.”

“I wish we could be together more often.”

“I’m working on it. I’ll do what I can,” he said.

“Petty Officer N’Nessk, please report to the conference room in half an hour for mission briefing,” said a faintly mechanical female voice. It seemed to emanate from midair.

She kissed him again. “Do you have to go?”

“You know I do. I’ll keep you close to my heart until the next time.”

“Sometimes I think I feel your heartbeat,” she said. “I know it can’t be, but sometimes...”

“Til next time, dearest.” He stood, his half-erection magnificent in the sunlight, and said, “Computer, end simulation.”

Everything but the beautiful woman in front of him vanished, becoming a room approximately ten feet square with featureless silver walls. She sat up and smiled at him as he approached the console set into the wall near the door. He opened it to find his neatly folded uniform and dug through it until he withdrew a metal heart-shaped pendant on a chain. He pulled it apart, revealing an information chip, and plugged it into a jack on the console. “Computer, load 36H into the carrier, please.”

The woman vanished and he unplugged the chip. He put it back together and then draped the chain around his neck before putting the uniform back on. He was glad that the bulge from the heart was nearly invisible under the fabric; he didn’t want to be separated from his beloved any more than he already had to be.

“This Tango-Alpha assignment is a little unorthodox compared to the usual

fare,” said Captain Zerkoth. Zerkoth was tall and lean with dark brown hair...or rather fur, fine and soft over her entire body. Her wide, slitted eyes and high-set ears marked her as a Nellick, resembling nothing so much as a humanoid Jaguar. She stood at the head of the long table in the conference room, addressing the top officers and civilian liaisons of the UNS Philotes.

Commander Jesse Highground, First Officer, sat at her right-hand spot. He was a tall, blonde Human, with a strong jaw and brown eyes that appeared capable of staring through a bulkhead.

Next to him sat Doctor Vrelin, the head of the medical division on the Philotes. She was a Spathian, with silvery skin and four huge, round breasts. Tiny smile wrinkles at the corner of her eyes and mouth were the only indications that she was one of the older people in the room.

A27-4a, a male version of 36H, sat at the end of the table on the other side of Vrelin. He had the same dark-tan skin and tilted eyes, as if he had been created by someone who had averaged the Human population into an ideal. He was handsome enough to be distracting, which he fought by being as professional as possible while on-duty. He also allowed the others to call him Aid in an effort to connect with the rest of the crew.

Lieutenant Hrrok, head of security, stood in the corner at attention. He insisted on being addressed as a male, even though he appeared to be a female Spathian with a highly developed musculature and a truly mind-blowing ass. An accident with the quantum hopper had led to the formerly male Ogroth being trapped in a body identical to another woman at the table, Kellera D’Kath.

Kellera appeared much more relaxed than Hrrok, and in spite of the fact that they were technically identical she had a much softer look. She was a civilian, head of the Recreation section that processed and planned for the Tango-Alpha situations that the crew faced. Her goal was to make things run as smoothly as possible and she was well-versed in a wide variety of different cultures and their preferences.

The newest addition to the crew, a liaison officer who worked closely with Kellera, sat across the table from Doctor Vrelin. Lieutenant Desirae Richards was a dark-haired, blue-eyed Human with a figure that inspired dark thoughts and a face made to be painted on angels. She sat very straight in her chair, her

hands folded as she tried to project the very image of professionalism.

Finally, another Nellick sat at the spot that would be on the Captain's left. Another civilian, Grris Hsao was an official diplomat for the Planetary Union, permanently assigned to the Philotes in an effort to give the ship a veneer of respectability when a world or other destination might balk at allowing a Recreation-class ship to have docking rights. He was also the Captain's husband, a situation that both of them found to be agreeable enough that they regularly had reason to appreciate the soundproofing that surrounded every room on the Philotes.

"We will require all hands during this assignment," the Captain said. "Union Base Sentinel is currently hosting science ship UNS Wardencllyffe. The Wardencllyffe is just pulling in after a two-year mission in deep space. Both that crew and the crew of the Sentinel could use our services, and we need to be prepared."

The door slid open, admitting Petty Officer N'Nessk. He went to the last empty chair at the table, sliding in between Diplomat Hsao and Lieutenant Richards. The Captain paused in her briefing until he sat, not commenting on his tardiness. The silence in the room as he sat down was enough of a reprimand.

"The base has a wide variety of life forms, and I am confident that we can accommodate them. The Wardencllyffe leans toward conventional humanoid species thanks to a lack of room and resources, so it is more homogenized than the Sentinel. The appropriate files have been forwarded to Diplomacy, Recreation, and Civilian Interaction. I expect everyone to be as professional as we have been in the past, and to work together. This might be a stressful assignment thanks to the sheer amount of work, but I have full confidence in you all."

She dismissed the meeting, and as everyone stood up Doctor Vrelín said, "Petty officer N'Nessk, a word, please. Come with me to my office?"

N'Nessk glanced at the Captain, who nodded. "He is on duty, Doctor, if you would be brief?"

"I'll do what I can," said Vrelín. Now that the meeting was over she felt free to give the Captain a smile and a bawdy wink. The Captain's lip twitched in response, her version of a surprised laugh, and the meeting room cleared.

N’Nessk followed the doctor to the lift, his movements jerky and uncertain. His inoculation and prophylactic implants were up to date, both of them over ninety days from needing renewal. He performed his job effectively, outside of a few instances of tardiness that were becoming less and less frequent. When the doors closed around them he said, “What’s this about, ma’am?”

She shook her head and gave him a smile. “Nothing bad, Petty Officer. I just wanted to talk to you about some reports I’ve had recently. Trust me, it’s more of an issue of me being concerned about you than anything else.”

“Oh. Ah. Okay, I suppose.”

He lapsed into silence and she seemed unwilling to throw out another conversational gambit. He glanced at her enormous bosoms out of the corner of his eye, feeling as if he was cheating on 36H. On a Recreation ship such things weren’t indiscretions; indeed, in many instances it was even welcomed so long as it didn’t interfere with duty. If he hadn’t been so in love with 36H he might even have approached Vrelin, but he was, so he didn’t.

She led him to her office, her body language relaxed and calm. N’Nessk allowed himself to think that things were going to be fine; he was able to keep up that slight deception until they got to her office. She gestured to the chair across from her desk, and as soon as he did that she hopped up to sit on the corner of her desk, her massive breasts bouncing off of each other companionably.

“N’Nessk...Petty Officer...Cevik. I wanted to talk to you about something that’s got me a little concerned. I hope you don’t mind. I’m talking to you as a friend and as a doctor, so please don’t feel that you’re being singled out. The health of the entire crew is a priority for me.”

“Of...of course, Doctor. I’m just not sure what the problem is, and...”

She held up her hand. “Cevik. I’m...very familiar with Callypians, and their needs. I know that it’s common for your people to have regular intercourse, usually once a day and often more. I’ve had several people, members of your own race, tell me that you haven’t been involved with anyone in quite a while. And the thing is, I know that for Callypians that the desires can build up quickly, so those kinds of reports are worrying for me. If you’ve found someone in the crew to share intimacy with, then that’s fine, but if you simply don’t have the desires anymore then we need to do some tests to check your hormone levels.”



N'Nessk was silent for a moment, and then he said, "I...wish that there was a little more privacy, I suppose."

She laughed, twenty years dropping from her in an instant. "I understand that. Unfortunately, on a Recreation ship the standards are slightly different. I hope you know that I'm not saying anything to embarrass or offend you. This is coming from a place of concern, Cevik."

N'Nessk nodded and said, "I understand, it's just unexpected. I want you to know that I am seeing someone, and that my needs are both normal and fully met."

She nodded. "That's wonderful to hear. I also wanted to make sure that your living arrangements are acceptable to you. I know that you're one of the few among your race to live by yourself, and I wanted to check to see that you're still all right with that."

He nodded. Most Callypians lived in a communal environment, but he had requested a small single room when he had fallen for 36H. The time alone allowed him to spend more time with her, taking advantage of a small holographic projector so that he could at least see her. He could only touch her in the Recrooms but talking to her was often enough. If nothing else, it allowed him to masturbate with her help when he was otherwise unable to visit her in physical form.

"I'm fine with it. I guess I'm just a little different, huh?" He gave her a disarming smile, and was glad when she returned it.

She patted him on the shoulder. "Well, none of us would be here if we were the classic Union personnel, huh?" She hopped off the desk and went around to her chair again. "That's all I wanted to know about, Cevik. Thanks for coming in, it's always good to make sure that everyone on the ship is one hundred percent."

"Glad to put your mind to rest, doc," he said. He stood and left, heading for the bridge so that he could man the communication station.

"Captain Zerkoth to Union Base Sentinel in regards to a Tango-Alpha assignment," said the captain. They were in transit, their post-relativistic speed

making sure that they were difficult to contact or even detect. The bridge crew ran a pair of drills along the way, one dealing with first contact and the other relating to emergency evacuation maneuvers from Engineering. N'Nessk kept his head down and did his job once he was back from the doctor.

Tango-Alpha assignments meant that the Philotes had been assigned to a particular ship, base, or other location to provide recreation and distraction to hardworking members of the Union. In many cases, this involved quite a lot of one-on-one work with the specially trained and chosen members of the Philotes in the Recrooms, set to provide a wide variety of scenarios for the enjoyment of their clients. Recreation-class ships were new but their reputations were growing and their services were in demand for lonely corners of Union space.

"This is Captain Adams of Union Base Sentinel," came the response. On the screen, a handsome older Human with pale skin, hair, and a thick shock of white hair stared at the bridge of the Philotes. His expression suggested that he didn't like what he saw.

"Greetings, Captain. We're going to be within docking range in five minutes, and we look forward to a pleasant stay," said Zerkoth.

"Just so you're aware that we have actual work to do here on this station," said Adams, still glaring. "I don't want you or your people getting in our way at any point."

"Of course, Captain," said Zerkoth, her voice calm. "I appreciate your reminder of our place. Rest assured, my people operate with the utmost professionalism."

Adams growled something incoherent and said, "Have your navigator contact our docking officer, and we'll bring you in with the kinetic manipulators when you're close enough." He made a motion and the signal cut off without further discussion.

"Well that was pleasant," said Highground.

"I have found that Recreation-class ships sometimes get that reaction," said Zerkoth. "Regardless, we have our orders and Captain Adams cannot interfere as far as those orders go. Please remind the crew to walk softly while we are on the Sentinel."

“And what about the Wardencllyffe?”

“We are about to mind out. Mister N’Nessk, please open a channel to the Wardencllyffe.”

It was done in a moment and they were viewing a bridge much like their own. A tall, well-proportioned woman sat in the command chair. She had dark hair and slightly tilted eyes, which when combined with her dark-tan skin marked her as an Adonic. N’Nessk made a small sound, virtually unheard, at the sight of her.

“Captain A35-6b of the UNS Wardencllyffe,” said the woman. “Common designation Captain Allie Five.”

Captain Zerkoth greeted her and said, “We are here for a Tango-Alpha assignment for your ship and Union Base Sentinel, Captain. I suspect that Captain Adams does not welcome our presence, and I hope that our interaction will be more pleasant.”

Captain Allie Five smiled and said, “We’re all looking forward to a little recreation, Captain. It’s been a long two years, and we could all use some shore leave.”

Captain Zerkoth nodded. “Excellent. We should be docking within the next ten minutes, and my civilian and Union recreation officers will be in contact shortly afterward to set up schedules.”

“Looking forward to it. Perhaps you and I could meet for drinks in the base’s commissary.”

“I would like that. Philotes out.”

The signal remained open, the window onto the Wardencllyffe’s bridge still active. Zerkoth turned to N’Nessk and said, “Philotes out, Mister N’Nessk.”

He became aware of his surroundings and started tapping at his console. The signal closed and Zerkoth nodded. “Mister Highground, you have the bridge. I will be in the ready room.”

N’Nessk resisted the urge to thump his forehead on the console in front of him. The sight of Captain Allie Five had shocked him deeply, to the point that he

hadn't heard the Captain telling him to close the signal. Captain Allie Five was so much like 36H that she could have served as the model for his beloved. He had known that Adonics were close to identical but they were so rare that he hadn't met a female one in the flesh before; the closest that he'd come had been the simulation of 36H. He forced himself to focus on his console and did his best to keep from thinking about the glorious Captain of the Wardencllyffe.

Lieutenant Desirae Richards, Civilian Interaction officer, was busier with her new position than she had ever imagined that she could be. She worked closely with Kellera D'Kath who, in spite of being a civilian, was more organized than most Union officers that Richards had met.

"Most of the crew of the Wardencllyffe is Human, but perhaps thirty percent of the crew is not," said D'Kath. She stood before the assembled Recreation staff, briefing them on what to expect and on how to educate the members of the crew to provide the best possible Recreation service to the Wardencllyffe and the Sentinel.

"That thirty percent includes some Nellicks, a few Callyprians, and some Ogroths. There are also two Orgalian, a female and a bi, and of course the captain is an Adonic," said Richards.

"Now we're all used to how those races operate," said D'Kath, allowing herself a little giggle as she spoke. She was Callyprian and when she wasn't on-duty she was rumored to revel in her race's proclivities. The thought made Richards's nipples tingle but she forced herself to stay focused. "Potential problems are probably going to come from the crew of the Sentinel. In addition to a cross-section of most of the species in the Union, they're host to dozens of interstellar travelers of various kinds. We're really going to have to stay on our toes here, people. Of course we're more than happy to offer our Recreation services to civilians, but the Union staff comes first. Everyone has their briefings. I expect us to go out there and have some fun!"

The meeting broke up and the Recreation staff scattered to meet with their sections of the crew. Richards slumped back in her chair, covering her eyes. "How do you do that?" she said.

"Do what?" said Kellera.

“I swear you haven’t had any more sleep than I have. How do you sound like a cheerleader the whole time?”

D’Kath laughed. Richards’s eyes flew open when she felt soft fingers on her shoulders; Kellera had come around behind her and had started to massage her neck. “There are techniques that Callypians use that you might find really interesting,” said Kellera. She squeezed a bit, her fingers finding sore spots on Desirae’s shoulders that she didn’t know that she had.

Desirae stiffened for a moment and then she relaxed in stages as Kellera’s educated fingers discovered and then soothed points of tension in her shoulders and neck. She fought to focus on the words instead of the tingles that flooded her. “I’m not, ah...not familiar with...”

“It’s okay. Just relax. Computer? Can we have a more relaxing atmosphere, please?”

“Specify,” said the computer’s soothing female voice.

“Five-star resort room with a massage table,” said Kellera, laughter tingeing her voice.

The Recreation staff took their meetings in the larger Recrooms, rooms that used holographic and force-field manipulation to simulate millions of different situations. The Recrooms were normally used in official ship Recreation situations and were available for crew members to use when they weren’t needed for official functions. At Kellera’s command, the conference room vanished and then reformed around them. A spectacular, high-ceilinged suite formed around them, with deep carpets and golden accents on the walls. They were in the living area, the massive bed barely visible in the doorway to the bedroom. Desirae’s chair had changed from a comfortable swivel model to a recliner so lush that it was on the edge of being seductive. A massage table shimmered into life in front of them.

“Do we have time for this?” Desirae said, her voice barely above a whisper.

“You know, it’s interesting the difference between Callypians and other humanoids,” said Kellera, her voice still set to lecture mode. She took Desirae’s hand and led her unprotesting to the table. “Callypians assume that pleasure is something that helps clear the mind, that it helps us to be as productive as we

can be. So many others feel guilty about it, as if it's wrong."

She stopped and took Desirae's other hand, facing her. She said, "And besides. I caught you staring a few times."

Desirae blushed and tilted her face away, the color rising delicately on her pale cheeks. "Sorry, it's just...I'm not used to Callyprians, and..."

"It's okay. It really is." Kellera put one hand to Desirae's chin to raise it, then stood on her tiptoes to give the softest kiss that Desirae had ever felt. She gave a small gasp at the sensation of Kellera pressing against her, their breasts bulging together and their lips burning.

"And besides," said Kellera once they pulled apart, "I've been looking at you too."

Desirae allowed herself to touch Kellera, finally, her slim hand stroking at Kellera's skintight uniform. Kellera's smile widened, and she reached down to catch Desirae's hand, to lead it to the stays that held her uniform closed.

They explored one another a step at a time as their uniforms came off. Desirae felt as if she was melting from the heat that filled her; Kellera's touches and kisses were perfectly placed, finding sensitive spots that Desirae didn't even know that she had. By the time Kellera was ready to pull her partner's top away, their breaths were coming hard and a thin sheen of sweat covered both of them.

"Get on the table," said Kellera, trying to keep her voice steady.

"But what about...?"

"We've got time for pleasure. We've got time. Shh."

Desirae got up on the table, sitting so that she faced Kellera. Kellera smiled and said, "You're the most spectacular Human. I want to see more."

Desirae chuckled in the back of her throat and said, "You might need help with, um, with my bra."

"I've tackled tougher engineering problems than this." Still, it took Kellera a minute or two of fumbling with various hooks before she got the final one

undone. The bra, held under pressure thanks to Desirae's prodigious bosom, sprang open. Desirae let it fall to the floor.

"Oh...oh my," said Kellera. She reached around and hefted Desirae's breasts, her hands clearly not up to the job of covering them. "They're huge. Are you sure you're not part Spathian?"

The question surprised a laugh out of Desirae, even as her giant nipples stiffened at the sensation of Kellera's touch and the feel of her soft breasts against her back. "No, thank heavens. I don't know how they stand it with four of these. I can barely manage two. According to the ancestry records that I've been able to access, all the women in my family have looked like this."

Kellera came around the front, her eyes still wide. "You're spectacular," she said, her tone reverential.

Desirae blushed and looked down. "Um. Thank you?"

"I'm so glad that you're willing...I've been wanting to see you naked since you came onboard."

"I'm looking forward to coming onboard," said Desirae, giving Kellera an impish smile.

Kellera frowned in confusion for a moment before her face cleared and she laughed. "A pun! At a time like this! You're a treasure!" She leaned forward and cupped Desirae's left breast, the size of her head, in both hands before kissing the nipple gently. Desirae stiffened and gasped in a deep lungful at that.

"Lie back," Kellera whispered. Desirae did so, feeling half hypnotized. Her family had a streak of bisexuality but she had generally leaned toward women. The idea that this incredibly attractive Callypian wanted her was wonderful, and she went willingly.

Kellera removed Desirae's boots, unzipping them slowly and teasing at her bare skin beneath. Desirae lifted her wide hips and beautifully rounded ass, her body reacting without her input, and Kellera took advantage of the position to roll Desirae's trousers down her flawless legs. Kellera's eyes widened more with every inch uncovered. "You're perfect," she whispered. "If it wasn't for your eyes and skin I'd say you were Adonic."

Desirae's blush returned. "Nope, all natural. You're beautiful, you know."

"Nothing like you. Oh, this is going to be a fun massage."

With that, Kellera dove in. She rubbed at Desirae's creamy skin, her fingers alternately strong and gentle as she relentlessly sought out tension. She was free with her mouth as well, ravenous for Desirae's perfect body. Desirae felt helpless within her own skin, Kellera's fingers setting off tiny waves that dove into the depths of her and rebounded, only to be joined by others. The waves sang together, heating her and filling her with pleasure. She was vaguely aware of the way that she gasped and moaned, the way that she pulled at her own nipples when Kellera wasn't kind enough to do so, and the way that Kellera was pushing her higher than she had ever been before. She had been with women before but few had ever come close to the pleasure that Kellera created inside her.

Lost in her own sensations she barely noticed when the pleasure plateaued; for eternal seconds she stayed poised on the tipping point, held there by Kellera's fingers and skill. Then she fell, shrieking out her ecstasy as her body ignited and burned her from the inside out. Kellera never stopped, barely acknowledged Desirae's bucking and half-frantic screams. By the time Desirae was able to think again Kellera had her halfway to another climax that she was sure would shatter her mind.

She fought to the surface and seized Kellera's wrist, dragging the Callypian woman onto the table with her. Kellera giggled and went willingly, her pants already removed and her panties halfway to her feet. Desirae pulled her atop of her sweat-drenched body, pressing her hands deep into Kellera's delectable ass and pulling her tightly against her as their mouths met for a kiss that went on and on. Desirae found herself just as hungry as Kellera and just as impatient to wreak herself on her new lover.

"To...to the bed!" she said, her breath hot on Kellera's skin. The two of them staggered like they had been drinking, clinging to one another as they made their way into the bedroom area, their hands and mouths never still and always wanting to know more, more! The wrestling match was brief, ending with Desirae victorious and her face buried between Kellera's legs. Kellera let out moans and soft sounds of encouragement as Desirae licked and suckled, their translators having a hard time with half-finished words turning to moans. Kellera fisted her tiny hands, pressing hard against her own thighs as Desirae worked,



and when she came it was with a shout of pure joy.

An hour later they simply held each other, aftershocks and afterglow warring pleasantly in their glorious intertwined bodies. “Do you feel better?” said Kellera, her voice quiet and relaxed.

“This is the best I’ve felt in...I don’t remember the last time I really let go.” Desirae snuggled against Kellera, radiating contentment.

“Well, we’ll have to do this again, soon, but for right now we really should get back to work.”

“Aw, do we have to?”

“I’m starting to see why you got assigned to a Recreation ship,” Kellera teased, gasping out a laugh when Desirae blushed again.

They helped each other out of the middle of the enormous bed and headed for the bathroom. The shower proved spacious enough for both of them to bathe at the same time, and they shared a companionable wash. After they had climbed back into their uniforms, Kellera helping a little with Desirae’s complicated bra, Kellera banished the bedroom and the two of them headed out of the Recroom, going their separate ways for the time being.

Desirae was surprised to find that Kellera’s therapy hadn’t left her worn out; in fact, she had more energy and focus than she’d had in a long time. She spent the rest of the day working hard to get the ship and its crew ready for the oncoming work load, only blushing occasionally at the memory of her time with Kellera. She looked forward to the next session, glad to know that on a Recreation ship it was never very far away.

The Sentinel’s lounge was nearly as nice as the one on the Philotes, at least in Captain Zerkoth’s eyes. She admitted a slight bias to herself, but allowed herself the moment of sentiment. Certainly our brandy is better, she thought as she sipped at the glass that the Sentinel’s bartender had plunked down in front of her. She nodded to him and he beamed in obvious pride before bustling off to take care of other customers.

The room was full, mostly of people wearing Union uniforms. By the decorations at their throats Zerkoth was able to determine that they were largely deep-space crew, which led her to deduce that they were probably from the Wardencllyffe. They had the air of people blowing off steam after a long time under pressure; certainly she had had enough experience with that sort of behavior to recognize it. Soon the Philotes would be full of the same boisterous laughter and chatter.

She wanted to be back at her post in her office, helping to get things ready, but she had to trust her staff. She had a diplomatic meeting to attend to, after all, and she wanted to get that out of the way first.

The chatter fell to a roomful of whispers and she turned to see what had caused the change. The woman standing in the doorway was almost certainly the cause. When displayed on the comm's screen, Captain Allie Five had been striking. In person she was breathtaking. She nodded when her eyes met with Zerkoth's, and she made her unhurried way through the crowd. She carried herself like a queen or a goddess, not unaware of the way that people stared but instead welcoming it as her due.

Her smile was blinding. "Captain Zerkoth, I presume?" she said.

Zerkoth nodded and stood. "Captain Allie Five. Please, sit. It is a pleasure to meet you in person."

"Eventually," said Allie Five. She gave a devilish smile as she sat, and Zerkoth wondered what the Adonic would be like in bed. As Captain of the Philotes she rarely afforded herself such luxuries but she thought that she might make an exception this time if Allie Five was amenable.

The chatter around them picked up again. Zerkoth said, "I trust that your mission was a success?"

Allie Five shrugged as she perused the drink menu. "Well, we poked at a lot of stars and planets, anyway. Gathered a lot of data, and now we're looking forward to a little break."

"I am glad that we are able to help with that."

Allie Five punched in her order on the table's pad and then leaned forward, her

elbows on the table. “You know I’ve never met anyone from a Recreation ship. I didn’t even know what they were when my commander first mentioned the possibility.”

Zerkoth nodded and took another sip of her brandy. “They are quite new. If you have been out of the system for two years you might have missed the creation of the Recreation designation altogether. I am proud of the service that we provide for the Union.”

The striking Adonic nodded. “I would think so. I hear that you even have one of my kind onboard?”

“Indeed. Commander A27-4a, designate Aid. He is my chief science officer and a valuable member of the crew.”

Allie Five laughed, a sound that drew surreptitious glances. “I bet he is. Particularly where females are involved, am I right?”

Zerkoth’s tail lashed once. “Naturally I am not allowed, or inclined, to discuss that sort of activity with others.”

Allie Five waved her hand. “Oh, it’s all right. Doctor Travis knew what he was doing when he made Adonics, and part of that was making sure that we all have a tremendous sex drive.” More glances.

Zerkoth tilted her head. “So I have heard. I am surprised, in fact, that we do not have more Adonics applying to be part of the Recreation program.”

“Well, the sex drive is geared toward reproduction. I’m thinking that your people are given prophylactic implants, right?”

“Ah, correct.”

“Well, there you are then. Hard to spread your genes when you can’t spread your genes.”

Beside Allie Five’s arm, a shimmer appeared in the air. It resolved itself into a short, wide glass mostly full of something pale and blue. “About time,” she said.

“Our services on the Philotes are quite discreet,” said Zerkoth. “If that is a

concern for you...”

Allie Five shrugged and then nodded. “I suppose it should be. Adonics don’t tend toward excessive embarrassment, but I know that it’s an issue for some beings.” She reached out and put her free hand on Zerkoth’s. “Are you sure that you can accommodate...everyone on my ship?”

Zerkoth nodded, letting the hand stay where it was. “Quite sure, of course.”

Allie Five gave it a moment longer and then withdrew. “I’m surprised to see a Nellick in charge of a Recreation ship, to be honest.” Her eyes were cooler as she sipped her drink, staring at Zerkoth in a calculating manner over the rim of her glass.

“Why would that be?”

“Your people are...well, you have the reputation for not being very emotional. Or demonstrative.”

“I suppose that is true. It makes me no less a candidate for my position, however.”

Allie Five held up her hands. “Hey, no offense meant. We’re both captains here.”

Zerkoth tilted her head, fighting down another tail lash. “Of course.”

The comm on Zerkoth’s forearm beeped and she pulled her sleeve back to answer. “Zerkoth here.”

“Captain, this is Doctor Vrelin. I thought you might want to come back to the ship for a moment. There’s been an interesting development.”

“Of course, Doctor. It may take a moment. I am with the captain of the Wardencllyffe right now.”

“Bring her with you. This might involve her as well.”

Zerkoth glanced at Allie Five, who shrugged. “On our way, Doctor. Zerkoth out.”

“We started cycling crew members through a little over two hours ago,” said Doctor Vrelin. She, Allie Five, and Zerkoth were standing outside one of the Recrooms on the Philotes. The light above the door was green, meaning that the room was in use. “This is the Recroom assigned to Petty Officer Lott Ospilious, a Human from the Wardencllyffe. We gave him the usual scans and pronounced him free of disease before Ensign Frulesia J’Dorth took charge of him. J’Dorth is a Callypian, and from her performance reviews she’s not only competent but talented.”

“Why are we here, Doctor?” said Allie Five. Zerkoth shook her head to silence her colleague, knowing that Vrelin was working up to something.

“We’re here because they’ve been locked in sexual intercourse for two solid hours and show no signs of stopping, Captain. That should be impossible for a Human male, though a Callypian female might be able to pull it off with preparation. Ensign J’Dorth used her Safeword signal a few moments ago, and security has been holding Petty Officer Ospilious since then.”

“In there?” said Allie Five.

“Indeed. I wanted you to know that he’s not himself. He’s still quite, ah, aroused, and appears to be willing to attack any female who comes near. Ensign J’Dorth is in sickbay and under treatment for exhaustion.”

“Open the doors,” said Zerkoth.

Vrelin did so without further discussion. The sounds of a struggle echoed into the hallway the moment the doors opened.

Three of the Philotes’s security team, all male Ogroths, struggled to contain a medium-sized Human man who made a lunge for the open door and the three women standing there. The Ogroths were both tall and broad compared to the human, but their muscles bulged as they worked to stop him from attacking the doctor and the captains. Ospilious was quite naked, and he was not only erect but appeared to be painfully engorged. His balls were enlarged as well, larger than any that Zerkoth had seen on a human.

“Doctor, please sedate him,” said Zerkoth.

Vrelin stepped closer, attempting to find a spot to use her hypo-spray, but Ospilious roared and lunged again in spite of the Ogroths. She got close enough to dose him but the spray didn't seem to make much difference. She dialed up a larger dose and hit him again, causing him to stagger and look confused. A final dose made him slump unconscious in his captor's arms. He remained rigid even in his sleep, giving the appearance of a man in the midst of a truly astonishing wet dream.

"Take him to sickbay and restrain him," said Vrelin. The Ogroths hustled the unconscious Human out, leaving the three women behind to look around the Recroom. The interrupted simulation wasn't anything particularly amazing, just a bedroom with a large, soft bed that had been stripped of blankets and sheets through repeated enthusiastic activity.

"What the hell was that?" said Allie Five, her eyes wide.

"For one thing, that was about four times the amount of Solm needed to put a Human to sleep immediately," said Doctor Vrelin. She straightened her uniform top and put the sprayer back in her bag, doing her best to look as though she hadn't been shaken.

"But why?" said Zerkoth. "Was the Petty Officer infected with something?"

"Nothing showed up on the standard screenings," said Vrelin, sounding slightly defensive.

"I'll make his medical records available to you," said Allie Five.

"Thanks. Do you think he might've picked something up on the Sentinel?" said Vrelin.

"It's possible, I suppose."

Zerkoth let out a deep sigh. "I think this means that we will have to contact Captain Adams again."

The three women looked at each other, and Vrelin shrugged. "Not it."

“So one of you brought something onboard my station?” said Captain Adams. He glared at Zerkoth and Allie Five from the screen in Zerkoth’s ready room, his eyes bulging and his moustache seeming to crackle.

“We do not know the vector or even whether it is a disease at all,” said Zerkoth, her voice still calm.

“Regardless, we need to have your people do some internal scans,” said Allie Five. She was less calm than Zerkoth but still had a firm grip on her irritation with Adams.

“Like hell. I told you people not to make any more trouble for me!”

“Captain,” said Zerkoth. “If there is an infection on the Sentinel, it would be a good idea to catch it as early as possible.”

Adams took visible hold of his emotions and said, “I’ll have my medical people do the scan. Adams out.” The screen went dark.

“I don’t think he likes you,” said Allie Five.

“I think your powers of observation border on the obvious,” said Zerkoth.

Allie Five gaped at her for a moment before giving voice to a laugh that echoed in the small room. “Now I’ve seen everything,” she said. “A Nellick making a joke.”

“Not everything,” said Zerkoth. “Have you considered taking advantage of the Philotes and its Recreation duties yourself?”

“I had, but I wasn’t sure. I thought I would wait until my crew had been taken care of.”

Zerkoth gave a small smile, a slightly disconcerting expression on her semi-feline face. She reached out and put her hand on Allie Five’s shoulder, one finger stroking the Adonic’s neck. “Perhaps you and I could take some time. As a member of this crew, I am fully trained.”

Allie Five smiled and put her hand on top of Zerkoth’s. “Why Captain. I thought you would never ask.”

Ensign Frulesia J'Dorth was treated and released from sickbay, her condition labeled "exhaustion" by Doctor Vrelin's staff. She was told to head to her quarters and take bed rest for the next day or so, and then she could resume her regular duties as assigned. She went gladly, still a bit unsteady but improving with each step. As a precaution, in case something unusual happened, Doctor Vrelin sent one of the Ogroth security team with her to see her back to her quarters.

J'Dorth thought that the doctor was being overprotective. She acquiesced because there was no real way to fight against having an escort without looking like someone who needed an escort. Besides, she liked the look of the giant Ogroth.

They entered the lift together, the Ogroth towering over her, and he stood with his hands clasped while they rode to the residential levels. She looked him over, surprised to find herself feeling the tingle that meant that she was starting to become interested in someone. She had thought that even her Callypian physiology would require a couple of days to recover from the endless, half-savage coupling that she'd participated in with Ospilious, but now her nipples stood up at the sight of the security man. His broad shoulders stretched his uniform to the limits, showing off his heavy muscles and toned physique. She had never had an Ogroth before but she'd heard things about how they trained relentlessly in both strength and stamina. She'd heard some pretty impressive things about their equipment, too, and right then she found that she wanted to know the truth of the rumors firsthand.

"What's your name?" she said. She was unsurprised to hear that her voice had the almost inaudible purr of a Callypian woman in a state of arousal. Maybe she wasn't too wiped out for one last roll before bedding down in the communal Callypian quarters.

"Vlerk Tgoth," he said, glancing at her. He hadn't put a lot of thought into the woman he'd been assigned to escort; she was just another job to him. Nice ass, though, he thought. Maybe he should ask her out sometime.

"Vlerk. It's such a...strong name. You look really strong." She touched his arm, her fingertip sliding down a valley between the visible muscles of his shoulder.



“Uh. Thank you, Ensign,” he said, not sure how to react. He’d heard stories about the Callyprians, of course, but even on a Recreation ship nothing like this had ever happened.

“Tell me, Vlerk...have you ever thought about showing a girl like me just how strong you are?” J’Dorth was wet, her arousal sending urgent signals to the rest of her body, convincing it that it was more than ready to be on the receiving end of Vlerk’s strength in spite of her recent activity.

“I, uh. I’m not sure what you mean,” he said. He shifted a bit as he felt himself hardening. It wasn’t hard to think about a woman like J’Dorth in bed with him. He’d even had a few sessions in the Recrooms with Callyprians in the past, though they had been more professional than personal. J’Dorth didn’t seem professional at the moment; to his eye, she was almost panting.

“What’s your assignment, Vlerk?” she said, her hand still on him. Now she moved it to his chest, stroking at the hard muscle there. Her nipples were incredibly hard, clearly visible through her uniform. The purr remained, now audible to non-Callypian ears. Her breathing had quickened as well. She was amazed; she’d never felt such swift and complete arousal.

“To make sure that you get back to your quarters safely,” he said, struggling to focus. There was something about her voice, about her smell, that cut through to the savage core of his mind.

“I have a better idea. Why don’t you take me back to your quarters and make sure that I’m safe.” J’Dorth was distantly surprised by both her suggestion and her desire. Interest had turned to arousal had turned to raw need. “Just a quick trip. No one will know, and I really want to see how strong you are.” Her hand traveled down his belly and then down the front of his trousers, to where something massive stirred.

“I...it’s not...”

“Don’t worry. No one has to know.” She turned and put her back to him, pressing her magnificent ass against his groin. He moaned softly. The purr in her voice, designed to help demonstrate her availability, had become almost painfully arousing to him as she got hotter and hotter.

The feel of that ass grinding away decided him. He reached out and encircled her

waist with his broad hands, pulling her tightly against him while he cooed. “N... not my quarters, my roommate will be there,” he growled.

*“Two of you? Oh, that’s even better.”*

The trip from the lift to Vlerk’s room was difficult, if only because they had a hard time walking thanks to such strong mutual arousal. The door slid open and then shut as they started to tear at one another’s clothing. Vlerk wasn’t about to argue with the situation and J’Dorth couldn’t remember the last time she had been so turned on. The thought of Petty Officer Ospilious was a distant memory, with no bearing on her intense desire for Vlerk. For anyone, she realized.

“What the hell’s going on?” said a grumpy voice from the darkness. A huge form sat up in the bed across the room.

“Special delivery!” said J’Dorth as she bent over Vlerk’s bed and presented herself to him in the Callypian manner. Her words grounded themselves in a breathless shriek as he thrust hard, impaling her and stretching her more than she’d ever felt before. There was pain from the stretching but a deep sensation of relief filled her even fuller than Vlerk. It was so strong that it was nearly a climax all by itself.

“Come help!” she said, her voice still full of the purr that had done so much damage to Vlerk’s calm. His roommate, already naked from his usual sleeping habits and half dazed from waking up so quickly, had very little defense against J’Dorth’s charms. It wasn’t long before her soft lips were stretched tightly around the tip of him, drawing him helplessly toward orgasm as she screamed out her pleasure from her first climax at Vlerk’s hands.

J’Dorth’s eyes widened as she felt something that she had never felt before during sex. The climax was powerful and amazing, fully satisfying, but when it was finally over she was half-terrified to realize that she not only couldn’t stop; she actually needed the penetration even more than when she’d started. She rammed herself backward helplessly, desperate to get him deeper even as her desire and pleasure grew at the same speed.

“It’s not anything I’ve seen before,” said Doctor Vrelin. “It’s not even anything like what’s in the archives.”

She and the other members of the medical team clustered around a display showing a cross-section of Petty Officer Ospilious's brain, rendered in exquisite detail by the medical scanner. Zerkoth stared as well, uncertain of what she was seeing.

"There's something clustered at the base of his brain stem," said Vrelin, pointing at a small white mass. "It's not organic, is the thing."

"How is that possible?" said Zerkoth.

Vrelin shrugged, her four enormous breasts bouncing off of each other. "Beats me. I'm going to have to find out what the things are made out of, and then we can figure out where he might have picked something like this up. Once I know more I'll send the information to Adams and Allie Five so we know what to look for."

Zerkoth nodded. "Well done, Doctor. Let me know as soon as you learn something."

"Lieutenant Hrrok to Captain Zerkoth," said a feminine voice at Zerkoth's wrist.

She nodded to Vrelin. "I look forward to hearing from you soon, Doctor." She tapped the computer on her forearm and said, "Zerkoth here."

"Captain, there's a problem in the crew quarters that I think you need to see. It's related to the issues we were having in the Recrooms, sir."

Zerkoth sighed quietly and said, "On my way." She looked at Allie Five and said, "I am afraid that I have to deal with this, Captain. Will you be able to find your way out?"

Allie Five nodded. "Thanks, Captain. I'll have my people get with the medical team here and we'll see if we can help figure this out."

"I appreciate it."

“Doctor. Captain.” Zerkoth nodded to them and headed for the lift.

“Any idea how long your scans will take?” said Allie Five once Zerkoth was gone.

“We’re putting this at the highest priority,” said Doctor Vrelin. She patted Ospilious’s shoulder. The sedated petty officer made no response. “Poor guy. We’ll get the preliminary tests to you immediately, Captain. Now if you don’t mind?”

Allie Five nodded to the Doctor and headed for the door. She was aware of the eyes that followed her; in a skin-tight uniform like the one favored by the Union, her body naturally drew eyes. She had simply become used to it, not that it was difficult for her. Like all Adonics, her sense of self-esteem was so high that it was a kind of armor.

She made her way to the lift and got on, nodding to the Callypian officer already there. He immediately stood taller and she said, “As you were, Petty Officer. Just visiting.”

“Ah, yes, sir,” said N’Nessk. He forced himself to focus on anything besides the woman in front of him. It was so much like having 36H standing next to him that he felt himself stiffening at the sight. She even smelled similar, with that faintly musky odor that shot straight to the base of his spine and made him stiffen. “Where are you heading, sir?”

“Main quantum hopper,” she said, her voice just like 36H’s. Now that they were so close he could tell that there were some differences, very subtle ones, but the resemblance was still close enough to send him into a spiral of confusion. He reached for his necklace, pulling it out of his tunic and wrapping his fist around it to feel its warmth.

“So how do you like serving on a Recreation ship, petty officer?”

“Sorry, what?” said N’Nessk, looking up in surprise. Her gaze pinned him to the wall, her multi-hued eyes an exact match for his beloved’s.

She smiled. “You seem distracted, petty officer...?”

“Ah, N’Nessk, sir, sorry.”

“No need to apologize, N’Nessk. You’re a Callypian, correct?” Allie Five asked mostly in an effort to be polite; N’Nessk’s blue hair, golden eyes, and charcoal skin identified him easily.

“Yes sir.”

“I haven’t been around too many of your people, especially in a Recreation setting, but I’m guessing that something has you distracted.”

He nodded. “Sorry, sir. You resemble someone I know. The likeness is remarkable, that’s all.”

“Ah, I see,” she said, nodding. “You must know another Adonic, then.” She glanced down at the front of his groin, which had a noticeable bulge, and grinned slightly.

N’Nessk kept his spine straight, his eyes focusing on something beyond the wall.

“Ah, something like that.”

“So you enjoy your work here on the Philotes?” At this point, Allie Five had to admit to herself that she was teasing the poor boy a little, but an urge drove her on.

“Yes, it’s very, ah, fulfilling.”

She chuckled softly, moving a little closer to him. “So the rumors about Callypians are true, then? From what I’ve heard, it’s the ideal assignment for your people.”

“It...well, it’s got its advantages, of course,” he said.

She gave him a grin that made him stiffen further and said, “I bet.” She took a half-step closer, invading his personal space just as the lift stopped and opened at her destination.

“Maybe we could talk about your assignment a little more before you leave,” she said. She gave him a wink and touched his shoulder before heading out to the

quantum hopper.

As soon as the door closed he leaned against the back wall and let out a deep breath that he'd been barely aware of holding. He had never been so tempted to return someone's flirting, and while he had no illusions about his monogamy the idea of being with someone who was so much like 36H felt more like cheating than anything he'd ever contemplated. He made a mental note to reserve one of the Recrooms soon and to set some time aside with the holographic projector when his shift was over.

Lieutenant Hrrok waited outside a crewman's quarters, standing at attention. Captain Zerkoth nodded to him as she approached, as always choosing to recognize Hrrok's self-chosen mental gender rather than her security leader's lusciously female Callypian exterior. In his mind, Hrrok was still the huge, muscle-bound Ogroth male that he had been at birth, and as long as it didn't interfere with shipboard security or discipline then Zerkoth was willing to go along with it.

"What is the situation, Lieutenant?"

"Another incident like the one in the Recroom earlier, sir," said Hrrok, his melodic voice hoarse from attempting to speak in a lower register.

"Is everyone safe and sedated?" she said.

"Close enough, sir. A medical team is already inside, but I thought you'd want to see this for yourself."

She nodded. "Open the door."

A wave of strong biological odors rolled out of the room when Hrrok opened the door, and Zerkoth's nose wrinkled. None of the smells were bad, particularly, but they were very strong. Someone, probably more than one person, had undertaken repeated, strenuous sex in this compartment.

Two Ogroths lay unconscious, one half concealing a smaller form beneath him. They were on the floor, he still buried inside of her. The other Ogroth was asleep on the bed, naked. The medical team of two was completing its scans when

Zerkoth came in.

“We’re just about to roll him off of her,” said one tech.

“Do we know who they are yet?” said Zerkoth.

“Ensigns Tgoth and Nuvek on top there, and Ensign J’Dorth underneath.”

“J’Dorth?” Zerkoth turned to Hrrok and said, “Wasn’t she involved with the incident in the Recroom earlier?”

Hrrok nodded. “I think that we might be looking at something a little more dangerous than we first thought.”

“Why are they unconscious?” said Zerkoth.

“Exhaustion, nearly as we can tell,” said the tech. His tone of voice said that he also knew what had caused the exhaustion, but the causes were clear enough that he didn’t have to spell it out.

“Get them to sickbay and put them under quarantine,” said Zerkoth. “Armed guard; they may be unruly when they awake. Get the report to Doctor Vrelin immediately, including the possible connection to the Recroom incident. And put something over them. They are Union officers, after all.”

“Aye sir,” said the tech. He and the other medical tech started to get the bodies sorted out.

“What now, sir?” said Hrrok once he and the captain were back out in the corridor.

“I think that it is time to notify the Sentinel and the Wardencllyffe of a potential contamination,” said Zerkoth. Just then, her comm beeped. She touched the control at her wrist and said, “Zerkoth here.”

“Captain,” said Petty Officer N’Nessk. “We’ve got an incoming transmission from Captain Adams for you, priority. He sounds upset, sir.”

Zerkoth closed her eyes for a moment before answering. “I suppose he is. I will take it in my ready room, N’Nessk. Zerkoth out.”

Hrrok stood aside and let Zerkoth pass. “Better you than me, sir,” he said, his face betraying nothing.

“What did you bring on board my station?” said Adams. His glare was the same but his voice was quieter than before. He seemed almost reasonable if one discounted the trembling fist at the bottom of the screen. “Six of my people have had to be restrained, and they’re incoherent. They’ve descended into some kind of animal state. Now I hear that you’ve taken one of Allie Five’s people into custody?”

“Yes, Captain,” said Zerkoth. “My medical team is doing everything that they can to find a solution to this problem, and that includes studying the Wardencllyffe’s petty officer. I am not convinced that we are the source of the infection. Given that the first incident involved an officer from the Wardencllyffe, it seems far more likely that they-“

“I won’t have you questioning Captain Allie Five or her ship, Zerkoth. You and your...your brothel can get the hell off my station.”

“I am afraid that I cannot do that, Captain.”

Adams lost his tremulous control for a moment, sputtering half-formed words until he closed his eyes and visibly calmed himself down. “What makes you think that I’m giving you a choice?”

Zerkoth tilted her head slightly. “Our three vessels are involved with an unknown infection, Captain. Until we can isolate it and deal with it, you will have to put your station under quarantine. You know this as well as I do.”

He stared at her as if planning to give a detailed description of her to an assassin. Finally he said, “You’re quite correct, Captain. As soon as is convenient, you will have the assistance of my medical people. When this issue is resolved, you will get off my station and I will make sure that you never come back.”

The channel closed, leaving the screen blank. Zerkoth sat back with a small sigh.



Allie Five returned to her ship to find that it was in quarantine along with everyone else at Union Base Sentinel. She wanted to be more upset about the situation but for some reason it wasn't as urgent to her as she felt it should be. What kept popping up in her mind was the Callypian petty officer she'd met in the lift on the Philotes. His chiseled jaw and half-distracted eyes returned to her mind again and again, and she couldn't figure out why.

After a report from her medical and security teams that told her that another half-dozen of her people had fallen prey to the condition sweeping through the ship, she retired to her ready room to deal with some paperwork.

Within ten minutes she tossed her stylus down with a disgusted huff. The problem was that every time she let her mind do anything but focus on the reports in front of her, he popped into her head. What had his name been? N'Nessk.

She reflected that while it had been a long time for her crew, the realities of relativistic time meant that it had been even longer for her. A Human could go a good long while without sex before it got to be an issue, usually dealing with the urges through self-manipulation or simply channeling the energy into other things.

Adonics had a much stronger sexual drive built in thanks to their creator. Doctor Isaac Travis had made sure that his new race would spread their genes as far and wide as possible, meaning that a deep desire for sex came standard along with the optimized muscles and nearly invincible immune system. Allie Five became more and more distracted until she was forced to admit that she was going to have to do something about her desires.

The idea of another masturbation session felt silly when there was an entire ship-full of Recreation specialists just on the other side of the bulkhead. She opened a channel to the Philotes and contacted the civilian Recreation team in charge of scheduling. The quarantine was in effect but she hoped that she might be able to bypass it if she was able to find a willing partner.

N'Nessk gasped hard, his cries blending with his lover's as they both came. He held himself in both hands and even so he was barely able to control the wild surges. He filled the condom waiting to catch his seed. Across from him on the

bed, 36H writhed in pleasure as her magnificent body gave up another climax. The two of them bucked and moaned until the pleasure released its grip and then they lay there facing one another. He knew better, now, than to reach out and try to touch her, however much he wanted to.

The holo-emitter in his private quarters was a good one but to have actual tactile interaction with 36H required him to upload her into the Recrooms. They were all taken up with station and Wardencllyffe personnel, however, so he and his beloved were forced to make do with what they could get.

Panting together, they lay gazing into each other's eyes. N'Nessk said, "I love you."

She just smiled back but he could read her response in her eyes. Before either of them could say anything else his comm beeped. He sighed and turned it on without video. "N'Nessk."

"Cevik? It's Kellera! How are you?"

N'Nessk closed his eyes and treated himself to a moment before responding. "Miss D'Kath, to what do I owe the pleasure?"

"Well, we got a call. There's a client who requested your services as a Recreation specialist."

36H covered her smile with one hand as he said, "Are you sure that the client called for me, Miss D'Kath?"

"Well, she said the petty officer she'd met in the lift while visiting our ship, and we figured it out from there." Kellera's voice contained a teasing note, mirrored by 36H's grin.

N'Nessk stared at the comm, his mind momentarily whiting out. It was only when Kellera said, "Cevik? Are you there?" that he realized that he was simply staring. His mind had turned into something like static at the thought of the Adonic captain he'd briefly met. To have the opportunity to touch her, to feel her, to know that there was someone flesh and blood...but he was in love with the exquisite woman in bed with him.

"Ah, yes, I'm here, ah...when did the client want to schedule the session?"

“As soon as possible, which is half an hour from now in Recroom Six. It fits into your duty schedule, so is that convenient for you otherwise?”

N’Nessk thought as hard as he could under the circumstances but couldn’t come up with a way out of the assignment. “It...it is. I’ll meet her then.”

“Thanks, Cevik! This will be a big help for our team. Kellera out.”

The comm clicked out and 36H was at least able to let her laughter go. “You really made an impression on someone,” she said. “Not that I can blame her. Or is it a man?”

“A, ah...a woman, actually. She...she’s an Adonic.”

“Really?” 36H sat up, her spectacular body on display.

“Yes, she’s Captain Allie Five of the Wardencllyffe.”

Her face went blank for a moment as the computer fought to keep up with the algorithms that governed 36H’s personality. He waited, knowing that she would be back. She returned a moment later and said, “Her mother formed the template for, well, for me.”

N’Nessk blinked. “Okay, that’s getting strange, I should just call Kellera back and have her call the whole thing off.”

“No, no, it’s fine. You should do your duty to the ship.”

He reached out and put his hand on the blanket net to her leg. She put on top of his, and he forced himself to think that he could feel her. “Are you sure?” he said.

She smiled that heartbreaking smile that so filled his mind. “Of course, Cevik. I’ll be here when you get back.”

“I know you will.”

“You know...if you’re going to be in the Recroom, perhaps I could take part.”

He blinked. “Really?”

“If you think it would be appropriate to the situation. I’d like to help you. If she’s amenable.”

“Well, if it...comes up, I suppose. I’m not sure how to raise the idea, but I’ll work on it. I love you.”

As always, she just gave him that smile in response. At his command, the computer clicked the image off and allowed him to reclaim the physical form of his beloved. He sat staring at the chip for as long as he could, his mind whirling. He wondered if the doctor and the others were right to be concerned about him.

“It’s not even organic,” said Doctor Vrelin. She spoke to Adams, Zerkoth, and the leader of the Wardencllyffe’s medical department, Doctor Charles Gilligan, Zerkoth in person and the others on screens.

“Six more of my people have it,” said Adams. “What did you people do?”

“We’re having a hard time figuring out just where it came from,” said Vrelin. “I’ve been over our medical and travel records for the last six months, and there’s nothing even remotely close to this, either as symptoms or a potential vector, until we came to the Sentinel.” She folded her arms beneath her gigantic breasts, all four of them clearly visible on the screen thanks to her short stature. Gilligan tried not to stare at her chest in an unprofessional manner; his bad news made it easier.

“I think that I’ve figured out the source,” he said.

There was a brief silence on the line. Adams, still obviously fighting to keep himself under control, said, “Then what is it? Who brought it?”

“Two months ago, during a routine scan of a nebula around seventy light years from here, we discovered proto-life in the cloud itself,” said Gilligan. “It was formed from the particles there, and took nourishment from certain high-energy reactions that took place between the chemicals that form the nebula.”

“That’s fascinating, but-“

“If I may, Captain Adams. I’m getting there. Petty Officer Ospilious was

involved with the team that we sent on an EVA mission to study the makeup of the cloud. He got some residue on him, as did most of the team, but they were thoroughly disinfected according to the Union guidelines. I suspect that some of the semi-living material got through our scans and wound up inside him. From there it must have naturally settled in an area of the body that closely simulated its natural environment.”

“The brain stem?” said Zerkoth. “Seems a bit highly oxygenated for something from outer space.”

“They don’t respire. It’s the energy. The brain stem is well-stimulated at all times, and it’s a good place to wind up. Since the creature isn’t organic in the traditional sense, it’s difficult to know what it would do. However, at the moment we’re aware of one definite result.”

“Why does it do this?” said Adams.

“The brain stem is involved in mating,” said Zerkoth. “It has found a way to get itself more energy by stimulating the reactions in its environment. Probably it is using that energy to reproduce and infect new hosts.”

“Truly a wondrous adaptation,” said Gilligan.

“Save your admiration,” said Adams. “Is it sentient?”

“No, not as far as we can tell,” said Gilligan. “It’s about the mental level of a virus.”

“Then we have to figure out how to get rid of it before it kills the hosts,” said Vrelin. “We don’t know what kind of damage it could cause.”

“We’re still working on that. Until then, the best thing is to keep the victims sedated and separated from the rest of the population.”

“Assuming that it hasn’t spread any further,” said Vrelin.

“Well, yes, assuming that. We have to be ready for anything.”

Allie Five wasn't used to Recrooms and wasn't sure what to expect from the Recreation assignment that she'd requested, but sitting there on the holographic bed was more comfortable than she'd thought it would be. She was more concerned with the heat emanating from her nethers, though, coupled with a growing wetness. She was used to desiring sex, even used to feeling horny, but this was something else entirely; this felt as if she was on fire. She squirmed, desperate for a little relief, and had just about decided to start without her partner when the door opened and N'Nessk walked in.

She stood and went to him, unzipping the front of her uniform as she came. "I know that you people are trained for all kinds of foreplay any all, but I have to have you now," she said, her voice automatically dropping to a lower register as she made her needs abundantly clear. The sheer lust that she felt for him was a little frightening but she couldn't hold herself back any longer.

N'Nessk wasn't sure what to do at first. The session started like some of his fantasies with 36H, the ones where she'd decided to come on strong, but there were subtle differences. No matter how advanced it was, the computer hadn't been able to fully simulate the touch of skin on skin and the way that an organic woman's hair smelled. When Allie Five embraced him he felt the heat from her body and the beginning of a warm sweat forming. The heft of her breasts was different, so slightly that he couldn't quantify it, but his fingers knew. Everything was so different and so similar that his mind retracted in a state of confusion.

Once his mind was out of the way his Callypian physiology was glad to take over and do what it was evolved to do. The bulge at the front of his uniform stretched larger, his length straining against the feeble material that tried to contain it. Callypians had evolved an enthusiastic sex response and Allie Five seemed to be fully aware of it.

She rubbed her body against his, whimpering slightly as the heat and desire built up inside of her. The solution to everything that she wanted, needed, was behind that bulge, and she had to get at it. The fear returned, buried beneath layers of raw lust, but it wasn't able to slow her advance.

N'Nessk wasn't fully into the situation, confused as he was, but he didn't have to call on his extensive Recreation training to fully satisfy this client. She tore at his clothing, feverish to get at him, and he did his best to assist her along the way.

Allie Five's mind was almost subsumed behind a red haze of lust. She didn't know why she wanted him so badly but it wasn't important. It certainly wasn't as important as getting into his pants. When she finally freed him she let out a half-gasp at the sight of him. Relief beckoned. She pressed herself against him, squirming desperately, and with a single twist she arched her hips at just the right angle to bring the head of his shaft into her.

He bore her backward, confusion lost beneath the wave of sudden pleasure at the feel of her wrapping around him. N'Nessk felt as if he'd come home, and he wanted to stay. He pushed her back onto the bed, seeing nothing now but his beloved in a state of raging desire, and he thrust deep.

Allie Five screamed as he stretched and filled her, the insane lust that filled her momentarily satiated as he pushed deep. The pain immediately turned to pleasure and then ramped higher than ever before as she bucked against him. Within moments, she came so hard that she thought she would crush him. She had never been on the receiving end of a climax like that before. Her eyes widened as she came down, the incredible satisfaction fading beneath a renewed wave of lust.

She was more passionate than 36H, her body clenching him tightly and her screams more uninhibited. He found himself pushing harder and thrusting deeper, his excitement heightened as much by the differences as the sight and feel of her. Even her taste was different, her smell. N'Nessk felt that he was on simultaneously familiar and alien territory, and the joy that he took in both shamed him and excited him further.

"We're going to have to create something that's closer to their original environment than the brain stem," said Vrelin. She and Orolis Nello, chief engineer of the Philotes, were in consultation with Doctor Gilligan. Captains Adams and Zerkoth were also on the line.

"We have the differences, anyway," said Nello. He looked like a Spathian male, with four breasts less than half the size of Vrelin's, but beneath his exterior were mechanical systems that allowed him to simulate biological life; Nello was a Spathian android. "Figuring out the differences isn't the issue. We have to figure out how to move the nebula creature from the brain stem to another medium."

“It seems interested in reproducing itself. It copies itself to other brain stems. For a while I wondered if it had infected the crew of the Wardencllyffe and had just lain dormant, but then others from the Sentinel and the Philotes started to show symptoms,” said Vrelin.

“Symptoms,” said Adams with a mostly-suppressed snort.

“Regardless of how distasteful you find both this and us, Captain, the facts are the facts. The people showing the signs of excessive arousal are under the influence of a disease. Please allow us to find a cure without further interference.”

“InterFER-“

“If there are new symptoms then feel free to contact us. Until then, rest assured that this problem is our highest priority.” Vrelin reached out and tapped a button, kicking Captain Adams from the conference call. Nello and Doctor Gilligan both stared at her, their eyes wide. Zerkoth took in a deep breath and let it out again.

“He hated us already,” said Vrelin. She shrugged, the motion doing impressive things to her chest that Nello and Gilligan regarded with interest.

“At least his opinions have not changed,” said Zerkoth. “Please contact me when there is progress, Doctor. I am going to go check on the Recreation efforts.”

“You might want to suspend them until we can figure out what’s going on and how to stop it,” said Vrelin, her tone stern.

“If it gets any worse, then we will. We have improved the pre-scanning to include searches for the elements that make up the nebula creatures. If that is not enough precaution then we will reassess.”

Vrelin crossed her arms below her lower set of breasts. “I’m on the edge of insisting, Captain.”

“And I trust your judgment, Doctor. Please contact me with your progress.” With that, Zerkoth turned and left.

Vrelin blew out a breath in a huff that pushed a strand of hair out of her face. “Captains.”



“Agreed,” said Nello. Gilligan nodded sympathetically.

Allie Five was lost in pleasure, writhing and crying out again and again beneath N’Nessk. He gritted his teeth, hanging on as best he could while she climaxed once more. It was taking all his skill and effort to keep from succumbing to his own orgasm; he was aided in this by a sense of unreality. In addition to her resemblance of his beloved and the emotions that besieged him due to that fact, he was also aware that her strong reaction wasn’t normal. A Spathian or a Callypian might have been able to climax that strongly from mere penetration, but not so many times, so close together.

Finally even his doubts couldn’t keep him from his pleasure. He thrust deeper, filling her deeper than any human could go, and then bellowed as he clenched tight. He gushed into her, spilling out of her where they joined, and she launched into another squealing climax of her own.

Allie Five gasped beneath him as she regained some of her clarity. The pleasure burned inside and for a moment she could think again. She said, “What... what...”

He blinked at her, bleary in the aftermath, and said, “What’s wrong?”

“I have to...the ship, I...” Allie Five tried to collect her thoughts, but the sensation of him still inside of her was more distracting than anything had ever been.

“What about the ship?” said N’Nessk.

“I have to get back to...to...” She shook her head, her hips surging against him. “To fucking you.”

“Uh...”

“Please. Please fuck me,” she said, her hips moving again. She was caught, her mind wanting to leave but her body rebelling in its raw desire for him. “More!”

N’Nessk felt himself rising to the occasion but he wasn’t sure if he had what it took to satisfy her after his session with 36H. Something occurred to him, and he

withdrew with some difficulty. She gasped out an anguished denial but he held his hand up. “Just a minute. I think I know how to make it better.”

While she shook and whimpered, her hand feverishly busy between her legs as she fought to keep from leaping on him, N’Nessk plugged his chip into the nearest appropriate jack. “Computer, access 36H. Initialize.”

She appeared next to the bed, taking in the room and the situation immediately. His beloved smiled and said, “Need some backup?”

He grinned at her and Allie Five. “Thought you might help me with the Captain here, dearest.”

“My pleasure.”

The presence of the two nearly-identical women raised his flagging interest, and by the time he crawled back into bed with Allie Five she was already spread and begging for him. 36H joined them, her hands and mouth working expertly on both of her partners.

Allie Five didn’t care. She was past caring, her body lost in its own pleasure and no longer consulting with her mind. She just went on and on, lost in the moment with her partners until she realized that she was desperately fucking an unconscious Callypian; she’d worn N’Nessk out and he’d fallen asleep beneath her. 36H remained, though, and whatever had happened to Allie Five was just fine with her having sex with a woman instead of a man. Allie Five didn’t know how long she went with just the hologram; her pleasure followed her into her dreams, her body climaxing helplessly time and again.

Doctor Vrelin sat back with a disgusted sigh, wishing that she had a stylus or something else non-breakable to throw across the room. Their touch-pad computers were effective but unsatisfying in a frustrated moment. What she really wanted was a nice, relaxing session with some well-hung male, but she had to stay focused.

“This is ridiculous!” she said. “There has to be something.”

“None of the simulations worked,” said Nello.

“I’m aware of this, thank you,” said Vrelin.

Zerkoth looked back and forth at them and then glanced at the screen that displayed a canted angle of the Wardenclwyffe’s sickbay. “What happened to Doctor Gilligan?”

“He’s infected,” said Vrelin. “We turned the sound off.”

“He had sexual contact with one of the infected?”

Vrelin shook her head. “It doesn’t take that intimate a contact. Skin to skin is enough.”

“That is disquieting.”

“Tell me about it. And nothing that we’ve tried is able to remove the particles without killing the victim.”

“What do we do, then?”

Zerkoth’s beeping comm interrupted them. “Zerkoth here.”

“Captain, Petty Officer N’Nessk was supposed to be here twenty minutes ago, but he was in the Recrooms,” said Lieutenant Hrrok. “I found him there... Captain, he and his partner were both victims of the nebula creature, but there’s something else that you need to see. Bring Doctor Vrelin and mister Nello as well, please.”

“Acknowledged. On our way.” Zerkoth clicked the comm off and nodded to the others, who stood to follow her.

“What do you think’s going on in there?” said Vrelin.

“I’m hoping that we find something more pertinent to the problem than the other, ah, aftermaths,” said Nello. “Interesting as they are.”

Zerkoth glanced at the engineering chief, who shrugged. “I’m fascinated by all kinds of interactions, sir,” he said.

The Recroom was under guard, two security members standing outside the

closed door. They nodded to the three visitors and resumed their attentive stances as the door slid open.

At first it was much like what they'd come to expect from the nebula creature. The simulated bed was half-destroyed, the bedclothes scattered and the mattress ripped in several spots by lovers in the throes of passion. Petty Officer N'Nessk was on his back on the bed, beneath a truly exquisite woman whose skin implied that she was an Adonic. They recognized Captain Allie Five.

Another Adonic stood next to Lieutenant Hrrok, who was at attention toward the back of the room. The standing Adonic woman seemed confused, looking around as if uncertain as to where she was. As Zerkoth approached the Adonic flickered for a moment. Behind her, Vrelin began scanning the unconscious officers with her hand scanner.

"Lieutenant," Zerkoth said. "What brings us here?"

"Sir. As per orders, I scanned the bodies without touching them as soon as I arrived. They displayed readings similar to those of the victims of the nebula creature."

"Similar?"

"Captain!" said Doctor Vrelin. She stared at her portable scanner. "Hrrok is right. They're showing the same exhaustion as the nebula creature's victims, but there's no sign of the nebula particles in their brain stems or anywhere else."

"There's more, doctor," said Hrrok. He nodded to the confused-looking holographic Adonic. "Scan her, please."

Vrelin shrugged and did so, frowning at the results. "Captain...it reads with nebula creature signatures. It has them all through it."

"Her," said a weak voice. The standing officers looked in that direction. Petty Officer N'Nessk struggled weakly beneath Allie Five, trying to make his way out from under her. "She's...she's not just a thing."

"Doctor," said Nello. "Could the nebula creatures have been drawn to its...ah, to her energy signature?"

Vrelin blinked at the results on her scanner, a smile slowly surfacing on her face. “I think that’s entirely possible, chief.”

“Is she okay?” said N’Nessk. He wasn’t referring to the woman in his lap, still unconscious. All his concern was directed at the hologram.

“Maybe we could use it to clear the other victims,” said Nello, disregarding N’Nessk’s question. “Petty Officer, what kind of contact did the hologram have with you and Captain Allie Five?”

“I...I don’t know, she joined in on the Recreation assignment, and...”

“Doctor, coordinate with Lieutenant Hrrok’s security teams. Get one of the infected here to test this. Get Mister N’Nessk and Captain Allie Five out of here and to the recovery area,” said Zerkoth. Hrrok lifted his wrist and started snapping orders into his communicator.

“Wait, wait!” said N’Nessk, panic lending him the strength he needed to roll Allie Five off of his lap. He stood, staggering slightly, unmindful of his nakedness. “What...is she okay?”

Vrelin put her hand on his shoulder to try to get him to sit down again, but he shook her off. He walked to 36H, his steps unsteady. “Are you okay? Dearest?”

The hologram looked at him and frowned. “N’Nessk?” She smiled for a moment before the confusion came back. “I thought I knew you. Have we met?”

“36! It’s me, it’s Cevik!”

She looked around, her brow furrowed as if she had never seen any of them before. “How did I get here?”

“Doctor, please?” said Zerkoth.

“No. No!” N’Nessk cried. He tried to grasp 36H’s shoulders, but his hands went through her as if she wasn’t there; it was just like the times when he’d tried to touch her in his quarters. She focused on him for a moment before looking around again.

“Petty Officer,” said Nello. He came forward and pulled N’Nessk away,

unconcerned with the other man's nudity. He carefully didn't notice N'Nessk's tears when they started. "Please get dressed. We'll talk about...about her when you're dressed and away from here."

N'Nessk followed orders, dressing as if poorly programmed. Nello took him outside to the waiting area, sitting him down in one of the consultation rooms. Hrrok's security team carried Allie Five toward sickbay, her glorious body carefully covered.

"N'Nessk...I scanned her while we were talking. I'm sorry, but she's been corrupted by the nebula creature. Her programming is damaged and can't be salvaged," said Nello.

N'Nessk slumped down, his head hitting the table between them. In addition to his grief he was aware that he had revealed his secret to the Captain and the others in the Recroom. "There's nothing that can be done?"

"I'm sorry, Petty Officer. The best that we can do is to simply acquire a new copy of the same program. It would be the same as when you, ah, started."

N'Nessk sat back up, his face set in an expression of utter despair. "So there's nothing that can be done. I killed her."

"N'Nessk...I want you to know that Doctor Vrelin, Doctor Gilligan, and I have been working on a solution for the people infected by the nebula creatures for hours. Nothing worked. All the simulations ended with the patients brain-dead at best. The 36H program...the woman you know might be gone, but she is the key to saving dozens of lives."

N'Nessk stared at the desk for a while and then said, "She would have liked that. She was very...very giving."

Nello nodded. "As an artificial life form myself, I am glad that she was able to find someone who cared about her so much. I can assure you that she feels no pain."

N'Nessk firmed his mouth and sat up straight. "Thank you, chief. I'm going to go back to my quarters now."

"Of course. Petty Officer, if you ever need to talk about this, please let me

know.”

“Thank you.” N’Nessk stood and left without another word. The thought of his empty quarters had never been less appealing but he couldn’t think of anywhere else that would be better.

The entire operation was thirty-six hours long. By the time that all the infected were cleared and the station and both ships were thoroughly swept, 36H was little more than a vertical beam of light. When they were completely done and the scans showed no signs of the creatures except for those contained within her, she was herded into a containment capsule and finally deactivated. The capsule was scheduled for return to the nebula, which was to be marked as off-limits until the technology to safely study the creatures was perfected.

Outside of some lingering embarrassment, the victims of the nebula creature made full recoveries. There were multiple cases of exhaustion and some pulled muscles, but the pain faded. Normal Recreation activities resumed, to the great relief of the station and Wardencllyffe personnel.

Petty Officer N’Nessk tapped at the button to announce his presence at the Captain’s ready room. “Come in,” she called.

He walked in, his stride faltering when he saw Captain Allie Five sitting next to Zerkoth. Allie Five and N’Nessk looked mostly unharmed, though both had similar hollows beneath their eyes. “Captains,” he said, coming to attention.

“As you were, N’Nessk. Please sit. I called you in to discuss this transfer request,” said Zerkoth, gesturing toward the form displayed on her desk computer.

“Yes sir, is there a problem?”

“I was wondering what brought it on.”

N’Nessk looked back and forth between the two women, his dusky skin darkening further with a blush as he fought anger and embarrassment. “I can’t

serve on the Philotes anymore. All anyone talks about is...me and her.”

“You mean 36H,” said Zerkoth.

“Yes. It was my private relationship, and the only person who can even understand that is Chief Nello. Everyone else thinks I’m crazy.”

“Our counselors cleared you, N’Nessk.”

“I know that. The other Callypians don’t understand me, and now there’s no one for me to connect with. I just...I can’t stay here, Captain.”

“It is unusual to find a Callypian who is not comfortable in the communal quarters. That does not mean that there is no place for you, Petty Officer.”

N’Nessk couldn’t think of anything else to say. “Yes sir,” he said, his voice drained of life.

“But not aboard the Philotes, I think. Fortunately, I know that the Wardencllyffe is looking for a new communications officer since the last one was eaten by a Glog.”

He blinked at her and then looked at Allie Five. She was so much like his lost love that it was almost painful to see her, but he didn’t let himself look away. He would have to learn to deal with the pain sometime. She smiled and said, “Would you be comfortable aboard the Wardencllyffe, Petty Officer?”

“Ah...possibly.”

She nodded. “Captain Zerkoth told me about your preferences, and we can certainly accommodate you. There is only one Recroom on the Wardencllyffe, however, so it’s possible that you might become uncomfortable.”

“Captain, there are therapies that suppress the Callypian desires.”

“I’ve heard of those I’ve also heard that they can cause damage. Still, in discussing the problem with Captain Zerkoth, I think that we can come to a suitable arrangement. You’re experienced with separating sex and duty, I’m told.”



“It’s part of the Recreation training, yes.”

“Well, then. As an Adonic my own sex drive is quite high, and has led to certain distraction a number of times during our deep-space explorations. If you can help me with that, and we can keep things professional, then I think that I can help you with your needs as well.”

He blinked and looked down at the floor. He couldn’t deny that the sight of her made him twitch, particularly since he had largely neglected his urges since his interlude with her. Callypian physiology was geared toward at least one sexual encounter per day, and usually more.

Still, to do it with the virtual duplicate of his lost love...

“It will be difficult to adjust to, but I think that it’s my best bet at the moment,” he said.

“Lovely. The papers will go through immediately, then.”

“Thank you, Captain. And Captain.” He stood and nodded to both of them.

“Dismissed, Petty Officer. Go and pack your things,” said Zerkoth.

Once he was gone, Allie Five smiled and stood. “Well that turned out well. But tell me, Captain, before I head back to my ship, there’s one thing I’ve been wondering about.”

“What is that?”

“You and I had a wonderful time together, but you didn’t get infected with the nebula creature. How is that possible?”

Zerkoth tilted her head slightly. “When we found you and N’Nessk...the entire time that we were coordinating the cleanup efforts I was getting more and more aroused. I was among the last of the nebula creature’s victims to be disinfected. I am not sure that my husband will be walking correctly for days.”

Allie Five’s laughter brightened the room.